

FERRY COUNTY ASSESSOR

Rachel D. Siracuse, Assessor

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As your county assessor, it is my responsibility to ensure that we value real property in an impartial, professional manner while complying with Washington State law. If we assess property accurately and fairly, and manage exemption programs efficiently, then property owners pay only their fair share of property taxes.

Property taxes fund the vital services that make us a viable community, services such as schools, libraries, hospitals, police and fire protection, roads, and emergency medical services. The housing crisis that has crippled various parts of the country has had me concerned about a ripple effect in Ferry County. I am pleased to say that we have not experienced any significant decline in property values; land appears to be holding its value through this nationwide upheaval. Sales slowed down at the beginning of fall and did not pick up through the winter. Land prices dropped somewhat in the first part of 2009 compared to previous years, but the differences were not dramatic. Our records revealed only a handful of forfeitures in comparison with the rest of the nation. Overall, our county is in a fairly stable condition in terms of property values.

As most of you know, we are required by the state to value property at 100% true & fair market value. We determine market value from sales of typical, or comparable, properties occurring within five years of the assessment date. The assessment date represented by the enclosed "Change of Value" notice(s) is January 1, 2009. We cannot determine value based on your income or personal wealth, or by what you paid for the property years ago. If you've put your property up for sale, and it has been on the market for some time and still hasn't sold, then we would very much like to know that fact to revisit your current value levels.

2008 Ferry County Sales	Sale Price	Assessed Value	Ratio (%)
Residential (84 sales)	10,612,606	8,145,800	77%
Bare Land (133 sales)	5,268,482	4,388,600	83%
Commercial (6 sales)	1,673,380	1,271,000	79%

While many other counties have converted to an annual re-valuation schedule, Ferry County is still on a four-year cycle. This means that an increase in your property value represents a full four years of appreciation. This schedule will change by 2014. The Washington State legislature has passed new legislation requiring us to switch to an annual revaluation by that year. This change actually *benefits* landowners, because property values on an annual cycle follow the market more closely than those on a four-year cycle. Landowners won't experience the huge value increases that a four-year cycle generates.

Several years ago I implemented the TaxSifter website with the help of donations that came from a variety of area businesses. This website allows you to search our assessment records for property information and track the taxes owing or paid through the Treasurer's office. You can monitor your own assessment and tax records through this website by simply conducting a Google search for "Ferry County TaxSifter". I'm happy to say that I can now provide an additional service online: the Ferry County website. I have added several pages of assessment information, and have provided a link to a variety of forms, brochures and applications for your benefit. The link for this site is listed at the top of this letter. You will now be able to find information on all exemptions programs, current use programs and deferred tax programs offered by the State.

Sales data is always available for review during regular business hours. We also provide the comparable property data and sales figures we use to value your property. If you feel our explanation of an increase in value for your property does not justify the change in value, you have the option of appealing the value change before the Board of Equalization. Appeal petitions are available through the County Commissioners' office or through the online website. **Please note that petitions must be submitted to the Commissioners' office on or before July 1st of the current year, or within thirty (30) days of the date of the 'Change of Value' notice, whichever is later.** We encourage landowners to visit our office and talk to our appraiser before submitting their petition for appeal. Open discussion of the appraisal process can frequently answer your valuation questions and concerns.

Thank you,

Rachel D. Siracuse, Ferry County Assessor