



Usability Test Results

Phase 2 redesigns for www.cookcountyassessor.com

Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this test was to evaluate new page layouts and designs for [cookcountyassessor.com](https://www.cookcountyassessor.com). Participants of this study were asked to look at the following redesigned pages:

- Redesigned CCAO Homepage
- Redesigned CCAO Exemptions Landing Page
- Redesigned Property Detail Page

The test sessions focused on the following objectives:

- How do homeowners navigate the CCAO website?
- Can homeowners easily locate CCAO's core services (Exemptions, Appeals, Certificates of Error)?
- Do homeowners like or dislike the overall structure of these redesigns?

Participant Profiles

CCAO provided 6 participants including 1 new homeowner, 3 seasoned homeowners, and 2 representatives from partner agencies. Here is the list of participants:

Kristin Wilson

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New Homeowner

Deidre Cato-Baker

deidre.cato@att.net

Seasoned Homeowner

Cynthia Love

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Seasoned Homeowner

Alida Nally

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Partner Agency

Catherine Sharp

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Partner Agency

Note: A sixth participant name Dorries Hailey was included in this study. Ms. Hailey is 85 years old and was unable to use a computer on her own. Her great-granddaughter was able to assist Mr. Hailey through the redesigned pages. Ms. Hailey prefers calling the CCAO if she has any questions or needs to access any information. I did not include her results because they were not relevant for this particular study.

Methodology

The usability tests were conducted remotely via Zoom. Participants were provided links to high fidelity mockups of the proposed redesigned CCAO web pages. Participants were then asked to share their screen so the moderator could record their movements and take notes.

The participants were also asked to talk through their thought process while reviewing the high-fidelity mockups. This running commentary provided qualitative data used to recommend changes to the redesigned pages.

What did participants think of the redesigns?

All 5 users thought each page had an intuitive layout that was easy to navigate. Upon review of each redesigned page, participants were asked to rate the “ease of use” on a scale of 1 to 5, 1 being very difficult/un-helpful and 5 being very easy/intuitive.

Pages	Ease of Use Average	Kristin	Deidre	Cynthia	Alida	Catherine
Homepage	4.2	5	4	4	3	5
Exemption Landing Page	4.1	5	4.5	3	4	4
Property Detail Page	4.6	5	5	4	4	5

Usability Testing Synthesis

The following section contains the main takeaways from each participant after reviewing the redesigned CCAO web pages. More detailed responses per participant can be found in the [appendix](#).

Redesigned Homepage

Usability Test Average Rating: 4.2 out of 5

Main Takeaway: All participants were able to locate CCAO's core services and thought the layout was intuitive and easy to navigate.

Kristin Wilson: "This page looks and feels very user friendly." Kristin was able to locate CCAO's core services quickly and easily. She thought the layout was user friendly and easily scannable. Kristin especially liked where the property detail section was located on the homepage. She recently bought a new home and had difficulty finding property details. She scanned the "quick link" buttons and would have clicked on several including the "Homeowner Exemption" button.

Deidre Cato-Baker: "I like the layout; it's nicely spaced out and easy to read." Deidre gave the homepage redesign a 4 out of 5. She is a self-described minimalist and thought the page had too much information on it. Note, she was able to locate all CCAO's core services easily. She thought the quick link cards were very helpful. She did not like the image in the hero section. It did not speak to her as a homeowner in the south suburbs and was more interested in the information on top of the image.

Cynthia Love: Cynthia gave the homepage a 4 out of 5. She was able to locate all CCAO's core services and thought the page was easy to scan. She did not like the hero image at the top of the page and thought it was old-fashioned. Other notable comments included "The news section draws your eye to it and more important information, relevant to homeowners, is not as pronounced." She recommended making the quick link buttons pop more on the page.

Alida Nally: Alida gave the redesigned homepage a 3 out of 5. She specifically wanted to see more color and thought the quick link cards were visually unappealing in comparison to other parts of the page. Note, the participant was able to find all CCAO's core services and information relevant to her as an assessor. She also had difficulty with the hero section image. She thought the bungalows were Chicago specific and did not speak to the wider Cook County community.

