



OFFICE OF THE CLAY COUNTY PROPERTY APPRAISER



Honorable Roger A. Suggs, CFA, AAS, CCF
State-Certified General Real Estate Appraiser RZ2771

2015 Proposed Property Tax (TRIM) Information

- **What is a TRIM notice?**

The Notice of Proposed Tax forms, also known as Truth in Millage (TRIM) notices, are prepared and mailed each year by the Property Appraiser on behalf of the taxing authorities pursuant to Florida law. Although the TRIM notice is not a tax bill, it is intended to notify property owners of possible changes that may appear on the November tax bill. Our office has developed some information to assist you with understanding your notice:

- [Understanding Your Notice of Proposed Property Taxes](#)
- [2015 TRIM Guide](#)

For more information regarding the history and facts about TRIM notices, click [here](#).

- **What are my rights as a taxpayer?**

The 2000 Florida Legislature created the Taxpayer's Bill of Rights for Florida property owners ([s. 192.0105, F.S.](#)). It guarantees your rights, privacy, and property are safeguarded during the assessment, levy, collection, and enforcement of property taxes.

For more information, click [here](#).

- **How are my ad valorem property taxes calculated?**

Ad valorem ("according to value") property taxes are calculated as follows:

$$\text{Taxable Value} \times \text{Millage (tax) Rate} = \text{Property Taxes}$$

The taxable value (as of Jan. 1, 2015) is estimated by the Property Appraiser; the millage rates are determined by the taxing authorities.

Non-Ad Valorem taxes are not determined by the Property Appraiser and are not listed on your TRIM notice.

For more information on Florida's Property Tax System, click [here](#).

Main Office
County Administration Building
477 Houston Street, 2nd Floor
Green Cove Springs, FL 32043
Telephone: (904) 269/284-6305
Fax: (904) 284-2923
www.ccpao.com

Orange Park Office
Park Central Plaza
1518 Park Avenue
Orange Park, FL 32073
Telephone: (904) 541-5332
www.facebook.com/ccpaofl

- **Can the proposed values, millage rates, and/or taxes on the TRIM notice change?**

Yes. If you believe your property value or exemption status is incorrect, contact the Property Appraiser's office. We will review your property and provide you with a timely and thorough explanation. Corrections can be made for the current assessment roll.

The millage rates displayed on the TRIM notice are last year's millage rates, the rollback millage rates, and the proposed maximum millage rates. The proposed rates may be reduced by the taxing authorities prior to the November tax bills. If you have questions or concerns regarding millage rates or resulting taxing levels, contact your taxing authorities or attend the public hearings displayed on your notice.

- **Can the Property Appraiser lower my taxes or change my tax rates?**

No. The Property Appraiser cannot lower your taxes or millage rates. Although the Property Appraiser's office is responsible for mailing the TRIM notice, the market, assessed, and taxable values are the only issues this office has the authority to address. However, if a correction to your property is made, the resulting taxation level may be affected.

- **Are my taxes "capped" if I have homestead exemption?**

No. The assessed value of a property with an existing homestead exemption is capped - not the taxes.

In 1992, the voters of Florida approved Amendment 10, which was also known as the "Save-Our-Homes" (SOH) amendment, that provided for limiting ("capping") increases in existing homestead property valuations for ad valorem tax purposes (with the exception of properties with new construction, additions and/or renovations). The SOH cap limits the annual increase in the **assessed value** – not the taxes – of a homesteaded property to:

- 1) a 3% assessed value increase from the prior year, or
- 2) the percent change in the Consumer Price Index, whichever is lower.

For 2015, the rate of assessed value increase is capped at 0.8%. Click [here](#) for more information.

- **How is the market value of my home determined?**

The ad valorem assessment process is governed by Florida law, including [s. 193.011 Florida Statutes](#).

Market (just) value is defined as the most probable sale price for a property in a competitive, open market involving a willing buyer and seller on **January 1**. The market value is unencumbered and may increase or decrease as the market dictates.

The 2015 market value is based upon sales of comparable properties (and other market data) in 2014. Sales that occurred during 2014 will impact assessments on the 2015

assessment roll. You can review sales in your neighborhood on our website or call (904) 284/269-6305 to speak to an appraiser.

