

# MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

between

\_\_\_\_\_ County and The Division of Property Assessments

**DATE:** \_\_\_\_\_

**TO:** \_\_\_\_\_, Assessor of Property

\_\_\_\_\_, County Mayor (or Executive)

**RE:** \_\_\_\_\_ County \_\_\_\_\_ Year Reappraisal Program

**FROM:** Tennessee Comptroller of the Treasury  
Division of Property Assessments

The purpose of this memorandum of understanding is to clarify the areas of responsibility for all parties involved in the reappraisal of \_\_\_\_\_ County. It is intended to express the requirements needed to successfully complete reappraisal and to define the extent of involvement expected of the Comptroller's Division of Property Assessments. A reappraisal program is defined as the updating of all values in the county by analyzing current information and establishing new tables, models, schedules, rates and depreciation.

Tenn. Code Ann. § 67-5-1601 provides for assessors of property to have the option to reappraise either on a 6- year cycle with an update of values in the third year, or to reappraise on a 4- or 5-year cycle with no updates, or the SBOE may consider a plan submitted by an assessor which would have the effect of maintaining real property values at full value as defined by law on a schedule at least as frequent as outlined in § 67-5-1601(a)(1). The resources available to the Division of Property Assessments enable them to provide technical assistance to counties during the reappraisal year; however, the amount of division involvement will be determined by the workload resulting from all counties that are scheduled for reappraisal during each year.

**The amount of Division of Property Assessments involvement must be determined and clearly understood prior to the county producing a plan for reappraisal. The assessor of property will prepare a plan that accomplishes reappraisal in accordance**

**with standards and procedures prescribed by the Division of Property Assessments. The reappraisal plan must include all specific items identified in this memorandum of understanding.**

## **I. County Responsibility**

The assessor of property will be responsible for ensuring that all phases of the reappraisal program are conducted in accordance with Division of Property Assessment's policies and procedures relating to **property valuation, sales verification, appeal defense and statistical standards**. The county must **resolve data quality reports, provide accurate property characteristics, provide adequate data entry, demonstrate its ability to organize and manage a program, provide adequate staffing and provide financial support**.

**A. Property Valuation:** All types of property will be valued following standard procedures.

**1. Residential** - Residential properties will be valued by determining the proper base rate for each residential improvement type in the jurisdiction. The base rates will be developed using sale properties with recently constructed improvements whenever possible to reduce the difficulties of estimating depreciation and to increase the accuracy of the land values. The base rate analysis will consider the new depreciation that will automatically be calculated when the year of reappraisal changes. The assessor of property shall retain all base rate analyses for appeal purposes. Appropriate depreciation and/or effective age will be used to adjust groups of parcels where market evidence supports it. When additional depreciation or effective age changes are used to adjust values, market analysis must be retained to support the adjustments. Individual property characteristics will not be improperly altered to achieve acceptable analysis results. Outbuildings and Yard Items (OBYs) will be valued using standard abbreviations and updated cost tables. The cost tables will be developed from nationally recognized cost services and calibrated to the local market. The assessor of property will retain all necessary supporting documentation for review and appeal purposes. Residential land will be valued using accepted appraisal practices and available computer techniques. All residential market area (neighborhood) delineation codes will be reviewed to determine their accuracy, and the necessary action will be taken to correct any changes indicated by the market since the last reappraisal program.

**2. Rural Land** - Rural land will be valued using standard rural land valuation procedures. Rural sales will be located and verified to determine if they meet the requirements of a valid transaction. All rural sales will be reviewed by the assessor of property or a staff member

with either the buyer, seller, or agent to determine the conditions of the sale and if any adjustments are needed. A rural land sales verification form will be completed on all rural sales. These forms will be maintained in the assessor of property's office for review and use in appeals. Rural land will be valued using the rural land valuation tables. Appropriate sales analysis must be conducted to produce a rural land schedule and to determine all factors affecting value. Areas of the county that cannot be valued using the base rural land schedule will be valued using the rural land schedule adjusted to the appropriate level of value. Land grade maps will be used to determine the appropriate land grade for each parcel. The land grade maps, if not already available, will be constructed by using Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) soil survey information. All maps will be updated to reflect the most current base features such as wooded areas and areas that have been cleared since the last reappraisal program. All rural market area (neighborhood) delineation codes will be reviewed to insure they conform to current market conditions.

