

APPRAISAL THEORY

An appraisal, in itself, is nothing more than an opinion of value. This does not imply, however, that one opinion is necessarily as good as another; there are valid and accurate appraisals, and there are invalid and inaccurate appraisals. The validity of an appraisal can be measured against the supporting evidence from which it was derived, and its accuracy against that very thing it is supposed to predict - the actual behavior of the market. Each is fully contingent upon the ability of the appraiser to record adequate data and to interpret that data into an indication of value.

Appraising real property, like the solving of any problem, is an exercise in reasoning. It is a discipline, and like any discipline, it is founded on fundamental economic and social principles. From these principles evolve certain premises which, when applied to the valuation of property, serve to explain the reaction of the market. This section concerns itself with those concepts and principles basic to the property valuation process. One cannot overstate the necessity of having a workable understanding of them.

BUNDLE OF RIGHTS

Real estate and real property are often used interchangeably. Generally speaking, real estate pertains to the real or fixed improvements to the land such as structures and other appurtenances, whereas real property encompasses all the interests, benefits and rights enjoyed by the ownership of the real estate.

Real property ownership involves the Bundle of Rights Theory which asserts that the owner has the right to enter it, use it, sell it, lease it, or give it away, as he so chooses. Law guarantees these rights, but they are subject to certain governmental and private restrictions.

The Governmental restrictions are found in its power to:

- tax property
- take property by condemnation for the benefit of the public, providing that just compensation is made to the owner (Eminent Domain)
- police property by enforcing any regulations deemed necessary to promote the safety, health, morals, and general welfare of the public
- provide for the reversion of ownership to the state in cases where a competent heir to the property cannot be ascertained (Escheat)

Private restrictions imposed upon property are often in the form of agreements incorporated into the deed. The deed also spells out precisely which rights of the total bundle of rights the buyer is acquiring. Since value is related to each of these rights, the appraiser should know precisely which rights are involved in his appraisal.

Appraisals for Ad Valorem tax purposes generally assume the property is, owned in the "Fee Simple", meaning that the total bundle of rights is, considered to be, intact.

THE NATURE AND MEANING OF VALUE

An appraisal is an opinion or estimate of value. The concept of value is basic to the appraisal process and calls for a thorough understanding. The American Institute of Real Estate Appraisers' Appraisal Terminology Handbook, 1981 edition, offers the following definitions of value:

"The measure of value is the amount (for example, of money) which the potential purchaser probably will pay for possession of the thing desired."

"The ratio of exchange of one commodity for another, for example, one bushel of wheat in terms of a given number of bushels of corn; thus the value of one thing may be expressed in terms of another thing. Money is the common denominator by which value is measured."

"It is the power of acquiring commodities in exchange, generally with a comparison of utilities - the utility of the commodity parted with (money) and that of the commodity acquired in the exchange (property)."

"Value depends upon the relation of an object to unsatisfied needs; that is, supply and demand."

"Value is the present worth of future benefits arising out of ownership to typical users and investors."

With these definitions, one can see that value is not an intrinsic characteristic of the commodity itself. On the contrary, value is determined by people, created by desire, modified by varying degrees of desire, and reduced by lack of desire. Throughout the definitions a relationship between the purchase and the commodity (property) is implied; this relationship is "value". A purchaser desires a property because it is a useful commodity in that it has utility. Utility is a prerequisite to value, but utility standing alone does not sufficiently cause value. If a great supply of a useful commodity exists, as for example air, needs would be automatically satisfied, desire would not be aroused, and therefore value would not be created. Therefore, besides having utility, to effectively arouse desire, the commodity must also be scarce.

One additional factor is necessary to complete the value equation . . . the ability to become a buyer. A translation must be made of desire into a unit of exchange; a buyer must have purchasing power. The relationship is now complete . . . the commodity has utility and is relatively scarce, it arouses desire, and the buyer is able to satisfy that desire by trading for it . . . value is created. The question is how much value, and herein lays the job of the appraiser.

Numerous definitions of value have been offered, some simple and some complex. It would seem though that any valid definition of value would necessarily embody the elements of utility, desire, scarcity and purchasing power. Furthermore, the concept of value very rarely stands alone. Instead, it is generally prefixed by a descriptive term that serves to relate it to a specific appraisal purpose or activity such as "loan value". Since appraisals are made for a variety of reasons, it is important for the appraiser to clarify the specific purpose for the appraisal and the type of value that he seeks to estimate.

For Ad Valorem Tax purposes, the value sought is generally market value. The descriptive term "market" indicates the activity of buyers and sellers. MARKET VALUE is the justifiable price, or that price which an informed and intelligent buyer, fully aware of the existence of competing properties, and not being compelled to act, would be justified in paying for a particular property.

VALUE IN USE AS OPPOSED TO VALUE IN EXCHANGE

We have stated that there are a number of qualifying distinctions made in reference to the meaning of value. One of the most common and probably the most important relative to the purpose of this manual is the distinction between value in use and value in exchange. We have defined market value as a justifiable price which buyers, in general, will pay in the market. The question arises then as to the value of property which, by nature of its special and highly unique design, is useful to the present owner, but relatively less useful to buyers in the market. One can readily see that such a property's utility value may differ greatly from its potential sales price. It is even possible that no market for such a property exists. Such a property is said to have value in use, which refers to the actual value of a commodity to a specific person, as opposed to value in exchange, which aligns itself with market value, referring to the dollar-value of a commodity to buyers in general.

THE PRINCIPLE OF SUPPLY AND DEMAND

Among the forces which constantly operate to influence supply and demand are population growth, new techniques in transportation, purchasing power, price levels, wage rates, taxation, governmental controls, and scarcity. A sudden population growth in an area would create an increase in demand for housing. If the demand increased at a higher rate than the supply, this could soon be a scarcity of housing. If the demand was backed up by purchasing power, rentals and sale prices would tend to increase and ultimately reach a level which would tend to stimulate more builders to compete for the potential profits and thus serve to increase the supply toward the level of demand. As the supply is increased demand would begin to taper off. This would cause rentals and sale prices to level off. When builders, due to increases in labor and material rates, are no longer able to build cheaply enough to meet the new level of prices and rents, competition would tend to taper off and supply would level off. The cycle is then complete.

Balance occurs when reasonable competition serves to coordinate supply with demand. When competition continues unchecked to produce a volume that exceeds the demand, the net returns to investors are no longer adequate to pay all the costs of ownership, resulting in loss rather than profit and consequently, a decline in values.

A community may well support two shopping centers, but the addition of a third shopping center may increase the supply to excess. If this occurs, one of two effects are caused; either the net dollar return to all the shopping centers will be reduced below that level necessary to support the investment, or one of the shopping centers will flourish at the others' expense.

THE PRINCIPLE OF HIGHEST AND BEST USE

The highest and best use for a property is that use which will produce the highest net return to the land for a given period of time within the limits of those uses which are economically feasible, probable and legally permissible.

On a community-wide basis, the major determining factor in highest and best use is the maximum quantity of land that can be devoted to a specific use and still yield a satisfactory return. Once a suitable basic use has been chosen for a specific property, each increment of capital investment to the existing or planned improvement will increase the net return to the land only up to a certain point; after this point is reached; the net return to the land begins to diminish. This is the point at which the land is at its highest and best use

For example, in planning a high-rise office building, each additional upper floor represents an extra capital expenditure that must yield a certain return to the investor. This return will be dependent upon the levels of economic rent that the market will bear at the time. An optimum number of floors can be calculated above which the income yield requirements of additional expenditures will no longer be satisfactorily met. This, notwithstanding the possibility of other more particular considerations, should determine the number of stories of the building.

Detailed analysis of this type is rarely thrust upon the property tax appraiser. Generally, the tax appraiser will find the most prudent course of action is to consider the present use and follow development rather than anticipate it.

THE PRINCIPLE OF CHANGE

The impact of change on the value of real property manifests itself in the life cycle of a neighborhood. The cycle is characterized by three stages of evolution: the development and growth evidenced by improving values; the leveling off stage evidenced by static values; and finally, the stage of infiltration of decay evidenced by declining values.

