**Appeal ‘Propertunities’**

*By Janae Robbins, Wyandotte County, Staff Write*r

Nobody likes taxes — especially property taxes. Income taxes have a single day to focus on — sales tax is all but invisible, but we have almost three months to engage with our citizens after valuation notices are sent. There are two ways to look at what may be called “property tax season.” We can look at it as a grind or as an opportunity. We are of the opinion that it is our best opportunity to engage with our citizens to explain how the appraisal system works, provide them with knowledge and market data, and make them partners in refining our values to better reflect fair market value. We prefer to take this approach in our messaging and in our hearing processes from start to finish.

To assist in minimizing the number of appeals our office receives, we reach out to the public first. Even though we have steadily increased property values the last three to four years, our number of appeals has declined. We attribute that decline to the following community outreach:

* Put appraisal info, guides and visuals out on your website.
* Create Facebook, YouTube and Twitter accounts.
* Create visuals or short “explainer” videos on upcoming phases/valuation items.
* Send out news releases.
* Ask commissioners, neighborhood groups and business associations to invite you to meet with community members at their events.

**Engage, Educate and Empower**

Appeals should be looked at as an opportunity.

This is a chance to not only verify property data but engage, educate and empower our citizens. They may not like the answer, but at least they will have a better understanding of why and how the process works. Engaging, educating and empowering citizens:

* Opens the door for staff to clear up some of the appraisal/valuation misconceptions floating around out there.
* Allows for corrections to be made if needed.
* Allows them to be heard.
* Ensures staff is able to provide good public service and creates a positive customer experience.
* Provides a visual way for the public to digest information. Create visuals, interactive maps, statistic reports, etc. for public use. This can be done via brochure, flyer, graphic or video. Display these items in appeal waiting areas, social media platforms, YouTube, local newsletters and media outlets.

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Offering various ways to appeal at the county level may provide relief not only to the property owners, but staff as well. Thanks to technology, we are now able to accommodate large amounts of people with less effort.

* In person: great for engagement, but can be time consuming and difficult to conclude.
* Virtual: still get that engagement, but great for live walkthroughs and real-time data updates. Setting up links and connection may cause some hurdles.
* Phone: quick and great for limited hearing times, however, the engagement piece of the appeal process is diminished and lack of visuals may cause confusion.
* No Contact: straight to the point, mostly based upon evidence submitted. Downside is there is no engagement opportunity unless there are issues with the evidence submitted, at which point the appeal turns into a phone hearing anyway.

Another helpful appeals tool is to prepare your appellant with the necessary tools and information when coming in for the appeal. Our goal is to send the message, “help us help you.”

* Send out helpful appeals tips and good documentation items on the back of the confirmation letter that the appellant could consider submitting as evidence.
* Put market and appraisal information on your website and social media platforms in simple, easily understood terms.
* Include a questionnaire (paper or online) with the confirmation letter that can be filled out by the appellant in advance and reviewed during the hearing.
* Have market and neighborhoods reports readily available.

Appeal form templates and examples are available on the [KCAA’s website.](https://www.kscaa.net/newsletter-2/) ■