



# TUSKEGEE

---

## UNIVERSITY

**Heir Property at the Micro, County, Level:  
An Example Using a New Deal African American Resettlement Program**

---

Robert Zabawa and Tristeen Bownes  
George Washington Carver Agricultural Experiment Station

# Policy: Resettlement Program

Resettlement Administration,

- Executive Order 7027, April 30, 1935
- Administrator, Rexford Tugwell

Functions

- Resettlement of “destitute or low income” families
  - Infiltration
  - Community
- Administration of programs dealing with erosion, pollution, reforestation and flood control
- Management of farm ownership and operating loans

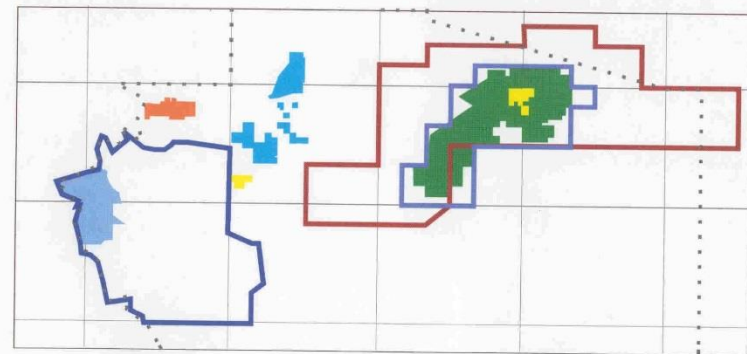
Successor Agencies

- Farm Security Administration (1937-1946)
- Farmers Home Administration (1946-1994)
- Farm Services Agency (1994-present)

# Focus: Macon County, AL



Proposed and Present Structure of 20th Century Resettlement Projects in Macon County, Alabama 1901 - 1997

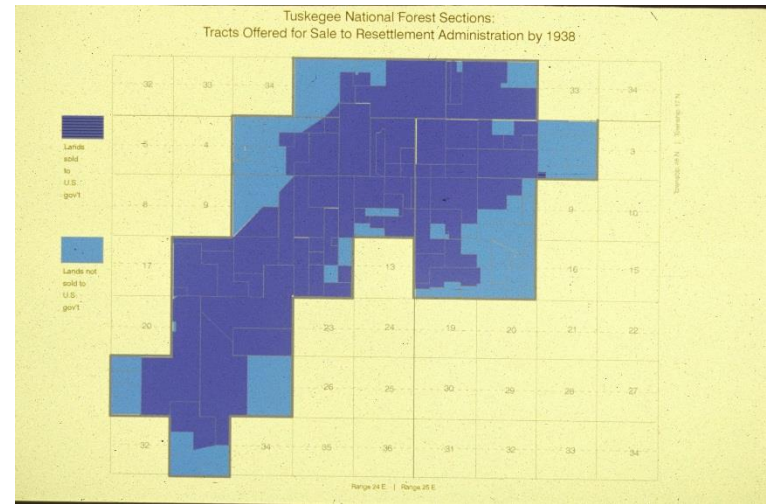


- |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| Proposed resettlement area (@30,000 acres)                            | Southern Improvement Company ("Big Hungry") (@ 3,360 acres) | Tuskegee National Forest (@ 11,000 acres) |
| Prairie Farms RR-AL-28 (@ 3,200 acres)                                | Sub-marginal land area (@ 52,000)                           | Home Seekers Land Company (@ 960 acres)   |
| Tuskegee Farm and Improvement Company (Baldwin Farms) (@ 1,600 acres) | Proposed purchase area LA/LD-AL-8 (@ 18,000 acres)          | Macon County line                         |

# Submarginal Land



*Erosion. Macon County, A. Rothstein, Library of Congress*



*S. Warren & R. Zabawa, Ag History, 1998, 72:2*

This proposed purchase area is representative of serious mal-adjustment in the use of lands....Erosion has robbed the land of its natural fertility. The families living within this area are stranded on lands unsuited for cultivation.

# Submarginal Community



*Tenant Farmer's Home. Macon County,  
A. Rothstein, Library of Congress*



*Hickory Grove School, Polk Studios,  
Tuskegee University Archives*

The homes not only lack the essentials of sanitation, convenience and comfort but present the appearance of dilapidation and despair. The disheartening conditions have caused many of the younger people to migrate to urban centers. Others, having been inured, settle down, in the only place they know, to live the same hand-to-mouth existence of their foreparents.

# Moving Day



*Moving Day, Polk Studios, Tuskegee University Archives*



*Moving Day, Polk Studios, Tuskegee University Archives*

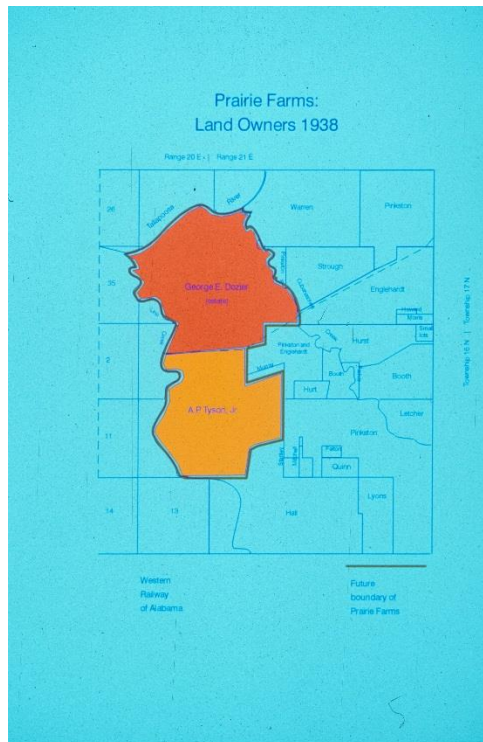
# Result 1: Reforestation



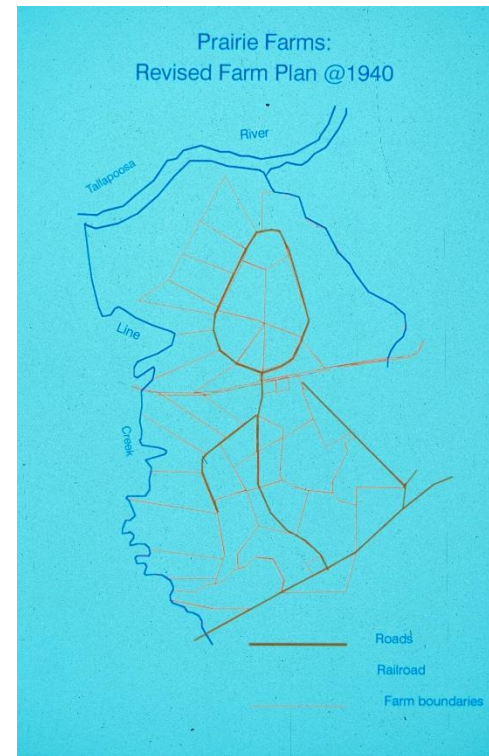
*Work on Reforestation Project, Tuskegee Project,  
A. Rothstein Library of Congress*



