



# News for Broward Taxpayers

Summer - Fall 2006

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## Assessing Additions to Homesteaded Property

We are frequently asked: "How will my Save Our Homes value be impacted if I build an addition onto my homesteaded property?"



The Answer: We generally use what is called "the cost approach" (i.e., the South Florida fair market replacement construction cost -- on a square foot basis -- for an addition of the same quality). Thus, if the fair market construction cost of your addition is \$100,000, you would see no more than \$100,000 added to your pre-existing Save Our Homes value. In the future, the combination of your pre-existing Save Our Homes value plus the cost-basis value of the addition would be your new Save Our Homes base value (subject to the 3% increase cap). If you have specific questions, please call our Residential Property Division at 954.357.6831.

## "My Neighbor And I Have Identical Homes, So Why Are My Taxes So Much Higher?"

"My neighbor and I own identical homes. Both were built in the same year and sit on identical sized lots. My neighbor bought her house six years ago and I just purchased my home last year. My estimated tax bill for this year is \$10,530 -- but my neighbor's bill is only \$6,220. There must be a mistake!"

Unfortunately, we hear this story several times a day. A provision in Florida's Constitution -- the "Save Our Homes" Amendment -- causes this disparity and confusion. Overwhelmingly adopted by Florida voters, Save Our Homes was intended to prevent homeowners from being taxed out of their homes in the face of rapidly rising real estate values. The Save Our Homes cap limits increases in assessed value of homesteaded properties to **no more than 3% per year** -- regardless of how much more the properties increase in **market value**.



Because of this, Florida law favors owners who stay in their homesteaded property for many years. The longer you stay and the more your property rises in market value, the more you'll save. If you purchased your home last year and obtained Homestead for this year, your new assessed value is based upon your sale price and other recent sales. Thus, the market value and assessed value of your property are identical this year. Next year, you'll likely see the market value climbing at a rate much higher than your assessed value. Your taxes will never drop to the level of your neighbor because of Save Our Homes -- but, when she sells her home, you should see the next buyer paying quite a bit more in taxes than you.

Dear Broward Neighbors,

We're constantly working to improve this office ... but I need your help. If you have ideas to make our office even better, please drop me a note, or email me at [lori@bcpa.net](mailto:lori@bcpa.net)

  
Lori Parrish  
Broward County Property Appraiser



Printed on recycled paper.

Our Main Office: 115 South Andrews Avenue, Room 111, Fort Lauderdale, Florida 33301



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IMPORTANT: "Understanding Your TRIM Notice" Inside ... See Pages 2-3

## Protecting Your Rights as a Taxpayer is as Easy as 1-2-3

### 1. READ YOUR "TRIM NOTICE" & TAKE PROMPT ACTION.

Too often, many taxpayers ignore their TRIM Notices until it is too late by law to challenge an assessment or fight a proposed tax hike. But, if you act timely, you can best protect your rights.

The first thing to understand is how your taxes are calculated. It is based upon a simple math formula: **TAXABLE VALUE x TAX MILLAGE RATES + SPECIAL ASSESSMENTS = TAX BILL**. Our office determines the assessed value for your property. The Property Appraiser does **NOT** set any tax rates. Your various governmental taxing authorities -- the School Board, County Commission, City Commission, hospital district board, etc. -- set your tax millage rates.



### 2. CHALLENGING YOUR PROPERTY'S ASSESSMENT.



Your TRIM Notice reflects our office's **ASSESSMENT** of your property's value. For non-homesteaded property, the assessed value is identical to the property's market value as of January 1, 2006. For homesteaded property, your assessment is the Save Our Homes assessed value. In most instances, our market values are determined using a mass-appraisal process based upon multiple sales of comparable properties in the same or similar subdivisions. **BOTTOM LINE:** If our assessed value of your property (as printed on your TRIM Notice) is higher than you believe a buyer would reasonably pay for your property on the open market, either call our office or file a petition **by the September 18, 2006 deadline**. Please see inside for the contact phone numbers and more details.

### 3. FIGHTING PROPOSED TAX RATES AND FEES.

Your TRIM Notice also contains proposed **TAXES** for your property, as set by the various taxing authorities (i.e., School Board, County Commission, City Commission, hospital district board, water management district board, etc.). On average, properties in Broward County increased approximately 19% in taxable value this year over the previous year. As property owners, that means you made a great investment. But, as taxpayers, the same news has other financial consequences. For non-homesteaded properties, it means your taxing authorities will potentially collect 19% more in property taxes this year unless they sharply cut their tax rates. Here's an example: If a taxing authority cuts the millage rate by 5%, that would still equal a 14% tax hike (19% tax base increase - 5% rate cut = 14% tax hike).



If you want to protest your proposed tax amount, or the price of non-ad valorem fees and special assessments, you **MUST** contact your elected officials who serve on those taxing authorities and/or attend the public hearings in September. Your TRIM Notice has all of the hearing dates, locations and/or contact information. **WARNING: If you stay silent until you get your tax bill in November, it will be too late to make any changes to your tax rates.**



# Understanding Your TRIM (“Truth In Millage”) Notice

## The Important Parts of Your TRIM Notice

Looking at your TRIM Notice, here are the parts you should read very carefully:

