

Income declines as property taxes soar

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ALBANY — Between 2008 and 2011, median household income in Dutchess County fell 2.71 percent as median property taxes shot up 20.6 percent, according to U.S. census data released today.

The Dutchess median household income dropped by \$1,890 to \$67,727 as the median property taxes grew by \$972 to \$5,692, census data show.

In Ulster County, median household income edged up from 2008 to 2011 by \$152 to \$54,854, or 0.28 percent, as median property taxes jumped \$725 to \$5,007, or 16.9 percent.

The data show what has been a perennial problem in New York: high taxes compared to wealth. Median household income in New York fell 1.4 percent from \$56,033 to \$55,246, but property taxes rose 18 percent, census data released today show.

Many New Yorkers “have property-tax bills that are an inordinate share of their income,” said Frank Mauro, executive director of the Fiscal Policy Institute, a labor-backed think tank in Albany. “The point we make is that too many in New York state have to pay more than 10 percent of their income in property taxes.”

Westchester County led the nation in median property taxes paid in 2011 at \$10,000, the census data found. Nassau County was second, and Rockland County was third. Household income in Westchester fell 3 percent to about \$77,000 between 2008 and 2011. Statewide, the median property-tax bill — including school and local government taxes — was \$4,273 in 2011. It was \$3,622 in 2008, the Census Bureau said.

Business groups said the new numbers indicate New York has to improve its economic climate. Nationally, property taxes rose 8.4 percent from 2008 to 2011, from \$1,897 to \$2,057. The census data show the median household income nationally was \$50,502 in 2011.

New York consistently has the nation’s highest property taxes, reports have shown. Not only do places like Westchester pay the most because of high property values, parts of upstate pay the most in property taxes compared to home values. The Tax Foundation, based in Washington, said in a report in July that Wayne and Monroe counties paid the most in the country in property taxes compared to home values.

Mike Durant, state director of the National Federation of Independent Business, said New York needs to boost its business competitiveness.

“As the taxes continue to go up and as the business costs that are mandated by the state continue to be ignored, nobody is going to be hiring,” he said.