

Cook County Assessor's Office



Assessor Joseph Berrios Accomplishments: 2010-Present

Introduction

My staff and I are committed to fiscal responsibility and increased efficiency. Like everyone else in Cook County – and across Illinois – we are charged with accomplishing more, with less – during these difficult financial times. It is a continuing challenge, and I am pleased to report that in this past year, not only did we continue providing excellent taxpayer service but among many other initiatives we were able to:

1. VALUATION GOALS

- a. Successfully issued second installment tax bills on time in each year since 2012 and are on target to continue to meet the August 1 deadline again in 2015. This consistent effort has resulted in the savings of millions of dollars for taxing bodies.
- b. The CCAO appeals process has recently seen a high level of reinvigoration. Over 397,000 parcels appealed in 2012- the highest rate seen in 12 years.
- c. Worked hard to create reasonable and realistic valuations of the current market by recognizing the drop in the fair market value which has been about 15-35% in residential properties.
- d. Concluded re-assessment in record time from 506 days in 2006 to 350 in 2012
- e. It was important for me to re-institute a fair and responsive re-review process, so we did.
- f. Revitalized the Assessor Recommendation and Certificate of Correction, because we understood that sometimes issues come up after deadlines.

2. COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

The Assessor's Office has been active in serving and working with the much larger community.

- a. We regularly schedule community outreaches and are present at community fairs and workshops to assist taxpayers.
- b. We have Completely re-vamped The Cook County Assessor website to make it:
 - i. More user friendly
 - ii. Inclusive of more data
 - iii. Better organized
 - iv. Interactive
- c. We have made efforts to engage suburban Township Assessors to assist in collection of market data, correct neighborhood discrepancies and identify areas adversely impacted by serious

- i. Interactive**
- a. We have made efforts to engage suburban Township Assessors to assist in collection of market data, correct neighborhood discrepancies and identify areas adversely impacted by serious flooding.
- b. We have instituted a Summer High School Intern Program that has worked with:
 - i. Chicago Public Schools**
 - ii. Youth Outreach Services**
 - iii. And Chicago Summer Business Institute (CSBI)**

Because of this work, the Cook County Assessors Office has been selected as the recipient of the 2014 Public Partner award by Youth Outreach Services and its Board of Directors.

1. LEGISLATIVE INITIATIVES

- a. We have worked closely with the Illinois Housing Development Authority to pass Affordable Housing legislation that was signed by Governor Quinn. This gives an assessment break to improvements made to buildings that provide affordable housing.
- b. Through legislation initiated in my office, we were able to increase the amount of the homeowner and the senior exemptions savings offering a more reliable tax relief that was not based on valuation.
- c. We are fully implementing enforcement of the Erroneous Exemption legislation.
 - i. As of September 30, we have billed \$6,299,248.61 and have received almost \$3,000,000 in payments.**
 - ii. From March we have received almost \$3 million of what was billed.**
 - iii. There has been a steady increase in the amount recovered made each month. In the month of September alone we received over \$825,000 in payments.**
 - iv. The enforcement of this legislation is important because it ends the abuse of existing erroneous exemptions and recoups lost tax district revenue for schools and municipalities.**
 - v. We also implemented an amnesty program, where taxpayers could voluntarily come forward and self report their erroneous exemptions of the approximate \$3,000,000 we received over \$2.1 million in payments.**

Conclusion

This past year was a productive year for the Assessor's Office and I know this coming year will bring additional success. The assessment practices and functions of our office impact a real estate tax base that produces billions of dollars annually locally for local taxing bodies and both our valuation and reform on the legislative front is critical.

I want to emphasize that after you have looked at the totality of the county budget, my office is prepared to work with you do whatever is necessary to ensure that the taxpayers of Cook County receive a budget that best serves them in 2015.