The highest and best use today is not necessarily the highest and best use tomorrow. The highest and best use of the land often lies in a succession of uses. A declining single-family residential neighborhood may be ripe for multi-family, commercial or industrial development. Whether it is or not depends upon the relationship of present or anticipated future demand with existing supply.

In estimating value, the appraiser is obligated to reasonably anticipate the future benefits, as well as the present benefits derived from ownership and to evaluate the property in light of the quality, quantity, and duration of these benefits based on actual data as opposed to speculative or potential benefits that may or may not occur.

THE PRINCIPLE OF SUBSTITUTION

Value is created by the marketplace. It is the function of translating demand into a commodity of exchange. When the benefits and advantages derived from two properties are equal, the lowest priced property receives the greatest demand, and rightfully so. The informed buyer is not justified in paying anything more for a property than it would cost to acquire an equally desirable property. That is to say that the value of a property is established as that amount for which equally desirable comparable properties are being bought and sold in the market. Herein lies an approach to value . . . and the basis of the valuation process.

TRADITIONAL APPROACHES TO VALUE

In the preceding paragraphs, it has been stated that value is an elusive item that occurs in many different forms, and that the forces and influences which combine to create, sustain, or destroy value are numerous and varied. It is the appraiser's function to define the type of value sought, to compile and to analyze all related data, and giving due consideration to all the factors which may influence the value, to process and translate that data into a final opinion or *estimate of value*. This he must do for each property he is to appraise.

The processing of this data into a conclusion of value generally takes the form of three recognized approaches to value: Cost Approach, Sales Comparison Approach, and Income Approach. Underlying each of the approaches is the principle that the justifiable price of a property is no more than the cost of acquiring and/or reproducing an equally desirable substitute property. The use of one or all three approaches in the valuation of a property is determined by the quantity, quality, and accuracy of the data available to the appraiser.

The *COST APPROACH* involves making an estimate of the depreciated cost of reproducing or replacing the building and site improvements. *Reproduction Cost* refers to the cost at a given point in time of reproducing a replica property, whereas *Replacement Cost* refers to the cost of producing improvements of equal utility. Depreciation is deducted from this cost new for loss in value caused by physical deterioration, and functional or economic obsolescence. To this depreciated cost is then added the estimated value of the land, resulting in an indication of value derived by the Cost Approach.

The significance of the Cost Approach lies in its extent of application . . . it is the one approach that can be used on all types of construction. It is a starting point for appraisers, and therefore it is a very effective “yardstick” in any equalization program for Ad Valorem taxes. Its widest application is in the appraisal of properties where the lack of adequate market and income data preclude the reasonable application of the other traditional approaches.

The *SALES COMPARISON APPROACH* involves the compiling of sales and offerings of properties that are comparable to the property being appraised. These sales and offerings are then adjusted for any dissimilarity, and a value range obtained by comparison of said properties. The approach is reliable to the extent that the properties are comparable, and the appraiser's judgment of proper adjustments is sound. The procedure for using this approach is essentially the same for all types of property with the only difference being the elements of comparison.

The significance of this approach lies in its ability to produce estimates of value, which directly reflect the attitude of the market. Its application is contingent upon the availability of comparable sales, and therefore finds its widest range in the appraisal of vacant land and residential properties.

The *INCOME APPROACH* measures the present worth of the future benefits of a property by the capitalization of the net income stream over the remaining economic life of the property. The approach involves making an estimate of the “effective gross income” of a property, derived by deducing the appropriate vacant and collection losses from its estimated economic rent, as evidenced by the yield of comparable properties. From this figure then is applicable operating expenses are deducted, the cost of taxes and insurance, and reserve allowances for replacements resulting in an estimate of net income, which may then be capitalized into an indication of value.

The approach obviously has its basic application in the appraisals of properties universally bought and sold on their ability to generate and maintain a stream of income for their owners. The effectiveness of the approach lies in the appraiser's ability to relate to the changing economic environment and to analyze income yields in terms of their relative quality and durability.

APPLYING THE COST APPROACH

If the highest and best use of a property is its present use, a valid indication of value may be derived by estimating the value of the land, and adding the land value to the depreciated value of the structures on the land; the resulting equation being . . .

	Estimated Land Value
+	Estimated Replacement Cost New of Structures
-	Estimated Depreciation
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=	Indication of Property Value

Since estimating the land value is covered in a separate section, this section will address itself to the two remaining elements, Replacement Cost and Depreciation.

REPLACEMENT COST

Replacement Cost is the current cost of producing an improvement of equal utility to the subject property; it may or may not be the cost of reproducing a replica property. The distinction being drawn is one between *Replacement Cost*, which refers to a substitute property of equal utility, as opposed to *Reproduction Cost*, which refers to a substitute replica property. In a particular situation the two concepts may be interchangeable, but they are not necessarily so. They both, however, have application in the Cost Approach to value, the difference being reconciled in the consideration of depreciation allowances.

In actual practice, outside of a few historic type communities in this country, developers and builders, for obvious economic reasons, replace buildings, not reproduce them. It logically follows that if an appraiser's job is to measure the actions of knowledgeable persons in the marketplace, the use of proper replacement costs should provide an accurate point of beginning in the valuation of most improvements.

The replacement cost includes the total cost of construction incurred by the builder whether preliminary to, during the course of, or after completion of the construction of a particular building. Among these are material, labor, all subcontracts, builders' overhead and profit, architectural and engineering fees, consultation fees, survey and permit fees, legal fees, taxes, insurance, and the cost of interim financing.

ESTIMATING REPLACEMENT COST

There are various methods that may be employed to estimate replacement cost new. The methods widely used in the appraisal field are the quantity-survey method, the unit-in-place or component part-in-place method, and the model method.

The *Quantity-Survey Method* involves a detailed itemized estimate of the quantities of various materials used, labor and equipment requirements, architect and engineering fees, contractor's overhead and profit, and other related costs. This method is primarily employed by contractors and cost estimators for bidding and budgetary purposes and is much too laborious and costly to be effective in everyday appraisal work, especially in the mass appraisal field. The method, however, does have its place in that it is used to develop certain unit-in-place costs which can be more readily applied to estimating for appraisal purposes.

The *Unit-in-Place Method* is employed by establishing in-place cost estimates (including material, labor, overhead and profit) for various structural components. The prices established for the specified components are related to their most common units of measurement such as cost per yard of excavation, cost per lineal foot of footings, and cost per square foot of floor covering.

The unit prices can then be multiplied by the respective quantities of each as they are found in the composition of the subject building to derive the whole dollar component cost, the sum of which is equal to the estimated cost of the entire building, providing of course, that due consideration is given to all other indirect costs which may be applicable. This components part-in-place method of using basic units can also be extended to establish prices for larger components in-place such as complete structural floors (including the finish flooring, sub-floor, joists and framing) which are likely to occur repeatedly in a number of buildings.

The *Model Method* is still a further extension, in that unit-in-place costs are used to develop base unit square foot or cubic foot costs for total specified representative structures in place, which may then serve as "models" to derive the base unit cost of comparable structures to be appraised. The base unit cost of the model most representative of the subject building is applied to the subject building and appropriate tables of additions and deductions are used to adjust the base cost of the subject building to account for any significant variations between it and the model.

Developed and applied properly, these pricing techniques will assist the appraiser in arriving at valid and accurate estimates of replacement cost new as of a given time. The cost generally represents the upper limit of value of a structure. The difference between its replacement cost new and its present value is depreciation. The final step in completing the Cost Approach then is to estimate the amount of depreciation and deduct said amount from the replacement cost new.

DEPRECIATION

Simply stated, depreciation can be defined as “a loss in value from all causes.” As applied to real estate, it represents the loss in value between market value and the sum of the replacement cost new of the improvements plus the land value as of a given time. The causes for the loss in value may be divided into three broad classifications: Physical Deterioration, Functional Obsolescence, and Economic Obsolescence.

Physical Deterioration pertains to the wearing out of the various building components, referring to both short-life and long-life terms, through the action of the elements, age, and use. The condition may be considered either “curable” or “incurable”, depending upon whether it may or may not be practical and economically feasible to cure the deficiency by repair and replacement.

