



Appraisal  
Institute®

*Professionals Providing  
Real Estate Solutions*



What's It  
Worth  
to You?

Finding Value in a Real  
Estate Appraisal Career

## What is Real Estate Appraisal?

Real estate is a major—and pivotal—facet of our economy. Whenever real estate is sold, mortgaged, taxed, insured or developed, having an opinion of value is an essential component of the transaction. Without an informed and objective appraisal, a real estate transaction can fall apart at the seams.

Real estate appraisers are problem solvers. They assemble and analyze hundreds of facts and statistics on property characteristics and market patterns to arrive at an unbiased opinion of value for their clients. Each appraisal assignment challenges the appraiser's ability to put analytical skills into practice, exercise sound judgment, and communicate effectively with people.

## From Wall Street to Main Street

No matter where you hang your hat—whether it be city, suburb or country—a career as a real estate appraiser is a unique choice that can fit into your lifestyle, pace and expectations. You can let your location and market dictate the types of real estate you appraise, such as single-family homes, commercial properties, shopping malls and farms. You also may be able to explore the country by accepting specialized appraisal assignments in different states, or even different countries!

With thousands of properties changing hands each year, the opportunities for growth and diversity are unlimited. Everyone from Wall Street financiers to the neighbor next door needs to know the value of their property, ensuring that the appraisal industry is always open for business.



## What to Expect from a Career in Real Estate Appraisal

### No Two Alike

Because no two properties are exactly alike, you are provided a fresh challenge with every assignment you accept. This is what makes real estate appraisal interesting and distinct from the many other career choices available. If you want variety in your job, real estate appraisal may be a perfect option.

### Show Me the Money

Your earning potential in this field depends on your professional training, educational background, time investment (full time or part time), characteristics of the firm that employs you and market trends. The money is there to be made—it all depends on your ambition and goals. That is the beauty of this career choice!

### Go Your Own Way

There are many paths to choose which can be tailored to fit your work and lifestyle—a real estate appraiser may run his or her own business, work as a member of a firm composed of appraisers and other real estate professionals, or serve on the staff of a financial institution, government agency or large corporation.

The major areas in which real estate appraisers serve their clients and employers are:

#### **Residential Real Estate Appraisal**

Residential appraisers typically provide opinions of value on single-



family homes in situations such as buying and selling a home, making major home improvements, determining investment value, assisting with job relocation and appealing a property tax assessment. Residential appraisers may also be called in to appraise small multi-unit buildings.

### **Commercial/General Real Estate Appraisal**

Real estate appraisers who specialize in commercial properties may receive assignments involving shopping malls and retail buildings, factories and warehouses, offices, hotels and apartment complexes. Occasionally an appraiser may receive an assignment for a special purpose property such as a power plant, sawmill and the like.

In addition, real estate appraisers may also consider pursuing specialty work in the following areas: eminent domain, condemnation valuation, litigation support, consulting, agriculture, estate appraisals and tax appeals.

### **Never Out of Style**

The future of real estate appraisal is promising. Smart appraisers can ride the highs and lows of a changing market—they understand that every state, community, and even individual will continue to need to know the value of their properties, regardless of economic conditions. By staying informed, educated and connected, a real estate appraiser can continue to prosper in any economic climate.

### **Student Membership: Head of the Class**

If you are enrolled in six or more credit hours in a degree program relative to real estate appraisal, finance or economics, you may be eligible for student membership in the Appraisal Institute. Career building benefits include:

- Professional development—Be in touch with the leading innovators and thinkers in the industry.
- Free subscriptions to premiere publications, including *Valuation Insights & Perspectives*, *The Appraisal Journal* and *Appraiser News Online*.

## **How Do I Become a Real Estate Appraiser?**

It's important first to determine if a career as a real estate appraiser is a good fit with your skills and interests. Common and important characteristics of successful real estate appraisers include the ability to evaluate and analyze data, conduct research in documents such as deeds and records, understand construction terms and building manuals and read blueprints. In addition to these, you'll need to have exceptional communication skills, both verbal and written.

### **Start Early**

If you are currently a student enrolled in an undergraduate university and considering a career in real estate appraisal, you may want to focus on courses that cover the following topics: finance and economics, business administration, architecture, law, engineering, computer technology, sociology and English composition. And you thought real estate appraisal was just about real estate!

Just as important, you should consider becoming a student member of the Appraisal Institute. If you are a full-time student, you can reap benefits that will give you an advantage in a competitive job market, at a discount that can't be beat.

- Free access to the Appraisal Institute's Lum Library and its professional research service.
- Behind-the-scenes access to a wealth of information on the members-only Web site.
- Job postings to further your career development.
- Member discounts on Appraisal Institute books, videos and education.

In addition, you will be welcomed at local chapter meetings, providing an excellent opportunity to rub elbows with top professionals—and possibly your future employer!

## Mastering the Appraisal Profession

You can also pursue a master's degree in real estate appraisal through select universities affiliated with the Appraisal Institute. Graduate students at these schools not only will be trained in the highest standards of the industry, but also can apply their education and experience toward obtaining the Appraisal Institute's MAI designation.

### **The Appraisal Institute's Master's Degree Program offers students numerous advantages and benefits:**

- While enrolled in the program, students receive all of the benefits and discounts offered to regular members, but without having to pay the annual Appraisal Institute national fees. What a savings!
- Students do not have to affiliate with an Appraisal Institute chapter or pay chapter dues but may network with any members and associates in their area.
- With chapter cooperation, first-year students are able to take the Standards of Professional Practice Course at no charge through the Appraisal Institute.
- Opportunity to apply for education scholarships and tuition assistance programs.

