

## Jeffco Assessor's Valuations of Homes Are Surprisingly Inconsistent

Every homeowner in Colorado received a Notice of Valuation this week from their County Assessor. Your 2011-2012 property taxes will be based on this valuation, unless reduced through the appeal process.

Like other real estate professionals, I receive calls and emails at this time from homeowners shocked at the increase in valuation for their home and requesting my help in appealing it.

In past years I have provided one-on-one counseling to such homeowners, but this year I have made it so that anyone in Jeffco can do their own research using a website I created for that purpose. That information is in the far right column, but first...

This year I have gone further to check the consistency of valuation changes from house to house. I had assumed in the past that if one house in a neighborhood had, say, a 2% increase or decrease in

valuation, that I would find the same change in the houses next door — especially if they're in a subdivision that was built at the same time by the same builder.

Well, was I in for a surprise! For example, looking at 21 neighboring homes in Golden's Village at Mountain Ridge, the variations among similar homes was, frankly, shocking.

On Canyon Point Circle, eight of the 21 were reduced up to 4.8%, one was unchanged and the rest were increased up to 9.9%. Given the similarity of these homes and the fact that any change is governed by the same database of sold homes, these increases and decreases make no sense, and call into question the whole methodology used by the assessor's office.

Curiously, this inconsistency almost disappeared when I ana-

lyzed the more expensive homes in the subdivision, backing to open space on Mesa View Way. These homes were either unchanged in value or decreased by up to 1.8%, except for one home which increased in value by 5.3%.

You can do the same comparison on your own street, using a web shortcut which I created for this purpose. Go to [www.JeffcoAssesorValues.info](http://www.JeffcoAssesorValues.info) and enter a range of addresses — e.g. 100 to 600 Main Street. (Note: "Street" is a suffix and not part of the street's name.) Then click on the blue link for the first home and it will open a page where, if you scroll down, you'll see last year's valuation and this year's valuation. Then click "Next" on the top left of that web page to see the next home and so on. You'll be shocked, as I was, at how some homes on your street were increased and others decreased for no apparent reason. As I said above, it calls into

question the whole methodology — programmed into the assessor's computers — for arriving at valuations of homes, at least in Jefferson County. I haven't studied the other metro counties' valuations.

Based primarily on the year of construction, every section of the county is grouped together with similar sections into what the assessor calls a "Neighborhood." These can be far apart, but they are still considered the same neighborhood by the assessor for the purpose of comparing each property with homes that sold in the 24 months ending on June 30 of each even-numbered year.

The value assigned this year to your house is what it was worth on June 30th last year, so you can't

use sales that happened after June 30, 2010, to support your appeal of the valuation you just received.

### How to Appeal Assessor's Valuation of Your Home

The explanation of the appeal process on the Jeffco Assessor's website is not as clear as it could be, so I created a web page on which I made the process simpler and provided visual guidance.

Point your web browser to [www.HowToAppealJeffcoValuations.info](http://www.HowToAppealJeffcoValuations.info), and it will help you navigate the assessor's website to find the qualified sales which could support your appeal. If you still need assistance, call me and, time permitting, I'll help you further.

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**Jim Smith**

Broker/Owner

**Golden Real Estate, Inc.**

DIRECT: 303-525-1851

EMAIL: [Jim@GoldenRealEstate.com](mailto:Jim@GoldenRealEstate.com)

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