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Sales

Sales are the foundation for mass appraisal when utilizing a sales comparison approach. Assessors rely heavily on sales of properties in their jurisdictions when estimating values of all other similar properties in the same area. Assessors are required to use sales information in their assessment work. The validity of sales information is crucial. The sales analysis and study conducted by the assessor is only as good as the information provided to and the work completed by the assessor.

Importance of Sales

Sales information, the majority of which is required to be reported on a Certificate of Real Estate Value, go through a verification and review process before being utilized by the assessor as part of a sales ratio study to estimate future values. Minnesota is fortunate to be a state that requires reporting of sales information. There are three means of disclosure: full mandatory sale price disclosure, transfer fees, and mandatory recordation of any transfer instrument.

In 2008, the IAAO reported 36 states required full disclosure of sale prices. Seven states do not have any means of disclosure as statewide policy: Alaska, Idaho, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, Texas, and Utah. However, the limitation is not as severe in Missouri because several major local jurisdictions have full disclosure, so only parts of the state are without sale price disclosure requirements. Many states have transfer taxes based on sale price; some of these states also have full disclosure. Since 2003, Delaware has gained disclosure requirements and has been added to this list. Nevada and South Carolina lost disclosure requirements but retained transfer taxes related to sale price. Disclosure typically occurs when a sale price statement is filed as deeds are processed. More states indicated that disclosed sale prices are confidential; this number increased from five in 2003 to nine in 2008. In states that do not require such reporting and disclosure, the assessor is left to ascertain market information from listings, Realtors, and other means.

Certain sales are automatically removed from consideration, while others require more scrutiny and review by the assessor. When only verified sales remain, the assessor is able to analyze and study them to make some generalizations for the market and to make any changes in value to respond to the market.

A formal sales study is also conducted on these sales to verify the assessors' actions responded appropriately to the changes in the market. The Department of Revenue conducts additional studies as a check on the assessors' performances and to ensure equalization of values. Any of these formal studies involve data analysis, statistical measurement, critical thinking to develop solutions to correct issues, and reporting of results.

Primary Statutory References: 272.115, 287.241, IAAO.org

Certificates of Real Estate Value

Certificates of Real Estate Value (CRVs)

As previously mentioned, the sale (as it is reported on a CRV) is the foundation of the analysis an assessor conducts on the local market. It provides the data for sales ratio studies. Since the CRV contains important market data and is used for sales ratio studies and local government aids, it is important that the assessor examine each certificate when it comes into the office. If there is a wide difference between the sale price and the assessor's EMV, the assessor should examine that property and the conditions and terms of sale. The assessor may find that the property, through improvement or deterioration, may have changed since its last physical inspection. Or there may be other considerations that need to be addressed.

Requirement to File CRV

A Certificate of Real Estate Value (CRV) must be filed whenever any real estate is sold for a consideration in excess of \$1,000, whether by warranty deed, quitclaim deed, contract for deed, or any other method of sale. The CRV is filed in the county in which the property is located. The grantor, grantee, or an entity's legal agent is responsible for filing the CRV.

The CRV is also important for homestead purposes. When a property is sold, the assessor must remove the homestead classification for the following assessment year unless the new owner qualifies and files for the homestead classification under his or her name. No real estate sold or transferred shall be classified as a homestead unless the required CRV is filed.

A CRV is not required when the real estate is being conveyed to the state of Minnesota, a political subdivision of the state, or any combination of them, for highway or roadway right-of-way purposes, provided that the agency or governmental unit has agreed to file a list of the real estate conveyed to the agency or governmental unit with the commissioner of revenue by June 1 of the year following the year of the conveyance.

Primary Statutory References: 272.115, 273.124, subd. 13 (e)

The CRV Document

The CRV is a four-part paper form (white, yellow, green, and pink), officially titled the PE20, which is completed by a party involved with the sales transaction. Often it is completed by a closing agent or real estate attorney. Often this person, or a buyer or seller, will sign the CRV. It is usually filed (as Minnesota Statutes suggest) with the County Auditor during part of the recording process for the transaction, though some counties may have slightly differing processes established depending on their structure.

The first part (the white sheet) is picked up by the department's Regional Rep during the course of a sales review and pick up. These occur regularly throughout the year as needed based on the sales volume. The rep works with the counties to be sure sales are being properly verified and included or excluded from the study. The second and third parts (the yellow and green sheets) are the county's copies of the CRV, and each county may have different policies on which offices keep what copies.

During the processing of CRVs, the county auditor transmits two copies of the CRV to the assessor who shall insert the most recent market value and when available, the year of original construction of each parcel of property on both copies and shall transmit one copy to the Department of Revenue. Upon the request of a city council located within the county, a copy of each certificate of value for property located in that city shall be made available to the governing body of the city.

The fourth part (the pink sheet) of the form collects Social Security or tax ID numbers for parties to the transaction. The CRV has required the Social Security number or the federal employer identification number of the grantors and grantees since July 1, 1995. The page of the CRV with this information is almost immediately removed and safeguarded before being sent directly to the department. Remember Social Security numbers are private and/or nonpublic data. This information must be protected, but it may be shared with the commissioner of revenue for purposes of tax administration.

The person signing the CRV declares under penalty of law that the information provided is true, correct, and complete to the best of his/her knowledge and belief. Many assessors can recall instances where this is not the case. Some signers of the CRV do not fully understand the value of the document they are signing and how important it is to the assessment process. They also do not know what to review for accuracy; they are only signing because they are instructed to. Those completing the form may also not be fully aware of the value of the CRV or may not know what needs to be reported. Assessors must work diligently to verify any sale they plan to use in any sales study or analysis to ensure accurate data.

For certain property types (Agricultural, Apartment, Commercial/Industrial, and Other), filers of the CRV must attach a supplemental schedule formally titled the PE20A. This is also a four-part form that provides additional information on the sale to help the assessor better understand the transaction. This form is attached to the CRV and becomes a part of it.

The CRV is designed in a way to easily provide the assessor with detailed information pertaining to the sale. Every assessor should become familiar with what information is required (and what other information can be found) on the CRV. For example, the CRV may indicate an anticipated change in use. Legislation enacted in 2008 requires the CRV filer to include on the CRV any proposed change in the use of the property that could change the classification of the property. When agricultural land is sold for development purposes, the assessor's EMV may be significantly different than the sale price of the property that was purchased for development. This type of sale would likely be discarded from a ratio study.

The CRV lists the classification to which the property belongs for the purpose of determining the fair market value of the property. It includes financing terms and conditions of the sale which are necessary to determine the actual, present value of the sale price for purposes of the sales ratio study. The commissioner of revenue establishes administrative rules specifying the financing terms and conditions which must be included on the certificate.

Certificates of Real Estate Value

The CRV shall require such facts and information as may be determined by the commissioner of revenue to be reasonably necessary in the administration of the state education aid formulas and the property tax in general. The information required to be shown on the CRV is limited to the information required as of the date of the acknowledgment on the deed or other document to be recorded.

Additional legislation now also requires filers to indicate on the CRV if the transaction involved a like-kind exchange under section 1031 of the Internal Revenue Code (as amended through December 31, 2006). These transactions are more commonly known as “1031 Exchanges” and are more common for certain property types (commercial properties and agricultural land). These exchanges may occur through an exchange accommodation titleholder, but that entity may not hold title for more than 180 days.