**3. Commercial/Industrial Property** - All commercial and industrial property shall be valued using standard valuation procedures. The listing of commercial and industrial properties will be reviewed for accuracy. All commercial property will be reviewed to determine if valuation by the income approach is the most appropriate method. In these instances, it will be necessary to gather sufficient income and expense data from the market to calculate an indication of value by the income approach. Completed income and expense forms will be retained for review and appeal purposes. All income data must be analyzed by making comparisons with like properties such as comparing offices to offices, warehouses to warehouses, and restaurants to restaurants. All commercial sales will be verified to determine if any special circumstances such as personal property or unusual financing are included. Commercial and industrial base rates will be developed for each type of commercial and industrial improvement in the jurisdiction. This is typically accomplished using a combination of local information and a professional cost service. All industrial properties shall be revalued using the most appropriate method, typically the cost approach. All commercial and industrial land will be revalued using the most appropriate unit of comparison, and all pertinent information such as zoning will be indicated on the land valuation maps. All analyses and sales information used to determine the commercial and industrial land values will be retained by the assessor of property for review and appeal purposes. All commercial and industrial market area (neighborhood) delineation codes will be verified to determine if they need to be revised due to changes in the market.

**4. Small Tracts** - Land that does not qualify as a farm and is not part of an organized development is considered a small tract. It is typically valued as an individual unit and priced per unit or per acre. A total countywide small tract analysis must be accomplished in order to determine reasonable values. After the analysis has been accomplished and a pricing guide developed, the existing small tracts are to be reviewed to determine consistency. After making any needed adjustments to improve consistency, the small tracts will be revalued using accepted appraisal practices and any appropriate computer-assisted techniques. The assessor of property will maintain all analyses and sales information used in the valuation of small tracts for review and appeal purposes. All market area (neighborhood) delineation codes that influence the valuation of small tracts will be reviewed to determine accuracy, and any adjustments needed will be made.

**5. Unique Properties** - Usually, unique properties will exist in a county that will require special treatment. These can be lake properties, mobile homes, large industrial complexes, mineral interest, leasehold interest, etc. The reappraisal plan will address these properties and explain how they will be valued.

**B. Sales Verification:** A major element in the success of a reappraisal program is the completeness and accuracy of the sales file. The Division of Property Assessments maintains a publication entitled *Property Assessor's Procedures for Sales Data Collection and Verification* to guide assessors through this process. These procedures will be followed to ensure the necessary accuracy in sales analysis. Any attempt to influence the results of the analysis by inaccurate sales verification must be avoided. The quality of the final statistical analysis depends on the integrity of the sales file, and every effort should be made to ensure its accuracy. The assessor of property will maintain records on the verification of sales for review and appeal purposes.

**C. Appeal Defense:** Any reappraisal program must have the necessary data and information to defend the appraisals. The assessor of property and staff must have the ability to present the value-supporting data in a manner that provides the property owners and appeal boards with the information necessary to understand how and why the value conclusions were determined. The assessor of property and staff will resist making unnecessary changes just to satisfy the property owner when the appraisal is otherwise correct. All elements of the valuation process must consider the appeal process. An effort must be made to maintain sufficient data to defend the values, and this data includes the following: base rate analysis; sales analysis;

cost information; land valuation information; adjustments to sales; income and expense information; and any other information that will be useful in the appeal process.

**D. Statistical Standards for Reappraisal:** The Division of Property Assessments utilizes statistical standards developed by the International Association of Assessing Officers (IAAO) for evaluating the results of reappraisal programs. The reappraisal program should be completed with these standards as the goal. Failure to meet these standards indicate the reappraisal program may be flawed and unacceptable. The standards apply to property by its statutory classification such as residential, commercial/industrial, and farm. Within each classification, properties may be further stratified based on a detailed analysis of the information available. The data used to produce the analysis must be accurate and uninfluenced by personal bias. The discovery of inaccurate data that has an influence on the results of the statistical analysis will be considered in the overall evaluation of the program. If the results of the statistical analysis fail to meet acceptable standards, said results will be reported to the State Board of Equalization for appropriate action.

**E. Data Quality Reports:** Data quality reports include edits that enable the assessor to identify data problems. Since the success of a reappraisal program is determined by the accuracy of the data, each county must identify and resolve errors found on data quality reports. Typically, this information is produced from the assessor of property's computer file and analyzed locally. Counties utilizing the state computer-assisted mass appraisal (CAMA) system may contact Division of Property Assessments staff for assistance as needed to generate data quality reports. Counties operating independent CAMA systems are expected to accomplish this without Division assistance.

**F. Data Entry:** A reappraisal increases the amount of data entry because of changes and adjustments to the file, especially where extensive field reviews are required. Any plan for reappraisal must consider this additional data entry workload.

**G. Organization and Management:** The completion of a successful reappraisal program is dependent upon the ability of the assessor of property to organize work activities and to manage employees throughout the reappraisal cycle. Any reappraisal plan must consider topics including but not limited to: staffing (both in quantity and in assignment of duties), training, quality control, and office space.

