

Reassessment Leads to a Wide Variety of Changes in Tax Bills

By Ali ElSaffar, Oak Park Township Assessor

The second installment property tax bills mailed in early July are the first to reflect the 2023 reassessment of Oak Park properties. They also reflect the annual tax increases for local governments serving Oak Park.

This year, Oak Park property owners are collectively paying \$255 million in property taxes. This sum, the Oak Park tax burden, is the combined levy of all taxing districts serving Oak Park. This year's tax burden is 6.2% higher than it was last year and if there had not been a reassessment, tax increases would have been about 6.2% for most Oak Park properties.

The reassessment did not change Oak Park's tax burden. But it did change each property's *share* of the tax burden and the result is dramatic changes to individual tax bills:

- About 35% of Oak Park homeowners are paying less this year than last year.
- About 25% of Oak Park homeowners have annual tax increases of less than 10%.
- About 40% of homeowners have double-digit tax increases, with a little more than half of the 'double-digit' group experiencing tax increases of 20% or more compared to last year.

How do you explain the wide variation in Oak Park's tax bills? The simplest explanation involves two numbers: the 6.2% increase in tax levies; and the 29% overall increase in the taxable value of Oak Park properties due to reassessment. If the increase in the taxable value of an individual property matches Oak Park's 29% increase, there will be no change in the property's share of the tax burden. Its tax increase will match the 6.2% levy increase.¹

But properties with valuation increases that exceed 29% will see their taxes rise by more than 6.2%, as such properties will also be paying a greater share of Oak Park's tax burden. Conversely, if a property's new valuation does not reach the 29% threshold, it will pay a smaller share of the tax burden and its taxes will either decrease or increase by less than 6.2%.

I filed a successful tax appeal, but my taxes still increased significantly. How is that possible? Imagine the proposed increase in your 2023 assessed value was 70%. If you filed an appeal that reduced the assessment increase to 45%, you prevented a spectacularly large increase in your tax bill. But since the 45% increase is higher than the 29% increase in Oak Park's taxable value, your share of Oak Park's tax burden still increased. The increase, however, is smaller.

My homeowner exemption and some other exemptions are worth less than last year. Why? The homeowner exemption is calculated by multiplying \$10,000 by the property tax rate. But property tax rates fluctuate and typically fall after a reassessment with rising property values. This year, Oak Park's tax rate fell by 18% due to the reassessment, which led to an 18% drop in the homeowner exemption's value. Some, but not all, of the other exemptions also fell in value.

I thought Illinois law limited tax increases for local governments to the annual rate of inflation, which is 3.3% right now. How could Oak Park spending go up by 6.2%?

The tax cap law limits most local governments from increasing their tax levies by either the rate of inflation or 5%, whichever is lower. This year, the applicable rate of inflation is from the year

¹ To calculate the 'Taxable Value' of either an individual property or a community, take the assessed value of the property or community, multiply it by the state equalizer, and subtract the value of exemptions.

2022. Since 2022's inflation rate was above 5%, the tax increases for Oak Park's public schools, park district and township were capped at about 5%.

Oak Park's village government and library are both exempt from tax caps, but they used their exempt status differently. Village government's 3% levy increase is the smallest among Oak Park's local governments, whereas the library's 8% increase is the biggest.

Finally, Oak Park's share of regional government tax levies increased significantly. This is because Oak Park property values rose due to reassessment while the values of non-reassessed areas in the region remained unchanged.²

Can I do anything to reduce my current tax bill? If you are eligible for a homeowner, senior citizen or disability exemption but did not receive one, the Township Assessor's office can assist you in obtaining a revised bill for a smaller amount. If you received all exemptions for which you are eligible, however, you likely will not be able to reduce your current tax bill.

If you purchased and moved into your property in 2022, you should pay special attention to the homeowner exemption, as you had to apply for the exemption earlier this year to receive it on the tax bill. The Township can help if the exemption is not on the bill.

Can I do anything to reduce future tax bills? On July 8, the Cook County Board of Review began accepting 2024 assessment appeals. Oak Park residents should be able to file appeals until sometime in August, although the exact deadline has not yet been announced.

For those struggling with unexpectedly higher property tax bills stemming from the reassessment, the best way to find relief may be to file an assessment appeal. A 2024 appeal will not reduce this year's taxes, but if successful, it should provide some relief on next year's second installment bills.

² See chart of tax levy increases for all taxing districts serving Oak Park on the next page.

**Tax Levies for Government Units Serving Oak Park
2023 Taxes Paid in 2024 (excluding Special Service Areas)**

<i>Unit of Government</i>	<i>Tax Levies Paid in 2023</i>	<i>Tax Levies Paid in 2024</i>	<i>Levy Increase</i>	<i>% of Tax Bill in '24</i>
<u><i>Oak Park Districts</i></u>				
School District 97	\$94,003,675	\$99,009,066	5.3%	38.8%
High School District 200	\$59,129,868	\$61,857,048	4.6%	24.2%
Village of Oak Park	\$37,198,728	\$38,309,328	3.0%	15.0%
Oak Park Library Fund	\$10,544,521	\$11,384,153	8.0%	4.5%
Oak Park Park District	\$11,642,909	\$12,305,278	5.7%	4.8%
Oak Park Township	\$5,876,374	\$6,164,448	4.9%	2.4%
<u><i>Oak Park's Share of Regional Districts</i></u>				
Cook County	\$7,890,084	\$9,116,770	15.5%	3.6%
Water Reclamation District	\$6,846,616	\$8,148,408	19.0%	3.2%
Triton College District 504	\$5,546,858	\$6,164,448	11.1%	2.4%
Miscellaneous Agencies	\$1,757,420	\$2,801,256	59.4%	1.1%
Total Tax Levies	\$240,437,053	\$255,260,203	6.2%	100.0%

Notes:

1. The levies for Oak Park River Forest High School reflect Oak Park's portion of the school's levy.
2. Oak Park's share of regional levies increased this year because Oak Park property values rose due to reassessment whereas other parts of the regional districts were not reassessed.