Functional Obsolescence is a condition caused by either inadequacies or over-adequacies in design, style, composition, or arrangement inherent to the structure itself, which tends to lessen its usefulness. Like physical deterioration, the condition may be considered either curable or incurable. Some of the more common examples of functional obsolescence are excessive wall and ceiling heights, excessive structural construction, surplus capacity, ineffective layouts, and inadequate building services.

Economic Obsolescence is a condition caused by factors extraneous to the property itself, such as changes in population characteristics and economic trends, encroachment of inharmonious land uses, excessive taxes, and governmental restrictions. The condition is generally incurable in that the causes lie outside the property owner's realm of control.

ESTIMATING DEPRECIATION

An estimate of depreciation represents an opinion of the appraiser as to the degree that the present and future appeal of a property has been diminished by deterioration and obsolescence. Of the three estimates necessary to the Cost Approach, it is the one most difficult to make. The accuracy of the estimate will be a product of the appraiser's experience in recognizing the symptoms of deterioration and obsolescence and the ability to exercise sound judgment in equating all observations to the proper monetary allowance to be deducted from the replacement cost new. There are several acceptable methods that may be employed:

Physical deterioration and/or functional obsolescence can be measured by observing and comparing the physical condition and/or functional deficiencies of the subject property as of a given time with either an actual or hypothetical, comparable, new, and properly planned structure.

Curable physical deterioration and functional obsolescence can be measured by estimating the cost of restoring each item of depreciation to a physical condition as good as new or estimating the cost of eliminating the functional deficiency.

Functional and economic obsolescence can be measured by capitalizing the estimated loss in rental due to the structural deficiency, or lack of market demand.

Total accrued depreciation may be estimated by first estimating the total useful life of a structure and then translating its present condition, desirability, and usefulness into an effective age (rather than an actual age) which would represent that portion of its total life (percentage) which has been used up.

Total accrued depreciation may also be estimated by deriving the amount of depreciation recognized by purchasers as evidenced in the prices paid for property in the market place; the loss of value being the difference between the cost of replacing the structure now and its actual selling price (total property selling price less the estimated value of the land).

APPLYING THE SALES COMPARISON APPROACH

An indication of the value of a property can be derived through analysis of the selling prices of comparable properties. The use of this technique, often referred to as the “comparison approach” or “comparable sales approach”, involves the selection of a sufficient number of valid comparable sales and the adjustment of each sale to the subject property to account for variations in time, location, site and structural characteristics.

SELECTING VALID COMPARABLES

Since market value has been defined as the price which an informed and intelligent buyer, fully aware of the existence of competing properties and not being compelled to act is justified in paying for a particular property, it follows that if market value is to be derived from analyzing comparable sales, that the sales must represent valid “arms length” transactions. Due consideration must be given to the conditions and circumstances of each sale before selecting the sales for analysis. Some examples of sales that do not normally reflect valid market conditions are as follows:

Sales in connection with; foreclosures, bankruptcies, condemnations, and other legal actions.

Sales to or by federal, state, county, and local governmental agencies.

Sales to or by religious, charitable, or benevolent tax-exempt agencies.

Sales involving family transfers, or "love and affection."

Sales involving intra-corporate affiliations.

Sales involving the retention of life interests.

Sales involving cemetery lots.

Sales involving mineral or timber rights, and access or drainage rights.

Sales involving the transfer of part interests.

In addition to selecting valid market transactions, it is equally important to select properties that are truly comparable to the property under appraisal. For instance, sales involving both real property and personal property or chattels may not be used unless the sale can be adjusted to reflect only the real property transaction, nor can sales of non-operating or deficient industrial plants be validly compared with operating plants. The comparable sales and subject properties must exhibit the same use, and the site and structural characteristics must exhibit an acceptable degree of comparability.

PROCESSING COMPARABLE SALES

All comparable sales must be adjusted to the subject property to account for variations in time and location. The other major elements of comparison will differ depending upon the type of property being appraised. In selecting these elements, the appraiser must give prime consideration to the same factors that influence the prospective buyers of particular types of properties.

The typical homebuyer is interested in the property's capacity to provide the family with a place to live. A primary concern is with the living area, utility area, number of rooms, number of baths, age, structural quality and condition, and the presence of a modern kitchen and recreational conveniences of the house. Equally important is the location and neighborhood, including the proximity to and the quality of schools, public transportation, and recreational and shopping facilities.

In addition to the residential amenities, the buyer of agricultural property is primarily interested in the productive capacity of the land, the accessibility to the marketplace, and the condition and functional utility of the farm buildings and structures on the land.

The typical buyer of commercial property, including warehouses and certain light industrial plants, is primarily concerned with its capability to produce revenue. Of special interest will be the age, design and structural quality and condition of the improvements, the parking facilities, and the location relative to transportation, labor markets and trade centers.

In applying the sales comparison approach to commercial/industrial property, the appraiser will generally find it difficult to locate a sufficient number of comparable sales, especially of properties that are truly comparable in their entirety. It will, therefore, generally be necessary to select smaller units of comparison such as price per square foot, per unit, per room, etc. In doing so, great care must be exercised in selecting a unit of comparison that represents a logical common denominator for the properties being compared. A unit of comparison that is commonly used and proven to be fairly effective is the Gross Rent Multiplier, generally referred to as G.R.M., which is derived by dividing the gross annual income into the sales price. Using such units of comparison enables the appraiser to compare two properties that are similar in use and structural features but differ significantly in size and other characteristics.

Having selected the major factors of comparison, it remains for the appraiser to adjust each of the factors to the subject property. In comparing the site, adjustments for size, location, accessibility, and site improvements must be made. In comparing the structures, adjustments for size, quality, design, condition, and significant structural and mechanical components also must be made. The adjusted selling prices of the comparable properties will establish a range in value in which the value of the subject property will fall. Further analysis of the factors should enable the appraiser to narrow the range down to the value level that is most applicable to the subject property.

APPLYING THE INCOME APPROACH

INTRODUCTION

The justified price paid for income producing property is no more than the amount of investment required to produce a comparably desirable return; and since the market can be analyzed in order to determine the net return actually anticipated by investors, it follows that the value of income producing property can be derived from the income which it is capable of producing. What is involved is an estimate of income through the collection and analysis of available economic data, the development of a property capitalization rate, and the processing of the net income into an indication of value by employing one or more of the acceptable capitalization methods and techniques.

THE PRINCIPLES OF CAPITALIZATION

Capitalization is the process for converting the net income produced by property into an indication of value. Through the years of appraisal history, a number of procedures have been recognized and employed by appraisal authorities in determining the value of real estate by the income approach. Although present-day practice recommends only certain methods, we will at least touch on the other approaches to value - even though they may not be accepted in today's appraisal scene because they do not accurately reflect the current market conditions.

EXPLORING THE RENTAL MARKET

The starting point for the appraiser is an investigation of current economic rent in a specific area in order to establish a sound basis for estimating the gross income that should be returned from competitive properties. The appraiser must make a distinction between economic rent and the rent which property is normally expected to produce on the open market, as opposed to control rent or the rent which property is actually realizing at the time of the appraisal due to lease terms established some time in the past.

The first step then is to obtain specific income and expense data on properties that best typify normal market activity. The data is necessary to develop local guidelines for establishing the economic rent and related expenses for various types of properties.

The next step is to similarly collect income and expense data on individual properties, and to evaluate the data against the established guidelines. The collection of income and expense data (I & E) is an essential phase in the valuation of commercial properties. The appraiser is primarily concerned with the potential earning power of the property. The objective is to estimate its expected net income. Income and Expense Statements of past years are valuable only to the extent that they serve this end. The statements must not only be complete and accurate but must also stand the test of market validity. Consideration of the following factors should assist the appraiser in evaluating the income and expense (I & E) data in order to arrive at an accurate and realistic estimate of net income.