Federal tax laws allow the exchange of business or investment property solely for business or investment property of a like-kind. Both properties must be held for use in a trade or business or for investment. Property used primarily for personal use, like a primary residence or a second home or vacation home, does not qualify for like-kind exchange treatment. When an exchange occurs, no gain or loss is recognized under Internal Revenue Code Section 1031. Gain deferred in a like-kind exchange under IRC Section 1031 is tax-deferred, but it is not tax-free. If, as part of the exchange, other (not like-kind) property or money is received, a gain is recognized to the extent of the other property and money received, but a loss is not recognized. Section 1031 does not apply to exchanges of inventory, stocks, bonds, notes, other securities or evidence of indebtedness, or certain other assets.

Properties are of like-kind if they are of the same nature or character, even if they differ in grade or quality. Real properties generally are of like-kind, regardless of whether the properties are improved or unimproved. For example, real property that is improved with a residential rental house is like-kind to vacant land. However, real property in the United States and real property outside the United States are not like-kind properties

A check box has been added to the CRV to account for this legislative change. It is located next to other information pertinent to the sale, and is a potential reason to discard the sale from a ratio study.

The paper version of the CRV has been “electrified” by some software companies. They have versions that allow for computer entry of the information, but the printout that is filed still looks essentially the same. Counties must accept these printouts as long as they provide the same information as the official CRV. The submitter can be expected to provide the appropriate number of copies. This version of the CRV should not be confused with the eCRV project as it still has a paper trail, where the eCRV ideally will remove the necessity for paper filing altogether.

The current version of the CRV is available on the department’s website. Limited quantities of the CRV forms may be requested from the division. If filers are requesting larger quantities, they may be

purchased from the state's bookstore, Minnesota's Bookstore, by visiting <http://www.comm.media.state.mn.us/bookstore/mnbookstore.asp> or by calling 651-297-3000 or 800-657-3757. The forms are cataloged as "Certif of Real Estate Value."

Primary Statutory References: 272.115, IRS.gov website

Completing the CRV

CRV filers are generally required to provide all information requested on the CRV. The supplemental CRV must also be completed if the property being transferred is apartment, commercial/industrial, or farm (or other) property. The assessor should verify that the appropriate information is provided, and may request additional information if it is missing.

The CRV does require the Social Security number or the federal employer identification number of the grantors and grantees. However, a married person who is not an owner of record and who is signing a conveyance instrument along with the person's spouse solely to release and convey his marital interest, if any, in the real property being conveyed is not a grantor for the purpose of providing a Social Security number. In these instances, a statement in the deed is sufficient to allow the county auditor to accept a CRV for filing without the Social Security number. This statement should state something very similar to:

"(Name) claims no ownership interest in the real property being conveyed and is executing this instrument solely to release and convey a marital interest, if any, in that real property."

Primary Statutory Reference: 272.115

Sale Price Listed on CRV

The sale price listed (total purchase price in box 2) is obviously very important as it is the value used for calculation of sales ratios and it helps the assessor determine market conditions. The sale price, in the case of any deed not a gift, is the amount of the full actual consideration paid, or to be paid, including the amount of any lien or liens assumed. The items and value of personal property transferred with the real property must be listed and deducted from the sale price.

The sale price amount should include the negotiated sale price for the real property, the value of any personal property if it was included in the sales contract (it also gets reported separately so it can be subtracted), any seller paid costs (points, closing costs, etc. which also get reported separated so they can be subtracted), and any normal real estate agent commissions. When the assessor is determining the sale price to use for ratio calculation, she will take the listed sale price and subtract any personal property amount and any seller paid cost amounts. The net is the sale price to use for sales ratio and analysis purposes.

Certificates of Real Estate Value

Certain items are allowable as deductions for personal property. They include the following and, if listed as personal property involved in the transaction, should be deducted from the sale price indicated.

- Above ground pools
- Hot tubs
- Boats and docks
- Crops
- Display cases
- Drapes
- Free standing appliances
- Fireplace equipment
- Farm machinery
- Furniture
- Fuel tanks
- Garden equipment
- Swing set
- Commercial signs
- Shelves

Certain items are not allowable as deductions for personal property. They include the following and, if listed as personal property involved in the transaction, should NOT be deducted from the sale price indicated.

- Awnings
- Attached grill or barbecue
- Attic fans / air cleaners
- Built in appliances
- Built in vacuum cleaners
- Central air conditioner
- Garbage disposal
- Gates and fences
- Garage door openers
- Installed carpeting (indoor/outdoor)
- Light fixtures
- Music/intercom system
- Solar panel
- Smoke or security detectors

Commercial, industrial, apartment, and agricultural property sales often include personal property that is not taxable, such as machinery, equipment, inventories, furnishings, crops, livestock, etc. If you excluded all sales for these categories of property where there was personal property included in the sale, there would be no sales. Therefore, it is necessary to estimate, through interview and analysis, the portion of the total consideration attributable to real property as opposed to personal property. Any adjustments made to the sale price for personal property or business rights should be well-documented.

In most cases, special assessments should be ignored in the sale price. They usually involve long-term encumbrances to the property that will lower ratios. Including special assessments can complicate the determination of sale prices without significantly improving the study's accuracy. Special assessments should be included in the sale price only if the dollar amount of the assessment is included in the consideration, and the cost of the assessment has contributed value that has been included in the current year assessor's estimated market value.

Deed Tax Calculation

A deed tax is collected on real estate transfers in Minnesota. The rate is .33% (.34% in Hennepin and Ramsey Counties) of the total purchase price as listed in box 2 on the CRV in most instances. Box 2 should include the negotiated purchase price for the real property (including the value of personal property if the sales contract is conveying both real and personal property and seller paid costs such as points, closing costs, etc.). The personal property should also be reported in box 5 while the seller paid costs are reported in box 4 of the CRV.

For residential real property (one-, two-, or three- unit residential structures), the value of the personal property being conveyed with the real property is subject to deed tax. The seller paid costs are also subject to the deed tax. For example, if a house sells for \$200,000 including \$10,000 for personal property and another \$5,000 for seller paid costs, the deed tax is calculated on the total \$200,000.

For other real property, the value of the personal property being conveyed with the real property is not subject to deed tax. The seller paid costs are still subject to the deed tax. For example, if an office building sells for \$5,000,000 including \$200,000 for personal property and another \$10,000 for seller paid costs, the deed tax is calculated on an adjusted \$4,800,000 price.

The deed tax amount may be helpful information for assessors if there is any doubt that a CRV has inaccurate information provided in boxes 2, 3, or 4. Assessors can calculate a total purchase price (after adjusting for personal property if necessary) that should be reported in box 2 by dividing the deed tax as reported on the deed by .33% (or .34% in Hennepin and Ramsey Counties). For example, if the recorded deed shows a deed tax of \$660, the total purchase price was \$200,000 (\$660 / .0033). Again, if the property is something other than one-, two-, or three- unit residential real property, the calculated total purchase price would then need to be increased by the amount of personal property listed in box 5.

Formula:

$$\text{Box 2 Total Purchase Price} = \frac{\text{Deed Tax Amount}}{.0033 \text{ (or } .0034)}$$

Primary Statutory Reference: 287.20, subd 2(c)

CRV Verification

CRV Verification

As has been mentioned numerous times, the assessor must be very diligent to verify all filed CRVs to determine if they will be included in the sales ratio studies and analysis to estimate values. The accuracy of the assessment, as well as the credibility placed on the changes made to assessments is dependent on reliable and accurate data that reflects the local market conditions. Without verification of sales, inappropriate or inaccurate information regarding the local market may be included in sales studies and may skew the analysis.

