

Time is now to challenge property tax assessment

By Loretta Kalb, Sacramento Bee

Tens of thousands of homeowners in the Sacramento area are headed into another year of an expensive tax cycle – one of paying those hefty property tax bills that help fuel government operations.

For those who believe their property assessments are too high, this is also the time of year owners can try to do something about it. The windows for challenging your property tax assessment are about to close in Placer, Yolo, El Dorado and Sacramento counties.

Following is a step-by-step guide on how to get started. All it takes is a little homework, some paperwork, patience and basic analysis.

Your first question: Is your home's assessed value in line with sales of comparable properties in your neighborhood? Or is it too high?

To find out, look at sales of homes with similar amenities, square footage, bedrooms and lot sizes in your neighborhood. County assessors tie their valuations to Jan. 1, 2012, so focus mainly on sales from Oct. 1, 2011, through March 31, 2012.

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