

Taxpayers Guide to the 2018 Reassessment

Why is there a reassessment?

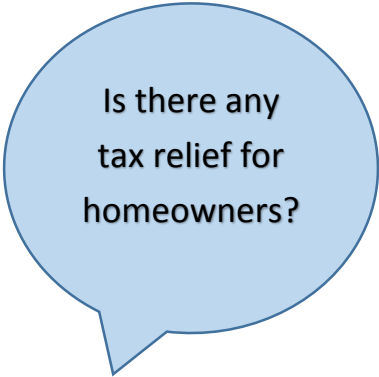
Lancaster County uses base year methodology to set assessed values. Lancaster County's base year will be set as January 1, 2015 with an effective date of January 1, 2018. Ideally every county should reassess every four to six years. However, the typical period between reassessments in Pennsylvania is at least 20 years. Lancaster County, by resolution in 1997, adopted an eight (8) year schedule for reassessment, not including any future delays. Our last reassessment was completed and effective 1/1/2005. A reassessment is done to equalize all assessments and current fair market values at 100%.

Does this mean I will pay more taxes?

By Pennsylvania Statute, millage rates must be adjusted in a reassessment year. The taxing jurisdictions (i.e. county, municipality and school districts) cannot levy more taxes as a result of the reassessment, than it did the previous tax year, as a first step in the process. As a second step, a taxing district may then, by a separate vote, choose to adjust their millage rate if they desire to levy additional taxes. The law caps the additional revenue at 10% the total amount levied the preceding tax year. This statutory limit is different for school districts, which are limited to an annual index as provided by the State Department of Education. In recent years, that index has been around 2-3 %, but a higher increase request can be made under certain conditions. Keep in mind, an individual's property tax may increase or decrease dependent on the current assessed value and the new 2018 reassessment value, and the application of the new millage rate. There is no cap as to the percentage change of an individual tax amount.

There is no simple, precise way to predict the total net tax change for any single property until the new tax rates are established for the 2018 County, Municipal and 2018-2019 School tax year.

Generally, some property owners will see a tax decrease; some property owners will see a tax increase; and some property owners will see their taxes remain about the same.




**Is there any
tax relief for
homeowners?**

If you are a senior citizen, or are interested in finding information regarding the PA Property Tax or Rent Rebate Program, please contact the Department of Revenue at 1-888-222-9190, or online at www.revenue.pa.gov. If you are interested in knowing about a disabled veteran exemption, you may contact the PA Department of Military and Veteran Affairs for information at 1-800-547-2838, or online at www.dmva.pa.gov.

The Pennsylvania Farmland and Forest Land Assessment Act 319 is also known as the Clean and Green Program. Act 319 provides a preferential tax assessment for land devoted to agricultural use, open space land or forested land. Generally, land can be enrolled if the parcel is at least 10 acres or can generate at least \$2,000 in annual gross income directly from an agricultural commodity for three preceding years. Enrolled land is taxed at its use value rather than fair market value. Please refer to the home page and click on “Clean & Green Program” for further details.

Act 1 of 2006 (formerly Act 72) is the Homeowner Tax Relief Act. Its goal is to reduce school district reliance on the real property tax, to be achieved by putting in place new funding options, including local personal or earned income taxes and funds from gaming. The reduction in property taxes is achieved by applying these new funds to the Homestead and Farmstead exclusions. These eligible properties must be owner occupied. Please refer to the home page and click on “Homestead/Farmstead Exclusion” for further details.



**How is the
reassessment
done?**


Every property in Lancaster County is recorded with the Property Assessment Office. The County employs full-time Certified Pennsylvania Evaluators (CPE) that visit properties throughout the year and maintain these records. The main reason for visiting a property is a building permit issued by a local municipality. These same CPE’s review current market trends and valid sales to establish these reassessment values. In 1997, the County contracted a private reassessment firm to perform the first county-wide reassessment since the 1960’s. Since then, Lancaster County performs all reassessments in house using market studies to establish base year assessments.

Fair market value (FMV) is determined in the marketplace, when a willing seller sells to a willing buyer in an arm's length transaction. The process of determining FMV involves the analysis of recent sales in a certain time period within the county. Only valid sales, which reflect transactions on the open market will be considered. The reassessment value reflects a probable FMV or selling price derived from these studies.

Two primary objectives are key to a successful and fair reassessment process:


1. Market values in a reassessment year must be 100% or the true market value.
2. Properties of similar type, characteristics, and neighborhood are fair and uniform.

When this is achieved, each property owner in Lancaster County will be paying his or her fair share of the tax burden.



I recently took out a building permit. Will that be reflected in the reassessment?

