

Ten Things Every Property Owner Should Know About Their Property Assessment and Taxes

By Sacramento County Assessor Ken Stieger

In my travels speaking throughout the county, I have found that many people, including some real estate professionals, have misconceptions about their property taxes. In an effort to help you better understand the property tax laws I have developed a list of ten things every property owner should know about property taxes, from the most frequently asked questions I receive during my talks.

- 1) Real Property (Land and Improvements) can only be reassessed (revalued for tax purposes) if there has been a change in ownership, new construction or a decline in value.
- 2) If you own and occupy your home, you may qualify for a homeowner's exemption on your property. This is currently a \$7,000 reduction from the assessed value of your home, which results in a \$70 savings per year. You can check your tax bill to see if your residence already has one.
- 3) Remodels, or repair and replacement of existing items on your property do not cause reassessment unless you have renovated the building to the extent it becomes substantially equivalent to a new building. Additions will be assessed at fair market value.
- 4) Refinancing will not cause a reassessment of the property. However, you may be asked to provide supporting documentation.
- 5) Any transfer between spouses will not cause a reassessment of the property.
- 6) Declines in the value of your property due to a natural calamity (Fire, Flood, Earthquake) or market conditions can reduce your property assessment temporarily until the condition is remedied. Requests/Applications for reduction can be made with the County Assessor.
- 7) Supplemental Assessments occur whenever a change in ownership or new construction occurs, and are in addition to your annual bill sent out each October. These bills are not normally paid through your impound account.
- 8) Transfers of title between parents and children, or in certain circumstances Grandparents and Grandchildren, may be excluded from reassessment if an application is filed with the County Assessor and certain conditions are met. Each individual owner can transfer property up to 1 million dollars worth of assessed value in addition to their primary residence to their children/parents/grandchildren.
- 9) If one owner of your residence is age 55 or older, and you purchase a residence of equal or lesser market value within the same county, you may transfer your old property tax base to your new property, if an application is filed with the County Assessor and certain conditions are met.
- 10) If you have a concern that your property is assessed too high, please contact your Assessor's office first to try and resolve the issue. If it cannot be resolved, then file an appeal of your assessment with your local Assessment Appeals Board under the County Board of Supervisors. You must file the appeal within 60 days of the date the bill or notice was sent, or for the annual main roll bill, between July 1st and November 30th of each year.

As Sacramento County Assessor, it is my intention to keep taxpayers informed. For additional information about the Assessor's office or Property Tax laws please visit my website at www.saccounty.net/assessor.