



# JANUARY 2010

## NEIGHBORHOOD NEWSLETTER

Our goal is to help you get the most out of your local Real Estate market.

Whether it's buying or selling, we can put our expertise to work for you. We specialize in homes in your area!

Contact us today for more information on the services we can provide.

### Texas Homestead Exemption

A homestead exemption reduces taxes by lowering a home's taxable value. All school districts offer a \$15,000 homestead exemption, and some taxing units offer additional optional reductions for the homestead exemption. Homeowners can lower their property taxes by applying for these exemptions for which they are eligible. You must OWN your own home and occupy it as your principal residence on January 1. You can have only ONE principal residence and ONE homestead exemption.

Homeowners who are 65 yrs or older on January 1 are also entitled to an over 65 homestead exemption with a minimum reduction of \$10,000 for school tax purposes. Once you receive an over 65 homestead exemption, you automatically qualify for a tax ceiling on your school taxes. If you don't add any improvements, your school taxes will never increase from the amount you owed when you first qualified, even if the assessed value of the home increases.

When a homeowner who has been receiving the school tax ceiling dies, the ceiling amount will transfer to the surviving spouse if the survivor is 55yrs or older. The survivor must have ownership of the home and submit proof of age and proof of death of the deceased spouse. The surviving spouse must apply to the appraisal district for the tax ceiling, it will NOT transfer automatically. A homeowner who meets the definition of a totally disabled person under state law on January 1, ordinarily qualifies for a disability homestead exemption. (You may NOT claim BOTH over 65 and disabled person exemptions.)

A special form is needed to apply for homestead exemptions. The form must be completed and returned to the appropriate appraisal office not before January 1 but no later than April 30.

Once you receive a homestead exemption, you will not need to apply again unless the appraisal office asks you to do so in writing. If you move to a new home, you will need to file a new application. If you pass your 65th birthday before January 1, you will also need to file a new application.

For additional information regarding Texas Tax information, visit the State Controller of Public Accounts Website ([www.window.state.tx.us](http://www.window.state.tx.us)), or call the office toll-free at 1-800-252-5555.

<http://www.traviscad.org/formlist.htm>

<http://www.wcad.org>

*Information deemed reliable but not guaranteed.*



## PATTEN LAW FIRM

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