

LIFE IN THE PRAIRIE

Local kids enjoy a winter day at Staring Lake Park



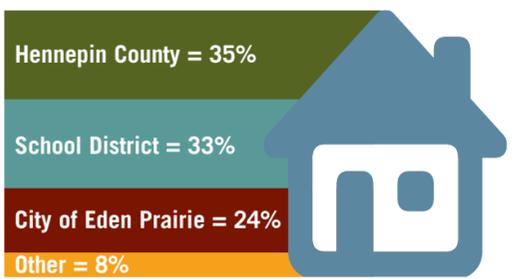
APRIL 2009

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 2009 Property Tax Statement**, which is based on the Jan. 2, 2008, assessment and must be paid this year. The other is a **2009 Notice of Valuation and Classification** from the City, which is used to calculate property taxes to be paid in 2010.

2009 Homeowner Property Taxes

City taxes account for about one-fourth (24 percent) of property taxes, the remainder is comprised of taxes for the school district (33 percent), the county (35 percent) and other jurisdictions (8 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 the property.

In early March, official market value notices are mailed to homeowners; the four 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, 2009.

Veterans Exclusion

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

Qualifying Improvement Value

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.

Taxable Market Value

This is the value that 2010 property taxes will be based on, after all reductions, exemptions and deferrals are taken.

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 **2009 Notice of Valuation and Classification**, are based upon an analysis of real estate market trends in the year 2008. The values cannot reflect changes in market conditions since the end of last year, and any changes taking place in 2009 will be reflected in next year's assessment.

Market Value Appeals Process

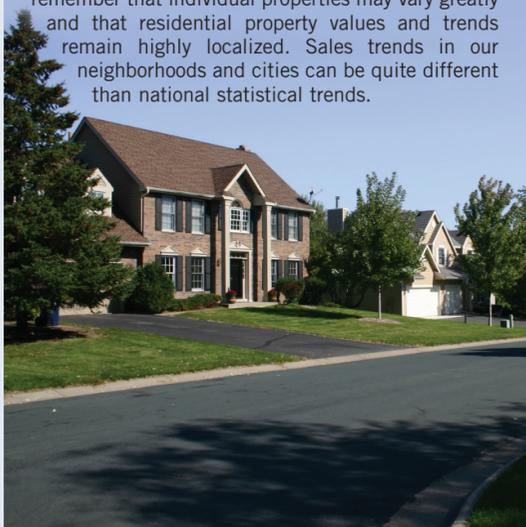
Estimated market values are subject to appeal. Appeals may be made directly to the State Tax Court; however, most appeals are first handled through the local Board of Appeal and Equalization and then by the Hennepin County Board of Appeal and Equalization.

The Eden Prairie City Council appoints local real estate professionals to the local Board of Appeal and Equalization and gives this special board 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. The appointed Board members must be residents of Eden Prairie.

To make an appeal to the local board, homeowners 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.

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 2008 to 2009 assessment the average value reduction for residential properties in the City of Eden Prairie is approximately 5.3 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 Timeline

March 2009

City assessing staff issues and mails market value notices beginning the second week of **March 2009**.

April 2009

The deadline for making an application to the local Board of Appeal and Equalization is **April 17, 2009**. The first meeting is scheduled for April 23, 2009.

June 2009

The Hennepin County Board of Appeal and Equalization hearings will take place in **June 2009**.

April 2010

Appeals must be filed with the State Tax Court by **April 30, 2010**.

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.

Securing a Sound Financial Future

As the nation continues to explore solutions for our current financial situation, many businesses, organizations and private citizens themselves are also seeking options which will help them persevere in these difficult economic times. The state of Minnesota has already begun to take action in compensation for its \$5-billion budget deficit, and many cities throughout the metro area are being forced to make changes today in order to secure a sound financial future.

The Current Situation

In December 2008, the Eden Prairie City Council approved the 2009 City budget and, in response to the nationwide economic downturn, voted to maintain the 2008 tax levy of \$30,646,421 through 2009. The approved 2009 budget called for a reduction of \$550,000 in general fund expenses originally budgeted for this year; however, because of a decrease in actual and projected development-related revenue, an additional \$1-million in budgeted general fund expenses must now be reduced in order to avoid a year-end deficit.

The Priorities

City leaders, elected officials and staff members are committed to upholding the **Eden Prairie Promise**, to provide taxpayers with: a healthy, strong and safe community; a preserved and beautiful environment; a mobile community with safe and efficient travel options; an overall satisfaction with the community; efficient and effective service; and a responsive and accessible government.

City Manager **Scott Neal** said the solutions to the City's economic situation will not compromise the maintenance of its infrastructure and facilities, and will maintain all aspects of public safety.

"The solutions will place priority on planned development projects and capital improvements, to sustain the best possible economic conditions and quality of life for Eden Prairie residents and taxpayers," Neal said.

