



**BASICS OF HOW PROPERTY IS APPRAISED
FOR
AD VALOREM TAXATION**

**CALDWELL COUNTY APPRAISAL DISTRICT
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This handout is intended to give property owners the basic framework of how property is appraised and does not include detailed information regarding property appraisal. For more information, please feel free to contact our office and one of our staff members will assist you with any questions you might have.

Thank you,

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INTRODUCTION

The Caldwell County Appraisal District is responsible for the appraisal of all real property and tangible business personal property within Caldwell County for ad valorem taxation. The District appraises property for 27 taxing units located within the boundaries of Caldwell County including:

Caldwell County	Lockhart ISD	Luling ISD
Prairie Lea ISD	Gonzales ISD **	Waelder ISD **
San Marcos ISD **	Hays ISD **	ACC **
City of Lockhart	City of Luling	City of Mustang Ridge **
City of Niederwald **	City of Uhland **	City of Martindale
City of San Marcos **	Plum Creek Conservation	Plum Creek Underground
Gonzales County Underground	Caldwell-Hays ESD #1	Caldwell ESD #2
Caldwell ESD #3	Caldwell ESD #4	Caldwell County MUD 1
Caldwell Valley MUD 1	Cotton Center MUD 2	
<i>** Only portions of Entity that is located inside the boundary of Caldwell County</i>		

Below is a brief summary of how the Caldwell County Appraisal District appraises property.

Mass Appraisal

In appraising property for ad valorem taxation the District utilizes a method called mass appraisal to calculate the value of a large number of properties. Mass appraisal is the process of valuing a group of properties as of a given date using common data, standardized methods and statistical testing. In mass appraisal, values for individual parcels should not be based solely on the sale price of a property; rather, valuation schedules and models should be consistently applied to property data that is correct, complete and up-to-date.

Market Value

In the State of Texas, the appraisal date for property tax purposes is January 1st of each year. Property must be appraised at its fair market value as of January 1st. The Texas Property Tax Code defines market value as:

The price at which a property would transfer for cash or its equivalent under prevailing market conditions if exposed for sale IN THE OPEN MARKET with a reasonable time for the seller to find a purchaser, both the seller and the buyer know of all uses and purposes to which the property is adapted and for which it is capable of being used and of the enforceable restrictions on its use and both the seller and buyer seek to maximize their gains and neither is in a position to take advantage of the other.

Highest and Best Use

In order to determine the market value of property, the appraiser must determine the “highest and best” use of the property. The highest and best use is the use of the property that is its most profitable use at a specific time (as of January 1), that is legally permissible, physically possible and financially feasible. Highest and best use is not always the actual current use of the property. The only time highest and best use is not considered is in the appraisal of a residence homestead property. In this instance, the residence homestead value must be determined solely on the basis of its current use.

Data Collected

The District staff begins the appraisal process by performing data collection of all property. Staff appraisers will inspect each property, noting individual characteristics of the property that affect value, such as square footage, age, quality of construction, physical conditions, restrictions of use of the property, topography or terrain, etc... The District has developed valuation schedules and models based on different types of property. Each property will be placed on the appropriate model based on its individual characteristics.

Statistical Analysis and Ratio Studies

Models are calibrated and adjusted annually through the use of ratio studies and statistical analysis. The District will compare actual sales prices of properties to the value produced to that property through the model and determine the appropriate adjustment that is needed for the model. Ratio studies allow the District to measure and evaluate the two major aspects of mass appraisal models:

Level of Appraisal Accuracy – the overall ratio of appraised values to market values of property within the same category or market area.

Level of Appraisal Uniformity- the degree to which properties are appraised at equal percentages of market value.

Value Approaches

Because the market value of an unsold property is not only unknown but also uncertain, the District’s appraisers use three different views of market value in appraising property.

THE SALES COMPARISON/MARKET APPROACH

This approach asks the question, “What are properties similar to this property selling for?” In the absence of a sale of the subject, sales prices of comparable properties are usually considered the best indicator of market value. The sales comparison approach models the behavior of the market by comparing the properties being appraised (Subject

property) with similar properties that have recently sold (Comparables). Comparable sales are selected for similarity to the subject property. Their sales prices are then adjusted for their differences from the subject. Finally, a market value for the subject is estimated from the adjusted sales prices of the comparable sales.

