

## **Equalization of Darien's Tax Base**

**By Anthony Homicki Assessor**

As mandated by the State of Connecticut's General Statutes, commercial and residential property owners will receive a letter by the end of November from the Office of the Assessor which will show the change in your real estate assessment. **Under Connecticut state law, all properties are to be revalued every five years. Darien's last revaluation was completed October 1, 2018.**

Darien first performed this effort in a computer medium (going from a penciled manual record) in 1999, transferring a variety of building and land features into an appraisal database. This automated information was enhanced during the 2003 revaluation with a updated computer assisted mass appraisal (CAMA), with further refinement in 2008, when this CAMA system integrated a centralized database with the Building Department's software. In 2013 we further integrated the CAMA with photos using mapping technology (GIS), and aerial imagery with even better technology in 2023 as aerial imagery is now complimented with oblique 360 degree matching off existing footprints of all buildings.

### **Why are properties assessed at 70% of fair market value?**

The updated assessment is based on 70% of fair market value applicable as of October 1, 2023. The 70% ratio was established in the 1960s, when the intent was to standardize all Connecticut towns and cities, bringing uniformity as some towns had lower ratios while others had higher ratios. It was in the 1960s that a uniform fiscal year was also established by state law. In the 1970's the appeal process was refined, giving all residents a local review process. The legislature further refined the Connecticut property assessment process requiring all local assessors to have continuing education annually and established performance based standards, requiring uniformity and parity when these assessments are updated. You might ask why a five year mandate? A quick answer to that question is that it has become a practical and political blending of the real-estate cycles that occurred through Connecticut over the past three decades. So your first task in understanding the Assessor's letter is to divide your new assessment by 70%. This will give you the gross appraised value of your property.

### **Your property value:**

The Assessor's Office is mandated by State Statute to review and identify all sales for a variety of assessment purposes. With the certified appraisers/consultants hired by the town, this office has identified over 600 sales, which are now the basis for defining and defending the updated 2023 assessments. The overall objective of this five-year mandate is to establish parity and consistency for all of Darien's real estate.

Is your assessment fair? The best way to answer this question is to review the sales that have occurred, not only in your immediate neighborhood, but also throughout the town of Darien. In some situations, some appraisers have to go outside of the borders of Darien to find comparables especially for unique homes and commercial properties. You should look for recent sales that are much like your house, which have the same type of property, the same room count, be it the number of bedroom and bathrooms, and comparable age and possibly the same type of neighborhood. Much of this information and more can be found on the Town's website: [www.darienct.gov/327/assessor](http://www.darienct.gov/327/assessor). Many of the local real estate agents and brokers have an incredible amount of detail on their own websites that you might find helpful.

## **What does this updated assessment actually mean to me?**

What will this updated 2023 assessment mean to my July 2024 tax bill? At this time it is not possible to exactly determine how it would compare to your bill from last year until the certified Grand List is finalized and the budget is set. It is only then that the mill rate is calculated (normally during the month of May).

