

*John M. Clarkson*  
Town Supervisor

*Laurie Lambertsen*  
Sole Assessor

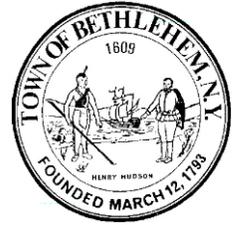
# TOWN OF BETHLEHEM

Albany County - New York

**ASSESSOR'S OFFICE**

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## MEMORANDUM

TO: Supervisor Clarkson and Members of the Town Board

FROM: Laurie Lambertsen, Assessor

DATE: April 7, 2017

SUBJECT: Background on Residential Data Collection

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This is provide additional background on the Residential Inventory Data Collection project. This is NOT a reassessment. The purpose of the recollection is to correct and update the residential inventory we have on file. Inventory includes: style of home, year built, year remodeled, number and condition of kitchens, bathrooms and bedrooms, fireplaces, heating system, central air, basement type, basement garages, overall condition and construction grade of house. Also included is the SFLA (square footage of living area) of each floor of the home (1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, etc.), finished area over the garage, finished attic, finished basement (split levels and raised ranches adds to SFLA), unfinished rooms, total SFLA and finished rec rooms (not added to SFLA). In the improvement section you will find porches, garages, gazebos, sheds, pools, patios/decks, barns, etc. When a significant change is made, such as a change in the square foot of living area, it may warrant an assessment change, which may be an increase or decrease. For example: If we are adding on a small shed we will correct our records but there will not be an assessment change. We do not add value, just inventory, for above ground swimming pools, decks/patios under 200 square feet, and/or sheds under 200 square feet.

We have identified certain style houses, which are harder to data collect from the outside which include: split levels, raised ranches, and contemporary style houses. We may need the homeowners' assistance for these style homes. For instance, with contemporary homes cathedral ceilings may have been misidentified as having additional SFLA and we want to rectify this.

We have found many discrepancies over the years, for various reasons and have worked hard to correct them. Not all changes to a property require a building permit (defer to building department) and if a change was made we would not necessarily know about it. We have asked for help from homeowners in the past to verify inventory, via data mailers, which were sent out before every reassessment, and sale verification forms, which are sent to new homeowners when a property sells. Some forms were never returned and some were changed incorrectly. When we find missing or incorrect data/inventory we correct our property record cards and RPS, which is our computer system used to value properties.

The sketches we have on file were done with pencil and paper. We now have new digital technology that will calculate the square foot of living area (SFLA) from the digital sketching program GAR will use, which will eliminate human calculation errors. They will also be taking new photos. GAR updated all of the commercial property data including sketches and photos in 2014 and we want to modernize the residential data as well. We will have more accurate data to build upon in the coming years and have better tools/technology to keep track of it. It is important for every property owner that our data is current and accurate because fair assessments are based on accurate physical inventory. It is the job of the Assessor's office keep a fair and equitable assessment roll.