The Solutions

The solutions to the City of Eden Prairie's 2009 projected \$1-million shortfall, which will be proposed to the City Council in May, include the following:

- A \$500,000 reduction in General Fund expenses
- A \$500,000 transfer from the City's Budget Stabilization Fund into the General Fund

The Future

Looking ahead, City leaders are closely examining the budget forecast for 2010-2014, knowing that changes must be made today in order to ensure a positive outlook.

"The reductions we implement in 2009 will better position us for planning the 2010-2011 biennial budget later this year," Neal said.

According to Neal, other options the City is currently considering for future budgets include modifications in the structure of its employee compensation system, a restructuring of its debt service obligations and the introduction of a new street lighting utility.

In these uncertain economic times, City leaders, staff members and elected officials are committed to upholding the tradition of excellence that Eden Prairie is known for and will take a careful and balanced approach to finding and implementing the solutions that will position the City of Eden Prairie for a sound financial future.

"The reductions we implement in 2009 will better position us for planning the 2010-2011 biennial budget later this year"

City Manager **Scott Neal**

Pioneer Trail Construction Update

Pioneer Trail (County State Aid Highway 1), an east-west thoroughfare on the south side of Eden Prairie, has been slated for a total reconstruction project by Hennepin County starting this year. When complete, this project will take Pioneer Trail from two lanes as it is today, to a four-lane divided road.

The project, which was bid out in January, is now scheduled to begin in April 2009. During the construction process, two-way traffic on Pioneer Trail will be maintained at all times; however, it is always important to use extra caution when driving in and around a construction zone, especially when workers are present.

It is also important to note that Pioneer Trail is the road which provides access to Staring Lake Park and Ampitheatre, one of the most highly used recreation areas in Eden Prairie. The City's Parks and Recreation Department has several programs and events scheduled at Staring Lake this summer and would like to remind the community that, due to road construction, it may be necessary to allow plenty of travel time when visiting the park this year.



YOUR ELECTED CITY OFFICIALS



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Live Well Eden Prairie!

The City of Eden Prairie boasts more than 30 neighborhood, community and regional parks which provide a setting for thousands of leisure activities, gatherings and sporting events each year. With amenities ranging from bike trails, beaches and fishing piers to ball fields and picnic shelters, the City's parks offer an incredible variety of recreational activities and unlimited opportunities to help you Live Well in Eden Prairie!

As the snow begins to melt away, do your part to help maintain the City's precious parks and trails by participating in **Park Clean-up Day** on Saturday, April 18 from 8:30 to 11 a.m. This event is a great opportunity to gather with friends or get the neighborhood kids together for a fun-filled morning of fresh air and community service. To participate, call **Jeff Cordes** at **952-949-8463** at least one week in advance for a park assignment.

As you plan your summer events, remember that Eden Prairie **park facility rentals** provide an ideal and affordable option for gatherings, birthday parties and family reunions. For park facility rental rates and requirements, as well as detailed facility information and photos, visit the Parks and Recreation page of the City's Web site, **edenprairie.org**, and select "Park Facility Rentals" from the menu, or call **952-949-8471**.



As you explore summertime options for the kids, check out the **summer day camps** available for children ages 3 to 12 at several park playgrounds throughout the City. These camps are designed to engage the imagination, develop motor skills, stimulate learning and increase social interaction through recreational play, arts and crafts, games, songs, story time and more. Registration is required, see page 14 of your **Parks and Recreation Spring/Summer Program Guide** or call **952-949-8470** for more information.

This spring, prepare to take full advantage of the nearly 3,000 acres of City parks and open spaces available to you, and make it your mission to Live Well in Eden Prairie!

To learn more or register for these and other Eden Prairie **Parks and Recreation Department** programs, visit **edenprairie.org** or pick up a copy of the **Spring/Summer Program Guide** available now at any City facility.



Our Environment Infiltration and Rain Gardens

The **U.S. Environmental Protection Agency** has named storm water runoff, rain or snowmelt that flows over the ground, as our nation's biggest water quality threat.

Runoff occurs when impervious surfaces like driveways, sidewalks and streets prevent storm water from naturally soaking into the ground. This causes debris, chemicals, dirt and other pollutants to flow into storm sewer systems which lead directly into lakes, streams, rivers and wetlands. All storm water runoff that enters a storm sewer system is discharged untreated into bodies of water used for swimming, fishing and as a source for drinking water.



The best way to help storm water infiltrate the ground rather than run off into storm sewers is to create a rain garden or infiltration area designed to catch rain water runoff with vegetation that can tolerate partial flooding on occasion. Rain gardens provide beautiful landscaping, create a natural wildlife habitat and, by soaking up rain where it falls, they slow storm water runoff, help prevent erosion and remove pollutants in the process.

The City of Eden Prairie is partnering with the City of Minnetonka to host two free workshops on infiltration and rain gardens.

