

# LIFE IN THE PRAIRIE

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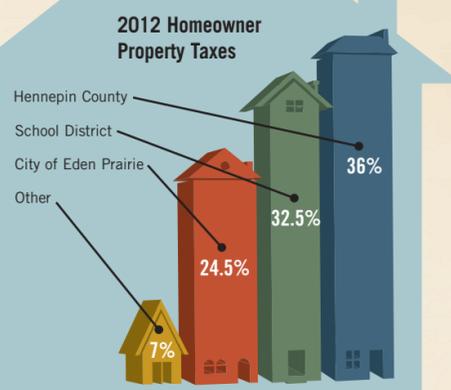
Watch for the new **edenprairie.org** to launch this spring

MARCH-APRIL 2012

## The Property Valuation Process

By the end of March, residential property owners in Eden Prairie will have received two notices related to property taxes. One is a **Hennepin County 2012 Property Tax Statement**, which is based on the Jan. 2, 2011, assessment and must be paid this year. The other is a **2012 Notice of Valuation and Classification** from the City, which is used to calculate property taxes to be paid in 2013.

City taxes account for about one-fourth (24.5 percent) of property taxes, the remainder is comprised of taxes for the school district (32.5 percent), the county (36 percent) and other jurisdictions (7 percent).



### Market Value Assessments

The City Assessing Division maintains records for every property in Eden Prairie. Adjustments are made to the market values of most properties based on actual real estate sales on comparable properties from the past year. Approximately one-fifth of the properties are also physically inspected each year and market value adjustments are made based on the results of the inspections. Additional market value adjustments are made for building additions, remodeling and other improvements to property.

In early March, official market value notices are mailed to homeowners; the value amounts which may appear on the notice include:

#### Estimated Market Value

This is the City Assessor's estimate of the total market value of the property, or what the property would likely sell for on the open market as of the date of assessment, which by statute is Jan. 2, 2012.

#### Disabled Veterans Market Value Exclusion

Qualifying disabled veterans may be eligible for a valuation exclusion on their homestead property, which would reduce the amount subject to taxation.

#### This Old House Exclusion

This figure shows the portion of the value of improvements made to an older home under the former "This Old House" law. This program expired with the 2003 assessment; however, property may still be receiving the value exclusion under this program.

#### Referendum Market Value

The value subject to referendum levies.

#### New — Homestead Market Value Exclusion

The exclusion is a maximum of \$30,400 for properties valued at \$76,000 and is reduced for the amount of value over \$76,000. The exclusion phases out for properties valued at \$413,800 or more. *This exclusion was enacted during the State Legislature's 2011 Special Session and was not shown on 2011 value notices, although it was applied to 2011 taxable market values.*

#### Taxable Market Value

This is the value that 2013 property taxes will be based on, after all reductions, exclusions, exemptions and deferrals.

Property tax assessment in Minnesota is a complicated process strictly governed by state law. Although the City of Eden Prairie administers the assessment, the City's work is overseen by Hennepin County and the State Department of Revenue. The state-mandated schedule requires that property values, as reflected in the **2012 Notice of Valuation and Classification**, are based upon an analysis of real estate market trends in the year 2011. The values cannot reflect changes in market conditions since the end of last year, and any changes taking place in 2012 will be reflected in next year's assessments.

### A Note About Declining Home Values

The real estate market has experienced a significant decline in a number of locations in the metro area and across the nation. From the 2011 to 2012 assessment the average value reduction for residential properties in the City of Eden Prairie is approximately 4.4 percent. It is important to remember that individual properties may vary greatly and that residential property values and trends remain highly localized. Sales trends in our neighborhoods and cities can be quite different than national statistical trends.

### Market Value Appeals Process

Estimated market values are subject to appeal. Appeals may be made directly to the State Tax Court; however, most appeals are first handled through the local Board of Appeal and Equalization and then by the Hennepin County Board of Appeal and Equalization.

The Eden Prairie City Council appoints local real estate professionals who reside in Eden Prairie to the local Board of Appeal and Equalization, which has full authority to raise or lower estimated market values. The Board's actions are final and can only be appealed to the Hennepin County Board of Appeal and Equalization.

