



**SANTA CRUZ COUNTY**  
**ASSESSOR | RECORDER**  
**2024 ANNUAL REPORT**

**SHERI THOMAS, ASSESSOR-RECORDER**



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Photo Credit: Carol Sutherland, Assistant Recorder





Photo Credit: Elizabeth Nissen, Appraiser II

## Message from Assessor-Recorder **Sheri Thomas**



I am pleased to report that the 2024 assessment roll increased 4.4%, reaching a record high of \$61,100,160,376. This figure reflects the net assessed value of all real, business, and personal property within the county as of January 1, 2024. While the overall roll grew by 4.4%, the assessed values of most properties increased by only 2%, due to the protections of Proposition 13. Property taxes are a vital revenue source for school districts, cities, the county, and many special districts including fire departments and libraries.

Although still behind in processing, the Assessor's Office is now in a position to finally make progress in addressing the "perfect storm" of decreasing staff and increasing workload that began in 2020-21. With the recent addition of appraisal staff, we are now focused on making meaningful progress in catching up on the backlog of over 2,000 prior-year ownership changes.

I want to extend my sincere thanks to staff for their unwavering commitment to excellence, integrity, and service. Their continuous pursuit of process improvements and dedication to delivering exceptional customer service are truly commendable.

The 2024 Assessor Report provides insights into the work of the Assessor and Recorder Offices, along with a detailed look at the property assessment roll. As you explore the report, I hope you enjoy staff's photos showcasing this beautiful county where we work, live, play, and serve.

Sincerely,

*Sheri Thomas*

Santa Cruz County Assessor-Recorder

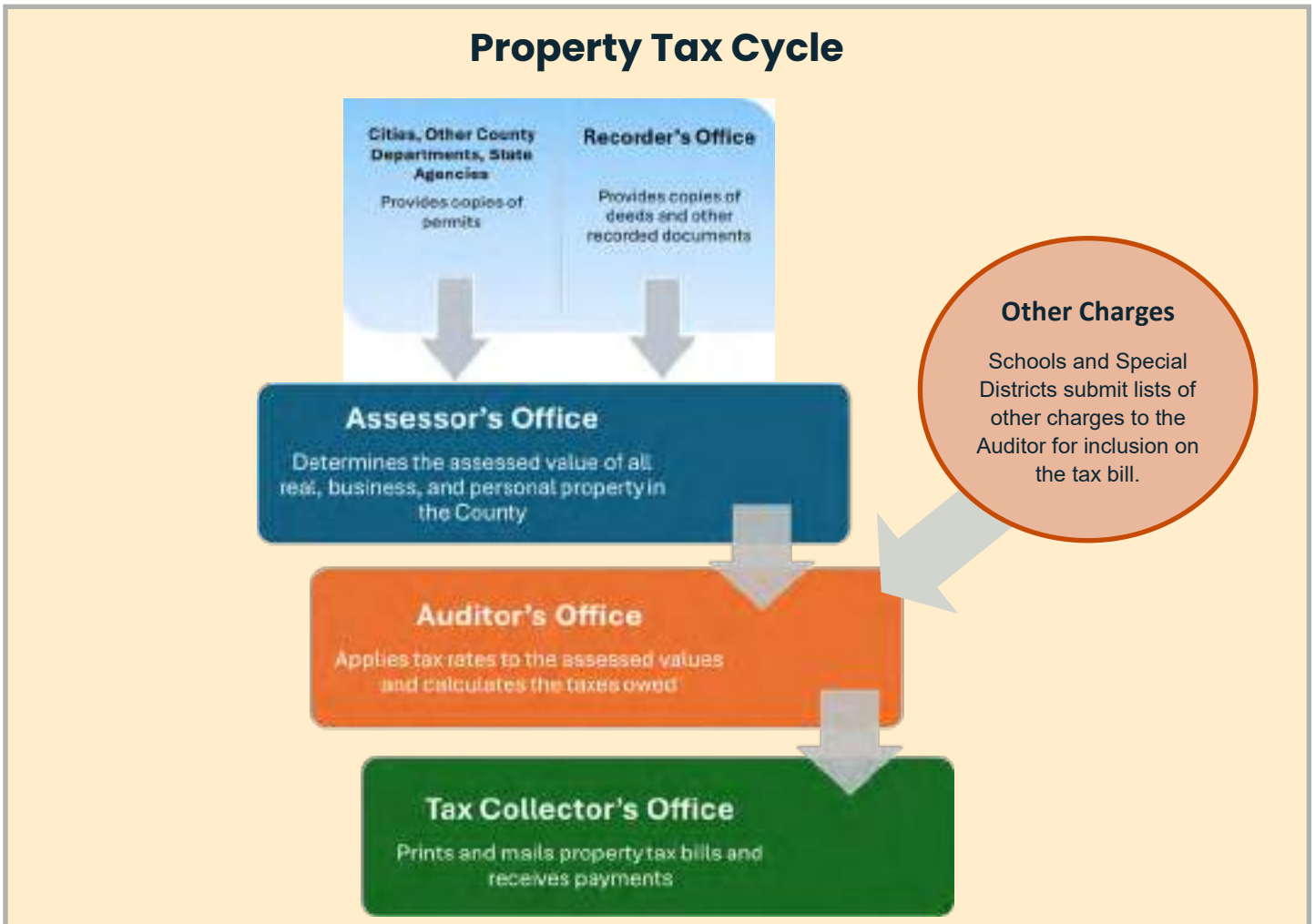
# The Roll of the Assessor

The constitutionally mandated duties of the Assessor’s Office are to locate all taxable property, identify ownership, establish an assessed value, apply all legal exemptions, and list the taxable value of all property on the assessment roll.

The County Assessor, an elected official, is governed by the California Constitution, laws passed by legislature, and rules adopted by the State Board of Equalization. The Assessor’s Office is responsible for assessing property values but **does not** issue tax bills, collect payments, or distribute tax revenue. Property tax bills are the final outcome of the **Property Tax Cycle**—a multi-step process that requires coordination between numerous local jurisdictions and several county departments.



Photo Credit: Cheryl Basinger, Appraiser II



## 2024-25 Assessment Roll

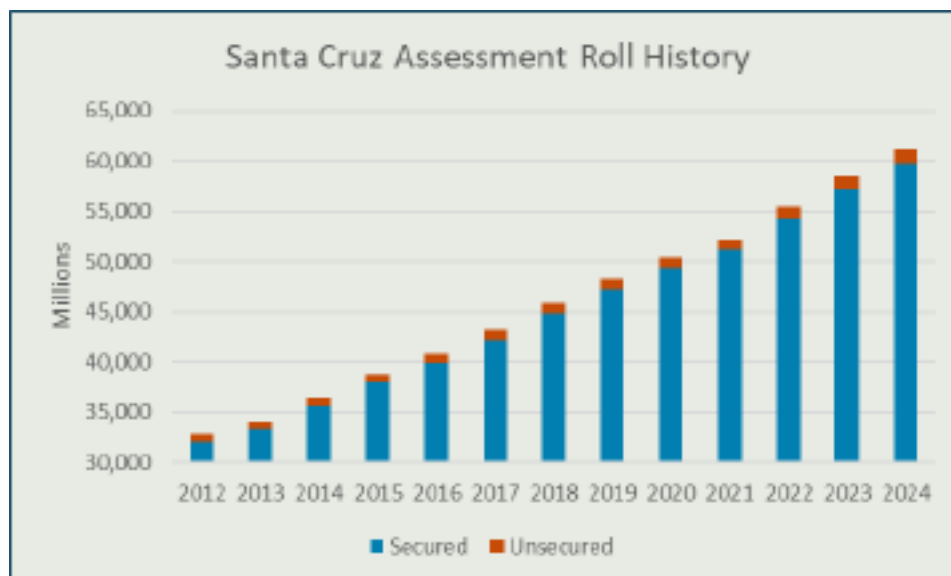
The local assessment roll is a comprehensive listing of all assessable property within the county. It includes details sufficient to identify the property, the owner (if known), and the assessed value.