QUESTIONS RELATING TO INCOME DATA

- A. Was the reported income produced entirely by the subject property? Very often the rent will include an amount attributable to one or more additional parcels of real estate. In this case, it would be necessary to obtain the proper allocations of rent.
- B. Was the income attributable to the subject property as it physically existed at the time of the appraisal, or did the appraisal include the value of leasehold improvements and remodeling for which the tenant paid in addition to rent? If so, it may be necessary to adjust the income to reflect economic rent.
- C. Does the reported income represent a full year's return? It is often advisable to obtain both monthly and annual amounts as verification.
- D. Does the income reflect current economic rent? Is either part or all of the income predicated on old leases? If so, what are the provisions for renewal options and rates?
- E. Does the reported income reflect 100% occupancy? What percentage of occupancy does it reflect? Is this percentage typical of this type of property, or is it due to special non-recurring causes?
- F. Does the income include rental for all marketable space? Does it include an allowance for space, if any, which is either owner or manager occupied? Is the allowance realistic?
- G. Is the income attributable directly to the real estate and conventional amenities? Is some of the income derived from furnishings and appliances? If so, it will be necessary to adjust the income or make provisions for reserves to eventually replace them, whichever local custom dictates.
- H. In many properties an actual rental does not exist because the real estate is owner occupied. In this event it is necessary to obtain other information to provide a basis to estimate economic rent. The information required pertains to the business operation using the property. Proper analysis of the annual operating statements of the business, including gross sales or receipts, can provide an accurate estimate of economic rent. Information requirements for a few of the more common property uses are as follows:

Retail Stores	The annual net gross sales. (Gross sales less returned merchandise).
Hotels and Motels	The annual operating statement of the business. If retail or office space is leased in these properties, obtain the actual rent paid.
Theaters	The annual gross receipts (including admissions and concessions) and seating capacity.
Automobile Parking	The annual gross receipts.

ANALYSIS OF EXPENSE DATA

The appraiser must consider only those expenses that are applicable to the cost of ownership; that is, those expenses that are normally owner incurred. Any portion of the expenses incurred directly or indirectly by the tenant should not be considered. Each expense item must stand the test of both legitimacy and accuracy. How do they compare with the established guidelines and norms? Are they consistent with the expenses incurred by comparable properties?

Management - refers to the cost of administration. These charges should realistically reflect what a real estate management company would actually charge to manage the property. If no management fee is shown on the statement; an allowance must be made, by the appraiser. On the other hand, if excessive management charges are reported, as is often the case, the appraiser must disregard the reported charges and use an amount that he deems appropriate and consistent with comparable type properties. The cost of management bears a relationship with the risk of ownership and will generally range between 4 to 10% of the gross income.

General expenses - may include such items as the cost of services and supplies not charged to a particular category. Unemployment and F.I.C.A. taxes, Workmen's Compensation, and other employee insurance plans are usually legitimate deductions when employees are a part of the building operation.

Reimbursed expenses - refer to the cost associated with the maintenance of public or common areas of the commercial property. This expense is passed on to the tenants and should, therefore, only be considered when the amount of reimbursement is included as income.

Miscellaneous expenses - is the "catch-all" category for incidentals. This item should reflect a very nominal percentage of the income. If expenses reported seem to be excessive, the appraiser must examine the figures carefully in order to determine if they are legitimate expenses and if so, to allocate them to their proper category.

Cleaning expenses - are legitimate charges. They are for such items as general housekeeping and maid service and include the total cost of labor and related supplies. All or a portion of the cleaning services may be provided by outside firms working on a "contract" basis. Cleaning expenses vary considerably and are particularly significant in operations such as offices and hotels. "Rule of thumb" norms for various operations are made available through national management associations. The appraiser should have little difficulty in establishing local guidelines.

Utilities - are generally legitimate expenses and if reported accurately, need very little reconstruction by the appraiser, other than to determine if the charges are consistent with comparable properties. Local utility companies can provide the appraiser with definite guidelines.

Heat and Air Conditioning - costs are often reported separately and in addition to utilities. The expenses would include the cost of fuel other than the above-mentioned utilities, and may include, especially in large installations, the cost of related supplies, inspection fees, and maintenance charges. These are generally legitimate costs, and the same precautions prescribed for "utilities" are in order.

Elevator expenses - including the cost of repairs and services, are legitimate deductions, and are generally handled through service contracts. These fees can generally be regarded as fairly stable annual recurring expenses.

Decorating and minor alterations - are necessary to maintain the income stream of many commercial properties. In this respect they are legitimate expenses. However, careful scrutiny of these figures is required. Owners tend to include the cost of major alterations and remodeling which are, in fact, capital expenditures, and as such are not legitimate operating expenses.

Repairs and Maintenance - expenses reported for any given year, are not necessarily a true indication of the average or typical annual expense for these items. For example, a statement could reflect a substantial expenditure for a specific year (possibly because the roof was replaced and/or several items of deferred maintenance were corrected); yet the statement for the following year may indicate that repairs and maintenance charges were practically nil. It is necessary for the appraiser to either obtain complete economic history on each property in order to make a proper judgment as to the average annual expense for these items, or include a proper allowance based on norms for the type and age of the improvements to cover annual expenses. Since it is neither possible nor practical to obtain enough economic history on every property, the latter method is generally used and the amounts reported for repairs and maintenance are then estimated by the appraiser.

Insurance - Caution must be used in accepting insurance expense figures. Cost shown may be for more than one year or may be for blanket policies including more than one building. It is generally more effective for the appraiser to establish his own guidelines for insurance. He must also be careful to include only items applicable to the real estate. Fire extended coverage and owner's liability are the main insurance expense items. Separate coverage on special component parts of the buildings, such as elevators and plate glass, are also legitimate expenses.

Real Estate Taxes - In making appraisals for tax purposes, the appraiser must exclude the actual amount reported for real estate taxes. Since future taxes will be based on his appraised value, the appraiser must express the taxes as a factor of the estimated value. This can be done, by including an additional percentage in the capitalization rate to account for real estate taxes.

Depreciation - The figure shown for depreciation on an operating statement is a “bookkeeping figure” which the owner uses for Internal Revenue purposes and should not be considered in the income approach. This reflects a tax advantage that is one of the benefits of ownership.

Interest - Although interest is considered a legitimate expense, it is always included in the Capitalization Rate. Most property is appraised as if it were “free and clear”; however, the appraiser does consider the interest of a current mortgage in the Capitalization Rate build-up.

Land Rent - When appraising for real estate tax purposes, only the sum of the leasehold and the leased fee is usually considered. Land rent is not deducted as an expense. Considered separately, rent from a ground lease would be an expense to the leasehold interest and an income to the leased fee. However, if land were rented from another property to supply additional parking for example, that land rent would be an allowable expense.

It is obvious that there are some expense items encountered on operating statements that the appraiser should not consider as allowable. This is because he is interested in legitimate cash expenses only. Income statements are usually designed for income tax purposes where credit can be taken for borrowing costs and theoretical depreciation losses.

It is virtually impossible and certainly not always practical to obtain a complete economic history on every commercial property being appraised. On many properties, however, detailed economic information can be obtained through the use of Income and Expense forms. One must realistically recognize the fact that the data obtainable on some properties is definitely limited.

In most cases, the gross income and a list of the services and amenities furnished can be obtained during the data gathering operation. However, in order to ensure a sound appraisal, it may be necessary to estimate the fixed and operating expenses. This is best accomplished by setting guidelines for expenses, based on a percent of Effective Gross Income or a cost per square foot of leased area. These percentages or costs will vary depending on the services supplied and the type of property.

CAPITALIZATION METHODS

The most prominent methods of capitalization are Direct, Straight Line, Sinking Fund, and Annuity. Each of these is a valid method for capitalizing income into an indication of value. The basis for their validity lies in the action of the market, which indicates that the value of income producing property can be derived by equating the net income with the net return anticipated by informed investors. This can be expressed in terms of a simple equation:

Value = Net Income divided by Capitalization Rate

The *Straight Line* and *Sinking Fund* methods are both actual forms of Straight Capitalization, with one using Straight Line recapture and the other using Sinking Fund recapture. Both methods follow the same basic principles as Direct Capitalization, differing only in that they provide for separate capitalization rates for land and buildings; the building rate differing from the land rate in that it includes an allowance for recapture.