CRV Verification and Screening

Since the CRV contains important market data and is used for sales ratio studies and local government aids, it is important that the assessor examine each certificate when it comes into the office. If there is a wide difference between the sales price and the assessor's estimated market value, the assessor should examine that property and the conditions and terms of the sale. The assessor may find that the condition of the property, through improvement or deterioration, may have changed since the previous assessment. The assessor may find that the terms of the sale may be such that they do not reflect normal conditions. On the other hand, the assessor may find that the sale does reflect the market. It is important that the assessor fully explain any abnormalities found in the sale which affects the sales price. These comments, when shared with the Regional Rep, may have some effect on the usage of that sales price in the sales ratio study.

Some of the verification done is more clerical in nature – solely based on which boxes are checked on the CRV – while other verification is more subjective and requires the assessor to work with the Regional Rep to determine if the sale reflects an open market and arm's-length transaction. Minnesota follows IAAO guidelines in determining this. An “open market sale” is one in which the buyer and seller are acting prudently, and the price is not affected by undue stimulus. Neither the buyer nor the seller must be under great pressure to complete a transaction in a short time. An “arms-length sale” is between two parties, both of whom are seeking to maximize their gain from the transfer. Typically, commercial, industrial, apartment, and agricultural properties need the most personal verification.

The following list specifies the general types of sales that do not meet the acceptance criteria and should be automatically rejected from the sales study. Most of these are easily identified by the way the CRV is completed. The number refers to the “reject code” that is assigned to that reason for state reporting purposes.

1. Old sales outside of the 21-month study period
2. Relative sale / related business
3. Government or exempt party sales
4. Partial interest sale
5. Use change (change of legal property class)
6. Unusual financing; non-cash financing; income guarantees
7. Physical change (after assessment date; before sale)
8. Correction deed; not an actual sale

9. Trade; gift; or estate sale not exposed to open market
10. Prior interest sale, such as lease with option to buy
11. Skipped CRV number; used to indicate that auditor's number was not used
12. Unique reject reason that Department of Revenue Regional Representative must authorize
13. Duplicate CRV; buyer and seller each file a certificate for the same parcel
14. Sale of interest in or payoff of contract; mortgage assumption
15. Forced sale; legal action; foreclosure
16. Assessor value for sale year not available or split not agricultural or timber classes
17. Excessive non-real property
18. Rewrite of terms; default on CD
19. Relocation; employee transfer
20. Sale—leaseback property leased back to seller for more than six months
21. Bank sale (including HUD sales) and lending institution sales not exposed to the market
22. Less than minimum down payment with CD longer than one year
23. Sale under minimum dollar amount:
\$3,000 minimum for bare land sales; \$10,000 minimum for all other property types
24. Sale of properties in more than one county
25. Ag preserve; sales subject to minimum assessment agreement
26. Not typical market
27. Court-ordered value
28. Nursing home / mobile home park
29. Allocated sale price
30. Assessor's value restricted by plat law; first year only
31. Assemblage

There is no automatic “reject code” for extremely high or low ratios, and the ratio itself is not a valid reason for rejecting or accepting the sale. However, the extreme ratio indicates a need for additional investigation. The county's Regional Rep will help work through any of these reasons for removing a sale from study consideration when there are any questions or concerns that arise. More information is also available in the Minnesota Department of Revenue annual Sales Ratio Study Criteria document available on the department's website.

Each county should have a standard form and process for verifying questionable sales and making determinations to their appropriateness in the sales ratio analysis and study. Below are some examples of questions to ask when verifying sales:

- May I ask you for a few facts about the property you recently bought?
- Confirm the purchase price, date of sale, and terms listed on the CRV.
- Did you buy/sell through a real estate agent? What was the property listed for? How long was it on the market? How was the purchase price established? Was there an appraisal done?
- Was the buyer/seller a friend or have you ever had any other dealings with the other party?

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- Are there circumstances known to you which would have caused the seller to sell (or buyer to buy) at a price below/above the fair market price?
- Was the date of the purchase agreement shortly before the deed date/closing date? How much time elapsed between the date of the purchase agreement and the closing date?
- Have you, or any company you control, ever owned this particular property before?
- Was there any compelling reason why you bought/sold the property?
- What was the condition of the property when you bought/sold it?
- Have there been any changes in the property since you bought/sold it? Are you planning any future changes to the property?
- What influenced you to buy this particular property rather than another?
- Review the terms of the sale.
- If farmed: Was the crop kept by the seller and for how many years does the seller get the tillable ground? Who gets the government payments? Is it irrigated? Is the tillable ground tiled?
- Was there any personal property in the sale price? What was the value of the personal property?
- Did the seller pay any points?

For sample sales verification forms, consult your Regional Rep. When sales verifications occur, any information provided, as well as general information about the verification (who was called, when, etc.) should be documented. Whenever a sale is being removed from study consideration, the reason for the exclusion should be noted.

Primary Statutory Reference: 273.061

Foreclosure and/or Bank Sale Verification

In difficult economic times, foreclosure and/or bank sales make it very difficult for assessors to first get a handle on their local markets, and second, know which sales represent the market and which need to be removed from sales study consideration. If the assessor is experiencing a high number for foreclosure or bank sales, he should work with his Regional Rep to better understand how to handle them. The MAAO and Department of Revenue also collaborated on the “Joint Advisory: The current residential real estate foreclosure situation and how it relates to sales verification, sales ratio studies, and the assessment process.” That advisory was cited in the IAAO “Guide to Foreclosure-Related Sales and Verification Procedures”. These are tools to consult in handling these types of sales.

The IAAO guide says the foreclosure sale must pass the “open market” test just like any other sale for possible inclusion in a study. In a depressed market, there may be as many or more foreclosure-related sales as there are traditional sales. In this case, extensive examination and possible adjustment is necessary to include them in a study. Again, the Regional Rep will need to be aware of this activity and approve the inclusion of foreclosure-related sales.

In jurisdictions where foreclosure and bank sales are still infrequent occurrences that the assessor does not see impacting the overall market, the sales should be removed from consideration in the sales ratio study if the property is residential or seasonal residential property. Residential and seasonal residential property may be considered for use in the study in very specific circumstances as described above. Re-sales of other repossessed property will be considered for use in the study. The resale should be considered for use in the study if the property has been placed on the market and sold through a real estate agent or broker, or if the seller has professional staff who can act as brokers or agents. Thorough verification is essential before using these sales. These sales should not be used if the seller is “dumping” the property without an attempt to get a market level price.

If a sale is an actual foreclosure sale (a Sheriff's Sale), a documented short sale (between individuals but subject to bank approval or to prevent a pending foreclosure process), or a transfer of the property back to the mortgagor (the bank will be listed as the buyer) to prevent a foreclosure, the sale should be excluded from the study with the reject code 15. This reject code is also used for any sale resulting from other legal proceedings (divorce settlement required sale of the property, bankruptcy-forced sale, etc.).

If a sale actually lists the bank or a lending institution (or mortgage company) as the seller, the sale should be excluded from the study with the reject code 21. There are several other entities that function as banks. When the following are listed as the seller, the sale should be excluded from the study with reject code 21:

- US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD or Secretary of HUD, etc.)
- Veteran's Affairs Administration (VA or Secretary of VA, etc.)
- Fannie Mae (FNMA, etc.)

The use of reject code 21 for these sales should supersede using any other reject code that may be apparent based on how the CRV is completed. For example, frequently CRVs listing HUD as the seller will have the “Property condemned or foreclosed upon” and “Buyer or seller is unit of government” boxes checked on the CRV. Even though these are indicated on the CRV, the sale should be excluded from the study with reject code 21.

