White Paper
Techniques that Prepare You for Reduced Financial Support from State Government

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Using CAMA to Accomplish More

As funding becomes more restricted at the state level, local governments are having to step up to provide more financial support for their schools, hospitals, libraries, public employees' pensions, emergency services, and more.

Some jurisdictions may rely on property tax revenue to help cover increasing expenses and, perhaps, even raise property taxes. As these officials demand that all property owners pay their fair share, taxpayers will begin looking more critically at property valuations. That means appraisal and tax offices will need to accomplish a lot more work with increasingly limited resources.

To prepare for additional responsibilities and scrutiny, these offices need to consider a vendor-partner that can help them build and support an infrastructure powered by proven, industry-leading software for property assessments and tax administration. Such an infrastructure would facilitate systems, processes, and automation to help their offices operate at peak efficiency.

Ideally, the same partner can offer expertise in mass appraisal services to ensure property data is clean, accurate, and up to date when executing a jurisdiction-wide reassessment. Using the powerful combination of accurate data and best-in-class computer-assisted mass appraisal (CAMA) software — especially a system with in-software market modeling capabilities — appraisers can calculate the most equitable and defendable valuations.

How can you successfully implement new software and execute a reassessment at the same time? The answer is to model the Town of Greenburgh, New York.

Attaining 100 Percent of True Market Value

The Town of Greenburgh’s last reassessment was executed in 1956. After its completion, the assessor’s office could only reassess a property when a building or demolition permit was granted. Even then, the office could only add a contributory value to the total assessment based on improvements made.

By 2015, local property values equaled approximately 3.09 percent of true market value. The few properties that received valuation adjustments took the assessor’s office nearly 30 minutes to calculate because they didn’t work with CAMA software.

To complicate matters, villages within the town calculated property valuations for their own tax rolls. The village’s valuations often conflicted with the town’s.

Recognizing the valuation disparity between similar properties, owners began challenging property values. Because valuations were difficult to defend, the city refunded approximately $10 to $12 million in property tax revenue every year.
To right the ship, the Town of Greenburgh ordered a citywide reassessment and the implementation of a CAMA system.

The town assessor and the vendor-partner prepared the community through regular public meetings, flyers, media coverage, and a public access website featuring the latest news about the initiative. As data collectors gathered property information, the vendor trained the assessor’s office on their new CAMA system and made necessary software adjustments to meet the town’s unique needs.

Greenburgh and their vendor-partner entered newly collected property data into the CAMA software. They chose comparable properties and developed models for use in the in-software market modeling tool. After a 60-year wait, the town assessor finally had valuations that reflected 100-percent market value.

When the same vendor executes CAMA software and reassessment simultaneously, their team can properly set up models, validate data, and ensure models and valuations are accurate. Future reassessments will go more smoothly when those elements are in place.

The Town of Greenburgh is already reaping valuable dividends. With the town’s new, accurate property valuations, the villages no longer need to calculate their own — saving taxpayers approximately $120,000 a year. The town assessor now uses the new CAMA system to complete property values in a quarter of the time it once took. Plus, more challenges are dismissed during appeals because property valuations are much easier to defend. This will curb the loss of tax revenue and help ensure long-term budget stability.

Achieving Success Against A Contested Reassessment

When looking for the right partner and solution, it’s important to ask these essential questions. Are the products and services offered by a vendor with a long history of appraisal and tax expertise? Does the vendor invest significantly in its software and services? Will those investments ensure the jurisdiction receives a return on initial investment for decades to come? Will the vendor still be in business in five or ten years?

Instead of reviewing a list of software features; focus on achieving tangible, immediate, and long-term business results, such as continuous software improvements, streamlined workflows, and improved services.

When Washington County, Pennsylvania, received a court order to conduct its first reassessment in nearly 35 years, they weighed these same questions. They chose a highly experienced vendor-partner with a stellar track record for reassessments that resulted in fair, equitable, and defendable property values.

Washington County followed a similar process to the Town of Greenburgh. They educated and provided updates to an initially resistant public about the reassessment, sent data collectors into the field, implemented industry-leading appraisal and tax software, chose comparable properties and tested valuation models, and received needed training and ongoing software support and upgrades to maximize their investment.
Their partner also introduced appraisal desktop verification. After entering collected data into new CAMA software, the partner took street-level images of all properties. The assessor could compare them to determine if qualitative decisions made by data collectors, such as the condition of the properties, were accurate. This helped ensure data was uniform and complete, and that all property owners were treated equally.

Desktop verification also covered mapping the entire 784 square-mile county, including its 120,000 properties, and comparing county property records and maps with current aerial views. Layering these sources, they uncovered inaccuracies within well-established records and identified property upgrades, such as additions and new outbuildings.

Using desktop verification, the partner electronically updated, corrected, and organized old and incomplete property records, including tax maps, forms, and documents.

