

REAL

TALK



FROM THE POLK COUNTY ASSESSOR

www.assess.co.polk.ia.us

SPRING 2022

IOWA SUPREME COURT RULING FAVORS ASSESSOR IN DISPUTE WITH IPIB

After a multiple-year dispute between the Iowa Public Information Board (IPIB) and the Polk County Assessor's Office, the Iowa Supreme Court has issued a ruling.

In November 2021, the court ruled in favor of the Polk County Assessor's Office and its desire to keep confidential the names of property owners who requested to opt out of the name search function on the Assessor's website.

The Assessor had appealed the case to the Iowa Supreme Court following a ruling by the Polk County District Court in May 2020 that sided with a decision by an administrative law judge in July 2019.

The IPIB argued that Polk County Assessor Randy Ripperger violated Iowa's open records law by not releasing a list of 2,166 Polk County property owners' names who had requested their property not be searchable by their name via the Assessor's website.

Many of the property owners who make the request do so because of concerns for their personal safety. Judges, lawyers, medical professionals, victims/potential victims of domestic violence, and others in similar situations are among those who most commonly make the request.

One outstanding point of clarification from the case is that the court indicated that the public record exemption applies only to communications from persons outside government. Therefore, it's not clear whether the exemptions are applicable to those who work for local, state, and federal agencies. The court wrote that the IPIB could continue to contest the issue on remand.

Information about property ownership can be obtained on an individual basis to anyone who goes to the Polk County Assessor's Office in person or via a call to the office.

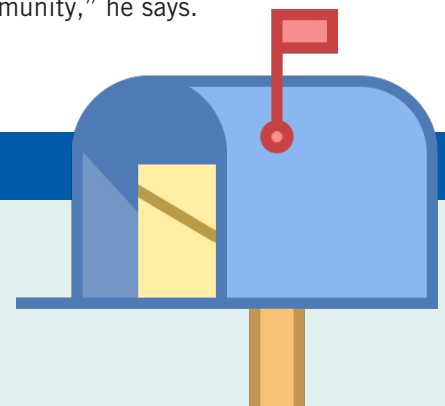
Randy says the Assessor's Office has always and will continue to make individual real estate records and assessed values available for inspection at its office during business hours in compliance with Iowa law. He also noted that the Iowa legislature recently adopted SF 342, which strengthens confidentiality protections for law enforcement, judicial officers, crime victims, and their families. "The Assessor's office continues to believe this is an issue of public safety, especially for victims, witnesses, and our law enforcement community," he says.

2022 ASSESSMENTS MAILED

The Assessor's office mailed more than 12,130 assessments this spring.

During even-numbered years, assessments are only completed for new properties and properties where building permits were issued during the year.

This compares to 184,000 assessment notices sent in 2021.



THE LATEST CHANGE IN REAL ESTATE CLASSIFICATIONS

Effective Jan. 1, 2022, multi-residential properties were combined with the residential property category when it comes to assessments. These include properties with three or more units for human habitation.



The change aligns with a new Iowa law (Iowa Code 441.21) and makes multi-residential properties eligible for the residential tax rollback. The tax liability changes may be minimal given the increasing sales prices for multi-residential properties.

Examples of multi-residential properties include:

- Apartment buildings with three or more separate dwelling units
- Mobile home parks
- Manufactured home communities
- Land-leased communities
- Assisted-living facilities

While these properties will be categorized differently for purposes of taxation, Randy Ripperger says the Assessor's office will still maintain separate records on multi-residential properties. This will provide a better understanding of the multi-residential market and result in more accurate assessments for the properties.