In normal markets, limited numbers of bank sales and foreclosure sales made for any analysis of those types of sales unnecessary. Without a need to specifically study them, the proper use of reject code 15 versus reject code 21 was somewhat irrelevant. In a market with ever-increasing bank sales and properties in the foreclosure process, the department needs to study these specific types of sales, and the proper use of reject codes for these sales is necessary. By correctly utilizing these codes, the department is able to analyze the prevalence of only the bank sales, for example, as opposed to all other sales involving legal proceedings.

It cannot be emphasized enough that these are general guidelines regarding the proper use of the sales study rejection codes 15 and 21. There may be other circumstances to be considered. For example, if you are in a jurisdiction where a large percentage of all sales are bank or foreclosure sales, they may need to be considered for inclusion in the sales ratio study. Additionally, sales may

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need additional verification to ensure there was no physical change to the property that may necessitate exclusion of the sale as reject code 07, or any other possible reasons to exclude the sale. For questions regarding specific sale inclusion or exclusion in the sales ratio study, please consult your Regional Rep.

Source: Joint Advisory: The current residential real estate foreclosure situation and how it relates to sales verification, sales ratio studies, and the assessment process." MAAO & MN Revenue

“Not Typical Market” Sale Verification

Another very subjective reason for removing a sale from sales study consideration is if the assessor deems the sale not reflective of typical market. Rejection reason R26 is for sales of doubtful title or other non-arms-length or non-typical market transactions. They should be removed from the study. This may include sales that are not advertised, listed, or promoted to potential buyers. A sale with a reject reason R26 with no explanation will not be accepted. Additional documentation will be required.

While R26 is a valid reason, a blanket application of rejecting all sales that are “not advertised, listed or promoted” would reject many sales that still meet the department’s guidelines of sales that are open market and arms-length. In an effort to maximize the number of sales in the ratio study sample and to provide assessors with all possible sales that reflect market value, market trends, and help to establish benchmarks for current and future assessments the following Three Strike Test has been developed to determine if the sale should be rejected as an R26 or accepted on its merits and included in the ratio study. Remember, transfers with doubtful title should always be rejected with R26.

- Test #1. Was the sale exposed to the market, or announced, and/or promoted through realtor listings, newspaper or other publications, advertisements, brochures or other promotional or informational mailings, including if the property was For Sale by Owner (FSBO)?
 - If the answer is YES; The sale SHOULD NOT be rejected as R26.
 - If the answer is NO; Go to Test #2.
- Test #2. Was an appraisal done prior to the sale to establish the sale price or used as a starting point for negotiations?
 - If the answer is YES; The sale SHOULD NOT be rejected as R26.
 - If the answer is NO; Go to Test #3.
- Test #3. Did the sale involve a willing and informed buyer and a willing and informed seller under no duress to buy or sell and is the sale price typical of the market for this type of property in your assessment district?
 - If the answer is YES; The sale SHOULD NOT be rejected as R26.
 - If the answer is NO; The sale SHOULD be rejected as R26.

Note: If through the verification process, it is determined that the sale should be considered as a market comparable and meets all other acceptance criteria, then the sale should be included in the study.

The reject R26 code is not an allowable reject code for agricultural sales, apartment sales, and commercial/industrial sales just because the property was not advertised. Individual situations may warrant the use of R26 on these property types. There will always be some highly unusual or questionable sales that will be encountered. It may be very difficult to determine if the sale should be a R26 or not. Any questions concerning whether a sale should be rejected as a 26 or included in the study as a good sale should be reviewed with the County Assessor and the Regional Rep.

Other Sale Verification Considerations

In order to increase the number of agricultural sales considered for the study, certain split sales (sales where a portion of a larger parcel is sold) will be used in most cases unless disqualified by the Regional Rep:

- If an entire agricultural property is split for sale to two or more buyers, the individual portions will be combined to produce one sale.
- If the agricultural land (over 34.5 acres) is split off from the building site and sold, the land sale will be considered for the sales ratio study.
- If the portion of the agricultural land of at least 34.5 acres was sold off and the seller retained the remainder of the farm, the land sale will be considered for the sales ratio study.

In these cases, assessors are asked to make sure that value is split promptly after the CRV is filed to assure uniform treatment of split sales throughout the state.

Non-agricultural split sales should not be used (the reason for excluding these are R16).

In order for a sale to be excluded due to physical change after assessment but before sale, the additional construction (or destruction) must exceed five percent of the previous year's market value. The intention is to include sales in which the physical change or new construction is merely cosmetic or would not have caused the assessor to change the market value of the property. Partial assessment sales will continue to be excluded. The reason for excluding these is R07.

CRV Data Submission

CRV Data Submission

All counties are expected to submit the data collected from the CRVs to the Department of Revenue in an electronic format. Instructions for providing this file with the correct layout and formatting are provided annually on the department's website. The CRV file is submitted to the Property Tax Division on an ongoing basis and the submission is coordinated through each county's Regional Rep. The file is the foundation of the data used for the sales ratio studies conducted annually to measure the level of assessment statewide by jurisdiction/county and property type. The data on the CRV file is matched with the data provided on the Market Value by Parcel File to collect the appropriate estimated market value information to calculate the sales ratios. Timely and accurate submission of this file allows for the division to provide counties with preliminary sales ratio study results as soon as possible.

File Submission Dates

Depending on the volume of sales transactions in jurisdictions, the Regional Rep will schedule ongoing and regular visits to review and pick up batches of sales. These batches are then electronically submitted according to the rep's directions.

At the conclusion of the sales study, there is one last pickup to ensure all sales are collected. There are different sales ratio studies conducted by the department which are covered in detail later in this module, and each has different study time periods. All end with sales occurring through September 30 of any given year. In order for the department to have sufficient time to process these files, as well as to give county assessors and Regional Reps ample time to review these sales, the following deadlines have been established:

- September 30 / October 31 – all sales occurring through September 30 that have been filed with the county auditor by October 31 must be included in the final file submission for that study.
- November 15 – all sales meeting the above dates must be entered into the file and be available for pickup by the Regional Rep. The rep will schedule the actual pickup date, so there is no single deadline date for submittal of all sales. Counties should work with their rep to be prepared for a visit near this date.
- January 15 – deadline for the department to complete the sales ratio study.

Submitting the File

Significant amounts of information are included in the CRV file; it is basically an electronic representation of the Certificate of Real Estate Value which is required to be filed for nearly every property transaction. The information collected in this file provides most of the information necessary to complete the sales ratio study process.

This file is submitted directly to the Property Tax Division (through the Regional Rep) via email, CD-ROM, or some other electronic means that is accepted. All counties should submit this

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CRV Data Submission

information electronically due to the time constraints the department works under in quickly processing these files and the benefits this electronic information has at the county level. If a county finds itself unable to electronically submit the files due technological or other reasons, it must work closely with the Regional Rep to submit this data.

Final Value Pickup

Final Value Pickup

The final value pickup occurs after the close of the sales study period and the county's final data submission but before the initial sales ratio study calculations are completed. It is a final review of the sales data to be included in the state's study. It is the time for any necessary additional adjustments/modifications to the sale ratio study before the final sale ratios are calculated.

Final Value Pickup Timing

The final value pickup up for each county is scheduled by the Regional Rep. It is typically in the winter of each year. The sooner counties submit the necessary information (final sales files and market value by parcel files); the sooner the department can compile the information and return it to the counties.

Final Value Pickup Process

Once the department has received, compiled, and analyzed the county's submitted files and data, it generates a final value listing report and a preliminary sales ratio study report. This information is distributed to counties and the Regional Rep. At this point, a meeting is scheduled to review the files to verify the data and make adjustments as necessary. The final value listing report lists, in summary form, all sales by property type. The report provides a significant amount of very important information, and careful review is necessary. The report is provided to facilitate this review. Each year, the department provides instructions to help with this review. Additional direction may come from the Regional Rep.

