

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS DURING A REVALUATION

What Is A Revaluation?

A Revaluation is the process of performing all of the necessary Market Analysis and Valuation steps to determine accurate and equitable values for all properties within a municipality. The equalization of the values within a Town creates a fair distribution of the tax burden. The purpose of a Revaluation is not to raise taxes. The purpose is to create an equitable distribution of the tax load.

Will A Revaluation Increase Taxes?

A revaluation may result in an increase or decrease of individual assessments depending on how a property value increased or decreased relative to the average change in assessment. It does not mean that all property taxes will increase or decrease. Remember, assessments are only the base that is used to determine the tax burden. The tax burden is the amount that the municipality must raise to operate the local government and support the many services each of us has come to expect, such as schools, police, fire etc. As an example, if the same amount of money is to be raised after the revaluation as the previous year and each assessment doubles, the tax rate (mill rate) would merely be cut in half.

Will All Property Values Change?

Most likely, yes. However, not all property values will change at the same rate. Market value may have increased more for some neighborhoods and property types than for others. Some neighborhoods and property types may have decreased in value and others may have remained the same. One purpose of a revaluation is to make sure that the assessed values reflect the changes that have occurred in the real estate market.

What Is Market Value and Who Determines My Property Value?

Market value is determined by activity in the real estate market and the general economy. The value of your property is based on an analysis of the entire market for a specified period of time before the completion of the revaluation project. Market value is defined as the amount a typical, well-informed purchaser would be willing to pay for a property. For a sale to be a market value (arms- length) sale, the seller and buyer must be unrelated, the buyer must be willing (but not under pressure) to buy, the property must be on the market for a reasonable length of time, the payment must be in cash or its equivalent, and the financing must be typical for that type of property. It is the appraiser's job to research and analyze the values in any particular area or neighborhood. The appraiser has specific guidelines to follow during their research. Some factors that are examined for each property are: location, size, quality of construction, age of improvements, topography, utilities, zoning restrictions, if any, etc.

How Will I Know If My Assessment Is Equitable?

The first thing that you should do is ask yourself if you could sell the property for approximately that amount. (Please note that assessments in Connecticut reflect 70% of market value.)

Nobody Inspected the Inside of My Home. How Could You Reassess It?

The Assessor's Office maintains a complete record for each property. Information is kept current through permit inspections, sales inspections, periodic re-inspections and exterior reviews. The records are available for your review. This information is used to develop the new assessments.

How Can My Assessment Change When I Haven't Done Anything to My Property?

General economic conditions such as interest rates, inflation rates, and changes in the tax laws will influence the value of real estate. As property values change in the marketplace (sales), those changes will eventually be reflected on the assessment roll.

I Recently Built My Home. Will the Actual Construction Costs Be Considered?

Your construction cost is a historical figure that may or may not reflect the current market value of your property. It is only one element that will be considered.

What Will Happen to My Assessment If I Improve My Property?

Generally speaking, improvements that increase the market value of a property will increase the assessment. The following examples are typical items that may increase the assessed value of your property. - adding living or rentable area - substantial modernization of kitchen or baths - extensive remodeling - adding features such as A/C, finished basement rooms, garages, pools, etc.

Will My Assessment Go Up If I Repaired My Property?

Normal maintenance will help retain the market value of your property, but generally will not affect your assessment.

Do I Have to Let the Assessor's Office Inspect My Property?

No, you don't have to let them in, this is a request not a court order. However, if you choose not to let the assessor's office in they will be forced to estimate the interior of the property. There are three scenarios that can occur. The first is that the assessor's office will estimate correctly and your assessment will be accurate. The second is the assessor's office will estimate incorrectly and you will receive an inaccurate assessment. The third case scenario is that the taxpayer made improvements to the house and the new assessment does not reflect the improvements. If you want an accurate assessment on your property the best approach is to let the assessor's office inspect the property.

How Can I Determine If the Assessor's Office Has the Correct Information on My Property?

You can review the information that the Assessor's Office has collected on your property to make sure the data is accurate. The Town of Simsbury will have this information available online at the end of the revaluation project and will be available to be reviewed at the Assessor's Office. While reviewing your property, you should make sure that all measurements on the sketch are accurate. Please note that all measurements are taken from the exterior. You should also check the land size and interior data to ensure accuracy.

Why Did My Land Value Change Differently Than My Building Value?

Since the last Revaluation, Real Estate Values have changed significantly. Over the same period, building construction costs have changed at a different rate than property values as a whole. Since building costs may change at a different rate than land values, it makes economic sense that the bulk of the change, if any, may be attributable to one or the other.

What Sales Did You Compare to My Property to Arrive at My Value?

