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Mecklenburg County 2019 Reval Underway

By Kevin Baker, Atlanta

The last property revaluation in Mecklenburg County, North Carolina created a firestorm of protests. It was 2011 when real estate values were at their lowest levels from the Great Recession and many owners felt their property was over assessed.

Work is underway on the next county-wide reappraisal. With new reforms in place, county officials are hoping things go more smoothly.

LOOKING BACK

Mecklenburg County property owners pleaded with county commissioners to redo the 2011 revaluation, saying their property values were over inflated. Short of a redo, they asked for an outside firm to study the revaluation.

An estimated \$7 million was spent to review the 2011 revaluation. A report later found that changes to property values as a result of the statistical evaluation were not that different from adjustments the county made after hearing appeals.

In response to the taxpayer uproar, county officials took steps to hire more staff, create a permanent division for revaluations, and overhaul the Board of Equalization and Review, which hears appeals.

LOOKING FORWARD

For the 2019 revaluation, site visits are being conducted on many of the county's 356,000 parcels, starting with problem areas identified after the previous reappraisal. More than 150,000 properties have been visited so far.

Officials expect tens of thousands of appeals after valuation notices go out in January 2019 simply because values have increased dramatically since 2011. Prices per square foot for commercial property are up 101%, industrial up 45%, and retail space up 77%.

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Tax bills do not automatically increase with rising property values because the tax rates are adjusted to keep total revenue relatively flat.

“We always calculate a revenue-neutral tax rate, so theoretically if the values go up we need a lower tax rate to generate the revenue that you need to provide services,” County Manager Dena Diorio told the *Charlotte Observer*. “So just because your value is going up, that doesn’t necessarily mean that your taxes are going to go up.”

However, Diorio adds a disclaimer: “People shouldn’t assume that they won’t see an increase in taxes, particularly people that have extraordinary value increases. Even if you lower the tax rate, it’s likely they’re still going to see a tax increase.”