THE INCOME APPROACH TO VALUE

This approach asks, “What would an investor pay in anticipation of future income from the property?” The income approach is used to appraise types of property that generate income, such as office buildings, hotels or retail centers. This approach is based on the principle that the value of an investment property reflects the quality and quantity of the income it is expected to generate over its life. That is, value is the estimated present value of future benefits (chiefly income and proceeds from the sale of the property).

Estimating the value of an income-producing property is done by capitalization. Simply put, this is the division of present income by an appropriate rate of return to estimate the value of the income stream.

In doing the income approach, the District will look at the market for typical rents and expenses of similar properties as it is the fee simple estate being appraised. The typical formula that is used in the income approach is:

$$\begin{array}{r} \text{Potential Gross Rent} \\ \text{Less} \\ \text{Vacancy and Collection Loss} \\ \text{Plus} \\ \text{Miscellaneous Income} \\ \text{Equals} \\ \text{Effective Gross Rent} \\ \text{Less} \\ \text{Allowed Operating Expenses} \\ \text{Equals} \\ \text{Net Operating Income} \\ \text{Divided By The} \\ \text{Capitalization Rate} \end{array}$$

COST APPROACH

This approach asks “How much would it cost to replace the property with one of equal utility?” The cost approach is justified in part by the principal of substitution; an informed buyer will pay no more for an improved property than the price of acquiring a vacant site and constructing a substitute building of equal utility, assuming no costly delays in construction. The cost approach requires estimates of land value, accrued depreciation and the current cost of constructing the improvements. Depreciation is subtracted from the current construction cost to obtain an estimate of improvement value.

A land value that reflects the value of the site as if vacant and available to be developed to its highest and best use is added to the value of the improvements.

The steps in the cost approach are:

Estimate land value as if vacant at highest and best use

Estimate replacement cost of new improvements

Estimate the accrued depreciation of improvements

Physical deterioration
Functional obsolescence
External obsolescence

Subtract the accrued depreciation from the total cost new of improvements

Add land value and depreciated improvement value to arrive at total value

The cost approach works best for new construction, as there is very little depreciation to account for. The cost approach is also a reliable method for unique properties that have no available sales comparables.

DEPRECIATION

Depreciation schedules, for mass appraisal purposes, can be developed from market data. Sales are grouped by building type, land and miscellaneous improvement values are subtracted, leaving a building residual value. The building residual value is subtracted from the replacement cost new (RCN) to determine the dollar amount of depreciation. The market derived depreciation is divided by the RCN to determine the percentage of depreciation. These percentages can be plotted against the effective age to create a curve through data to correlate the depreciation to age. This data can then be used to create depreciation tables.

CONSIDERATION OF VALUE APPROACH BY PROPERTY TYPE

The appropriateness of each valuation approach varies with the type of property under consideration. The table below ranks the relative usefulness of the three approaches in the mass appraisal of major types of properties. The table assumes there are no major statutory barriers to obtaining cost, sales and income data. Although certain approaches tend to produce better results for a given type of property, the use of two or more approaches should produce greater accuracy.

Type of Property	Cost Approach	Sales/Market Approach	Income Approach
Single Family Residential	2	1	3
Multi-Family Residential	3	1,2	1,2
Commercial	3	2	1
Industrial	1,2	3	1,2
Non-Agricultural Land	-	1	2
Agricultural Land	-	2	1
Special Purpose	1	2,3	2,3

LAND VALUATION

In appraising land the appraiser will take into consideration the four basic factors that affect land values:

- Physical Attributes of the Site (such as topography)
- Economic Conditions (such as location)
- Government Influences (such as zoning)
- Social Standards (such as country club)

There are four methods of appraising land used by our appraisers:

1. Sales/Market Approach:
This is the preferred method if sufficient sales data of vacant land is available. This method produces the most reliable indication of land value. In using this method the appraiser must make adjustments to the comparable sales for financing, time, location characteristics, physical characteristics and any restrictions to the land.
2. Allocation By Ratio:
This method works well for appraising lot values in a residential subdivision where few vacant lot sales are available. In this method the appraiser will:
 - Identify comparables sales of improved land;
 - Estimate the ratio of land value to property value ratio;
 - Apply the typical ratio to estimate the land value of the subject property.
3. Allocation By Abstraction;
In this method the appraiser will find the sale of a comparable improved property and subtract the depreciated replacement cost new of the improvement to arrive at the land value.
4. Capitalization of Ground Rent (Income Approach):

To capitalize a ground rent the appraiser must have reliable income information of rents of similar land and divide the market rent by the appropriate capitalization rate to produce an indication of value.