Please visit [www.appraisalinstitute.org](http://www.appraisalinstitute.org) for information on participating universities in the Appraisal Institute's master's degree programs.

## Switching Gears

If you are considering a change of career, the appraisal profession is an excellent choice. You can get up to speed with your colleagues by enrolling in courses available through the Appraisal Institute. Because our courses are considered the best in the profession, featuring current theory and application as well as a seasoned faculty of experienced appraisers, you are guaranteed to learn from the best in the country. Think about it... you are preparing for a tough examination. Wouldn't you feel better knowing that your education is from the most respected organization in the profession?

## Do I need a college degree to become an appraiser?

Many appraisers may choose to receive their training through professional organizations, such as the Appraisal Institute. However, in an increasingly competitive market, a college degree



## Learn to Walk Before You Run

In addition to fulfilling education requirements for state licensure and certification, be prepared to work long hours as an appraiser's apprentice researching data from public records and collecting information. Don't expect to hit the ground running, making appraisals on your own. You will need to learn from the experiences of other qualified, professional appraisers to really understand the business from the bottom up.

You may also want to explore on-the-job training opportunities. Few appraisal firms frequently employ appraisal assistants and trainees and may offer part-time work. You could also check with financial institutions and county assessors' offices for recent openings. In addition, personnel departments of city, county, state and federal government offices maintain lists of available positions and assignments for appraisers.

## Requirements for Becoming a Real Estate Appraiser

### **Licensing, Education and Experience**

To practice, you will be required to be licensed by your state, meeting minimum standards for education and experience related to real estate appraisal and analysis. To become licensed, you must pass an examination that is administered by your state's appraisal board. Since state requirements vary, contact your state's regulatory agency for specific requirements. A list of state agencies is available at [www.aaro.net](http://www.aaro.net).

typically serves as an enhancement and many professional organizations, including the Appraisal Institute, require a college degree should you decide to pursue an advanced designation.

You also have the option to become “certified” by your state, which requires additional education and experience. This more advanced recognition may help you be more competitive in your market.

Depending on the appraisal discipline you pursue (commercial or residential), to become a state licensed appraiser, at a minimum you will need to have at least 90 hours of classroom instruction and 2,000 hours of experience, pass the state appraiser examination and complete 14 hours of continuing education annually.

## The Appraisal Institute: Value Added to Your Career

In addition to fulfilling state licensing or certification requirements, conscientious individuals will want to demonstrate their professionalism by joining an organization such as the Appraisal Institute.

The Appraisal Institute has been the leader in the industry for more than 70 years. No other appraisal association can connect you to the heart beat of real estate analysis and valuation like we can. If you are truly serious about a career in real estate, your clients and potential employers will appreciate that you belong to the one of the most prestigious professional appraisal organizations in the world.

## Membership Categories

### Affiliate Membership

Individuals who are interested in the Appraisal Institute and the appraisal profession, but who are not performing any work identified by the Uniform Standards of Professional Appraisal Practice (USPAP). Affiliate members may include lenders, developers, attorneys or any other professional in a real estate-related business who works closely with appraisers.

### Student Affiliate Membership

Full-time students enrolled in six or more credit hours in a degree program relative to real estate appraisal, finance or economics are eligible for student membership.

### Associate Membership

Appraisers who are performing work identified by the Uniform Standards of Professional Appraisal Practice (USPAP). Associate members of the Appraisal Institute may also pursue the coveted MAI and SRA designations, which are symbols of integrity and excellence in the profession.



## Appraisal Institute Designations

The **MAI** professional membership designation is held by appraisers who are experienced in the valuation and evaluation of commercial, industrial, residential, and other types of properties, and who advise clients on real estate investment decisions.



The **SRA** professional membership designation is held by real estate solutions providers who are experienced in the analysis and valuation of residential real property.



The **SRPA** membership designation is held by appraisers who are experienced in the valuation of commercial, industrial, residential and other types of property.



Qualifications for either membership designation include the fulfillment of specific education, examination and experience requirements. In addition, an undergraduate degree from a four-year educational institution is required for the MAI designation. Either an undergraduate degree from a four-year educational institution or an alternative is required for the SRA designation.

## **Appraisal Institute Courses and Seminars**

The Appraisal Institute will help you build a successful career path right from the beginning. Suggested resources for getting started include the following Appraisal Institute courses, seminars and publications, all available to members at a discount of up to 20 percent.

### **Overview of Real Estate Appraisal Principles (Online Seminar)**

This seminar focuses on understanding what an appraisal is and how it works.

### **Basic Appraisal Principles**

Participants learn what professional appraisers do, how they do it, and the importance of appraisal work.

### **Basic Appraisal Procedures**

This course is the “nuts and bolts” of appraising property.

## **Appraisal Institute Publications**

### ***The Appraisal of Real Estate, 12th Edition***

The classic text that provides a broad and substantial understanding of real property valuation.

### ***The Dictionary of Real Estate Appraisal, 4th Edition***

Get the latest word on the language of real estate appraisal on your bookshelf and on your laptop.

## **A Helping Hand**

The Appraisal Institute offers scholarship programs for members who would like to advance their education and professional development. Members may also apply for the Real Estate Appraisers Training Program, matching novice appraisers with designated members to learn about appraising in the real world and to network with real estate professionals.

For more information on programs and services offered by the Appraisal Institute, please visit our Web site for a wealth of resources at [www.appraisalinstitute.org](http://www.appraisalinstitute.org). Join today and discover how easy it is to build your new career with the help of the leader in real estate appraisal!

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