## **What are the facts about the values in 2018 compared to 2023?**

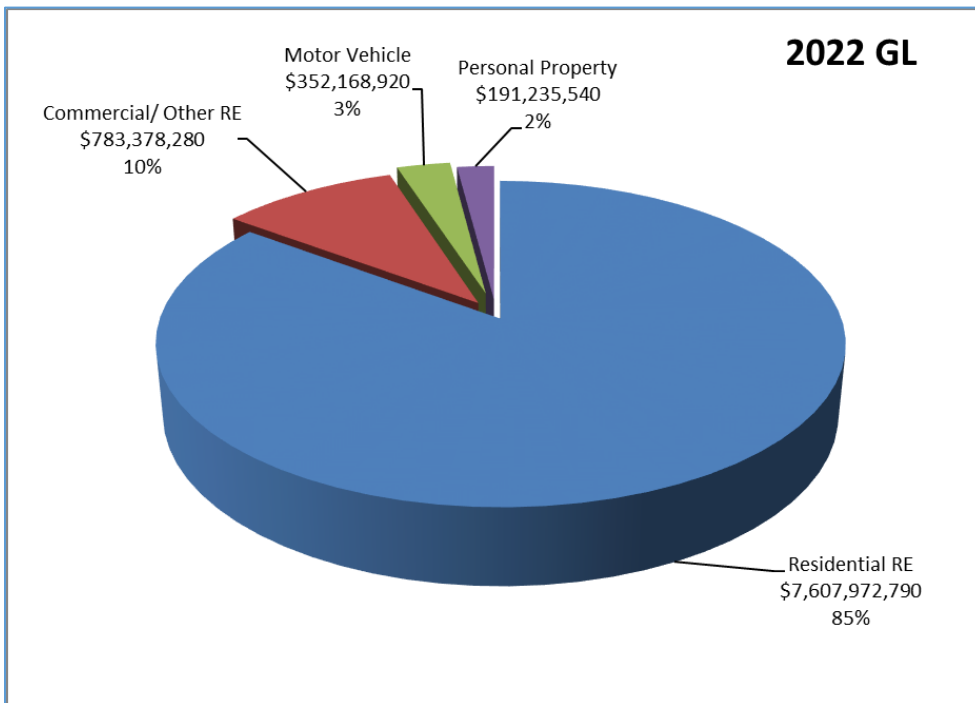
The average residential assessment has increased within the range of 26%-33% town wide depending on the specific neighborhood that you live in. Entry-level homes have increased in value from \$700,000 to \$900,000. These facts are based on the physical inspection and scrutiny of over 600 sales that have occurred over the past 24 months. We have also looked at detail as defined in each multiple listing service as well as had discussions with local agents and brokers. You might be above the average or below the average. The values are based on the features of each parcel and the specific features of your home itself. Our preliminary analysis shows that the overall residential tax base will increase as much as 29% above last year's grand list. With an increase in our base values will come a corresponding drop in the mill rate.

## **Darien economic trends over the past thirty years.**

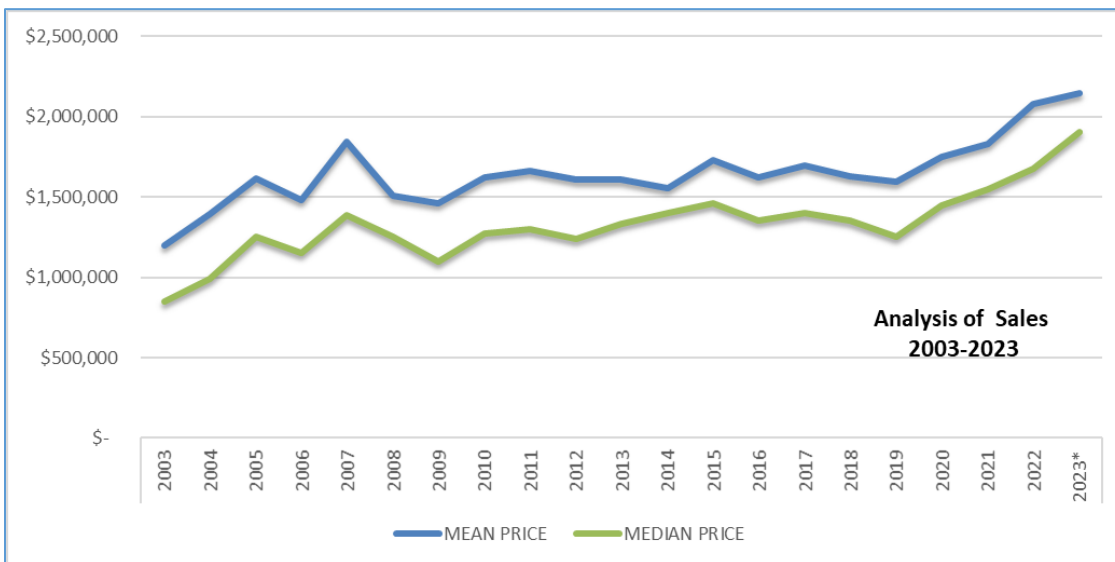
Darien like much of Fairfield County has changed over the past 30 years. We have seen significant growth within our residential neighborhoods and significant changes along the Boston Post Road, uniquely enhanced with downtown development, newly constructed commercial buildings and a variety of fine dining restaurants. The two Heights commercial redevelopments "Darien Commons" (Federal Realty) and "The Heights" (V20 Group) with our new town square called "The Corbin District" will supplement the tax base in Darien. Other examples of growth are The Affordable Self-Storage project on Hollow Tree Ridge Road and the Parklands continuing care facility known as "The Residence @ Selleck Woods". Both are examples of developments that have increased the tax base by millions of dollars.