If you have recently taken out a building permit during the Reassessment process, those changes may not be included in the preliminary or final reassessment value. If you are not sure and would like to check, you can review your property record information. The new Reassessment record information will be available after the preliminary notices are mailed (around March 1, 2017). Please refer to the home page and click on "Assessment Online Information (wEdge)". You can also call our office (299-8381) or visit us (150 N. Queen St, Suite 310, Lancaster) between the hours of 8:30am and 5:00pm.



How do I research sales for comparable properties like mine?

If you need to research sales in your area that are comparable to your property there will be a link on our home page. Click on "Assessment Online Information (wEdge)", then click on "one or more properties" search, and fill out desired criteria under "Attributes/Sales Criteria". We also have a limited number of public terminals for property owners to use in our office. Of these sales you will need to research and determine the validity and comparable nature of these properties.

2018 Reassessment Timeline

March 2017

- **Preliminary reassessment notices**

Notices will be mailed out in the beginning of March of 2017. This notice is a preliminary value and is not the set value effective 01/01/2018.

- **Informal Preliminary Notice Review**

The Assessment Office appraisers will be available for an informal review of your property information.

Dates: March 13 – March 31, 2017

Times: 10:00AM – 8:00PM, Monday through Friday only

Location 1: Park City Mall, 142 Park City Center, Lancaster, PA

We will be located in the Community Room of the mall office. This is located at the top of the stairs after entering the Kohl's entrance by the outside bus terminal. You can use the escalator or stairs and an elevator is available at the side of the escalator. Once at the top, there is an entrance located next to the Arby's rear entrance and public restrooms. Again, there is an elevator located near that entrance for your convenience.

Appointments: no appointments are necessary

Phone/email: You may reach us by phone at (717) 299-8381 (phone bank # to be available at that time) or by email (to be available after preliminary notices mailed, around March 1, 2017), with questions regarding the reassessment. We will make every effort to return any inquiry within 24 hours the following business day.

June 2017

- **Final notices**

Final notices will be mailed out on JUNE 1, 2017. This notice will reflect the set value the County has reassessed your property effective 01/01/2018, and will be used by all three taxing jurisdictions. (i.e. County, Municipal and School)

- **Appeals**

Once you receive your FINAL NOTICE you have the right to appeal that assessment if you disagree with the value the County has set on your property. You will have 40 DAYS from the date on the final notice to file an appeal with the Lancaster County Board of Assessment Appeals. In a reassessment year there is no fee to file an appeal. During this time the County waives the yearly appeal fee for property owners.

If you choose to file an assessment appeal, a hearing will be set and you will receive notice of a day/time in which to appear before the board.

ALL APPEALS MUST BE RECEIVED IN THE ASSESSMENT OFFICE, 150 N QUEEN STREET, SUITE 310, LANCASTER, PA 17603 ON OR BEFORE THE LAST DAY TO APPEAL. **Please note facsimile appeals will NOT be accepted.**

- **Forms**

If you would like a 2018 Appeal form along with the Appeals Information, Rules and Regulations, they will be available on our website. On the home page click on “Yearly Appeals and Pricing”. They will also be available in our office or you may contact our office and we can mail you an appeal form.

- **Responsibilities**

- **Burden of Proof**

The burden of proof is the appellant’s responsibility to show that the assessment is incorrect. The assessment, which is based on the fair market value of the property, is presumed to be correct until the appellant comes forward with credible evidence to prove his/her position. An appellant should be prepared to discuss comparable sales or present an appraisal (although not required). **PLEASE PROVIDE THE BOARD WITH ANY COPIES OF SUPPORTING DATA TO KEEP AT THE TIME OF THE HEARING OR ATTACH IT TO YOUR APPEAL FORM(WE DO NOT MAKE COPIES). DUE TO THE NUMBER OF ANTICIPATED APPEALS, ALL INFORMATION MUST BE SUBMITTED BEFORE OR AT THE APPEAL HEARING. WE WILL NOT BE ABLE TO ACCEPT ANY SUPPORTING DATA FOLLOWING THE APPEAL HEARING.**

- **Fair Market Value**

Fair Market Value has been defined by the courts to mean the most probable price which a property will sell for in a competitive and open market, having been exposed to the open market for a reasonable amount of time, the buyer and seller being well informed or well advised, acting prudently and knowledgeable and typically motivated. The FMV represents the typical selling price for the property, unaffected by special or creative financing or sales concessions granted by anyone associated with a sale.

- **Taxes**

Taxes are imposed by the county, municipalities and school districts. It is NOT the taxes, but the individual assessments that can be appealed.

- Please make sure to review the Appeals Information, Rules and Regulations for filing an appeal with the Board of Assessment Appeals.