# Result 2: Resettlement



R. Zabawa & S. Warren,  
*Ag History*, 1998, 72:2



R. Zabawa & S. Warren,  
*Ag History*, 1998, 72:2

Prairie Farms has been described as “a Government answer to the plea of the late Booker T. Washington, Tuskegee’s founder, for a live-at-home, crop-rotated salvation for the American farmer. *USDA/FSA, LAW 2/13/41*



# Farmsteads



*New Project House and Other Units, Prairie Farms,  
M.P. Wolcott, Library of Congress*



*Front of New Home of Project Family, Prairie Farms,  
M.P. Wolcott, Library of Congress*

Prairie Farms represents the Government's effort to preserve the lands of America and the people who till it.

Thus began this new community within an old community. And thus began a new life for the thirty-four families which comprised the [Prairie Farms] project. Deborah Cannon Partridge [Wolfe]

# Community



*Community and School Building, Prairie Farms,  
M.P. Wolcott, Library of Congress*



*Classroom, Prairie Farms,  
M.P. Wolcott, Library of Congress*



*Cooperative Grist Mill, Prairie Farms,  
M.P. Wolcott, Library of Congress*



*Cooperative Store, Prairie Farms,  
M.P. Wolcott, Library of Congress*

# Prairie Farms Today



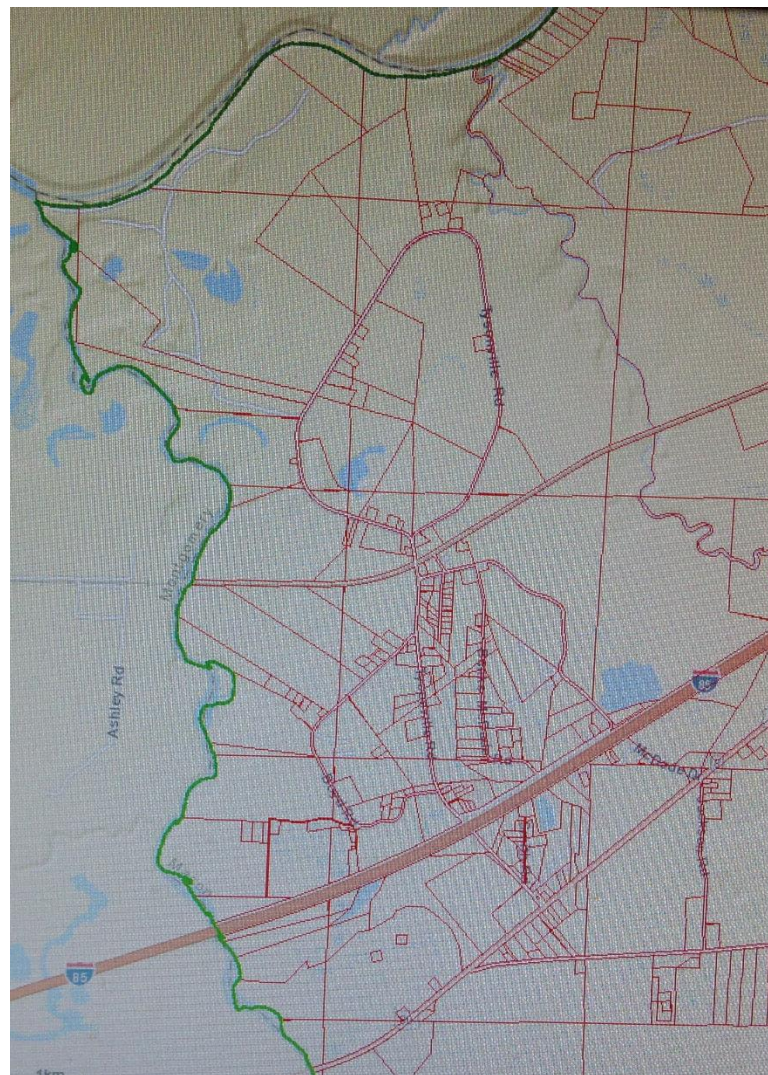
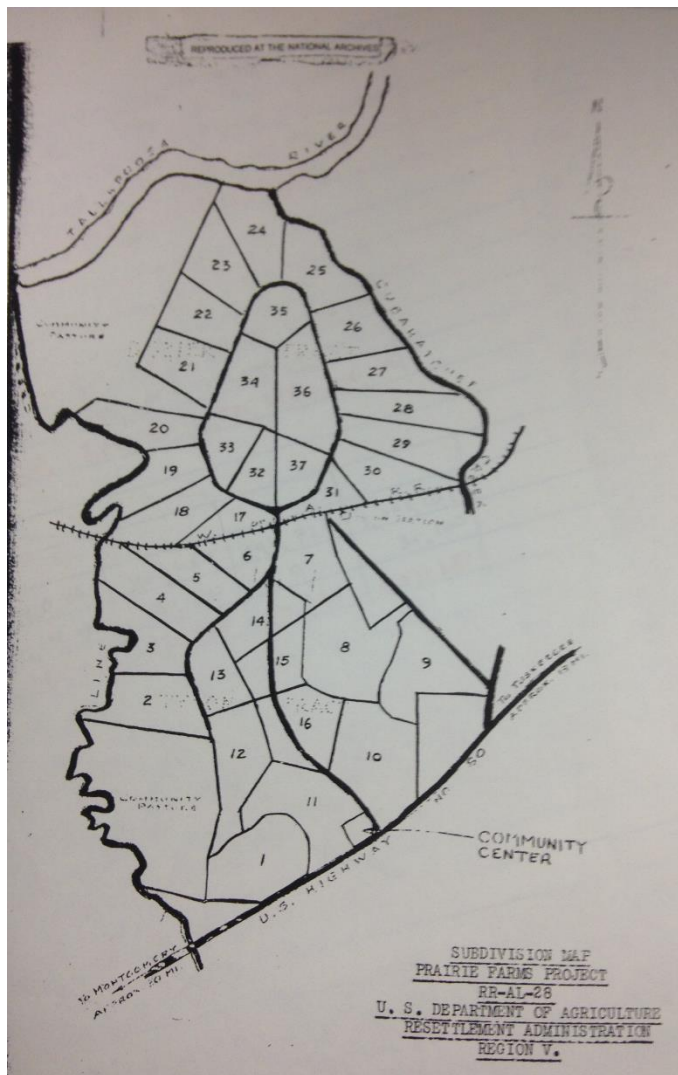
# Community



