



PHONG LA ALAMEDA COUNTY ASSESSOR

The Official Newsletter of the Alameda County Assessor's Office

MESSAGE FROM ASSESSOR LA

Happy New Year and Happy Lunar New Year! In the Lunar Calendar, 2020 marks the Year of the Rat! It is considered a year of new beginnings and renewals and I wish you a successful 2020.

It's hard to believe that it's been one year since I began serving as your Alameda County Assessor. I am proud of all the work from the Assessor's Office this past year and I look forward to an even better 2020.

Our Office remains committed to serving the residents of Alameda County. This year we will continue to provide great customer service, increase office efficiency, educate our local communities on vital tax-saving measures including applicable exemptions and exclusions for homeowners. Thank you for your interest and support of the Alameda County Assessor's office.

Before the holidays, there was an increase in earthquake activity and fires in the Bay Area, which prompted property owners in the County to ask me two questions:

1. WILL RETROFITTING MY HOUSE INCREASE MY PROPERTY ASSESSMENT?

ANSWER: NO. (Please see the information sheet under our Resources section below)

1. WILL DAMAGE CAUSED BY AN EARTHQUAKE OR A FIRE TO MY HOME DECREASE MY ASSESSMENT?

ANSWER: YES. Revenue and Taxation Code [section 170](#) states that if a calamity (flooding, fire, earthquake, etc.) destroys your property, you *may* be eligible for property tax relief if the county has adopted an ordinance and if certain conditions are met.

DOES ALAMEDA COUNTY HAVE A DISASTER RELIEF ORDINANCE?

Yes, it does.

Property tax relief is available to owners of damaged or destroyed real property, business equipment and fixtures, orchards or other agricultural groves, aircraft and boats, and certain manufactured homes.

To qualify for the property tax relief:

1. You need to file the **Application for Reassessment of Damaged or Destroyed Property** with the Assessor's Office within twelve (12) months from the date the property was damaged or destroyed. You can download a claim form at our website at <https://www.acgov.org/assessor/decreasetax/dis-relief.htm>.
2. Your loss estimate of your property must be at least \$10,000 at current market value.
3. AND you must not be responsible for any damage caused to your property.

When you rebuild your home in a like or similar manner, the property will retain its prior value (Proposition 13) for tax purposes. If, however, you decide to change the characteristics of your home by adding additional bedrooms or converting a half bathroom to a full bathroom, the Prop 13 assessment of your home will change.

For more information, please call (510) 272-3787 or visit our website at www.acgov.org/assessor.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Phong La". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Phong La
Alameda County Assessor

ASSESSOR LA CONGRATULATES YOU!



Congratulations to the European Wax Center on their ribbon-cutting ceremony in the City of Livermore! European Wax Center offers hair removal and waxing services for men and women. Thanks to the Livermore Valley Chamber of Commerce for organizing the event.



Congratulations to Red Ribbon Bakeshop on the grand opening and ribbon-cutting ceremony in the City of Hayward. Red Ribbon Bakeshop creates delicious and beautiful cakes, bread, pastries, and empanadas. Thanks to the Hayward Chamber of Commerce for organizing the celebration.



Congratulations to Five Little Monkeys for winning Best Place to Buy a Birthday Present Award at the Albany Chamber of Commerce Best of Albany event.

FEATURE STORY

THE ASSESSOR'S OFFICE GOT TALENT

Commercial and Industrial Real Estate Appraiser III Neysan Soleiman is not only responsible for assessing commercial and industrial properties in the cities of Berkeley and Albany, but is also a competitive bodyboarder. Neysan began surfing in 1984. By 1987, he was a finalist in the Morey Boogie National Amateur Championships held in Oceanside, CA. In early 2019, Neysan participated in the BelMarPro, one of the biggest contests held on the East Coast, and in the US Bodyboarding Festival, last month in San Diego. According to Neysan, what he loves most about surfing is the shared moments with creatures in the sea, “sitting on my board a hundred yards offshore, and having a seal stick his head up out of the water to show me the halibut clinched between his teeth! Makes you feel blessed and insignificant at the same time.” Although he surfs around the world, Neysan’s home break is in Ocean Beach. Please see the picture below of Neysan charging a ten-foot cloudbreak:



