

Appraisal fighters licensed to deal

As protest hearings start, property tax consultants find a booming business
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Consultant Jonathan Kutner, owner of Property Tax Protest, spends much of his time in May at the Dallas Central Appraisal District, as a growing number of taxpayers turn to professionals to represent them in appraisal fights.

Marc Greenberg once tried going to the appraisal district to protest his rising property-value assessments but found the process tedious and frustrating.

"It's intimidating when you go down there and walk in," he said, referring to the offices on Stemmons Freeway. "They have their own rules and procedures. If you don't know them, they really don't want to listen to you."

Then, about five years ago, a solicitation arrived in the mail. He hired a property tax consultant to represent him before the Dallas Central Appraisal District. He was pleased to see the appraisal value of his home and the small shopping center he owns in East Dallas drop by more than \$20,000. **Note: His tax savings were \$20,805; value reduction was 54% of value ---JK**

"It levels the playing field to hire a trained consultant," he said. "The larger building owners are smart about it." It's only the homeowners and the smaller business people that don't get help from consultants, he said.

Property owners can argue before the appraisal districts themselves – and more are doing just that. Those formal hearings begin this week, and the deadline for filing a protest is May 31.

Owners are also increasingly turning to professionals to represent them. The result is that business is booming for the property tax consultant industry.

"It's convenient to have somebody who knows how this works. To have somebody that has the information available and can do the research on the comparables and do it quickly at a competent level is valuable to me," said Michael Lowenberg. He got a reduction of \$80,000 off his appraised home value last year after hiring Property Tax Protest for a set fee of \$299. The reduction was worth about \$2,100 off his taxes.

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