Catherine Sharp: "This page is very easy to navigate. I liked the quick link boxes (third thing on the page). That's the most vital information people are looking for." Catherine gave the homepage a 5 out of 5. She works at Commissioner Bridget Degnen's office and gets frequent calls from constituents about filing appeals, exemptions, and certificates of error. She appreciated the PIN property detail component and was able to find all CCAO's core services easily. She thought the page felt comprehensive for both her and the homeowners she serves.

Recommended design and content changes:

1. De-emphasize the carousel images. Apply a larger color overlay on the entire image and increase the size the of the content presented in this section.

Redesigned Exemptions Landing Page

Usability Test Average Rating: 4.1 out of 5

Main Takeaway: All participants were familiar with tax exemptions and could locate relevant information. A few participants were confused by the “Certificates of Error” section located at the bottom of the page. Most participants wanted exemption qualifications listed under each exemption.

Kristin Wilson: “This page was very user friendly and easy to scan.” Kristin gave this page a 5 out of 5. She quickly found exemptions that were relevant to her as a new homeowner. She thought the steps at the top of the page were helpful but would’ve like to have seen instructions for anyone applying for an exemption for the first time.

Deidre Cato-Baker: “I think the information on this page is very good. I really appreciate the steps...I think all of this is helpful except for the “Certificate(s) of Error section.” Deidre gave this page a 4.5 out of 5. She read through the steps and could find relevant exemption information quickly and easily. Deidre thought the text under “Corticate(s) of Error was confusing and not helpful. She would have liked to see a definition and button to learn more.

Cynthia Love: “I think it’s good. It’s workable.” Cynthia gave this page a 3 out of 5. Note she was able to find relevant exemptions quickly and without difficulty. Her biggest recommendation was to present the user with questions under each exemption to easily discern if they qualify. For instance, for the “Senior Freeze Exemption” ask “Do you make [this much money]?” or “Have you owned your home for more than [# of years]?” If yes, the user would know they qualify for the exemption before reading more.

Alida Nally: Alida gave this page a 4 out of 5. “This page works really well for anyone who has applied for an exemption in the past. I also think the titles and icons are really clean and easy to scan.” Alida would like to see more information for new homeowners. It’s very helpful for seasoned homeowners but lacks instructions for anyone applying for an exemption for the first time. She also liked the “Certificates of Error” section and thought that was relevant.

Catherine Sharp: “This page adds an extra step for me to locate relevant forms for the people I’m trying to help.” Catherine gave this page a 4 out of 5. She thought the page was intuitive for homeowners. However, as someone who helps people with exemptions, she would’ve liked to see relevant pdfs directly on this page. She also noted it would be helpful to list the simple qualifications for each exemption such as income requirements or length of homeownership to qualify.

Recommended content changes:

1. Include steps for new homeowners and users applying for exemptions for the first time
2. Consider adding qualifications to the exemptions on the page. What does the user need to qualify for each exemption?
3. Add a “Certificate(s) of Error” definition. Better explain what it is and how it will help users.

Redesigned Property Details Page

Usability Test Average Rating: 4.6 out of 5

Main Takeaway: All participants found this page to be helpful and easy to navigate. All participants found the “township report” and found it to be helpful. All participants commented on the side bar navigation and thought those links were helpful.

Kristin Wilson: Kristin gave this page a 5 out of 5. She was able to read through all the information without getting overwhelmed. The information was relevant to her as a new homeowner, and she especially liked the “township report” link. She thought the empty “Appeals” accordion was a mistake. Would’ve liked to have seen a message saying there were no appeals for this property.

Deidre Cato-Baker: “This is a very informative page, very easy to navigate. I like this page a lot.” Deidre gave this page a 5 out of 5. She thought the dropdowns were very user friendly and included all the information she thinks is relevant as a seasoned homeowner. Deidre was also interested in click the “township report” and commented on how nice that is. She did not know what “property classification” and “tax code” is and wanted to know more.

Cynthia Love: “This page has all of the information I would be looking for.” Cynthia gave this page a 4 out of 5. She wanted to know more about “Property Classification” and “Tax Code” labels. She found the “exemption history and status” section to be very helpful as a seasoned homeowner. She would’ve rated this page a 5 if there was more information under the “Certificates of Error” section. She understood this property didn’t have any certificates of error filed but would want to know how much money was saved due to certificates of error.