Workshop I

April 16
6:30–9:30 p.m.
Eden Prairie City Center
8080 Mitchell Road

Presented by **Rusty Schmidt** of **Waterdrop Innovations**, this workshop will include information on the use and construction of rain gardens, rain barrels, permeable pavers and more.

Workshop II

April 29
6:30–9:30 p.m.
Minnetonka Community Center
14600 Minnetonka Boulevard

Presented by **Gregg Thompson** from the **Association for Soil & Water Conservation Districts**, this workshop will give detailed instruction on how to build and maintain rainwater gardens.

For more information, or to register for a workshop, contact **Leslie Stovring** at **952-949-8327** or **lstovring@edenprairie.org**.

Around Eden Prairie

A Page from the Blog of City Manager Scott Neal

There is a bill in the State Legislature that would allow stores that do off-sale liquor sales to sell their products on Sundays. Currently, off-sale liquor stores are prohibited by law from being open on Sundays.

Why? Your guess is as good as mine, but I suppose it's a remnant of our American puritanical past that emphasizes that Sunday is a day of rest. And drinking isn't resting.

Our municipal liquor operation had over \$10,000,000 in total sales last year and produced over \$1,000,000 for municipal improvement projects around the City. In our 2008 Quality of Life Survey, 89% of the respondents approved of the City being in the municipal liquor business.

Our three municipal liquor stores are impacted by this law, and would be impacted by the bill allowing off-sale liquor sales on Sundays. We're not advocating for the proposed law change, but I'm not lobbying against it either. If it passes, we will open our stores on Sundays. No question about that.

See more of **Scott Neal's** blog entries by visiting **edenprairie.org**.



Did You Know?

Did you know the Eden Prairie **Fire Department** uses eco-friendly fire suppression foam?

Fire suppression foam is mixed with water and used to cool a fire and coat the fire source, preventing its contact with oxygen. The use of foam is very important in firefighting operations because it suppresses fire three times faster than water alone, giving it less time to spread and preventing it from flaring up again once it is put out.



Recently, concerns have been raised about the presence of perfluorochemicals (PFCs) in certain fire suppression foams, and their potential to contaminate drinking water when flushed into storm sewers or left to seep into the ground. For this reason, the Eden Prairie Fire Department began searching for a more environmentally friendly option several years ago.

After finding a new product, the Fire Department officially began replacing its older fire-fighting foam with **FireAde 2000** in January of this year. This product is not only environmentally safe, non-toxic, non-corrosive and non-hazardous, but according to Fire Chief **George Esbensen**, it is also extremely fast and effective at suppressing even the most complex, alcohol-based fires.

Mark Your Calendar

Art on City Walls

Monday–Friday
8 a.m.–4:30 p.m.
City Center

Take a stroll through the lower level of the City Center and enjoy the April *Art on City Walls* exhibit featuring local artists.

City Council Meeting*

Tuesday, April 21

*All meetings begin at 7 p.m. in the Council Chambers at the City Center.

An Afternoon with the Bunny

Sunday, April 5
12:30–3:30 p.m.
Community Center

Bring your favorite little ones (ages 3 and up) and enjoy a hopping good afternoon of fun, complete with games, activities, an egg hunt and a spring craft project. Fee is \$9 per person and registration is required by March 26.

Animal Open House

Saturday, April 11
1–4 p.m.
Outdoor Center

To celebrate the Eden Prairie Outdoor Center's 20th Anniversary, the building will be overflowing with all kinds of animals, including extra-special visitors like a black bear, mountain lion, lynx, bobcat and more! Bring the whole family for this FREE day of fun!

Art Center Fundraiser Event:

Putting it All Together

Thursday, April 16
6:30 p.m.
City Center - The Garden Room

Enjoy an evening of music, food and art featuring a performance by world-renowned singer Connie Kunkle and an auction of luxury lifestyle items, including original art from area artists. Visit **edenprairieartcenter.com** for ticket information. Event benefits the Eden Prairie Art Center.

Park Clean-Up Day

Saturday, April 18
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 **Jeff Cordes** at **952-949-8463** at least one week in advance for park assignments.

Open Mic Poetry Night

Monday, April 20
7 p.m.
Eden Prairie Library

Celebrate National Poetry Month! Recite original works or favorite poems at this annual event hosted by local poet Polly Carden. The event is free and open to the public, and all readers will be entered in a drawing for a Barnes and Noble gift card. Pre-register to read a poem by calling **952-847-5375**.

The Eden Prairie Figure Skating Club

Presents: What's on your iPod?

Friday, April 24 – 7 p.m.
Saturday, April 25 – 5 p.m.
Sunday, April 26 – 2 p.m.
Community Center

The Eden Prairie Figure Skating Club Annual Ice Show will have you grooving to the hits, right out of your iPod! Tickets are available at the Community Center front office April 20–26; \$8 for adults (18+), \$5 for youth.

Spring Wine Tasting

Thursday, April 30
7–9 p.m.
Community Center

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 locations.