Straight Line Capitalization allows for “recapture” based on remaining economic life of the building - implying that at the end of that period of time, there would be a zero-improvement value. There are three fallacies in this thinking. First, the potential buyer (investor) has no intention of holding the property that long. The average investment period might average ten years. Second, the investor anticipates that at the end of that period he will either get all his money back or will make a profit. And third, is the depreciation allowance possible in connection with federal income taxes.

Depreciation allowances begin to “run out” between seven and ten years, so the advantages of owning the property are reduced considerably. A prudent owner may choose to sell the property at this point and re-invest in another property so that he may begin the depreciation cycle again and continue to take full advantage of the favorable tax laws.

For these reasons, the Straight Line Capitalization Method does not usually follow what the market indicates.

Straight Line recapture calls for the return of investment capital in equal increments or percentage allowances spread over the estimated remaining economic life of the building.

Sinking Fund Recapture calls for the return of invested capital in one lump sum at the termination of the estimated remaining economic life of the building. This is accomplished by providing for the annual return of a sufficient amount needed to invest and annually re-invest in “safe” interest-bearing accounts, such as government bonds or certificates of deposit, which will ultimately yield the entire capital investment during the course of the building's economic life.

Annuity Capitalization lends itself to the valuation of long-term leases. In this method, the appraiser determines, by the use of annuity tables, the present value of the right to receive a certain specified income over stipulated duration of the lease. In addition to the value of the income stream, the appraiser must also consider the value that the property will have once it reverts back to the owner at the termination of the lease. This reversion is valued by discounting its anticipated value against its present-day worth. The total property value then is the sum of the capitalized income stream plus the present worth of the reversion value.

CURRENT TECHNIQUES

There are two methods, however, that do lend themselves to an accurate measure of market value based on potential income. These are Direct Capitalization, utilizing the Direct Comparison Method of Rate Selection, and Mortgage Equity Capitalization.

In *Direct Capitalization*, the appraiser determines a single “overall” capitalization rate. This is done through analysis of actual market sales of similar types of properties. He develops the net income of each property and divides the net income by the sales price to arrive at an overall rate to provide an indication of value.

Mortgage Equity Capitalization is a form of direct capitalization with the major difference in the two approaches being the development of the overall capitalization rate.

In this method, equity yields, and mortgage terms are considered influencing factors in construction of the interest rate. In addition, a plus or minus adjustment is required to compensate for anticipated depreciation or appreciation. This adjustment can be related to the recapture provisions used in other capitalization methods and techniques.

RESIDUAL TECHNIQUES

It can readily be seen that any one of the factors of the Capitalization Equation (Value = Net Income divided by Capitalization Rate) can be determined if the other two factors are known. Furthermore, since the value of property is the sum of the land value plus the building value, it holds that either of these can be determined if the other is known. The uses of these mathematical formulas in capitalizing income into an indication of value are referred to as the residual techniques, or more specifically, the property residual, the building residual, and the land residual techniques.

The *Property Residual Technique* is an application of Direct Capitalization. In this technique, the total net income is divided by an overall capitalization rate (which provides for the return on the total investment) to arrive at an indicated value for the property. This technique has received more popular support in recent years because it closely reflects the market. With this technique, the capitalization rate may be developed by either “direct comparison” in the market or by the Mortgage Equity Method.

The *Building Residual Technique* requires the value of the land to be a known factor. The amount of net income required to earn an appropriate rate of return on the land investment is deducted from the total net income. The remainder of the net income (residual) is divided by the building capitalization rate (which is composed of a percentage for the return on the investment, plus a percentage for the recapture of the investment) to arrive at an indicated value for the building.

The *Land Residual Technique* requires the value of the building to be a known factor. The amount of net income required to provide both, a proper return on and the recapture of the investment is deducted from the total net income. The remainder of the net income (residual) is then divided by the land capitalization rate (which is composed of a percentage for the return on the investment) to arrive at an indicated value for the land.

MORTGAGE EQUITY METHOD EXAMPLE

For purposes of illustration, assume an investment financed with a 70% loan at 14.0% interest. The term of the mortgage is 20 years, paid off in level monthly payments. The total annual cost for principal and interest on such a loan can be determined by referring to the mortgage equity tables. Select the Constant Annual percent for an interest rate of 14.0% and a term of 20 years. Note that the constant is 14.92% of the amount borrowed, or .92% more than the interest rate alone.

Assume that the equity investor will not be satisfied with less than an 18% yield. The income necessary to satisfy both Lender and Equity can now be shown. The product of the percent portion and the rate equals the weighted rate. The total of each weighted rate equals the weighted average.

	PORTION	RATE	=	WEIGHTED RATE
Mortgage loan (principle interest)	70%	.1492	=	.1044
Equity (down payment)	30%	.18	=	.0540
Weighted Average	100%			100%

Note that the “constant annual percent” is used for the rate of the loan.

Since there is a gain in equity's position through the years by the loan being paid off little by little, it is necessary to calculate the credit for “Equity Build-Up”. Assume that the investor plans to hold the property for ten years. Since the mortgage is for 20 years, only a portion of the principal will be paid off and this amount must be discounted, as it won't be received for ten years. From the Table of Loan Balance and Debt Reduction, at the end of ten years for a 20 year mortgage at 14%, the figure is .199108. Consulting the sinking fund tables indicates that the discount factor for 18% and 10 years is .0425.

The credit for Equity Build-Up can now be deducted from the basic rate, thus . . .

$$\begin{array}{rcl}
 .199108 & & .0425 \\
 (\% \text{ of loan paid in 10 yrs.}) & \times & (\text{sinking fund 18\% for 10 yrs.}) \\
 & & = \underline{\underline{.0059}} \\
 \text{Resulting Net Rate} & & = .1525
 \end{array}$$

LAND VALUATION TECHNIQUES

In making appraisals for Ad Valorem Tax purposes, it is generally necessary to estimate separate values for the land and the improvements on the land. In actuality, the two are not separated and the final estimate of the property as a single unit must be given prime consideration. However, in arriving at that final estimate of value, aside from the requirements for property tax appraisals, there are certain other reasons for making a separate estimate of value for the land:

An estimate of land value is required in the application of the Cost Approach.

An estimate of land value is required to be deducted, from the total property sales price in order to derive indications of depreciation through market-data analysis. (Depreciation being equal to the difference between the replacement cost new of a structure and the actual price paid in the marketplace for the structure.)

As land is not a depreciable item, a separate estimate of land value is required for bookkeeping and accounting purposes; likewise, the total capitalization rate applicable to land will differ from the rate applicable to the improvements on the land.

Since land may or may not be used to its highest potential, the value of land may be completely independent of the existing improvements on the land.

Real Estate is valued in terms of its highest and best use; the highest and best use of the land (or site), if vacant and available for use, may be different from the highest and best use of the improved property. This will be true when the improvement is not an appropriate use and yet makes a contribution to total property value in excess of the value of the site. Highest and Best Use (Highest and Most Profitable Use; Optimum Use) is that reasonable and probable use which will support the highest present value as of the date of the appraisal. Alternatively, it is the most profitable likely use to which a property can be put. It may be measured in terms of the present worth of the highest net return that the property can be expected to produce over a stipulated long run period of time. *(American Institute of Real Estate Appraisers' Appraisal Terminology Handbook, 2001 edition.)*

As appraisers' opinions are based on data derived from the market, it is necessary to study and adapt, if possible, procedures used by those closest to everyday transactions.

SALES COMPARISON APPROACH

The most frequently used method in estimating the value of land is the comparable sales method in which land values are derived from analyzing the selling prices of similar sites. This method is in essence the application of the market data approach to value and all the considerations pertaining thereto are equally applicable here.

The appraiser must select comparable and valid market transactions and must weigh and give due consideration to all the factors significant to value, adjusting each to the subject property. The comparable sites must be used in the same way as is the subject property and subjected to the same zoning regulations and restrictions. It is also preferable, whenever possible, to select comparable sales from the same or a similar neighborhood. The major adjustments will be to account for variations in time, location, and physical characteristics to include size, shape, topography, landscaping, access, as well as other factors which may significantly influence the selling price, such as the productivity of farm land.