To make an appeal to the local Board, a homeowner should first discuss the property's value with Eden Prairie's Assessing Division staff. Based on that discussion, an appeal can be made to the local Board by asking that the property be listed for appeal.

### Market Value Appeals Timeline

- March 2012** City assessing staff target date to issue and mail market value notices is **March 15, 2012**.
- April 2012** The deadline for making an application to the local Board of Appeal and Equalization is **April 13, 2012**. The first meeting is scheduled for April 19, 2012.
- June 2012** The Hennepin County Board of Appeal and Equalization hearings take place in **June 2012**.
- April 2013** Appeals must be filed with the State Tax Court by **April 30, 2013**.

Homeowners with questions or concerns about a property's market value, or the assessment and appeals processes, should call the Eden Prairie **Assessing Division** at **952-949-8511**. City appraisers are available to discuss home values, as well as schedule an appraisal inspection if necessary.

## Council Member Profile

**Ron Case** was elected to his current term in November 2008, having previously served on the Eden Prairie City Council from 1995 to 2006.

Council Member Case, who has lived in Eden Prairie since 1979, has always enjoyed the leadership process, which is what led him to become involved in local government.

"I enjoy listening to people, shepherding ideas, building consensus and following through with decision-making," said Case.

Currently serving in his fourth term on the Council, Case is proud of the decisions he has been a part of through the years, which have helped to grow Eden Prairie from a small suburb of less than 40,000 residents in 1995, to an award-winning community of more than 60,000 today.

"But government isn't as simple as tasks completed and accomplishments checked off," he said. "For me, local small-town government in America is much more about the process: making sure people are given opportunities to be part of community conversations, educating about how and why government collects and spends the people's money, and always being willing to email back and forth, talk on the phone, and/or go out to personally meet people in their homes and neighborhoods. That's not only what I enjoy most about the



Ron Case

position, I think it is also what people most expect from their elected representatives."

Case noted Eden Prairie's incredible resources – people, natural beauty, business, schools – and sees a strong future for Eden Prairie.

"My hope is that we, the residents of this amazing place, will always see value in what is here," he said. "We must continue to commit ourselves to being good stewards of a City in which former residents since 1853 invested their energy, time and money, so that we might reap the rewards of their efforts."

Case said it is also important to him that the community continues to care about each other by valuing the contributions of every person who lives in the City.

"I have faith in Eden Prairie's future and tremendous confidence that its strengths will continue to shine for years to come," he said.

Finally, Case has some advice for others who want to become involved in local government.

"It sounds trite and definitely overly simplified, but just give of your time. Get appointed to commissions, run for office, write letters to the editor, volunteer for political party positions, take on personal causes, and come to public meetings to speak out for what you care about and value. We all lead very busy and complicated lives. But there is little of greater consequence one could do than to serve his/her community by strengthening our democratic institutions."

### Q and A with Council Member Ron Case

#### Q. What do you want the Eden Prairie community to know?

**A.** I would like this community to know that Council members enjoy hearing from people. We welcome, in fact, we value feedback both before and after decisions are made; and mostly, we're friends, neighbors, and/or coworkers who simply stepped forward to commit some time and energy to making this a better place to live.

#### Q. What is your favorite place in Eden Prairie?

**A.** I love the paths down along the river in our Richard T. Anderson Conservation Area. Additionally, when leading historic bike tours of Eden Prairie, I can't say enough about our incredible trail system that winds its way through what has to be the most beautiful suburban City in Minnesota.

#### Q. Why do you think Eden Prairie is a great place to live, work and dream?

**A.** Fortuitously, Eden Prairie was blessed from the beginning by natural beauty and being situated in the southwest corner of the metropolitan area within whose borders three of the eight major state highway corridors traverse. We also came of age at a time when enhanced zoning authority enabled us

to enact policies which created a desirable community that attracted the high-quality resident population we have today. So, the critical mass of natural amenities combined with prescient planning and strong economic growth provided the opportunity for Eden Prairie to grow into not just a great place, but an award-winning community.

