

2020 Revaluation Project General FAQs



City of Portland
Assessor's Office

Q: WHY IS PORTLAND REASSESSING PROPERTY VALUES?

A: Maine requires all municipalities to conduct a general revaluation every 10 years. Portland's last revaluation set values as of April 1, 2005. Portland's real estate market has changed considerably since then. The goal of a revaluation is to help ensure the city's property tax burden is distributed fairly and equitably based on current property values.

Q: WHEN WILL THE REVALUATION OCCUR? WHEN WILL IT TAKE EFFECT?

A: The effective date for new values is April 1, 2020. A notice of value change will be mailed to taxpayers in **mid to late May 2020**, at which point starts the informal appeal process. New values will be used to calculate tax bills for Fiscal Year 2021 which will be mailed in the fall of 2020.

Q: WHAT IS A REVALUATION? HOW DOES IT WORK?

A: Revaluation is a process that resets the taxable value of all real property to its current market value and eliminates inequities that have developed in assessed values since the last revaluation.

We have hired a professional reassessment firm, Tyler Technologies CLT Appraisal Services, the national leader in municipal revaluations, to conduct this project with assistance from the Portland Assessor's Office staff. To ensure our assessments are accurate, every recorded sale of property in Portland is evaluated through a combination of computer-based reviews and field reviews. This ensures the characteristics of **each property are accurately reflected in city tax records.** As part of this review, all parcels have been digitally photographed in high resolution to ensure that all improvements can be compared uniformly.

Q: WHAT IS MARKET VALUE?

A: Market value is the most probable price a property would bring in an open and competitive market. The City of Portland Assessor's Office does not create market value; rather, we analyze the patterns and trends of the local real estate market and use that information to estimate market values for all properties.

Q: WHY IS THE REVALUATION CYCLE BEING SHORTENED FROM TEN YEARS?

A: The Assessor's Office will be working to shorten the revaluation cycle from 10 years moving forward. A ten-year cycle, for a growing city like Portland, creates more opportunity for inequities to grow and usually leads to much larger and unpredictable changes to property values. A shorter cycle reduces the chances of this happening and helps make property taxes more equitable, predictable and manageable.

Q: ARE THERE ANY CIRCUMSTANCES IN WHICH VALUES WOULD CHANGE BEFORE THE NEXT REVALUATION?

A: There are a few important circumstances in which an assessed value would change before the next revaluation. These include new construction, demolition, addition or other improvement to a property that would affect value. When any of these changes occur to an individual property, its market value is adjusted using the rates developed for the most recent revaluation year.

Q: HOW DOES REVALUATION BENEFIT HOMEOWNERS?

A: Property taxes are based on property values. Without periodic revaluations, some property owners would pay relatively more while other would pay relatively less. Revaluation resets property values to their current market value so that the property tax burden is equitable for all taxpayers.

Q: WHAT ARE THE QUALIFICATIONS OF STAFF? HOW ARE THEY TRAINED?

A: All City of Portland Assessor's Office staff who conduct valuation work are certified to do so by Maine Revenue Services. Assessor's Office staff are both well trained and professional, with decades of combined experience. Appraisers must pass a series of educational courses and a comprehensive examination to meet certification requirements. They also have ongoing educational and training requirements to maintain certifications. In addition, state law requires that if a revaluation company or consultant is used, they must hold a Maine certification. Our project meets this requirement as Tyler's on-site project manager holds the required certification.

Q: HOW CAN I VIEW THE INFORMATION YOU HAVE ON FILE FOR MY PROPERTY?

A: Visit portlandmaine.gov/propertysearch and type in your Parcel ID (CBL) or address and click on "Search Now." Here you can view the property characteristics we have on file for your property, including a sketch and photo. You can request any changes by emailing assessors@portlandmaine.gov or calling 207-874-8486 to have one of our staff members take your information.

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Q: HOW DO I KNOW IF I SHOULD APPEAL?

A: The City of Portland Assessor's Office is committed to working with all property owners to ensure every property is appraised at a reasonable estimate of its April 1, 2020 market value. If you believe the 2020 assessed value of your property is not a reasonable estimate of what it could sell for on April 1, you have the right to appeal the value.

While we understand some taxpayers may have concerns about affordability and changes in property tax amounts, these alone are not grounds for an appeal. An appeal is based on the estimated market value of the property, not the amount of taxes. According to Maine taxation law (36 MRSA §848-A), your property's assessment is considered reasonable if it falls within 10% of its most probable selling price.

Q: HOW CAN I APPEAL?

A: Once you receive your Notice of New Value, every property owner has the right to an informal appeal hearing. These provide an opportunity to meet with a member of Tyler's staff to discuss their property value and correct any errors found in the data collection or property valuation process. These informal hearings will occur at various locations throughout the City in the summer of 2020. Specific instructions on how to schedule an appointment will be included with the Notice of New Value.

Once all informal appeals are heard by Tyler and data and value changes are made, the FY2021 tax rolls and tax commitment will be set. FY21 tax bills will then be printed and mailed in August / September 2020.

Once FY21 taxes are committed, taxpayers have 185 days to appeal. This appeal requires an application submitted to the Assessor's Office. The Assessor's Office has 60 days to respond. If you disagree with the Assessor's Office determination, you have 60 days to appeal to the City of Portland Board of Assessment Review for a formal hearing. If you disagree with the Board's decision, you can further appeal to the State Board of Property Tax Review. Further appeals beyond this Board's decision go into the state court system.

Q: HOW ARE APPRAISAL AND TAXATION RELATED?

A: Appraisal and taxation are separate issues. The Assessor's Office determines the market value of all property and sets an assessed value. The tax rate is calculated by taking the City Council's approved budget and dividing the amount needed from property taxes by the total taxable assessed value of the City.

Q: WILL MY TAX BILL CHANGE?

A: Not necessarily. The annual tax bill for each property is calculated by multiplying the assessed value by the tax rate. Some tax bills will go up, some will go down and some will stay about the same. To determine any tax bill change for your individual property, compare the increase of the City's total taxable value by the change in your individual assessment. As an example, if the City increases in total value by 40%, but your individual property assessment increase is 38%, you would see a 2% tax decrease.

Q: HOW MUCH ADDITIONAL TAX DOLLARS OR REVENUE DOES THE CITY COLLECT FROM THIS?

A: You may be surprised to learn the answer is zero. The annual approved City budget calls for the amount needed to be raised by property taxes. The tax rate is set by dividing this number by the total taxable valuation of the City. The increase in taxable value results in the tax rate decreasing to raise this same amount. The City does not generate any additional tax dollars from a revaluation.

Q: HOW DO I KNOW IF I QUALIFY FOR PROPERTY TAX EXEMPTIONS OR TAX RELIEF?

A: There are various tax relief programs available all with a range of eligibility requirements. To see the available programs, their eligibility requirements, and applications, visit www.portlandmaine.gov, navigate to the Assessor's Office page and click on **Tax Relief**. If you have any questions regarding exemptions, please contact us at 207-874-8486.



For more information, visit the Revaluation Project website at revalueportland.me. If you still have questions or concerns regarding revaluation, please call **207-874-8763** or send us an email at assessors@portlandmaine.gov.