

**City of Detroit**  
**JOB SPECIFICATION**

**APPRAISER**

**OCCUPATIONAL INFORMATION**

Appraiser professionals gather, verify, and analyze many kinds of information to determine an estimate of the market value of real and personal property as of December 31<sup>st</sup> of each year. The process follows the General Property Tax Act 206 of the State of Michigan, as well as generally accepted appraisal principles as set forth by the Appraisal Institute, the International Association of Assessing Officers, the Michigan Assessors Association, the opinions of the State Attorney General, decisions of the Michigan Tax Tribunal, the State Tax Commission, and the Court of Appeals. Appraisers are also charged with ensuring accuracy and completeness of assessments and reports, and understand appraisal strengths and weaknesses in which the Government may use to reach settlements or develop testimonies. Appraisers require knowledge of assessing methodologies and valuation techniques, as well as assessment and valuation laws.

**Major Appraiser Functions**

**Inspection.** Appraisers are responsible for locating and identifying all real and personal property within a jurisdiction regardless of taxable status. Appraisers are required to value property at the current market.

**Appraisal Process.** Appraisers estimate property values using one or more of the following appraisal approaches:

1. ***Sales Comparison Approach*** - determines value by comparing the property with similar properties recently offered for sale or rent in the open market
2. ***Income (Capitalization) Approach*** - determines value by estimating a property's expected monetary returns
3. ***Cost Approach*** - determines value by estimating the current cost of reproducing a property (less depreciation from functional, economic, and physical deterioration)

Appraisers gather, verify, and analyze many kinds of information that affect property values. They study the characteristics of the property such as its condition, size, boundaries, and topographical features; easements, rights-of-way, or encroachments; improvements; environmental conditions (e.g., the presence of hazardous material or endangered species); and mineral or water rights. They also study information on economic conditions, population and employment trends, recent comparable property sales, typical property uses and zoning controls (e.g., residential or commercial), and available transportation, school facilities, and public utilities. They also research the history and nature of the property's ownership and its assessed tax value.

Appraisers obtain the information they use from a variety of sources. They inspect the property and surrounding area, search historical records stored in courthouses and libraries, examine real estate listings, and interview property owners and private sector appraisers and realtors. Appraisers use this information to arrive at the value of the property.

State law mandates that all property is subject to taxation unless otherwise exempted. In general, properties that are owned and used by educational, charitable, religious, or government organizations may be exempt from certain property taxes. Property owners may also qualify for certain exemptions.

Appraisers keep up-to-date with new and varied techniques related to these approaches, such as discounted cash flow analysis, multiple regression analysis, and internal rates of return, to solve complicated or unique appraisal problems.

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**Assessment.** Annual assessments of residential, commercial, personal, and industrial property are performed for the purpose of levying property taxes. Property taxes support services to the residents of the City of Detroit. These services include law enforcement, fire protection, education, parks and recreation, and other vital services. Property owners are notified of changes to the value of their property.

**DEFINITION OF CLASS**

The Appraiser class performs professional appraisal work requiring an understanding of State, County, and City laws and regulations and an understanding of the requirements and standards accepted and distributed by professional appraisal organizations. These positions require technical knowledge and skill in the application of the principles, practices, and techniques of appraisal. In addition, Appraisers may be required to be licensed or certified by the State. Appraisers are responsible for conducting annual assessments of residential, commercial, personal, and industrial property to maintain the tax rolls so the City can levy and collect property taxes.

**DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES (Illustrative)**

The duties specified below are representative of the range of duties assigned to this job class and are not intended to be an inclusive list.

- Determines taxability and value of properties using methods such as field inspection, structural measurement, calculation, sales analysis, market trend studies, and income and expense analysis
- Inspects properties, considering factors such as market value, location, and building or replacement costs to determine appraisal value
- Explains assessed values to property owners and defends appealed assessments at public hearings, the Board of Review, and the Michigan Tax Tribunal
- Performs specialized professional duties related to the appraisal function, such as acting as a liaison with the local treasurer, Michigan Department of Treasury, and other agencies
- Represents the Office of the Assessor in public forums and explains the assessment cycle to taxpayers, property owners, and other interested parties
- Prepares and maintains current data on each parcel assessed, including maps of boundaries, inventories of land and structures, property characteristics, and any applicable exemptions
- Establishes uniform and equitable systems for assessing all classes and kinds of property
- Inspects new construction and improvements to existing structures and estimates building replacement costs using building valuation manuals to determine values
- Writes and submits appraisal and tax reports for public record that outline methods by which the estimations were made and meet appraisal standards
- Weighs and reconciles the differences of each valuation method, correlates the different value estimates, and derives a final value which is defensible
- Prepares, completes, and maintains assessment rolls that show the assessed values and status of all property in a municipality and obtains county land values and sales information about nearby properties to aid in the establishment of property values
- Analyzes trends in sales prices, construction costs, and rents, to assess property values or determine the accuracy of assessments
- Reviews information about transfers of property to ensure its accuracy, checking basic information on buyers, sellers, and sales prices and makes corrections as necessary
- Conducts regular reviews of property within jurisdictions to determine changes in property due to construction or demolition
- Identifies the ownership of each piece of regardless of taxable status
- Resolves valuation issues for properties with limited comparable sales, multiple or questionable ownerships, numerous encumbrances, various possible highest and best uses that may be entirely

