LIFE HAPPENS

The Aging Parent Property Checklist

Practical guidance for securing and maintaining a parent's home while your family works through a care transition.

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There's Rarely a Need to Decide Anything Today

When a parent moves into assisted living, memory care, or in with family, the house they've lived in for years often becomes an open question — usually while everyone is still adjusting to the bigger change underway.

This checklist isn't about deciding whether to keep, rent, or sell the home. It's meant to help your family protect it in the meantime, at whatever pace makes sense for you.

This guide is educational in nature and intended as practical, non-legal guidance. It is not legal, financial, or insurance advice.

What This Checklist Covers

- ☐ Securing the home
- ☐ Protecting the property
- ☐ Scheduling regular check-ins
- ☐ Maintaining the exterior
- ☐ Protecting important documents and belongings
- ☐ A short routine for the end of every visit

A Few Simple Steps

Protecting a home that sits vacant or only part-time occupied doesn't require perfection — just consistent attention. Work through the sections below at your own pace.

Secure the Home

- ☐ Confirm all exterior doors and windows are locked.
- ☐ Consider changing the locks if multiple people have had keys over the years. If internet service is not active at the property, installing a keyless door lock with a backup lockbox on the property is a wise idea.
- ☐ Test exterior lighting and replace any burned-out bulbs.
- ☐ Set interior lights on timers to give the home a lived-in appearance.
- ☐ Store spare keys in a secure location, and keep a list of who has access.

Protect the Property

- ☐ Notify the homeowner's insurance company if the home will sit vacant or unoccupied for an extended period.
- ☐ Keep utilities on unless a professional has advised otherwise.
- ☐ Check that smoke and carbon monoxide detectors are working.
- ☐ Replace HVAC filters as needed.
- ☐ Set the thermostat to help protect the home from extreme heat, humidity, or freezing temperatures.
- ☐ If internet service is in place, consider replacing the thermostat with a smart home thermostat so that temperature can be monitored and controlled remotely.

Schedule Regular Check-Ins

- ☐ Visit the property regularly, or ask a trusted person to do so on a set schedule.
- ☐ Look for water leaks around sinks, toilets, water heaters, and appliances.
- ☐ Check ceilings for water stains or discoloration.
- ☐ Watch for signs of pests or rodents.
- ☐ Confirm doors and windows remain secure between visits.
- ☐ Collect mail, newspapers, flyers, and packages so the home doesn't appear unattended.

Maintain the Exterior

- ☐ Mow the lawn and trim landscaping on a regular schedule.
- ☐ Remove fallen branches or debris after storms.
- ☐ Keep walkways clear and safe.
- ☐ Check fences and gates for damage.
- ☐ Make sure exterior lighting is functioning.
- ☐ If the home is equipped with lawn sprinklers, check the sprinkler schedule to ensure the right amount and frequency of watering.

Protect Important Documents & Belongings

- ☐ Gather important documents (insurance policies, deeds, financial records) and store them in a secure location.
- ☐ Photograph valuable belongings before anything is moved or distributed.
- ☐ Keep a simple inventory of larger items removed from the home.
- ☐ Save receipts for any property-related expenses paid on your parent's behalf.

Before Leaving Each Visit

- ☐ Verify all doors and windows are locked.
- ☐ Confirm faucets are fully turned off.
- ☐ Check that appliances not in use are turned off.
- ☐ Set the thermostat appropriately.
- ☐ Turn on timed lights if you're using them.
- ☐ Jot a quick note about the home's condition so changes are easy to track over time.

A Final Thought: Protecting a home while a parent's care needs change doesn't require perfection — just consistent attention. Regular visits and routine maintenance help preserve the property's condition while your family decides what comes next.

Questions Many Families Have

Do we need to decide what to do with the house right away?

No. Most families take time to adjust before making a property decision. Securing and maintaining the home comes first — the decision to keep, rent, or sell can wait until it makes sense for everyone.

Should repairs be made now, or can they wait?

It depends on the repair. Anything affecting the home's safety or protection — a roof leak, a broken window, a failing HVAC system — is worth addressing sooner. Cosmetic updates can usually wait until your family has decided on a longer-term plan.

What if family members don't agree on next steps?

This is common, and there's no need to resolve every question at once. Focusing on protecting the property in the near term often takes the pressure off the bigger decision until everyone is ready to discuss it.

What if the home sits vacant for a while?

A vacant home simply needs more consistent attention — regular check-ins, secured entry points, and utilities maintained. Many of the steps in this checklist are designed with exactly that situation in mind.

How do we figure out what the home is worth, or what our options are?

When your family is ready, a simple walkthrough can help clarify the home's condition and the range of options available — with no obligation and no pressure to act on any particular timeline.

Not Sure Where to Start?

If it would help, I offer a complimentary Property Walkthrough — we'll look at the home's condition together, flag anything that needs attention, and talk through the options available, whenever your family is ready. There's no obligation, and no expectation that you'll list or sell.

Schedule a Complimentary Property Walkthrough

Clarity first. Then the right solution — whenever your family is ready for it.

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