Although it is always preferable to use sales of unimproved lots for comparison, it is not always possible to do so. Older neighborhoods are not likely to yield a sufficient number of representative sales of unimproved lots to permit a valid analysis. In such cases, in order to arrive at an estimate of land values using the comparable sales approach, it is necessary to consider improved property sales and to estimate the portion of the selling price applicable to the structure. The procedure would be to estimate the replacement cost of the buildings as of the date of sale, estimate the accrued depreciation and deduct that amount from the replacement cost resulting in the estimated selling price of the buildings, which can be deducted from the total selling price of the property to derive the portion of the selling price which can be allocated to the land. The equation is as follows:

$$\begin{array}{r} \text{Selling Price of Property} \\ - \text{Estimated Depreciated Value of Buildings} \\ \hline = \text{Indication of Land Value} \end{array}$$

In some of these older neighborhoods, vacant lots will exist often as a result of fire or normal deterioration. Since the desirability as a new building site is restricted, value is generally determined by adjoining property owners who have a desire for additional land area.

In order to apply the comparable sales method, it is first necessary to establish a common unit of comparison. The units generally used in the valuation of land are price per front foot, price per square foot, price per acre, price per lot or site or home site price per apartment unit, and price per motel unit. The selection of any one particular unit depends upon the type of property being appraised . . . frontage being commonly used for platted, uniform type residential lots, and square footage and acreage for larger, unplatted tracts, as well as irregularly shaped lots lacking in uniformity. Use of square footage is especially desirable in Central Business Districts where the entire lot maintains the same level of value: depth factor adjustments have a tendency to distort this concept. Commercial arteries are also best valued on a square foot basis.

The utility of a site will vary with the frontage, width, depth, and overall area. Similarly, the unit land values should be adjusted to account for differences in size and shape between the comparable and the subject property. Since such an adjustment is generally necessary for each lot, it is beneficial that the appraiser adopts and/or develops standardized procedures for adjusting the lot size and the unit values to account for the variations. It is not uncommon for all lots within a development to market at the same price. Should data indicate this, it is necessary to make alterations or adjustments to maintain this value level. In some cases, a “site value” concept has advantages. Site value tables provide for uniform pricing of standard sized lots within homogenous neighborhoods or subdivisions. Some of the techniques commonly employed are as follows:

Standard lot sizing techniques provide for the adjustment of the frontage, width, and depth of irregular shaped lots to make the units of measurement more comparable with uniform rectangular lots. Incremental and decremented adjustments can be applied to account for size differences.

Standard Depth Tables provide for the adjustment of front foot unit values to account for variations in depth from a predetermined norm.

Frontage Tables provide for the adjustment of front footage unit values to account for variations in the relative utility value of excessive or insufficient frontage as compared to a predetermined norm.

Acreage or Square Footage Tables provide for the adjustment of unit values to account for variations in the relative utility value of excessive or insufficient land sizes as compared to a predetermined norm.

During the process of adjusting the comparable sales to account for variations between them and the subject property, the appraiser must exercise great care to include all significant factors and to properly consider the impact of each of the factors upon the total value. If done properly, the adjusted selling prices of the comparable properties will establish a range in value in which the value of the subject property will fall. Further analysis of the factors should enable the appraiser to narrow the range down to the value level that is most applicable to the subject property.

THE LAND RESIDUAL TECHNIQUE

In the absence of sufficient market data, income-producing land may be valued by determining the portion of the net income attributable to the land and capitalizing the net income into an indication of value. The procedure is as follows:

1. Determine the highest and best use of the land, which may be either its present use or hypothetical use.
2. Estimate the net income which the property can be expected to yield.
3. Estimate the replacement cost new of the improvements.
4. If the case involves the present use, estimate the proper allowance for depreciation, and deduct that amount from the replacement cost new of the improvements to arrive at an estimate of their depreciated value.
5. Develop appropriate capitalization rates.
6. Calculate the income requirements of the improvements and deduct the amount from the total net income to derive that portion of the income that can be said to be attributable to the land.
7. Capitalize the residual income attributable to the land to an indication of value.

RATIO METHOD

A technique useful for establishing broad indications of land values is a “typical” allocation or ratio method. In this technique, the ratio of the land value to the total value of improved properties is observed in situations where there is good market and/or cost evidence to support both the land values and total values. This market abstracted ratio is then applied to similar properties where the total values are known, but the allocation of values between land and improvements are not known. The ratio is usually expressed as a percentage that represents the portion of the total improved value that is land value, or as a formula:

$$\frac{\text{Total Land Value}}{\text{Total Property Value}} \times 100\% = \% \text{ Land Is of Total Property Value}$$

This technique can be used on most types of improved properties, with important exceptions being farms and recreational facilities, provided that the necessary market and/or cost information is available. In actual practice, available market information limits this technique primarily to residential properties, and to a much lesser extent, commercial and industrial properties such as apartments, offices, shopping centers, and warehouses. The ratio technique cannot give exact indications of land values. It is nevertheless useful, especially when used in conjunction with other techniques of estimating land values because it provides an indication of the reasonableness of the final estimate of land value.

The ratio should be extracted from available market information and applied to closely similar properties. It should be noted that any factor that affects the value could also affect the ratio of values. Zoning is particularly important because it may require more or less improvements be made to the land or may require a larger or smaller minimum size. This tends to have a bearing on the land values and may influence the ratio of values considerably from community to community.

The following is an example of a residential land valuation situation:

Market information derived from an active new subdivision

Typical Lot Sale Price (most lots equivalent)	\$15,000
Improved Lot Sales (range)	\$65,000 to \$75,000
Indicated Ratio	$\frac{\$15,000}{75,000}$ To $\frac{15,000}{65,000}$ X 100% 20% to 23%

Similar subdivision, but 100% developed

Typical Lot Sale Price (most lots equivalent)	Unavailable
Improved Lot Sales (range)	\$85,000 to \$105,000
Broadest Indicated Range of Lot Values (20% x \$85,000 to 23% x \$105,000)	\$17,000 to \$24,150
Narrowest Indicated Range of Lot Values (23% x \$85,000 to 20% x \$105,000)	\$19,550 to \$21,000

If both lots and improvements vary considerably, the broadest range is most appropriate. If most lots vary little and are judged equivalent but the improvements vary somewhat, the narrowest range is appropriate. Most subdivisions exhibit a combination of the two ranges, showing a narrow typical range, but a wider actual range of land values.

MASS APPRAISING

In preceding sections, we have outlined the fundamental concepts, principles, and valuation techniques underlying the Appraisal Process. We will now approach the problem at hand . . . the reappraisal of certain specified real property within a total taxing jurisdiction, be it an entire county or any subdivision thereof . . . and to structure a systematic mass appraisal program to effect the appraisal of said properties in such a way as to yield valid, accurate, and equitable property valuations at a reasonable cost dictated by budgetary limitations, and within a time span totally compatible with assessing administration needs.

The key elements of the program are validity, accuracy, equity, economy, and efficiency. To be effective, the program must. . . .

- incorporate the application of proven and professionally acceptable techniques and procedures;
- provide for the compilation of complete and accurate data and the processing of that data into an indication of value approximating the prices actually being paid in the market place;
- provide the necessary standardization measures and quality controls essential to promoting and maintaining uniformity throughout the jurisdiction;
- provide the appropriate production controls necessary to execute each phase of the operation in accordance with a carefully planned budget and work schedule; and –
- provide techniques especially designed to streamline each phase of the operation, eliminating superfluous functions, and reducing the complexities inherent in the Appraisal Process to more simplified but equally effective procedures.

In summary, the objective of an individual appraisal is to arrive at an opinion of value, the key elements being the validity of the approach and the accuracy of the estimate. The objective of a mass appraisal for tax purposes is essentially the same. However, in addition to being valid and accurate, the value of each property must be equitable to that of each other property, and what's more, these valid, accurate, and equitable valuations must be generated as economically and efficiently as possible.

OVERVIEW

The prime objective of mass appraisals for tax purposes is to equalize property values. Not only must the value of one residential property be equalized with another, but it must also be equalized with each agricultural, commercial, and industrial property within the political unit.

