



Frequently Asked Questions



Appraisal & Value



What is market value, and how do you arrive at it?

Market value is the most probable price a property would sell for on the open market. The appraisal district uses sales, income, and building cost information from various sources, and then applies that information to fit a property's specific characteristics. For residential properties, the market (sales) approach is most often used.

Has anyone actually looked at my property?

Yes, a combination of field inspection and aerial photography is used by field appraisers to inspect all properties every year. These physical and aerial inspections are used to discover and list property features relevant to market value.

How often do you reappraise my property?

The Ector County Appraisal District uses an annual reappraisal cycle, which means that your property is appraised each year. Your property is inspected, and our records are updated to reflect any physical changes. Your property is then compared to similar properties that have sold recently to determine the market value of your property.

Why is IMPROVEMENT shown on my notice when I haven't made any improvements?

The Texas Property Tax Code defines "Improvement" as a building, structure, fixture, or fence erected on or affixed to land. Houses, barns, garages, etc. are all considered improvements to the land, and the sum of the value of all these structures is listed under Improvement on your appraisal notice.

I haven't made any improvements to my home, so why did the value increase?

Every year, the appraisal district looks at residential sales all over Ector County. Sales are then grouped into classes of homes (based primarily on type, style, and quality of construction) and into neighborhoods and market areas. By doing this, your home is compared only to homes similar to yours and located in fairly close proximity. Even if you did nothing to improve your property, if similar homes in your area are selling for more than their appraised value, then the value of all comparable homes go up accordingly.

How can my property value keep going up every year?

State law requires appraisal districts to appraise all taxable property based on its market value as of January 1st each year. For residential property, market value is primarily determined by sales prices of comparable homes. Buyers and sellers determine the sale price of a property; the appraisal district measures the impact of those sales and adjusts the appraisals accordingly. If homes are selling for more, appraisals will go up and if they are selling for less, appraisals will go down.

Is the age of my house taken into consideration?

Yes. The age, size, condition, quality of construction, and location are all factors in the valuation of your property.

Is my home ever depreciated?

Yes. The appraisal district applies a depreciation based on the age and condition of the structure, but increases in the market value based on sales may be more than the amount of depreciation applied.

My neighbor's house is just like mine, so why is my appraisal higher?

There are several reasons your appraisal might be higher. Residential properties are appraised on a per-square-foot basis. Your home might be slightly larger, which would result in a higher value. Also taken into consideration are other factors such as age, condition, quality of construction, and other structures located on the property. Additionally, your neighbor may have an exemption for which you do not qualify. If your neighbor has an exemption for over 65 years of age or disabled person, their property would have a lower taxable value.

What if I own a mobile home, but not the land?

You will only be responsible for taxes on the value of the mobile home. You may also apply for a homestead exemption on the mobile home if it is your principal residence (see the application requirements below).

How can my land value go up?

State law directs that land and improvements (structures) be valued and listed separately in appraisal records. When sales indicate that values are increasing more in a particular area or neighborhood than for similar properties in other areas, the appraisal district will make an adjustment in the land portion of the property to reflect the sales price differences in those neighborhoods.

I think my property would sell for the listed appraised value, but my estimated taxes are too high.

What can I do?

Local taxing units decide how much money they must spend to provide the public services we all need and use. Property tax rates are set according to taxing unit budgets. After final values are established by the appraisal district, each taxing unit adopts a tax rate, based on the total taxable value within its jurisdiction, which will raise the needed funds. The taxing entities will each hold public hearings if necessary and adopt tax rates, usually in September. Notices of the date and time of the hearings are published in the Odessa American and on the Truth-In-Taxes website, www.ector.truthintaxes.com. The public is invited to contact taxing entities, attend hearings, and let their voices be heard.



Exemptions

What is a residential homestead exemption?

The general homestead exemption is provided by state law for owner-occupied residential properties. The exemption deducts a portion of your value from taxation, which reduces your tax liability on your principal residence.

How do I qualify for the residential homestead exemption?

You may qualify for this exemption on property you own and occupy in the tax year. This property must be your principal residence and you may not claim a homestead on another property. To prove principal residency, all owners must provide a Texas Driver's License or a Texas Identification Card with the same mailing address as the location of the property on which the homestead is being requested.

Do I need to reapply for my homestead exemption every year?

No. Applications are necessary only when the chief appraiser requests a new one, or when you move to a new residence.

Where and when do I apply for my homestead exemption?

You may apply at the Ector County Appraisal District between January 1st and April 30th of the tax year. You may file for a late homestead exemption up to one year after the date which the taxes become delinquent. Contact our office for more information.

How many acres can I claim as my homestead?

State law allows you to claim that portion of your land that you maintain for residential purposes, but this amount may not exceed 20 acres.

Can I claim a homestead exemption on a mobile home if I do not own the land?

Yes. In addition to the ID requirements listed above, you will need to furnish a copy of Statement of Ownership (your mobile home title) issued by the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs which lists you as owner of the mobile home.

Am I eligible for additional exemptions when I turn 65?

If you are age 65 or older, you are eligible for additional exemption deductions on your qualified residential homestead property. You will also receive a tax ceiling, which limits the amount of your school taxes. You may file for the Over 65 Exemption up to one year from the date you turned 65. If

you are already receiving the homestead exemption and the appraisal district records include your birth date, the Over 65 exemption will be automatically applied for the year you qualify.

Are there property tax benefits for homeowners with disabilities?

If you have a disability, you may qualify for exemptions if (1) you can't engage in gainful work because of physical or mental disability; or (2) you are 55 years old and blind and can't engage in your previous work because of blindness. If you receive disability benefits under the Federal Old Age, Survivors, and Disability Insurance Program through the Social Security Administration or the Teacher Retirement System of Texas, you should qualify. Disability benefits from any other program do not automatically qualify.

Am I eligible for additional exemptions as a surviving spouse?

If you are 55 years or older, you may continue to receive the same Over 65 exemption benefits that your spouse received. When a homeowner who has been receiving the tax ceiling on school taxes dies, the ceiling transfers to the surviving spouse, if the survivor is 55 years or older and has ownership in the home. The survivor must apply to the appraisal district for the tax ceiling to transfer.

Are there property tax deductions for disabled veterans?

You may qualify for a property tax deduction if you are either (1) a veteran who was disabled while serving with the U.S. armed forces; or (2) the surviving spouse who remains unmarried; or (3) the child (under 18 years of age and unmarried) of a disabled veteran. You must be a Texas resident and must provide documentation from the Veteran's Administration reflecting the percentage of the service-connected disability. The disability rating must be at least 10%.

Veterans who:

- receive 100% disability compensation and
- have a 100% disability rating or are rated as unemployable

qualify for a 100% homestead exemption on their principal residence. Applications are available in our office or online at www.ectorcad.org in the Forms List. The surviving spouse of the veteran who qualified for the exemption when the disabled veteran died may also be entitled to the exemption.