



Reappraisal Assessment Districts

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RAD Parcel Counts

I have some concerns about specifying the parcel counts for the RAD's. What is currently proposed is for there will be approximately 10,000 parcels in a RAD. That is a significant decrease from the original County configurations that would have been more than double. However, I believe that even 10,000 is still too large to efficiently and effectively complete a RAD reappraisal.

I don't believe that configuration will work in Chittenden County. Burlington has over 10,000 parcels. Then next biggest is South Burlington at 7,890 and then the combined Essex area with 7,877. Those jurisdictions are large enough on their own as reappraisal projects. They are diverse of type (residential, condominium, commercial) and create complex assessment issues. Fully half of the parcels in Chittenden County use NEMRC software which is 14 of the 19 municipalities. Also, NEMRC Assessors serve six of the municipalities and do maintenance appraisals in three more. To combine municipalities to accumulate 10,000 parcels will cross multiple school districts. These areas will not be willing to give up their autonomy and assessment practices to fit into a 10,000 parcel RAD.

At the other extreme, Essex County has a little over 6,500 parcels. This is my best example of why geography matters. Essex County is very widespread with few parcels. It is a very expensive area to appraisal due to the rural nature of the housing. A clearer example of housing density might be to compare Bristol and Starksboro. It takes much more effort to collect data in Starksboro than in Bristol, even though they are approximately the same size.

A nice combination of towns would be Elmore, Hyde Park, Johnson and Morristown. Combined they are just over 6,000 parcels. They are also similar in market considerations and influence each other. To add Stowe into that mix brings a very different market influence.

I'm not exactly sure why we need to specify a specific number of parcels for a RAD, but I believe a goal of 5,000 is a better number given the size of Vermont municipalities and their geography.

There is no economy of scale in the reappraisal business. If it takes half an hour to inspect a property, it doesn't matter if there are 100 or 10,000, it still takes half an hour. A more rural area takes more time and more expense.

RAD's Centered Around Schools

I think it is meaningless to specify that RAD's will center around school districts when we do not know where they are and what they look like. Until the districts are set a specific parcel count should not be specified. I think it really depends on where they are. Geography does matter.

Appeals

The RAD districts create some problems for appeals. However, I think they can be overcome. My biggest concern is maintaining the state level hearing officers and courts to hear appeals. I have proposed for years to eliminate both for appeals and create a Valuation Appeals Board (VAB) like they do in New Hampshire. Any appeal beyond the RAD appeal is heard by the VAB. It has been difficult to maintain a consistent state level hearing staff and the courts do not really want to hear property appeals. Create a professional office to hear all appeals beyond the RAD's.