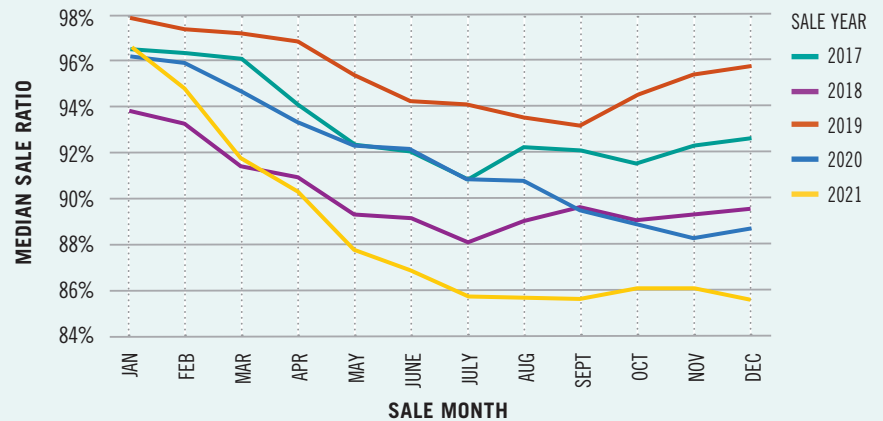
THE LATEST ON PROPERTY VALUES

In general, the latest data shows that sales prices continue to rise and the market remains strong for residential, warehouse, and industrial properties, with most selling above assessments.

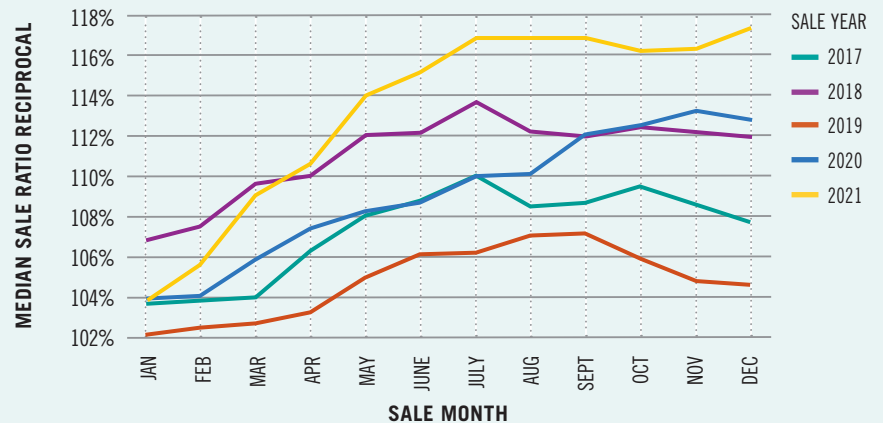
When it comes to commercial properties, the market continues to take a wait-and-see attitude as we emerge from the pandemic. With more companies offering remote and hybrid options to entice employees, property owners have yet to decide how to address the changes brought on by the pandemic.

The chart below shows median sale ratios for residential properties. Numbers below 100% mean properties are generally selling above their assessed value.

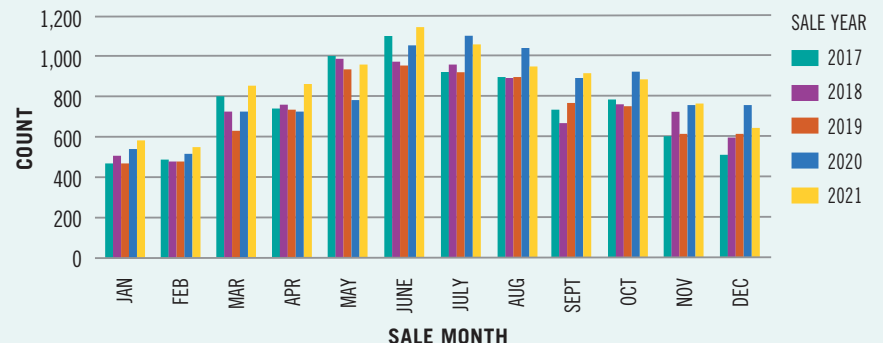
MEDIAN SALE RATIO BY MONTH — YEARS 2017–2021