Another skilled athlete is Jensen Novak, an Assessor’s Technician at the Business Personal Property Unit, responsible for clerical work and answering assessee's questions. Jensen is an accomplished skateboarder since age 16, mastering one of the most difficult tricks in skateboarding—the 360 Flip. According to Jensen, it is difficult to describe what he feels when skating, but if he can use one word to

sum it up, it would be freedom. There are many aspects that Jensen enjoys about the sport, but the comradery between skateboarders is at the top of the list. It was his close friends that helped him build the confidence to learn to skateboard. Jensen advises that the Bay Area has many spots to skateboard, but his favorite is the San Francisco hills. Please see picture below of Jensen accomplishing the 360 Flip:



A different talent at the Assessor's Office is Elizabeth "Beth" Bourland, Senior Assessor's Technician in the Assessment Roll Unit, where she processes changes in ownership, including potential exclusions from reappraisal. The senior technician sketches with "ink and wash" and paints in watercolor. Beth has been an artist since childhood when her parents encouraged her to draw on the back of paper placemats in restaurants. Her strangest art experiences have been sketching while drifting in a kayak and drawing in a chemo ward. Beth has won several awards through exhibitions and art associations, most recently second place for her watercolor painting of the historic Produce Market Warehouse District in Oakland. Beth considers art a form of meditation, a chance to observe, appreciate, and drift away in a timeless zone. Beth specializes in dog portraits. Beth will have two paintings on exhibit at the People and Places of Alameda County mixed media art show from February 21st to August 6th at the Treasurer & Tax Collector's Office in the County Administration Building--1221 Oak Street Room 131, Oakland, CA 94612. Please enjoy a collection of Beth's paintings below:



Working at the Assessor's Office can be a challenging job, but it is always good to know that life outside the office is as amazing as one can make it be. As best said by Beth, "you don't have to be born artistic [or talented]....it is a skill that can be developed. Try it, and just have fun!

