

# Property Tax Perspective <br> County of San Luis Obispo, <br> Fiscal Year July 1, 2019 to June 30, 2020 

## Property Tax Process

California schools, counties, cities and special districts depend on property tax as a primary source of discretionary revenue. Property taxes raised $\$ 562$ million for local governments within the boundaries of San Luis Obispo County during fiscal year 2018-19 and is expected to generate \$594 million for fiscal year 2019-20 based on the current taxable value (see page 4). The information provided in this publication is a general overview of the property tax process in San Luis Obispo County. It includes a broad description of the functions of various county departments from the generation of property taxes through the distribution to local government agencies. Please visit our website located at http://sloacttc.com to view or download copies of Property Tax Perspective and our other publications.

The Flow of the Property Tax Process


Proposition 13, approved by California voters in 1978, is the basis for the current property tax process. Proposition 13 limits the property tax rate to $1 \%$ of assessed value, plus any additional tax rate necessary to fund local voterapproved bonds and other indebtedness. It limits base property value increases to $2 \%$ per year, except for properties having a change of ownership or new construction. Property with a change in ownership is assessed at its new market value (usually the purchase price) and the value of any new construction is added to the existing base value of a parcel.

Since the passage of Proposition 13, the California legislature and the voters have continually altered, interpreted and implemented changes to the property tax laws resulting in local agency tax revenues being more and more limited. This has lead to the advent of special assessments, fees and special taxes levied on parcels by local agencies for the benefit of the property owners within their district boundaries. These charges are set by each individual agency and are not based on value nor subject to the tax rate, but do become a lien on the property along with the property tax.

Two Elected County Officials Provide Many of The Checks and Balances That Govern This Property Tax Process
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## Parcel Ownership and Taxpayers

Annually, owners of taxable property become liable for the property tax as based on the assessed value of the property. Taxable property is assessed (valued) each year as of January $1^{\text {st }}$ (the lien date) to generate tax revenue for the fiscal year that begins on the following July $1^{\text {st. }}$. The assessed value for most real property is the prior year's assessed value adjusted by the California Consumer Price Index, up to $2 \%$. However, if there has been a change in ownership the new assessed value will be the market value of the property that changed ownership. New construction value is added to the property's prior base values.

The owners of property in San Luis Obispo County are responsible for the timely payments of taxes. Those who pay late are subject to penalties and costs which can be significant.

| Principal Taxpayers 2019-2020 (Secured, Utility, Unsecured \& Aircraft) |  |  |  |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| Top 10 Taxpayers | Type of Property | Taxable Assessed Value | \% of Total Assessed Value |
| Pacific Gas \& Electric Co. | Utility | 2,001,973,104 | 3.37\% |
| High Plains Ranch II LLC | Solar Ranch | 823,210,175 | 1.38\% |
| Phillips 66 Company | Oil Refinery | 164,954,426 | 0.28\% |
| Southern California Gas Company | Utility | 119,953,547 | 0.20\% |
| Jamestown Premier | Commercial | 115,502,974 | 0.19\% |
| CAP VIII - Mustang Village LLC | Apartments | 94,501,067 | 0.16\% |
| E \& J Gallo Winery/Vineyards | Winery | 93,203,556 | 0.16\% |
| Treasury Wine Estates Americas Co | Winery | 92,492,856 | 0.16\% |
| Firestone Walker LLC | Brewery | 90,903,302 | 0.15\% |
| Sierra Vista Hospital | Hospital | 78,295,740 | 0.13\% |
| Total Top 10 Taxpayers |  | \$3,674,990,747 | 6.18\% |

The top ten taxpayers make up $6.18 \%$ of total taxable valuation. This is an indicator that the county has a diversified tax base.

> Under Proposition 13 similar properties can have substantially different assessed values based on their date of purchase.

The County has 139,542 secured parcels that include both residential (homes, condos and apartments) and non-residential (businesses, hotels, retail, etc.) property. Utilities and railroads are valued across multiple parcels. Business personal property (machinery and equipment) is taxable where it has established "permanent status"; while vessels (boats) are assessed where moored and aircraft are taxed at the location of the airport. Taxable personal property, business fixtures, aircraft, vessels and boats are classified as unsecured, of which there are about 30,275 such properties within the County.


