

Understanding Property Taxes

Property Tax Fact Sheet 1

Fact Sheet

This fact sheet explains why we have property taxes and how they are calculated for your property. It is one of a series of fact sheets designed to help you understand Minnesota’s property tax system.

Why do we have property taxes?

Local property taxes help fund local programs and services, such as public schools, fire and police protection, streets, libraries, and more. Property taxes fund school districts, towns, cities, counties, and other special taxing districts.

Some properties – including seasonal/cabin and commercial/industrial – are also subject to a state-level property tax. This “state general tax” goes into the state general fund.

Property taxes are generally a more stable source of revenue than sales or income taxes. Property taxes are less susceptible to economic, income, or spending trends.

What affects my property tax bill?

A number of things can affect your property tax bill, but local government spending and non-tax revenues will affect it the most. In general:

- Your property taxes may go up if local governments raise spending or receive less non-tax revenue (such as state aid).
- Your property taxes may go down if local governments reduce spending or receive more non-tax revenue.

Each year, local governments determine how much property tax revenue is needed to cover their spending – the **levy** (budget).

The value and classification (type) of property are used to determine your share of the levy. Other things – including programs that defer or reduce your property tax – also play a role.

How does my property value affect taxes?

The assessor determines the **estimated market value** (EMV) and classification of your property on January 2 each year.

The EMV does not directly affect your property tax bill. Instead, the **taxable market value** is used to calculate how much of the levy you will pay.

How does my property classification affect taxes?

The assessor classifies your property according to how it is used (homestead, apartment, cabin, farm, commercial-industrial, etc.).

Each class of property is taxed at a different percentage of its value. These **classification (class) rates** are set by state law.

Different class rates may result in some types of property paying a greater share of local property taxes than others. For example, commercial properties typically pay more than residential homesteads and agricultural properties.

How are my taxes determined?

First, your local jurisdiction determines how much property tax revenue is needed. Officials calculate the local tax **levy** by subtracting all non-property tax revenue from the total proposed budget.

$$\begin{array}{r}
 \text{Total Proposed Local Budget} \\
 - \text{Non-Property Tax Revenue (state aid, fees, etc.)} \\
 \hline
 = \text{Property Tax Revenue Needed (levy)}
 \end{array}$$

The levy is spread among all taxable properties according to their **tax capacity**. (A property's tax capacity is calculated by multiplying its taxable market value by its class rate.)

$$\text{Tax Capacity} = \text{Taxable Market Value} \times \text{Class Rate}$$

The **local property tax rate** is calculated by dividing the property tax revenue needed by the jurisdiction's total tax capacity.

$$\text{Local Tax Rate} = \frac{\text{Property Tax Revenue Needed (Levy)}}{\text{Total Tax Capacity (For All Properties)}}$$

Finally, the county auditor calculates and applies any credits, voter-approved school referendum levies, and the state general tax (for certain types of property).

By combining the above calculations, we get the **basic formula** to determine the tax due for an individual property.

$$\begin{array}{r} \text{Taxable Market Value} \\ \times \text{Class Rate} \\ \hline = \text{Tax Capacity} \\ \times \text{Local Tax Rate} \\ \hline = \text{Base Tax} \\ - \text{Credits} \\ + \text{Referendum Levy Amounts} \\ + \text{State General Tax (when it applies)} \\ \hline = \text{Total Property Tax Payable} \end{array}$$

What is a 'Truth in Taxation' notice?

Truth in Taxation notices are sent to all property owners each November, before local governments finalize their budgets for the coming year.

This notice is meant to help you understand how property taxes are determined and how you can get involved with local budgeting and taxation. It provides information about your property's:

- Value and classification
- Tax amounts for the current year
- Estimated taxes for the coming year under the local budgets being proposed

The notice also tells you when local officials will hold public meetings to discuss and finalize their budgets. These meetings are an opportunity to voice your opinion about the proposed spending.

You cannot appeal your property's market value, classification, or proposed taxes at these meetings.

What is a Property Tax Statement?

Property tax statements are mailed to all property owners by March 31 of each year.

The statement tells you how much property tax you owe for the year. It provides an itemized list of all your local property taxes (city or town, county, school district, etc.) It also will include any special assessments on your property, such as tax on "contamination value" or special assessments for road improvements.

Note: Your property's value and classification from the previous year are used to calculate the tax amount. You cannot appeal your tax amount.

When are my property taxes due?

Most property taxes are due on May 15 and October 15 (paid in equal installments).

If your total property tax is \$100 or less, the full amount is due on May 15.

If your property is classified as **agricultural**, the second payment is not due until November 15.

What can I get more information?

If you have questions or need more information:

- Go to www.revenue.state.mn.us
- Contact your County Assessor, Auditor, or Treasurer.