Additional adjustments/modifications are necessary to ensure the most current and correct information is provided for the sales ratio study. When the Regional Rep visits with counties on these reports, they review/incorporate additional sale verification information from the assessor if any additional sales need to be reviewed (or added/removed) for the study. The meeting will also include a check of "edits" indicated on the listing report. The "edits" are shown in the far right column ("COMMENTS") of the value pickup report. They could include missing values, extreme ratios (<65% or >135%), invalid sale price, property type code or other reporting errors (city code, parcel split error-incomplete match with market value file), conservation program acreage, "on-water" code, etc. All edit issues noted in the listing must be addressed as this is the information used to run the final sales ratio reports.

In order to help expedite this process, counties should complete a review of the report prior to the rep's visit and be prepared to discuss any issues and provide any needed data. For example, quite frequently, the report will indicate values are missing or incomplete. In these cases, the assessor should have the correct values ready for the rep to collect and enter. Another common "edit" is extreme ratios. In these cases, the assessor should review the sale again, conduct any necessary verification, and be ready to discuss these sales again to determine if they remain in the study.

Sales Ratio Studies

The sales ratio study is the culmination of the ongoing process of collecting information about the local real estate market. It provides important information in planning the upcoming assessment, evaluating the existing assessment, and identifying inequities in the assessment. There are other uses, as well. The state conducts several sales ratio studies to assist in assessment review and equalization and to aid the tax court. Many county and local assessors also perform their own in-house sales ratio analyses. Sales ratio studies are used by assessors in refining their valuation levels, by the tax court in adjudicating assessments, by the State Board of Equalization in determining orders, and by various aid formulas that utilize measures of equalized values. By the time sales ratio studies are completed by the department, there is an expectation that all the underlying sales data has been reviewed and is representative of the market.

Sales Ratios

Once sales reported on CRVs have been verified and determined as representative of market, the assessor can use them as part of a sales ratio study. Almost all measurements in a sales ratio study have some tie to the individual sales ratio. The sales ratio is a key tool in the review and equalization of values. The sales ratio shows the relationship between the assessor's EMV and the sale price of a property.

Formula:

$$\text{Sales Ratio} = \frac{\text{Assessor's Estimated Market Value}}{\text{Sale Price}}$$

Purpose of the Sales Ratio Study

There are three basic purposes of sales ratio studies. They are:

1. To plan an upcoming assessment
2. To evaluate an existing assessment
3. To identify inequities

The State Board of Equalization uses sales ratio studies to determine the assessment level for equalization purposes. For the assessor, the study provides an insight into variations in assessment among specific properties within classes, and between classes and areas. This is the first indication of possible inequities in the assessment. In addition, where assessment jurisdictions do not correspond to the principal taxing district (i.e. school district boundaries overlapping counties), the sales ratio study provides the assessor with information on which to base adjustments to the assessment with respect to the other county.

Property owners use the studies as support for their claim of unfair or inequitable treatment by assessors. Legislators use these studies to develop or change tax rates, which are a factor in distribution of state aids to local municipalities.

The Commissioner of Revenue is authorized by law to order a reassessment in any taxing district in order to correct a grossly unfair and inequitable assessment. Also, the Commissioner of Revenue

Sales Ratio Studies

constitutes the State Board of Equalization, and in that capacity, is empowered to reduce wide disparities in assessment levels between counties and among the several classes of real estate within counties. If the aggregate valuation of real or personal property is above or below the market value, the board is authorized to add or deduct from that valuation a percentage necessary to bring that aggregate valuation to market value. Sales ratio studies provide an equalization tool for the Commissioner of Revenue to measure how closely assessed values are to sale prices and to judge the quality of equalization within classes of properties and between classes and areas.

Sales Ratio Study Periods

While individual assessors perform their own in-house studies to aid in their assessments, the department produces three formal sales ratio studies: a 12-month study for the State Board of Equalization, a 9-month study for Tax Court, and a 21-month study for equalizing values for aid calculations.

The sales ratio study used by the State Board of Equalization, and given the most attention by assessors, spans a twelve-month period from October 1 to September 30. The sales occurring in this period are used in evaluating the assessments for the assessment date that it spans, which is useful for the equalization of the next year's assessment. For example, the 2009 study uses sales occurring from October 1, 2008 to September 30, 2009 which are compared to the January 2, 2009 assessor's estimated market values and could assist assessors in setting, or the State Board in equalizing, the next assessment.

The Tax Court uses a nine-month study of sales occurring from January 1 to September 30 of a given year. The preference for this timeframe may be an attempt to limit "spearing" or the "chasing of sales." In other words, the court may worry that a sale late in the year will cause the assessor to change that property's value for the January 2 assessment. Spearing could cause ratios to seem better than the assessor's actual performance for the majority of properties that did not sell. Studies with a shorter period, however, decrease the chance of having a sufficient number of sales in local districts.

The 21-month sales ratio study runs from January 1 of one year to September 30 of the following year. This study is used for determining equalized values which are used for local government aid (LGA), school aids, and other purposes. In this study, sales taking place in each year are compared to the assessor's taxable market values for that year. For example, sales occurring from January 2009 through December 2009 would be compared to the assessor's 2009 values; while sales occurring from January 2010 through September 2010 are compared to the assessor's 2010 values.

Sales Ratio Study Procedures

Most offices already follow existing procedures for completing a sales ratio study. Those procedures may differ from those listed here. The following are some general guidelines for completing a sales ratio study.

Many jurisdictions stratify their sales ratio studies in order to gain insight into what part of their jurisdiction or what type of property may need additional attention in an upcoming assessment. The

stratification occurs prior to the actual sales ratio study so the assessor can study the influence of that characteristic on the sales. The following stratification levels may be helpful to assessors:

- By type of home (i.e. ramblers, split-levels, 2 stories, etc.)
- By age (0 – 10 years old, 11 – 20, etc.)
- On lake/off lake (or other amenity such as golf courses, rivers, etc.)
- By price range (\$100,000 - \$150,000; over \$1 million, etc.)
- By acreage (5 – 10 acres; 40 – 75 acres; over 75 acres, etc.)
- By subdivision or neighborhood

As previously stated, sales ratio studies are only as reliable as the information they are based on. Therefore, it is necessary to take action to ensure the dependability of the information used in the ratio studies. The five steps necessary are as follows:

1. Gather basic data on real estate transfers.
2. Screen and edit information to make any necessary adjustments for conditions of sale and exclude all sales that do not represent arm's-length transactions.
3. Put relevant data into an acceptable format for processing on computer.
4. Sort information by listed categories of real estate within each area.
5. Total the data and compute statistics to describe the information.

Step 1: Sales Data Collection

Certificates of Real Estate Value (CRVs) are collected on all real estate transactions. Hundreds of thousands of real estate transactions occur in Minnesota each year. It is upon these transactions that the annual sales ratio study is based. All basic data regarding the transactions should be available on the CRV.

Step 2: Screening and Editing

At the Department of Revenue, CRVs are carefully screened to exclude transactions that are not "arm's-length" transactions. They should also be screened at the local level. Typically, commercial, industrial, apartment, and agricultural properties need the most personal verification.

All open market, arm's-length transactions should be included in the study. An "open market sale" is one in which the buyer and seller are acting prudently and where the price is not affected by undue stimulus. Neither the buyer nor the seller must be under great pressure to complete the transaction within a short time. An "arm's-length" sale is between two parties, each acting in their own best interest and seeking to maximize their gain from the transfer.