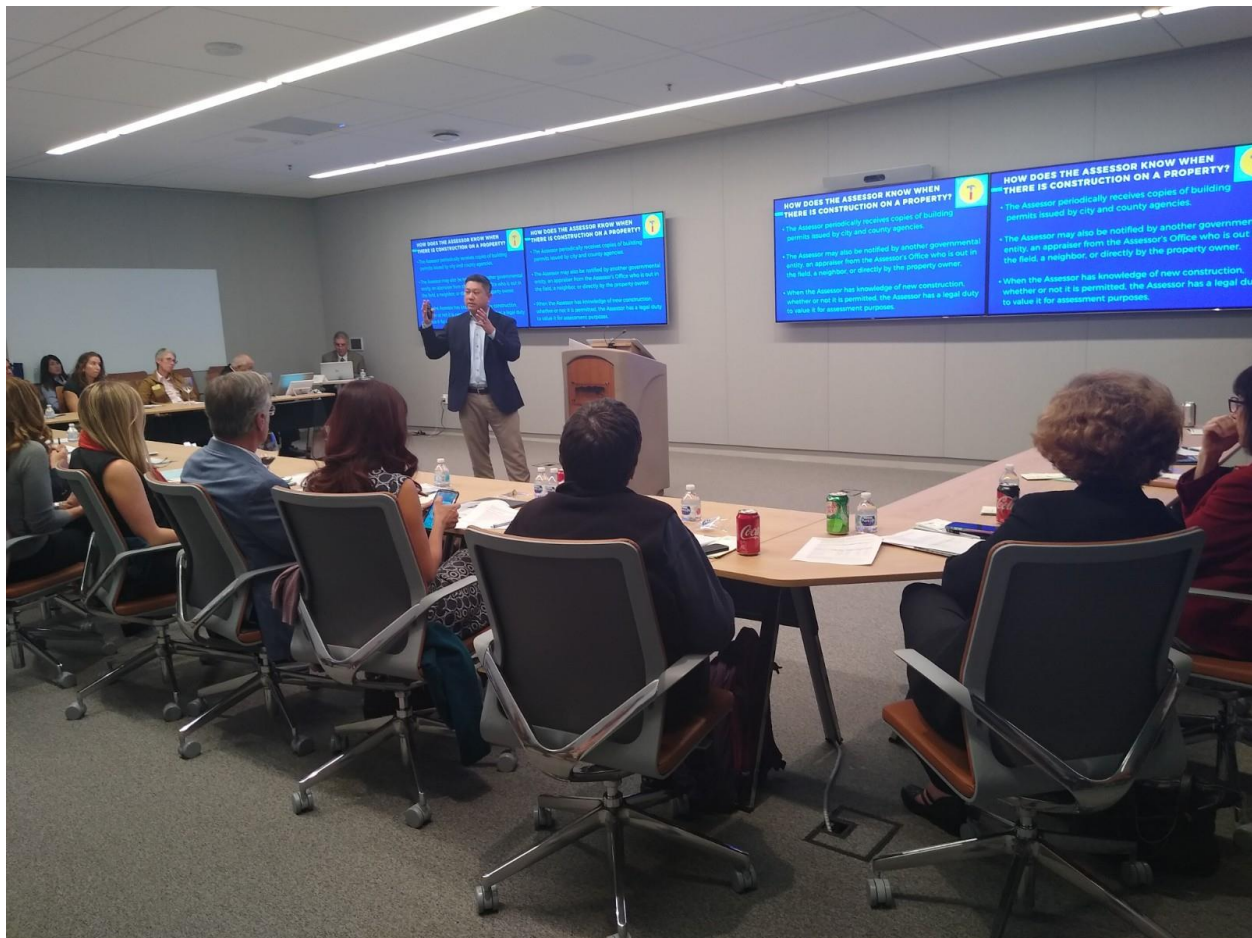
THE ASSESSOR'S OFFICE IN THE COMMUNITY

ALBANY



Thank you to Supervisor Carson and his wife for stopping by our booth at the Solano Avenue Stroll Street Festival.

PLEASANTON



Assessor Phong La explains to Alameda County mayors how collaboration between city government and the Assessor's Office increases wealth and resources for Alameda County residents.

DUBLIN



Assessor's Representative Joel Wong (left) and Supervising Auditor-Appraiser II Mika Hankins (center left) answer important questions about Business Personal Property at Assemblymember Rebecca Bauer-Kahan's Small Business Workshop event in the City of Dublin.

OAKLAND



Assessor's Office Assessment Roll Supervisor II Christopher Nguyen speaks at the Alameda County Law Library in Oakland on basic changes in ownership and exclusions between parent and child property transfers.

HAYWARD



Kristina Molina, Communications Coordinator (right), answers questions about Disaster Relief to an attendee at Assemblymember Bill Quirk's Disaster Preparedness event.

RESOURCES & EVENTS



**ALAMEDA COUNTY
ASSESSOR'S OFFICE**



HERA Oakland Post

housing and
economic
rights advocates

**UNCLE CREDIT
UNION**



2020 HOMEOWNER'S EXPO



**SATURDAY
FEBRUARY 29TH
9AM-12:00PM**

**Encompass Elementary
1025 81st Avenue
Oakland CA, 94621**

JOIN ASSESSOR PHONG LA AND THE HOUSING AND ECONOMIC RIGHTS ADVOCATES [HERA] FOR THE 2020 HOMEOWNER'S EXPO. THIS FREE EVENT FEATURES INFORMATION ON:

- Passing your home on to your children and grandchildren.
- How renovations, additions, and granny flats / in-law units (accessory dwelling units) will impact your property assessment.
- And much more!

**Please RSVP at
2020Expo@acgov.org**

**For more information
please call
(510) 271-9142**

Why You Should Consider Seismically Retrofitting Your Older House

Why should Californians care about seismic retrofits?

California has two-thirds of the nation's earthquake risk. Some 15,700 known faults crisscross the state, and more than 500 are considered active. There is a more than 99% chance of one or more magnitude 6.7 or greater earthquakes striking California.

Certain structures that lack proper retrofitting (adequate bolting and bracing) are more vulnerable to earthquake damage.

What is a retrofit?

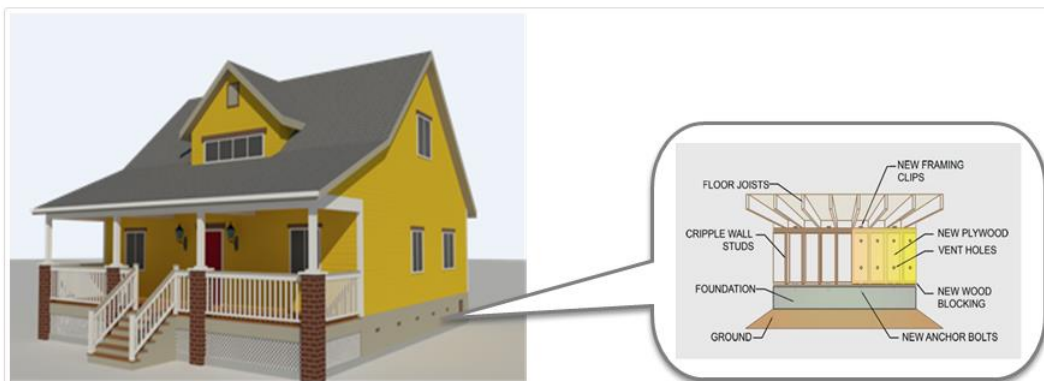
A retrofit, sometimes called a seismic retrofit, involves strengthening a house to make it more resistant to earthquakes.