# History



# Prairie Farms Land Ownership: 1940, 2017



# Changes in Land Ownership

	1940	1946	1976	1996	2016
<b>TOTAL</b>					
<b>Owners</b>	37	37	119	194	116
<b>Tracts</b>	37	87	194	282	216
<b>Acres</b>	2,998*	3,208	3,105	3,027	2,907
<b>Average Ac</b>	63.2	86.7	26.1	15.6	25.1
<b>HEIR PROPERTY</b>					
<b>Owners**</b>	0	0	2	26	21
<b>Tracts</b>	0	0	8	45	32
<b>Acres</b>	0	0	464	1,105	828
<b>Average Ac/Owner</b>	0	0	232	42.5	39.4
<b>TITLED PROPERTY</b>					
<b>Owners</b>	37	37	117	168	95
<b>Tracts</b>	37	87	186	237	184
<b>Acres</b>	2,998	3,208	2,641	1,922	2,079
<b>Average Ac/Owner</b>	63.2	86.7	22.6	11.4	21.9
<b>%HP/Total</b>					
<b>%Owners</b>	0	0	1.7	13.4	18.1
<b>%Tracts</b>	0	0	4.1	16.0	14.8
<b>%Acres</b>	0	0	14.9	36.5	28.5

\*This total includes two pastures of 431 and 230 acres

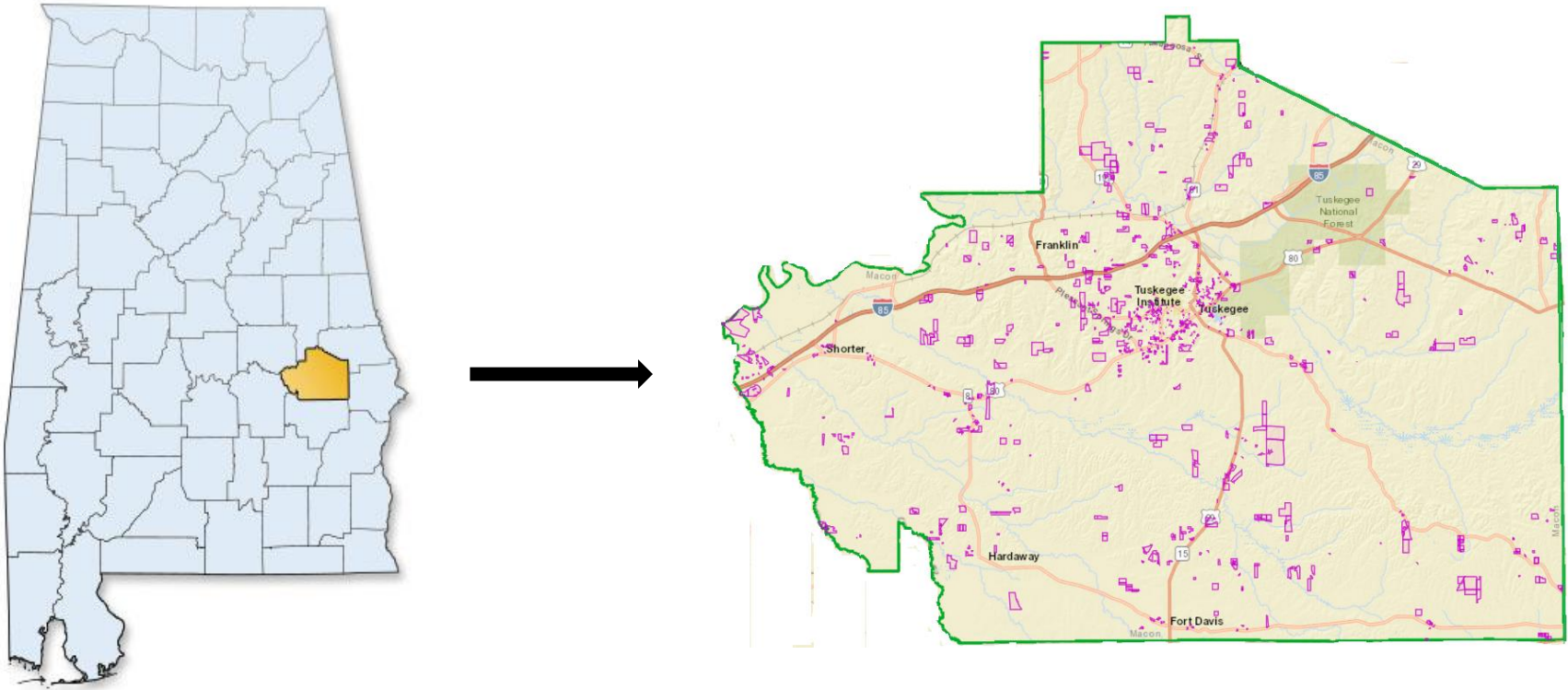
\*\*Heir Property "Owners" represent ownership entities and not necessarily individual owners

# Focus

- Determine if there was a difference in the dollar value of heir property versus titled property.
- Determine if there might be other variables involved in how property in general, and heir property specifically might be treated differently and thus affect the value of the property.
- Use GIS technology and data from the Macon County Revenue Commissioner's Office

