

CAMA Overview

What is CAMA

CAMA stands for Computer Assisted Mass Appraisal. Mass appraisal is the process of the valuing a group of properties as of a given date using common data, standardized methods, and statistical testing. To determine a parcel's value, tax administration users rely upon valuation equations, tables, and schedules developed through mathematical analysis of real estate market data.

Wake County does this by utilizing a collection of applications, including web based, as well as batch jobs, which allow users to perform the appraisal and taxation of real property. The primary application used for this is appropriately called CAMA. Users log in to the application to review, update, and assess properties. There are also additional features in CAMA relevant to taxation and appraisal such as appealing real property values, reviews of state-mandated property tax exclusion/exemptions and categorizing and archiving of sales data.

Brief History of CAMA

CAMA was originally developed around 2005 by an external company that worked very closely with county employees to develop and maintain the products. Around 2011, The Users found that there were features they needed, which the external company could not provide in the time frame they were needed for. As a result, development was brought in-house and since that time the product has been maintained and new features have been added to meet the users' needs.

The product is used by approximately 200 users. The primary users include appraisal staff and customer support staff. As part of the appraiser's role, they often go out in the field, and take with them a tablet PC, which allows them to document characteristics about homes they are appraising, including using the application to sketch the layout of the property. CAMA functionality is not currently optimized for tablet PCs, but that is a long-term goal of the Tax Department.

Secondary users of the CAMA system include our Geographic Information Systems (GIS) department, particularly the property addressing staff. The addressing staff are responsible for assigning the E-911 addressing for all real property in the County. At the present time, CAMA is the source of record for E-911 addresses in Wake County. Additional secondary users include staff in planning/permitting, and through interfaces to other programs and websites, Wake County citizens have access to a majority of the CAMA property data.

CAMA Data

Data entered into CAMA is received from a variety of sources. Any time towns are referred to, it is understood that the appropriate Wake County department will handle unincorporated areas.

- Ownership information is largely received from the Register of Deeds office. A copy of every new deed is added to a work queue as it is recorded, then reviewed by Revenue staff. Support

staff also regularly visit the Wills/Estates office in the Courthouse to update records when a property owner has passed. This is a regular, ongoing process, not an occasional one. We may also receive information directly from taxpayers or attorneys. Limited information (such as mailing address changes) may be taken over the phone or by email, but most changes require a supporting document. Sale price information is taken directly from the deed, specifically the excise tax (“revenue stamps”) paid when the deed is recorded. This is currently paid at the rate of \$1 per \$500 of sale price.

- Property line changes and jurisdictional changes come from GIS and from the towns. This includes changes to the County line, individual property lines, subdivision or recombination of parcels, changes to the planning jurisdiction boundary, annexations, zoning changes, and splits to right-of-way or other eminent domain cases.
- Building Permit data is received from the towns in paper or electronic format and attached to CAMA records by data entry staff. A paper copy of each permit is attached to a Property Record Card and filed for appraisers to review. Each appraiser is assigned one or more townships and will collect permits from the file at their own pace. They will visit each property in the field and note any changes on the PRC. Annotated PRCs are filed for data entry staff who will update the records directly in CAMA before returning the PRCs to the appraiser for a final review and sign-off.
- Applications are submitted by the public for various adjustments and for value appeals. This includes requests for exemptions, tax relief for the elderly, and inclusion in the farm use deferral program, among others. These are entered into CAMA and approved or denied by an appraiser. Appeals are a more involved process and will be discussed separately.

Revaluation of Properties

Wake County is currently on a 4 year reappraisal cycle. The reappraisal project is managed in-house utilizing a separate application and database that is copied from CAMA at the beginning of the reappraisal project. The LR/CAMA system is one code base with two sides; the CAMA side is used for annual work, and the REVAL side is used as we work on the General Reappraisal. CAMA is an acronym for computer-assisted mass appraisal. LR is an abbreviation for Land Records and refers to all non-valuation data maintained for use in assessment, such as ownership. Updates in CAMA are passed over nightly into the REVAL system via specific rules and processes. The REVAL environment allows appraisal staff to update rates, tables, schedules of value, and reprice all components of real property. CAMA and REVAL systems run simultaneously for approximately 18-24 months of each reappraisal cycle (48 months).