The common denominator or the basis for equalization is market value that price which an informed and intelligent person, fully aware of the existence of competing properties and not being compelled to act, is justified in paying for a particular property.

The job of the appraiser is to arrive at a reasonable estimate of that justified price. To accomplish this, the coordination of approaches to the valuation of the various classes of property must be made so that they are related one to another in such a way as to reflect the motives of the prospective purchasers of each type of property.

A prospective purchaser of a residential property is primarily interested in its capacity to render service to the family as a place to live. Its location, size, quality, design, age, condition, desirability and usefulness are the primary factors to be considered in making a selection. By relying heavily upon powers of observation and inherent intelligence, knowing what could be afforded and simply comparing what is available, one property will eventually stand out to be more appealing than another. So it is likewise the job of the appraisers to evaluate the relative degree of appeal of one property to another for tax purposes.

The prospective purchaser of agricultural property will be motivated somewhat differently. The primary interest will be in the productive capabilities of the land. It is reasonable to assume that the purchaser will be familiar, at least in a general way, with the productive capacity of the farm. It might be expected that the prudent investor will have compared one farm's capabilities against another. Accordingly, the appraiser for local tax equalization purposes must rely heavily upon prices being paid for comparable farmland in the community.

The prospective purchaser of commercial property is primarily interested in the potential net return and tax shelter the property will provide. That price which is justified to pay for the property is a measure of the prospects for a net return from the investment. Real estate, as an investment then, must not only compete with other real estate, but also with stocks, bonds, annuities, and other similar investment areas. The commercial appraiser must explore the rental market and compare the income-producing capabilities of one property to another.

The prospective purchaser of industrial property is primarily interested in the overall utility value of the property. Of course, in evaluating the overall utility, individual consideration must be given to the land and each improvement thereon. Industrial buildings are generally of special purpose design, and as such, cannot readily be divorced from the operation for which they were built. As long as the operation remains effective,

the building will hold its values; if the operation becomes obsolete, the building likewise becomes obsolete. The upper limit of its value is its replacement cost new, and its present-day value is some measure of its present-day usefulness in relation to the purpose for which it was originally designed.

Any effective approach to valuations for tax purposes must be patterned in such a way as to reflect the “modus operandi” of buyers in the marketplace. As indicated above, the motives influencing prospective buyers tend to differ depending upon the type of property involved. It follows that the appraiser's approach to value must differ accordingly.

The residential appraiser must rely heavily upon the market data approach to value . . . analyzing the selling prices of comparable properties and considering the very same factors of location, size, quality, design, age, condition, desirability, and usefulness, which were considered by the buyer.

The commercial appraiser will find that since commercial property is not bought and sold as frequently as is residential property, the sales market cannot be readily established. By relying heavily on the income approach to value, the net economic rent that the property is capable of yielding can be determined, and the amount of investment required to effect that net return at a rate commensurate with that normally expected by investors could also be determined. This can only be achieved through a comprehensive study of the income-producing capabilities of comparable properties and an analysis of present-day investment practices.

The industrial appraiser will not be able to rely on the market data approach because of the absence of comparable sales, each sale generally reflecting different circumstances and conditions. Also, it is not possible to rely upon the income approach . . . again because of the absence of comparable investments, and because of the inability to accurately determine the contribution of each unit of production to the overall income produced. Therefore, by relying heavily on the cost approach to value, a determination must be made of the upper limit or replacement cost new of each improvement and the subsequent loss of value resulting overall from physical, functional and economic factors.

The fact that there are different approaches to value, some of which are more applicable to one class of property than to another, does not, by any means, preclude equalization between classes. Remember that the objective in each approach is to arrive at a price which an informed and intelligent person, fully aware of the existence of competing properties and not being compelled to act, is justified in paying for any one particular property. Underlying and fundamental to each of the approaches is the comparison process. Regardless of whether the principal criteria are actual selling prices, income-producing capabilities, or functional usefulness, like properties must be treated alike. The primary objective is equalization. The various approaches to value, although valid in themselves, must nevertheless be coordinated one to the other in such a way as to produce values that are not only valid and accurate, but are also equitable. The same

“yardstick” of values must be applied to all properties and must be applied by systematic and uniform procedures.

It is obvious that sales on all properties are not required to effectively apply the sales comparison approach. The same is true regarding any other approach. What is needed is a comprehensive record of all the significant physical and economic characteristics of each property in order to compare the properties of “unknown” values with the properties of “known” values. All significant differences between properties must in some measure, either positively or negatively, be reflected in the final estimate of value.

Each property must be given individual treatment, but the treatment must be uniform and standardized, and essentially no different than that given to any other property. All the factors affecting value must be analyzed and evaluated for each and every property within the entire political unit. It is only by doing this that equalization between properties and between classes of properties can be ultimately affected.

All this, at best, is an oversimplification of the equalization process underlying the entire Mass Appraisal Program. The program itself consists of various operational phases, and its success depends primarily upon the systematic coordination of collecting and recording data, analyzing the data, and processing the data to an indication of value.

DATA INVENTORY

Basic to the appraisal process is the collecting and recording of pertinent data. The data will consist of general supporting data, referring to the data required to develop the elements essential to the valuation process; neighborhood data, referring to information regarding pre-delineated neighborhood units; and specific property data, referring to the data compiled for each parcel of property to be processed into an indication of value by the cost, market and/or income approach.

The data must be comprehensive enough to allow for the adequate consideration of all factors that significantly affect property values. In keeping with the economics of a mass appraisal program, it is costly and impractical to collect, maintain, and process data of no or marginal contribution to the desired objectives. The axiom “too much data is better than insufficient data” does not apply. What does apply is the proper amount of data, no more or no less, which is necessary to provide the database necessary to generate the desired output.

Cost data must be sufficient enough to develop or select and validate the pricing schedules and cost tables required to compute the replacement cost new of improvements needed to apply the cost approach to value.

All data pertaining to the cost of total buildings in place should include the parcel identification number, property address, and date of completion, construction cost, and name of builder, source of information, structural characteristics, and other information pertinent to analysis.

Cost information may be recorded on the same form (unassigned property record card) used to record specific property data.

The principal sources for obtaining cost data are builders, suppliers, and developers, and it is generally advisable to collect cost data in conjunction with new construction pick-ups.

Sales data must be sufficient enough to provide a representative sampling of comparable sales needed to apply the market data approach, to derive unit land values and depreciation indicators needed to apply the cost approach, and to derive gross rent multipliers and elements of the capitalization rate needed to apply the income approach.

All sales data should include the parcel identification number, property qualification code, month and year of sale, selling price, source of information, i.e., buyer, seller, agent, or fee, and a reliable judgment as to whether or not the sale is representative of a true arm's length transaction.

Sales data should be recorded on the same form (assigned property record card) used to record specific property data, and verified during the property-listing phase.

The principal source for obtaining sales data is the County Register of Deeds Office, MLS, Sales Letters, Fee Appraisers and the real estate transfer returns. Other sources may include developers, realtors, lending institutions, and individual owners during the listing phase of the operation.

Income and expense data must be sufficient enough to derive capitalization rates and accurate estimates of net income needed to apply the income approach. Income and expense data should include both general data regarding existing financial attitudes and practices, and specific data regarding the actual incomes and expenses realized by specific properties.

The general data should include such information as equity return expectations, gross rentals, vacancy and operating cost expectations and trends, prevailing property management costs, and prevailing mortgage costs.

Specific data should include the parcel identification number, property address (or building ID), source of information, the amount of equity, the mortgage and lease terms, and an itemized account of the annual gross income, vacancy loss, and operating expenses for the most recent two-year period.

The general data should be documented in conjunction with the development of capitalization procedural guidelines. The specific data, since it is often considered confidential and not subject to public access, should be recorded on special forms, designed in such a way as to accommodate the property owner or agent thereof in submitting the required information. The forms should also have space reserved for the appraiser's analysis and calculations.

The principal sources for obtaining the general financial data are investors, lending institutions, fee appraisers and property managers. The primary sources for obtaining specific data are the individual property owners and/or tenants during the listing phase of the operation.

