

Discussion Paper

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Abstract

In this paper, we examine a new data set composed of mechanic's lien complaints filed in the First Judicial District of Pennsylvania (Philadelphia County). Over a 10-year period, 426 mechanic's liens were filed against 398 single-family properties, which is less than 0.1 percent of single-family properties in Philadelphia. The lien properties in our data set tend to be more expensive, newer, and larger than non-lien properties. About 80 percent of mechanic's liens are filed by general contractors, with the remainder pursued by a subcontractor. Notably, a 2014 change in Pennsylvania law made it less advantageous for subcontractors to file liens, and we find a concomitant decline in the share of liens filed by subcontractors. We conclude by discussing how homeowners can protect themselves from mechanic's lien filings, including a requirement that the general contractor sign a written release of the lien at the time a payment is made.

Keywords: mechanic's liens, contractor fraud, home improvements

JEL Classification Numbers: D18, K12, K25, R2

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I. Introduction

Following the Great Recession, home prices in the United States began a steady climb back to pre-recession levels. As home prices and transaction volumes rebounded, so did home improvement spending, from major renovations to routine maintenance (Will, 2016). Often contractors are employed to carry out the work; however, many homeowners are not aware that contractors have the ability to place a lien on the home if the homeowner fails to pay for the work. In some situations, the two parties disagree over the terms of the work order or the work has not been completed to the customer's satisfaction. A mechanic's lien enforcement action may ultimately be pursued by the contractor in court to foreclose on the lien. As a result, the property may be put up for sale to satisfy the bill if it is left unpaid.

Importantly, certain subcontractors, including suppliers of materials, can also exercise the right to place and enforce a mechanic's lien if they are not paid for their work by a general contractor. In some cases, this may even occur when the homeowner has paid the general contractor in full.¹ As important as these liens are in ensuring contractors are compensated for their work fairly, little is known about how commonly mechanic's liens are used, what types of homeowners are most frequently affected, or whether there is significant abuse of mechanic's liens in connection with home improvement fraud.

In this paper, we study mechanic's liens using 10 years of data provided to us by the Office of Judicial Records for the First Judicial District of Pennsylvania, encompassing Philadelphia County.² For each record in our data set, we observe the initial filing date, plaintiff and defendant, and property address. From January 2009 until September 2019, more than 2,400 mechanic's liens were filed with the Philadelphia Court of Common Pleas. In order to focus on

¹ State law varies widely in the degree to which it protects homeowners against a mechanic's lien being filed by a subcontractor who was not paid by a general contractor who had been paid in full by the homeowner. Homeowners may be at serious risk in situations in which a general contractor has become insolvent or has filed for bankruptcy. Importantly, Pennsylvania now generally protects homeowners from subcontractor mechanic's liens in which the homeowner has paid the general contractor in full. However, if there is a dispute as to whether full payment has been made by the homeowner (for example, if there were change orders that gave rise to additional work beyond what was in the original contract), there is a risk that a homeowner may be forced to pay twice in some situations to avoid a subcontractor's lien. Similarly, a homeowner may still be required to pay a subcontractor if a portion of the contract payment was withheld because of allegations that the overall project was not completed or in cases in which the work was perceived as substandard.

² The information is a matter of public record and may be accessed through the Philadelphia Court's Civil Docket Access tool.

likely homeowners, we restrict our analysis to case records with addresses that match single-family or condo properties in which the defendant is a person, rather than a limited liability corporation, real estate trust, or other company.³

Over the 10-year period, 426 mechanic's lien complaints were filed against 398 distinct single-family properties, which amounts to less than 0.1 percent of single-family properties in Philadelphia. Mechanic's liens and ensuing complaints to enforce the liens tend to be filed by general contractors, although about one in five are pursued by a subcontractor.

We find several notable differences between the characteristics of properties associated with a mechanic's lien filing ("lien properties") and those of the average Philadelphia property without such a lien. First, lien properties tend to be more expensive, newer, and larger than non-lien properties. About 30 percent of the properties with mechanic's liens are located in the Greater Center City area, where average property values and household incomes are higher than in most other Philadelphia neighborhoods.