I grew up living in the same home throughout my childhood in Maryland and always wanted to raise a family similarly. So shortly after arriving in Minnesota, my wife Kathie and I purchased our 1870s historic homestead in Eden Prairie; and now, after having all four of our children attend and graduate from Eden Prairie Schools, this town has given our family the sense of place that I always hoped I would be able to find.



The Case family  
Photo Credit: Spencer Johnson Photography

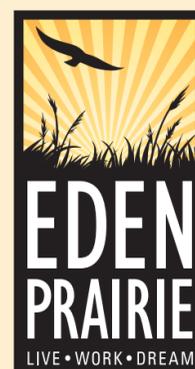
## Council Adopts Open to Business Program

At its Oct. 4, 2011, meeting, the Eden Prairie City Council voted to adopt a resolution supporting the City's participation in **Open to Business**, a small business technical assistance program provided by the **Metropolitan Consortium of Community Developers (MCCD)** through a partnership with the **Hennepin County Housing and Redevelopment Authority**.

Of the approximately 3,400 business currently operating in Eden Prairie, it is estimated that somewhere between 800 and 1,000 are home-based. The City's participation in the Open to Business program provides many small businesses like these with services to help them succeed – which will in turn support a broader strategy of promoting economic development, creating and retaining jobs, and cultivating entrepreneurs.

Some of the Open to Business services now offered free of charge to small businesses located in Eden Prairie include: business plan development, feasibility studies, cash flow and financing projections, marketing, loan request preparation and advocacy with lending institutions.

For more information about the Open to Business program, visit [opentobusinessmn.org](http://opentobusinessmn.org).



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# Live Well Eden Prairie!

## Register for Spring/Summer Parks and Recreation Programs

Believe it or not, a wonderful Minnesota spring is right around the corner! And that means the **Spring/Summer Parks and Recreation program guide** will soon be available. Watch for your copy in the mail on **March 2**, or visit [edenprairie.org/parksbrochure](http://edenprairie.org/parksbrochure) to check out the **new** online program guide!

More convenient and easy to use, this new tool makes it possible to:

- Click to Register** Click on any item in the program guide to register online.
- Keyword Search** Search any word or topic and get a list of related program offerings.
- Email to a Friend** Easily share the program guide with friends and family via email.
- Zoom** Zoom in on any page to make the program guide easier to read.

Registration begins on **March 13**, allowing you plenty of time to plan ahead and Live Well this spring and summer!



## Our Environment

Reduce, Reuse and Recycle Plastic Bags

Communities across the country are supporting efforts to reduce, reuse and recycle plastic bags as the tried-and-true approach to responsible handling. These simple, common-sense steps can help reduce waste, prevent litter and keep our environment clean. And they're working!

Recycling plastic bags and wraps is important because this valuable material can be made into dozens of useful new products such as low-maintenance fencing and decking, building and construction products, shopping carts, and of course, new bags!

### What You Can Do:

**Reduce:** Shoppers can always decline a bag at checkout, and paper or reusable cloth bags are a convenient alternative.

**Reuse:** More than 90 percent of consumers reuse their plastic grocery bags at home for purposes ranging from wastebasket liners to lunch bags to pet cleanup.

**Recycle:** Several local grocers and retailers now accept plastic bags and wraps for recycling. In addition, some local trash haulers have begun accepting plastic bags for recycling.

**Did You Know?** A plastic bag or product wrap is fully recyclable, but these products require a different type of infrastructure than plastic bottles and containers. That's why bags must be collected and recycled separately.

### What You Can Typically Recycle Wherever Plastic Bags Are Collected:

- All plastic bags labeled #2 (HDPE) or #4 (LLDPE)
- Grocery bags (remove any receipts)
- Retail bags (remove hard plastic or string handles)
- Plastic newspaper bags
- Dry cleaning bags (remove paper and hangers)
- Bread bags (with crumbs shaken out)
- Sealable food storage bags (with hard parts removed)
- Bags from boxes of cereal and crackers (with crumbs shaken out)
- Plastic wraps from products such as paper towels, bathroom paper, napkins, diapers, and cases of soft drinks

**Important Note:** When recycling plastic bags, make sure they are clean and empty. Do not include used plastic food wrap, bags with food residue, or material that has been painted or glued, as other substances can contaminate the recycled material.