Alida Nally: “I think it’s functional. I think it’s useful. Anything added at this point is going beyond the basics and isn’t necessary for the average homeowner. It’s good data.” Alida gave this page a 4 out of 5. She would have liked to see more colors applied to the accordions. Alida also said none of her constituents know what “property classification” or “neighborhood code” means. She thought it would be helpful to provide an explanation on what those mean and how they are determined. She also thought this is close to replacing her AIM program as an assessor. Would like to see whether the property is incorporated or unincorporated.

Catherine Sharp: “I like the dropdown bars. It was easy to scan and find the relevant information. It feels like it has all the essential information and there isn’t so much information that it’s difficult to navigate.” Catherine gave this page a 5 out of 5. She liked the sidebar links and would have clicked on the “township report”. Her only recommendation would be to add a message to the “appeals” and “certificate of errors” section if none have been filed for a property. She also thought seeing what exemptions were applied due to certificates of error would be helpful for owners.

Recommended content changes:

1. Include a message if no appeals or certificates of error have been filed for the property
2. Include what exemptions were applied when a Certificate of Error was filed and accepted
3. Include more information explaining “Property Classification” and “Tax Codes” within the “Tax Details” section.

Appendix

Moderator Script

Good afternoon. My name is _____, and I will be walking you through this test session. Before we get started, I will explain a few things. I'll be reading from a script to ensure that my instructions to all participants in the test sessions are the same.

State the purpose of the study

The Cook County Assessor's Office is planning on redesigning parts of their website. The purpose of this test is to see if the redesigned web pages are user friendly and intuitive for users like you. The session should only take about 45 minutes to an hour.

We are testing the designs, not you, so there is no right or wrong. This process helps us understand what works and what doesn't. Also, please be aware that we are only reviewing three pages within the CCAO website.

Describe thinking out loud

As you review these web pages, please try as much as possible to think out loud: to say what you're looking at, what you're trying to do, and what you're thinking. This will help us understand your experience.

Ask the participant to share any questions or concerns

Before we get started, do you have any questions or concerns?

Start the Study

OK. Before we look at the three web pages, I'd like to ask you just a few quick questions.

1. Do you currently own a home within Cook County?
 - a. If yes, how long?
2. Are you a user from a partner agency?
3. Are you familiar with the Cook County Assessor's Office website?
 - a. If yes, what are the main reasons you use the site?

Introduce the Redesigned Homepage

(Moderator will present the participant with a link to the redesigned CCAO homepage.
<https://invis.io/G5TYHG2XD8Y#/463075778> Redesigned Homepage)

Please take a few minutes to go over the homepage. As you go through the design, please think out loud, telling me what you are looking at. Feel free to comment on the layout, navigation, and anything you find important to you specifically as a homeowner.

From the homepage, please locate the following items:

1. An area to find your property details
2. Information on tax exemptions or how to save on your property taxes
3. Information about filing an appeal for your property

On a scale from 1-5, 1 being extremely difficult and 5 being extremely easy, please rate your experience looking for the items listed above.

Is there any other information you'd like to see on the homepage?

What did you like/dislike about this homepage?

Introduce the Redesigned Exemptions Landing Page

(Moderator will present the participant with a link to the redesigned Exemptions Landing Page.
<https://invis.io/G5TYHG2XD8Y#/463075783> Redesigned Exemptions Landing Page)

Please take a few minutes to go over the Exemptions Landing Page. As you go through the design, please think out loud, telling me what you are looking at. Feel free to comment on the layout, navigation, and anything you find important to you specifically as a homeowner.

From the Exemptions Landing Page, please locate the following items:

1. Information on how to file an exemption that's relevant for you.

On a scale from 1-5, 1 being extremely difficult and 5 being extremely easy, please rate your experience finding how to file an exemption and save on your property taxes.

Is there any other information you'd like to see on the Exemptions Landing Page?

What did you like/dislike about the Exemptions Landing Page?