Most liens are filed against owners in their 30s and 40s, which may be partly because those age groups undertake more home improvement projects on average. Later, we discuss contractor fraud involving mechanic's liens, a growing concern for older adults.⁴ Although we cannot say whether a lien was filed in connection with potentially fraudulent intent on the part of the contractor, we do not find evidence in this particular data set that mechanic's liens are disproportionately filed against older homeowners.

One interesting observation from our analysis was that, at the rough midpoint for the period of time covered by our data set (2014), a change in Pennsylvania law took effect that correlated with a decrease in liens filed by subcontractors. We examine the impact of this legislative change and discuss how our observations may inform homeowners and legislators in other states where the mechanic's lien laws may treat subcontractors more generously.

Notably, our data review ended about six months prior to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. This is significant because we would expect that the negative economic impact of the

³ We include condos in our definition of single-family properties. However, if a mechanic's lien was filed against a condo association or on multiple condo units, we exclude it from the sample of single-family liens.

⁴ See, for example, home improvement scam alerts issued by the National Consumer Law Center (2010) and AARP (2018).

pandemic on both the construction trades and homeowners will likely result in a considerable uptick in mechanic's lien filings. Indeed, even in March 2020, as the economic impacts of the pandemic were just being felt across the United States, mechanic's lien filings were already up 40 percent on a nationwide basis as compared with figures for January 2020, purportedly bringing such filings to an all-time high.⁵ In light of this trend, contractors and homebuyers/homeowners alike will benefit from better understanding the risks they face in connection with mechanic's liens during the current economic conditions. Moreover, state legislatures may more closely monitor trends in the data to determine whether any legislative changes are desirable under our current conditions.

II. What Are Mechanic's Liens?

The first mechanic's lien law in the United States was enacted in Maryland in 1791, with Thomas Jefferson and James Madison being credited for pushing the Maryland legislature to act on its passage to encourage building in the nation's recently appointed capital, the District of Columbia.⁶ Pennsylvania followed as the second state to enact such a law in 1803, and today, all U.S. states have such a law on the books.⁷ Whereas much of U.S. law derives from English law, the mechanic's lien is not an English construct and rather was earlier seen in France, Spain, and other parts of Europe, with possible origins in Roman law. Historical analysis suggests that the lack of foundation in English law stems from the English class structure having been premised on land ownership. All land in England was first owned by the crown, with parcels being granted to nobles along with their titles. Rich landowners in England would have been more than a bit reluctant to risk those in the lower-regarded classes (in this case, builders) depriving them of their land and related status by virtue of a property lien being granted. In contrast, when America was in its infancy, land was plentiful, and the strict class structure of Britain was not imported to the United States (Rockel, 1909).

⁵ See Wolfe (2020). The authors have not independently validated the 2020 lien filing data.

⁶ See Cameron (2000) and Rockel (1909).

⁷ Several state mechanic's lien laws reside in the state's constitution, including California, North Carolina, and Texas.

At its essence, a mechanic’s lien is a way to preserve the fruit of one’s labor in improving someone else’s real property (whether in erecting or repairing a structure). The filing of such a lien creates a security interest in the property so that the property owner is not unjustly enriched by the improvement if the owner fails to make good on the associated debt. The presence of the lien on one’s property gives the contractor substantial leverage to collect payment due for completed work. In addition to giving rise to potential foreclosure and the sale of the associated property, the lien also makes it very difficult, if not impossible, to sell the property or even to refinance a mortgage on the property. State law varies as to who may file such a lien, as well as the appropriate processes to file and serve the lien on the property owner (legally called *perfection*) and ultimately enforce and collect upon the lien. In Pennsylvania, mechanic’s liens may be filed by general contractors as well as subcontractors (including suppliers of materials or equipment) who have a contract with the general contractor or another subcontractor.⁸

To be effective in Pennsylvania, mechanic’s liens must be filed within six months of the work having been performed. Enforcement of the lien must occur within two years of the lien’s filing or the right to enforce may be lost.⁹

III. Mechanic’s Liens and the Composition of Lien Filers

We study mechanic’s liens using nearly 10 years of data provided by the Office of Judicial Records for the First Judicial District of Pennsylvania.¹⁰ Between January 2009 and mid-September 2019, a total of 426 mechanic’s liens were filed on 398 different single-family and condo homes.