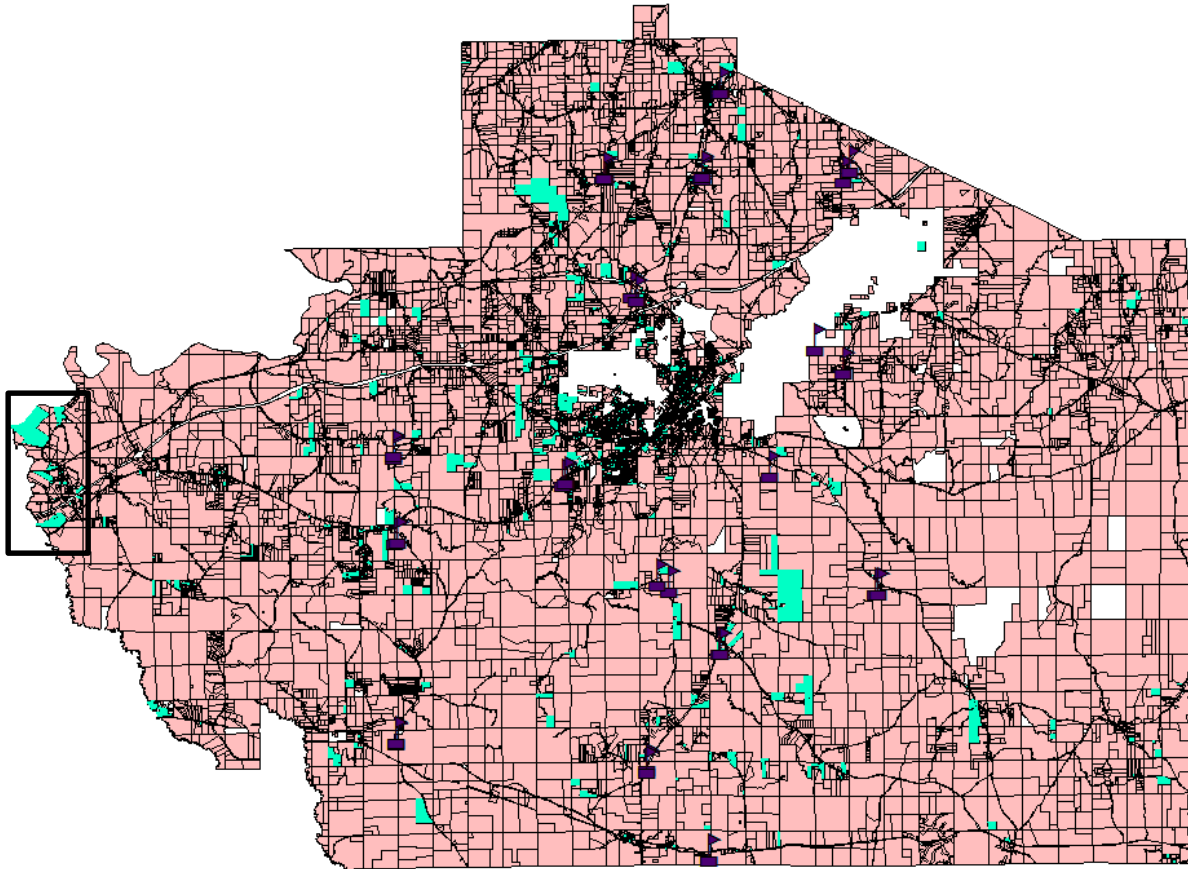


# Heir Property in Macon County



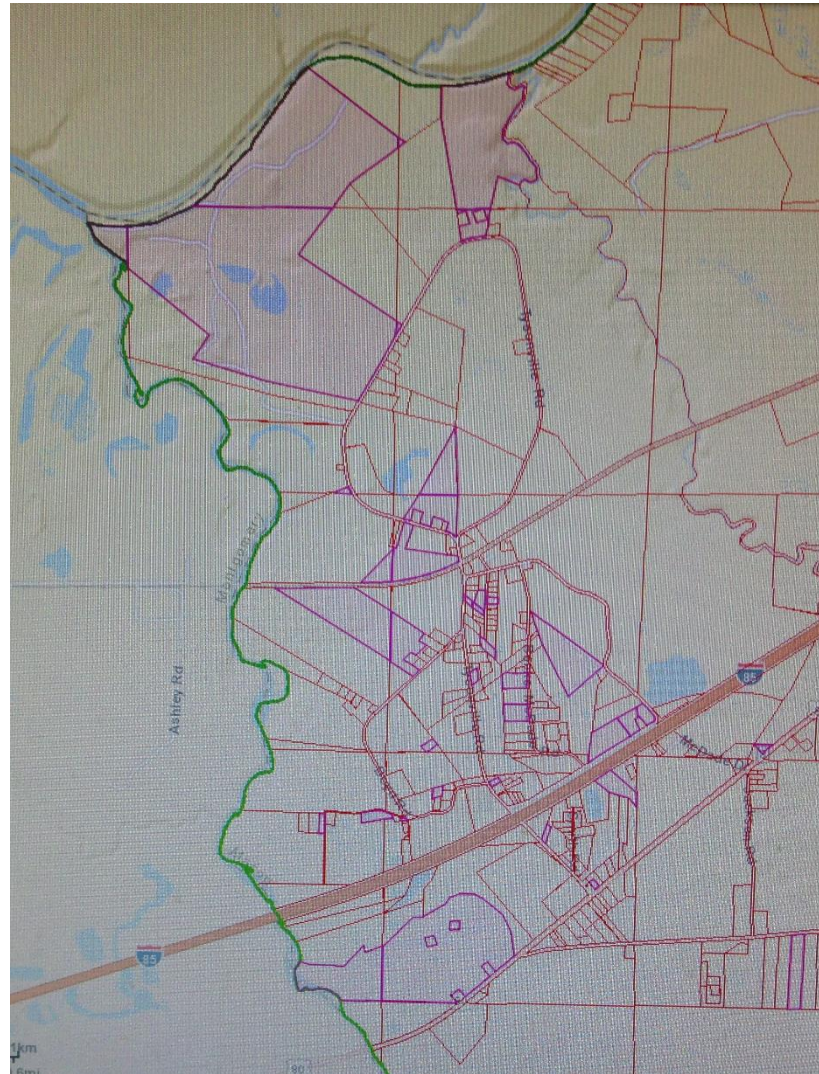
Source: Macon County Revenue Commissioner's website

# Heir Property in Macon County



Source: ArcMap Software. Heir Property is Highlighted in Blue, and Schools and Churches are Indicated in Purple