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different from the current use, unusual physical constraints, environmental concerns, and other complex situations

- Interviews landowner, tenants, and others, and observes and inspects properties and improvements to secure adequate and accurate descriptions required for the appraisal of properties history and zoning classification
- Assists in the establishment of Economic Condition Factors and State mandated residential study
- Performs special projects and other duties as assigned

**KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS, AND ABILITIES**

The knowledge, skill, and ability of an Appraiser increases with the level of responsibility and experience.

At the intermediate level, knowledge requirements might include detailed, intensive knowledge of:

- Concepts, principles, and practices to appraise and review the appraisals of properties with complex characteristics and to analyze complicated valuation problems
- Data gathering skill and ingenuity to locate information that is not readily available. This may include acquiring data about comparable sales when few, if any, exist, extensively searching public records for obscure data, or finding sources of information about properties with uncommon characteristics
- Valuation approaches and various appraisal techniques to adapt and apply the most appropriate appraisal methods for analyzing the available data
- Interrelate approaches and techniques to weigh and reconcile the differences of each method, correlate the different value estimates, and derive a final value
- Federal, state, and City laws, rules, practices, methods, and procedures related to the work
- Principles, methods and practices of one or more categories of real and/or personal property appraisal and their application to tax assessment
- Real estate terminology, real property rights, acquisition and disposal procedures, and property management
- Principles and processes for providing customer and personal services. This includes customer needs assessment, meeting quality standards for services, and evaluation of customer satisfaction
- Administrative and clerical procedures and systems, such as word processing, managing files and records, stenography and transcription, designing forms, and other office procedures and terminology
- Arithmetic, algebra, geometry, calculus, statistics, and their applications
- Structure and content of the English language including the meaning and spelling of words, rules of composition, and grammar
- Enterprise resource planning systems for finance, budget, general ledger, human resources, and other management systems and software programs

At the advanced level, knowledge requirements might include professional, comprehensive knowledge of:

- Mastery of appraisal concepts, principles, and methodologies. Function as technical authorities requiring the application of new theories and standards to appraisal problems or assignments
- Evaluate the impact of new or modified appraisal, real estate, tax, and environmental legislation on current and projected appraisal standards and programs and prepare important policy changes based on the impact
- Provide guidance to staff and fee appraisers on the interpretation and implementation of new or modified policies

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- Principles and processes for providing customer and personal services. This includes customer needs assessment, meeting quality standards for services, and evaluation of customer satisfaction
- Federal, state, and departmental laws, rules, practices, methods, and procedures related to the work
- Principles, methods, and practices of real and/or personal property appraisal and their application to tax assessment
- Real estate terminology, real property rights, acquisition and disposal procedures, and property management
- Materials, methods, and the tools involved in the construction or repair of houses, buildings, or other structures such as highways and roads
- Administrative and clerical procedures and systems, such as word processing, managing files and records, stenography and transcription, designing forms, and other office procedures and terminology
- Arithmetic, algebra, geometry, calculus, statistics, and their applications
- Structure and content of the English language including the meaning and spelling of words, rules of composition, and grammar
- Enterprise resource planning systems for finance, budget, general ledger, human resources, and other management systems and software programs

Skill in:

- Applying the principles and practices of appraising residential properties
- Interpreting established appraisal standards and real estate, tax, and environmental regulations, and analyzing property data using the valuation approaches
- Detecting differences in comparable properties and adjust data to make defensible value estimates
- Presenting concise assessment and appraisal information to a variety of audiences
- Interpreting resulting financial, appraisal reports, budgets, and summaries
- Information technology relevant to appraisal and assessment functions
- Understanding written sentences and paragraphs in work related documents
- Giving full attention to what other people are saying, taking time to understand the points being made, and asking questions
- Using logic and reasoning to identify the strengths and weaknesses of alternative solutions, conclusions, or approaches to problems
- Making mathematical calculations relating to building construction and real estate appraising
- Data analysis and problem solving
- Report writing
- Use of personal computers
- Use of Microsoft Office (e.g. Word, Excel, Access, PowerPoint) and other office suite software packages.
- Use of Excel (e.g. Formulas, Pivot Tables, Vlookup, Hlookup, other functions, charts, tables) and other financial management software packages functionality
- Use of large, complex, multi-departmental financial systems, and demonstrate the knowledge required to interpret resulting financial and accounting reports, summaries, and budgets