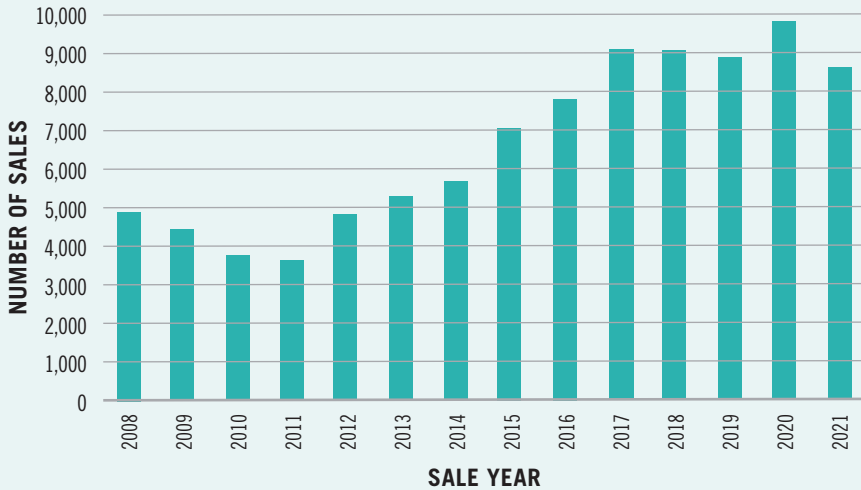
MEDIAN SALE RATIO RECIPROCAL BY MONTH — YEARS 2017–2021



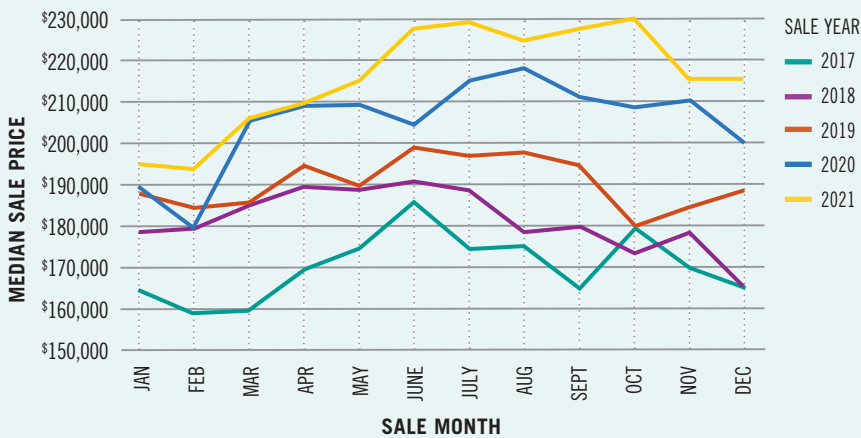
NUMBER OF SALES BY MONTH — YEARS 2017–2021



NUMBER OF SALES BY YEAR

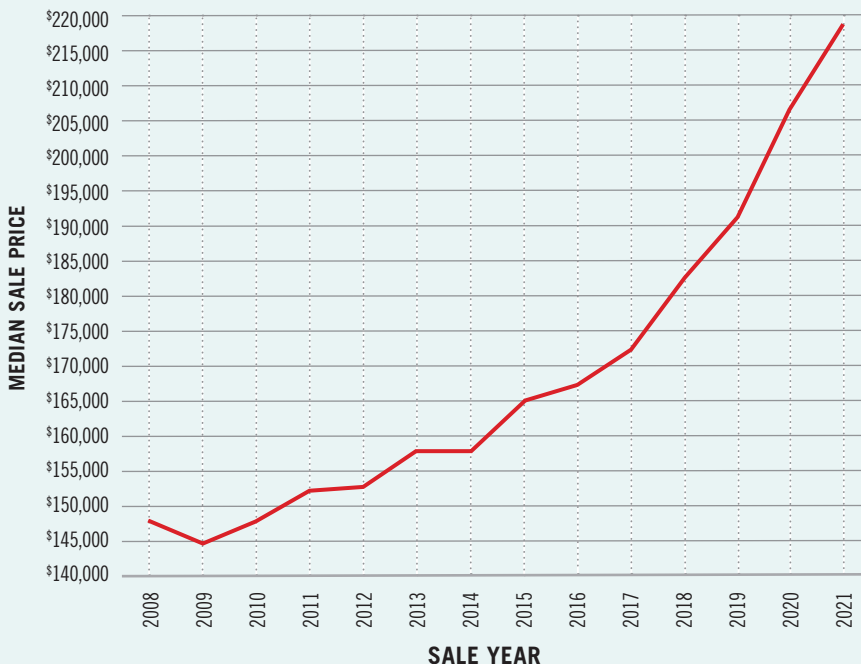


MEDIAN SALE PRICE BY MONTH — YEARS 2017–2021



MEDIAN SALE PRICE OF SINGLE FAMILY HOMES

The median sale price of a single family home in Polk County reached nearly \$220,000 in 2021.



