IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT: Our website is changing! Please click here for details.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

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Appraisal and Property Value Information

What does the Volusia County Property Appraiser do?

The Volusia County Property Appraiser is responsible for identifying, locating, and fairly valuing all property, both real and personal, within the county for tax purposes. The "market" value of real property is based on the current real estate market. Finding the "market" value of your property means discovering the price most people would pay for your property in its current condition.

What is important to remember is that the Property Appraiser does not create the value. People make the value by buying and selling real estate in the market place. The Property Appraiser has the legal responsibility to study those transactions and appraise your property accordingly.

The Property Appraiser also tracks ownership changes; maintains maps of parcel boundaries; keeps descriptions of buildings and property characteristics up to date; accepts and approves applications from individuals eligible for exemptions and other forms of property tax relief; and, most importantly, analyzes trends in sales prices, construction costs, and rents to best estimate the value of all assessable property.

Appraisers are also assisted by our Geographic Information System (G.I.S.), which helps us to provide detailed and up-to-date property ownership maps for field inspections. This information is also used to analyze property data and gives appraisers yet another tool for comparing similar properties.

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How is property appraised?

We are required to inspect each property at least once every five years. However, individual property values may be adjusted between visits in light of sales activity or other factors affecting real estate values in your neighborhood. Sales of similar properties are a strong indicator of values in the real estate market.

To find the value of your property, the Property Appraiser must first know what properties have sold, and how much they are selling for in today's market. That is why we maintain an accurate data base of real estate information. Each transaction must be studied to make sure it was an arms length transaction, meaning that a willing seller sold to a willing buyer without any undue pressure or special incentives (such as family relationships), and that the property was on the market for neither an excessive nor short period of time. Once this is determined, we can base the value of a property from other sales of comparable properties. This is the sales comparison approach to valuation.

Our Florida Constitution has been amended effective January 1, 1995 to limit any annual increase in the assessed value of residential property with a homestead exemption to 3 percent or Consumer Price Index whichever is lower. This limitation does not include any change, addition or improvement to a homestead (excluding normal maintenance or substantially equivalent replacement). During subsequent years, any improvements will fall under the Constitutional limitation.

Two other methods are used to appraise property - the cost approach and the income approach. The cost approach is based on how much it would cost today to build an almost identical structure on the parcel. If your property is not new, the appraiser must also determine how much the building has lost value over time. The appraiser must also determine the value of the land itself - without buildings or any improvements.

The income approach is the third way to evaluate property - usually commercial property. It requires a study of how much revenue your property would produce if it were rented as an apartment house, a store, an office building and so on. The appraiser must consider operating expenses, insurance, maintenance costs, and the return on profit most people would expect on your kind of property.

In estimating value for any property, Florida Statutes 193.011 requires the Property Appraiser to consider 8 factors:

1. The present cash value.
2. The highest and best use of the property.
3. The location of the property.
4. The quantity or size of said property.
5. The cost of said property.
6. The condition of said property.
7. The income of said property.
8. The net proceeds of the sale of said property.

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What is "Highest and Best Use?"

Highest and Best Use is that use which will generate the highest net return to the property over a reasonable period of time.

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How is land valued?

Land is valued based on the market or comparative sales approach. The location of the land is a major factor in determining its value. For example, land located near the water is generally more valuable than land located inland. Sale properties are analyzed and compared. Units of comparison such as square feet, acreage and front foot are used to develop land value from the sale properties. These land values are then applied to non-sale properties based on their comparability.

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Can I get a tax exemption?

In addition to determining values, the Property Appraiser accepts applications for and administers property tax exemptions.

Several types of exemptions are available. The type of exemption benefiting the largest number of property owners is the HOMESTEAD EXEMPTION. If you own property which you use as your primary residence as of January 1, you may apply for homestead exemption. This will reduce the assessed value of your home by up to $50,000, resulting in substantial savings on your property taxes.

Other types of exemptions include: religious, charitable, educational, veteran, widow, widower, and permanently disabled. Any new exemption or change in exemption status should be filed as soon as possible, but no later than March 1.

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When will I know the amount of my tax bill?