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Ability to:

- Collect, quickly interpret, and analyze information from a variety of sources, apply criteria, draw conclusions, and develop recommendations, guidelines, and policies
- Effectively organize and present appraisal opinions in writing
- Conduct inspections of property and analyze findings
- Maintain records and prepare reports and correspondence related to the work
- Develop and implement new assessment and appraisal techniques as necessary
- Listen to and understand information and ideas presented through spoken words and sentences
- Combine pieces of information to form general rules or conclusions (includes finding a relationship among seemingly unrelated events)
- Read and understand information and ideas presented in writing
- Apply general rules to specific problems to produce answers that make sense
- Communicate effectively with others, both orally and written
- Establish and maintain effective working relationships with co-workers, outside agencies and the public
- Work as part of a team

**SUPERVISORY CONTROLS**

The level and nature of the supervision given to an Appraiser professional will vary depending on the Appraiser's experience and level, i.e. whether the Appraiser is at the entry, intermediate or advanced professional level. Supervision may range from close and detailed up to and including a review only for adherence to policy.

At the intermediate level, the supervisor, higher-grade Appraiser professionals, higher-grade financial professionals, or other designated authority may provide standing instructions on recurring assignments by indicating what is to be done, applicable policies and procedures to follow, quality and quantity of work expected, deadlines and priority of assignments.

At the advanced level, the Appraiser takes initiative to perform recurring or individual assignments. The Appraiser also resolves recurring problems independently (e.g. investigates recurring discrepancies in procurement documents, obtains missing information from originators, or explains procedural requirements). The Appraiser refers situations not covered by instructions or precedents to the supervisor for decision or help. The supervisor provides administrative and policy direction in terms of broadly defined missions or functions of the organization. The supervisor also evaluates the accuracy and adequacy of completed work and methods used through indicators, such as the frequency and nature of problems resulting from errors in processing, problems with responding to inquiries or requests, the nature and frequency of complaints from serviced employees or others, and thorough a review of reports or other controls built into the system.

**GUIDELINES**

Extensive guidelines exist for Appraisers. The differences in Appraiser levels is determined by the judgment required to identify which guidelines to use, how to interpret the guidelines, and the ability to make judgments with missing, incomplete, or conflicting information. Guidelines exist in the form of agency regulations, legislation, procedures, manuals, and requirements; local, state, and federal rules and regulations; guidelines; and tax regulations. The City of Detroit Charter and the City of Detroit Code of Ordinances also offer guidelines for how the City should be run; therefore, the Appraiser must ensure financial compliance to the Charter and City Finance Directives. Judgment is required to determine applicability of these guidelines.

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**COMPLEXITY**

The complexity of the work derives from the nature, number, variety, and intricacy of tasks, steps, processes, or methods in the work performed; the difficulty in identifying what needs to be done; and the difficulty and originality involved in performing the work. Work complexity is further driven by the policies and procedures that guide the work or from communications with City employees and residents or corporations unfamiliar with the appraisal processes and tax rules and regulations, and ability to translate appraisal data into reports easily understood by people with and without an appraisal background. Appraisers select and apply the appropriate valuation methods and techniques from several established alternatives.

**SCOPE & EFFECT**

The scope and effect of the work centers on support to the supervisor, higher-grade Appraiser professionals, or financial professionals in the preparation and reconciliation of appraisals. The accuracy and timeliness of the work impact the reliability of the daily output of the individual or office.

The work involves planning and completing complex valuation projects. Appraisers develop new or modified techniques and methods to appraise and review the appraisals of properties with diverse or unusual characteristics. Appraisers may investigate and analyze a wide variety of problems and questions to provide guidance on specific appraisal standards, methods, and techniques, and to recommend new or modified policies.

**PERSONAL CONTACTS**

At the intermediate level, contacts are with employees in the same agency but outside the immediate organization. Typically, this includes realty specialists and functional experts (engineers, surveyors, attorneys, etc.) from various organizational levels. At the advanced level, contacts are with individuals or groups from outside the employing agency in a moderately unstructured setting (e.g., the contacts are not routine, the purpose and extent of each is different, and the role and authority of each party is identified and developed during the course of contact). Typical contacts include private sector appraisers, brokers, attorneys, property owners, lenders, tax assessors, real estate developers, and builders. Appraisers may also contact representatives from professional organizations, the news media, civic and public action groups, or State and local governments (e.g., mayors, librarians, record clerks). In some cases, contacts may be on an ad-hoc basis with program officials several managerial levels above the Appraiser.

