

Appealing Your Property Assessment

Presented by The Citizens' Action Project, www.citizensactionproject.org
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Background

- You get 30 days to appeal once your "blue card" is mailed. Final deadline filing dates are shown online at <http://www.lakecountyil.gov/Assessor/BoardofReview/AppealFilingDeadline.htm>
- Is there something to appeal? Is the assessment increase reasonable? Is it worth your time for the amount of increase?
- There are only 2 reasons to appeal: your assessment is "unfair" or it is "inconsistent".
- If you qualify for one of these two issues, begin the appeal process; research, document, and communicate.
- Anything amiss in your property description? Does the assessor have the wrong # of baths, bedrooms, or square footage? If something is in error, fix it through a visit to the office of your township assessor. Bring your home plat of survey and floor plan.

Research

- Go to the Lake County Assessor's site to begin your research; <http://www.lakecountyil.gov/Assessor/Default.htm>
- Look up "like" houses, or what are known as "comparables". Do they support your case? For example:
 - Know your home's dimensions and characteristics. Go to <http://www.lakecountyil.gov/Assessor/AssessmentInformation/Default.htm> and click on the "Property Tax Assessment Information" link. Enter your PIN# or address and access your property's dimensions and home characteristics. Mistakes are common when taking into account # of bathrooms, type of basement, deck, square footage, etc.
 - Assessments vary by house size and quality grade. Check your size in square feet. Check your quality grade: poor, average, good. Each pays at a consistent rate. Make sure you are not being standardized. Are you in a neighborhood of homes with "good" quality but you consider your home to be of "average" quality?
 - You can find information on how to use the web tools at <http://www.lakecountyil.gov/Assessor/Documents/ComparisonGridpresentation.pdf>
- Read up on the appeal process. The Lake County Board of Review rules can be found at <http://www.lakecountyil.gov/Assessor/BoardofReview/Default.htm>
- Get a Home Appraisal by an independent, accredited, professional appraiser. According to the Board of Review, "appraisals trump everything".

Document

- Hire an appraiser if you are appealing to Lake County's Board of Review.
- Document supporting statistics from the Lake County Assessor's page on comparables. Remember to select comparables with similar style (e.g. ranch, 2-story, split-level, etc.), construction (e.g., brick, frame, with or w/o basement, etc.), age, size, quality and condition to your property. Also remember that the comparables should be in your immediate neighborhood.
- Document all your conversations.

Communicate

- Talk to your neighbors. Share information and seek out those who already have appealed.
- Talk to your Township Assessor before appealing. Sometimes they agree with you and may help.

Appeal Process Order

- First talk with your Township Assessor or the Chief County Assessor. Then,
- Appeal to the Lake County Board of Review. Then,
- Appeal to the state Property Tax Appeal Board (PTAB). Then,
- Appeal in a Court of Law.

Appeal

- Take your documentation and make the case. You have limited time (15 min.) so prioritize your points.
- Speak only about your assessment, not taxes. If you get off topic, they will correct you.
- "The odds are stacked against you". Stick to provable facts that are relevant.