In August of each year, the Volusia County Property Appraiser sends a "Notice of Proposed Property Taxes" (aka TRIM) to all property owners as required by law. **This notice is very important -- look for it in the mail!**

The TRIM notice tells you the taxable value of your property. Taxable value is the assessed value less any exemptions.

The TRIM notice also gives you information on proposed millage rates and taxes as estimated by your community taxing authorities. It also tells you when and where these authorities will hold public meetings to discuss tentative budgets to finalize your millage tax rates and, therefore, your taxes.

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What if I think the appraised value of my property is too high?

If you think the taxable value shown on your "Notice of Proposed Property Taxes" (aka TRIM) is not correct, you are encouraged to contact the Volusia County Property Appraiser's Office to speak with an appraiser. The appraiser can explain how we determine your property's value. You have specific legal rights. As there are time limits with regards to these rights, contact our office as soon as possible if you have questions regarding your valuation or your exemption status. If you are not satisfied with our response, you may file a petition with the Value Adjustment Board.

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What do the different property values in our records mean to you?

Property taxes are determined by multiplying the property's taxable values by the millage rates set each year by the taxing authorities.

Formula:

Just/Market Value, Capped by the Save Our Homes Cap = **Assessed** Value

Assessed Value - **Exemptions** = **Taxable** Value

Taxable Value x Millage **Rate** / 1,000 = Gross **Taxable** Taxes

Under Florida Law, the status of a property on January 1 is the criteria for establishing value for the entire year. Each year's value stands alone and is based on market information including sales of comparable property from prior years. Value is a reflection of the market. When sale prices decline, so do values, and conversely when sale prices increase, so do values.

There are **THREE** values used in the ad valorem process:

JUST/MARKET VALUE: The first value established each year is the Just/Market Value, based on market information including sales. Two truly identical properties would have the same Just/Market Value.

ASSESSED VALUE: The second value, the Assessed Value (aka School Assessed Value), is the value that has been capped by an assessment cap, such as the Save Our Homes Cap, which was voted into law effective January 1, 1995, limiting the annual increase in assessed value of property with homestead exemption to 3 percent or the Consumer Price Index (CPI), whichever is less. It could also be affected by the Agricultural Classification.

Beginning in 2009, the assessed value of non-homestead real property cannot be increased more than 10% over the prior year's assessed value. If the property is sold, the cap is removed and the new owner establishes a new base-year for the cap to be applied. The 10% cap does not apply to school tax levies. Therefore, this created what is known as the Non School Assessed Value.

TAXABLE VALUE: Finally, any exemptions (like the $50,000 homestead exemption) are subtracted from the assessed value to reach the third value, the Taxable Value. Because of the 10% cap and the Low Income Senior exemption you could have a different taxable value for the School, County and City authorities.

Because of the Save Our Homes and the 10% Cap, it is not possible to compare taxes or assessed values with your neighbors. For example, if one of your neighbors has homestead exemption and has had the cap for several years, then his or her assessed value- and thus, taxes could be lower than yours, even if the market value of your neighbor's property is identical or higher than yours.

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Homestead Exemption Information

What is Homestead Exemption?

If you own your home, reside there permanently and are a Florida resident, all as of January 1, you may qualify for the homestead exemption. Homestead can reduce the assessed value on your home as much as $50,000. More importantly, your assessed value, which is used to calculate your property taxes, can not increase more than 3% annually after you are granted the exemption.

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Am I eligible to file?

You must meet the following requirements as of January 1st:

- Have legal or beneficial title to the property, recorded in the Official Records of Volusia County
- Reside on the property
- Be a permanent resident of the State of Florida
- Be a United States citizen or possess a Permanent Residence Card (green card)

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When can I file?

The deadline to file an application for 2018 is March 1, 2018. Under Florida Law, failure to file for any exemption by March 1st constitutes a waiver of the exemption privilege for the year.

Regular filing is January 2nd - March 1st.
Pre-filing for the coming year is March 2nd - December 31st.

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Where do I file?

You can file at any of our four Property Appraiser's Office locations during regular business hours.

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What information do I need to bring with me?