Property Detail Page

(Moderator will present the participant with a link to the redesigned Property Details Page.
<https://invis.io/G5TYHG2XD8Y#/463075791> Redesigned Property Details Page)

Please take a few minutes to go over this property detail page. As you go through the design, please think out loud, telling me what you are looking at. Feel free to comment on the layout, navigation, and anything you find important to you specifically as a homeowner.

First question: Do you understand the information on this page?

On a scale from 1-5, 1 being very un-helpful and 5 being extremely helpful, please rate your experience of looking at this property detail page.

Is there any other information you'd like to see on this property detail page?

What did you like/dislike about the Property Detail Page?

Kristin Wilson

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Interview Video link: <https://www.dropbox.com/s/jcu63aovq1ov9lo/video1548647963.mp4?dl=0>
New Homeowner

General Notes

- Bought her first home in June of 2021 (8 months)
- Used the CCAO website once to look up property details when searching for new homes
- Was able to easily navigate to relevant information
- Learned about new exemptions that she may have been eligible for
- Overall, liked the layout of all redesigned pages

Notes on the Redesigned Homepage

Experience Rating: 5 – Very easy, non-complicated layout. Options are easy to click and activate.

Notes:

- “Looks very user friendly”
- Likes that the property detail look up is the first thing you see. No need to search the site for that information. This is a great asset.
- Likes the images in the news section – easier to scan the information
- Easily found CCAO’s core services (Exemptions, Appeals)
- Generally liked the layout. Was easy to scan and could find relevant information in more than one spot (i.e., quick links and in the header menu)

Recommendations based on this interview:

- No recommendations here – page layout was sufficient for participant

Notes on the Redesigned Exemptions Landing Page

Experience Rating: 5 – was able to quickly find the information relevant to her as a new homeowner.
“This page was very user friendly and easy to scan”

Notes:

- Has never filed for a property tax exemption but knows what they are
- Liked the exemption icons. Icons helped her navigate to exemptions that were relevant to her.
- Participant was interested in “Homeowner Exemption” and Home Improvement Exemption”

Recommendations based on this interview:

- Step on the top of the page were not relevant to a “New Homeowner”. Would either add a section with steps for “New Homeowners” or include some more information about filing an exemption for the first time.

Notes on the Redesigned Property Details Page

Experience rating: 5 – Was able to read through all the information without getting overwhelmed. Thought in the information was important and liked the township report was linked to the page.

Notes:

- Understood all the information presented on this page
- All the information was important to the participant
- Was interested to click on the “Township Report” – this was important to the participant – was very interested to see the reports/data of other houses in the area
- Was confused to see no information in the “Appeal History” section
- Liked the images of the property – thought this was helpful

Recommendations based on this interview:

- If there is no “Appeal History” or “Certificate of Error” information available, let the user know there hasn’t been any appeals or certificates filed for this property

Alida Nally

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Interview Video Link: <https://www.dropbox.com/s/nw2tzfe4jyromps/video1201019802.mp4?dl=0>

Partner Agency – Assessor for Northfield Township

General Notes

- Assessor for Northfield Township – Deputy for 4 years and recently became an Assessor
- Has owned a home in Cook County for 25 years
- Uses the CCAO website extensively – daily

Notes on the Redesigned Homepage

Experience Rating: 3 – Able to find everything she needed as a homeowner and Assessor - Quick link boxes are not very appealing (wants more color) – liked the video section at the bottom – thought that was relevant and nice to see Toni Preckwinkle – could’ve been more colorful in general – Quick link options were not intuitive

General notes:

- Does not like the hero image – too specific to Chicago – wants something more neutral
 - Not relatable to her homeowners – not CHICAGO assessor – leaving a lot of the demographic out of this page – this image is screaming Chicago
- PIN number is not intuitive for homeowners – would rather enter address to access property detail information
- Didn’t think the options available in the quick link section were intuitive:
 - Should be consistent with the header titles
 - She didn’t know what “New Data Dashboard” was
 - Confusing to have a “Homeowner Exemption” card as well as an “Exemptions” card so close to each other
- Newsletter Section - Most people don’t know what township they live in – not that intuitive for homeowners
- Was able to access CCAO’s core services – found exemption information, found property tax assistance, found appeal information – all info relevant to her customer base

