

Chatham Borough Revaluation 2021

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Why a Revaluation?

The objective of a revaluation is to bring all properties to 100% of their true market value. Property values change at different rates for various locations and property types. A revaluation ensures fairness and equity in the collection of revenue for Municipal purposes. The purpose of a revaluation is to eliminate any assessment inequities that may have developed since the implementation of the previous revaluation. This balances the Municipality's real property tax burden among its taxpayers. In addition to ensuring that the local tax burden is borne equally, being at 100% of value means that property owners will be paying a fairer, more equitable portion of county taxes since no adjustments in the equalization process will have to be made.

Once the revaluation program is completed, the tax rate per \$100 of assessed valuation will undoubtedly go down to reflect the increased value of the ratable base. However, this does not necessarily indicate whether the tax on your property will increase or decrease.

Revaluations do not increase the total amount of revenue to be raised by taxation. The municipality only collects the amount of tax dollars that the four units of local government (local school, regional school, county government and municipal government) determine is necessary to operate.

2. How are the values established?

There are three different methods to estimating market value. The Sales Comparison method compares a property with similar properties that have recently sold in the same or similar neighborhoods. All properties for which there is a sufficient number of reasonably comparable sales will be valued using this method. The Replacement Cost method estimates what it would cost as current, local prices for construction material and labor to replace the building. Depreciation and obsolescence are subtracted to reach a net value for the buildings, and then the value of the land is added to reach a market value for the property. The Capitalization of Income method is used primarily for commercial and apartment properties. This method estimates the predictable net rental income after expenses are deducted that would be generated for the property and then determines the market value based on what a prudent investor would pay for such a property. After reviewing the valuations using the above three approaches where applicable, a final correlated value will be determined to be used as the basis of the assessed value.

3. Why an inspection of properties?

The purpose of the interior inspection is to record information relative to the structure which will affect its value. The information recorded at the time of this inspection will include such items as the type of interior wall construction, number of bathrooms, type of heat, air conditioning other than wall units, percentage of basement and area finished for recreation or apartment use and the percentage of finished half story and attic where applicable.

The exterior inspection includes the measurement of each structure including garages or other accessory buildings, the determination of story height, roof structure, type of foundation and exterior wall construction. The physical condition of the structure is noted to establish depreciation factors for age, use, etc. Topographical features of the land are also noted as they may affect value.

4. Doesn't the town have this information on file?

In many instances, the answer is yes. However, Appraisal Systems was contracted to provide current information based on physical inspections and has no access to any of the existing municipal records.

5. What can I expect during a visit by the field inspector?

For starters, when the inspector arrives at your door be sure to ask to see proper identification before allowing admittance to your home. If you have any doubts about the person's identity, refuse entry and call the Police Department for verification. Appraisal Systems will not enter your property unless the owner, or an adult representative of the owner is present.

6. How long will this inspection take?

A typical interior inspection lasts fifteen minutes or less.

7. Will I be assessed more for my decorating and/or landscaping?

Your tax assessment will not be greater because the interior of your home is elaborately decorated and furnished. Assessments are based only on the real property and not on your personal belongings. The same holds true for shrubbery and landscaping.

8. What if I am not home?

If unable to gain entrance at the time of the first visit, the field representative will leave a card indicating the date and time when he will return to inspect the premises. Should this date and time be inconvenient you may call the telephone number provided to reschedule. If at the time of the second visit an interior inspection is again not possible, an estimate of the interior structure of the premises will be made by the inspector. This information will be recorded on a card and left for the property owner. An interior inspection is an important component of the revaluation process.

If you receive an estimate card, please contact the office to schedule an appointment 201-493-8530.

9. Can I refuse entry to the field inspector?

Yes, you may refuse entry to your home, but it is in your best interest to see that as much information as possible is gathered to help insure an accurate assessment. If an appraiser cannot inspect the inside of a building, it is possible an inaccurate assessment may result. The law provides that a property can be assessed at the highest reasonable value if the field inspector is denied entry.

The revaluation program should not be seen as an adversarial situation. Property owners have a vested interest in the outcome of the project and their cooperation is vital to achieve an equitable revaluation. If one person's property is under-assessed, all the other property owners in the municipality will pay higher taxes to make up for the discrepancy. Conversely, if property owners deny access to the field inspector, they could wind up being over-assessed and pay more than their fair share of taxes.