# Prairie Farms Heir Property

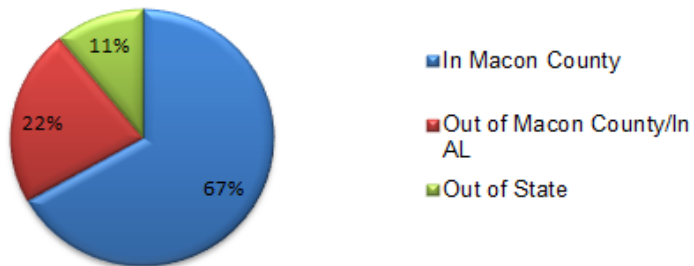


# **Other Variables: Residence of Ownership**

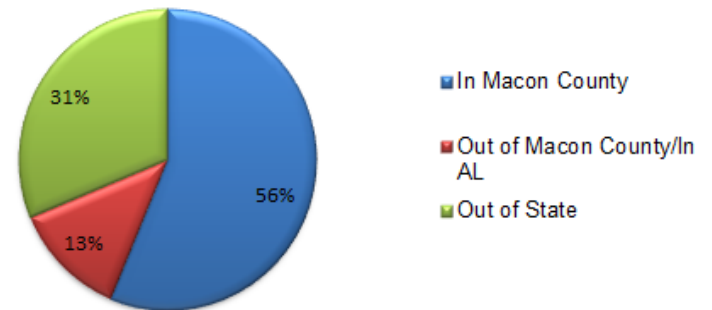
- 1. In Macon County**
- 2. In Alabama but Out of Macon County**
- 3. Out of Alabama**