# Assessor Values Property 

The primary responsibility of the County Assessor is to discover, describe, value and assess all taxable property so that each owner is assured of paying the proper amount of property tax for the support of local governments and schools. The main categories of taxable property include real property, business personal property, vessels and aircraft. The Secured Tax roll is comprised of real property which is defined as land, mines, minerals, timber and improvements such as buildings, structures, crops, trees and vines. Business personal property (items such as machinery, equipment, office tools and supplies), vessels and aircraft are included on the Unsecured roll. It is important to note that there are several full or partial exclusions/ exemptions (such as homeowner, disabled veterans and welfare exemptions) provided by the State Constitution and the legislature that reduce the burden of paying property taxes for certain taxpayers.

| Historical Assessed Value of Local \& Utility Property in San Luis Obispo County (in billions) |  |  |
| :---: | :---: | :---: |
| Fiscal | $\begin{aligned} & \begin{array}{l} \text { Assessed } \\ \text { Valuation (\$) } \end{array} \end{aligned}$ | Percentage Increase |
| 1990-91 | 15.6 | 10.6\% |
| 1991-92 | 16.4 | 5.1\% |
| 1992-93 | 17.1 | 4.3\% |
| 1993-94 | 17.5 | 2.3\% |
| 1994-95 | 17.9 | 2.3\% |
| 1995-96 | 18.3 | 2.2\% |
| 1996-97 | 18.6 | 1.6\% |
| 1997-98 | 19.1 | 2.7\% |
| 1998-99 | 19.7 | 3.1\% |
| 1999-00 | 20.8 | 5.6\% |
| 2000-01 | 22.1 | 6.3\% |
| 2001-02 | 23.5 | 6.3\% |
| 2002-03 | 25.6 | 8.9\% |
| 2003-04 | 27.6 | 7.8\% |
| 2004-05 | 30.2 | 9.4\% |
| 2005-06 | 33.5 | 10.9\% |
| 2006-07 | 37.4 | 11.8\% |
| 2007-08 | 40.8 | 8.9\% |
| 2008-09 | 42.9 | 5.2\% |
| 2009-10 | 42.8 | -0.4\% |
| 2010-11 | 42.4 | -0.9\% |
| 2011-12 | 41.7 | -1.7\% |
| 2012-13 | 42.1 | 1.0\% |
| 2013-14 | 43.4 | 3.0\% |
| 2014-15 | 45.8 | 5.5\% |
| 2015-16 | 48.5 | 6.0\% |
| 2016-17 | 51.0 | 5.1\% |
| 2017-18 | 53.8 | 5.6\% |
| 2018-19 | 56.6 | 5.1\% |
| 2019-20 | 59.8 | 5.6\% |

Assessed value is determined and enrolled to the owner as of January $1^{\text {st }}$, which is the tax lien date. As an example, changes in ownership (sales) and new construction (determined from permits and on-site reviews) during the prior calendar year 2018 are valued as of January $1^{\text {st }}, 2019$. The $2 \%$ (or less) inflation adjustment is applied to the assessed values along with exemptions and other appraisable events. The countywide adjusted gross value of $\$ 59.8$ billion as of January $1^{\text {stt }}, 2019$ is then taxed for the fiscal year July $1^{\text {stt }}, 2019$ to June $30^{\text {th }}, 2020$.

## Other significant processes include:

- The Supplemental roll places tax changes into effect on the date of transfer or a new construction completion date, rather than waiting for the next lien date, requiring the levying of additional tax for a portion of the current fiscal year.
- The Unitary roll contains properties, such as railroads and utilities, whose value is determined by the State Board of Equalization, not the County Assessor.
- The assessment appeals process allows a taxpayer to dispute values through administrative and judicial processes.
- A Proposition 8 reduction is a form of temporary assessment relief that may be applied when a property's taxable value exceeds the current market value.

The leading indicators of assessed value (AV) growth are the property transfer tax followed by the supplemental property tax growth rates. With the recent changes in the property transfer taxes, the supplemental and assessed values will follow the trend during the next couple of years.

For more information on the assessment process visit the Assessor's Website at: www.slocounty.ca.gov/assessor.htm


## Auditor-Controller Prepares Tax Roll

Once the assessed valuation is determined and enrolled by the Assessor, it is delivered to the Auditor-Controller on or before July $1^{\text {st }}$ each year. The tax roll is then prepared by the Auditor-Controller by multiplying the value of each parcel by the $1 \%$ tax rate plus the amount necessary to make annual payments on bonds or other indebtedness approved by the voters to finance local facilities. The majority of outstanding bonds in the County are for school facilities.

| 5-Year Total Tax Levy |  |
| :---: | :---: |
| Fiscal Year | Amount |
| $2015-2016$ | $534,912,449$ |
| $2016-2017$ | $565,027,617$ |
| $2017-2018$ | $609,474,644$ |
| $2018-2019$ | $644,856,304$ |
| $2019-2020$ | $679,949,496$ |

In addition to the taxes noted above, numerous direct charges approved by voters or permitted by legislation, are added to the tax roll. Examples include charges for sewer, flood control and street lighting. The total calculated liability for each parcel is provided to the Tax Collector by September $30^{\text {th }}$.

