

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE REASSESSMENT?

The purpose is to create an **equitable distribution of the tax load**. Reassessments are required under the Consolidated County Assessment Law 53 Pa C.S. § 8823 to be **revenue neutral**. This means that the total taxes levied by a taxing district cannot automatically increase the year after a reassessment, and the tax rates are required to be adjusted so that the total taxes levied do not exceed the total taxes levied in the preceding tax year.

Historically, based on data that's been published on other county-wide reassessments, **1/3rd of the property owners will see a decrease in their taxes**, 1/3rd will stay about the same, and 1/3rd will see an increase.



WILL I HAVE AN OPPORTUNITY TO QUESTION MY ASSESSMENT AFTER RECEIVING MY NOTICE?

Yes. When preliminary value notices are mailed, property owners will be provided a telephone number that will put the owner in touch with a person who can answer questions about the notices. Property owners will also have the opportunity to schedule an informal review. Informal reviews will be conducted by qualified staff who can review property descriptions, make data corrections, and discuss valuation. All informal reviews must be completed before June 1, 2024. Descriptive changes to a property may alter the proposed market value. All property owners will receive a Change of Assessment Notice after informal reviews have been completed. The owners may file an appeal with the Board of Assessment Appeals. If they are not satisfied with the results of that hearing, an appeal may be made to the Court of Common Pleas. There will be many opportunities for property owners to provide input.

How will the Countywide Reassessment Impact My Taxes?
When you receive the notice of your new assessed value, a portion of the notice will provide an estimate of the tax impact on your property. This estimate is based on the prior year's total county, municipality, and school taxes. Pennsylvania law requires taxing bodies to adjust their millage in the year after a reassessment. The estimated tax impact provided in your notice will be approximate and subject to the final adjustment to the millage rates. Although most property owners want to pay their fair share, they are naturally concerned about whether their taxes will increase or decrease as a result of the countywide reassessment.

CLARION COUNTY
REASSESSMENT OFFICE
HUMAN SERVICES BUILDING
214 S 7TH AVE RM 106
CLARION, PA 16214

MYTHS AND MISUNDERSTANDINGS ABOUT REASSESSMENTS:

Myth: A countywide reassessment means that my taxes are going to increase.

NOT NECESSARILY. Based on a typical countywide reassessment, about one-third of the tax base will see a decrease in their tax bills, one-third will stay the same, and one-third will pay more. A change to an individual's property taxes depends on whether the increase in the 1975 value to a January 1, 2024 market value is more or less than the average increase experienced in the taxing district. Many people mistakenly think that if their Fair Market Value increases, then their tax bill will increase by the same proportion. This will not happen because all taxing districts are required, by state law, to lower their tax millage by the same ratio that the tax base increased. Example: If the county's tax base were to quadruple, then the county's millage rate would be lowered to one-fourth.

Myth: The countywide reassessment will provide new revenue for taxing bodies.

NOT TRUE. Pennsylvania state law requires that after the tax base has been equalized and brought to current market value, the millage must be reduced in order to collect the same revenue as collected in the previous year. After the equalized millage is set, and if the taxing body needs to collect additional revenue, they may do so; however, they are limited (by law) to the amount of additional total revenue that may be collected from taxpayers in the year following the countywide reassessment. The statutory limit for counties, townships, and boroughs is 10%. The statutory limit for school districts is set by the Pennsylvania Department of Education and is limited to the index. That index is generally about 2%.



Clarion County Reassessment

CLARION COUNTY WILL BE UNDERGOING A COUNTYWIDE REASSESSMENT TO EQUALIZE PROPERTY VALUES

EFFECTIVE: JANUARY 1, 2025

Clarion County Reassessment Office
(814)-226-4000 ex 2300
Mon. thru Fri. 9:00 am - 4:30 pm

For more information, please visit www.vgsi.com/clarion-county-reassessment/

WHAT IS A COUNTYWIDE REASSESSMENT?

Real estate taxes are calculated for each property, based on the Fair Market Value at a given point in time (base year). This base year value is used for assessments each year until a new base year is established by a countywide reassessment. The current base year for Clarion County assessments is 1975. This is when the last countywide reassessment was completed.

WHY IS CLARION COUNTY PERFORMING A REASSESSMENT?

To Deliver Accurate, Fair, and Equitable Assessments According to Standards Set by the IAAO.

The IAAO (International Association of Assessing Officers) recommends that properties should be revalued at least every four to six years to account for changes in property values, and to maintain uniform and equitable assessments. Based on a study that was completed for the State Tax Equalization Board in 2014, titled "Review of Calculations of Common Level Ratios in Pennsylvania," Pennsylvania is one of eight states that doesn't require a current market value standard for property assessments, or a specified reassessment cycle. Instead, the decision to reassess is left up to each county with some counties not reassessing property assessments since the 1960's.

To Adhere to Best Practices Outlined by Pennsylvania's Property Assessment Reform Task Force.

In response to recent assessment-related litigation, and reports of inconsistencies in Pennsylvania's property assessment system, the Pennsylvania Local Government Commission formed the Property Assessment Reform Task Force in 2016. One of the Task Force accomplishments was a guide titled "Pennsylvania Property Assessment: A Self-Evaluation Guide for County Officials." This document was subsequently adopted as best practices by the County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania, and the Assessors Association of Pennsylvania in 2018. The self-evaluation guide provides steps a county can follow when periodically reviewing the status of their assessments, and the importance of regularly doing so. The guide also provides suggested guidelines for completing a ratio study, recommended ratio standards, and suggested standards on the frequency that counties should perform reassessments, all of which follow the standards established by the IAAO.