The LR/CAMA system is one code base, but what information and functions are shown to the user depends on the URL they use to log in. From the users’ point of view, they appear to be two separate systems: REVAL and CAMA.

Reappraisals generally produce high volumes of appeal, and these appeals are worked in our CAMA system. Approximately 18,000 appeals are expected for the current reappraisal year of 2020.

Independent Apps in CAMA

There are “modules” of CAMA that are not part of the main code base of the CAMA web site. Users and Information Services staff refer to these applications as “Independent Apps”. These are in actuality standalone web applications accessed via a menu in the CAMA application.

Four of the Independent Apps do not use the concept of a reval year or cycle.

- 1. User Management.** This app controls user IDs, passwords, and access rights and roles. When a user logs into CAMA, their ID and password are validated, and access rights are loaded into CAMA. If access rights are changed during a session, the user’s cache must be cleared (Options Menu/Clear Cache) or they must restart Internet Explorer to receive the changes.
- 2. Street Dictionary.** A database of current, former, and planned streets maintained by GIS addressing staff. A street must first be entered in the Street Dictionary before an address can be added to a CAMA record. When the address is added in CAMA, a validation is performed to confirm the street exists in CAMA in an appropriate status (i.e. active). The Street Dictionary includes a high and low address number for each street, and if the street number assigned in CAMA is outside this boundary the Street Dictionary fields are automatically updated. If a user tries to delete or retire a street in the Dictionary, the system will validate if it is being used on any CAMA record.
- 3. Zoning Dictionary.** A database of current and historic zoning codes for each planning jurisdiction in the County. New codes are received by Revenue from GIS and from the local zoning departments and used to update this database. Revenue receives copies of approved zoning changes from the towns and updates the property records in CAMA. A zoning code must exist in the Dictionary to be used in CAMA. Like the Street Dictionary, a zoning cannot be removed from the Zoning Dictionary if it is being used in CAMA.
- 4. Photo Management.** A database of exterior photos of each building in the County. Most photos are taken annually by a contractor and uploaded into Photo Management through a batch job. The contractor includes information identifying the parcel record each photo is associated with. Some photos are taken by Revenue staff, and some are submitted by the public. Photos can be viewed in CAMA, but all changes (add/edit/delete, reassign to different parcel) are done in the App. The most recent photo is included on the Property Record Card. Photos also appear on the web site.

Four of the Independent Apps are linked to specific Reval years and contain a parallel set of data for each period (currently 2000, 2008, and 2016). When a user accesses one of these applications, they are first prompted to choose a Reval year to view. All historic information remains available.

- 1. Lookup Maintenance –** Database of codes used in CAMA and the other Independent Apps. Each entry will include a code as it will appear in the CAMA database, a short and long description, and a legacy code (if it existed before CAMA was developed). Additional fields may be included if appropriate. Once a code is created, other properties may be assigned. Most items maintained here are descriptive. Codes related to valuation are typically added in the Schedule of Values.

- 2.** VCS Management – Database of all market areas. A Value Control Section is a submarket in which changes in supply and demand affect properties in the same way. For residential property, this is typically a subdivision or phase of a subdivision where homes are similar in age, size, and quality, and have the same amenities. For commercial and rural areas, a VCS is a wider area. Appraisers assign each VCS default values for land valuation (for example, a standard value of \$50,000 per subdivision lot) and default values for certain building characteristics (such as a default depreciation code).
- 3.** Schedule of Values – Database contains all codes, rates, and ranges used in calculating property values. Codes used in valuation are added here with the same attributes as new Lookup Table entries (short description, long description, etc.) but will also have a rate assigned (i.e. \$10.00 per square foot) and a property type (residential, commercial, industrial), and other attributes as appropriate.
- 4.** Income Schedule of Values – a separate Schedule of Values for appraising commercial properties based on anticipated future income. This is a new functionality that is still under development as of April 2020.