1. Two forms of residency is required, Florida Driver's License, if you drive;
   or if you do not drive, a Florida Identification Card and one of the following:
   - Florida Auto Registration
   - Florida Voter Registration Card
   - Recorded Volusia County Declaration of Domicile
2. Social Security numbers are required for all owners making application and their spouses, even if the spouse does not own and/or reside on the property.
3. If you are not a United States citizen, your Permanent Residence (green) Card (front and back).

Special Notes:

If title to the property on which you are applying is held in a trust, a copy of the entire trust agreement must also be submitted.

If you are filing on a mobile home (not currently being assessed as Real Property), proof of ownership is required for both the mobile home and the property. A **"Real Property" application** must also be completed .

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Do I have to be a citizen to qualify?

Citizenship is a requirement in order to qualify for homestead exemption, with the exception that an applicant who is not a U.S. citizen may use a valid resident alien card (green card).

CLICK HERE to view information on: homestead exemption by Non-U.S. Citizens can be based on occupancy by dependent children

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What if the property is in a trust?

In these cases, it is necessary for the applicant to furnish this office with a copy of the trust agreement. Florida Law specifies those situations under which the resident may obtain homestead exemption.

The Florida Constitution requires that the homestead claimant have legal title or beneficial title in equity to the property.

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Can I get homestead exemption on a mobile home?

Yes, you may if you own the mobile home and the land that the mobile home is setting on. When applying, you must bring in the title or registration to the mobile home.

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How long do exemptions continue?

Your exemptions may be automatically renewed each year in January as long as title does not change on the property and your residency status remains the same. Florida Law requires filing a new application when any title change is made.

You are required to inform the Property Appraiser's Office of any change in use of the property.

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Does my exemption follow me to my new home?

No. If you move after January 1st, the exemption will continue for the remainder of the year on the property where you initially filed for exemption.

You must file a new application by March 1st, whenever you move to a new residence; the exemption does not transfer with you.

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What will cause me to lose my homestead?

1. If the ownership of your homestead property changes, in any manner, you must re-apply for homestead exemption. Ownership changes are transfers such as but not limited to:

   - Preparing and/or recording a deed adding a name to the property
   - Preparing and/or recording a deed removing a name from the property
   - Preparing and/or recording a deed placing your property into a Trust.

   - Preparing and/or recording a deed placing your property into a Life Estate

   Florida Law requires that you re-apply for the homestead exemption anytime there has been a change of ownership. You MUST re-apply by March 1st. Even if you have always lived there, you must re-apply!

2. If you are moving to a new property you can not take your homestead with you. You must file for homestead on the new property by March 1st.

3. If you recently purchased a property and see a homestead exemption listed in the Property Appraiser's records, STOP, it's not your exemption. You have inherited the previous owner's exemption for the current tax year. If the property is your primary residence, you must file for your own homestead exemption by March 1st.

4. If you are an heir to a property which currently has a homestead exemption and you occupied the property as your primary residence by January 1st, you must apply for your own homestead exemption by March 1st.

5. If you change your mailing address and fail to notify this office, your annual renewal receipt could be returned to our office and may cause your exemption to be denied.

6. If you are active duty military and rent your home, you must provide this office with your new address and military orders. Failing to do this may result in your mail being returned and the exemption will be denied.

7. If you move from the property, change the use in any manner or begin renting the property, you MUST notify our office and request the exemption be removed. Failing to notify our office could result in a lien being filed in accordance with Florida Statute 196.161 which has a 50% penalty and 15% interest per annum, don't let this happen to you!

Please call our office at **(386) 736-5901** with any questions you may have.

PORTABILITY: Remember, if you qualify for Portability, you may take your "Save Our Homes" assessment savings (also known as your Portability amount) with you to the new property - But you must apply for it. You will need to apply for PORTABILITY by filling out a DR-501T form when you apply for the new homestead exemption; it is a separate application which must be filed in addition to the homestead application.

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What is Portability?

Homestead property owners are able to transfer their Save Our Homes (SOH) benefit (up to $500,000) to a new homestead within two years of giving up their previous homestead. This is called Portability.

If the just value of the new homestead is more than the previous home's just value, the entire cap value can be transferred.

