

St. Mary's County Senior "Cap" Tax Credit

The Senior Property Tax Credit has been an initiative of the St. Mary's County Board of Commissioners since February 2004. Upon authority granted from the Maryland General Assembly, the County Commissioners, with the help and input of local Senior Citizens, created the Senior Property Tax Credit to assist seniors in keeping up with escalating real property values, assessments, and taxes on the homes that they have worked so hard for all their lives.

Am I eligible for the Senior Property Tax Credit?

To qualify for the Credit upon your Dwelling, you must be a Senior Citizen and of Limited Income. For the purposes of this Credit, a Senior Citizen is a person seventy (70) years old or older as of July 1 of the tax year in which application for the Credit is submitted. Furthermore, you must have a household taxable net income (found on Maryland Income Tax Form 502) equal to or less than \$80,000. (This does not mean gross income or "pre-tax income." Therefore, all of your deductions and exemptions are calculated before your eligibility for this Credit is determined).

My home is in a Living Trust. Am I eligible for the Senior Property Tax Credit?

If you meet the criteria above and are a trustee of the living trust that holds fee simple title to your Dwelling, you qualify for the Credit.

What is a "Dwelling?"

A Dwelling is Real Property that is the legal and principal residence of the senior citizen for more than six (6) consecutive months in the Tax Year. It cannot be occupied by more than two families. Seniors are not penalized for non-occupancy of the dwelling because of illness or the need for special care (i.e., stays in a nursing home).

What is the "Base Year?"

"Base Year" means the first year an applicant applies for the Senior Tax Credit. For first time applicants your "Base Year" would be based on the date of your first signed application.

What is the amount of the credit?

For each year after the "Base Year" the credit will equal the amount of increase in the County's real property tax assessed that year over the County's real property tax assessed in the base year.

I have been given the Credit. Does this mean my total tax bill will not increase?

In short, the answer is no. There are many components to a property tax bill. On everyone's property tax bill in St. Mary's County there is a State Tax, which may increase up to 10% per year; the County Tax, which may increase up to 5% per year; a Fire Tax; a Rescue Tax and an Emergency Services Tax; and fees, such as the Bay Restoration Fund Fee and the Environmental Solid Waste Fee. In addition, some residents of the County pay special benefit assessments on their tax bill, such as for a MetCom special taxing district or road or shore erosion taxing district. The County has received authority from the Maryland General Assembly to grant a credit only on the County's tax upon the property.

My spouse had applied for and was granted the Credit, but has since passed. Do I have to repay the Credit and what happens next tax year when he or she can no longer apply?

The credit is good for an entire Tax Year. Therefore, if the Senior Citizen who applied for the Credit passes during the Tax Year, the surviving spouse will not have to repay the Credit for that year. If the surviving spouse is also a Senior Citizen, he or she may apply for the Tax Credit in the succeeding years and continue to use the deceased spouse's base year in the marital home. This insulates the surviving spouse from increases in the County's portion of the property tax from the time the deceased spouse first applied and was granted the credit until the death of that spouse.

When do I apply for the Senior Property Tax Credit?

You must apply for the Senior Property Tax Credit annually before September 1 to receive credit for the current Tax Year. Your application will be reviewed and if you qualify, the credit will be on your Real Estate Tax bill coded as "STC". *You must re-apply each calendar year for the Credit; it cannot be automatically renewed due to the income limitation imposed by the Maryland General Assembly.*

Where do I apply?

You may apply for the Senior Property Tax Credit at the Office of the County Treasurer, located at 23150 Leonard Hall Drive, Patuxent Building, Leonardtown, Maryland 20650. *If you think you qualify, please complete the form and mail to the County Treasurer with proof of age and income.*

Who can I speak to if I have further questions?

You may contact the County Treasurer's Office, at 301-475-4200 ext. 3300 or The St. Mary's County Department of Aging and Human Services 301-475-4200 ext. 1064