History of Local Assessment Roll			
Year	Amount of Increase	Assessed Value	% Change
2012-13	-374,593,488	32,799,908,232	-1.13%
2013-14	1,266,518,131	34,066,426,363	3.86%
2014-15	2,418,664,872	36,485,091,235	7.10%
2015-16	2,346,634,664	38,831,725,899	6.43%
2016-17	1,961,566,441	40,793,292,340	5.05%
2017-18	2,347,288,898	43,140,581,238	5.75%
2018-19	2,679,457,241	45,820,038,479	6.21%
2019-20	2,394,507,227	48,214,545,706	5.23%
2020-21	2,229,332,216	50,443,877,922	4.62%
2021-22	1,759,495,488	52,203,373,410	3.49%
2022-23	3,306,331,999	55,509,705,409	6.33%
2023-24	3,012,771,455	58,522,476,864	5.43%
2024-25	2,577,683,512	61,100,160,376	4.40%

### The local assessment roll is divided into at least two parts:

**Secured:** This section includes taxes on real property, such as land and improvements, that create a lien against the real estate. The Tax Collector mails out tax bills by November 1st. Payments are broken into two equal installments which become delinquent after December 10th and April 10th.

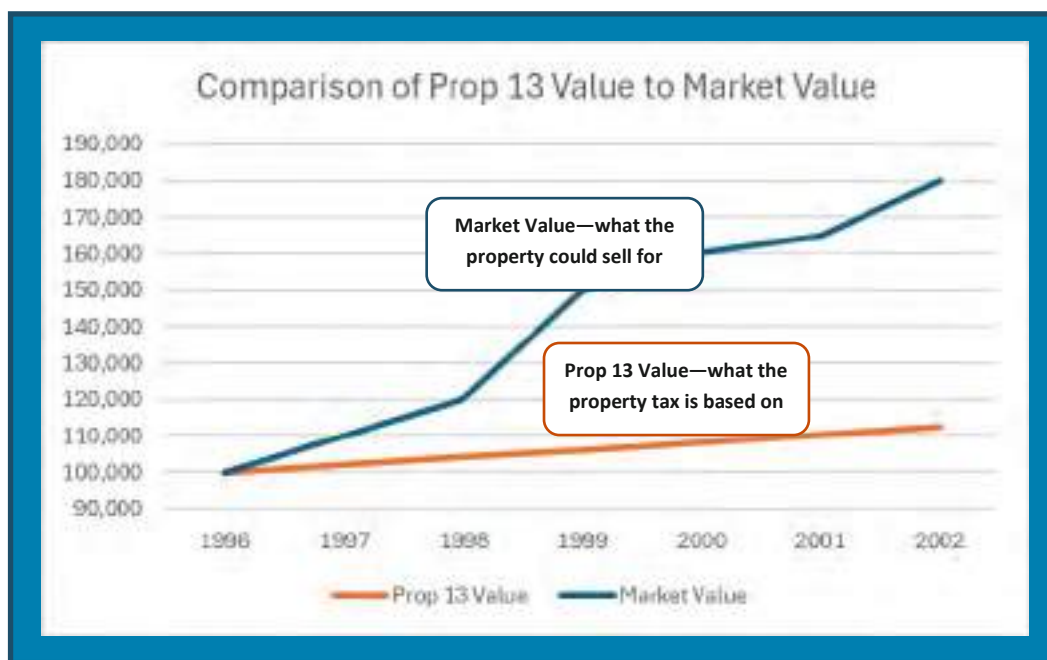
**Unsecured:** This section includes all property that is not secured by a lien against real estate. It includes business property and fixtures (office equipment, machinery, etc.), boats, aircraft, and possessory interests. The Tax Collector mails tax bills in mid-July and they are due by August 31st.



## Proposition 13

In 1978, California voters passed Proposition 13 in response to rapidly rising property values and the corresponding increase in property taxes. Before its passage, real property was appraised on a cyclical basis, with assessed values closely tied to current market value. Proposition 13 fundamentally changed this system, shifting California property taxes to an event-driven model.

Under Proposition 13, a base year value is established as of the 1975 lien date or when the property is newly constructed or changes ownership. Increases to this base year value are limited to a maximum of 2% per year, regardless of market fluctuations. This provides long-term homeowners with stable and predictable tax bills.



With Proposition 13 similar properties can have significantly different assessed values depending on when they were purchased or constructed, leading to disparities in property taxes between longtime owners and newer buyers.

### Who benefits from Prop 13?

All property owners benefit from Proposition 13, but the tax savings increase the longer a property is owned.

### Interaction of Prop 13 and Prop 19 base year value transfers

Proposition 19 enhances the flexibility for senior and disabled homeowners who, under Prop 13, might feel "locked in" to their existing homes because moving would trigger higher property taxes. (For more information on Prop 19 see pages 13-14).



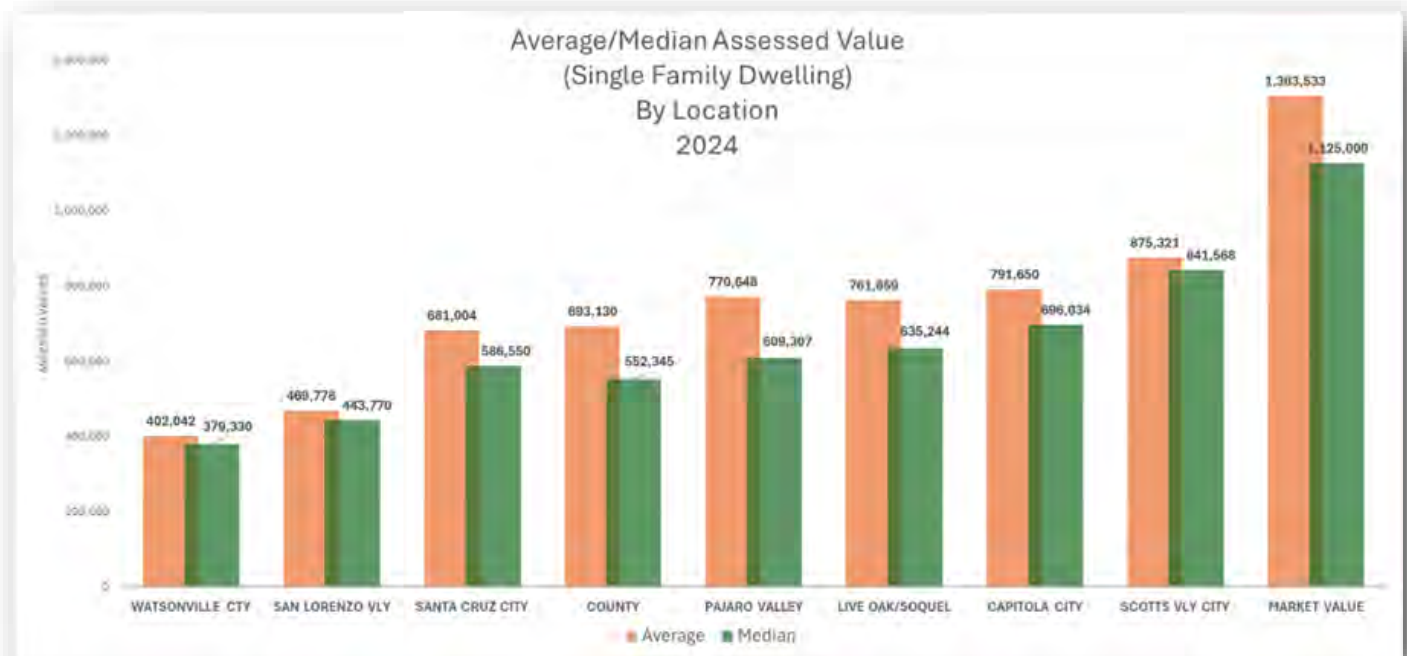
## Distribution of Proposition 13 Values

While the average market value of single family homes in the county is \$1,303,533, due to Proposition 13, the average assessed value is only \$662,287.

