

URBAN HOUSING ALLIANCE ADVOCACY PROPOSALS

Tax Revision Commission (Three Proposals)

We ask the Tax Revision Commission and our city leadership to take initiative on behalf of our low and moderate income (LMI) residents to resolve several key problems. The Alliance finds that DC residents carry an unfair burden in tax amounts and processes. This is in addition to the policy burdens we face like annual property reassessments (neighboring jurisdictions have triennial reassessments) and dealing with the newly-installed, biased employees in the Tax Appeals Commission that makes second level appeal judgments.

Homeowners' Bill of Rights

The Urban Housing Alliance presented its “Homeowners’ Bill of Rights” to the Commission on December 3, 2012. This document calls on the Commission to recommend to City Council and the Office of Tax and Revenue (OTR) a set of policies and actions to ensure fairness for homeowners seeking reductions in our property tax assessments. Also we ask for the implementation of the enacted Public Advocate Law for Assessments and Taxation, which would help homeowners immensely. Provisions include:

- Upon making a first level appeal, all requested OTR documents should be promptly provided without need for further request or charge.
- All property assessment and related code information and definitions should be made available with other information that is provided to persons when they appeal. Additionally, petitioners should be provided with the percentage adjustments made for such circumstances as: “no renovations”; “busy street”; “high crime area”.
- People filing an appeal should have all options available to them. This includes knowing when they can work with the Appraiser to adjust an assessment before a second level appeal (like commercial property owners do) and when a “rehearing” can be requested after the 2nd level appeal.
- Since OTR can fail to properly present its case at the second level because of errors or fraud, petitioners should be awarded their substantiated property assessments without further action.
- Appraiser’s Summary Reports should be provided at least two weeks before the hearing.
- Provide administrative authorization for residents to secure building permits for properties in their neighborhoods.
- Recommend that the Council implement, without further delays or conditions, the DC Code §47-825.02, which provides for a “**Public Advocate for Assessments and Taxation**”. (May 22, 1997, D.C. Law 11-269).

Tax Appeals Commission (TAC)

The TAC replaced the Board of Real Property Assessments and Appeals last year. We ask the Tax Revision Commission to recommend to the Council that it remove this entity and return to an independent Board for residential appeals.

The TAC consists of District employees who **cannot be independent**, because they work for the government which benefits from higher property assessments and taxes. (This practice is in violation of the International Association of Assessors standard of practice. This standard had been adopted by most, if not all, other jurisdictions in the USA and Canada.) The former Board members were only paid \$50 per hour and did not care if your appeal succeeded or whether the government's proposed assessment was sustained.

The TAC law provides that persons with properties valued at less than \$3 million would not have a 3-person panel like previously provided under the Board. Small residential petitioners will only have a 1-person "panel".

A hybrid second level appeal process can be performed by an independent board of real estate professionals who might be realtors, lawyers, mortgage brokers, etc. Appeals covered by these persons would include residential properties and others with assessments equal to or less than \$4 million. These persons can operate as independent professionals in the same fashion as the prior Board of Real Property Assessments and Appeals. These individuals could work in other professions and earn an hourly fee (\$50-70) for their service in making determinations of real property appeals. .

With the bulk of smaller appeals being handled by this Board, the more complex commercial appeals could be engaged by the Tax Appeals Commission which was initially envisioned to handle these challenges.

Triennial Reassessments to replace Annual Reassessments

Mayor Williams' recommended, a little more than a decade ago, that residential property assessments be calculated triennially and only commercial properties be subjected to an annual reassessment. We support this hybrid plan for District residential property owners. DC is the only local jurisdiction that has annual reassessments. It's just not fair.

For more information, contact: Campbell Johnson, Chair
Urban Housing Alliance
202-667-9011
ccj.caa.edi@verion.net
theuhalliance@yahoo.com
PO Box 90711
Washington, DC 20090

The Alliance is a 501(c)(3) non-profit charity. All contributions are tax deductible. We provide **FREE** hands-on help to successfully challenge property assessments, gain financial literacy and strengthen your small business.