



# New York State Office of Real Property Services

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## Press Release

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## **46% of New York’s Taxpayers Receive Up-to-date Assessments in 2009**

### **300-plus municipalities take steps to ensure fair and transparent property taxes**

This year, 312 of New York’s city, town and county assessing units conducted property reassessments that met state standards. The 312 assessing units account for 46 percent of the parcels in the state and are comprised of 310 municipalities and 2 county assessing units (Tompkins and Nassau Counties).

A reassessment is the comprehensive review and updating of all property values in a community. Most communities across New York regularly conduct reassessments. By adjusting the “assessed value” of each property to reflect full market value, assessors do not raise or lower the property tax for a community, but rather “level the playing field” so that all properties are fairly assessed and pay only their fair share of taxes.

Without frequent reassessments, most taxpayers will pay either more or less than their fair share of taxes. By updating assessments to reflect current market values, taxpayers are protected from paying taxes on overassessed properties and can easily determine whether their assessments are fair and accurate.

Governor David A. Paterson said, “The property tax burden in New York State is simply too high – for homeowners and businesses alike. I have repeatedly called for a school property tax cap to control the unsustainable growth of property taxes. At the same time, the high burden makes it even more important that local officials take necessary steps to ensure that the tax is distributed fairly.”

Lee Kyriacou, Executive Director of the New York State Office of Real Property Services, said, “Reassessments are the best way to ensure that taxpayers pay only their fair share of taxes. The efforts of the assessors and local officials in these communities are crucial to local equity and transparency for taxpayers. While most local governments have made great progress in recent years, there are still hundreds of municipalities that have not updated assessments in decades - some since prior to World War II. The result is a lack of transparency and fairness for the taxpayers in the municipalities that do not reassess.”

National standards recommend annual updates of assessments to reflect the real estate market, with no more than six years between comprehensive reassessment/reappraisal activity. Nearly 300 New York State communities now conduct reassessments annually. Statewide, 619 municipalities have conducted reassessments within the past six years. For taxpayers in 200 New York municipalities, it has been between seven and twenty years since the last reassessment. An additional 164

municipalities have not reassessed in more than twenty years. The total number of assessing units statewide is 983. ([see attached data](#))

Municipalities and counties conducting reassessments are eligible to apply for State Aid for Quality Assessing. This program awards up to \$5 per parcel aid to qualifying assessing units and includes:

- Annual Aid – available to municipalities that commit to maintaining all assessments at market value for a six-year period. Up to \$5 per parcel is available each year.
- Triennial Aid – available to municipalities that conduct reassessments at market value, but that do not commit to reassessments in subsequent years. Up to \$5 per parcel is available no more than once every three years.

The Office of Real Property Services will be presenting “Excellence in Equity” certificates to the local officials in municipalities that conducted 2009 reassessments.

A spreadsheet is attached listing each county, city and town assessing unit, along with corresponding reassessment data, equalization rates and parcel counts. More information is available online:

[www.orps.state.ny.us](http://www.orps.state.ny.us)

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### **Misconceptions about Reassessments**

Much of the misunderstanding about reassessments is a result of a lack of understanding about a very technical subject.

**Misconception:** Assessors increase taxes.

**Reality:** Assessors are charged with ensuring that taxes are distributed fairly; they cannot raise taxes. Taxing jurisdictions (school districts, city councils, town boards, village boards, county legislatures and special districts) raise taxes by approving higher budgets. Put another way, the amounts of taxes to be collected are determined by taxing jurisdictions, whereas assessments are simply the means of distributing those taxes.

**Misconception:** Taxes will go up as a result of a reassessment.

**Reality:** Reassessments do not increase taxes. The result of a reassessment is that those who were unfairly paying too much in property taxes will pay less, and those who were unfairly paying too little will pay more. Reassessment merely corrects the inequities without any net increase in taxes collected.

**Misconception:** Increasing an assessment to market value will increase the property owner’s taxes.

**Reality:** Your taxes increase only if you were previously underassessed (and, therefore, paying too little in taxes). For each property owner that sees an increase in taxes, someone else will see their taxes decrease.

**Misconception:** Reassessment will hurt certain groups (for example, older residents or poorer neighborhoods).

**Reality:** The result of the reassessment depends on whether the individual’s property was undervalued or overvalued beforehand. In fact, typically reassessment will help homes and neighborhoods that have not appreciated as fast as the rest of the community.