

WHO ARE WCAD APPRAISERS?

So there is a lot of misunderstanding about the role of appraisers, and how they affect the property tax that homeowners pay. When someone hears the term appraiser, they seem to think of a scary figure reaching for their wallet. Not so. Appraisers don't set tax rates. Appraisers don't chase tax dollars. An appraiser is interested in fairly determining property values, and they take great pride in it.

Property tax is determined by a simple formula. Appraisers only effect one of these variables; the value, and they do so with incredible accuracy. Appraisers aren't tax collectors or even tax setters. They're just fellow taxpayers, and their primary goal is to make everything fair and equitable.

Imagine that you are in a restaurant with two friends. One orders a hot dog, one a plate of caviar, and you order a steak. The waiter comes to the table with total bill of \$100, but he doesn't know how much each of you should pay. If everyone paid the same amount, the guy who ordered caviar might be happy, but what about the guy who ordered a hot dog? Enter, appraisers. The food is your property. Just like these meals, some people's property is worth more than others, and it's the appraiser's job to determine how much each property is worth. That's it. So, in the same way the value of these menu items would need to be determined, an appraiser places values on properties to ensure fairness and equity.

After the appraiser determines the value of each property, local governing bodies will set their budgets for the coming year. They set the tax rate in order to produce the dollars needed for their budgets. The value of a property does not affect the amount of property tax needed. The sum total of all these budgets is a set number that has to be divided up among all the property owners. So even if everyone's value was cut in half by the appraisers, the tax rate would be raised in order to generate the same amount of tax revenue. The appraisers don't determine the taxes you pay. They just determine the values of properties to keep everything as fair and equitable as possible. When you notice a change in your property's appraised value, the change is the result of a never ending quest for fairness and accuracy. Appraisers are graded on their performance, so there is a detailed system to get accurate valuations.

First, the appraiser looks at similar properties that have sold, their sale prices, and the terms and conditions of each sale. That's the reason your home won't just be compared to the place next door. Studying things like square footage, age, and location helps appraisers determine how comparable another property is to yours. Appraisers maintain a thorough database of real estate information to make this process as precise as possible. Changes in value are typically the result of local real estate market sales or major changes to a property. Remodel a kitchen, and your property's value could increase.

When you see your home's appraised value, you can rest assured that the number has not been drawn out of a hat, nor generated with anything but equity and accuracy in mind. Long story short, appraisers are here to help, not trying to hinder. Their focus is accurate values, not tax collection.

The only things an appraiser chases are fairness and equity, and they take great pride in it.