



PROPERTY APPRAISALS

What is an Appraisal?

A property appraisal is an estimate of a property's value. Property value is based on such factors as location, amenities, structural condition and recent sales of similar local properties.

A home appraiser conducts the process. The appraiser will do a walk-through of the property, noting anything that can alter the home's value. For example, if the house has a swimming pool but swimming pools aren't popular in the area, it might not add much value to the property—the pool might even detract from it.

The appraiser will sketch and take photos of the property layout and will look for any safety code violations. If there are any, you may need to fix them before the lender approves the loan.

Appraisals may be required for any type of property, including single-family homes, apartment buildings and condominiums, office buildings, shopping centers, industrial sites, and farms. The reasons for performing a real property appraisal are just as varied. They are usually required whenever real property is sold, mortgaged, taxed, insured, or developed. For example, appraisals are prepared for:

- Mortgage lending purposes
- Tax assessments and appeals of assessments
- Negotiation between buyers and sellers
- Government acquisition of private property for public use
- Business mergers, dissolutions, lease negotiations

Who Performs Home Appraisals?

Appraisers are third-party certified or licensed contractors, and the lender usually hires them. They are knowledgeable in real estate and are required to know how to evaluate a property on factors such as neighborhood growth, neighborhood housing trends and market conditions.

To be safe, make sure the appraiser is certified and deals with multiple lenders. If the appraiser only works with one other lender, he may have outside interests—and you may not receive a correct assessment.

Who Pays for Home Appraisals?

The cost of home appraisals depends on the property value, location, and size of your property. They cost a few hundred dollars and typically the buyer pays the fee at closing, although you can opt to pay it up-front. A good faith estimate—also known as a GFE—given to you by the lender will supply a fee for the appraisal.

A “drive-by appraisal” does not pay as much attention to detail as the walk-through, and most lenders will not accept this appraisal. Instead of walking through the home, the appraiser drives by the property and then researches real estate records to come up with an estimate.

These home appraisals are cheaper than traditional ones, but you should ask your lender if they will consider it before you purchase.

How to Protest Property Value

Appraisal districts must send required notices by May 1, or by April 1 if your property is a residence homestead, or as soon as practical thereafter. The notice will include the date and place the appraisal review board (ARB) will begin hearing protests. If you are dissatisfied with your appraised value or if errors exist in the appraisal records of your property, you should file a notice of protest with the ARB.

What Can Be Protested

The notice of protest may be filed using the model form on the Comptroller's website: comptroller.texas.gov/forms/50-132.pdf. The notice need not be on this form. Your notice of protest is sufficient if it identifies (1) the protesting person claiming an ownership interest in the property, (2) the property that is the subject of the protest and (3) dissatisfaction with an appraisal district determination.

You may protest your property's value in the following situations:

- the value the appraisal district placed on your property is too high and/or your property is unequally appraised
- the appraisal district denied a special appraisal, such as open-space land, or incorrectly denied or modified your exemption application
- the appraisal district failed to provide you with the required notices
- the appraisal district denied the circuit breaker limitation on appraised value for non-homestead real property

What is an ARB?

The ARB is an independent, impartial group of citizens authorized to resolve disputes between taxpayers and the appraisal district. Beginning on July 1, 2024 in counties with a population of less than 75,000, the local administrative district judge, or designee will continue to appoint ARB members. In counties with a population of 75,000 or more, the board of directors of the appraisal district will appoint the ARB members, including special panel ARB members to hear complex property cases where available.

When are Protests Filed?

You must file your notice of protest with the ARB no later than May 15 or 30 days after the appraisal district mailed the notice of appraised value, whichever is later. You may request an evening or Saturday hearing. The ARB will notify you at least 15 days in advance of the date, time, and place of your hearing. The ARB begins hearings around May 15 and generally completes them by July 20. You or your authorized representative may appear at the ARB hearing in person, by telephone conference call, videoconference, or by filing a written affidavit.

What Steps to Take to Prepare for a Protest Hearing

You should consult with the appraisal district staff about your property's value. Ask questions about items you do not understand. The appraisal district is required to provide copies of documents that you request, at no charge via first class mail or electronically by filing a written request to exchange electronic communications on a form prescribed by the Comptroller for that purpose. Many appraisal districts provide a great deal of information on their websites at no charge.

The following tips can help in achieving a successful appeal:

- Be on time and prepared for your hearing.
- Stick to the facts and avoid emotional pleas. The ARB has no control over the appraisal district's operations or budget, tax rates for local taxing units, inflation or local politics.
- Review the ARB hearing procedures.
- Present your information in a simple and well-organized manner.

website: comptroller.texas.gov/taxes/property-tax

PROPERTY APPRAISAL DISTRICTS

Bastrop County

212 Jackson Street
Bastrop, Texas 78602
512-303-1930
www.bastropcad.org

Burnet County

223 South Pierce Street
Burnet, Texas 78611
512-756-8291
www.burnet-cad.org

Caldwell County

610 San Jacinto
Lockhart, Texas 78644
512-398-5550
www.caldwellcad.org

Hays County

21001 North IH 35
Kyle, Texas 78640
512-268-2522
www.hayscad.com

Llano County

103 E Sandstone Street
Llano, Texas 78643
325-247-3065
www.llanocad.com

Travis County

8314 Cross Park Drive
Austin, Texas 78754
512-834-9317
www.traviscad.org

Williamson County

625 FM 1460
Georgetown, Texas 78626
512-930-3787
www.wcad.org

Texas Comptroller

www.window.state.tx.us