# Results

**Titled Property Land Owners by Land Owner Residence Location**

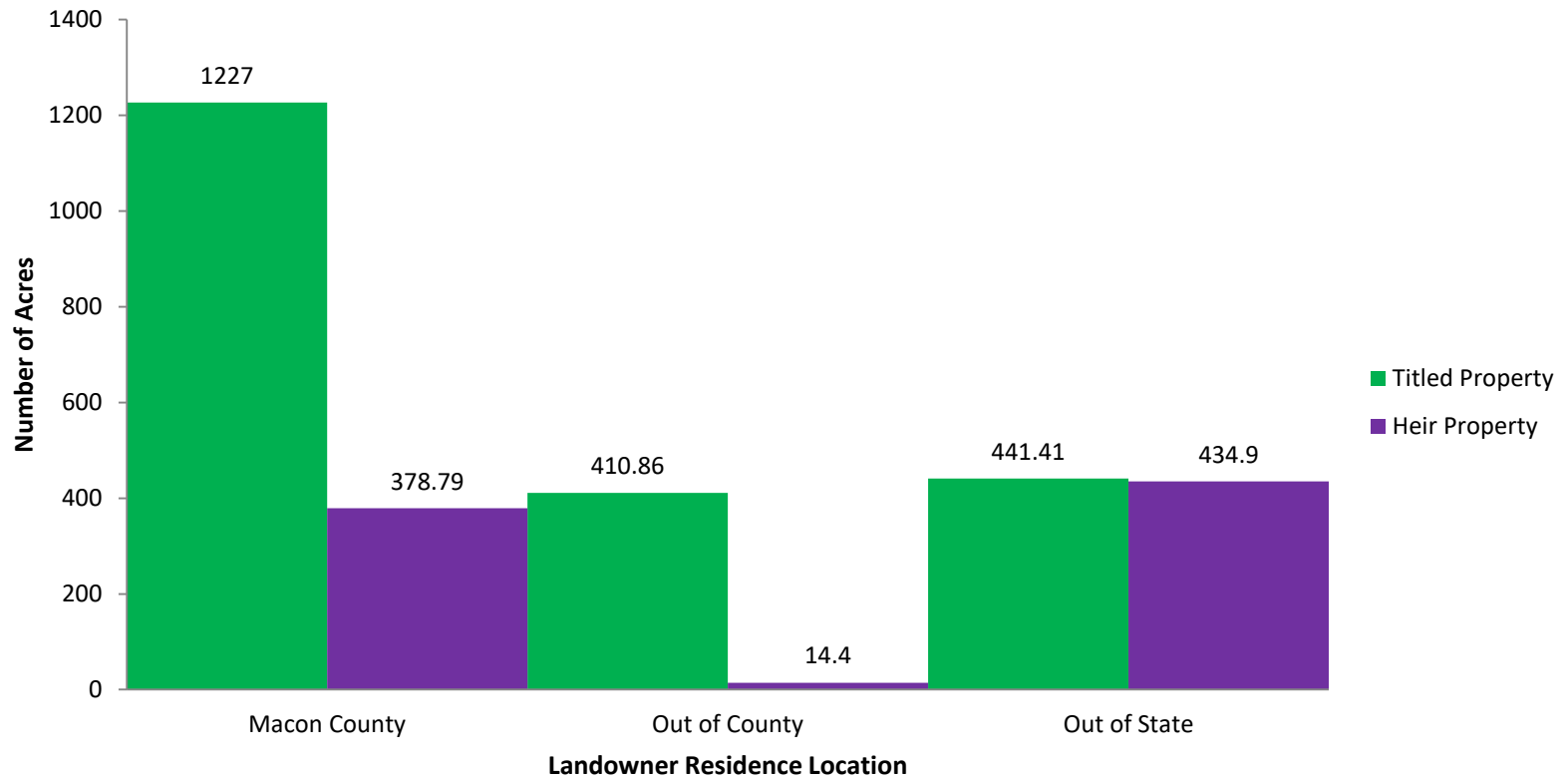


**Heir Property Land Owners by Land Owner Residence Location**



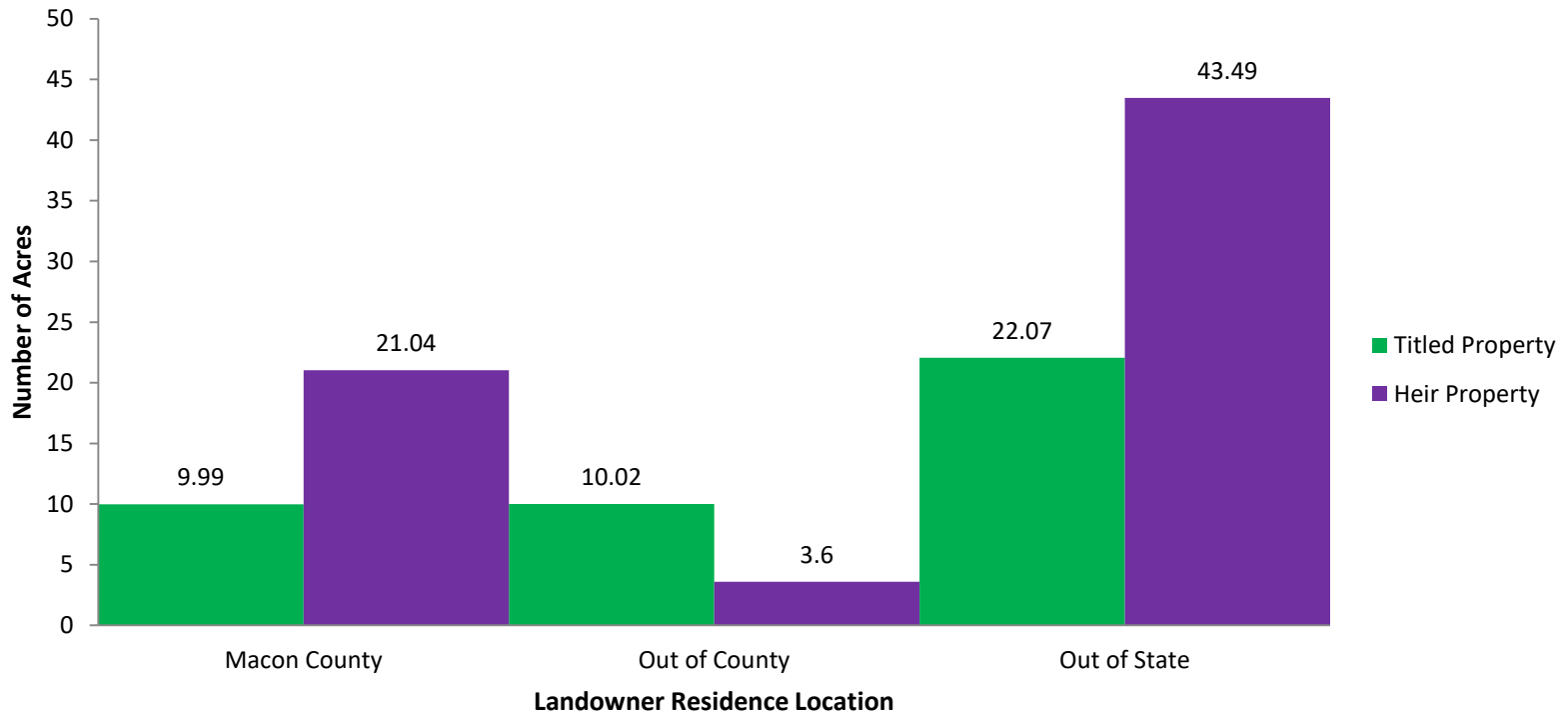