**PURPOSE OF CONTACTS**

At the intermediate level, the purpose of contacts is to plan, coordinate, or advise on work efforts and resolve operating problems by influencing or motivating individuals or groups who are working toward mutual goals and who have basically cooperative attitudes. At the advanced level, the purpose of contacts is to influence, motivate, or question persons or groups to provide property data, accept recommended values, and/or comply with policies. At this level the persons contacted may be fearful of the intent of the questions or results of the recommendations, skeptical about trusting Government employees, unwilling to provide the information, or, at times, dangerous. Appraisers must have the skill to establish rapport with uncooperative contacts and to approach and persuade individuals or groups to obtain the desired effect.

**PHYSICAL DEMANDS**

The work is primarily characterized as sedentary. Typically, Appraisers sit comfortably to do their work, interspersed by brief periods of walking, standing, bending, carrying of papers and books, and extended periods requiring the use of computer terminals to accomplish work objectives. Some work may require physical exertion such as long periods of standing; walking over rough, uneven, or rocky surfaces;

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recurring bending, crouching, stooping, stretching, or reaching; or similar activities. Site inspections may require such exertion. Some work may require walking and standing in conjunction with travel to and attendance at meetings and conferences away from the work site.

**WORK ENVIRONMENT**

Work is performed in a comfortable office environment which is appropriately lighted, heated and cooled. The work environment contains no significant hazards.

During extended periods each year, Appraisers may be required to work considerable overtime.

**MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS**

These minimum qualifications establish the education, training, experience, special skills, and/or license(s), which are required for employment in the classification. Minimum qualifications increase based on the level of the position. Additional qualifications (i.e., special conditions) may apply to a particular position.

**Education**

For all Appraisers, it is a requirement to have completed a bachelor's degree from an accredited college or university, with major course of work in accounting, business or public administration, or other related field of study.

**Experience**

For entry into the Appraiser III position, experience as an Appraiser II for at least three (3) years in the valuation or appraisal of real property is required, preferably within a governmental agency responsible for appraisals for tax assessment purposes. Appraisers must demonstrate proficiency with integrated word processing and spreadsheet functions.

For selection, appointment to an Appraiser level IV, in addition to the minimum education requirements, more progressive levels of experience are required based on the following:

Appraiser IV – at least four (4) years of experience

**License / Certificates**

The State of Michigan Level II or III Appraiser certification is required for an Appraiser III. If Level III Appraiser certification is not obtained at the time of appointment, the Level III Appraiser certification must be obtained within the first 12 months. The State of Michigan Level III Appraiser certification is required for an Appraiser IV.

**Equivalency**

Equivalent combinations of education and experience that provide the required knowledge, skills, and abilities will be evaluated on an individual basis.

**WRITTEN TEST REQUIREMENTS**

Applicants may be required to illustrate proficiency in the use of software packages such as the Microsoft Office Suite including Word and Excel. Applicants may be required to take written tests or work simulations to illustrate proficiency in other skill sets as may be determined based on the duties and responsibilities to be performed. These written tests might include mathematical skills and writing skills, including grammar and reading comprehension.

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**BACKGROUND AND OTHER CHECKS**

Applicants may be subject to background, criminal, and credit checks.

**POSITION TITLES**

There are two positions in the Appraiser job class specification:

**Appraiser III**

This is the experienced level. The Appraiser performs a full range of professional appraiser assignments. Considerable independent judgment is used to make decisions in carrying out assignments that have significant impact on services or programs.

**Appraiser IV**

This is the advanced level. The Appraiser may function as a lead appraiser or head appraiser. At this level, Appraisers are responsible for overseeing the work assignments of other professionals or have regular assignments, which have been recognized as having significantly greater complexity than those assigned at the experienced level.

Based on the program functional area, parenthetical titling may be used when special subject matter knowledge of a specific functional area is required.

**PROBATIONARY PERIOD**

Individuals appointed to a position in this class will be required to serve a probationary period of six months with the possibility of a six-month extension for a total of twelve months. If promoted to a position in this class, an individual will be required to serve a probationary period of six months. Performance will be carefully evaluated during the probationary period. Continued employment in this class will be contingent upon successful completion of the probationary period.

**CODE DESIGNATIONS**

Class Code: 13-2020-00

EEO Code: 2

Date Established: 03/10/2015