

APPRAISAL THEORY

An appraisal, in itself, is nothing more than an opinion of value. This does not imply, however, that one opinion is necessarily as good as another; there are valid and accurate appraisals, and there are invalid and inaccurate appraisals. The validity of an appraisal can be measured against the supporting evidence from which it was derived, and its accuracy against that very thing it is support to predict – the actual behavior of the market. Each is fully contingent upon the ability of the appraiser to record adequate data and to interpret that data into an indication of value.

Appraising real property, like the solving of any problem, is an exercise in reasoning. It is a discipline, and like any discipline, it is founded on fundamental economic and social principles. From these principles evolve certain premises which, when applied to the valuation of property, serve to explain the reaction of the market. This section concerns itself with those concepts and principles basic to the property valuation process. One cannot overstate the necessity having a workable understanding of them.

BUNDLE OF RIGHTS

Real estate and real property are often used interchangeably. Generally speaking, real estate pertains to the real of fixed improvements to the land such as structures and other appurtenances, whereas real property encompasses all the interests, benefits and rights enjoyed by the ownership of the real estate.

Real property ownership involves the Bundle of Rights Theory which asserts that the owner has the right to enter it, use it, sell it, lease it, or give it away, as he so chooses. Law guarantees these rights, but they are subject to certain government and private restrictions.

The Governmental restrictions are found in its power to:

- tax property
- take property by condemnation for the benefit of the public, providing that just compensation is made to the owner (Eminent Domain)
- police property by enforcing any regulations deemed necessary to promote the safety, health, moral and general welfare of the public
- provide for the reversion of ownership to the state in cases where a competent heir to the property cannot be ascertained (Escheat)

Private restrictions imposed upon property are often in the form of agreements incorporated into the deed. The deed also spells out precisely which rights of the total bundle of rights the buyer is acquiring. Since value is related to each of these rights, the appraiser should know precisely which rights are involved in his appraisal.

Appraisals for Ad Valorem tax purposes generally assume the property is, owned in the “Fee Simple”, meaning that the total bundle of rights is considered to be intact.

THE NATURE AND MEANING VALUE

An appraisal is an opinion or estimate of value. The concept of value is basic to the appraisal process and calls for a thorough understanding. The American Institute of Real Estate Appraiser’ Appraisal Terminology Handbook, 1981 edition, offers the following definitions of value:

“The measure of value is the amount (for example, of money) which the potential purchaser probably will pay for possession of the thing desired.”

“The ratio of exchange of one commodity for another, for example, one bushel of wheat in terms of a given number of bushels of corn; thus the value of one thing may be expressed in terms of another thing. Money is the common denominator by which is measured.”

“It is the power of acquiring commodities in exchange, generally with a comparison of utilities – the utility of the commodity parted with (money) and that of the commodity acquired in the exchange (property).”

“Value depends upon the relation of an object to unsatisfied needs; that is, supply and demand.”

“Value is the present worth of future benefits arising out of ownership to typical users and investors.”

With these definitions, one can see that value is not an intrinsic characteristic of the commodity itself. On the contrary, value is determined by people, created by desired, modified by varying degrees of desire and reduced by lack of desire. Throughout the definitions a relationship between the purchase and the commodity (property) is implied; the relationship is “value”. A purchaser desires a property because it is a useful commodity in that it has utility. Utility is a prerequisite to value, but utility standing alone does not sufficiently cause value. If a great supply of a useful commodity exists, as for example are, needs would be automatically satisfied, desire would not be aroused, and therefore value not be created. Therefore, besides having utility, to effectively arouse desire, the commodity must also be scarce.

One additional factor is necessary to complete the value equation...the ability to become a buyer. A translation must be made of desire into a unit of exchange; a buyer must have purchasing power. The relationship is now complete... the commodity has utility and is relatively scarce, it arouses desire, and the buyer is able to satisfy that desire by trading for it ...value is created. The question is how much value, and herein lays the job of the appraiser.