# Results

## Total Acres Owned Per Landowner Residence Location



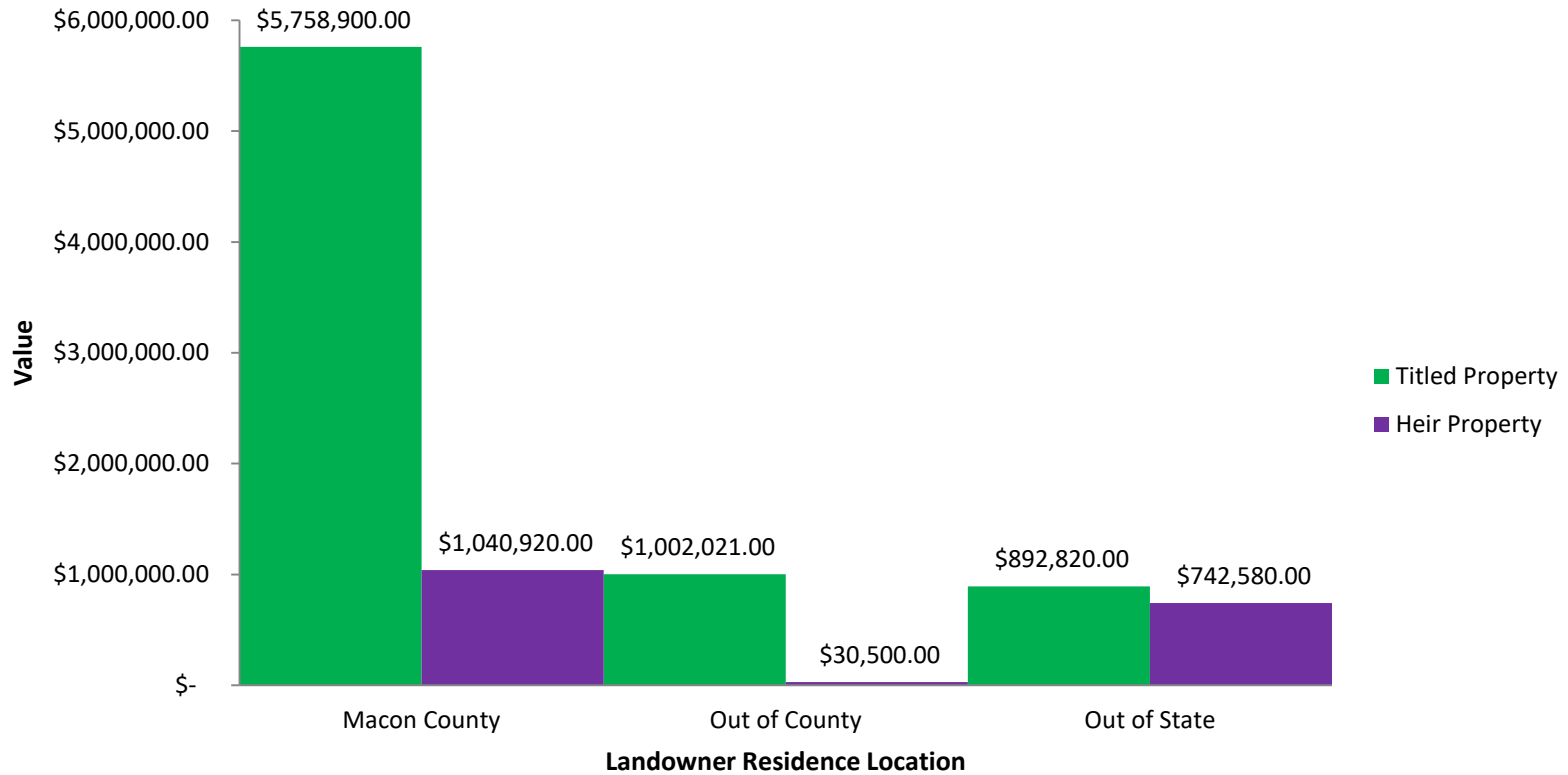
# Results

## Average Amount of Acres Owned Per Landowner Residence Location



# Results

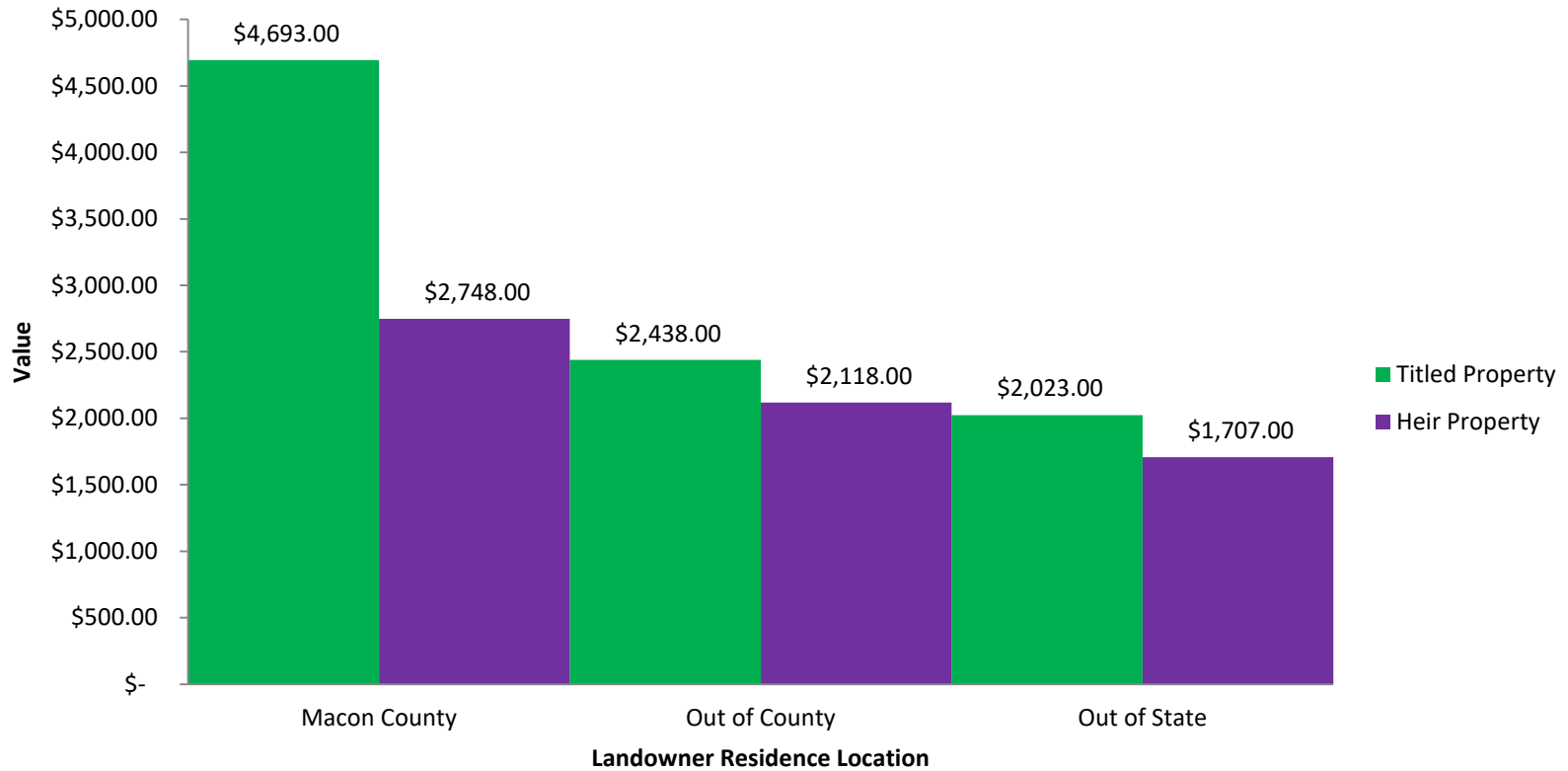
## Total Value of Acres Per Landowner Residence Location