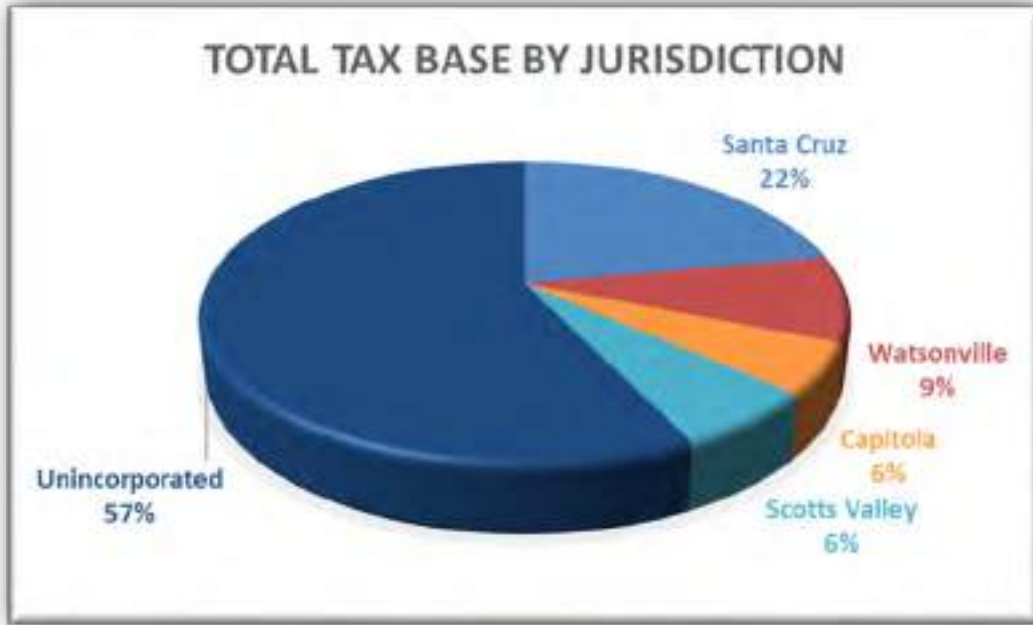


**ABOVE:** Almost half (47%) of all single family dwellings in the county have an assessed value of \$500,000 or less, indicating longer term ownership, and account for 18% of the total assessed value.

**BELOW:** A review of average and median assessed values by location can highlight more affordable areas of the county, such as Watsonville and San Lorenzo Valley, while also identifying regions with higher turnover or recent development, like Scotts Valley.



# 2024-25 Roll Growth



**Roll Growth by Jurisdiction (in thousands)**

Jurisdiction	Unsecured			Secured Roll			COMBINED		
	2023	2024	% change	2023	2024	% change	2023	2024	% change
Santa Cruz	\$381,715	\$430,164	12.69%	\$12,422,590	\$13,038,671	4.96%	\$12,804,305	\$13,468,834	5.19%
Watsonville	\$314,991	\$356,877	13.30%	\$4,985,051	\$5,221,959	4.75%	\$5,300,042	\$5,578,835	5.26%
Capitola	\$79,583	\$79,740	0.20%	\$3,078,003	\$3,225,289	4.79%	\$3,157,586	\$3,305,029	4.67%
Scotts Valley	\$157,721	\$146,108	-7.36%	\$3,545,101	\$3,667,011	3.44%	\$3,702,822	\$3,813,118	2.98%
Unincorporated	\$357,478	\$339,178	-5.12%	\$33,200,243	\$34,595,165	4.20%	\$33,557,721	\$34,934,343	4.10%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$1,291,488</b>	<b>\$1,352,066</b>	<b>4.69%</b>	<b>\$57,230,988</b>	<b>\$59,748,094</b>	<b>4.40%</b>	<b>\$58,522,477</b>	<b>\$61,100,160</b>	<b>4.40%</b>

## Drivers of Roll Growth

### Unsecured

Business and personal property are not subject to Proposition 13 and are instead assessed annually at their current market value. Changes in value may occur due to the acquisition or sale of boats or planes, the creation or termination of possessory interests, or changes to business property, such as when a business opens, closes, expands, or relocates from one jurisdiction to another.

### Secured

Under Proposition 13, real property assessment increases are limited to 2% per year. However, larger increases may occur when there is construction in progress, completion of new construction, or a change in ownership which can occur by purchase, gift, inheritance, etc. Ownership changes are the largest contributor to roll growth.



## DISTRIBUTION OF SECURED ROLL VALUE BY PROPERTY TYPE

Distribution of Secured Roll Value by Property Type - SUMMARY					
Class	Parcel Count	% of Total Parcels	Net Taxable Value	% of Taxable Value	Average Taxable Value per Parcel
Other	2,525	2.52%	20,242,532	0.03%	8,017
Rural/Ag	8,108	8.10%	1,693,998,190	2.85%	208,929
Commercial	5,118	5.11%	7,149,085,269	12.02%	1,396,851
Residential	84,315	84.26%	50,615,870,544	85.10%	600,319

**ABOVE:** The Assessment Roll contains four classes of property: Residential, Commercial, Rural/Ag, and Other. Each class can be further broken out by use codes. Santa Cruz County has over 230 distinct property use codes.

**BELOW:** A deeper analysis of roll values by property type/use code offer a more detailed view of the distribution of assessed values within the county.

Distribution of Secured Roll Value by Property Type - DETAIL						
Class	Property Type	Parcel Count	% of Total Parcels	Net Taxable Value	% of Taxable Value	Average Taxable Value per Parcel
Rural/Ag	Agricultural Structural Improveme	33	0.03%	46,680,393	0.08%	1,414,557
Rural/Ag	Agricultural Living Improvements	521	0.52%	441,549,579	0.74%	847,504
Rural/Ag	Restricted	1,088	1.09%	470,627,867	0.79%	432,562
Rural/Ag	Other Rural	1,649	1.65%	80,061,802	0.13%	48,552
Rural/Ag	Vacant Rural/Ag	4,817	4.81%	655,078,549	1.10%	135,993
Other	Oil, Gas Mineral	19	0.02%	11,028,727	0.02%	580,459
Other	Other	2,506	2.50%	9,213,805	0.02%	3,677
Commercial	Vacant Land (zoned commercial)	412	0.41%	189,774,459	0.32%	460,618
Commercial	Commercial Improved	4,706	4.70%	6,959,310,810	11.70%	1,478,817
Residential - Multi	Multi-family 2 to 4 units	3,871	3.67%	2,434,214,662	4.09%	663,093
Residential - Multi	Multi-family 5-59 units	695	0.69%	1,038,644,221	1.75%	1,494,452
Residential - Multi	Multi-family 60-100 units	27	0.03%	264,401,746	0.44%	9,792,657
Residential - Multi	Multi family - over 100 units	11	0.01%	269,280,058	0.45%	24,480,005
Residential	Single Family	45,248	45.22%	29,967,177,366	50.38%	662,287
Residential	Single Family with ADU	1,848	1.85%	1,688,047,826	2.84%	913,446
Residential	Rural Residential (acreage)	9,613	9.61%	8,170,331,790	13.74%	849,925
Residential	Townhome	4,245	4.24%	2,376,949,229	4.00%	559,941
Residential	Condominiums	5,583	5.58%	2,865,718,686	4.82%	513,294
Residential	Manufactured Homes	3,189	3.19%	360,078,235	0.61%	112,913
Residential	Other	3,944	3.94%	959,978,418	1.61%	243,402
Residential	Vacant Land (zoned residential)	6,241	6.24%	221,048,308	0.37%	35,419