Despite a 35-year gap between reassessments, Washington County established clean, baseline property data and achieved fair and accurate valuations.

**Leveraging Appraisal Desktop Verification**

Even well-kept records need to be verified. Jurisdictions that keep impeccable records can also benefit from appraisal desktop verification. Bethel and Greenwich, Connecticut, are working with their vendor-partner to ensure property data is accurate and up to date.

These jurisdictions use a sketch validation technique that takes a vector sketch out of the CAMA system and converts it into a geo-based layer. When placed over recent aerial photography, they can verify whether existing data is accurate or if the property owner made improvements, such as additions and patios. With desktop verification, communities can update property records without a larger-scale reassessment.

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"A reassessment is something that skips generations and no one knows what to expect. It’s important to prepare your constituents for it."

— Brad Boni
Chief Appraiser
Washington County, Pennsylvania

**Why Public Engagement Is Essential**

Both the Town of Greenburgh, New York, and Washington County, Pennsylvania, enjoyed successful reassessments because they worked with their vendor-partner to educate and update property owners.

Most citizens had never been through reassessments before. To put more minds at ease, the assessor’s offices and vendor-partner took the following measures.

- **Distributed brochures.** These educational tools announced the reassessments, explained the vendor’s role in them, provided FAQs, and invited taxpayers to a series of public meetings.

- **Held public meetings.** Property owners, realtors, rotary groups, homeowners’ associations, and more attended meetings to hear updates and ask questions. The town assessor in Greenburgh hosted more than 60 such gatherings.

- **Hosted a public access website.** Citizens had 24-hour access to news about the reassessments, local property assessment and valuation data, and the names, photos, and license plate numbers of data collectors.

Through all these measures, the assessors’ offices and vendor-partner earned the confidence of property owners, helped data collectors gain easier access to properties, and reduced the number of phone calls and requests for information that had to be fielded by office staff.
The Right Partner Is Out There

The benefits of using best-in-class appraisal and tax technology, coupled with technology-driven mass appraisal services, speak for themselves. While introducing new software and reassessment services at the same time may seem intimidating, the end result and long-term benefits are well worth the effort. Just ask any jurisdiction that’s taken the initiative and reaped the rewards.

So how do you get started? Focus on research. Ask tough questions. Reach out to your current provider, or ask others about their solutions. Learn as much as possible about the technology and the financial strength and stability of the vendor providing it.

Identifying the right vendor-partner is becoming mission critical across local governments. Find one with the expertise and range of industry-leading software and services to meet the needs of your jurisdiction and office. Also, be sure to choose a partner that will be there for you now and for many years to come.

The right partner is out there and is prepared to maximize the efficiency of your office and calculate accurate, equitable, and defendable property valuations.

About Tyler Technologies

Tyler Technologies (NYSE: TYL) is a leading provider of end-to-end information management solutions and services for local governments. Tyler partners with clients to empower the public sector — cities, counties, schools, and other government entities — to become more efficient, more accessible, and more responsive to the needs of their constituents.

For nearly 80 years, Tyler has been a recognized leader in the appraisal and tax industry and has a track record to prove it. We have provided solutions to 49 states, 26 state capitals, four Canadian provinces, The Commonwealth of the Bahamas, and other international locations. Tyler’s CLT Appraisal Services remains the oldest and only national mass appraisal services company, appraising more than 31 million parcels — that’s equal to one out of every four houses in the U.S. — since the company’s inception in 1938.

With our rich history, CLT offers experience and expertise in appraisal services, property valuation modeling, and analysis that’s unmatched in the industry. When using technology-driven mass appraisal services through Tyler Verify™ — the most complete property data verification service that meets International Association of Assessing Officers standards for desktop review — we can eliminate the costs and time associated with traditional field visits, and deliver high quality street-level images, thorough data review, validation of CAMA sketch accuracy against ortho-photography, and virtual in-the-office inspections. CLT uses Tyler Verify to collect and verify an average of 60,000 parcels monthly.

You can count on Tyler to help you administer reliable, fair and equitable taxation through best-in-class software solutions, including iasWorld®, Orion™, and AES California™. Hundreds of veteran assessors and industry experts built their countless years of experience and knowledge into these leading appraisal and tax administration software solutions which, to date, have been used to collectively value and manage more than 65 million parcels, and produce more than 19 million assessment notices and 13 million tax bills every year.

If Tyler software implementation is part of your solution, we won’t just collect and input your property data. We will help you adjust your Appraisal & Tax Solutions to meet the unique needs of your jurisdiction. When Tyler executes CAMA software and reassessment simultaneously, our team can properly set up models, validate data, and ensure the models and valuations are accurate. Future reassessments will go more smoothly when those elements are in place.

Contact Tyler to learn more about these and other leading Appraisal & Tax Solutions.

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