



Assessment Equity Study

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Background

- **RFP for Equity Study was released in January 2024**
- **Keene Mass Appraisal Consulting was the most qualified vendor**
 - 30+ year career in the assessment field at the City of Philadelphia
 - Extensive work conducting equity studies in the assessment field
- **Preliminary research includes:**
 - Touring the county to understand physical properties and geography
 - In depth review of assessment processes and data
 - Interviews with Assessment Staff
- **Findings and recommendations synthesized into a final report**



Findings

- **There was no evidence of systemic racial or income discrimination in the assessment process and this includes the Assessment Department employees and supporting processes**
- **The assessment process is “blind and fair” and does not consider demographics in determining value**
- **There is no evidence of overt political influence in the assessment process**



Key Opportunities

- **Improve data quality going into the mass appraisal model**
 - Increase data gathered directly from field visits
 - Conduct field assessments of disadvantaged communities
 - Create a process to collect data for properties in decline
- **Improve precision of the mass appraisal model**
 - Improve evaluation of a “valid transaction” (removing outliers and transactions that are not based on property attributes or market conditions)
 - Reduce the number of “market areas”
 - Use regression modeling to improve accuracy of assessments
- **Outreach**
 - Create a customer service unit
 - Engage N.C. Legislators to expand tax relief options



Recommendations – Short-term (2025 Reval)

Recommendation	Benefit
Implement process to identify property sales to non-Buncombe Co. residents (COMPLETE)	Better understanding and insight into the housing market in Buncombe Co.
Create Appraiser position to focus on luxury homes (\$1M+) (COMPLETE)	More accurate valuations of these property types
Create Appraiser position to focus on manufactured, modular, non-traditional, etc	More accurate valuations of these property types
Develop online resources to view individually, customizable reports of comparable properties	Increased transparency for the community
Create informational videos on the assessment process & display in County owned buildings with public access	Increased understanding of key elements of the assessment process
Create a customer service unit to focus on community inquiries	Enhances the Community's interactions with the Assessment Dept. and allow Appraisers to focus on core job responsibilities
Conduct additional analysis of sale validations	Increases fidelity of property data and corresponding assessments
Conduct relist of eight Census Blocks of disadvantaged neighborhoods	Increases fidelity of property data and corresponding assessments



Recommendations – Long-term (2029 Reval)

Recommendation	Benefit
Develop a more comprehensive toolset for reviewing & revising assessed values	Increases fidelity of property data and corresponding assessments
Lobby the State Legislature to expand options for tax relief	Increased relief for the most vulnerable property owners in the community
Create a dedicated analysis and modeling team	More advanced analytics leading to greater accuracy in the assessment process
Implement regression models in the assessment process	More advanced analytics leading to greater accuracy in the assessment process
Relist of all properties in the County	Results in up-to-date property characteristics and lead to more accurate assessments
Add spatial data for assessments	Facilitates greater precision in the assessment process
Update market area definitions	Results in fewer market areas and less unrepresented properties
Partner with local universities to create an Assessment internship program	Create a pipeline of qualified Assessment new hires



Recommendations – Long-term (2029 Reval)

Recommendation	Benefit
Create a unique set of location definitions for each property class	More accurate market areas adjustments
Create & maintain internal machine learning models	Eliminates need for current vendor (ex. cost savings) and provides more control of model process
Improve property type and location classifications	Increase fidelity of property data and corresponding assessments
Evaluate & revise the definition of valid sales transactions to detect & eliminate outliers	Increase fidelity of property data and corresponding assessments



Summary

Implementation of recommendations will lead to:

- A more equitable distribution of the tax burden
- Increased accuracy in the assessment process
- Enhanced public engagement, transparency and community understanding of the assessment process
- Fewer appeals and complaints



Questions?

