



2025 Assessor's Report

PROPERTY TAXES: WHO'S REALLY TO BLAME FOR INCREASES?

It happens every year: we receive our property tax bills, open them, and are shocked by how much they've increased. This year, we also heard reports from Olympia that the legislature was discussing tripling the rate at which property taxes can increase—without a vote from the citizens. Property owners are asking: Will I be able to continue affording my property taxes? What can we do to control them, and who's responsible for these increases?

THE ASSESSOR'S OFFICE IS NOT THE VILLAIN

Many people immediately point to the Assessor's office, assuming that rising property assessments lead to rising taxes. But in Washington State, that's not how it works. The increase in property assessments is separate from the property tax requests by local taxing districts. If property assessments rise, the tax rate is adjusted downward to ensure the Treasurer does not collect more than the taxing district requested in their annual budget. The purpose of property assessments is to ensure equity, not to generate more revenue.

BUREAUCRATS CAN'T RAISE TAXES

Another common refrain is that "bureaucrats" are responsible for raising taxes. Again, this is a misunderstanding. Bureaucrats in Washington State cannot direct the Assessor's office to collect more property taxes. They don't have the authority to increase property tax collections.

WHO HAS THE POWER TO RAISE TAXES?

If neither the Assessor's office nor

bureaucrats can raise taxes, who does have that power? The answer is simple: elected officials. Local boards—whether at the state, county, city, school district, port commission, or fire district level—have the authority to approve budgets that levy property taxes. These boards are elected by voters in their districts, and every year they pass a budget that includes a request for property tax collections for the following year.

ARE ELECTED OFFICIALS TO BLAME FOR HIGH PROPERTY TAXES?

To some extent, yes. Elected representatives are responsible for the budgets they pass, which determine how much property tax is collected. However, they do have limits. If they want to raise taxes beyond what the law allows, they must put it to a vote of the people in their district.

THE VOTERS HOLD THE POWER

If 2025 has taught us anything, it's that voters do have the ultimate control over property taxes. Due to public outcry, proposed property tax increases at the state level were blocked. Several property tax increases on local ballots were also defeated. In the end, it's up to citizens to decide how much government funding—and property tax revenue—they're willing to support.

If you want to influence property tax levels, attend public budget hearings in your districts. These meetings give you the opportunity to voice your concerns and hold elected officials accountable. Ultimately, it's your government—and your decision.



Beth Conyers

Peter Van Nortwick Assessor

The Clark County real estate market demonstrated continued resilience in 2024, showing signs of stabilization as it adjusted to sustain higher interest rates. In July, the county reached a significant milestone, recording its highest-ever average home sale price, exceeding \$650,000. That same month, the median sales price also peaked at \$557,300.

While a seasonal decline in median prices occurred toward the end of the year—as is typical—2024 overall marked the highest annual median home prices in Clark County's history.

Notably, while many regions across the United States experienced softening or declining home values, Clark County continued to see growth in property values, driven by sustained demand and low inventory.



Architectural rendering of proposed design provided by Port of Vancouver.

LTIF In Action.

Local Tax Increment Financing (LTIF), introduced in Washington State through House Bill 1189 in 2021, enables municipalities to fund infrastructure projects using redirected property tax revenue. Currently Clark County has three approved LTIFs: Port of Vancouver for water-front improvements, City of Ridgefield for transportation infrastructure, and Port of Ridgefield for downtown waterfront and I-5 corridor enhancements.

The Clark County Assessor's Office, in collaboration with the Treasurer's Office, has worked closely with our local tax districts and tax system vendor to ensure the accurate collection and distribution of LTIF funds, supporting economic growth and development in the region.

LTIFs allow tax districts to borrow funds to complete infrastructure improvements in an area. The loans are paid back by re-directing certain property taxes based upon the increased assessed values for parcels in the LTIF area. During the payoff period, the tax revenues typically going to other taxing districts are re-directed to the jurisdiction sponsoring the LTIF to repay the loans for the project. Once the loans for the infrastructure projects are paid off, the property taxes will no longer be redirected to the sponsoring jurisdiction and will revert to the original taxing districts. After receiving feedback from local taxing districts, the Assessor and Treasurer Offices plan to develop a web-site dedicated to LTIF information. The site will detail property tax allocations, LTIF collections to date, and provide helpful resource links. Be on the lookout, more information coming soon!

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