⁸ In Pennsylvania, subcontractors (“subs”) are protected only down to second-level contractors (i.e., subs of subs may file liens, but not subs of subs of subs). See 49 Pa. C.S. §1201, and 49 Pa. C.S. §1301.

⁹ In the spirit of *Hamilton* (the musical), and given the crucial involvement of Thomas Jefferson and James Madison in promoting the mechanic’s lien in the United States and the highly technical set of rules that must be strictly observed to perfect and enforce these liens, it seems appropriate to urge that a contractor “not throw away [his] shot” by missing a filing deadline or other procedural rule that would likely result in losing all protection that a lien would offer.

¹⁰ The First Judicial District of Pennsylvania is the judicial body for the County of Philadelphia. The information is a matter of public record and may be accessed through the Philadelphia Court’s Civil Docket Access tool. For each record in our data set, we observe the case type, case identification number, initial filing date, plaintiff and defendant, and property address.

As shown in [Figure 1](#), in 2009 and 2010, about one-third of mechanic's liens were filed by subcontractors (as opposed to general contractors). The relatively high percentage of subcontractor filings in this time frame may have been driven by an increase in insolvency among general contractors as a result of the Great Recession. Apparently prompted at least in part by the bankruptcy filings of one or more prominent homebuilders during the crisis, several Pennsylvania legislators began to pursue an amendment to the Pennsylvania mechanic's lien law to afford greater protections for consumers who were buying or renovating primary residences. A bill was proposed as early as 2009 to protect homeowners from a subcontractor who filed a mechanic's lien in which the homeowner had already paid the general contractor in full. News reports at the time illustrated that homebuyers who had recently contracted with a homebuilder had to pay for some of the work a second time when the builder had declared bankruptcy and had not paid its subcontractors.¹¹ If the homebuyers did not make the duplicate payment, their home could be at risk of foreclosure.

The Pennsylvania legislature ultimately adopted new homeowner protections related to duplicate payment risk in mid-2014; the law took effect on September 8.¹² The overall number of subcontractor liens as a percentage of all mechanic's liens filed was significantly lower after the change in the law, with subcontractor liens representing 25.8 percent of all such filings prior to the effective date of the law, and only 14.9 percent thereafter (see [Figure 1](#)). However, a downward trend in subcontractor filings preceded the 2014 change, perhaps as the economy was recovering after the mortgage crisis and fewer general contractors were entering bankruptcy.

IV. Property and Neighborhood Characteristics

To compare property and neighborhood characteristics of single-family homes with and without liens, we combine the mechanic's lien data set with parcel-level data from the City of Philadelphia's Office of Property Assessment (OPA) on property characteristics and data on

¹¹ See, for example, <https://6abc.com/archive/6845195/>.

¹² The referenced 2014 amendment applies only to certain residential properties and provides no comparable safeguards for owners of commercial or other non-residential properties. See 49 Pa. Stat. §1301(b).

neighborhood characteristics from the 2000 decennial Census and 2018 5-year American Community Survey.¹³ Summary statistics are reported in [Table 1](#).¹⁴

Compared with the average Philadelphia home, those with a mechanic's lien tend to be much more expensive, constructed more recently, and have considerably more living space.¹⁵ According to OPA data, the median home with a lien is currently valued at \$239,500, more than \$100,000 higher than the median value of a home without a mechanic's lien. The average home with a lien was constructed in 1941, whereas homes without liens are, on average, five years older. The average home with a lien contains 1,800-square feet of living space compared with about 1,300-square feet in the average non-lien home.

