

**BEFORE THE NEBRASKA TAX EQUALIZATION AND REVIEW
COMMISSION**

JOSEPH A URBAN
REVOCABLE TRUST,
APPELLANT,

V.

DOUGLAS COUNTY BOARD
OF EQUALIZATION,
APPELLEE.

CASE NO: 22R 0551

DECISION AND ORDER
AFFIRMING THE DECISION
OF THE DOUGLAS COUNTY
BOARD OF EQUALIZATION

I. BACKGROUND

1. The Subject Property is an improved residential parcel in Douglas County, parcel number 2161110006.
2. The Douglas County Assessor (the County Assessor) assessed the Subject Property at \$168,900 for tax year 2022.
3. Joseph A Urban Revocable Trust (the Taxpayer) protested this value to the Douglas County Board of Equalization (the County Board).
4. The County Board determined that the taxable value of the Subject Property was \$168,900 for tax year 2022.
5. The Taxpayer appealed the determination of the County Board to the Tax Equalization and Review Commission (the Commission).
6. A Single Commissioner hearing was held on June 15, 2023, at the Omaha State Office Building, 1313 Farnam, Room 227, Omaha, Nebraska, before Commissioner Steven Keetle.
7. Joseph A. Urban was present at the hearing for the Taxpayer.
8. Kurt Skradis with the County Assessor's Office (the County Appraiser) was present for the County Board.

II. APPLICABLE LAW

9. All real property in Nebraska subject to taxation shall be assessed as of the effective date of January 1.¹
10. The Commission's review of a determination of the County Board of Equalization is de novo.²
11. When considering an appeal, a presumption exists that the "board of equalization has faithfully performed its official duties in making an assessment and has acted upon sufficient competent evidence to justify its action."³ That presumption "remains until there is competent evidence to the contrary presented, and the presumption disappears when there is competent evidence adduced on appeal to the contrary. From that point forward, the reasonableness of the valuation fixed by the board of equalization becomes one of fact based upon all the evidence presented. The burden of showing such valuation to be unreasonable rests upon the taxpayer on appeal from the action of the board."⁴
12. The order, decision, determination, or action appealed from shall be affirmed unless evidence is adduced establishing that the order, decision, determination, or action was unreasonable or arbitrary.⁵
13. Proof that the order, decision, determination, or action was unreasonable or arbitrary must be made by clear and convincing evidence.⁶

¹ Neb. Rev. Stat. § 77-1301(1) (Cum. Supp. 2020).

² See Neb. Rev. Stat. § 77-5016(8) (Reissue 2018), *Brenner v. Banner Cty. Bd. of Equal.*, 276 Neb. 275, 286, 753 N.W.2d 802, 813 (2008). "When an appeal is conducted as a 'trial de novo,' as opposed to a 'trial de novo on the record,' it means literally a new hearing and not merely new findings of fact based upon a previous record. A trial de novo is conducted as though the earlier trial had not been held in the first place, and evidence is taken anew as such evidence is available at the time of the trial on appeal." *Koch v. Cedar Cty. Freeholder Bd.*, 276 Neb. 1009, 1019, 759 N.W.2d 464, 473 (2009).

³ *Brenner v. Banner Cty. Bd. of Equal.*, 276 Neb. 275, 283, 753 N.W.2d 802, 811 (2008).

⁴ *Id.* at 283-84.

⁵ Neb. Rev. Stat. § 77-5016(9) (Reissue 2018).

⁶ *Omaha Country Club v. Douglas Cty. Bd. of Equal.*, 11 Neb. App. 171, 174-75, 645 N.W.2d 821, 826 (2002).

14. A Taxpayer must introduce competent evidence of actual value of the Subject Property in order to successfully claim that the Subject Property is overvalued.⁷
15. The Commission's Decision and Order shall include findings of fact and conclusions of law.⁸

III. FINDINGS OF FACT & CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

16. The Subject Property is a residential parcel improved with a 1,205 square foot ranch style residence constructed in 1993. The Subject Property has quality and condition ratings of average.
17. The Taxpayer alleged that the percentage increase in assessed value, particularly as compared to other nearby properties, was unreasonable or arbitrary.
18. The County Board presented the Property Record File (PRF) for the Subject Property. The PRF contains information about the characteristics of the Subject Property and information regarding the qualified sales that occurred in the economic area of the Subject Property. This information was used to determine the value attributed to each of the characteristics of residential properties in the area, including the Subject Property.
19. The County Appraisers stated that it was determined by the County Assessor's office that values in the Subject Property's market area were undervalued and the entire market area reassessed for tax year 2022. The last reassessment for the Subject Property's market area was in 2021.
20. The assessed value for real property may be different from year to year according to the circumstances.⁹ For this reason, a prior year's assessment is not relevant to the subsequent year's

⁷ *Josten-Wilbert Vault Co. v. Bd. of Equal. for Buffalo Cty.*, 179 Neb. 415, 418, 138 N.W.2d 641, 643 (1965) (determination of actual value); *Lincoln Tel. and Tel. Co. v. Cty. Bd. of Equal. of York Cty.*, 209 Neb. 465, 468, 308 N.W.2d 515, 518 (1981) (determination of equalized taxable value).