2019-20 Tax Bill Calculations

| Secured Value | $\$ 56,050,038,290$ |
| :--- | ---: |
| Unsecured Value (w/Air) | $2,341,575,058$ |
| Utility Value | $2,373,141,752$ |
| Exemptions | $(1,294,085,177)$ |
| Net Taxable Values | $\$ 59,470,669,923$ |
| $1 \%$ Basic Tax Rate | $\times 1 \%$ |
| Property Tax | $\$ 594,706,699$ |
| Bonds | $56,780,263$ |
| Direct Charges | $26,462,534$ |
| Total Tax Levy | $\$ 679,949,496$ |

Several decades ago, local agencies and school districts could ask local voters for an increase in property taxes to support their programs and pass such measures by a majority vote. Proposition 13 constrained this ability in 1978 by requiring a two-thirds majority vote of the electorate.

A 1986 voter-approved amendment to Proposition 13 (ACA 17) permitted agencies and districts to seek approval of local general obligation bonds to be repaid through property taxes. In the November 2000 election, voters approved Proposition 39 allowing the voting threshold for school general obligation bonds to be lowered to $55 \%$ if the school board so chooses.

As of 1984, agencies and districts with new residential and commercial development in their boundaries could, with two-thirds majority vote of the affected property owners, form a special "Mello-Roos Community Facilities District" to build new facilities in the area. Then in 1998, a new law permitted the formation of School Facility Improvement Districts with a two-thirds vote. This threshold was lowered (with some requirements) to $55 \%$ in July 2001.

Once approved, one or any combination of these types of voter approved debt may appear on your tax bill.

## San Luis Obispo County School District General Obligation Bonds

| District | Debt Authorized | Bonds Issued |  | 2019-2020 <br> Taxes per \$100K Assessed Value |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
|  |  | Amount of Issues | Principal Balance as of 6/30/2019 |  |
| Atascadero Unified | \$117,000,000 | \$104,000,000 | 106,269,692 | 118.04 |
| Cayucos Elementary | 7,850,000 | 7,850,000 | 8,595,000 | 35.50 |
| Coast Unified | 16,300,000 | 16,300,000 | 9,964,900 | 38.74 |
| Cuesta Community College | 275,000,000 | 75,000,000 | 126,100,000 | 19.25 |
| Lucia Mar Unified | 215,350,000 | 81,832,000 | 95,741,577 | 72.34 |
| Paso Robles Unified | 20,000,000 | 20,000,000 | 16,844,998 | 11.90 |
| Paso Robles SFID | 95,000,000 | 40,000,000 | 40,000,000 | 48.53 |
| San Luis Coastal Unified | 177,000,000 | 100,000,000 | 162,735,000 | 49.00 |
| San Miguel Elementary | 9,750,000 | 6,345,000 | 6,445,095 | 72.68 |
| Shandon Unified | 3,150,000 | 3,150,000 | 3,065,000 | 60.00 |
| Templeton Unified | 35,000,000 | 35,000,000 | 33,060,000 | 58.00 |

Treasurer-Tax Collector Issues Bills \& Collects Taxes

The Tax Collector mails annual secured tax statements (bills) by November $1^{\text {st }}$. The bill can be paid in two installments, the first due November $1^{\text {st }}$ and delinquent after December $10^{\text {th }}$ and the second due February $1^{\text {st }}$ and delinquent after April $10^{\text {th }}$. Note that the payment due dates are well into the fiscal year of July through June.

Supplemental tax may be billed at anytime throughout the year when there is a change in ownership or new construction is completed.

