

Property tax bills to go down

Butler County auditor to reduce property tax values after off-year appraisals.

By [Josh Sweigart](#), Staff Writer 12:16 AM Thursday, November 5, 2009

HAMILTON — Most home-owners across Butler County will see a decrease in their taxable property values this year after a historic off-year appraisal, according to the county auditor's office.

This will lower some taxes based on property values, including new millages approved by voters Tuesday, Nov. 3, according to Auditor Roger Reynolds.

Reynolds' office has spent much of the year analyzing property values after many complained that a state-mandated appraisal last year left taxable values above market values.

Reynolds said the appraisal was nearly done when he took office in 2008, and he was hamstrung by state rules that only allowed him to account for boom years, but not bust years.

"Butler County did not escape the free-fall of home values in 2008 and 2009," he said. "While there has been some recent stabilization of the market, homes are clearly selling for less than they were in 2006 and 2007."

He doesn't have specific numbers yet, but said, "most everyone is going to see a reduction in their values. ... Based on real data, certain areas of the county have fared better than others," he said. "As expected, homes in suburban areas such as West Chester and Liberty (townships) have declined, but not near the level of decline that we have seen in the more urban areas of Hamilton, Middletown and parts of Trenton."

Reynolds said the changes will be reflected in tax bills that come out in early 2010.

Property values are usually re-appraised every three years, and Reynolds said he's unaware of there ever being appraisals two years in a row. The next appraisal is scheduled for 2011.

"Like all property owners, I'm hopeful values recover and the economy strengthens," he said. "However, until such time I'm committed to appraising real estate at a conservative, fair value."