

PROPERTY VALUES

Initially, many property owners don't even want to hear about the possibility of vapor intrusion because they are worried, with good reason, that it may have a negative effect on their property values. While the health effects of low-level exposure to volatile contaminants in one's home are uncertain and long-term, the impact on property values is often immediate and undeniable. Some people believe that if vapors are not documented, they won't experience economic losses.

However, once an area is known to be contaminated, the evidence—thus far—is that a systematic response, either demonstrating that a home is clean or installing mitigation system to make the air acceptable, is the best way to protect or restore property values. In some cases, property tax assessments can be reduced, and in some communities residents, either through proposed local legislation or legal action, have sought to recover economic damages from the polluters. Many environmental officials choose not to discuss property values, because it is beyond their jurisdiction, but confronting the problem as seen by property owners may be the best way to increase cooperation with the investigation.

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