Darien continues to have its own character, being a waterfront community influenced by tidal coastal concerns both positive and negative, wonderful marshlands with preservation areas owned by the Darien Land Trust, as well as open land covenants established by our country clubs and the Ox Ridge Hunt Club. We have a Master Plan of Conservation and Development that advocates growth with sensitivity to each neighborhood. Housing values in Darien have generally grown faster than the rate of inflation over the past thirty years. Generally speaking, commercial properties do not appreciate in value as much as residential property. Personal Property and Motor Vehicles are not a significant factor in the Grand List of Darien.

The following chart shows how dominate our residential tax base is:



The following chart shows the level of sales that have occurred up to October 1, 2023:



The following compares the Darien Grand list and mill rate changes back to the 1960's:  
 (Please note that the effective tax rate at 1% is one of the lowest in the state)

<b>GRAND LIST OF TAXABLE PROPERTY IN DARIEN</b>				
<b>(Before BAA)</b>				
<b>YEAR</b>	<b>GRAND LIST</b>	<b>INCREASE</b>	<b>% OF INCREASE</b>	<b>MILL RATE</b>
1960	122,344,970	2,568,680	2.9	33.00
1961	124,917,650	3,275,400	2	35.00
1962	128,193,050	3,101,810	2.6	36.00
1963	131,294,860	4,464,090	2.4	37.00
1964	135,758,950	4,474,090	3.4	37.00
1965	139,419,830	3,660,880	2.6	38.00
<b>1966</b>	<b>196,249,520</b>	<b>56,829,690</b>	<b>40.7</b>	<b>30.00</b>
1967	202,543,900	6,294,380	3.2	33.00
1968	209,809,825	7,265,925	3.6	36.00
1969	216,832,125	7,022,300	3.3	39.00
1970	221,605,880	4,773,755	2.2	41.00
1971	224,342,670	2,736,790	1.2	43.00
1972	227,878,620	3,535,950	1.5	45.50
1973	233,369,630	5,491,010	2.4	47.50
1974	243,862,350	1,493,320	0.7	47.50
1975	243,862,350	6,907,518	2.9	48.50
1976	246,742,835	4,991,967	2	50.50
1977	252,970,110	6,227,275	2.5	52.00
<b>1978</b>	<b>671,662,404</b>	<b>418,692,294</b>	<b>166</b>	<b>20.80</b>
1979	687,786,500	16,124,096	2.3	22.00
1980	694,178,968	6,392,468	1	23.50
1981	707,036,228	12,857,260	1.6	25.10
1982	716,489,995	9,453,767	1.3	26.70
1983	725,180,784	8,690,789	1.2	28.70
1984	742,860,065	17,679,281	2.4	30.50
1985	758,492,045	15,631,980	2.1	32.20
1986	776,530,730	18,038,685	1.02	33.90
1987	797,476,592	20,945,862	2.7	35.30
<b>1988</b>	<b>2,659,321,607</b>	<b>1,861,845,015</b>	<b>233.5</b>	<b>11.30</b>
1989	2,695,777,018	36,455,411	1.35	11.90
1990	2,718,035,986	22,258,968	0.85	12.56
1991	2,731,099,875	13,063,889	0.45	13.10
1992	2,747,687,259	16,587,384	0.65	13.53
1993	2,782,170,896	34,483,637	1.0126	14.00
1994	2,802,942,753	20,771,857	0.75	14.49
1995	2,841,870,122	41,069,869	1.013	15.32
1996	2,863,357,312	60,414,559	0.81	16.13
1997	2,894,331,663	28,584,602	1.01	17.05
1998	2,901,469,783	7,138,120	1.00	17.72
<b>1999</b>	<b>4,201,293,840</b>	<b>1,299,824,057</b>	<b>1.31</b>	<b>13.06</b>
2000	4,208,656,086	7,362,246	1.00	14.02
2001	4,213,376,565	4,720,479	1.00	14.98
2002	4,244,041,755	30,665,190	1.01	16.00
<b>2003</b>	<b>6,222,450,581</b>	<b>1,978,408,826</b>	<b>1.32</b>	<b>11.95</b>
2004	6,331,280,145	108,829,564	1.02	13.02
2005	6,417,472,453	86,192,308	1.01	13.40
2006	6,504,163,707	86,691,254	1.01	13.87
2007	6,606,255,385	102,091,678	1.02	14.55
<b>2008</b>	<b>8,740,903,404</b>	<b>2,134,648,019</b>	<b>1.32</b>	<b>11.37</b>
2009	8,753,256,485	54,810,011	1.01	11.74
2010	8,795,402,983	42,146,498	1.00	12.20
2011	8,863,212,891	66,336,358	1.01	12.68
2012	8,896,458,480	34,469,819	0.52	13.17
<b>2013</b>	<b>8,285,454,606</b>	<b>(611,003,874)</b>	<b>-7%</b>	<b>15.01</b>
2014	8,365,999,834	80,545,228	1%	15.35
2015	8,451,514,184	85,514,350	1%	15.77
2016	8,521,512,679	69,998,495	0.83%	16.16
2017	8,598,603,870	77,091,191	0.90%	16.08
<b>2018</b>	<b>8,494,349,986</b>	<b>(104,253,884)</b>	<b>-1.21%</b>	<b>16.47</b>
2019	8,577,028,702	82,678,716	0.97%	16.33
2020	8,635,984,905	58,956,203	0.69%	16.84
2021	8,797,087,353	161,102,448	1.87%	17.23
2022	8,931,036,124	133,948,771	1.52%	17.61