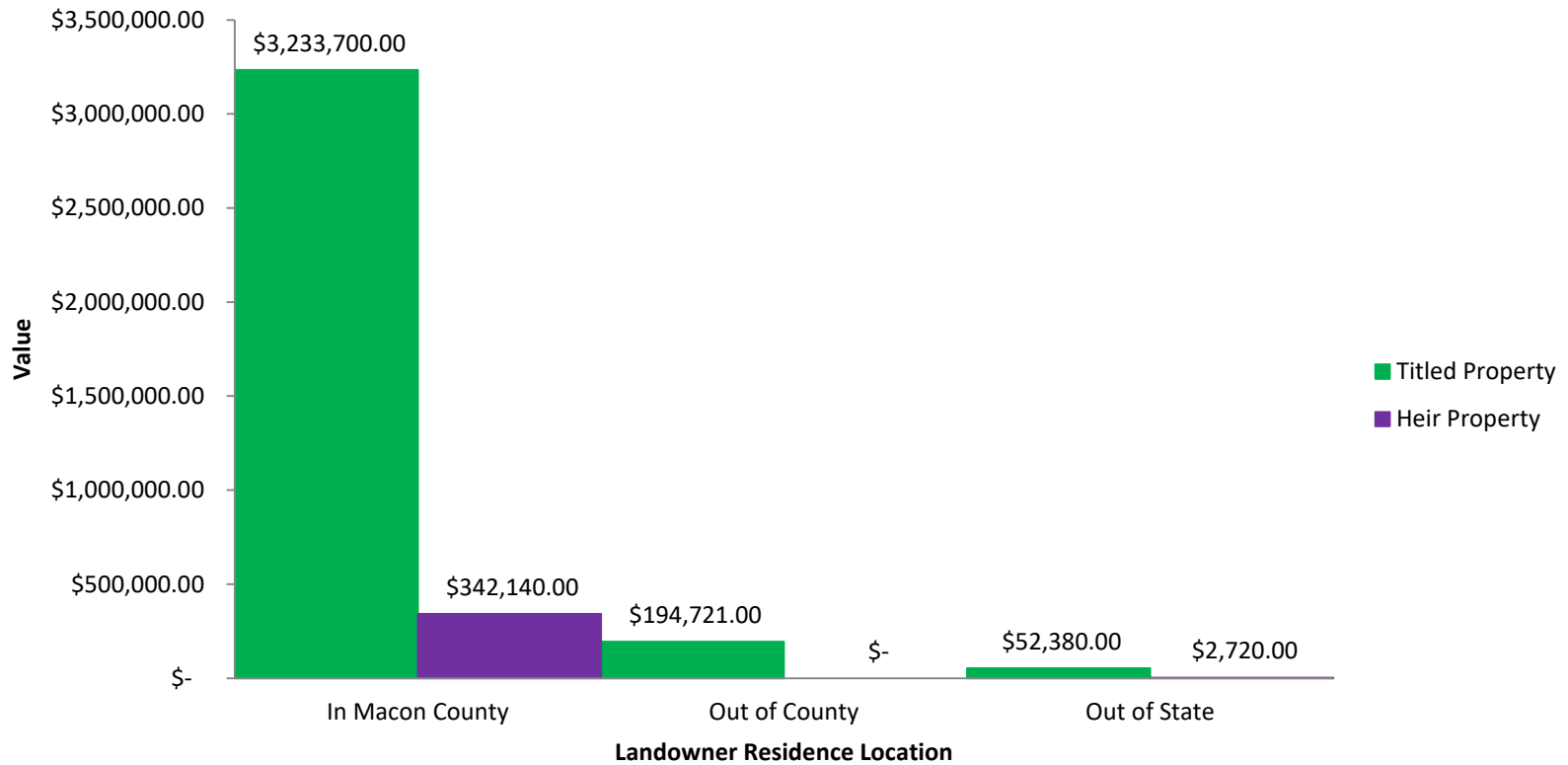
# Results

## Average Value of Acres Per Landowner Residence Location



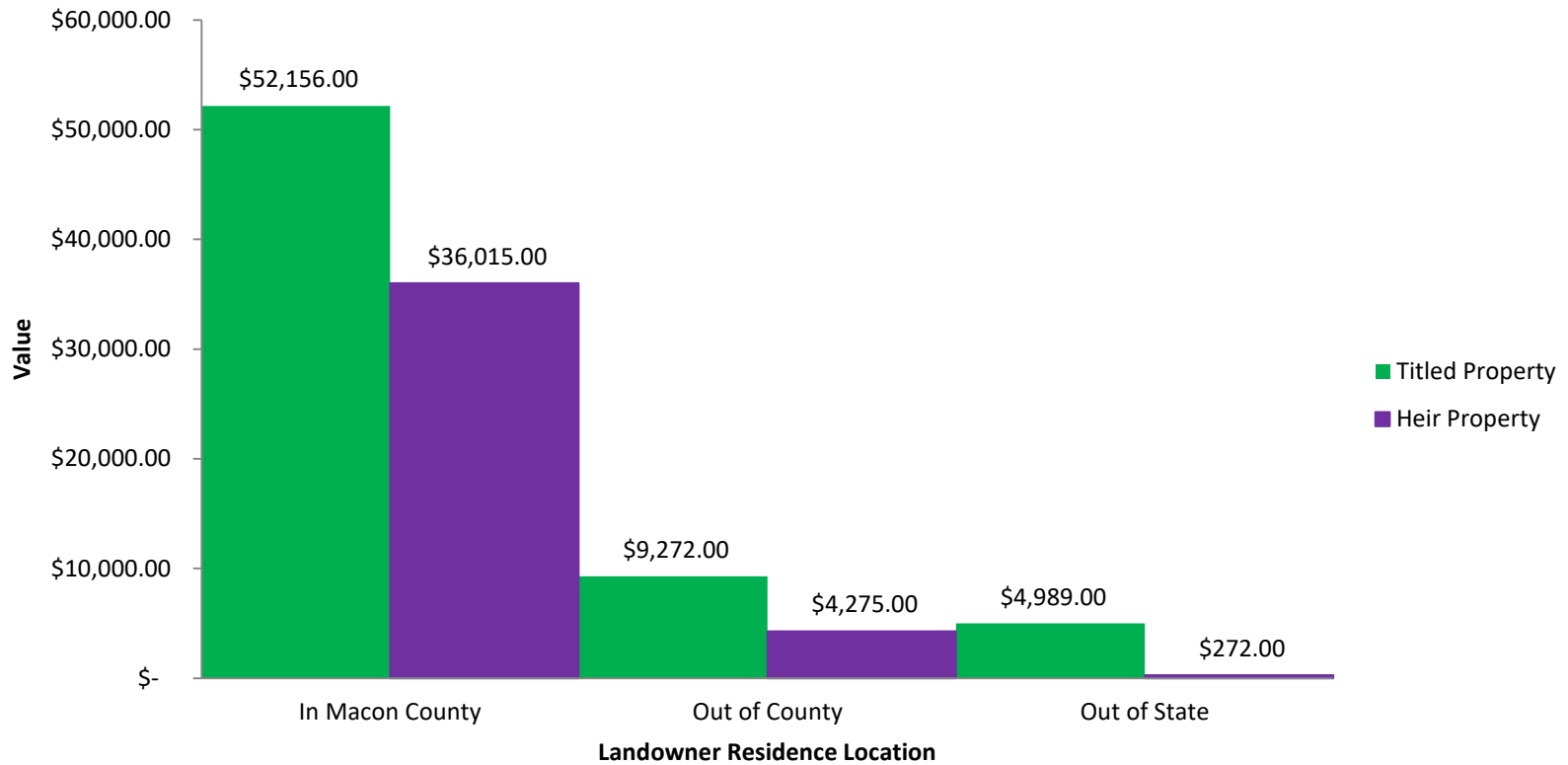
# Results

## Total Improvement Value Per Landowner Residence Location



# Results

## Average Improvement Value Per Landowner Residence Location



## Discussion – Land

- There is more titled property than heir property, but more titled property owners.
- The majority of both titled property owners and heir property owners live in Macon County, Alabama.
- 1/3 of heir property owners lived out of state, while only 10% of titled property owners lived out of state.

# Discussion – Land Value

- Titled property, on average has a higher per acre value than heir property.
- Residence of owner(s) plays a role in the value of both titled property and heir property.
  - The greater the distance from the property, the less value attached to the land.
  - A major source of this difference is found in the improvements attached to the land.

# Caution: Sample Size and Type

<b>Residence\Title</b>	<b>Titled Property</b>	<b>Heir Property</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>In Macon County</b>	123	18	141
<b>In Alabama</b>	41	4	45
<b>Out of Alabama</b>	20	10	30
<b>Total</b>	184	32	216
<b>Type: Agricultural</b>			
<b>Forestry</b>			
<b>Residential</b>			
<b>Commercial</b>			

# Acknowledgements

- USDA/AFRI Project ALA-SLACD2015 "Securing the Land for Agricultural and Community Development: Addressing Heir Property as an Asset Building Strategy" and colleagues at Auburn University
- George Washington Carver Agricultural Experiment Station, Tuskegee University