

Assessor FAQ

My neighbor's tax bill is less than mine, yet he lives three blocks from me in the same house with the same lot. Why?

It's important to remember that the Cook County Assessor's Office assesses property; it does not calculate or collect your property tax bill. Assessments are based on market value and uniformity, meaning that similar homes in the same area should have similar assessments. However, this does not automatically mean that those same homes will have similar tax bills. There are many reasons why tax bills may vary, even among similar homes:

- The homes may be in the same vicinity, but in different tax districts with different rates.
- One home may have exemptions the other does not, such as the Senior Exemption, or the Seniors' Assessment Freeze
- In a new subdivision, one home may be on a prorated assessment (based on the date of the occupancy permit) while another is already on a full year's assessed value.
- Even if both homes appear similar, there may still be an underlying difference in assessments due to actual differences between the properties, such as style, age, living area, lot size, condition, et al.

My assessment decreased but my tax bill increased, why?

While your assessment may have decreased, the other component of your tax bill is the funds needed by your local taxing bodies. The assessed value determines your portion of the overall tax burden. The tax burden is the individual taxing bodies request for money, there is a list on your tax bill of all the taxing bodies that provide services to your particular area. When these taxing districts levy for more than the prior year the overall increase is reflected in your tax bill. Your tax bill will decrease when the taxing bodies request the same amount or less than they did in the prior years. Due to legislative action, in 1991 the Property Tax Extension Limitation Law (PTELL) became law. The Tax Cap, as it is known, states property tax extensions (levies) are limited to a 5% increase or the increase in the national Consumer Price Index (CPI) whichever is the least amount. The limitation can be increased for a taxing body but only with voter approval.

If the Property Tax Cap is still in effect, how can my assessment keep going up?

The Property Tax Cap limits *the levy increases* of taxing bodies to 5% per year or the rate of inflation, whichever is lower. However, the Property Tax Cap does *not* limit increases in assessments. As market values increase, assessments must increase to keep pace and comply with statute. This assessment process is completely separate and distinct from the property tax process that actually determines your tax rate and tax bill. Note that, though assessments may increase each year, the driving force behind increases in your tax bill is the increasing budgets

of local taxing bodies. While the Property Tax Cap theoretically limits these increases, the cap can be bypassed by local referendums. Additionally, new construction is not subject to the cap and can be levied against at a different rate. In the end, an increase in assessments in your area does not automatically trigger higher tax bills; typically, it is levy and budget increases by the taxing bodies that serve your area that determine any increase in your property tax.

What is the purpose of property assessment?

The goal of assessment is to accurately estimate the market value of all properties in a community in order to determine each property's fair share of community taxes. Ideally, a property whose value is equal to 1% of the community's total property value will pay 1% of the community's taxes.

Who determines the assessed value?

The Cook County Assessor assesses all properties in Cook County. The Palatine Township Assessor facilitates communication between local taxpayers and the County Assessor.

How often are Palatine Township's properties reassessed?

Every three years. Palatine Township was reassessed in 2016 and will be in 2019 and 2022.

How is the assessed value determined?

First the County Assessor estimates the market value of property. This is the price a buyer would pay for property offered for sale on the open market.

But my home hasn't sold recently. How is its value determined by the Assessor?

The Assessor reviews current sale prices of homes in your neighborhood to estimate the market value of all similar homes nearby, including those that have sold recently.

Does the County Assessor know the size and other characteristics of my property?

Yes. The Assessor maintains a characteristics file on each property which we can give you. Errors in the file can be corrected by filing an appeal.

The "market value" indicated on my last tax bill is less than my property's true value. Why?

"Market value" has traditionally been below actual sale prices. "Tax value" may be a more accurate term than "market value."

Why is my assessed valuation different from my property's market value?

Cook County requires that homes, condominiums, and small apartment buildings be assessed at 10% of market value, and that other property types be assessed at different percentages of value. Cook County is the only county in Illinois where assessment levels vary by property class. This system reduces the tax burden on residential properties while increasing it on businesses.

What if I think my assessment is too high?

File an appeal. Appeals typically arise when:

- There are errors in your home's characteristics file.
- Your home's assessment is higher than that of comparable properties in your neighborhood.
- Your house has suffered structural damage due to fire or flooding.
- Negative conditions in the area around your property or other factors reduce your home's value.

How do I appeal my assessment?

The Township Assessor can help you prepare the evidence you will need to support your appeal. The County Assessor accepts appeals every year during a 30-day period. If you miss the appeal period or dispute the Assessor's decision, the Cook County Board of Review also has a 30-day appeal period each year.

Can a condominium unit owner appeal?

Yes, but the condominium association acting on behalf of the entire building is more apt to succeed. Each unit is assessed in proportion to the building's total value. The association is often better able to challenge a building's total value than one unit owner.

Is there any charge for appealing my assessment?

No, our office will help file your appeal.

If I appeal my assessment and receive a reduction, where will it appear on my tax bill?

On the second installment, which usually arrives in the late summer/early fall.

How often can I appeal my property tax assessment?

You can appeal your assessment every year at the Cook County Assessor's Office, the Cook County Board of Review, and the Property Tax Appeal Board (PTAB). If you wish to file an appeal, you must do so by filing during the open appeals time.

Where do I gather evidence for my assessment appeal?

You can gather evidence here at the Palatine Township Assessor's Office and online at the Cook County Assessor's web site.

Do I need an attorney to file an appeal?

No attorney is needed to file an appeal at the Assessor's office for any type of property. However, if your property is an incorporated business, you do need an attorney to appeal at the Board of Review and the Property Tax Appeal Board (PTAB).

If I take out a building permit for work on my house, will my assessment increase?

Not in most cases. Common upgrades such as kitchen updates, new roofs, and porch upgrades usually do not lead to higher assessments. However, upgrades that increase a property's living space will result in higher assessments, as will a new garage. Upgrades that trigger increased assessments receive the home improvement exemption, which defers improvement-related assessment increases for four years. The exemption is automatically applied, but is available only for the first \$75,000 in improvements.

Explain multipliers and equalized assessments.

Although Cook County assesses properties at different levels, state law requires that a county's overall level of assessment equal 33% of the market value of all county properties. To reach the 33% level, the state increases each assessment by a uniform factor known as the state multiplier or equalizer. Multiplying a property's assessment by the equalizer yields the equalized assessment. The equalized assessment is then reduced by exemptions, (see next section) and the result is multiplied by the community tax rate. This final calculation yields your tax bill.

What is the Homeowner exemption?

The homeowner exemption reduces the taxes on owner-occupied homes, condominiums and small apartment buildings. Those eligible for the exemption who have not received it should call our office.

What if I did not receive a Homeowners or Homestead (Senior) Exemption to which I was entitled?

You can apply for a Certificate of Error at our office or the County Assessor's office and receive a refund on the extra taxes you paid for the most recent three years. If you have not yet paid this year's bill, call the Township Assessors office for assistance.