Along some dimensions, census tracts containing properties with liens are economically better off, on average, than tracts that contain single-family homes but no liens. The median household income in lien tracts was \$53,320, about 30 percent higher than in non-lien tracts. Fewer residents live in poverty, unemployment rates are lower, and owner occupancy rates are higher in lien tracts. The median home value for owner-occupied properties, as reported in census data, was \$216,301 in lien tracts, about 28 percent higher than in tracts without liens.¹⁶

Differences in home affordability, however, appear to be similar across groups. We found no significant difference in the percentage of homeowners who are considered cost burdened (or severely cost burdened), spending at least 30 percent (or 50 percent) of their income on

¹³ We collected census data from Social Explorer, which normalizes census tract boundaries to 2010 tract definitions (2018 American Community Survey and 2000 Decennial Census data, accessed March 17, 2020). The OPA property assessment file contains a record for all real property in Philadelphia and includes a long list of variables OPA uses to assess the value of a property for tax purposes. The OPA makes its property assessment data available for download through OpenDataPhilly at <https://www.opendataphilly.org/dataset/opa-property-assessments>.

¹⁴ Although 426 mechanic's liens were filed on 398 distinct single-family properties during our study period, we also observe mechanic's lien enforcement actions on an additional nine properties. We include these in [Table 1](#) as properties with liens.

¹⁵ Unfortunately, the available OPA data do not cover our entire study period, so we are using property characteristics at a snapshot in time for 2020. As such, this data may not reflect the property conditions at the time the mechanic's lien was placed. However, analysis restricted to recent mechanic's liens (for which the OPA characteristics should be more accurate) indicate similar results.

¹⁶ This census tract-level difference appears less stark than the property-level differences in median OPA-assessed values discussed earlier in this section. This could be caused by a number of reasons, most notably that the tract-level comparison is not weighted by the number of properties included in each tract. Other reasons include differences in when the valuations were captured and how they were estimated (self-reported by homeowners in census versus local government-estimated in OPA data). Another notable difference is that the OPA data are restricted to single-family and condo properties, whereas the census data uses all owner-occupied housing.

homeownership costs.¹⁷ In addition, based on average Gini index values, income does not appear to be distributed any less equally in lien tracts.¹⁸

Philadelphia, like many large American cities, has seen notable demographic changes over the past 20 years, with some neighborhoods experiencing significant growth in incomes and home values, while other areas have been stagnant or have even declined (Ding, Hwang, and Divringi, 2016). Lien tracts appear to have thrived more between 2000 and 2018 than tracts in which no liens were filed. Household incomes grew more in tracts with liens (33 percent nominal growth as compared with 15 percent in tracts without liens); however, neither group kept pace with inflation.

The average rate of population growth between the two types of tracts was similar, but the percent of non-white residents in lien tracts showed less growth than in tracts without liens. Today, tracts with liens have lower average shares of non-white, Hispanic, or Latino populations, although both are primarily minority communities, on average. Lien tracts currently have a slightly higher percentage of persons over the age of 65, 14.5 percent compared with 13.0 percent in non-lien tracts. There was no statistically significant difference in the change in the share of persons aged 65 or older since 2000.

A. Homeowner Age Distribution

As the U.S. population has aged, news outlets and consumer watchdog groups have identified a trend in home improvement scams in which older adults are victims of fraud involving a contractor. For example, Rentzelas (2018) notes that disreputable contractors have been known to go door-to-door after major storms to drum up business, sometimes claiming there is roof or gutter damage that is not visible from the ground.¹⁹ With this in mind, we examine the age distribution of mechanic's lien defendants to determine whether older adults comprised a disproportionate share. Since lien records do not contain information on the defendant's age, we

¹⁷ The Census Bureau defines monthly ownership costs as including mortgage and home equity loan payments, real estate taxes, homeowner's insurance premiums, condo fees, mobile home costs, and utilities, as applicable.