For more information on these and other plastic bag recycling tips, visit [plasticbagfacts.com](http://plasticbagfacts.com).

# Around Eden Prairie

A Page from the Blog of City Manager Rick Getschow

## Utility Rates

Feb. 9, 2012

Here's a trivia challenge question for you: How many gallons of water are used in Eden Prairie on an average day? The answer: More than 8-million gallons!

We know this because the City of Eden Prairie operates the water, sanitary sewer and storm sewer systems for the community. The major water components include pumping well water to the **Water Treatment Plant**, treating that water and monitoring water quality to meet safe drinking-water standards.

But that's not all, the City also maintains: 15 groundwater wells, 4,224 fire hydrants, 269 miles of water mains, 244 miles of sanitary sewer, 172 miles of storm sewer and 93 storm water sediment tanks.

And all of these services are funded entirely by user fees – not by tax dollars.

So in an effort to ensure funds are available for future maintenance needs, the City conducted an in-depth utility rate study aimed at providing a snapshot of our future maintenance needs and steps we need to take to fund them.

As a result of this study, the City of Eden Prairie enacted a new utility rate structure in 2011. This new structure not only allowed for maintaining the infrastructure system as it ages, but also encourages water conservation – because the rates are based on annual water usage.

Another benefit of this new utility rate structure is that it will allow for minor adjustments over time, as they are needed to cover capital costs and provide for adequate reserves for the system.

What does this mean for the average Eden Prairie resident in 2012?

Well, more than 75 percent of all residential customers fall in the 0-36,000 gallons range of water used per quarter. So that means the average Eden Prairie resident will see an increase of 7 percent, or \$3.43 per month, on their water bill.

And while we know that rate increases aren't necessarily "good news" for our residents, we also know that it is necessary to ensure funding for the maintenance of essential infrastructure, and we see this adjustment as the best possible way to do so.

See more of Rick Getschow's blog entries, by visiting [edenprairieweblogs.org](http://edenprairieweblogs.org).



Each year in Minnesota, distracted or inattentive driving is a factor in one in four crashes, resulting in at least 70 deaths and 350 serious injuries.

### Avoid Distracted Driving

Turn off cell phones or place them out of sight, program favorite radio stations, adjust mirrors and temperature, and program navigational units before traveling. Try to avoid consuming food/beverages while driving. Teach children the importance of good behavior in a vehicle.

### Know the Law

It is illegal for drivers in Minnesota to read, compose or send text messages and emails, or access the Internet using a wireless device while the vehicle is in motion or a part of traffic – including stopped in traffic or at a traffic light.

For more information about these and other traffic safety tips, visit [dps.mn.gov/divisions/ots](http://dps.mn.gov/divisions/ots).

# Mark Your Calendar

**Beyond the Yellow Ribbon Kickoff Meeting**  
Wednesday, Feb. 22  
6:30 p.m.  
City Center Heritage Rooms

Beyond the Yellow Ribbon (BTYR) is a program for connecting returning service members and their families with community support, training, services and resources. This is an informational meeting to build awareness and seek volunteers who can help make Eden Prairie a BTYR community. For more information about this meeting, contact Bob Danielson at **612-868-0558**. Visit [beyondtheyellowribbon.org](http://beyondtheyellowribbon.org) to learn more about this statewide program.

**Taste of Eden Prairie**  
Saturday, Feb. 25  
6–10 p.m.  
Minnesota Vikings Field House

Attend this annual Foundation for Eden Prairie Schools benefit and mingle with friends, neighbors, teachers and staff while enjoying foods donated and served by 25 local restaurants, along with locker room tours, a raffle, live and silent auctions, live music and more. Tickets: \$35 in advance, \$40 at the door. Visit [foundationforepschools.org](http://foundationforepschools.org) for more information.