Homeowners may transfer their SOH benefit to a new homestead anywhere in the State of Florida within two years of leaving their former homestead if the new homestead is established by January 1. For example, if you moved during 2015, the exemption remains on your home until December 31, 2015. You have until January 1, 2017 to qualify for a new exemption and port the benefit to a new homestead. This provision applies to all taxes, including school taxes.

For property owners who have the homestead exemption and the Save Our Homes cap, and who do not give up their homestead, the exemption and cap status remain unchanged.

A separate application must be completed by March 1 to qualify for portability.

If you own another property (2nd home, beach house, etc.) and establish your homestead there, you can remove the homestead from the old property and apply for the portability benefit.

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What options do I have if I miss the deadline for filing? Can I still get the Exemption?

Yes. Florida Law does provide for late applications, but additional filing requirements are necessary.

1. You must come into one of our offices, and file an application on or before the 25th day following the mailing of the Notice of Proposed Property Tax (TRIM) Notice.
2. You must also write a letter, addressed to the Property Appraiser, explaining the extenuating circumstances, which caused you to miss the deadline. This is a legal requirement and it must be done.
3. Upon receipt of the application and letter the Property Appraiser will review the evidence and determine if the exemption shall be granted or not.
4. If the evidence is not sufficient enough the applicant will receive a reminder notice to either provide the additional information or file a petition with the Value Adjustment Board.
5. Upon filing the petition you will be required to pay a nonrefundable fee of $15.
6. You will then receive a letter from the Value Adjustment Board providing your hearing date.
7. At the hearing a decision will be made whether to grant or deny the exemption for the current year.

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What other exemptions are available under law?

State law entitles you to apply for an additional exemption as a widow or widower. Certain specified medical disabilities may also qualify for an additional exemption.

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Your Manufactured Home and the Property Appraiser's Office

The Property Appraiser is required by law to determine how your mobile home (also known as a manufactured home) will be classified for property tax purposes. That classification is based upon whether or not it is located on land owned by the mobile home owner or on land owned by another (such as a mobile home park).

A mobile home permanently affixed to land owned by the home's owner must have a one-time "RP" (Real Property) series sticker affixed to the home. In cases where the land is not owned by the home owner, an annual "MH" (Mobile Home) series sticker is required. In the event that no sticker is affixed to the mobile, it is presumed that the mobile home is tangible personal property and will be assessed as such.

How do I get a "RP" series sticker?

Bring with you both the deed to the land and the title to the mobile home. The staff will complete a DR402 form which declares the mobile home to be real property.

This form should be taken to the Revenue Division's Tag Office locations throughout Volusia County. With it, you may purchase a "RP" sticker which is valid for as long as you own both the mobile home and the land.

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Where and how can I purchase a "MH" sticker?

This sticker must be purchased each year during the month of December from the Revenue Division offices. The prior year's "MH" sticker is valid until December 31st.

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As a mobile home owner, am I eligible for homestead exemption?

If you own both the land and mobile home, have a "RP" sticker affixed to the home, and it is your primary residence, you may apply for homestead exemption. The exemption must be applied for before March 1.

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"Value Cap" or "Save Our Homes" Questions

What is the Save Our Homes amendment?

In 1992 voters approved an amendment to the Florida Constitution known as Amendment 10, or Save Our Homes (SOH). SOH is an assessment limitation, or "cap", on increases in the assessed value of a homestead residence. Those increases are limited to 3% or the percent change in the CPI (Consumer Price Index), whichever is less. The "cap" goes into effect beginning the year a qualified homestead exemption is applied.

Prior to SOH, taxable value, upon which taxes were calculated, was equal to market value less homestead exemption. When the market value increased, so would taxable value and therefore, taxes. The SOH law prohibits this from happening allowing for the maximum 3% "cap" to protect assessed value, regardless of how high market values may increase. This prevents owners from being taxed out of their homes when the market is escalating.

The SOH benefit stays on a homestead property, providing there are no ownership changes or property improvements. This can provide significant tax savings over time.

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How does the amendment limitation apply?

Real property shall be assessed at full market value (just value) as of January 1 of the year in which the property first receives the homestead exemption. The following year the property is reassessed and any change from the prior year's value is not to exceed the lesser of 3% of that prior year assessed value or the Consumer Price Index percentage change. (Except for capital improvements, additions or improvements.)