Recommendations based on this interview:

- More color – especially for the quick link cards
- Make quick links consistent with the header
- Just list Exemptions – don’t list “Homeowner Exemptions” and “Exemptions” in the same space to bypass confusion
- Make all images Cook County specific – no Chicago specific imagery

Notes on the Redesigned Exemptions Landing Page

Experience Rating: 4 – The image on the top is more user friendly (less Chicago and more neutral for any user within Cook County) – would’ve liked to have seen more helpful information for new homeowners. This page works well for anyone who has applied for an exemption before. Likes the titles a lot (“I think that’s really clean and easy to use”)

General notes:

- “Property Tax Savings” header is not clear that this page is about Exemptions
- Like the steps at the top of the page. “Determine if they auto-renew is going to be awesome”
 - Steps are not helpful for first time homeowners – what if the user has never applied for an exemption – needs to be clearer for both new homeowners and seasoned homeowners
 - Steps do not speak to “New Homeowners” at all
 - Nice if the CCAO reminded their users when to apply for upcoming exemptions instead of making the user mark their calendar
- Icons and exemption boxes are good and very descriptive – very easy to locate exemptions relevant to homeowner
- Sometime Property Tax Savings are achieved by appeals as well. Would have liked to see a link to that attached to this page
- Liked seeing a link to “Certificates of Error” thought that was relevant to the homeowner visiting this page

Recommendations based on this interview:

- The first section doesn’t speak to someone who is brand new, but very helpful for seasoned homeowners
- Add images of people – may be more inclusive since certain types of homes are sometimes specific to certain areas of Cook County

Notes on the Redesigned Property Details Page

Experience rating: 4

- “I think its functional. I think it’s useful. Anything added at this point is going beyond the basics which isn’t necessary for the average homeowner/user. It’s good data.”
- Would’ve been a 5 if there was more color – she likes colored boxes – something to make it more eye appealing.
- Would love if this function could replace aim. Doesn’t do that now but something she would love to see in the future. A one stop shop for both assessors and homeowners.

General notes:

- Average users don’t know what “property classification” means – would be nice to have an explanation – why are they a “206”
- Average users don’t know what “neighborhood code” means – would be nice to have an explanation – what are they code “11”
- All useful information – good to have all this data on this page
- “Yeah, it’s good, it’s functional, and that’s what it has to be. It’s relatable.”
- Side bar menu is helpful – likes seeing the calendar, ability to download tax bill, update address
- Appeal history – would be helpful to know where the property’s reductions came from (i.e., assessor, board of review, etc.)
- This could be an end all be all for township assessors – replace AIM system
 - Whether the property is incorporated or unincorporated – tells people if they need to go their township for a service or Cook County for a service

Recommendations based on this interview:

- Add more assessor specific information – enough info to replace AIM
- Add more color to the page

Deidre Cato-Baker

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Interview video link: <https://www.dropbox.com/s/4byl8oanpb97akl/video1997138184.mp4?dl=0>
Seasoned Homeowner

General Notes:

- Homeowner for the last (14 years)
- Uses the CCAO website regularly
 - Looked up property details when she was looking to move in the past
 - Getting PIN numbers
 - For tax exemptions

Notes on the Redesigned Homepage

Experience Rating: 4 – didn't give it a five because there is a ton of information on the homepage page. She is a minimalist and thinks there's too much to scroll through and look at

General notes:

- “First thing that caught my eye was the Townships that are open for appeal” – something she will always be checking
- Liked the hero section – easy access to property tax exemptions – would've stopped to click on this information
- Was able to find all CCAO's core services easily
- Stopped and read all news items – focused less on the newsletter sign-up
- Video section – would like to see informational guides (how to find comparable properties in her area – how to appeal – how to save money on taxes)
- Bungalow image does not touch her at all. Doesn't speak to her as a homeowner. “The houses engulf the information” – “Would've liked for the information to have been a little larger”
- “I liked the little boxes...they're nicely spaced apart and easy to read”
- “I would certainly take the time to watch” – video section
- Would've liked to have added her address to get her PIN number

Recommendations based on this interview:

- Emphasize the information in the hero section instead of the image – make that text larger and focus less on the image behind it

Notes on the Redesigned Exemptions Landing Page

Experience Rating: 4.5 – I think the information on this page is very good. I really appreciated the steps...I think that would be extremely helpful except for the Certificate(s) of Error section.

