

Understanding the Reassessment Process

Union County Assessor's Office

This fall, as required by the State of South Carolina Code of Law §12-43-217(a), Union County will put in place new real estate values to be used in determining 2015 property taxes. Periodic reviews of property values – in other words, reassessments – are intended to distribute the taxes collected more fairly among the property owners; by capturing value changes that have occurred during the previous five years due to such factors as construction, demolition, renovation, and market demand.

State law guards against counties raising property values during a reassessment simply to raise more tax revenue. Specifically, the law contains a mathematical formula called a “roll-back millage” calculation. If reassessment shows the tax base has grown, this formula adjusts the base tax rate downward so that it produces approximately the same amount of revenue as the prior tax year. Likewise, if the tax base has declined in value since the previous reassessment, the base rate may be increased, but only enough to produce roughly the same amount of revenue as the prior year.

Once the assessor's value estimations have been reviewed and approved by the South Carolina Department of Revenue, every property owner is mailed an “assessment notice”, as per SC Code of Laws §12-60-2510(3). This notice contains two values for each property: 1) a market value, which is approximately what the property could be sold for on the open market; and 2) a “tax value”, which is the value against which the tax rate is actually applied to determine the property taxes due.

The tax value figure is derived from statutory protection “Act 388” that limits increases in value between reassessments to no more than 15 percent or special assessment as agricultural property. The 15% limitation is triggered when the property's value was significantly under-valued in the past. Importantly, the 15 percent cap does not apply to new construction; and may also be lifted whenever a property changes ownership, see SC Code of Laws §12-37-3150.

If a property owner feels that the value stated on the assessment notice is greater than its approximate fair market value, he or she may appeal the value. Please note that one of three things can happen with all appeal requests: 1) the value may remain the same 2) the value may decrease 3) the value may increase.

The first appeal (objection) is the “informal appeal” and all appeals due to an assessment notice must be given in writing to the assessor within ninety days of the dated notice; Taxpayer may appeal to one or more of the following; the fair market value, the special use value, the assessment ratio and the property tax assessment. Appeals must contain the following: 1) Owner's name, address and telephone number 2) the description of the property in issue (i.e. 911 address) 3) a statement of facts supporting the taxpayers position (i.e. known issues with the real property) 4) a statement outlining the reasons for the appeal (objection), including any law or other authority, upon which the taxpayer relies (i.e. comparable sales, cost to construct, individual appraisals using the same effective date as the assessor, etc.) and 5) the value and classification which the property owner considers the fair market value, special use value, if applicable and the proper classification.

If the value disagreement cannot be resolved during the informal appeal process, the property owner will be informed of their additional appeal rights to of the assessor value.

We hope you will not hesitate to contact us with any questions or concerns about the reassessment process. The Assessor's Office may be reached by phone at 864-429-1650. We look forward to working with you to make this reassessment a successful one.