# ALLOCATION OF PROPERTY TAX REVENUE

While Proposition 13 offered stability and protection to individual property owners, it had a dramatically different impact on funding for schools and local governments. Under Proposition 13, the state took control of how property tax revenues are distributed, using allocation ratios set in the 1970s that have not changed and no longer reflect the current needs of communities.



# ALLOCATION OF PROPERTY TAX REVENUE

“The County of Santa Cruz is systematically underfunded compared to county peers and statewide county averages. This chart illustrates how the county serves more residents as compared to other counties, while the per capita property and sales tax are the lowest”

[Budget \(santacruzcountyca.gov\)](http://santacruzcountyca.gov)

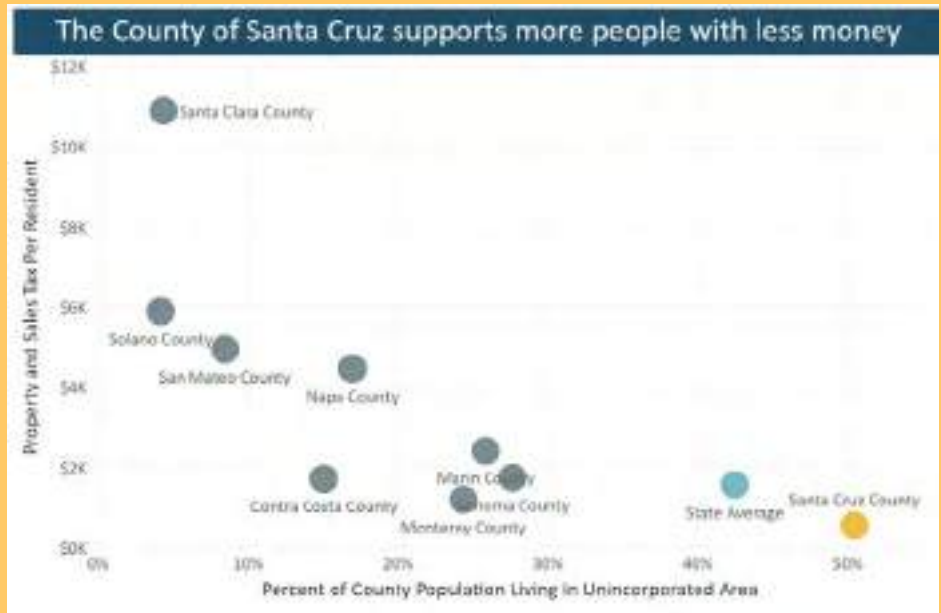
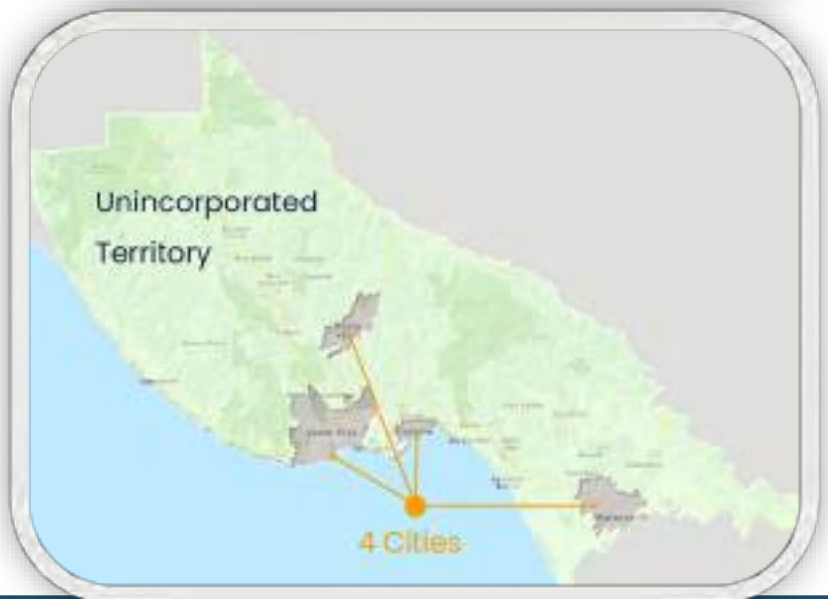


Photo Credit: Cheryl Basinger, Appraiser II



Jurisdiction	Population
County of Santa Cruz	133,153
City of Capitola	9,938
City of Santa Cruz	62,956
City of Scotts Valley	12,224
City of Watsonville	52,590

<https://www.santacruz.org/plan-your-trip/about-santa-cruz-county/>





# Assessor's Workload

Roll Year:	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
<b>Real Property</b>						
Total documents received	10,366	12,158	17,128	16,099	10,043	9,342
Re-assessable Transfers Completed	3,699	3,390	4,110	4,698	2,979	3,179
Legal Party Updates	NA	NA	6,362	6,869	6,405	7,373
Total Permits Received	NA	NA	NA	8,716	9,904	11,201
Assessments from New Construction	657	727	614	1,236	1,328	1,855
Prop 8	1,883	1,548	1,070	493	352	313
<b>Business property</b>						
Vessels	1,290	1,284	1,231	1,287	1,539	1,626
Aircraft	242	254	250	235	241	272
BP Statements Processed	3,446	3,315	4,096	2,932	2,938	4,406
Total Business Property Assessments	10,895	10,749	10,740	9,452	7,528	11,728
<b>Exemptions</b>						
Homeowners'	36,518	36,319	36,578	37,028	37,852	38,472
Disabled Veterans'	352	368	397	399	417	428
Institutional	5,797	5,647	5,599	5,478	5,341	5,270

## Roll Year

The 2024 roll includes assessments based on property values as of January 1, 2024, and accounts for events and changes that occurred during the 2023 calendar year or earlier.



Photo Credit: Jessica Baum, Assessment Technician



Photo Credit: Diego Camacho-Lopez, Appraiser

## Documents Received

Although Assessor staff review and analyze all documents received, not all documents result in a reassessment. Certain deeds, such as transfers into or out of a trust or name corrections, are non-reassessable. In these cases, the Assessor's Office updates the legal ownership and mailing address as reflected on the deed, but no reassessment of the property's value occurs.

# PROPERTY TAX EXEMPTIONS

The California Constitution allows that certain properties/portions of properties are exempt from taxation. The exemption applies to the assessed value of the property only and does not apply to direct levies or special taxes. With over 100 available exemptions, all require at least a one-time filing and many must be renewed annually.

## INSTITUTIONAL EXEMPTIONS

Real and personal property used exclusively by a church, college, cemetery, museum, school, or library may qualify for an Institutional Exemption. Additionally, properties owned and exclusively used by nonprofit organizations for religious, charitable, scientific, or hospital purposes may also be eligible. Charitable properties include those dedicated solely to affordable housing.