General notes:

- “Property Tax Savings is always one of the top items in my agenda”
- Followed the steps and thought they were very helpful – liked Step 2 most

- List of exemptions – “This is good, very good...having all these options on this page is something I would be interested in, and I can’t imagine what homeowner wouldn’t be interested in this information.”
- Confusion around Certificate(s) of Error and what they are – text wasn’t helpful in explaining them fully – participant once applied for a certificate of error because her property taxes were set too high (may have been an appeal?)
- The participant expected to fill out and submit an application when clicking “Apply Here” – did not expect to go to an interior page with more info about the exemption

Recommendations based on this interview:

- Provide a complete definition of what a certificate of error is
- Make it easier for participants to apply for more than one exemption – if she applies for the “Senior Exemption”, make it easy for her to find the “Senior Freeze” as well

Notes on the Redesigned Property Details Page

Experience rating: 5 – “This is a very informative page. Very easy to navigate. I like this page a lot.”

General notes:

- Doesn’t know what “Property Classification” is and how that is determined
- Doesn’t know what “Tax Code” is and how that is determined
- Participant really likes “Next Reassessment” – thought this was very helpful and comforting to know this information
- (Dropdowns) “This is very user friendly. This makes looking up important information really easy.”
- Looked at the side bar navigation – thought these were helpful
- Interested in the Township Report – she already gets the report sent to her but thought this was great to have on this page

Recommendations based on this interview:

- Provide more information on specific “Tax Details” – what they are and how they are determined

Catherine Sharp

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Interview Video Link: <https://www.dropbox.com/s/op5wktzmcszmzusa/video1133796454.mp4?dl=0>

Partner Agency – Cook County Commissioner Bridget Degnen’s office

General Notes

- Participant gets a lot of constituent calls related to property tax assessments and exemptions
- Uses the CCAO website very frequently
 - assisted in filing appeals
 - applying for exemptions
 - filing for certificates of error
 - checking the appeal schedule
 - using the search function to look up people’s property’s

Notes on the Redesigned Homepage

Experience Rating: 5 - “Very easy, I liked the quick link boxes (the third thing on the page). That’s the most vital information people are looking for.”

General notes:

- “I like the immediate – enter PIN to see property details – I think that’s helpful having that on the front page. That is a function I use a lot”
- “All of the quick link boxes are all things I frequently look at.”
- (Pin Detail Component) “I do think having a way to plug in an address would be helpful. I know a lot of people I speak with do not know the PIN off the top of their heads.”
- Most frequently gets questions about Certificates of Error. Most of her users don’t know what that is. Provide a section or button that helps explain this to users
- For the homepage in general - “This feels comprehensive to me.”
- Was able to easily locate all CCAO’s core services

Recommendations based on this interview:

- Make “No PIN? Use the Property Detail Advanced Search.” Much more readable on the PIN detail component – Change the wording to “Click here to find property details by entering an address”

Notes on the Redesigned Exemptions Landing Page

Experience Rating: 4 – the participant is mostly searching for pdfs and forms for her users. She said this is a great layout for her users but for herself, it took a while for her to locate exactly what she typically looks for. “This page adds an extra step for to locate relevant forms.”

General notes:

- Not sure people have a great understanding of what “equalized assessed value” is
 - In participants experience, not all exemptions lower EAV
- Steps are very helpful
- Would be helpful to list what exemptions renew every year – be specific on which one’s auto-renew

- “I like the icons that are used and the prominent “Apply Here” buttons. I think those are very helpful.”
- Confusion around Certificates of Error section – would like a simple definition of what a Certificate of Error is
- Would like to see the Certificate of Error button say “Apply for missing Exemptions” because that is what a Certificate of Error does
- The people she helps often ask about what qualifications are needed for most exemptions. Would be helpful to list qualifications
 - What qualifies a user for a Senior Freeze Exemption?
 - Apply as soon as you turn 65+ (Senior Exemption)
 - Note income requirements
 - How long does a homeowner need to own a home to qualify for the homeowner’s exemption?

