

# Frequently Asked Questions About Texas Property Tax Appeals

*O'Connor discusses frequently asked questions about Texas property tax appeals.*

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Thanks to growing property values and taxes, homeowners and businesses across Texas are feeling the strain like never before. Even with recent overhauls to the homestead and over-65 exemptions, many are still facing unprecedented spikes in value. These new exemptions primarily reduces school taxes, which make up the largest portion of the bill, while county, MUD, and dozens of other property taxes are untouched. This has led to increasing bills, acting as a financial drain.

As taxes rise and economic woes increase, more Texans than ever are exploring property tax appeals. These protests range from simple appraiser corrections to full-on lawsuits against appraisal districts and are one of the primary ways outside of exemptions that can lower taxes. Most Texans are not even aware that tax appeals exist, let alone know how to file them. We often receive questions about the process, so we will try to answer as many of those questions here.

## Reasons to File an Appeal

At the end of March or in early April, property owners receive a notice of appraised value from the appraisal district (CAD). By studying this document, owners will be able to see if there are any errors. First, check to see if all the basic information is right. Owners should check that the name of the owner is correct, all exemptions they qualify for are listed, the size and classification of



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their property are correct, and confirm any other information. Many times, there can be clerical errors in the appraisal process that could lead to higher property values. Any errors should be appealed.

Next, check the property values on the notice. There will be either two or three. Market value is what the property would get if sold on the open market, as estimated by the CAD. Appraised value is the market value with its growth controlled by laws, statutes, and caps. Finally, some notices may have a taxable value. This is the appraised value that has been lowered by exemptions and other reductions. This is the value that has tax rates applied to it to create bills. If these values are significantly higher than they were a year ago, then they could be appealed, hopefully landing a reduction.

### What is Unequal Appraisal?

One of the main reasons to appeal is unequal appraisal. Under the Texas Constitution, all properties in an area with the same characteristics, such as size or age, should be appraised at the same level. If two properties are alike but are being taxed differently, then that is a textbook reason to appeal. This can be determined by studying appraisal records for your neighborhood and comparing the property to those of others. Unequal appraisal is typically one of the most common and successful reasons for appealing.

### Can Appeals Lower Taxes?

Protests can absolutely lower property taxes, though they do not do so directly. They challenge the property values, rather than the taxes. Since values are used as the basis of taxation, getting the value reduced lowers the tax burden, just as an exemption does. By lowering the figure that tax rates are applied to, owners often see their entire tax bill significantly lowered.

### What Evidence do Owners Need to Win a Property Tax Appeal?

This somewhat depends on the grounds of the appeal. If owners are aiming to prove unequal appraisal, they will need to bring several appraisal records for their property and similar properties in their area to demonstrate the differences in appraisal. Owners will need to photograph their property and those that they are making the comparison to. If owners are protesting on value, they will need sales records for properties in the area dating back up to three years. Owners will need to photograph their property to show any damage or deferred maintenance that would lower their property value. Repair estimates are also useful to back up this claim, as they can put a solid number on the issue.

### Does Appealing the Value Lower the Selling Price of a Home?

No, though this is a common misconception. Protesting only lowers the value when it comes to taxation, not what it would get on the open market. Just like exemptions will not drop the home's

sale price, neither will appeals. In fact, a successful appeal can often be a boon, as having a lower tax bill makes the home more attractive to buyers. High property taxes are one of the major reasons that people do not buy homes, so having a lower potential tax bill is a nice bonus.

### What is the Deadline to File an Appeal?

The statewide appeal deadline is May 15, though there are some caveats. If that date is on a weekend, then it rolls over to the next workday. Also, the deadline is either May 15 or 30 days after the notice of appraised value was sent, whichever is later. This means that a late notice could give owners more time to appeal. The notice should have the appeal deadline on it as well. Sometimes counties will extend the deadline, as Harris County did in 2025, adding an extra week. Owners should be sure to file before the final date, as they will not get a second chance.

### What are the Property Tax Appeal Stages?

A protest can go through many different stages before a settlement is reached, or it can be settled right out of the gate. First, an informal appeal to the CAD is made. If a settlement is rejected or inadequate, then it can be pushed to a formal protest with the appraisal review board (ARB). This is the last stage of administrative appeals. If owners wish to protest the decision of the ARB, then they must use litigation. This includes binding arbitration and judicial appeals. While administrative appeals can be made solely by a taxpayer, litigation requires an attorney.

### What is the Appraisal Review Board?

The ARB is a board of three experts that acts as impartial arbiters between the owner and the CAD. Often tax professionals and real estate experts in their own right, the ARB will hold formal hearings that see the evidence of the taxpayer against the evidence of the CAD. They will then decide on which side has more merit. Because of the formal nature of the hearing, more evidence is required from the taxpayer to make their case, so owners should have everything mentioned in the evidence section if they go to this level.

### Are Tax Appeals Often Successful?

While it can vary between counties, most appeals will result in a reduction. In 2024, over 74% of informal appeals and 66% of formal ones ended with reductions. The success of informal appeals is usually tied to the CAD, as some are more generous than others. Formal appeals are decided by evidence far more than initial appeals, so they can be harder to win. Appeals with professional representation tend to be more successful than those launched by taxpayers alone.

### Can a Failed Appeal Increase the Values or Taxes?

No, the values or taxes will never increase if owners have an unsuccessful appeal. One of the largest benefits of protesting is that there is no risk. Many taxpayers also fear retaliation by the CAD for contesting values, but this is also unfounded. Appealing is a right under the Texas Constitution and should be practiced without fear.

### Do Owners Need Professional Representation to Appeal?

No, as it is the right of every Texan to protest their taxes. Having professional support does make things easier and increases the chances of winning, but it is certainly possible to do it independently. Since protests are rare, owners can often get an informal reduction simply by challenging the CAD's values, though owners will want to have as much evidence as possible. Most Texans do not protest, so carrying out an appeal is certainly a big step in the right direction and can be rewarding.

### Should Owners Appeal Annually?

While businesses often do, O'Connor recommends that homeowners file every year as well. This is because property values are tied to the real estate market, which fluctuates every year, making values unpredictable. Likewise, tax rates are based on the annual budgets of taxing entities, so these will also be different on an annual basis. Protesting every year ensures that the values are correct, and multiple appeals tend to build upon each other. This chain of success can lead to even greater savings in the long run.

### What are Common Appeal Mistakes that Taxpayers Make?

Missing the deadline is the biggest one, as once it passes, the option to appeal is gone. Gathering the wrong evidence is also another big issue. It is common for taxpayers to focus on the wrong issues, such as high taxes instead of high values. Whether it is appraisals or real estate sales, owners must use the right comparable properties, which match the attributes of the home or business the closest. Most of these errors can be avoided by being informed about the process.

### About O'Connor:

O'Connor is one of the largest property tax consulting firms, representing 185,000 clients in 49 states and Canada, handling about 295,000 protests in 2024, with residential property tax reduction services in Texas, Illinois, Georgia, and New York. O'Connor's possesses the resources and market expertise in the areas of property tax, cost segregation, commercial and residential real estate appraisals. The firm was founded in 1974 and employs a team of 1,000 worldwide. O'Connor's core focus is enriching the lives of property owners through cost effective tax reduction.

Property owners interested in assistance appealing their assessment can enroll in O'Connor's Property Tax Protection Program™. There is no upfront fee, or any fee unless we reduce your

property taxes, and easy online enrollment only takes 2 to 3 minutes.

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