- **Are foreclosures, short sales, and REO sales considered when determining the value of non-sold homes in a neighborhood?**

Foreclosure occurs when a financial institution "repossesses" a property due to non-payment of the mortgage obligation. A **short sale** occurs when a financial institution agrees to accept a purchase price from a buyer which is less than the outstanding mortgage balance. The term **REO** stands for Real Estate Owned. These are bank owned properties. An REO sale occurs when a financial institution sells its foreclosed property to an individual or investor.

The initial foreclosure "repossession" to the lender is not a sale and therefore not considered. However, short sales and REO sales may be considered on a neighborhood by neighborhood basis, depending upon the quantity of these sales compared to sales of non-distressed properties.

- **Why are my taxes higher than my neighbor's when our houses are very similar?**

Different exemptions and assessment caps (like the Save-Our-Homes cap or non-homestead assessment cap), make it impossible to accurately compare **taxes** with your neighbors.

Below is a common example:

"My neighbor and I have identical homes. Both were built in the same year and sit on similar lots. My neighbor bought his house ten years ago and I just purchased my home last year. My estimated tax bill for this year is \$5,470, but my neighbor's bill is only \$2,460. There must be a mistake!"

No mistake. The intent of Amendment 10 (SOH) was to prevent homestead property owners from being taxed out of their homes in the face of rapidly increasing real estate sale prices by allowing for the accumulation of a "capped difference" over time. This accumulation of non-taxed value, also known as the "Save Our Homes Benefit", causes the disparity. This is the scenario impacting your neighbor's property, mainly due to the fact that they have owned their home for 10 years and yours was recently purchased. They have enjoyed the benefit of an increasing "capped difference" over time.

It is more appropriate to compare the **market values** of comparable properties rather than taxes.

- **How does Homestead Exemption affect my property value?**

Homestead exemption is a \$50,000 reduction in the assessed value of your home. It is granted to property owners who: 1) possess title to real property; 2) are bona fide Florida residents living in the dwelling and making it their permanent residence on January 1; and 3) file an application by March 1.

The first \$25,000 of assessed value is entirely exempt from taxes. The additional \$25,000 exemption (Amendment 1) applies only to the assessed value between \$50,000 and \$75,000, and is **not exempt from school district tax levies**. If your assessed value is between \$50,000 and \$75,000, a pro-rated exemption amount applies. If your assessed value is \$75,000 or higher, you will receive full benefit of the additional \$25,000 homestead exemption, **except from school district tax levies**.

The following diagram illustrates the Homestead Exemptions that apply based upon the assessed value of your property.



ALERT TO NEW HOMEOWNERS

- By law, when a property sales or transfers, the cap and all exemptions are removed at the end of the calendar year. If you purchased your home during **2014**, your assessed value this year may be substantially higher than last year due to the removal of the previous owner’s cap.

Click [here](#) for an explanation of exemptions, reductions, and classifications.

- **How do I appeal my property value or exemption status?**

If you disagree with your property value or exemption status, three options are available to you:

1) Informal Conference

If you believe your property value is higher or lower than the Property Appraiser’s estimate of market value on **January 1, 2015**, we encourage you to speak with an employee of our office at (904) 284/269-6305. Our goal is to produce accurate and equitable valuations and provide you with a thorough explanation of your property assessment and/or exemptions. We prefer to resolve any issues through an informal process.

The Property Appraiser's office will answer general questions on the phone immediately and refer specific valuation questions to our appraisers, who should respond to your request/inquiry within 24 hours.

2) **Formal Petition to the Value Adjustment Board**

You have the option to file a petition with the Clay County Value Adjustment Board (VAB) by the statutory deadline listed on the bottom of your TRIM notice.

The VAB does not set millage rates and has no jurisdiction over taxes. Board appointed Special Magistrates can only address issues concerning values, classifications, exemptions, and portability. Click [here](#) for more information.

To download petition forms, please use the following links:

[Petition to the Value Adjustment Board](#)

[Petition Withdrawal](#)

To file a completed petition or for questions, please contact the Value Adjustment Board at:

VALUE ADJUSTMENT BOARD
ATTN: CINDY ATKINSON
P.O. BOX 988
GREEN COVE SPRINGS, FL 32043
(904) 284/269-6334

Please include the non-refundable filing fee of \$15.00 per petition, made payable to:
BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Note to petitioners: Certified property record cards can be accessed on the Property Appraiser's website.

3) **Circuit Court Complaint (lawsuit)**

Your third option is to file a civil action in the Circuit Court pursuant to [Florida Statute 194.171](#).