## HOMEOWNERS' EXEMPTION

A property that is owned and occupied as the primary residence may qualify for a Homeowners' Exemption. A one-time filing is required, and the exemption provides a \$7,000 reduction in assessed value, which equates to about \$77 in property tax savings each year. Once granted, the homeowners' exemption remains in place until the property is sold, or the Assessor is notified/determines that the owner no longer qualifies.

Qualifying Exemptions 2024/25		
EXEMPTION TYPE	QUANTITY	EXEMPT VALUE
Private & Parochial schools	19	66,471,305
Privately owned colleges	2	542,829
Schools	20	46,077,006
Hospitals	4	217,135,805
Charitable Properties	711	1,449,308,341
Religious properties	109	70,968,941
Churches	14	9,613,432
Cemetery	15	8,647,903
Museum	3	2,086,280
Low valued property	4,501	3,949,348
Historical Aircraft	10	1,159,961
Commercial Fishing	29	1,753,404
Disabled Veterans	428	68,738,839
<b>REIMBURSABLE EXEMPTIONS:</b>		
Homeowners'	38,500	269,089,814
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>44,365</b>	<b>2,215,543,208</b>



Photo Credit: Jessica Baum, Assessment Technician

## DISABLED VETERANS'/SURVIVING SPOUSE

A property that is owned and occupied as the primary residence of a qualified disabled veteran may qualify for the Disabled Veterans' Exemption. A one-time filing is required, with the exemption amount adjusted annually. For 2024, the basic exemption of \$169,769 offers about \$1,867 in tax savings. Low-income disabled veterans may qualify for additional relief, requiring annual filing, with a 2024 exemption of \$254,656, resulting in approximately \$2,801 in tax savings.

# Proposition 19

On November 3, 2020 voters approved Proposition 19, the Home Protection for Seniors, Severely Disabled, Families and Victims of Wildfire or Natural Disasters Act. Proposition 19 (Prop 19) resulted in significant changes to property tax law in two distinct areas: **Intergenerational Transfers** (benefits narrowed) and **Base Year Value Transfers** (benefits expanded).

## Base Year Value Transfers—Persons at least 55/Disabled/Victims of Wildfire

Proposition 19 **expanded** qualifying homeowners’ ability to transfer their assessed value to a replacement property, allowing qualified homeowners to move closer to family or medical facilities, downsize, or find a more suitable home without incurring higher property taxes.

Count of Prop 19 Base Year Value Transfers			
	2020-22*	2022-23	2023-24
IN to Santa Cruz County	80	97	74
WITHIN Santa Cruz County	80	58	56
OUT of Santa Cruz County	149	56	91

\*The initial reporting period is 15 months long, from the effective date 4/1/2021 through 6/30/2022

### Key expansions include:

- Removes location restrictions – replacement home can be purchased anywhere in California.
- Removes the value threshold – if the replacement home is of higher value, the difference in value is simply added to the base year value being transferred.
- Increases the limit to three times per individual (six times per married couple)

57% of all base year value transfers IN to Santa Cruz County come from Santa Clara County

Prop 19 Market Value/Prop 13 Values			
	2020-22*	2022-23	2023-24
In to - highest value (purchase)	5,750,000	10,500,000	5,000,000
Out of - highest value (sale)	4,200,000	3,700,000	5,068,000
Lowest Prop 13 Value	46,254	76,230	79,186

For more information about Prop 19 see Publications 800-1, 800-2, 800-3, and visit [www.boe.ca.gov/prop19](http://www.boe.ca.gov/prop19)



## Intergenerational Transfers (aka parent/child and grandparent/grandchild)

Proposition 19 narrows the benefits previously available under Props 58/193. Previously, children could inherit their parents' primary residence and up to \$1 million in assessed value of other property without the property's value being reassessed for property tax purposes. Under Proposition 19, effective February 16, 2021:

- Only the parent's primary residence, or a family farm, qualify for the exclusion.
- The property must become the primary residence of at least one eligible child **within one year** of the transfer\*.
- The child must apply and qualify for either the homeowners' or disabled veterans' exemption.
- At least one eligible child must live in the property continually, as their family home, to maintain the exclusion. Family farms are exempt from the residency requirement.
- There is a value limit of the factored base year value + \$1,000,000 (adjusted biannually). If the market value exceeds this limit, the amount exceeding the value limit will be added to the factored base year value.

**\*If the property is inherited as a result of a death, the date of death is the *date of transfer* for property tax purposes, NOT the date the property is distributed.**

### Effects of Proposition 19 Intergenerational Transfer:

#### **Increased Revenue for Local Governments:**

Prop 19 results in significant increases in assessed property values when certain properties are transferred between generations. This leads to higher property tax revenues for cities, counties, and special districts.

#### **Enhanced Fairness in Property Taxation:**

The law effectively closes a longstanding "loophole" that allowed wealthier property owners to avoid paying their "fair share" of property taxes on investment properties.

<https://www.latimes.com/politics/la-pol-ca-california-property-taxes-elites-201808-htmllstory.html>

#### **Preservation of Tax Breaks for Family Homes:**

Children can still inherit a low property tax base on a family's primary residence, as long as they live in the home, preserving an important financial advantage for families.

#### **Increased Workload for the Assessor's Office:**

Prop 19 has added over 4,800 hours annually to the workload of the Santa Cruz County Assessor's Office, contributing to processing delays over the past three years. However, with the recent addition of two new valuation staff members, the office is now better equipped to handle the increased volume of work and meet the demands of Prop 19.

## BUSINESS AND PERSONAL PROPERTY

Distribution of UNSECURED Roll Value by Property Type				
Type	# Accounts	% of Total Accounts	Net Taxable Value	% of Taxable Value
Business & Equipment	6,968	70.8%	1,169,683,171	86.5%
Vessels	1,626	16.5%	54,483,926	4.0%
Aircraft	266	2.7%	53,102,831	3.9%
Possessory Interest	983	10.0%	74,796,147	5.5%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>9,843</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>1,352,066,075</b>	<b>100%</b>

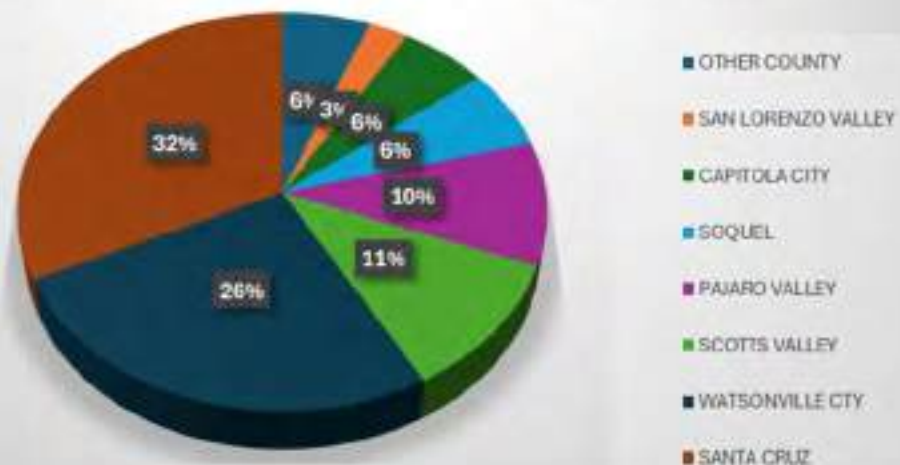
Taxable **business property** includes supplies, machinery and equipment, tools, office furniture, computer hardware and operating systems, buildings, fixtures, land improvements, and leasehold improvements. Taxable **personal property** covers items such as vessels and aircraft. Both business and personal property is appraised annually at its current market value as of the January 1st lien date.