- A** - Name(s) of the current property owner, and the Real Estate ID or account number for the property.
- B** - The governmental entities that tax your property.
- C** - Amount of taxes last year for your property.
- D** - What your taxes will be this year IF the taxing authorities adopt their proposed budgets after the public hearings in September.
- E** - Schedule of public hearings. If you believe the **proposed millage (tax) rates** are too high, these are the meetings you may attend to let the taxing authorities hear your objections.
- F** - The appraised “Market Value” of your property as of January 1, 2006. This is our opinion of the real value of your property on the open market.
- G** - The “Assessed Value” of your property as of January 1, 2006 -- sometimes referred to as the “Save Our Homes” value. This amount (minus exemptions) is applied against the millage rate to determine your property taxes.
- H** - The value of any exemptions (Homestead, Widow/Widower, Disabled, Disabled Veteran) on your property as of January 1, 2006. *Note: If you acquired this property AFTER January 1, these “inherited” exemptions from the previous owner will automatically expire at the end of this year. You must apply for your own Homestead and other exemptions on this property (if eligible), regardless of whether you previously had it elsewhere. Exemptions do NOT transfer from one property to the next.*
- I** - The taxable value of your property (Assessed Value minus Exemptions = Taxable Value).
- J** - The value of your Seniors’ Additional Exemption (for qualified seniors on fixed incomes).
- K** - The taxable value of your property after any deduction for the Seniors’ Additional Exemption.
- L** - Non-Ad Valorem fees or “special assessments.” The Property Appraiser has nothing to do with setting these fees, and these have no relationship to the value of your property. Contact the authorities listed in this lower portion if you have questions about any of these assessments.

## Property Values vs. Millage (Tax) Rates

If you don’t like what you see in your TRIM Notice, who should you call?

**VALUES & EXEMPTIONS** - The Property Appraiser is responsible for determining market values, assessed values, and applying exemptions and special classifications (non-profits and agricultural). If the VALUE is more than you believe a buyer would pay for your property -- or you applied for an EXEMPTION but it wasn’t printed on the TRIM Notice -- call the Property Appraiser’s office.

**TAX RATES & SPECIAL ASSESSMENTS** - If you think the amount of TAXES is too much, the MILLAGE RATE is too high, or the non-ad valorem FEES are too costly, you need to **contact the taxing authorities** (City Commission, County Commission, School Board, hospital district, etc.) listed on your notice. The Property Appraiser does NOT levy or collect any taxes.

## Extended Hours for TRIM Season

To speak in person with one of our appraisers about your assessment, please visit our **Main Office** at 115 South Andrews Avenue, Room 111, in downtown Fort Lauderdale (just south of Broward Boulevard). **Our Main Office is always open weekdays from 7 am until 6 pm** (and will stay open until 7 pm weekdays during September 5-18). *Note: All Agricultural matters are handled in our Plantation office (One N. University Drive, Room 111-A); 8:30 am to 5 pm.*

**SPECIAL WEEKEND HOURS:** Our Main Office will also be open on **Saturday, August 26; Saturday, September 9; and Saturday, September 16 from 8:30 am to 5 pm** to better serve your busy schedule.

## Did You Forget to File for a 2006 Exemption?

If you forgot to file for a 2006 Homestead Exemption, Widow’s/Widower’s Exemption, Disabled Veteran’s Exemption or some other tax-saving exemption for which you were **eligible as of January 1, 2006**, you still have time to “late file.”

The easiest way to do this is visit our office **by September 18, 2006** and file an application for the appropriate exemption(s). You’ll also need to file a “Good Cause” **petition** and **pay a \$15 filing fee** to

the Value Adjustment Board. It’s not complicated -- and we’ll gladly help you with the simple paperwork. You may still “late file” from September 19, 2006 to January 2, 2007, but the Value Adjustment Board will likely require you to attend a hearing before any exemptions are approved by our office.

## “How Can I Challenge My Appraised Value?”

If you think the market value (**F**) for your property is wrong ... or an exemption you thought you had did not appear on your TRIM Notice (**H** and **J**) ... the **first thing** you should do is call our office. One of our appraisers will be happy to speak with you, listen to your concerns, and discuss the data we used to reach the value. If there was a mistake, we’ll correct it. If -- after speaking with you -- we still believe our value is accurate, we’ll explain the easy steps you can take to file an appeal with the Broward County Value Adjustment Board (an independent and quasi-judicial review board).

Save time by directing your call to the BCPA section you need:

### RESIDENTIAL (HOMES and TOWNHOMES) VALUES:

954.357.6831 (Dennis Staruch, Supervisor)

### CONDO, CO-OP and TIME-SHARE VALUES:

954.357.6832 (Scott Lewis, Supervisor)

### COMMERCIAL (incl. DUPLEXES) REAL PROPERTY VALUES:

954.357.6835 (Paul Murphy, Manager)

### VACANT LAND VALUES:

954.357.6935 (Craig Stafford, Deputy Appraiser)

### AGRICULTURAL PROPERTIES:

954.382.5844 (Jason Curtis, Supervisor) \*\* Location: Plantation Office \*\*

### MOBILE HOMES:

954.357.6890 (Michael Bell, Supervisor)

### TANGIBLE (COMMERCIAL) PERSONAL PROPERTY:

954.357.6836 (Jack Gruber, Director)

### EXEMPTIONS AND ALL OTHER GENERAL QUESTIONS:

954.357.6830 (Cheryl Guske, Manager)

**REPORT HOMESTEAD FRAUD:** 954.357.6900 (Ron Cacciatore, Director)

**PROPERTY APPRAISER LORI PARRISH:** 954.357.6904

Have questions for the Value Adjustment Board (VAB) about your petition? Contact the **Broward County Value Adjustment Board** directly at 954.357.7292.

Skip the lines! Download V.A.B. petitions and find other info at our [BCPA.NET](http://BCPA.NET) website.

**IMPORTANT:** All petitions **APPEALING ASSESSED VALUES** must be received by the Broward County Value Adjustment Board by the close of business on **September 18, 2006**. All “Good Cause” late filing petitions for an **EXEMPTION** must be received by the Broward County Value Adjustment Board by the close of business on **January 2, 2007**.