

Ask DLS: Assessor Inspections

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Do residents have to allow assessors onto their property for an inspection?

No, local assessors have no legal authority to enter a person's private property unless they have the owner's consent.

What happens if a property owner refuses to allow an assessor onto their property during a cyclical inspection?

The assessors do not have police powers to enter property without permission of the owner. If the owner files an abatement application to contest a property assessment, the assessors can use the process described in [G.L. c. 59, § 61A](#) to demand a viewing of the property. Any refusal to allow a property inspection request after an abatement application has been filed may subject the owner to loss of appeal rights. [G.L. c. 59, § 61A](#). Also, while a property owner may deny access, either before or after any assessment, assessing department inspections of property are necessary to verify information that the assessors are required to obtain concerning the characteristics of the property for valuation and abatement purposes. Periodic inspection programs are part of the process necessary for local assessors to comply with the quinquennial certification requirements provided by state law. See [GL c.](#)

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40, § 56. Voluntary compliance with inspection requests furthers the objective of full and fair valuation of all property in the community.

How often should assessors conduct inspections?

There is no statutory or regulatory provision which limits the rights of assessors to inspect property to once every few years or for a shorter period, although the minimum inspection frequency is at least once every ten years. Inspections may also be prompted by a building permit, a transfer of title or an abatement application. Inspections of targeted neighborhoods may become necessary, where, for example, there is evidence of volatile sale prices in a particular neighborhood, an increased number of building permits or reports of construction activity suggesting changes in a particular parcel. In any event, such inspections cannot be performed without the owner's consent.