



# KRIHS Policy Brief

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## Policymaking to Prevent, Manage & Use Empty Houses

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### Summary

1. The number of empty houses is surging across Korea but implementing policy actions to alleviate this problem faces difficulties due to the lack of related regulations and laws.

- The number of empty houses has tripled over the past two decades (from around 370,000 in 1995 to 1.07 million in 2015), and the figure is likely to soar further due to the ever-declining fertility rate and working population, the housing penetration rate of 100 percent, and volume of aged houses.

- Related laws and statistics apply different standards for “types of buildings” and “unoccupied periods,” resulting in a discrepancy in implementing a variety of policy actions for resolving the empty house problem. The legal framework is also insufficient to require the owners of empty houses to manage them.

2. Regions with empty houses tend to produce more empty houses and plans to prevent, manage, and utilize empty houses are needed based on why homes are abandoned, regional characteristics, and the opinions of residents.

3. The rise in the number of empty houses is because “the influx of new residents is decreasing as the owner of a home dies or its facilities are aging” or “massive maintenance projects are canceled or delayed.” Thus devising and implementing solutions to these problems are urgent. Measures are also needed to prevent homes from being abandoned and utilize empty houses as regional assets.

- The difficulties faced by owners of empty houses in managing such homes include “expecting an increase in a home’s real estate value,” “difficulties in managing an empty house,” or “complex ownership relations.” Another major problem is deciding who is responsible for managing an empty house because identifying and locating the owner can prove difficult.

## Policy proposals

- ① (Setting principles for managing empty houses) Empty houses should be managed by their owners, who can receive incentives or penalties for performing related tasks.
- ② (Building management implementation system) A specialized organizational system is needed by laying the legal and administrative basis for empty house management and forming a taskforce for the problem including teams for consultation, PR, surveying, and management.
- ③ (Surveying empty houses and related database) The definition of an empty house must be precise and definitive, regular surveys should be conducted, and the history of an empty house has to be maintained and managed.
- ④ (Establishing roles for central and local governments and private sector and creating cooperative networks linking them) The central government needs to devise a legal basis, budget, and guidelines for empty houses; local governments must implement related policies and manage and monitor a related database; and the private sector should implement projects that utilize empty houses.
- ⑤ (Conducting locally customized management projects for empty houses and linking them with other government plans) Locally customized management projects are needed to handle empty houses that consider the characteristics of regions and types of the reasons for empty houses and must be linked to other plans for urban planning and housing.