Consult the earlier list for the general types of sales that do not meet the acceptance criteria and should be automatically rejected from the sales study. Remember, extremely high or low ratios are not a valid reason for rejecting or accepting the sale. The extreme ratio indicates a need for additional investigation. Also recall that split class properties will be included in the study for the class that contains the largest share of the assessor's market value.

Sales Ratio Studies

Step 3: Prepare Data for Computer Entry

After screening all the sales for their usability in the sales ratio study, it is necessary to sort the transactions into useful classifications. Generally, they are sorted into three general categories within the counties (or subcategories from these if there are sufficient sales):

- City or Township
- Improved or Unimproved
- Use of Property (residential, commercial, industrial, apartment, seasonal recreational residential, agricultural [2a and 2b])

Step 4: Results Sorted and Listed

Each individual assessment/sales ratio, or relationship between the assessor's market value and sale price, is calculated by computer. These individual ratios are then arranged in order of magnitude and listed for several classes of properties within municipalities and townships. Hopefully, these individual ratios are grouped around the median ratio. Extremely high or low ratios are reviewed again to determine their suitability for the ratio study. After the outlier sales ratios are reviewed, the ratios are used to perform statistical computations that measure the overall level of assessment and the quality of the assessment.

Step 5: Statistics of Assessment/Sales Ratio Studies

One of the main objectives in property tax administration is an equalized assessment. It is exceedingly important that maximum equalization be attained both among local property owners and between taxing districts because the assessment serves as a basis for:

1. Tax levies by overlapping governmental units (i.e. counties, school districts, and special taxing districts).
2. Determination of net bonded indebtedness restricted by statute to a percentage of either the local assessed value or market value.
3. Determination of authorized levies restricted by statutory tax rate limits.
4. Apportionment of state aid to governmental units via the school aid formula and the local government aid formula.

An equitable distribution of the tax burden is achieved only if it is built upon a uniform assessment. The result of a non-uniform assessment is a shift in the tax burden to other property owners.

Sales Ratio Study Sample Size Minimum

The Department of Revenue requires at least six sales to constitute a valid sample size for calculating sales ratio statistics. The department has determined that six sales per property type per jurisdiction is the minimum number of sales that can provide a statistically-reliable indication of the assessment levels. If there are not six sales in a given year, then the sample is expanded by area (looking to countywide sales rather than for just a single jurisdiction) or by time (considering prior year assessment performance based on the "five year history" report). This same procedure is carried

out throughout the entire state to provide a fair and uniform methodology to measure the levels of assessment.

A minimum of six sales has been used as the threshold for quite some time and results in an acceptable level of reliability in the statistical measures that are computed. The IAAO endorses as few as five sales as a valid sample. Assessors with few sales for a property type in a jurisdiction need to work closely with their Regional Rep to be sure they are addressing the assessment issues for those properties. There are policies and procedures in place to ensure these “small samples” are being reviewed.

In jurisdictions with limited sales, a five year report is reviewed to measure the level of assessment over a longer time period. The five year report individually lists the original median ratios and adjusted median ratios for the five most recent sales ratio study periods, among other information. The report is created at the jurisdiction level for certain types of property, including residential/cabin, apartment, and commercial/industrial. It applies what is called the “three strikes test” to provide some insight into changes to the levels of assessment, as well as any actions the assessor took to change the level of assessment in each year during this time period. The three factors measured are:

1. Whether there were two or more years with six or more sales in the five-year history. If there were, it can be assumed that the assessor had to respond to the results in those years and thus that market was addressed.
2. Whether half of the years with sales (at least 2 of 5) have acceptable ratios (mini-adjusted ratios between 90 and 105 percent). If there were, it can be assumed that even though there are limited sales, the values placed on those properties have historically been in line with the market.
3. Whether the un-weighted average ratio of the years with sales falls within the acceptable range (90 to 105 percent). If it does, it can be assumed that taking all the sales over time into account (thus enlarging the study size), the values placed on those properties were in line with the market.

The results of the “three strikes test” are reported on the five year report. If a county does not pass at least one of the three tests for a certain property type in that jurisdiction, that jurisdiction is flagged on the report. The state board may order a change to the assessment based on this test, but the report is primarily utilized to identify instances where the county is not taking steps to review and improve assessment where there are limited or no sales.

Sales Ratio Study Statistical Measures

Sales Ratio Study Statistical Measures

Sales ratios are the most common calculation used to measure assessment equality or inequality. In a perfect world, if perfect assessment uniformity existed, the assessor's estimated market value and the sales price of a property would match and show a ratio of 100% since assessors are directed to appraise property at full market value. Since this is not realistic, there are several other measures that are useful to the assessor during the sales ratio study and analysis process. These measures help the assessor uncover areas to improve the assessment and determine changes. The following is a basic review of the most common statistical measures. The calculations and measures adhere to the IAAO standards.

Measures of Central Tendency

Measures of central tendency describe the overall level at which properties are valued. In assessment practice, three measures of central tendency are used to measure the overall level of assessment: the mean ratio, median ratio, and the aggregate (weighted mean) ratio.

The first step in calculating any of the measures of central tendency is to calculate each individual ratio for each sale. This is accomplished by the following formula:

Formula:

$$\text{Sales Ratio} = \frac{\text{Assessor's Estimated Market Value}}{\text{Sale Price}}$$

The mean ratio is the average of a group of ratios. It is the arithmetic average of the group and is a measure of central location. The mean is the most commonly used, easily understood average, but it weights each ratio equally and is easily affected by one extreme sales ratio. This can lead to significant distortion of the average.

Formula:

$$\text{Mean Ratio} = \frac{\text{Sum of All Ratios}}{\text{Number of Ratios}}$$

For example, a jurisdiction had 10 sales last year with ratios as follows:

.83	.81	1.00	.88	.76
.93	.86	.89	.64	.98

The sum of all the ratios is 8.58. To find the mean, the total of all of the ratios, is divided by the number of ratios

Formula:

$$\text{Mean Ratio} = \frac{\text{Sum of All Ratios}}{\text{Number of Ratios}} = \frac{8.58}{10} = .858 \text{ or } 85.8\%$$

Sales Ratio Study Statistical Measures

The median ratio is found by arranging the ratios in order from lowest to highest (or vice versa) and then selecting the middle ratio in the series. (In a case where there is an even number of ratios, select the midpoint between the two middle ratios.) It is used to describe a group of individual sales ratios. This is the most widely used measure of central tendency because it is not affected by extreme ratios. This feature is desirable due to the difficulty in excluding sales, that if the fact were known, would be discarded as unusable. The median of a group of ratios depends upon the position of items in the distribution rather than their magnitude.

Department of Revenue guidelines indicate that the median ratio of a sales ratio study should be from 90 to 105 percent. The median ratio is used to determine the level of assessment for the State Board of Equalization.

Using the ratios from the previous example, this time arranged in order from lowest to highest:



The median is the midpoint between the ratios, in this example the fifth and sixth ratios, .86 and .88. Thus the median is .87, or 87 percent (the mean or average of .86 and .88 is found by adding them together [.86+.88 = 1.74] and dividing that total by two [1.74 / 2] to find the median ratio of .87).

The aggregate ratio or weighted mean is computed by dividing the total assessor's EMV for all properties sold by the total sale prices of those properties. With the aggregate mean, each property sold is given a weight based on its sale price. Higher priced properties are given more weight than lower priced properties when the average is determined. This effect is justified if the number of higher priced properties that were sold represents the same percentage of higher priced properties in the area being studied (for example, if 30 percent of all property sales for a city are properties over \$400,000 and if 30 percent of properties in the entire city are valued over \$400,000). Because of these considerations, the aggregate mean is generally accepted as the most appropriate measure to be used in the equalization of aids.