¹⁸ The Gini index is a measure of the equality of the income distribution, with higher values indicating greater inequality (Roland, 2016).

¹⁹ Rentzelas (2018) advises consumers to maintain a healthy level of suspicion when it comes to unsolicited offers and high-pressure sales tactics, to always check references before signing a contract, and to know their federal and state rights.

searched publicly available data sources to find individuals' estimated current age, then back-dated the age to the year of the initial lien filing.²⁰ To understand how the age distribution of mechanic's lien defendants compares with the city as a whole, we also incorporated data on homeowner ages in the neighborhood from the 2010 census (see [Figure 2](#)). We find that mechanic's lien defendants are actually somewhat underrepresented in older age groups and are overrepresented in the 35–44 and 45–54 age groups.²¹

One reason underscores why mechanic's liens may be disproportionately concentrated among younger homeowners: Those homeowners may be more likely to hire companies to improve their homes. We compare the age distribution of mechanic's lien defendants to the distribution of homeowners in the Philadelphia metropolitan area who paid someone to take on a home improvement job of \$2,000 or more, using data from the 2017 American Housing Survey (AHS).²²

Since the AHS data are based on the Philadelphia core-based statistical area (CBSA), its distribution of homeowners is different from the City (County) of Philadelphia.²³ Compared with the light blue bars in [Figure 2](#), the AHS metropolitan data (shown in peach) reflects a greater share of homeowners falling in the 45–84 age brackets. The dark orange bars represent the age distribution for the subset of homeowners who began a home improvement job of \$2,000 or more in the previous two years using one or more contractors. Compared with the peach bars, we see that 35- to 54-year-old homeowners are slightly more likely to have paid to get work done, but not enough to explain the overrepresentation of mechanic's liens in that part of the age distribution.

²⁰ We primarily rely on online directory services, tapping a number of sites such as [whitepages.com](#) that provide estimated ages for residents.

²¹ Although [Figure 2](#) uses just one mechanic's lien per affected property (choosing the first filed), the result is similar if we instead use the lien as the unit of analysis, allowing each property to appear more than one time, potentially with multiple defendants, categorized by their respective ages.

²² That is, a job that cost \geq \$2,000 and was not flagged as a work performed by the homeowner.

²³ The Philadelphia CBSA includes the neighboring cities of Camden, NJ, and Wilmington, DE, as well as surrounding areas.

B. Geographic Dispersion

[Figure 3](#) displays the location of single-family and condo properties with liens on the left and the percentage of homes in each census tract that had one or more mechanic's liens on the right. No tract had greater than 1 percent of properties encumbered by a mechanic's lien. The most notable clustering of mechanic's liens is in the greater Center City area. Although only 14 percent of single-family and condo properties are located in that area, the district includes 30 percent of properties with liens.²⁴

V. Recommendations for Homeowners

A mechanic's lien is a valuable tool for contractors to ensure they are paid for their role in building or repairing property. However, a mechanic's lien can pose significant risk to property owners, including homeowners, who may not understand that their home could be foreclosed and sold in the event that a contractor's bill is unpaid. Although the mechanic's lien filing records we reviewed for Philadelphia County did not allow us to draw any conclusions as to whether these liens are frequently abused in connection with contractor fraud, it is clear from prior research that home improvement scams have resulted in significant monetary losses and other harm to homeowners. The threat of a mechanic's lien may be used as leverage in connection with such a scam.

Homeowners have several avenues available to protect themselves from unscrupulous contractors as well as legitimate contractors who may have started a job with good intentions, but who may nonetheless fail to complete the agreed-upon work for a variety of reasons, potentially including a failure of the business because of insolvency. Homeowners can protect themselves from the filing of a mechanic's lien by requiring that the general contractor sign a written release of the lien at the time a payment is made.²⁵ Recalling our earlier finding that subcontractor

²⁴ We define greater Center City as including the area from the Delaware River to University City (around 45th Street), and from Girard Avenue to Tasker Street. Zip codes included are 19107, 19106, 19102, 19103, 19104, 19146, 19147, 19130, and 19123.