IMPROVING ASSESSMENTS THROUGH BETTER PHOTOGRAPHY

Gathering photos of properties to appraise can be a time-consuming effort, and may only provide basic photos.



However, the Polk County Assessor recently entered into an agreement with a leading provider to local U.S. governments of high-definition, dynamic, 360-degree street level (180-degree vertical) imagery of Polk County properties.

The photos meet the industry standards from the International Association of Assessing Officers (IAAO) and will reduce the amount of time assessors spend in the field, and reduce the overall costs of gathering the photos.

Other Polk County government agencies can also benefit from the technology at no additional cost. The enhanced property photos can be used to help improve such things as:

- Public safety
- Disaster preparedness
- Flood mitigation
- Emergency response and E911
- Police – Tactical and strategic planning
- Fire – Pre-planning and situation analysis

Watch for the new photos to be added to the Assessor's site over the course of the next three-to-six months.



2021 HIGHLIGHTS

The Polk County Assessor's Office issued its [2021 annual report](#) in January.

Here's a look at a few highlights about properties from the year:

- The Polk County Assessor's Office mailed about 184,000 assessment notices in 2021.
- The total assessment roll for Polk County increased 10.6% during the year to more than \$52 billion.
- Polk County saw more than 10,000 residential property sales.
- The median sale price of a single-family home in Polk County increased to an all-time high of nearly \$220,000 during the year.
- In 2021, property owners filed 5,130 protests; 38% were upheld and 62% were denied by the Board of Review.
- Out of all the protests, 824 Board of Review decisions were appealed to either District Court or the Property Assessment Appeal Board (PAAB) – the largest number of appeals since PAAB was created in 2007 (largely due to appeals on six townhome/condominium projects, which are individually parceled).

PROPERTY TAX CYCLE

	STEP	DATE	ACTIVITY	
January–June 2022	1	January 1	Assessment date.	
	2	April 1	Assessors complete assessments and notify taxpayers.	
	3	April 2–25	Taxpayers may request informal review of assessment by Assessor.	
	4	On or before April 25	Following informal review, Assessor may enter into a signed written agreement with the property owner or aggrieved taxpayer authorizing the Assessor to correct or modify the assessment according to the agreement of the parties.	
	5	April 2–30	Taxpayers may appeal assessments to local boards of review.	
	6	May 1–31	Local boards of review consider appeals. This time may be extended to July 15 by the Iowa Department of Revenue Director.	
	7	June 15	Local boards of review submit reports to the Director.	
July–December 2022	8	July 1	Assessors submit abstracts of the assessments to the Director.	
	9	August 15	The Department issues tentative equalization notices to assessors.	
	10	September	The Department holds equalization hearings, which are held for public input.	
	11	October 1	The Department issues final equalization orders to county auditors.	
	12	October 2–12	Assessing jurisdictions may apply for alternative methods of implementing equalization orders.	
	13	By October 8	The county auditor must publish notice of the final equalization order by this date, and must provide notice by mail to the taxpayers if the equalization order results in an increase in valuation.	
	14	October 9–31	Taxpayers may protest the final equalization order to local boards of review.	
	15	October 10–November 15	Local boards of review meet to hear equalization protests.	
	16	November 1	The Director certifies assessment limitation percentages to county auditors.	
	17	November 15	Local boards of review submit a report about the equalization protests to the Department.	
2023	18	December 1–February 28	The taxing authorities adopt the budgets based on the valuations.	
	19	March 1	The county board of supervisors levies the taxes.	
	20	July 1	The county treasurer receives authorization to collect taxes.	
	2024	21	September 30	First half of taxes are due.
		22	March 31	Second half of taxes are due.

Source: Iowa Department of Revenue

QUESTIONS?

We hope you've found this issue of *RealTalk* to be informative. We'd like to know what you think. For more information on any of these topics, please contact us. We want to be your resource for property assessment issues.

Previous issues of RealTalk are archived on the Polk County Assessor's website at www.assess.co.polk.ia.us.

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OUR MISSION

The mission of the Polk County Assessor is to estimate the fair market value of residential and commercial property. The Assessor doesn't determine tax rates or calculate or collect taxes. If you have questions or want more information about what we do, please let me know.

Randy Ripperger, Polk County Assessor