
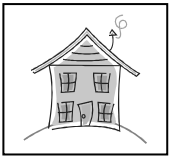




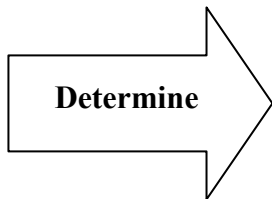
# Answers to Frequently Asked Questions

Snohomish County Assessor   
Cindy Portmann – Assessor  
3000 Rockefeller Ave. M/S – 510  
Everett, WA 98201  
<http://assessor.snoco.org>

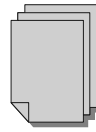
## Market Sales



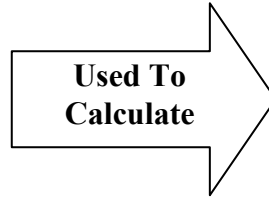
In 2008



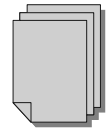
## Assessed Value



As of January 1st, 2009



## Taxes Payable



In 2010

### General Information

#### Q: What does the County Assessor do?

**A:** Washington State law requires Assessors to appraise property at 100 percent of its “true and fair market value” in money according to the “highest and best use” of the property. The Assessor also sets the levy rates based on taxing district budget requests, statutory limits and property values.

**NOTE:** Market sales, assessed value history and tax history are available on our website at <http://assessor.snoco.org>.

### Property Tax Relief Programs for: Seniors and Disabled Persons

#### Q: What tax relief programs are available for lower income seniors and disabled persons?

**A: Senior Citizen/Disabled Person Exemption Program:** If you own and occupy a residence or mobile home and were 61 or older by December 31, 2008 OR are retired because of physical disability you may qualify for an exemption and/or a reduction of your 2009 property tax. The total combined, gross household income limit (including social security and/or disability payments) for the program is \$35,000 or less. For determining eligibility we must use your total combined income, which is your income from ANY source less veterans' disability, survivors' dependency or indemnity compensation. This is NOT the same as the “taxable income” used for federal income tax purposes.

Also available is a **Senior Citizen or Disabled Persons Tax Deferral Program**. To qualify you must be 60 years of age or disabled from working, with a gross income less than \$40,000. The State of Washington will pay your property taxes, which must be re-paid upon the transfer of ownership, if the property is no longer your primary residence or upon death of the applicant. A lien is placed on the property.

#### Q: I already have a senior citizen or disabled person exemption and my taxable value is “frozen”, will the new assessment affect my taxes?

**A:** Individuals qualifying for a Senior Citizen or Disabled Persons exemption are taxed on either the market value of the property on the date of qualification (“Frozen Value”) or on the New Market Value whichever value is lower.

### Contact the Assessor's Office Exemptions Dept.

Please contact us at **425-388-3433** or visit us at the 1<sup>st</sup> floor of the Customer Service Center (CSC) in the Robert J. Drewel Building (Admin-EAST), located at 3000 Rockefeller, in Everett for more information on exemption programs, filing destroyed property claims or information on special classifications.

## IMPORTANT:

Please Read The Back Side Of The Assessor's Notice of Value For Additional Information About Other Exemption Programs And Special Classifications

**Business Hours:** Please call 425-388-3433 for the hours the Assessor's Office will be open to assist the public or visit our website at <http://assessor.snoco.org> for more information.

### Contact the Assessor's Office – Appraisal Department

#### Q: Who should I contact for more information about my assessed value?

**A:** If you have questions regarding your property or disagree with the assessed value, please call our **Appraisal Department at 425-388-3390**. Staff will be glad to answer your questions and examine the valuation of the property.

### Appealing your Assessed Value to the Board of Equalization

#### Q: Can I appeal my assessed value?

**A: Yes.** If you do not agree with the value set by the Assessor, you can file a petition for a hearing before the Snohomish County Board of Equalization (BOE). The petition must be filed with the BOE within 60 days of when the value notice was mailed or by July 1<sup>st</sup> whichever is later. The appeal process does not require an attorney, but you will need to present evidence that the Assessor's value is incorrect. Appeal forms are available from the **Clerk of the Board at 425-388-3407**.

#### Q: Can I appeal the amount of taxes I will pay or the percentage that my assessment increased or decreased?

**A: No.** The Board of Equalization cannot consider appeals on this basis. If you have concerns over the amount of taxes you are paying, you need to take them up with the taxing district officials who determine the budgets for their districts. You can also work for efficiency in government by attending budget hearings and calling or writing the taxing authorities with your concerns and ideas. Please refer to your local phonebook for contact names and numbers of each taxing district.

### What will my Taxes be in 2010?

#### Q: How much will my taxes increase or decrease in 2010?

**A:** Information on how much you will pay in property taxes next year won't be available until the taxing districts adopt their budgets at the end of this year and any voter approved taxes are added or dropped in 2009. **(Voter approved measures typically account for 40 to 45% of the taxes levied each year countywide.)** In early 2010 levy rates will be calculated and tax statements will be available. New tax amounts are usually available from the County Treasurer's office in February of each year.