Penalties for late payments are significant at $10 \%$ for the first installment delinquency, $10 \%$ plus $\$ 20$ for the second installment delinquency and an additional 1.5\% per month beginning the following July $1^{\text {st }}$. After 5 years of taxes being delinquent, property can be sold at a tax sale to pay the tax. In San Luis Obispo County, delinquency rates continue to remain among the lowest in the state.

| Number of Bills Issued |  |  |  |  |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| Fiscal Year | Secured | Unsecured | Supplemental | Total |
| 2015-2016 | 128,978 | 9,406 | 10,177 | 148,561 |
| 2016-2017 | 129,256 | 8,888 | 8,794 | 146,938 |
| 2017-2018 | 129,782 | 8,558 | 11,765 | 150,105 |
| 2018-2019 | 128,904 | 8,666 | 10,846 | 148,416 |
| 2019-2020 | 130,091 | 8,793 | 8,723 | 147,607 |


| Delinquent Secured Tax Payment History <br> As of June 30th of Fiscal Year Due |  |  |
| :---: | :---: | :---: |
| Fiscal Year | Amount | $\underline{\text { Delq Rate }}$ |
| $2009-2010$ | $13,746,301$ | $3.33 \%$ |
| $2010-2011$ | $10,792,998$ | $2.64 \%$ |
| $2011-2012$ | $7,233,779$ | $1.79 \%$ |
| $2012-2013$ | $5,418,141$ | $1.34 \%$ |
| $2013-2014$ | $4,689,817$ | $1.11 \%$ |
| $2014-2015$ | $4,757,680$ | $1.06 \%$ |
| $2015-2016$ | $4,163,510$ | $0.88 \%$ |
| $2016-2017$ | $4,386,659$ | $0.89 \%$ |
| $2017-2018$ | $4,751,203$ | $0.91 \%$ |
| $2018-2019$ | $4,874,452$ | $0.89 \%$ |

## Auditor-Controller Distributes Property Taxes

The Auditor-Controller is responsible for the apportionment and distribution of property taxes in accordance with specified formulas and procedures as explained on page 8. The information below shows the change in allocation from the prior to the current fiscal year and the corresponding percentage of growth. The growth trends of the various geographic regions of the county become apparent when comparing the wide variation in incremental growth percentage of the taxing agencies.

COUNTY OF SAN LUIS OBISPO
SUMMARY OF INCREMENTAL GROWTH AND PROPERTY TAX ALLOCATION BY FUND
For Secured and Unsecured Property Taxes (Including Homeowners Subv entions, Excluding Unitary \& Aircraft)



## Auditor-Controller Distributes Property Taxes

After collecting the property taxes, the Tax Collector forwards them to the Auditor-Controller for apportionment and distribution to all eligible jurisdictions within the County. The law requires the County Auditor-Controller to allocate the revenue in accordance with specified formulas and procedures.

AB8 (Assembly Bill 8 of 1979-80), with many subsequent amendments, governs the complicated tax allocation process. Each taxing jurisdiction (entity) was assigned a base amount of property tax determined by 1978-79 revenue. Each year the entity is then allocated an amount equal to the total received in the previous year plus a percentage of tax growth within the geographic tax area served by the entity. The law also provides for transfers of property tax revenue when boundary changes or transfer of service responsibilities occur and are referred to as jurisdictional changes.

Adding to the complex tax allocation process, legislation (SB1096) was enacted in fiscal year 2004-05 that permanently swaps Motor Vehicle License Fee revenue for Property Taxes (the "MVLF Swap") of the cities and county only. The legislation specifies that the property tax revenues necessary to fund the MVLF Swap are to be taken from the Educational Revenue Augmentation Fund (ERAF). For fiscal year 2019-20 the total MVLF Swap is \$56.1 million of additional property taxes for cities and the county with a corresponding decrease of property tax revenue allocated to the County ERAF for schools.

For fiscal year 2019-20, overall County property tax growth is continuing to increase. Countywide locally assessed property taxes increased by $\$ 36.7$ million, representing a $6.85 \%$ growth from the prior fiscal year. Provided on the previous two pages is a summary of the change in percentages and taxes for the various local agencies that receive property tax revenue. As you will note, there are large fluctuations in growth percentages among agencies due to growth in the various geographic regions within the county.

## County Financing Sources

## State and Federal Revenue

State and federal revenue, at $\$ 283$ million, represents about $46.7 \%$ of the County's financing and is the single largest revenue source. For the most part, these funds are restricted as to use for the support of statutory programs and are not available for discretionary purposes.

## Taxes

Property tax, sales tax, transient occupancy and other taxes generate $\$ 215$ million or $35.5 \%$ of the County's financing, with property tax being the single largest source of discretionary revenue available to the County.

## Other Revenues

The remaining $17.8 \%$ of the County's revenues are comprised of various funding sources. Licenses, permits, fines and penalties make up about $2.9 \%$, while revenues derived from billing of various County departments charging for their services represent another $5.2 \%$, with the $9.7 \%$ balance being generated by interest earnings and miscellaneous court fines and penalties.