⁸ Neb. Rev. Stat. § 77-5018(1) (Reissue 2018).

⁹ *Affiliated Foods Coop. v. Madison Co. Bd. of Equal.*, 229 Neb. 605, 614, 428 N.W.2d 201, 206 (1988); see Neb. Rev. Stat. § 77-1502 (Reissue 2018).

valuation.¹⁰ Similarly, prior assessments of other properties are not relevant to the subsequent assessment.¹¹

21. The Commission must look to the value of the Subject Property as of January 1 of each tax year.¹²
22. The County Appraisers stated that when a market area is reappraised percentage adjustments are not applied, rather properties characteristics are reviewed and values are redetermined based on characteristics, amenities, and the market for the current tax year.
23. The Taxpayer presented a table of twelve properties (including the Subject Property) that he alleged were comparable to the Subject Property.
24. The County Appraisers stated that all twelve of the properties presented by the Taxpayer were valued using the same assessment model for tax year 2022. For tax year 2021 eleven of these properties were valued using the same assessment model but that the Subject Property's value was lowered to an amount lower than its assessment model value which is why its valuation increase would be a higher percentage increase from the prior assessed value.
25. The Taxpayer alleged that the assessed value of the Subject Property is not equalized with other comparable properties.
26. Comparable properties share similar use (residential, commercial/industrial, or agricultural), physical characteristics (size, shape, and topography), and location.¹³
27. "A sales comparison adjustment is made to account (in dollars or a percentage) for a specific difference between the subject property and a comparable property. As the comparable is made

¹⁰ *Affiliated Foods Coop.*, 229 Neb. at 613, 428 N.W.2d at 206; *DeVore v. Board of Equal.*, 144 Neb. 351, 354-55, 13 N.W.2d 451, 452-53 (1944).

¹¹ *Kohl's Dep't Stores v. Douglas Cty. Bd. of Equal.*, 10 Neb. App. 809, 814-15, 638 N.W.2d 877, 881 (2002).

¹² Neb. Rev. Stat §77-1301(Reissue 2018)

¹³ See generally, International Association of Assessing Officers, *Property Assessment Valuation*, at 169-79 (3rd ed. 2010).

more like the subject, its price is brought closer to the subject's unknown value."¹⁴

28. The PRFs presented by the Taxpayer show that the 12 properties were constructed between 1990 and 1993 with almost the same square footage and features but that some of the properties have additional bathrooms, some have basement finish, two have covered decks, one is in fair condition, and one doesn't have a walk out basement.
29. The PRFs show that the per square foot values are higher for properties with more than two bathrooms, that value is added for finished basements and covered decks, and that depreciation is higher the older a property is, and more depreciation is applied for the property that has a lower condition rating than the other eleven properties.
30. The Subject Property was constructed in 1993, has only two bathrooms, no basement finish, a covered wood deck, and is the only property of the twelve presented that doesn't have a walk out basement.
31. The Taxpayer alleges that the assessment model does not property account for the value added for a walk out basement.
32. The County Appraisers stated that the sales in the economic area of the Subject Property did not indicate that walk out basements increased or decreased the prices paid for residential properties in the area unlike other features such as basement finish, number of bathrooms, or age. The County Appraisers stated that without data to demonstrate the impact of a walkout basement (or lack of a walkout basement) they were unable to increase assessed values for this feature.
33. The Taxpayer did not present information to allow the Commission to quantify the impact of a walk out basement (or the lack of a walk out basement) on the value of the Subject Property or other properties in the area.

¹⁴ Appraisal Institute, *Appraising Residential Properties*, at 334 (4th ed. 2007).

34. The County Appraisers stated that the per square foot assessed value of the Subject Property is below the median per square foot assessed value of the properties presented, which accounts for the differences in characteristics and amenities between the properties.
35. The Taxpayer has not shown that the assessed value of the Subject Property is not equalized with other comparable properties.
36. The Taxpayer has not produced competent evidence that the County Board failed to faithfully perform its duties and to act on sufficient competent evidence to justify its actions.
37. The Taxpayer has not adduced clear and convincing evidence that the determination of the County Board is arbitrary or unreasonable and the decision of the County Board should be affirmed.

IV. ORDER

IT IS ORDERED THAT:

1. The decision of the County Board of Equalization determining the taxable value of the Subject Property for tax year 2022 is affirmed.
2. The taxable value of the Subject Property for tax year 2022 is:

Land	\$ 12,900
<u>Improvements</u>	<u>\$156,000</u>
Total	\$168,900

3. This Decision and Order, if no further action is taken, shall be certified to the Douglas County Treasurer and the Douglas County Assessor, pursuant to Neb. Rev. Stat. § 77-5018 (Reissue 2018).
4. Any request for relief, by any party, which is not specifically provided for by this Decision and Order is denied.
5. Each party is to bear its own costs in this proceeding.

6. This Decision and Order shall only be applicable to tax year 2022.
7. This Decision and Order is effective on June 21, 2024.

Signed and Sealed: June 21, 2024



Steven A. Keetle, Commissioner