**H. Approval of any cycle other than a 6-year cycle:** The assessor of property in any county that plans a 1,2,3,4, or 5-year reappraisal program must have approval by resolution from the county legislative body. The plan for reappraisal prepared by the assessor of property must be submitted for review to the county executive and the county legislative body. The county legislative body must provide the funding to accomplish the reappraisal program as outlined in the plan for reappraisal.

## **II. Division of Property Assessments' Responsibility:**

Tenn. Code Ann. § 67-5-1601 provides that all work (accomplished by the assessor of property) is subject to the supervision and approval of the director of the Division of Property Assessments. The Division of Property Assessments is required to supervise and direct all reappraisal and revaluation programs. The Division of Property Assessments' statutory responsibilities include providing technical assistance and ensuring the accuracy of the reappraisal program. All counties conducting reappraisal programs accept the condition of limited involvement from the Division of Property Assessments and agree to maintain records and provide sufficient data and reports to enable the Division of Property Assessments to evaluate the quality of the reappraisal program.

**A. Technical Assistance:** Technical assistance is provided to a county by staff members of the Division of Property Assessments. The amount of technical assistance to be provided by the Division of Property Assessments will be determined after considering available resources and existing workload of county reappraisal programs scheduled during each year.

### **Examples of technical assistance to the assessor's office may include:**

- Residential Base Rate Development
- Residential Analysis
- OBY Cost Tables Development
- Rural Land Schedule Development
- Homesite Analysis
- Commercial & Industrial Base Rate Development
- Income & Expense Analysis
- Commercial Market Analysis
- Industrial Property Appraisal
- Small Tract Sales Analysis
- Small Tract Pricing Guide Development
- Sales Adjustments Determination
- Sales Verification Instruction
- Unique Properties Appeal Preparation
- Data Preparation for Appeals Defense
- Overall Statistical Results Review
- Data Quality Reports Production
- Assessable Mineral Interest Valuation
- Assessable Leasehold Interest Valuation
- On-The-Job Training for Assessor's Staff
- Market Area (Neighborhood) Delineation Codes Review

**B. Modification of Responsibility**

Due to level of expertise, number of staff members, and resources available to the assessor of property, there may be a need to modify areas of responsibility in the memorandum of understanding. The purpose of the modification of responsibility is to provide latitude between the assessor and the division regarding the identified areas of responsibility. The following are specific modifications to this agreement that will be mutually beneficial for both parties and allow for better utilization of resources during the revaluation program:

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**III. Accuracy of Program**

The assessor of property will prepare a final value report at the end of the revaluation year that will give an overview of the reappraisal program and support the value indications. The accuracy of the reappraisal program shall be determined by a review of the supporting documentation for the following: base rate development; land valuation; application of market adjustments; market area (neighborhood) delineation codes analysis; rural land sales analysis; small tract analysis; identification and valuation of unique properties; completeness of the sales file; quality of records developed for appeal defense; results of the statistical analysis; resolution of the data quality reports; and correctness of property characteristic data.

**IV. Computer Appraisal System**

In the event the assessor of property chooses to change the current CAMA system, information regarding the new system and a detailed plan of implementation must be included with the reappraisal plan for approval by the State Board of Equalization.

**V. Failure to Comply**

It is the expressed intent of this memorandum of understanding to provide the county and the Division of Property Assessments with a clear understanding of the responsibility of each party

regarding the completion of the next reappraisal program. It is the intent of the Division of Property Assessments to take whatever action necessary to ensure the accurate and timely completion of the reappraisal program. Failure on the part of the county on any of the items agreed to herein shall result in the reporting of said failure to the State Board of Equalization for appropriate action.

**It is with full understanding that we accept the conditions identified in this memorandum of understanding and accept responsibility to accomplish all items identified herein. We recognize that failure on the part of the county legislative body or the assessor of property to complete the agreed to requirements will result in the action identified herein.**

**County Mayor (or Executive)** \_\_\_\_\_  
*Signature* \_\_\_\_\_  
*Date*

**Assessor of Property** \_\_\_\_\_  
*Signature* \_\_\_\_\_  
*Date*

**Manager**  
**Div. of Property Assessments** \_\_\_\_\_  
*Signature* \_\_\_\_\_  
*Date*

**Senior Manager**  
**Div. of Property Assessments** \_\_\_\_\_  
*Signature* \_\_\_\_\_  
*Date*

**Assistant Director**  
**Div. of Property Assessments** \_\_\_\_\_  
*Signature* \_\_\_\_\_  
*Date*