²⁵ A release of a lien is more readily available to an owner of a residential property than to a commercial property owner under Pennsylvania law. Note that a home having more than three stories (not including a basement) is not covered within the definition of a "residential property" in Pennsylvania. Residential property owners may obtain lien releases from both general contractors and their subs at any time as long as the release is in writing. Conversely, a lien release is only available to a commercial property owner in connection with payment being made, or in the case of subcontractors, where the general contractor has posted a bond guaranteeing the subs will be paid.

mechanic's liens comprise fully 20 percent of the distribution of all mechanic's lien filings in Philadelphia observed over a 10-year period, a cautious homeowner might also seek confirmation from the general contractor that all subcontractors have been paid in full. A homeowner may ask the general contractor for written lien releases from the subs prior to paying if there is any concern that the general contractor may be experiencing business challenges that could have caused the subs to go unpaid. While certain homeowners in Pennsylvania are protected from duplicate payment risk in which the general contractor has been paid in full, many states do not offer similar safeguards.²⁶

On the front end of any home construction or home improvement project, there are additional steps consumers may take to protect themselves. A detailed analysis of these steps is beyond the scope of this paper; however, a brief list of protective actions includes: (1) investigating the legitimacy of the contractor, including whether the contractor possesses any legally required licenses for the type of work to be performed; (2) obtaining references related to recent work performed by the contractor and checking for Better Business Bureau complaints; (3) ensuring that the written contract contains sufficient details about the scope of work to be performed; (4) availing oneself of any available rescission right under the contract (right to cancel) if something doesn't feel right about the contractor immediately after signing; (5) never making any cash payment to a contractor either in connection with a required deposit or as payment for work completed (a check will serve as evidence of payment if there is a subsequent dispute); (6) when in doubt, obtaining the services of a consumer protection attorney to review the contract in advance of signing it, and certainly in the event of any dispute that arises over the course of the project.

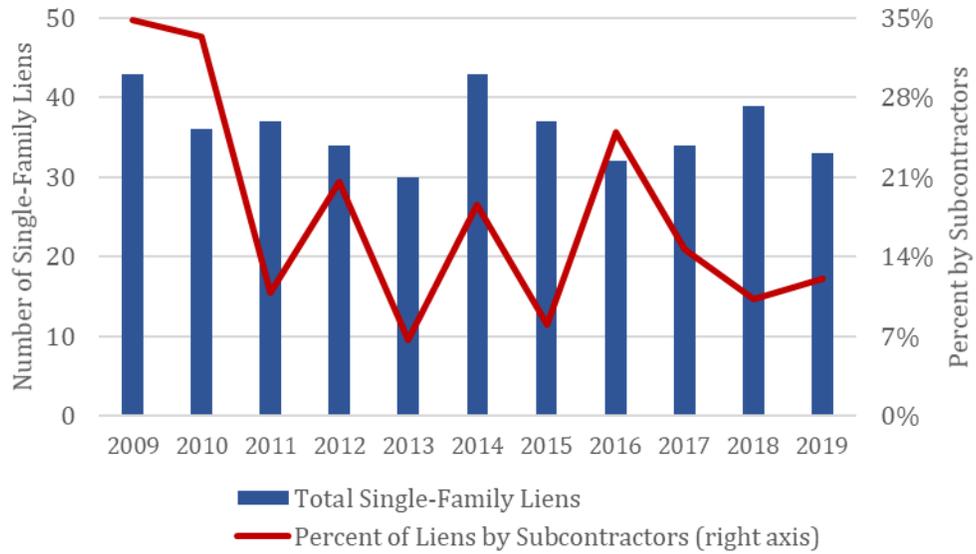
Practically speaking, a contractor is unlikely to release its lien right to a homeowner prior to receiving payment even though doing so is legally permissible. The homeowner's best bet is to secure releases at the time of final payment to avoid the potential for a subsequent dispute about whether the contractor believes he or she is entitled to more money or a claim by the subcontractor that the bill was never paid at all. As discussed in detail earlier, certain residential property owners are protected from subcontractor liens in which a general contractor has been paid in full.