Numerous definitions of value have been offered, some simple and complex. It would seem though that any valid definition of value would necessarily embody the

elements of utility, desire, scarcity and purchasing power. Furthermore, the concept of value very rarely stands alone. Instead, it is generally prefixed by a descriptive term that serves to relate it to a specific appraisal purpose or activity such as “loan value”. Since appraisals are made for a variety of reasons, it is important for that appraiser to clarify the specific purpose for the appraisal and the type of value that he seeks to estimate.

For Ad Valorem Tax purposes, the value sought is generally market value. The descriptive term “market” indicates the activity of buyers and sellers. MARKET VALUE is the justifiable price, or that price which an informed and intelligent buyer, fully aware of the existence of competing properties, and being compelled to act, would be justified in paying for a particular property.

VALUE IN USE AS OPPOSED TO VALUE IN EXCHANGE

We have stated that there are a number of qualifying distinctions made in reference to the meaning of value. One of the most common and probably the most important relative to the purpose of this manual is the distinction between value in use and value in exchange. We have defined market value as a justifiable price which buyers, in general, will pay in the market. The question arises then as to the value of property which, by nature of its special and highly unique design, is useful to the present owner, but relatively less useful to buyers in the market. One can readily see that such a property’s utility value may differ greatly from its potential sales price. It is even possible that no market for such a property exists. Such a property is said to have value in use, which refers to the actual value of a commodity to a specific person, as opposed to value in exchange, which aligns itself with market value, referring to the dollar-value of a commodity to buyers in general.

THE PRINCIPLE OF SUPPLY AND DEMAND

Among the forces which constantly operate to influence supply and demand are population growth, new techniques in transportation, purchasing power, price levels, wage rates, taxation, governmental controls, and scarcity. A sudden population growth in an area would create an increase in demand for housing. If the demand increased at a higher rate than the supply, this could soon be a scarring of housing. If the demand was backed up by purchasing power, rentals and sales prices would tend to increase and ultimately reach a level which tend to stimulate more builders to complete for the potential profits and thus serve to increase the supply toward the level of demand. As the supply is increased demand would begin to taper off. This would cause rentals and sale prices to level off. When builders, due to increases in labor and material rates, are no longer able to build cheaply enough to meet the new level of prices and rents, competition would tend to taper off and supply would level off. The cycle is then complete.

Balance occurs when reasonable competition serves to coordinate supply with demand. When competition continues unchecked to produce a volume that exceeds the demand,

the net returns to investors are no longer adequate to pay all the costs of ownership, resulting in loss rather than profit and consequently, a decline in values.

A community may well support two shopping centers, but the addition of a third shopping center may increase the supply to excess. If this occurs, one of two effects are caused; either the net dollar return to all the shopping centers will be reduced below that level necessary to support the investment, or the shopping centers will flourish at the others' expenses.

THE PRINCIPLE OF HIGHEST AND BEST USE

The highest and best use for a property is that use which will produce the highest net return to the land for a given period of time within the limits of those uses which are economically feasible, probable and legally permissible.

On a community-wide basis, the major determining factor in highest and best use is the maximum quantity of land that can be devoted to a specific use and still yield a satisfactory return. Once a suitable basic use has been chosen for a specific property, each increment of capital investment to the existing or planned improvement will increase the net return to the land only up to a certain point; after this point is reached; the net return to the land begin to diminish. This is the point at which the land is at its highest and best use.

For example, in planning a high-rise office building, each additional upper floor represents an extra capital expenditure that must yield a certain return to the investor. This return will be dependent upon the levels of economic rent that the market will bear at the time. An optimum number of floors can be calculated above which the income yield requirements of additional expenditures will no longer be satisfactorily met. This, notwithstanding the possibility of other more particular considerations, should determine the number of stories of the building.

Detailed analysis of this type is rarely thrust upon the property tax appraiser. Generally the tax appraiser will find the most prudent course of action is to consider the present use and follow development rather than anticipate it.

THE PRINCIPLE OF CHANGE

The impact of change on the value of real property manifests itself in the life cycle of a neighborhood. The cycle is characterized by three stages of evolution: the development and growth evidenced by importing values; the leveling off stage evidenced by static values; and finally, the stage of infiltration of delay evidenced by declining values.