Any business owning business or personal property with a combined cost of \$100,000 or more must file an annual property statement with the Assessor.

### Property Tax Relief

Santa Cruz County has a low value ordinance of \$5,000 on unsecured property, where no bill is issued, as the cost to assess and collect property taxes exceeds the tax revenue generated.

### Distribution of Unsecured Roll by Jurisdiction



# BUSINESS AND PERSONAL PROPERTY

## Vessels

Any watercraft used or capable of being used as a means for transportation on water. Can be located at the harbor, a storage yard, or private residence.

## Aircraft

Privately owned aircraft used for business or pleasure, not authorized to carry passengers, mail, or freight on a commercial basis. Primarily located at Watsonville Airport.

## Possessory Interest

The right to possess publicly owned real property, exclusive of the rights held by others. Some examples: harbor slips, aircraft hangars, cabins on State land, businesses leasing government owned buildings,



Photo Credit: Diego Camacho-Lopez, Appraiser

### Top 25 Business Property Accounts

Rank	Business
1	*DIGNITY HEALTH MEDICAL FOUNDATION - EXEMPT
2	JOBY AVIATION
3	KAISER FOUNDATION
4	S MARTINELLI & CO
5	HARMONY FOODS CORPORATION
6	COMCAST OF CA
7	SUTTER BAY MEDICAL FOUNDATION
8	*MID PENINSULA HEALTH SERVICES - EXEMPT
9	SANTA CRUZ SEASIDE CO INC
10	DRISCOLL STRAWBERRY ASSOC INC
11	LAKESIDE ORGANIC GARDENS LLC
12	DEL MAR FOOD PRODUCTS CORP
13	LOCKHEED MARTIN CORPORATION
14	SAFEWAY STORES INC
15	CHARTER COMMUNICATIONS
16	JUNO PACIFIC INC
17	PACK FRESH PROCESSORS LLC
18	*MOUNT HERMON ASSOCIATION INC - EXEMPT
19	FOX FACTORY INC
20	REITER BERRY FARMS INC
21	FEDEX GROUND PACKAGE SYSTEM INC
22	CEMEX INC
23	TESLA ENERGY OPERATIONS INC
24	ANATOMETAL INC
25	GRANITE CONSTRUCTION COMPANY

The top 25 businesses account for 48% of the value on the unsecured roll



# New Construction

## 2024 Roll Growth from New Construction

### By Jurisdiction



The 2024/25 assessment roll reflects an increase of \$441,141,150 from new construction

### Construction in Progress

If new construction is only partially completed on the lien date (January 1), the Assessor must determine its fair market value based on the percent of completion. This value is then added to the property’s annual assessed value. This process is repeated each year until the construction is completed.

### Completion of construction

When construction is complete, the newly constructed improvements are assessed at its full market value, and a new base year value is established. This value is added to the previously established base year value for the remainder of the property.

### Assessable New Construction

Assessable new construction includes the addition of value when new buildings or additions are constructed, as well as the removal of value when structures are demolished. It also covers the removal and restoration of value when properties are damaged or destroyed due to a disaster, provided a timely application is filed.

### Non-Assessable New Construction

Normal repair and maintenance activities, such as replacing a roof, water heater, or bathroom fixtures, are not assessable. However, if remodeling is so extensive that the structure becomes “substantially equivalent” to a new structure, it may be considered assessable.



### 2024 New Construction Statistics:

>10,000 Permits Received

1,608 Parcels

\$285,854,244  
Construction in Progress

\$158,286,906  
Completion of New Construction

## Property Tax Relief

New Construction is generally an assessable event, unless it is specifically excluded. There are several different types of new construction exclusions, as outlined below.

### Automatically excluded, no application required:

- Active Solar Energy System
- Fire Sprinkler Retrofits
- Underground storage tanks (repair)
- Contaminated Properties

For more information go to: [New Construction](#)

### TIMELY FILED APPLICATION REQUIRED:

- Disabled Persons Access—Residential
- Disabled Persons Access—Commercial
- Seismic Safety Retrofitting
- Initial Purchaser—Rain Water Recapture
- Initial Purchaser—Solar Power

For more information or to file an application, go to: [All Assessor Forms \(santacruzcountyca.gov\)](#)



## Proposition 8

Proposition 8 amended Article XIII A of the California Constitution to allow for temporary reductions in assessed property values when there is a decline in market value. A decline in value occurs when the current market value of a property is lower than its adjusted base year value as of the lien date (January 1st).

When a property's assessment is reduced under Proposition 8, the assessor's office reviews the value annually to determine if it should remain in decline-in-value status. While in this status, the assessed value may increase by more than the 2% annual limit set by Proposition 13; however, unless there is a change in ownership or new construction, the assessed value can never exceed its original factored base year value.



**\*\* Years 4-7**  
Assessed values increase more than 2% per year, which is allowed because the assessed value is at/below the Prop 13 value for the year.

**Year 1**  
The \$200,000 market value of the property at the time of ownership change becomes the Prop 13 base year value.

**Year 2**  
Market value increases to \$260,000. The assessed value is \$204,000 - \$200,000 base year value plus 2% increase allowed under Prop 13.

**Year 3-6**  
Market value falls below the Prop 13 value, so property is temporarily assessed at the lower Prop 8 value.

**Year 7**  
The market value increases to \$300,000 but the assessed value is the "restored Prop 13 value" of \$225,233.



## Proposition 8

The most recent 'peak' of decline-in-value occurred in 2012-13 when 24,656 (25%) of all parcels were receiving Prop 8 reductions. Most of the reductions were initiated by the Assessor's Office. As market values recovered, the number of properties in decline-in-value status has steadily decreased. For 2024-25, only 313 properties are receiving Prop 8 reductions.

Santa Cruz County is not currently initiating automatic Prop 8 reductions. However, taxpayers can request a review by submitting a "Request for Decline in Value Review" with the Assessor's Office or by filing an Assessment Appeal application with the Clerk of the Board. The first step, though, should be an **informal discussion** with your Assessor's Office to learn more about your particular assessments and explore your options.

### STOP!

Don't pay for services that are available for **FREE** from your local Assessor's Office

Have you received a solicitation to reduce your property taxes, in exchange for a fee or portion of the savings? Taxpayers are encouraged to contact their local Assessor's Office before signing a contract or sending money to a private company as most of the services they offer are available for FREE from the Assessor's Office.

### Informal Discussion w/ Assessor's Office

Often, a taxpayer's first step in challenging an assessment is simply to discuss the matter informally with assessor staff. The taxpayer can receive an explanation of how the assessment was determined and can provide information to the assessor of conditions that may affect the value of the property.

### Decline in Value Review Request

Taxpayers who believe the market value of their property has declined, AND is less than their assessed value, are encouraged to contact the Assessor's Office and complete a Decline in Value Review Request. Assessor staff will review the request and implement a Prop 8 reduction if warranted.

### Assessment Appeals

The Assessment Appeals Board is an independent board charged with resolving disagreements between County Assessor and property owners. Assessment Appeal applications must be filed with the Clerk of the Board during specific filing periods and there is a \$50 filing fee. Typically about 200 applications are filed each year, over half of which pertain to commercial appeals filed by tax agents. Just over 1/3 of applications were filed for single family dwellings.

