



The Measure of a Home

Dear Dave: When we sold our 1980's Hillside home, the Appraiser measured the house and came up with quite a different square footage than the Municipal Tax Records were showing. How should a house be measured?

Answer: To ascertain the square footage of living space in a home, the Appraiser will typically start with the external measurements or "footprint" of the property. If the building is a plain two-story or spilt-entry, this calculation is simply multiplied by 2.

From this point, adjustments have to be made. If the home has a tuck-under garage this must be extracted. The same applies to areas inside the home where a cathedral ceiling to the upper level exists. Further adjustments must be considered for cantilevered portions of the house, bay window areas, and other geometrical projections from the basic footprint. The complication can arise with a chalet-style property where the roof line angles down and is both roof and wall to the upper level. In this case, appraisers will only measure the space that provides at least 5 feet 6 inches of head-room.

In short, you measure a house

essentially from exterior numbers, which should correspond to the as-built survey. Condominiums are measured from interior dimensions since that is the space being purchased. The exterior walls, attic and crawl-space are not acquired when you purchase a condo – only the space inside the unit. The building itself, like the land, is owned "in common" with all the other condo owners in the development.

The reason current Appraisals often differ from the Municipal Tax Record is that the source of information, and its timing, are different. When a builder applies for a permit to build, plans are lodged with the Municipality and this provides them with their basic data. However, changes are often made to buildings after the original permit is issued.

To ensure more accuracy, the Municipality usually sends someone out to all new construction to run a tape on the external measurements. The occasional discrepancy is often from the Municipal inspector having to make assumptions, as they are often not privy to an interior inspection. For example, the attached garage or open area may be larger or smaller than what is assumed by the inspector viewing from outside.

The Municipality is required to physically check all properties every 6 years (AR 86-295), and the Assessor's office has generally been able to inspect 16,000 properties per year (100,000 over a 6 year period). However, 2019 and 2020 have been somewhat disrupted by the Earthquake and Covid according to Jack Gadamus, Municipal Assessor. The Municipality will measure the exterior of properties during such inspections and look for any recent additions that may not have been permitted. To learn more about your assessed value and property characteristics, visit <http://>

Dave

Wilson

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