**Human Rights Awards Nomination Deadline**  
Friday, March 2  
4:30 p.m.

Each year, the City's Human Rights and Diversity Commission presents one individual, non-profit organization and business with a Human Rights Award, recognizing inspiring efforts that work to promote human rights and diversity, and to create an inclusive community spirit. For more information on how to submit a nomination, call **952-949-8439** or visit [edenprairie.org](http://edenprairie.org).

**City Council Meetings\***  
Tuesdays, March 6, 20 and April 17.  
*\*All meetings begin at 7 p.m. in the Council Chambers at the City Center.*

**Eden Prairie Polar Bear Plunge**  
Saturday, March 10  
Plunge Time: Noon  
Round Lake Park

Cheer on the Eden Prairie Police and Fire Departments as they take the annual Polar Bear Plunge along with hundreds of Eden Prairie residents, organizations and businesses to support Special Olympics Minnesota.

**Home, Landscape and Garden Expo**  
Saturday, March 17  
9 a.m.–3 p.m.  
Grace Church

Don't miss this free Eden Prairie Chamber of Commerce event featuring more than 100 exhibits on home remodeling, landscaping, interior design, windows and more, plus free seminars and door prizes.

**Eden Prairie Reads Event**  
Monday, March 19  
6–8:30 p.m.  
The International School of Minnesota

After reading the 2012 book selection *The Hunger Games* by Suzanne Collins, plan to participate in an evening of entertainment, complete with a light Hunger Games-inspired meal, a non-perishable food drive and a star-power simulation game, followed by a panel and discussion of the book. For more information visit [epreads.org](http://epreads.org).

**Eden Prairie Figure Skating Club Presents Heroes and Villains: An On-Ice Fantasy**  
Friday, March 23 at 7 p.m.  
Saturday, March 24 at 5 p.m.  
Sunday, March 25 at 2 p.m.  
Community Center

Bring the whole family and enjoy this annual showcase of Eden Prairie's figure skaters. Tickets available at the Community Center March 19-25; \$8 for adults (18+), \$5 for youth.

**Town Hall Meeting**  
Wednesday, March 28  
4–5:30 p.m.  
Summit Place

Participate in the first of several Town Hall Meetings to share input, ideas and feedback with City Council Members and City Staff in an informal setting.

**An Afternoon with the Bunny**  
Saturday, April 7  
3–5 p.m.  
Community Center

Enjoy a hopping good afternoon of fun, with games, activities, an egg hunt and a spring craft project. Tickets available at the Community Center or Senior Center; children 8 and under \$5 in advance, \$6 at the door. Admission is free for children under 1, parents and guardians.

**Animal Open House**  
Saturday, April 14  
1–4 p.m.  
Outdoor Center

The Outdoor Center will be overflowing with rabbits, snakes, chinchilla and more! Bring the whole family for this FREE day of fun, and don't miss the animal shows at 1:30 and 3:30 p.m.

**Eden Prairie Foundation Ball**  
Saturday, April 14  
6 p.m.  
Minnetonka Marriott Southwest

Attend this annual Eden Prairie Foundation fundraiser, which benefits the community with grants, scholarships and special gifts to deserving projects, and enjoy a black-tie evening complete with cocktails, dinner, a live auction and dancing. Visit [edenprairiefoundation.org](http://edenprairiefoundation.org) for more information.

**Park Cleanup Day**  
Saturday, April 21  
8:30–11 a.m.

Grab your work gloves, bring your trash bags and help keep Eden Prairie's park and trail systems clean. A great opportunity for service organizations, youth organizations and neighborhood groups! Please call **952-949-8463** by April 7 for park assignments.

**Spring Wine Tasting**  
Thursday, April 19  
7–9 p.m.  
The Garden Room

Eden Prairie Liquor hosts an evening of wine and hors d'oeuvres. Tickets are \$20 per person and available at all three Eden Prairie Liquor stores in April. Visit [edenprairieliquor.org](http://edenprairieliquor.org) for locations and store hours.

For more information about City of Eden Prairie events, meetings or Parks and Recreation programs, visit [edenprairie.org](http://edenprairie.org) or call the City Center at 952-949-8300.