



A publication of the Office of the City Manager, City of Cambridge  
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617-349-4300 • [cambridgema.gov](http://cambridgema.gov)  
Newsletter #3

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## Property Value Information:

Property Value Information:  
Assessing Department  
617-349-4343, [cambridgema.gov/assessing](http://cambridgema.gov/assessing)

Tax Bill Information:  
Finance Department  
617-349-4220, [cambridgema.gov/finance](http://cambridgema.gov/finance)

Budget Information:  
Budget Office  
617-349-4270, [cambridgema.gov/budget](http://cambridgema.gov/budget)

General Information:  
City Manager's Office  
617-349-4300, [cambridgema.gov/citymanager](http://cambridgema.gov/citymanager)



Cambridge introduces new composting program

## Questions on your tax bill or assessment?

Email us at:

[Treasurer@cambridgema.gov](mailto:Treasurer@cambridgema.gov)  
[Assessors@cambridgema.gov](mailto:Assessors@cambridgema.gov)

 [CambridgeMA.Gov](https://www.facebook.com/CambridgeMA.Gov)  [@CambMA](https://twitter.com/CambMA)



YWCA Cambridge Family Shelter  
859 Massachusetts Avenue



*The City continues to offer one of the most generous tax exemption programs in the Commonwealth.*

*Louis A. DePasquale, City Manager • Lisa C. Peterson, Deputy City Manager • David J. Kale, Finance Director*

## Dear Taxpayers of Cambridge:

This is the third newsletter issued to Cambridge taxpayers in an effort to provide information regarding the City's budget and property taxes.

Property tax bills for the first half of the fiscal year were mailed to you on October 26, 2018, with a due date of November 26, 2018. This newsletter contains information about property tax exemptions and tax deferrals that may help you reduce or defer real estate taxes.

Please read this information carefully, and if you believe you are eligible for an exemption or tax deferral program, contact the City of Cambridge Assessing Department at 617-349-4343 to request an application form or to discuss your particular situation. Information is also available on the City's Assessing Department webpage:  
[www.cambridgema.gov/assessing](http://www.cambridgema.gov/assessing).

The City continues to offer one of the most generous tax exemption programs in the Commonwealth. Each year, the City Council votes to double the value of the statutory exemptions, and to index income and asset levels to keep pace with inflation. Cambridge was one

of the first municipalities in the Commonwealth to adopt this taxpayer benefit.

Additionally, each year the City adopts one of the highest residential exemptions allowed by law. The FY19 residential exemption is \$375,800, which results in a tax bill reduction of \$2,232.25 for owners who reside in their property and file a Massachusetts income tax return using that address.

I encourage you to read this publication, and to seek out City staff from the departments listed on the back cover with any questions or comments.

Very truly yours,

  
Louis A. DePasquale  
City Manager

## Mark your calendar!

- If you do not receive your tax bill by **November 9, 2018**, please contact the Finance Department at 617-349-4220 or [treasurer@cambridgema.gov](mailto:treasurer@cambridgema.gov)
- First Half Tax Bills Due: **November 26, 2018**
- Abatement Applications Due: **November 26, 2018**
- Exemption Applications Due: **April 1, 2019**

**Next Participatory Budgeting Vote  
December 1-7, 2018!**

*Visit [pb.cambridgema.gov](http://pb.cambridgema.gov) for more information.*





# Elderly, Veteran, and Other Statutory Exemptions

A variety of statutory exemptions are available to reduce property tax obligations for certain qualifying taxpayers: elderly persons, blind persons, disabled veterans, surviving spouses or orphaned minor children, and extreme hardship. There is also an exemption for active duty Massachusetts military servicemembers.

Applications for FY19 statutory exemptions are due no later than April 1, 2019 (MGL Ch.59, S.5, effective 11/7/2016)

**General Qualifications for Exemptions:** Applicants must meet age and residency qualifications as of July 1, 2018. In most cases, the applicant must have owned and occupied real estate property in Massachusetts for five years (and owned and occupied the current property on July 1 in the year of application), and in Massachusetts, the property must have been the applicant's place of domicile for the preceding ten years.

