



General Property Re-assessment

October 26, 2020

The City's general property re-assessment is nearing completion. The City's assessor has completed the process of assigning values for each City property and notices to property owners have been prepared. The notices are scheduled for mailing during the last week of October, 2020.

In addition to the first class mailing of the reassessment notices, the newly assessed values will be released on the City's website, www.fredericksburgva.gov.

Property owners who have evidence to suggest that their property value should be different than the assessment may appeal their findings to the assessor. Appointments will begin on November 11 and will last through November 19. Please contact the real estate office at (540) 372-1087 with questions or to make an appointment.

The City and the Assessor have prepared some Frequently Asked Questions to help further understand the assessment process.

[Frequently Asked Questions](#)

What is the purpose of a re-assessment?

State law requires all localities to evaluate property tax values to ensure that they are in line with current market value and to assure uniformity of assessments with similar properties. The City of Fredericksburg has hired Wingate Appraisal Service to conduct a professional assessment of real estate values in the City.

Is this the normal time of year for the City to do the re-assessment?

The COVID-19 pandemic affected the timing of this re-assessment, which under normal circumstances would have been completed in May and June of 2020 with an effective date of July 1, 2020.

However, travel restrictions and safety measures enacted to respond to the pandemic caused a six month delay in the completion of the assessment. The new values will take effect on January 1, 2021.

What other changes to the process have occurred because of the pandemic?

The City has changed the process for reviewing re-assessment records. The physical office of the Commissioner of the Revenue's real estate division is currently closed for safety reasons.

However, all property cards and other records are available for inspection upon request, and the City also has made much of the information for this assessment available on-line. Requests for worksheets may be made to the real estate office (540) 372-1087 or 2020reassessment@fredericksburgva.gov.

Are there other changes to know about?

This assessment is the first assessment that the City has conducted using the Ias World software package for computer-assisted mass appraisal. The staff of the City's Commissioner of the Revenue's office, the City's Information Technology Department, Ias World, and the City's contract assessor (Wingate Appraisal Service) all worked very hard during the transition to make the process as seamless as possible.

There may be differences in the appearance of workpapers and property record cards from prior assessments. If you have any questions, please contact the City's real estate office.

How was the re-assessment conducted?

The process began in 2019 with a study of real estate sales for the past two years. In addition, properties in the City were visited and viewed by the assessor. Additional information was gathered for commercial or multi-family properties, such as rental income.

The property visits were generally completed by March 2020. The additional time for the assessment allowed the Assessor to consider market data through the third calendar quarter of 2020. The Assessor also gave consideration to residential and commercial occupancies most impacted by virus-related economic factors.

Are all sales considered in determining the real estate market?

The general rule of thumb is that sales are considered if they are between a "willing buyer" and a "willing seller." Most sales fall into that category. However, the assessor might exclude sales from consideration if they are much higher or lower than typical sales in the marketplace. Excluded sales might represent sales under duress (such as from a foreclosure), or they may represent acquisitions made at a premium because of factors unique to a buyer's situation.

What types of factors are considered in assessing value?

In addition to the overall market, the assessors considered factors such as location, access to highways, proximity to shopping centers, and the condition and type of building. For certain types of properties the assessor evaluated the replacement cost less depreciation, utilizing the typical contract cost for such work. In keeping with generally accepted practice for appraisal, the Assessor considers all approaches to estimating value and gave the most consideration to the approach that yielded the most credible result.

What impact might this have on my taxes?

The purpose of the re-assessment is not to increase taxes, but to provide uniformity between assessed properties and an assessment of value in line with the real estate market at the current time.

This re-assessment will be unusual for the City in that it will take effect in the middle of the current fiscal year. The City's current fiscal year, FY 2021, began in July 2020 and runs through June of 2021. The budget for the fiscal year was constructed assuming that there would be no increase in the overall tax levy mid-year, and the City Council will be considering a new tax rate based on that assumption. It is important to remember that the impact of the new assessment and the new rate will be different for each individual property.

I don't agree with my assessment. What should I do?

If you disagree with your assessment, and feel it is out of line with market value and similar properties, please make an appointment to appeal to the Assessor. Please bring to the Assessor's attention any facts or data that you feel support a change in the assessment, and the Assessor will gladly reconsider the assessment on your property.

Property owners should bear in mind that the last assessment in the City was four years ago. Although this will not affect all properties, there are properties that will see significant changes in assessed value, based on current market conditions.

There are several ways to appeal your assessment to the Assessor.

- 1) Fill out the on-line appeal form available at www.fredericksburgva.gov. The form must be received by November 19th to be considered.
- 2) Request a telephone interview. Please contact us at (540) 372-1087 to schedule.
- 3) Request an on-line virtual interview, by calling us at (540) 372-1087.
- 4) Mail a copy of the appeal form and your supporting evidence via first class mail. The form must be postmarked by November 19th to be considered.

The Assessor's Office will be available for appeals during the following dates and times. If telephone lines are busy, please leave a message. Messages will be returned in the order in which they were received.

Wednesday	Nov 11	9:00 AM to 3:00 PM	Tuesday	Nov 17	1:00 PM to 6:00PM
Thursday	Nov 12	9:00 AM to 3:00 PM	Wednesday	Nov 18	9:00 AM to 3:00 PM
Monday	Nov 16	10:00 AM to 3:00 PM	Thursday	Nov 19	9:00 AM to 3:00 PM

Property owners appealing their assessment will be notified of the appeal results by mail prior to January 1st, 2021.

Property owners also have the option to appeal their assessment to the Board of Equalization, which will convene and hold hearings during the first half of 2021. Any property owner may appeal to the Board of Equalization, whether or not an appeal was made to the Assessor. The dates and times of the Board of Equalization appeals have not yet been set, but will be publicized on the City's web page (www.fredericksburgva.gov).