Publication 30 is a valuable resource for taxpayers filing Assessment Appeal applications:

[Publication 30, Residential Property Assessment Appeals](#)

# Disaster Relief

Property tax relief is available when taxable property is damaged or destroyed in a calamity such as a fire, earthquake, or flood. To qualify for relief, the damage must be from a sudden, distinct event, the event must be without fault of the assessee, there must be at least \$10,000 of damage, and a claim must be filed with the Assessor’s Office within 12 months of the event. Disaster relief is available to owners of real property, business equipment and fixtures, aircraft, boats, and certain manufactured homes.

A valid calamity claim provides two different types of property tax relief. First, the assessed value is reduced to reflect the damaged condition and taxes are adjusted accordingly. More importantly, the rebuild/repair of the property is excluded from being re-assessed as new construction. As long as the property is rebuilt in a like or similar manner, the original base year value is retained.

In certain circumstances the owner of a property that has suffered at least 50% damage to either land or improvements can transfer their tax base to a replacement property:

Code Section	Property Type	Replacement Property Location	Must sell damaged property	Time period to Purchase or Newly Construct Replacement	Value Test	Operative Date	How to apply
XIII A section 2.1(b) (Prop 19)	Principal place of residence	Any county in California	Yes	2 years from sale date	100% *	4/1/2021	See "receiving" county's website for application and instructions
RTC Section 69.3	Principal place of residence	One of the 13 counties that has adopted an ordinance to accept.	No	3 years from disaster date	Equal or lesser value	10/20/1991	See "receiving" county's website for application and instructions
RTC Section 69	All property types	In Santa Cruz County	No	7 years from disaster date	120% *	7/1/1985	<a href="#">Santa Cruz County Form BOE 65-P</a>

\* Partial relief available if market value of replacement property exceeds value test.

## CZU Fire

In August 2020, the CZU Lightning Complex fire destroyed over 1,400 buildings, including 911 homes on approximately 858 separate parcels. The Assessor’s Office automatically initiated calamity adjustments on destroyed properties and reduced over 800 assessed values within six weeks of the fire, prior to the annual tax bills being due in December 2020.

## Winter Storms

The winter storms of 2023 and 2024 caused significant and widespread damage to homes, business, and public infrastructure. The Assessor’s Office reviewed over 175 properties for calamity relief.

The Assessor's Office is responsible for maintaining updated parcel maps for all properties within the county. Each time a parcel boundary is changed, the Assessor mapping staff updates the corresponding parcel maps and assigns new parcel numbers.

Mapping Workload	
Parcel Combinations	25
Boundary Line Adjustments	17
Parcel Division	19
New Subdivision Parcels	80
Verifying Legal Descriptions	260

Parcel maps become the basis for the county GIS parcel layer. Assessor staff load quarterly updates to the GIS system. These county parcel layers are aligned with over 50 other data layers and provide the foundation of the county's GIS system.

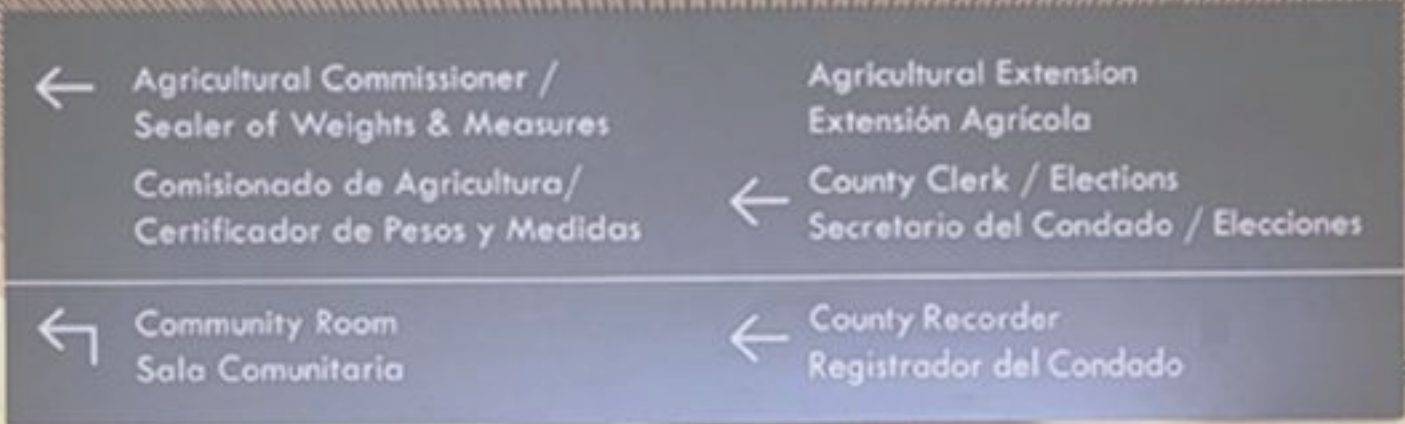
As time and staffing allow, the Assessor's Office continues to work on improving the accuracy of the county parcel layer alignment. During the prior fiscal year, staff worked with the county GIS department to realign the Davenport area parcel layers to significantly improve correlation to aerial imagery. This work is crucial to ensuring accuracy and reliance on the county system, especially in the event of disaster response.

The Assessor mapping division is also responsible for verifying legal descriptions to ensure that recorded deeds correctly describe the parcel number indicated. Additionally, they research and provide legal descriptions for county property tax sales and other critical county processes; prepare parcel history letters for the Planning Department and property owners; and update situs addresses as directed by the four cities.



Photo Credit: Cheryl Basinger, Appraiser II





## **Recorder's Office Now Open in South County**

Recorder's Office is now operating at Westridge on Mondays and Fridays, with hours matching those of our main office: 8:00 AM - 12:00 PM and 1:00 PM - 4:00 PM (recordings until 3:00 PM).

We are equipped to provide all our standard services, including vital records and recordings. Additionally, we have one kiosk available for public access.

I would like to thank Assistant Recorder Carol Sutherland who had the vision and persistence to make this happen.

We are excited about this expansion and look forward to serving the South County community more conveniently.

The Recorder's Office is responsible for creating, maintaining, and preserving official public records, primarily related to real property transactions and vital statistics. Its functions include:

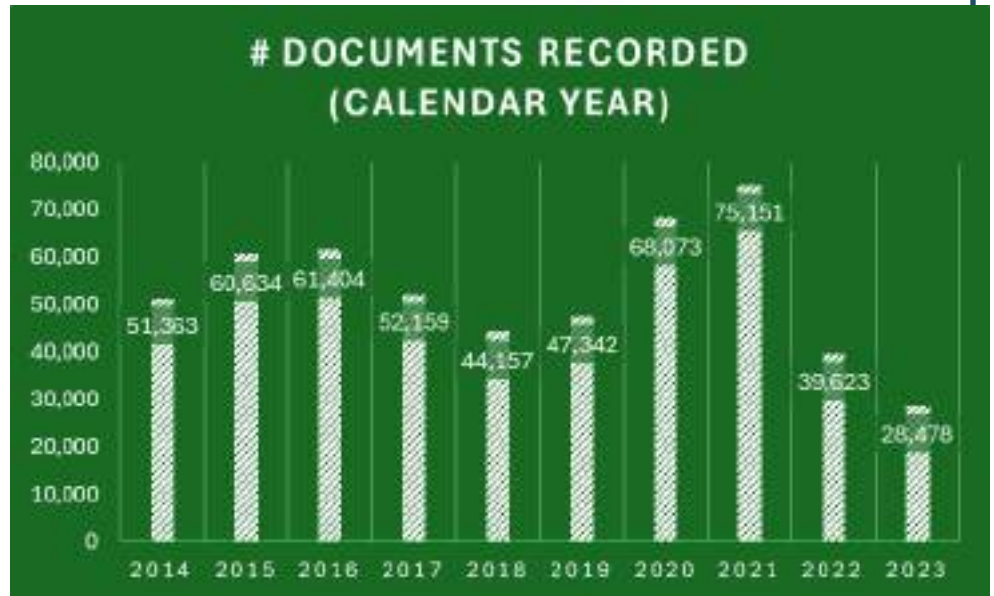
- ◆ **Real Property Records:** The office records and archives documents related to real estate transactions, such as deeds, mortgages (deeds of trust), reconveyances, liens, and other related documents. These records provide legal evidence of property ownership and transactions.
- ◆ **Vital Records:** It maintains official records of important life events such as birth certificates, death certificates, and marriage certificates.
- ◆ **Document Preservation:** Recorded documents are scanned, indexed, and microfilmed to create a permanent record. The microfilm is stored in secure, temperature-controlled environments to ensure they remain preserved for legal and historical purposes.
- ◆ **Public Access and Assistance:** The office provides access to the records for the public and assists individuals in searching for and retrieving specific documents.
- ◆ **Fee Collection:** Staff collects recording fees, transfer taxes for real property transactions, and fees for providing copies of documents. Transfer taxes collected are distributed to the county and cities of Santa Cruz, Capitola, Watsonville, and Scotts Valley.



