

Common Misunderstandings of Reassessments

Knowing the common misunderstandings around your efforts (and reassessments in general) helps you to know what to address up front. Here are some common myths, and their explanations:

MYTH #1 - Reassessments mean higher taxes. Reassessment simply redistributes the tax distribution so that each taxpayer pays no more than his or her fair share it does not raise additional taxes. In fact, doing a reassessment could mean your tax rate decreases significantly, particularly if it's been a while since the last reassessment. Without an increase in the tax levy, if one homeowner sees an increase in taxes due to a reassessment, it means another homeowner has seen a decrease. It's that simple.

MYTH #2 - Reassessment is selective assessment. Certainly, you know this is true, but does your board? Unfortunately, if the program is not explained adequately, it could result in the public misperception of selective assessment. The memo in the Appendix details how you can avoid this pitfall. Essentially, you need to stress the fact that you are analyzing ALL of the assessments and are making adjustments as necessary to maintain ALL assessments at market value. To avoid misleading your board, try to:

1. Focus on your efforts to maintain equity by keeping ALL values. It is best to note that ALL parcels are analyzed to arrive at *any* conclusions in property values; and
2. Explain that assessments are adjusted to reflect market value. Emphasize that ALL assessments are observed and evaluated, but not necessarily changed. Be sure your board understands that, if certain properties or neighborhoods were not adjusted, it is because the market values did not change.

MYTH #3 - Reassessment means that all assessments will be increased. While all parcels will be analyzed to compare their market values to their assessed values, only those whose market values have increased will see increases. This myth is especially untrue in the case of annual assessment changes, since not all properties will necessarily increase in value every year.

MYTH #4 - Reassessment means one-third of the assessments will go up, one-third will go down, and one-third will remain the same. The percentage of properties going up, down, and staying the same can be very different from one town to another. The same is true with the percentage of properties seeing tax increases, decreases and staying the same. The best thing to say is that you'll let them know how the numbers look as soon as you know.

MYTH #5 - Seniors will lose some of the savings from their STAR exemption. It is safe to say that when a roll is relatively equitable from year to year, your homeowners who are receiving STAR will not suffer a loss in savings. And, besides, STAR isn't just for seniors, anyway!