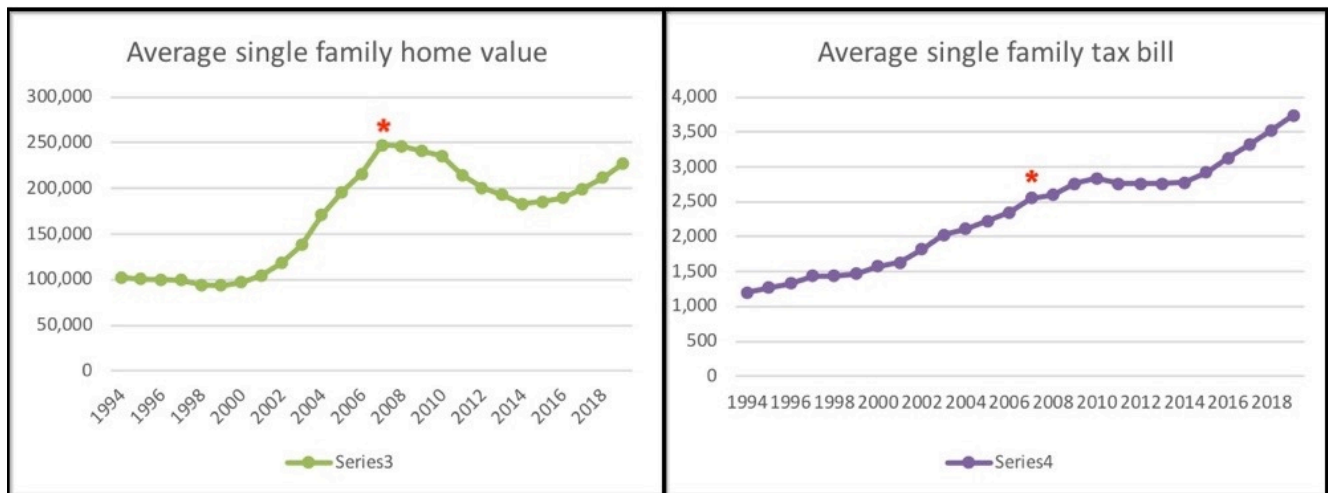


# Property valuation and appreciation have not kept up with government spending in New Bedford

There is a saying; the only two certain things in life are death and taxes. Well, it seems there's no place that statement is more accurate than right here in New Bedford.

But in a jurisdiction so overwhelmingly democratic, in nature and by count, it may raise an eyebrow that the main focus seems to be more concentrated on the government than on the people. In times of economic downturn, we would expect to see the entire population see that same downturn, proportionately. For instance, if we have a housing crash, and our homes lose value, we would never expect the taxes to then go up. If I saw something like that, I would tend to think that the government wasn't just taking from taxpayers only what they had to in order to keep afloat, but were actually treating taxpayers as though we were a personal workforce, pawns duped into exploitation by our government, to turn a profit and fund their endless shopping sprees.

The housing market suffered quite a bit from the recession of 2008. The star on each graph marks the beginning of the recession. As you can see, our home values have not fully recovered from the crash as of 2019. In fact, the average single-family home in New Bedford still has an average price that is 8.2% less than it was 2007 (-8.2%).



On the other hand, property taxes have continued to march forward, only falling by a few dollars one year, and then continuing to rise without exception. While our homes have lost, on average, 8.2% or -\$20,324 between 2007 and 2019. The property taxes have increased by 46.63%, or \$1190 per property, during that same time.

So while the people have been forced to cut spending and make sacrifices in their personal lives, whether that be much needed child care, medical insurance or even just vacation and recreational expenditures, our local government has not. Actually, in the years between 2007 and 2019, every salary has increased, some significantly. Our pension obligation has increased, our medical insurance liability has gone up, spending has charged on and it seems the only thing that didn't keep up, has been the assets of the people, which they corrected for with some of the heftiest increases in tax rates historically.

Since all government spending is a direct result of the taxpayers, shouldn't it follow that when the taxpayers suffer a loss, as a group, due to an economic downturn, that that loss and downturn also be translated into our government's spending levels? The people of Fall River thought so and opted to impose a pay cut of 8% on all municipal workers 9 years ago. This was done voluntarily by the city workers, to avoid layoffs that would have had to happen if they hadn't.

The city of Fall River also chose to freeze the pay of all elected officials at that time, and their pay remains frozen to this day, without cost of living raises. The other thing that was sacrificed was the health insurance of some elected officials. It seems that Fall River acted like a team, evenly distributing the burden of the recession, so as not to overstrain their population. Maybe a few of our residents would not have lost their homes, been forced to sell or sacrifice necessary services, had we a similar mentality here.

The information and data used for the graphs and opinions were supplied by the Municipal Databank and the Local Aid Unit, 2 divisions of the Commonwealth.

If you haven't had a chance to look at the extensive information offered to the public on their website, I highly recommend taking a moment and checking it out: [mass.gov/municipal-databank-data-analytics-including-cherry-sheets](https://mass.gov/municipal-databank-data-analytics-including-cherry-sheets).