

If I paint my house my taxes will go up!

Property owners who wish to take pride in the exterior appearance of their homes shouldn't be concerned that everyday maintenance will cause an increase in property taxes. Here is a brief overview of the county's residential real estate appraisal process, which should help dispel the notion that painting your house, automatically increases your annual real estate tax.

In Kansas residential property is appraised at market value. That value is established every year as of January 1. The County Appraiser's annual task is to arrive at an estimate of what the property would sell for if offered on the open market for a reasonable length of time. An efficient and standardized way to estimate this number, is to compare each property to other similar properties that have sold fairly recently. In Atchison County, trained appraisal staff visit the sold properties to make sure the data we have is accurate and there have not been changes since our last visit. Changes that would affect value, and thus the sale price that we use to compare to other properties. Changes, such as building a new addition or garage, finishing the basement, or a complete renovation would certainly affect the value. It is very important when properties do sell, that we have accurate information because we use those sale prices to compare to other similar properties that haven't sold.

Each County Appraiser across Kansas is required to physically inspect all property at least once every 6 years. However, there's always an inspection when there's new construction due to a building permit, or to review a neighborhood revitalization application, or as mentioned before at the time a property sells. Quality Control inspections may also be done for specific areas or parcels to assure we have accurate and complete property data. Because there could be as much as a 6-year gap between actual site-visits by local appraisal staff, recent imagery from Google Street View, Farm Service Agency, or the Kansas Data Access and Support Center offer a low-cost way to do general audit and review of properties.

Every year, Each Kansas County Appraiser is required to conduct cost, depreciation and market studies and do a lot of behind the scenes work from these studies before applying comparable sales results to arrive at an annual appraised valuation for each property.

It is possible for a property value to change from year to year, based on market changes alone, whether the county physically visited the property or not. However, to address the question of the impact of painting your house, it's helpful to know what type of data is collected on a structure and what is not. Many of your property's characteristics are included in the data we collect, such as number of bedrooms, total square footage, construction quality, number of bathrooms, garage, finished basement, etc. But "*recent paint job*" is not one of them.

When the appraisal staff inspects a property, they estimate what is referred to as "physical condition". Most houses are in Average physical condition for their age. Average means that the owner keeps up with the average level of maintenance on the exterior of the house. The painting, roof, gutters, windows, etc. If a property is allowed to become run down, and the exterior has not been well maintained (we call this deferred maintenance), we will record the condition as Fair, Poor, or even Unsound if it is no longer inhabitable. Neglecting to take care of your house can have the effect of depreciating an asset which will eventually result in a lower property value. Not just for taxation purposes, because it will also have an impact if one wants to sell or mortgage their property.

The County Appraiser is tasked with annually estimating the market value for each residential property, i.e. - what it would sell for on the open market on January 1 of a tax year. A property that is maintained properly will likely sell for more than a property that is not. Bottom line – simply painting your house will not be what causes your appraised value to go up or down.