Neighborhood data. At the earliest feasible time during the data inventory phase of the operation, and after a thorough consideration of the living environment and economic characteristics of the overall county, or any political sub-division thereof, the appraisal staff should delineate the larger jurisdictions into smaller "neighborhood units," each exhibiting a high degree of homogeneity in residential amenities, land use, economic trends, and housing characteristics such as structural quality, age, and condition. The neighborhood delineation should be outlined on an index (or comparable) map and each assigned an arbitrary Neighborhood Identification Code, which when combined with the parcel identification numbering system, will serve to uniquely identify it from other neighborhoods.

Neighborhood data must be comprehensive enough to permit the adequate consideration of value-influencing factors to determine the variations in selling prices and income yields attributable to benefits arising from the location of one specific property as compared to another. The data should include the taxing district, the school district, the neighborhood identification code, special reasons for delineation (other than obvious physical and economic boundaries), and various neighborhood characteristics such as the type (urban, suburban, etc.), the predominant class (residential, commercial, etc.), the trend (whether it is declining, improving, or relatively stable), its accessibility to the central business district, shopping centers, interstate highways and primary transportation terminals, its housing characteristics, the estimated range of selling prices for residentially-improved properties, and a rating of its relative durability.

All neighborhood data should be recorded on a specially designed form during the delineation phase.

Specific property data must be comprehensive enough to provide the data base needed to process each parcel of property to an indication of value, to generate the tax roll requirements, to generate other specified output, and to provide the assessing officials with a permanent record to facilitate maintenance functions and to administer taxpayer assistance and grievance proceedings.

The data should include the parcel identification number, ownership and mailing address, legal description, property address, property classification code, local zoning code, neighborhood identification code, site characteristics, and structural characteristics.

All the data should be recorded on a single, specially designed property record card customized to meet individual assessing needs. Each card should be designed and formatted in such a way as to accommodate the listing of information and to facilitate data processing. In addition to the property data items noted above, space must be provided for a building sketch, land and building computations, summarization, and memoranda. In keeping with the economy and efficiency of a mass appraisal program, the card should be formatted to minimize writing by including a sufficient amount of site and structural descriptive data that can be checked and/or circled. The descriptive data should be comprehensive enough to be suitable for listing any type of land and improvement data regardless of class, with the possible exception of large industrial, institutional, and utility complexes that require lengthy descriptions. In these cases, it will generally be necessary to use a specially- designed supplemental property record document, keyed and indexed to the corresponding property record card. The property record card should be made a permanent part of the assessing system, and used not only in conjunction with the revaluation, but also to update the property records for subsequent assessments.

The specific property data should be compiled from existing assessing records and field inspections. The parcel identification number, ownership, mailing address, and legal description may be obtained from existing tax rolls. Property classification codes may also be obtained from existing tax rolls (whenever available) and verified in the field. Local zoning codes may be obtained from existing zoning maps. Neighborhood identification codes may be obtained from the neighborhood delineation maps. Lot sizes and acreage may be obtained from existing tax maps. The property address, and the site and structural characteristics may be obtained by making a physical inspection of each property.

In transferring lot sizes from the tax maps to the property record cards, the personnel performing the tasks must be specially trained in the use of standardized lot sizing techniques and depth tables, may be used, which are necessary to adjust irregular shaped lots and abnormal depths to account for variations from predetermined norms. In regard to acreage, the total acreage may be transferred, but the acreage breakdowns required to effect the valuation of agricultural, residential, forestry, commercial, and industrial properties must be obtained in the field from the property owner and verified by personal observation and aerial photographs, if available.

Field inspections must be conducted by qualified listers under the close supervision of the appraisal staff. During this phase of the operation, the lister must visit each property and attempt personal contact with the occupant. In the course of the inspection, the following procedures must be adhered to.

Identification of the property.

Recording the property address.

Interviewing the occupant of the building and recording all pertinent data.

Inspection, when possible, of the interior of the building and recording of all pertinent physical data.

Measuring and inspecting the exterior of the building, as well as all other improvements on the property, and recording the story height, and the dimensions and/or size of each.

Recording a sketch of the principal building(s); consisting of a building foot-print plan showing the main portion of the structure along with any significant attached exterior features, such as porches, etc. All components must be identified and the exterior dimensions shown for each.

Selection of and recording the proper quality grade of the improvement.

Selection of and recording the proper adjustments for all field priced items.

Reviewing the property record card for completeness and accuracy.

After the field inspection is completed, the property record cards must be submitted to clerical personnel to review the cards for completeness, calculate the areas, and make any necessary mathematical extensions.

Complete and accurate data are essential to the program. Definite standardized data collection and recording procedures must be followed if these objectives are to be met.

PROCESSING THE DATA

This phase of the operation involves the analysis of data compiled during the data inventory phase and the processing of that data to an indication of value through the use of the cost, market, and income approaches to value.

During the analytical phase, it will be necessary to analyze cost, market, and income data in order to provide a basis for validating the appropriate cost schedules and tables required to compute the replacement cost new of all buildings and structures; for establishing comparative unit land values for each class of property; for establishing the appropriate depreciation tables and guidelines for each class of property; and for developing gross rent multipliers, economic rent and operating expense norms, capitalization rate tables and other related standards and norms required to effect the mass appraisal of all the property within an entire political unit on an equitable basis.

After establishing the appropriate standards and norms, it remains to analyze the specific data compiled for each property by giving due consideration to the factors influencing the value of that particular property as compared to another, and then to process the data into an indication of value by employing the techniques described in the section of the manual dealing with the application of the traditional approaches to value.

Any one, or all three of the approaches, if applied properly, should lead to an indication of market value; of primary concern is applying the approaches on an equitable basis. This will require the coordinated effort of a number of individual appraisers, each appraiser acting as a member of a team, with the team effort directed toward a valid, accurate and equitable appraisal of each property within the political unit. Each property must be physically reviewed, during which time the following procedures must be adhered to.

- verification of the characteristics recorded on the property record card.
- certification that the proper schedules and cost tables were used in computing the replacement cost of each building and structure.
- determination of the proper quality grade and design factor to be applied to each building to account for variations from the base specifications.
- making a judgment of the overall condition, desirability, and usefulness of each improvement in order to arrive at a sound allowance for depreciation.
- capitalization of net income capabilities into an indication of value in order to determine the loss of value attributable to functional and economic obsolescence.
- addition of the depreciated value of all improvements to the land value, and reviewing the total property value in relation to the value of comparable properties.

At the completion of the review phase, the property record cards must be, once again, submitted to clerical personnel for final mathematical calculations and extensions, and a final check for completeness and accuracy.

Once the final values have been established for each property, the entire program should be evaluated in terms of its primary objectives . . . do the values approximate a satisfactory level of market value, and what's more important, are the values equitable? Satisfactory answers to these questions can best be obtained through a statistical analysis of recent sales in an appraisal-to-sale ratio study, if sufficient sales are available.

To perform the study, it is necessary to take a representative sampling of recent valid sales and compute the appraisal-to-sale ratio for each of the sales. If the sample is representative, the computed median appraisal-to-sale ratio will give an indication of how close the appraisals within each district approximate the market value. This is providing, of course, that the sales included represent true market transactions. It is then necessary to determine the deviation of each individual appraisal-to-sale ratio from the median ratio, and to compute either the average or the standard deviation, which will give an indication of the degree of equity within each individual district. What remains then is to compare the statistical measures across property classes in order to determine those areas, if any, which need to be further investigated, revising the appraisal, if necessary, to attain a satisfactory level of value and equity throughout the entire jurisdiction.

The techniques and procedures set forth herein, if applied skillfully, should yield highly accurate and equitable property valuations, and should provide a sound property tax base. It should be noted, however, that no program, regardless of how skillfully administered, can ever be expected to be error-free. The appraisal must be fine-tuned and this can best be done by giving the taxpayer an opportunity to question the value placed upon his property and to produce evidence that the value is inaccurate or inequitable. During this time, the significant errors will be brought to light, and taking the proper corrective action will serve to further the objectives of the program. What's important in the final analysis is to use all these measures as well as any other resources available to affect the highest degree of accuracy and equity possible.