## **Might you want to know more about the revaluation process?**

The Assessor's website ([www.darienct.gov/327/assessor](http://www.darienct.gov/327/assessor)) has an updated Q&A document, a list of validated arms-length sales and an interactive map with [Darrien real estate sales](#) from 10/2021 to 10/2023. You can also review individual parcel information by accessing our [property records online](#).

### **Summary:**

Assessment change notices were mailed to all property owners. Assessor, Anthony Homicki, encourages all to go on our [Assessor's website](#) and review the revaluation data to see if your questions can be answered.

INFORMAL REVIEW BOARD – Tyler Technologies, the Town's 2023 property revaluation company, will have appraisal personnel available for the purpose of reviewing property values. Informal review hearings will be scheduled **by appointment only**. The appraisers will not be able to discuss tax rates or estimated tax bills. A change in value will be considered if the owner can demonstrate that the appraised value is in excess of market value. **The last day to request an appointment is December 6, 2023.**

To **schedule an appointment online** please go to [www.tylertech.com/schedule](http://www.tylertech.com/schedule) and follow the instructions. You will need the Parcel number (PARID#) at the top of the change of assessment letter in order to book your appointment.

If you do not have access to a computer, you may call **Tyler Technologies** toll free at **1-(844)-656-0971** between the hours of 9:00 AM and 4:00 PM Monday-Friday excluding weekends and public holidays.

BOARD OF ASSESSMENT APPEALS – If a property owner is not satisfied with the results of the informal review, they may appeal to the Board of Assessment Appeals by requesting a hearing in writing no later than February 20, 2024. Applications to the BAA will be available after January 1, 2024.