The highest and best use today is not necessarily the highest and best use tomorrow. The highest and best use of the land often lies in a succession of uses. A declining single-family residential neighborhood may be ripe for multi-family, commercial or industrial development. Whether it is not depends upon the relationship of present or anticipated future demand with existing supply.

In estimating value, the appraiser is obligated to reasonably anticipate the future benefits, as well as the present benefits derived from ownership and to evaluate the property in light of the quality, quantity, and duration of these benefits based on actual data as opposed to speculative or potential benefits that may not occur.

THE PRINCIPLE OF SUBSTITUTION

Value is created by the market place. It is the function of translating demand into a commodity of exchange. When the benefits and advantages derived from two properties are equal, the lowest priced property receives the greatest demand, and rightfully so. The informed buyer is not justified in paying anything more for a property than it would cost to acquire an equally desirable property. That is to say that the value of a property is established as that amount for which equally desirable comparable properties are being bought and sold in the market. Herein lies an approach to value ... and the basis of the valuation process.

TRADITIONAL APPROACHES TO VALUE

In the preceding paragraphs, it has been stated that value is an elusive item that occurs in many different forms, and that the forces and influences which combine to create, sustain, or destroy value are numerous and varied. It is the appraiser's function to define the type of value sought, to compile and to analyze all related data, and giving due consideration to all the factors which may influence the value, to process and translate that data into a final opinion or *estimate of value*. This he must do for each property he is to appraise.

The processing of this data into a conclusion of value generally takes form of three recognized approaches to value: Cost Approach, Market Data Approach and Income Approach. Underlying each of the approaches is the principle that the justifiable price of a property is no more than the cost of acquiring and/or reproducing an equally desirable substitute property. The use of one or all three approaches in the valuation of a property is determined by the quantity, quality, and accuracy of the data available to the appraiser.

The *COST APPROACH* involves making an estimate of the depreciated cost of reproducing or replacing the building and site improvements. *Reproduction Cost* refers to the cost at a given point in time of reproducing a replica property, whereas *Replacement Cost* refers to the cost of producing improvements of equal utility. Depreciation is deducted from this cost new for loss in value caused by physical deterioration, and functional or economic obsolescence. To this depreciated cost is then added the estimated value of the land, resulting in an indication of value derived by the Cost Approach.

The significance of the Cost Approach lies in its extent of application ... it is the one approach that can be used on all types of construction. It is a starting point for appraisers, and therefore it is a very effective “yardstick” in any equalization program for Ad Valorem taxes. Its widest application is in the appraisal of properties where the lack adequate market and income data preclude the reasonable application of the other traditional approaches.

The *MARKET DATA APPROACH* involves the compiling of sales and offerings of properties that are comparable to the property being appraised. These sales and offerings are then adjusted for any dissimilarity, and a value range obtained by comparison of said properties. The approach is reliable to the extent that the properties are comparable, and the appraiser’s judgement of proper adjustments is sound. The procedure for using this approach is essentially the same for all types of property with the only difference being the elements of comparison.

The significance of this approach lies in its ability to produce estimates of value, which directly reflect the attitude of the market. Its application is contingent upon the availability of comparable sales, and therefore finds its widest range in the appraisal of vacant land and residential properties.

The *INCOME APPROACH* measures the present worth of the future benefits of a property by the capitalization of the net income stream over the remaining economic life of the property. The approach involves making an estimate of the “effective gross income” of a property, derived by deducing the appropriate vacant and collection losses from its estimated economic rent, as evidenced by the yield of comparable properties. From this figure then are deducted applicable operating expenses, the cost of taxes and insurance, and reserve allowances for replacements resulting in an estimate of net income, which may then be capitalized into an indication of value.

The approach obviously has its basic application in the appraisals of properties universally bought and sold on their ability to generate and maintain a stream of income for their owners. The effectiveness of the approach lies in the appraiser’s ability to relate to the changing economic environment and to analyze income yields in terms of their relative quality and durability.