10. When will your inspectors be in my neighborhood?

Normally, our inspectors follow the tax map pages or neighborhoods delineated by Appraisal Systems. For this reason, two houses a block apart may be inspected months apart from each other. Weather also plays a large part of our rate of inspections. For these reasons, we cannot forecast when we will be in any specific area.

11. Can I schedule an appointment in advance?

Because of the large numbers of properties being appraised, specific appointments with property owners are not made until field inspectors have made at least two attempts to gain access. In the event, a card will be left at your door instructing you to call for an appointment. When you call the number on the card, you will be asked for the block and lot of the property, which can be found on the card. Appointments will be available weekdays, evenings, and Saturdays to accommodate everyone's schedule.

12. My property is unique. What should I do?

Send any evidence you have, such as photographs property surveys to the appropriate Appraisal Systems office. The information will be considered along with the other data gathered by the inspectors. See Contact Information for details on where to send this documentation. Also, please do not send any original items to us, as we will be unable to return them to you.

13. My home has been inspected. Now what?

The next step is the valuation process. Regardless of if when your home was inspected, all notifications of value are mailed out at the same time (approximately). Typically, this occurs in October. For further information on this aspect, please see our Frequently Asked Questions on the Valuation Process.

14. Why do some homeowners pay more taxes after a revaluation and some pay less?

Some increases result from correcting inequities such as improvements to property performed without building permits and therefore not reflected in the assessments prior to the revaluation.

If market values in your area have not risen as much as in other areas, or your property is currently overvalued when compared with the comparable properties, your share of the tax burden would be reduced as a result of revaluation. The assessed value is only one component in determining tax rate. The other is the amount to be raised in taxation in each government's yearly budget that each of the four government's (local, county, school, and regional school) determine to be required to operate. When each year's budget reflects an increase in the amount to be raised regardless of whether a revaluation is implemented, one pays more taxes.

15. When will I be notified of my new assessment?

After all the properties in your town have been inspected, the process of determining value takes place. Appraisal Systems will notify each property owner regarding the preliminary assessment of his or her property. If you have any questions or you disagree with the preliminary valuation, you may schedule an appointment to discuss your concerns with a representative of the company.

These notifications are mailed out at the same approximate time regardless of when your house was inspected. This is generally done in November.

16. What are my neighbors' assessed values?

Until the revaluation is completed and accepted by the municipality and the county, all the values are kept confidential as they are still works in progress. Once the official tax book is printed by the county, you may visit the assessor's office in the municipal building and review all the properties in the town. This will occur by January 10th.

17. Who can I talk to about my value?

An informal interview will be available for property owners who have questions or concerns about the preliminary assessment of their property. The one-on-one interview can be scheduled at a time convenient to the property owner and will take place in Town Hall. You will be provided with a telephone number to call to schedule an interview should one be necessary.

The interview process will be informal and will focus on a discussion of your property. It is important that all the information presented about your property is accurate. If you feel there are conditions that diminish the market value of your property, the interview is another opportunity to bring those factors to our attention. All

appropriate comments will be reviewed and considered to determine if an adjustment is in order.

18. When will I find out the results from my informal hearing?

Once the period for informal interviews has ended, all property owners who held a meeting will receive a notification of outcome. These are all mailed out at the same time regardless of when your interview took place.

19. Is there an official appeal process if I still disagree with my value?

If you are still dissatisfied with the result of your interview, you can file a formal appeal with your County Board of Taxation after January 1st but prior to April 1st. This step is like the informal interview. However, your comments will be heard by a Commissioner of the Board of Taxation. You will be given an opportunity to state the reasons you believe your assessment is inaccurate. After reviewing the facts presented, the Board will render a decision as to whether an adjustment is in order.

In the event you are not satisfied with the decision of the Board of Taxation, you have the right to file an appeal with the Tax Court of the State of New Jersey. This must be done within 45 days of your notification. This step in the process is formal, taking place in a courtroom setting before a Tax Court Judge.

20. Can I appeal my taxes?

Under State Law, the actual tax on a property cannot be appealed. However, an aggrieved property owner can file an appeal regarding the assessment of a value. The tax rate and tax assessment are two distinctly different things which are often confused. The tax rate is determined by the dollar amount needed to operate the four governmental entities, while the tax assessment provides the value upon which to apportion the taxes. One appeals a tax assessment, not a rate.