To Bring Clarion County's Property Assessments in Line With Market Value.

At this time, Clarion County property owners are paying their county, municipal, and school taxes based on the assessed values established during the last countywide reassessment that was completed in 1975. The challenge with the real estate tax system lies in the fact that property values change over time; therefore, assessments cease to reflect real market values. Since the real estate tax is an "at value" tax, the fairness of the tax changes as the real estate market changes. These changes vary between property types, geographic areas, and other factors. A countywide reassessment is needed to equalize the values and create a fair distribution of the tax burden.

Who is Conducting the Reassessment?

Vision Government Solutions, Inc. has been contracted by the Clarion County Commissioners to conduct the reassessment. Vision is responsible for updating the Assessment Office's computer software, collecting specified property data in the field, providing a public relations program, developing new Fair Market Values, calculating Clean and Green values, conducting the informal reviews, and providing certified assessors to assist the county with formal appeals.

HOW IS A REASSESSMENT DONE?

1. Properties will be visited to obtain accurate property descriptions and photograph structures. The collected data will be computerized and quality checked.
2. Real estate market studies will be conducted to develop formulas for estimating the Fair Market Value for each property, as of January 1, 2024.
3. Final estimates of value will be determined after consideration of all appropriate approaches to value.
4. Property owners will receive a preliminary notice of their new assessed values.
5. Informal reviews can be scheduled to give property owners a chance to ask questions, verify information, and present facts about the property that might affect the value.
6. Property owners will receive a change of assessment notice indicating their new assessed value. The notice will also project Clean and Green values for properties of 10 or more acres in size.
7. If owners dispute the new value, they may appeal to the Board of Assessment Appeals and present their own evidence of Fair Market Value.
8. An owner may appeal the decision of the Board of Assessment Appeals to the Court of Common Pleas.

WHAT SHOULD I EXPECT WHEN A DATA COLLECTOR VISITS?

Data collectors are trained to gather data in a prescribed format and will visit every property in the county. During this visit, property descriptions will be verified, photographs will be taken of the property's structures, and information will be recorded on a property record card. This information will be used during the valuation phase. Data collectors do not set property values, nor will they go inside homes.

All data collectors will display an official county ID, and data collectors will always knock on the door of the primary residence. If an individual approaches you as a data collector, but cannot produce proper credentials, you should not permit him/her onto your property; the police and Reassessment Office should be notified immediately. Some of the property characteristics for residential and agricultural properties that the data collector will note are:

- building size, type, age, renovations,
- number of stories, property type,
- siding, heating, air conditioning,
- outbuilding descriptions, and
- extraneous economic influences such as landfills, junkyards, and sewage treatment plants.

For commercial and industrial buildings, data collectors will also ask what rents are being paid, if applicable. This information is needed to develop overall typical rent patterns for income-producing properties and will be used when valuing commercial and industrial properties by the Income Approach. All rental information is kept confidential and is not made part of the public record. When Vision data collectors begin visiting various areas and properties throughout the county, area newspapers, local officials, and law enforcement officials will be notified.

How Can I Review the Data Collected and Provide Additional Information?

As data is being collected, managers from both Vision Government Solutions and County Assessment staff often revisit properties to double check the data collection process. Property owners who are not at home during the exterior inspection will have an opportunity to review and correct the information collected once they receive a data verification mailer. Data Mailers will be sent in order to gain further insight on residential properties. Income & Expense forms will be sent on commercial/industrial properties to gain further insight on lease information.

Who Values My Property?

State law and the courts require that state-licensed Certified Pennsylvania Evaluators (CPE) consider the three approaches to value, whenever possible; namely, the Market Approach, the Cost Approach, and the Income Approach. After property descriptions are collected and reviewed, a CPE will utilize the data to classify structures and assign each property to a neighborhood that contains similar structures and market conditions. Valid sales for all property types are studied and appropriate formulas are developed. From this, preliminary values are produced. CPE's will then review these values and make any needed adjustments to land and building values so that all values are uniform. ALL VALUATIONS ARE MADE BY CERTIFIED PENNSYLVANIA EVALUATORS.

When Will I Know the Results of My New Assessment?

Property owners will receive a preliminary value notice no later than April 2024. The notice will include the proposed new Fair Market Value, and information about how to take advantage of the informal review process. Property owners will receive a Change of Assessment notice in the mail on or before July 1, 2024. The notice will include the old assessed value, the new Fair Market Value, the Clean and Green value (if applicable), and information about appeal rights. Owners will be notified about their rights and responsibilities regarding the appeal process.

WHAT IS CLEAN AND GREEN?

Clean and Green - Pennsylvania Farmland and Forest Land Assessment Act 319 of 1974, (as amended) is a state law authorized by the Pennsylvania Constitution that allows qualifying land that is devoted to agricultural and forest land use to receive a preferential assessment. Property owners with land of 10 acres or more in size may qualify for the Clean and Green program. Land tracts of less than 10 acres in size and actively producing an agricultural commodity may also be eligible. The Clean and Green program provides a tax reduction by permitting a "use value" to be assessed to qualifying land instead of "market value." Property owners may learn more about this program by visiting the reassessment website (www.vgsi.com/clarion-county-reassessment/). Clean and Green information may also be obtained by contacting the Clarion County Assessment Office at (814) 226-4000.