Formula:

$$\text{Aggregate Mean Ratio} = \frac{\text{Total Assessor's EMVs}}{\text{Total of Sale Prices}}$$

Sales Ratio Study Statistical Measures

Measures of Uniformity

Measures of uniformity measure the quality and uniformity of the assessment. These measures of uniformity include the range of ratios, the coefficient of dispersion, and the price related differential.

The range is the difference between the smallest and largest ratios. A large range typically indicates poor uniformity. However, the range is highly susceptible to extreme ratios. The range from the previous example is .36 and is calculated by subtracting the smallest ratio (.64) from the largest ratio (1.00).

Formula:

$$\text{Range} = \text{Largest Ratio} - \text{Smallest Ratio} \quad 1.00 - .64 = .36$$

The average absolute deviation (AAD) measures the average difference between each ratio and the median ratio. This statistic is used to calculate the coefficient of dispersion. It is calculated by subtracting each individual ratio from the median ratio, summing the absolute value of those differences, and dividing by the number of the ratios.

Formula:

$$\text{Average Absolute Deviation (AAD)} = \frac{\text{Sum of (Absolute Value of Each Ratio - Median Ratio)}}{\text{Number of Ratios}}$$

The coefficient of dispersion (COD) is an index by which individual ratios vary from the median ratio. It is defined as the average absolute variation from the measure of central tendency (the median) expressed as a percentage of that measure. In other words, it measures the average percentage variation between all of the sales ratios and the median. (It could also be used for the mean, mode, or weighted mean.)

The COD is an important statistical measure in mass appraisal because it measures the equality or uniformity of the assessment. A low COD indicates that appraisals within a class or area are uniform; the sales ratios are grouped relatively close to the median. If the sales ratios are relatively close to the median and to themselves, relative over- and under- assessments are small. A high COD indicates that properties are being appraised at inconsistent percentages of market value.

IAAO standards suggest the following:

- Single family residential –
 Generally less than 15; less than 10 if a newer, homogeneous area.
- Income-producing properties –
 Generally less than 20; less than 15 in large, urban areas.

The general rule of thumb for a COD is:

- 0 to 10 = Excellent
- 11 to 19 = Acceptable
- More than 20 = Problem — poor uniformity

Sales Ratio Study Statistical Measures

Formula:

$$\text{Coefficient of Dispersion (COD)} = \frac{\text{AAD}}{\text{Median Ratio}} \times 100$$

The price-related differential (PRD) measures the relationship between the mean ratio and the aggregate mean ratio. It is calculated by dividing the mean sale ratio by the aggregate mean sale ratio and then multiplying the result by 100. Appraisal uniformity is said to be regressive if high-value properties are under-appraised relative to low-value properties. This would be evident by a PRD of greater than 100. A progressive assessment, evident by a PRD of less than 100, indicates that lower priced properties are under-appraised. The Department of Revenue looks for a PRD of 97 to 102.

The general rule of thumb for a PRD is:

- 97 to 102 = Acceptable
- Less than 97 = Unacceptably progressive
- More than 102 = Unacceptably regressive

Formula:

$$\text{Price Related Differential (PRD)} = \frac{\text{Mean Ratio}}{\text{Aggregate Mean Ratio}} \times 100$$

Other Features of the Sales Ratio Study

Other Features of the Sales Ratio Study

Time Adjusted Values

An important piece affecting sales ratio studies is the time adjustment for sales prices. All sales used in the sales ratio study are analyzed for the need of a time adjustment. If necessary, the sale prices are adjusted to the date of the assessment (January of the study year for the 12-month study). For example, in the 2009 study, all sales are compared to the January 2009 assessors' market values to derive the sales ratios. The time adjustment adjusts the sale price of all sales to January of 2009.

The following simplifies the procedures used to calculate the time adjustments:

- The sales are stratified by property type – residential/seasonal recreational, apartment, commercial/industrial and farm.
- A regression is performed on the median sales ratios of the sales over time. In order for a time adjustment to be used in the study, it must be statistically significant at the 95% confidence level. If the time adjustment is not statistically significant, no time adjustment is used.
- The time adjustments for residential/seasonal recreational are calculated at the county level or at the city level for cities with large numbers of sales – approximately 100 or more sales.
- The time adjustments for the other property types (apartment, commercial/industrial and farm) are calculated in multi-county groupings of approximately 8-12 counties.

The regression analysis and other statistical measures are very complex. The important thing for the assessor to remember is that the time adjusted sale price (and corresponding ratio) is supplied to the county on the final value listing reports. These numbers should be used in conducting any analysis. They will often not affect the final median ratio much (or at all) as the adjustments are usually minor or offsetting (same number of sales before and after the assessment date), but they must be utilized when appropriate. The adjustment factor is also provided if counties wish to use it internally.

Financing Adjusted Sales

All sales in the sales ratio study are reviewed by the department for any necessary financing adjustments. Sales recorded on contract for deed or sales recorded on warranty deeds that include an assumption of an existing mortgage or a seller-provided mortgage may be adjusted. These types of sales often need adjusting to reflect current financing trends generally available in the market. Financing adjustments will not be made to new mortgages from third parties as these likely already represent current financing availability. The calculations for determining a financing adjustment are complex, but the important thing for the assessor to remember is that the financing adjusted sale price (and corresponding ratio) is supplied to the county on the final value listing reports. These numbers should be used in conducting any analysis. They will often not affect the final median ratio much (or at all) as the adjustments are usually minor and very rare, but they must be utilized when appropriate.

Other Features of the Sales Ratio Study

Local Effort

Local effort measures how much change in value the assessor can claim is due to value changes in response to market. It is measured from the Fall and Spring Mini Abstracts. It is the percentage change in adjusted market value from the fall of one year (after changes made by boards of appeal and equalization and the State Board of Equalization) to the spring of the next year. This calculation is used when determining if the assessor's changes to the market values were sufficient enough in responding to market trends so as to result in an acceptable level of assessment.

Formula:

$$\frac{\text{Adjusted 2010 Spring Mini EMV} - \text{Adjusted 2009 Fall Mini EMV}}{\text{Adjusted 2009 Fall Mini EMV}} \times 100 = \text{Local Effort}$$

For example, a residential homestead increases in value from \$150,000 in the fall to \$163,000 in the spring. The local effort for this property would be 8.67% or 8.7% (rounded).

Formula:

$$\frac{163,000 - 150,000}{150,000} \times 100 = 8.67\%$$

This simplified example can be carried forward to entire classes of property for entire jurisdictions. Say the residential property for a township increased in value from \$2.3 million in the fall to \$2.7 million in the spring. This change was not due to class shifts or any of the other unusual circumstances that can affect a local effort calculation. In this case, the local effort for this property type would be 17.39% or 17.4% (rounded).

Formula:

$$\frac{2,700,000 - 2,300,000}{2,300,000} \times 100 = 17.39\%$$

This 17.39% would be the increase due to the assessor changing market values on residential property. It would then be multiplied by the median sales ratio indicated in the final sales ratio calculated by the state to indicate if further adjustments were needed to equalize values. For example, if the median residential sales ratio for this township was 81.2%, the assessor would be showing enough local effort to support an adjusted median ratio of 95.32%.

Formula:

$$(\text{Median Ratio} \times \text{Local Effort}) + \text{Median Ratio} = \text{Adjusted Median Ratio}$$

$$(81.2\% \times 17.39\%) + 81.2\% = 95.32\%$$

The local effort calculation involves other adjustments, such as class shift (value moving from one property type to another), new construction, Plat Law deferral, and others. The department publishes

Other Features of the Sales Ratio Study

annual instructions for the proper determination and reporting of the information analyzed to calculate local effort. These instructions are posted to the department's website.