This question, although common, highlights one of the clear differences between the revaluation appraisal process and the more well-known "bank" appraisal. Most homeowners have had a "bank" appraisal on a property before and are familiar with the process involved and the resulting report. Many assume that the revaluation company uses the same process. Although the appraisal concepts are the same and the results similar, the process is different.

To answer this question, it is important to understand that in a revaluation the value of your property is based on an analysis of the entire real estate market for a specified period of time before the completion of the revaluation project (a one- or two-year period). This study of recent property sales allows the appraisers to establish valuation parameters (construction rates, land rates, market adjustments, etc.). Ideally, when these valuation parameters are applied to the properties that sold, the calculation will result in an appraised value that is very close to the sales price.

The appraisers are required by the State to test that the parameters being used are consistently producing values that closely approximate the sale prices across all types of properties throughout the town. When this is accomplished, the appraisers can then apply these same valuation parameters to all of the "non-sale" properties in the town. In doing so, they are approximating the market value of each property using the information derived from all of the sales. Therefore, no particular sale or group of sales was used to determine the value of your property. This is because ALL of the recent sales were included in the analysis that set the parameters used in the revaluation of the town.

Will Current Real Estate Conditions and Change in Interest Rates Be Reflected in My New Assessment?

Your current assessment is based on a State defined date of value. We use actual sales that have occurred up to that date, October 1st, 2022 in this case, as a basis for the creation of all of our valuation models. That date of value would reflect prevailing economic conditions that are occurring at that time. It is important to remember that when evaluating your change in assessment that you factor in when the previous assessment was calculated.

Do All Properties Change at The Same Rate?

There are differences between individual properties and between neighborhoods. In one area, the sales may indicate a substantial increase in value in a given year. In another neighborhood, there may be a lesser change in property values.

Different types of properties within the same neighborhood may also show different value changes. For example, one - story houses may be more in demand than two - story houses or vice versa. Older homes in the same area may be rising in value more slowly than newer homes.

Among the numerous factors to be considered that will cause values to differ are location, condition, size, quality, number of baths, basement finish, garages, and many others.

What Is an Informal Hearing?

Towards the end of the revaluation, every property owner receives a notice of their proposed valuation. If they have a question or concern about the proposed valuation, they are asked to call the Assessor to set a date and time for an informal hearing. This appointment is meant to allow a brief discussion about the valuation process, review the specifics of the property in question and to answer general questions the owner may have. Most hearings last about 10-15 minutes. Homeowners are asked to come prepared with their questions and have compared their property to other comparable ones in their neighborhood. They are also encouraged to provide the Hearing Officer with copies of any documentation they may have regarding specific issues with their proposed assessments.

It is important to remember that an informal hearing is not a forum to discuss taxes or town politics nor is it an in-depth class on appraisal practices and theory. It is strictly meant to answer general questions on the proposed property assessments. The hearing officer will take notes during your meeting to document the information you have discussed. They will later determine if further review of your property assessment is necessary based on these notes. The proposed values are not final until all hearings and any data or value changes resulting from the hearings are completed.

How Do I Prepare for A Hearing?

When you come to a hearing, bring whatever information that you may have (property information and/or data changes, comparable sales that sold for less than your property, pictures of your property, etc.) to the hearing. You may be asked to allow an Assessor to visit your property for a physical inspection. If you refuse you may lose your right to an appeal.

How Will I Know If A Change Was Made to My Assessment After My Hearing?

At the conclusion of the hearings, appraisal staff will review the notes from your hearing and any information you have provided on your property. They will make changes to the data and/or value of the property if appropriate. After this final review process is complete for all properties, a change notice will be sent to you. The new value on this change notice will reflect the changes made based on your hearing. This value will now be considered your new assessment and will be reflected in the Assessor's records.

If I Disagree with My Assessment After A Hearing, What Are My Options?

If any property-owner believes the assessment on their property is in excess of its Fair Market Value they should first notify the Assessors Office. They may then appeal before the Municipality's Board of Assessment Appeals. The Board of Assessment Appeals will review the case and make a determination as to the disposition of the appeal. Should the property-owner still feel the assessment is incorrect, they may appeal to the New Britain Superior Court, which is the judicial district which the Town of Simsbury is located.

All appeals to the Board of Assessment Appeals must be made by February 20th if the grand list is filed by the Assessors office by January 31st. If the town is granted an extension to file the grand list the filing deadline to the Board of Assessment Appeals is March 20th. Always contact the assessor's office with any questions pertaining to the filing dates for appeals.

What About Elderly and Veterans Exemptions?

The law requires that the Assessor appraise taxable property and not the people who own it. Under state law, all property is appraised at current fair market value. There are, however, programs such as the Elderly and Totally Disabled Homeowners Program that provide tax relief for qualifying persons over the age of 65. Other statutes provide exemptions for those who are veterans, disabled, or blind. If you now have an exemption it will be automatically deducted at tax billing time.