## Recorder's Office

Carol Sutherland, Assistant Recorder

Record-low interest rates brought a surge in recording activity, driven by increased refinancing. However, the interest rate hikes of the past couple of years slowed both refinancing and recording volumes. This slow down has allowed staff to focus on process improvements and undertake the extensive work mandated by AB 1466.



### AB 1466

In 2021, the California Legislature enacted Assembly Bill 1466, requiring all California Counties to identify and redact discriminatory or racially restrictive language from deeds and other property documents. The Recorder's Office is tasked with reviewing its entire repository of real estate records to ensure compliance with this law.

Currently, all typewritten records from 1900 to 1996 are in the process of being digitized. (Documents recorded since 1996 are digitized at the time of recording). This digitization phase is expected to be completed by December 2024.

The next phase will involve the use of Optical Character Recognition (OCR) technology to detect potentially restrictive language. Any flagged documents will undergo individual review by Recorder staff. If restrictive language is found staff will create a copy of the original document, with the restrictive language redacted, and submit both the redacted and original versions to County Counsel for review. If Counsel confirms the presence of unlawful language, the County Recorder will record a redacted version of the document while preserving the original images for historical purposes.

#### Requests and Submissions from the Public

The Recorder's Office is prepared to receive submissions of unlawful language from the public. A link to the AB 1466 Restrictive Modification Form can be found on our website at: <https://www.santacruzcountyca.gov/rcd/>



## Important Property Tax Dates

<b>January 1</b>	Lien date for all property
<b>February 15</b>	Deadline to timely file all exemption claims
<b>April 10</b>	Last day to pay second installment of secured taxes without penalty
<b>May 7</b>	Last day to file a business property statement without incurring a 10% penalty
<b>July 1</b>	Deadline for County Assessor to complete local assessment roll
<b>August 1</b>	Last day to file exemption for historical aircraft and 4% assessment of certain vessels to receive 80% of the exemption
<b>August 31</b>	Last day to pay unsecured taxes without penalty
<b>November 30</b>	Last day to file assessment appeal application with the Clerk of the Board of Supervisors for annual tax bills.
<b>December 10</b>	Last day to pay first installment of secured taxes without penalty
<b>December 10</b>	Last day to file a homeowners' or disabled veterans' exemption to receive a partial exemption

*If due date falls on a Saturday, Sunday, or legal holiday, mail postmarked on the next business day shall be deemed on time.*

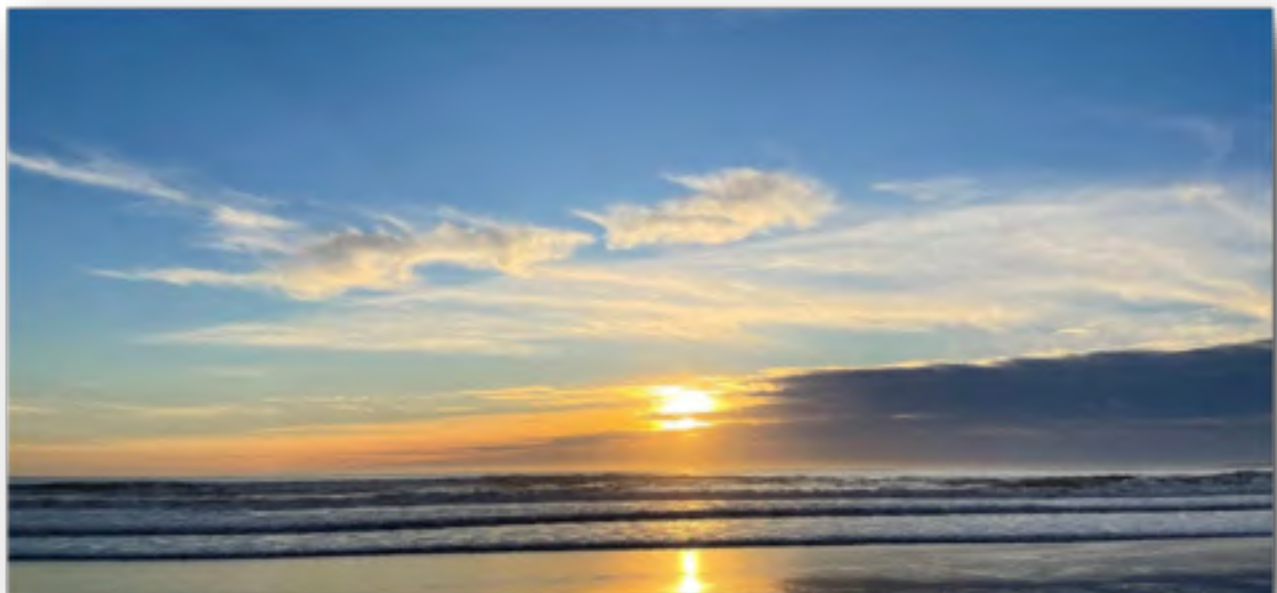


Photo by: Nathan Macy, Appraiser II

## How can we help you?

Whether you need assistance with recordings, vital records, or property assessments, our dedicated team is ready to help. Visit us in person, give us a call, or reach out via email.

### Assessor's Office

**Hours:**

8:00 AM—5:00 PM

**Location:**

**Santa Cruz :** 701 Ocean St., Room 130

General Office: (831) 454-2002

Email: [asrwebmail@santacruzcountyca.gov](mailto:asrwebmail@santacruzcountyca.gov)

Real Property: (831) 454-2270

Email: [assessor@santacruzcountyca.gov](mailto:assessor@santacruzcountyca.gov)

Business Property: (831) 454-2487

Email: [asrbp@santacruzcountyca.gov](mailto:asrbp@santacruzcountyca.gov)



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### Recorder's Office

**Hours:**

8:00 AM—12:00 PM & 1:00 PM—4:00 PM *\*Recordings until 3:00 PM*

**Locations:**

◇ **Santa Cruz :** 701 Ocean St., Room 230

◇ **Watsonville\*:** 500 Westridge Dr. *\*Mondays and Fridays only*

Phone: (831) 454-2800

Email: [rcdwebmail@santacruzcountyca.gov](mailto:rcdwebmail@santacruzcountyca.gov)



Santa Cruz County Assessor's Office  
Sheri Thomas, Assessor-Recorder  
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