²⁶ Florida, Illinois, Kansas, and Oregon are just a few states where duplicate payment risk remains an issue for homeowners. Florida law requires that contracts related to real property improvements include a special notice of the duplicate payment risk, but there is no substantive protection from a lien attaching where full payment has been made. One pertinent part of Florida's consumer disclosure reads as follows: "**IF YOUR CONTRACTOR OR A SUBCONTRACTOR FAILS TO PAY SUBCONTRACTORS . . . THOSE PEOPLE WHO ARE OWED MONEY MAY LOOK TO YOUR PROPERTY FOR PAYMENT, EVEN IF YOU HAVE ALREADY PAID YOUR CONTRACTOR IN FULL.**" See Fla. Stat. §713.015.

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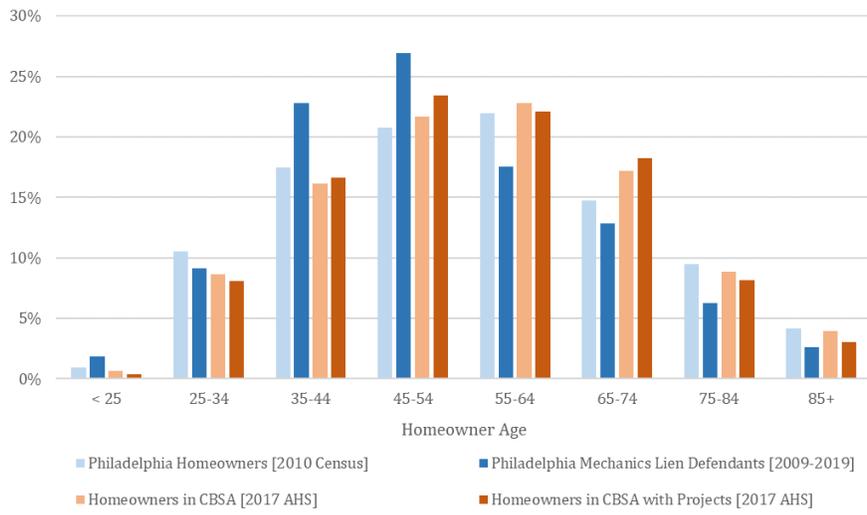
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Figure 1. Mechanic’s Liens on Single-Family Properties by Year



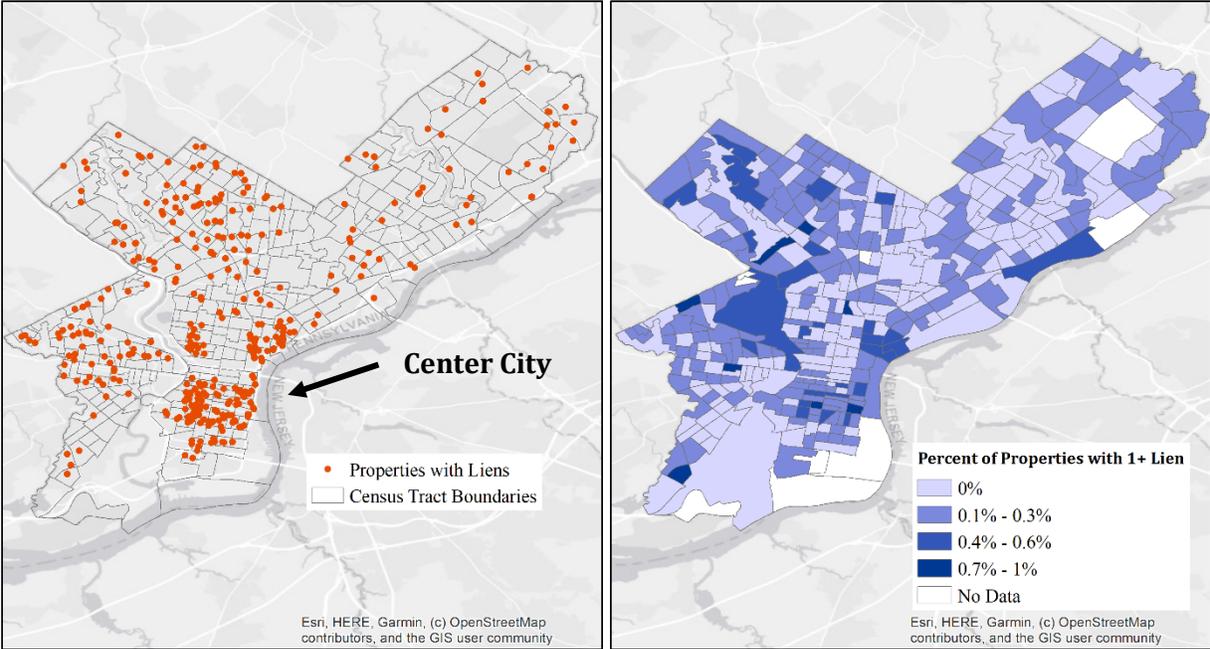
Data sources: Philadelphia Court of Common Pleas and City of Philadelphia Office of Property Assessment.
 Note: This chart includes the initial mechanic’s lien filing observed in our data set for each property.