In some circumstances, if two or more persons jointly own a property and each qualifies for a different exemption, more than one exemption may be applied to a single property tax bill.

**For Owners of Property in Trust:** Trust ownership arrangements may affect qualification for a statutory exemption. As a general rule, an applicant must be a trustee and a beneficiary and submit:

- A copy of a recorded trust instrument, including amendments
- A copy of the schedule of beneficiaries

Consult your attorney if these requirements pertain to you. The following table provides a general idea of the exemptions available. For more information, please contact the Assessing Department at 617-349- 4343.

## Residential Exemption

More than two-thirds of the residential property in Cambridge is owner occupied. You are eligible for a residential exemption if you owned and occupied your property as your primary residence as of January 1, 2018. Check your bill to make sure that you received the residential exemption. If you do not see this on your bill, and you qualify, an application form **must be submitted no later than April 1, 2019**. You do not need to reapply each year.

## Senior Tax Deferral Program

Homeowners who are 65 or older and who meet certain income and asset guidelines are eligible to defer up to 100% of annual property taxes. As required by state law, deferred taxes accumulate with simple interest at 4% as a lien on the property until it is sold or the owner is deceased.

## Massachusetts Military Service Tax Payment

Another form of tax relief available to Massachusetts National Guardsmen and reservists deployed outside of the state, is the Massachusetts Military Service Tax Payment Deferral. National Guardsmen and reservists deployed outside Massachusetts, and their dependents, are granted up to 180 days after that service to pay their property taxes-without interest or penalties. This local option statute is patterned after the provisions of the Federal Service Members Civil Relief Act, which allows similar benefits for federal, state, or local income taxes. The deferral applies to all outstanding property taxes of qualifying guardsmen or reservists and their dependents, regardless of when the taxes are due.

## Senior & Valor Act Veteran Work Program

The Department of Human Services (DHSP) offers positions to Cambridge seniors to work up to 75 hours during the year. Duties include assisting in senior center activities, mailings, and other office tasks. All work is performed onsite at the Senior Centers. Senior qualification guidelines include being a Cambridge resident, age 60 or older, and meeting the Cambridge Housing Authority's income guidelines.

The program serves seniors who are either homeowners or renters. Veteran qualification guidelines under the Valor Act are available from the Board of Assessors.

## Community Preservation Act (CPA)

CPA Residential Exemption: The first \$100,000 of residential property value is automatically exempt from the CPA surcharge. The CPA surcharge on your FY19 bill accounts for the \$100,000 exemption.

*CPA Low/Moderate Income Exemption:* Qualifying lower income owners and low to moderate income seniors may be eligible for a full surcharge exemption, based on income guidelines established by the Commonwealth each year. The form is available on the City’s Assessing Department webpage.

*Guidelines:*

- Applicant must own and occupy the property as their primary residence as of January 1, 2018.
- Applicant and each co-owner must have household income for the calendar year before January 1, 2018, at or below the limit for that owner's household size and type.

The table below shows the limits by household type:

Household Size (# persons)	Senior Household	Non-Senior Household
1 person	\$75,500	\$60,400
2 people	\$86,300	\$69,040
3 people	\$97,100	\$77,680
4 people	\$107,800	\$86,240
5 people	\$116,500	\$93,200
6 people	\$125,100	\$100,080
7 people	\$133,700	\$106,960
8 people	\$142,300	\$113,840

*Note: The annual income limits are based on the median income for the Boston area, set by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development, and income limits are based on inclusionary housing program guidelines. If your household is larger than five persons, please contact the Assessing Department for the formula.*

## Senior Circuit Breaker Tax Credit

Eligible seniors are able to reduce their property taxes even further through this state tax credit program. A tax credit is available to assist low-to moderate-income seniors in paying property taxes and utility charges. Under this program, eligible homeowners and renters receive a refundable credit on their state income taxes, if they file annual income tax returns (for the previous taxable year). This is a state program. For more information, please contact the Massachusetts Department of Revenue Customer Service at 617-887-6367.

*\*Income: Salary, wages, interest, dividends, rental income, IRA distributions, pensions.*  
*\*Assets: Stocks, bonds, IRAs, bank account balances, real estate holdings other than primary residence.*