Recommendations based on this interview:

- Add a Certificates of Error definition to the page – be specific on what it is and how it can help people save money on taxes
- List basic qualifications under each exemption to help users determine what they can and can’t apply for

Notes on the Redesigned Property Details Page

Experience rating: 5 – “I like the dropdown bars. It was easy to scan and find the relevant information I was looking for. It feels like it has all the essential information and there isn’t so much information that it’s difficult to navigate.”

General notes:

- “I haven’t noticed a township report being listed before. That seems new to me.”
- (Assessed Evaluation) Most people won’t understand the Board of Review assessment. Might be helpful to explain what this is or why they need to review
- “This all seems really helpful”
- Would be helpful to see the certificate of error details – what exemption did the filed certificate of error cover
- It would be helpful to say “there have been no appeals filed” if appeals history section is empty – when empty it looks like an error
- Liked the side bar links – thought they were helpful and useful
- Would like to see “search comparable function” on this page
 - Gets a lot of questions about comparable properties

Recommendations based on this interview:

- Include more details for certificate of error – what exemption did it apply to
- Add a “no appeals” or “no certificates of error” message if those sections are empty
- Add a link or component about how to find comparable properties

Cynthia Love

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Interview Video Link: <https://www.dropbox.com/s/1jcqymgayhx28fj/video1588240622.mp4?dl=0>
Seasoned Homeowner

General Notes

- Has owned a home in Cook County for the last 20 years
- Uses the CCAO website:
 - To see how much taxes are
 - If someone has gotten all their exemptions
- Has a real estate license – know her way around all this information – more familiar than the average user

Redesigned Homepage

Experience Rating: 4 – “The news section, with the blue background, draws your eye to it and more important information, relevant to homeowners, is not as pronounced.”

General notes:

- First stopped at the property details section – wanted to check her property details to see if they were accurate
- Would’ve entered her email for the newsletter section
- Interested in all the items about tax reform
- Was able to locate all CCAO’s vital information
- “The page was easy to scan, and I found exactly what interests me.”
- Did not like the house in the hero section. Could look a little more up to date. The bungalows did not resonate with her
- “Events, that is something I would go to. I regularly attend events like this.”

Recommendations based on this interview:

- Soften the “News” component to make the cards/quick links more pronounced on the page

Redesigned Exemptions Landing Page

Experience Rating: 3 – Ask more questions in the descriptions of the exemption sections. Allows users to quickly determine if they qualify for the exemption they are looking at.

General notes:

- “It looks pretty good.” She was able to find relevant exemptions quickly and without difficulty
- Confusion around the certificates of error – it is not self-explanatory – need to provide a definition – this section did not clarify if she needed to apply for one
- Instead of descriptions of each exemption – ask questions:
 - Have you owned a home for more than 10 years? (Homeowner exemption)
 - Do you qualify for a senior freeze exemption (add qualifications)?
 - Are you planning on renovating your home?
 - Have you missed an exemption in the past? (Certificate of Error)

- “I think it’s good. It’s workable”

Recommendations based on this interview:

- Provide more details and definitions of the “Certificates of Error” section.

Redesigned Property Details Page

Experience rating: 4 – would like to see more information on the Certificates of Error – if there is no information, direct the user to an informational page explaining what it is and how it may be beneficial.

General notes:

- “This page has all of the information I would be looking for.”
- Found the “Township Report” link and would’ve clicked on it
- Wants to know more about “Property Classification” and “Tax Code”
 - Wanted to know how those are determined and what do they mean to a homeowner
- Once saw a discrepancy in the characteristics of her home – didn’t know how to change it – wants a place she could dispute or update the information
- Found “exemption history and status” to be very helpful
- Participant said people are afraid to file an appeal because they might save the homeowner money. She knows several people who won’t consider filing an appeal.
- Confused about what “Update Mailing Address” means. Does it update on the computer, or does it send something to CCAO to be reviewed before it was updated?
- Thought the sidebar section was relevant and liked seeing those on the page

Recommendations based on this interview:

- Include a link to more information about certificates of error within the dropdown