Figure 2. Homeowner Age Distribution



Data sources: Philadelphia Court of Common Pleas, 2010 Census, and 2017 American Housing Survey.
 Note: CBSA = Philadelphia Core-Based Statistical Area.

Figure 3. Locations of Single-Family Homes and Condos with Liens



Data sources: Philadelphia Court of Common Pleas and City of Philadelphia Office of Property Assessment data, mapped to 2010 census tracts.

Table 1. Average Home and Neighborhood Characteristics

	With Liens	Without Liens	Significance
A. Property Characteristics	n = 407	n = 460,963	
Age of home (years)	78.4	83.0	***
Median estimated market value (tax assessment)	\$239,500	\$129,800	***
Livable area (sq. ft.)	1,799	1,337	***
B. Neighborhood Characteristics in 2018	n = 197	n = 172	
Population non-white or Hispanic/Latino	61.5%	67.3%	~
Population aged 65+	14.5%	13.0%	*
Median household income	\$53,320	\$40,444	***
Gini index	0.47	0.47	n.s.
Poverty rate	21.9%	28.8%	***
Unemployment rate	10.0%	11.2%	~
Homeownership rate	55.6%	47.5%	***
Median home value	\$216,316	\$168,994	**
Cost-burdened owners	28.0%	28.8%	n.s.
Severely cost-burdened owners	13.3%	13.5%	n.s.
C. Change in Neighborhood Characteristics (2000 to 2018)	n = 197	n = 172	
Population (% growth)	8.4%	6.7%	n.s.
Population non-white or Hispanic/Latino (% point change)	4.1%	10.2%	**
Population aged 65+ (% point change)	-0.2%	-0.6%	n.s.
Median household income (% nominal growth)	33.2%	15.0%	~
Median household income (% inflation-adjusted growth)	-9.4%	-21.7%	~

Data sources: Philadelphia Court of Common Pleas, City of Philadelphia Office of Property Assessment (panel A), the 2018 American Community Survey (panels B and C), and the 2020 Census (panel C). Note: All statistics displayed are means, except the median estimated market value (tax assessment). *Cost-burdened* is defined as owners spending at least 30 percent of income on housing costs. *Extremely cost-burdened* indicates spending at least 50 percent of income on these costs. *Significance* indicates level of statistical significance for a two-tailed difference in means test, assuming unequal variances; with ~ indicating significance at the 0.1 level, * 0.05, ** 0.01, *** 0.001, and n.s. indicates not significant. The significance for the difference in OPA median tax assessments is calculated using a Fisher's exact test. *Median household income growth* is inflation-adjusted using the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics' Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U).



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