Please visit us at:

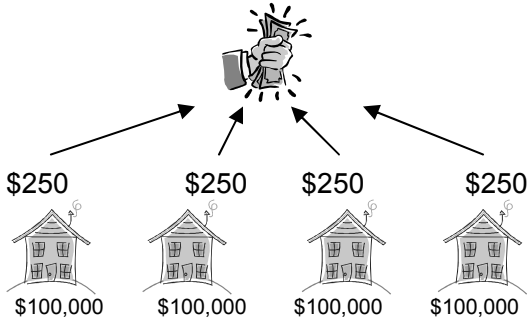
<http://assessor.snoco.org/forms/FormStore/2009AnnualReport.pdf> for detailed information regarding tax distributions.

## Property Tax Explanation

As County Assessors we receive a number of inquiries that show that there is a broad misunderstanding of our state property tax system. The best way we can explain Washington's property tax system is with some simple illustrations.

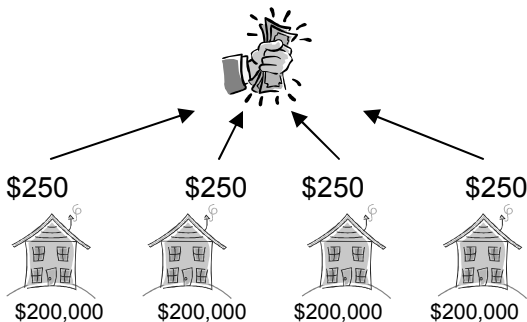
Imagine a little city that consists of four homes, each exactly the same, and each appraised by the Assessor at \$100,000. Let's also say that the annual city budget for our imaginary city is \$1000. To raise the amount of the budget, each homeowner must pay \$250. Four homes each paying \$250 raises \$1000. Our property tax system is budget based. Taxes collected are enough to raise the amount in the budget.

### \$1000 Budget



Let's say next year's budget remains at \$1000, but the Assessor doubles the assessed value of all the homes to \$200,000 each. Do the taxes on each of the homes change? No. To raise the budgeted amount, each must still pay \$250. In this example, the assessed value of each home doubled, but the tax didn't change.

### \$1000 Budget

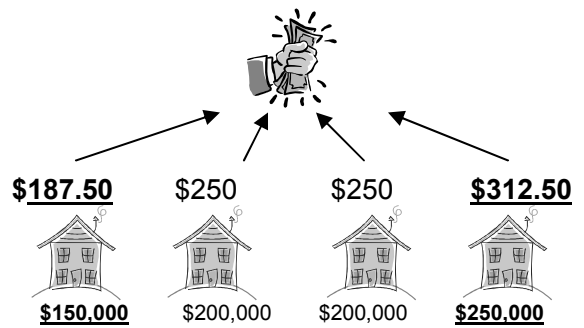


Now let's get a bit more realistic and say that the values on the homes change differently. Suppose one home goes from \$100,000 to \$150,000. Two homes double in value to \$200,000 and the last home jumps up to \$250,000! Now what happens to the taxes? The average value of the four homes is still \$200,000, so the taxes on the two homes that go to \$200,000 are unchanged. They are at the average and they each still pay \$250.

The lowest valued home sees its tax go down to \$187.50, even though the assessed value goes up 50 percent!

The home that jumped 150 percent to \$250,000 in value sees its property tax go up to \$312.50, a 25 percent increase. In the end, we still only collect \$1000 total to meet the budget.

### \$1000 Budget

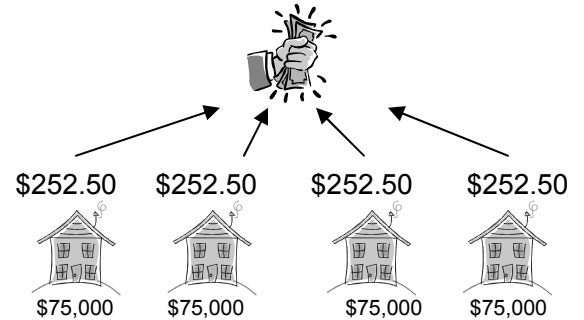


Most taxpayers who call our offices think there is a limit on increases to assessed values. Assessed values are driven by the real estate market. The limit is on the annual budget growth of the tax districts.

Snohomish County is an "Annual County". This means all property is adjusted to fair market value every year. While we inspect only 1/6<sup>th</sup> of our county each year, we update the appraisal of all property annually. All property is valued based upon sales of comparable property. Many people have asked if real estate market prices decline, will the assessed value decline with it? The answer is yes.

Let's look at what happens if home values decline from \$100,000 to \$75,000. The new assessed value is \$75,000 with the budget of \$1,000 increasing by 1% by the taxing districts or \$1,010. Look what happens to the individual property tax on each home. Four homes supporting the new \$1,010 budget means each home now pays the amount of \$252.50 each. Although the assessed value decreased by \$25,000 (25%) the budget increased by 1% and property owners pay \$2.50 more.

### \$1010 Budget



Please visit us at: <http://assessor.snoco.org/forms/levyclass.pdf> for a more detailed explanation of the levy process.

## How are Property Taxes Distributed?

**Total Property Taxes To Be Distributed in 2009: \$926,794,442**