Prior to SOH, taxable value, upon which taxes were calculated, was equal to market value less homestead exemption. When the market value increased, so would taxable value and therefore, taxes. The SOH law prohibits this from happening allowing for the maximum 3% "cap" to protect assessed value, regardless of how high market values may increase. This prevents owners from being taxed out of their homes when the market is escalating.

Because a change in property ownership will effectively "reset" the capped value to full market value, it is important to be aware when purchasing a home that benefits from the cap, **that it can be expected that property taxes will increase the next year because the assessed value must be adjusted to equal current market value.**

The increase due to the removal of the cap could double or even triple taxes, depending on how long the previous owner had homestead exemption.

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How is my property affected?

The year following the granting of homestead exemption, the property is subject to the limitation.

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What about any changes, additions or improvements to the homestead property?

New construction or additions shall be assessed at full market value as of the first January 1 after the changes are substantially completed. In these circumstances, it is possible that the assessed value may exceed the amendment limitations. However, after the first year that the changes are assessed at full market value, they are also subject to the amendment limitations.

For example, if a pool is added to a property, the value can increase no more than the cap rate, plus the value of the pool.

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What properties are not subject to the limitation?

Residences without homestead, non-residential property, vacant land, tangible personal property, commercial property, and agricultural property are not eligible for the amendment limitation.

Multi-family properties may qualify based on percentage of use. For example, if you own a duplex, live in one half and rent the other half to a tenant, only 1/2 of your property value will be capped.

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Why would my assessment increase when my market value stayed the same?

This is probably due to the "recapture" rule. In September 1995, the Department of Revenue adopted a rule, approved by the Governor and Cabinet, directing Property Appraisers to raise the assessed value of a qualifying homestead property by the maximum of 3% or the Consumer Price Index, whichever is less, on all properties assessed at less than full market value whether or not that property's value increased during that calendar year.

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What happens if a property is sold or conveyed to a new owner?

Once the property has been conveyed to the new owner, it is raised to full market value January 1 of the following year. The new owner must apply and qualify to receive homestead exemption.

For example, if a pool is added to a property, the value can increase no more than the cap rate, Even if the property received a homestead exemption under the previous owner, the limitation, just like the exemption, expires January 1 of the year following a change of ownership.

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10% Assessment Limitation for Non-Homestead Properties

When did the 10% cap go into effect?

It became effective beginning with the 2009 tax roll. The 10% cap will only ensure your assessed value does not increase more than 10% from the previous year assessed value. The cap will remain, providing ownership does not change, there was no split or combination of the property during the previous year, and no new construction has occurred.

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Do I have to apply to receive this cap?

No, the cap will automatically be applied to your property.

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Can I get the 10% cap on my homestead property?

No, this assessment cap is only for all "non-homestead" properties. Homesteads already benefit from the maximum 3% Save Our Homes assessment cap.

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What is "non-homestead property" ?

All properties that DO NOT have a homestead exemption, such as 2nd homes, rental properties, vacation homes, vacant land or commercial property.

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Will the 10% cap reduce my taxes?

There is no guarantee your taxes will reduce due to the 10% assessment cap, as many other factors are involved such as tax rates and non-ad valorem assessments, neither of which are determined by the Property Appraiser.

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Will my assessment increase 10% each year?

Not necessarily. The maximum amount your assessment can increase from one year to the next is 10%. Depending on market factors, your assessed value could increase less than 10% or could decrease.

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Does the 10% cap apply to millage rates of ALL taxing authorities?

The 10% cap applies to all taxing authority millage rates EXCEPT the School Board millage.

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If I purchase a property that has received benefit from the 10% cap, will my assessment change from the prior owner's assessment?

The 10% assessment cap remains for the balance of the tax year in which the property was purchased. But, Florida Law provides that the property must be reassessed at full market value in the year following the sale.

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If there is a change of ownership or control not recorded on a deed, does it trigger a reassessment?

Yes. And per Florida Statute 193.1556, any person or entity owning property under the 10% cap provision MUST notify the Property Appraiser promptly of any change of ownership or control. Failure to do so may subject the property owner to a lien of back taxes plus interest of 15% per annum and a penalty of 50% of the taxes avoided.

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