Why should owners of older houses care about retrofits?

The houses that are most vulnerable to earthquake damage are ones built before 1980 on raised foundations.

Older houses are often not bolted to their foundations and lack bracing on the wood framed exterior walls enclosing the crawl space. Houses without adequate bolting and bracing are prone to sliding or toppling off their foundation during an earthquake. This type of serious damage can be prevented with proper seismic retrofit of the crawl space.

CRAWL SPACE VIEW



Are there resources to help?

You may be eligible for a grant of up to \$3,000 from Earthquake Brace + Bolt or—if you're a California Earthquake Authority (CEA) policyholder and meet eligibility requirements—from CEA Brace + Bolt. CEA policyholders with a verified seismically retrofitted house may receive up to 25% off their insurance policy premium.

Where can I learn more?

Learn more about earthquake risk and preparedness at EarthquakeAuthority.com and learn

more about seismic retrofitting and grant eligibility at EarthquakeBraceBolt.com and CEABraceBolt.com.

Retrofitting: Informational Sheet

The Tale of Two Victorian Homes

In the 1980s, an architect purchased two identical Victorian homes in downtown Santa Cruz at 210 and 214 Elm Street. He remodeled both buildings, but only retrofitted the 210 Elm Street home by reinforcing cripple walls and adding foundation bolts. In 1989, the 7.1 Loma Prieta Earthquake hit Santa Cruz. 210 Elm Street sustained \$5,000 in damages and was livable. Unfortunately, 214 Elm Street came apart in four sections, with damages totaling \$260,000.

How to Make Your Home Earthquake Resistant:

1. Install or add foundation bolts to meet current standards.
2. Reinforce cripple walls (the area between foundation and first floor).
3. Reinforce shear walls.
4. Reinforce or strap chimneys (securing heavy objects).
5. Reinforce masonry walls.
6. Install gas shut-off devices.

Top 5 Reasons to Retrofit your Home:

Reason #1

To reduce the chances of injury and death, retrofitted buildings are much more likely to withstand the shaking.

Reason #2

To reduce repair costs. It is much cheaper to retrofit a house than it is to repair it after an earthquake.

Reason #3

To increase the chances of having a place to live. Repairs can take years. There may be no houses available for you to rent.

Reason #4

To increase the resale value of your home, a retrofitted home is a better investment.

Reason #5

Seismic retrofit work is tax-exempt. Please file the **Claim for Seismic Safety Construction Exclusion from Assessment** (Form BOE-64) with the Alameda County Assessor's Office. You can find form at www.acgov.org/assessor.

Resources:

The Association of Bay Area Governments - *Stand Up To Quakes; Get Your Home in Shape*.

<http://resilience.abag.ca.gov>

[United States Geological Survey](http://www.usgs.gov)

<http://usgs.gov/faqs/what-haywired-scenario>

California Earthquake Authority

<http://www.earthquakeauthority.com>

Earthquake Country Alliance - *Seven Steps to Earthquake Safety*:

<http://www.earthquakecountry.org>

ALAMEDA COUNTY ASSESSOR'S OFFICE

DATA ENTRY PROJECT SCANNING, INDEXING, AND FILING INTERNSHIP

\$15+ /HR

MINIMUM 20 HRS PER WEEK COMMITMENT

Currently enrolled college students
or 2019 high school graduates are
encouraged to apply.

**TEMPORARY POSITION WITH
FLEXIBLE SCHEDULES AVAILABLE!**

**WE ARE CURRENTLY ACCEPTING
APPLICATIONS FOR BOTH PART-
TIME AND FULL-TIME POSITIONS!**

Please EMAIL your resume to
AllAssessorPRU@acgov.org



Alameda County has a diverse workforce, that is representative of the communities we serve, and is proud to be an equal opportunity employer. All aspects of employment are based on merit, competence, performance and business need. Alameda County does not discriminate in employment on the basis of, race, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy and gender identity), national origin, political affiliation, sexual orientation, marital status, disability, genetic information, age, membership in an employee organization, retaliation, parental status, military service, or other non-merit factors protected under federal, state and local law. Alameda County celebrates diversity and is committed to creating an inclusive, and welcoming workplace environment.