Equalized Values

The State Board of Equalization has the responsibility to determine inequalities in the assessment. Sales Ratios are used to equalize assessed values throughout the state by dividing the assessed values (whether market values or net tax capacities) by the sales ratio. Dividing by the ratio essentially identifies the value at the 100% level for a better comparison of relative values where assessments were equally determined.

For example:

City	Assessed Value	Median Sales Ratio	Equalized Value
A	\$5,000,000	99.9%	\$5,005,005
B	\$3,500,000	65.0%	\$5,384,615
C	\$4,000,000	81.7%	\$4,895,961

In this example, City B looks to be the property poor city, but if the value in these cities were perfectly assessed, they are actually the property rich city. State aid, for instance, should not reward poor assessment performance by giving more aid to the lowest performing assessor's city. The equalization of values controls for varying assessment levels to make sure state aid is fairly distributed.

The department completes these calculations to equalize state aid payments, but they are a direct result of the assessor's level of assessment and directly affect the county and local units of government in the aid payments they receive.

Sales Chasing

Since the twelve-month study includes sales of properties that take place prior to the assessment date those sales are compared to (i.e. an October sale is compared to the assessed value of the next January 2), assessors must be certain they do not chase or spear sales. Spearheading could cause ratios to be better than the assessor's actual performance for the majority of properties that did not sell. As previously mentioned, the Tax Court uses a nine-month study in response to this possibility.

Sales chasing or spearheading is the practice of using the sale of a property to trigger a change in its appraised value to (or near) its selling price. In contrast, the appraised value of unsold property is not changed. The practice of sales chasing may cause invalid findings in ratio studies. If sales are being chased, the sample will show appraised values at or near market value. Since the sample is made up of a subgroup of all properties and this subgroup is treated differently than the universe of properties, this sample may not reflect the true nature of the universe of properties. The reality may be that the majority of appraised values—unsold properties—may be below or above market value. In a rising housing market, sales chasing may cause a study to arrive at an inaccurately low market value.

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Other Features of the Sales Ratio Study

Conversely, in a falling market, sales chasing may cause a study to arrive at an inaccurately high market value.

The department conducts tests and analysis to identify sales chasing, and it will take appropriate measures when sales chasing or spearing is identified or suspected.

eCRV

eCRV

The eCRV will allow a buyer/agent to submit an electronic CRV via a web interface directly to the Department of Revenue. They may do so by filling out an on-line Web form, or in the future via a file. Counties will then retrieve the CRV data on-line or via a download for review, acceptance, and finalization before the department uses it to complete the sales study.

When fully operational, any buyer or agent will be allowed to submit a CRV via a computer. The department will assign a unique CRV# for each CRV submitted by the buyer/agent. The buyer/agent will reference that CRV# when submitting the deed to the county. The county will be able to download and upload CRV data for processing to complete its tasks and analysis. Counties may also be able to edit CRV data on-line.

The new process will greatly save processing time and resources by CRV submitters, counties, and the department. Regional Reps will be allowed to focus more attention on the analytical tasks, assisting counties in assessment and administrative practices, and on performing county oversight duties.

eCRV Project

The Department of Revenue is in the midst of a major project to eliminate the paper version of the Certificate of Real Estate Value. In some test counties already, and eventually in all counties throughout the state, filers will submit their CRVs electronically. This will save substantial data entry time for county staff as the files can be “connected” to their computer systems to share information and complete the CRV process electronically.

Development and implementation of the eCRV project is divided into two phases: Early Adopters and Statewide Adoption. During the Early Adopters phase, only selected counties and selected buyers/agents will be allowed to use the system. Early Adopter counties will begin using the system one at a time during late 2009 and into 2010. The number of early adopter buyers/agents will also grow in a managed way as appropriate. Counties beyond the early adopter counties will begin participating in late 2010 and throughout 2011.

There is an issue of obtaining suitable funding to complete this project. The department does not have sufficient resources or funds to complete the project independently. It seeded the project with resources and one-time money to begin development and has provided human resources.

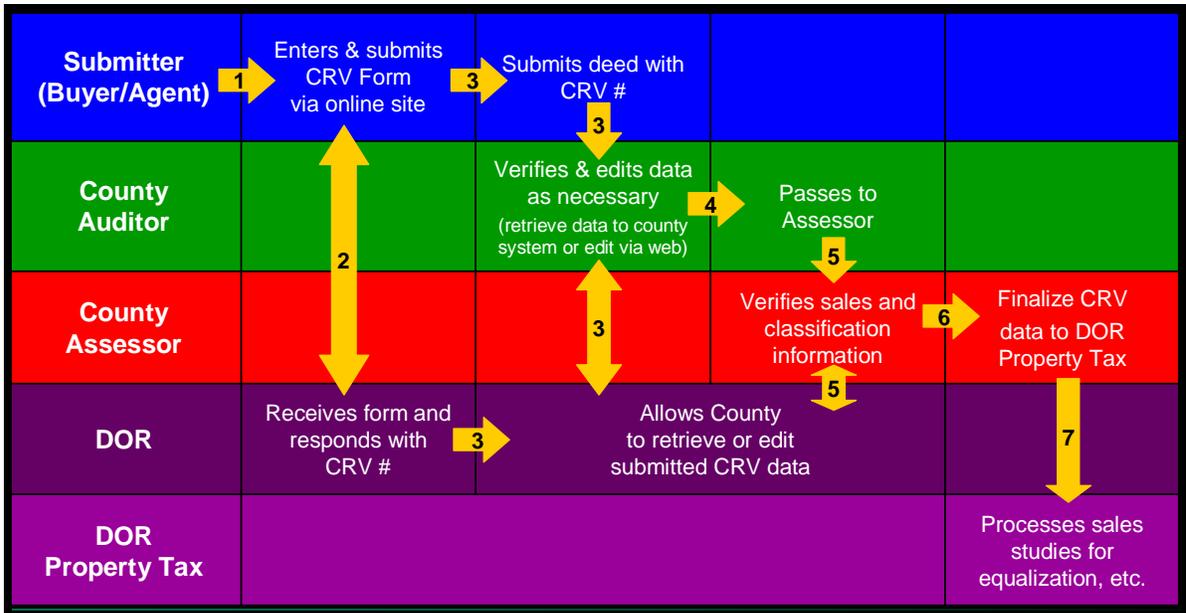
To cover state development costs, counties have offered, and are being asked, to contribute an upfront fee to begin using the system. Early adopter counties provided funds in advance to finance development. To cover state on-going maintenance costs, industry players may be offered login access to electronic file and batch file submission for an annual fee. Individuals and organizations may always submit individual CRVs via a free Web form. Industry early adopters will also be asked to provide a discounted annual fee up front to help finance initial development.

eCRV

Funding county level development and on-going maintenance is being covered by recording fees already being collected. State portions of the recording fees go to the general fund and at present are not directly accessible by the Property Tax Division.

At this time, participation in eCRV is voluntary to both counties and submitters (industry) and any fees to utilize eCRV will be somewhat proportional to CRV volume and/or data submission and access utility. Submitting or accessing individual CRVs via a Web form will remain free

The following is a schematic of the eCRV process as it is currently envisioned. It will likely change slightly as the process is refined and more counties begin accepting eCRVs. The bottom line is the eCRV process will enable assessors to complete the CRV process (entry, verification, analysis) much more efficiently and effectively and will remove the need for a paper copy of the CRV. It will also eliminate the need for counties to submit a copy with Social Security numbers.



There is additional information regarding eCRV on the department's website.