

FAQ'S

What is property taxation? Property Tax is an ad valorem tax, which means “according to value”. Ad valorem tax, the tax collected by the tax officer, is based on the value of the taxable property.

What property is taxed? All real estate and personal property are taxable unless law has exempted the property (O.C.G.A. 48-5-3.) “Real Property” is land and generally anything that is erected, growing or affixed to the land; personal property is everything that can be owned that is not real estate. “Personal property” typically consists of inventory and fixtures used in conducting a business, such as boats, aircraft, farm machinery, motor vehicles and mobile homes. The contents of your household are not normally taxable unless they are used for a home-based business.

Who decides how much my property is worth for tax purposes? The Gwinnett County Board of Assessors and their staff have the responsibility of determining the value of property in Gwinnett County.

What is the difference between fair market and assessed value? Assessed value is defined as being 40% of the fair market value. Property in Georgia is taxed on the assessed value.

What is a millage rate? For City taxes, the tax rate, or millage rate, is set annually by the Mayor and Council of the City of Duluth. A tax rate of one mill represents a tax liability of one dollar per \$1,000 of assessed value. The governing authority estimates their total revenue from other sources. This figure is subtracted from their overall budgetary needs, and then a millage rate is set that will generate the necessary revenues to fulfill budgetary requirements.

How is my tax bill calculated? To calculate a tax bill, you must first deduct any exemptions such as Homestead Exemption that may apply from the assessed value; thus generating a net assessed (taxable) value. Next multiply the net assessed value by the millage rate.

When is my tax bill due? City of Duluth tax bills for real estate and business personal property are mailed out on or before September 1st and are due on or before December 15th each year. After the due date, interest at the rate of 1% per month is added to the base amount. Additionally, a penalty of 10% will apply to all taxes that remain unpaid. The City Clerk has the right and responsibility to levy (place a lien) on the property for non-payment, as a last resort for tax collection. Tax bills are mailed to the homeowner, never to the mortgage company. Some mortgage companies contact the City directly to obtain billed amounts, but if not, you should forward the bill you receive to your mortgage company. Please verify with your mortgage company which method they utilize.

Is there any way to reduce my tax bill? Yes, there are several exemptions and special assessment programs available that may apply to your property. The most common are

homestead exemptions for real estate, business personal property, as well as a Freeport exemption, if applicable.

What is and how do I file for Homestead Exemption? Homestead exemption is the system developed by the State of Georgia that exempts from taxation a specified amount of assessed value of your home. You may apply for homestead exemption in the Gwinnett County Tax Commissioner's office. To qualify you must both own and occupy your home as of January 1. Once you have qualified for homestead exemption and remain in the same house, you do not need to reapply. However, if you move, you are required to reapply for the exemption for the new location. Applications can be submitted year-round but the deadline for filing for the current year is April 1st. When the homeowner reaches the age of 65 years old, they may apply for an additional senior exemption. To file for both City and County exemptions, the Gwinnett County Tax Commissioner's Office located at 75 Langley Drive, Lawrenceville, GA 30046, or call 770-822-8800. Please visit online for details of all the available homestead exemptions via their website www.GwinnettTaxCommissioner.com.

When property is sold, what is the responsibility of the new owner? Property taxes are usually prorated at the real estate closing, but the new owner is legally responsible for payment. Check with your closing attorney. If you have an escrow account, you should forward the tax notice to your mortgage company so the proper party can pay.

What do tax dollars fund inside the City of Duluth? Property tax revenues account for 20% of funds available to provide City services. Examples of these services are listed below:

- ✓ Activities at the Community Center, park programs-Bunten Road Park
- ✓ Beautification of areas such as Buford Highway
- ✓ Business and Alcohol License Control
- ✓ Citizen involvement and awareness programs
- ✓ City newsletters
- ✓ Community events: movies, concerts, festivals, etc.
- ✓ Development of park grounds, maintenance and green space
- ✓ Economic Development
- ✓ Memorial Day and Veterans services, flags and memorial markers
- ✓ Police programs such as COPS, Duluth against Drugs-D.A.D, Citizens Police Academy, etc.
- ✓ Police protection, vacation house checks
- ✓ Public Works dumpster services, recycling, compost units, and mulch
- ✓ Street maintenance & street lights
- ✓ Zoning code and property maintenance enforcement

For further information, please contact: City of Duluth Property Tax Officer, Crystal Huntzinger
3167 Main Street Duluth, GA 30096. Also, via telephone at 770-476-3434 or email taxes@duluthga.net.

Definitions:

Ad Valorem: according to value.

Ad Valorem Tax: a tax levied in proportion to the value of the property being taxed.

Appraisal: estimate of value.

Appraisal Date: in Georgia, this date is January 1 of each tax year.

Assessed Value: is the dollar value assigned to a property to measure applicable taxes.

Assessment Roll: lists for all taxable properties the name of the owner, the assessed value, exemptions, etc.

Assessor: appointed by the county governing authority to serve as administrative head over assessment functions including valuation, approval and denial of exemptions.

Base Year: value set at a point in time used to calculate the amount of homestead exemption to offset inflationary increases to value.

City Property Tax Officer: Responsible of disbursing and collecting ad valorem taxes, also collecting delinquent taxes and performing other duties.

Effective Tax Rate: the tax rate expressed as a percentage of market value.

Equalization: process which attempts to ensure that property is appraised equitably at market value or as otherwise required by law.

Governing Authority: county board of commissioners or city council (elected officials).

Homestead Exemption: a release from a portion of assessment or property tax on taxpayer's primary residence.

Market Value: the highest price in terms of money that a property will bring in a competitive and open market under all conditions requisite to a fair sale with the buyer and seller, each acting prudently, knowledgeable, assuming the price is not affected by undue stimulus (fair market value).

Mass Appraisal: the process of valuing a group of properties as of a given date, using standard methods, and allowing for statistical testing to achieve uniformity and equalization.

Mill or Millage: term used to express property tax rate. One mill is one-thousandth of one dollar or one-tenth of one cent. Millage is often expressed as whole numbers in Georgia, such as 6 mills which means that the tax bill on an assessment of \$100,000 = 6 mills/thousand or \$600.

Tax Levy: in property taxes is the total revenue that is to be realized by the tax.

Tax Digest: (roll) the official list of each taxpayer subject to property taxes together with the assessment and the amounts taxes due.

Uniformity: assessed values that have the same relationship to market value as do all other assessments within the tax district. It implies equalization of the tax burden.