COASTAL OWNERSHIP · FLORIDA PANHANDLE + COASTAL ALABAMA

The tax bill after you buy.

A Florida buyer's guide to reassessment, exemptions and escrow.

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Gregg Costin
Practical guidance for your next real estate decision.
(850) 266-5005 · GreggCostin.com

06

SEE THE WHOLE PROCESS FIRST

Your path, from start to finish.

The full purchase path comes first. This guide concentrates on the property decisions to resolve before the relevant contract deadlines.

01 **Preapproval + the money plan**

Verify borrowing capacity before searching or touring. Select the product, payment, cash and reserve plan. Cash buyers verify funds.

02 **Search + property-specific offer**

Compare suitable homes and real ownership costs. Agree on price, protections, deposit, dates and possession.

03 **Accepted contract + calendar**

Deliver the signed contract, confirm the deposit and open the lender and closing files. Calendar every actual deadline.

04 **Investigate + decide**

Inspection, specialist estimates, insurance, title and association review run alongside the loan. Decide before rights expire.

05 **Underwriting + final conditions**

The lender reviews the borrower and property, clears conditions and coordinates disclosures and funding.

06 **Review + close + receive possession**

Review final figures, verify funds, walk through, sign and confirm the contractual conditions for keys.

07 **Own + maintain + keep records**

Complete the servicing, tax, insurance and maintenance handoff. Plan for future costs and the eventual sale.

Read top to bottom; work can overlap.

The chapters follow this order. Property, lender and closing reviews often run in parallel. Your contract, loan product, required approvals and actual circumstances set the dates.

FOLLOW THE STEPS. KEEP THE REFERENCE.

The details behind each decision.

A seller's Florida property-tax bill can substantially understate a new buyer's future bill. A qualifying ownership change generally resets the assessment to just value the following January 1, so build your budget using the buyer's expected assessment and exemptions.

INSIDE THIS GUIDE

Reset
The seller's assessed value may not be your value.

Estimate
Use the parcel, tax year and buyer circumstances.

Apply
Confirm homestead, portability and deadlines.

Use this with your team

Examples are hypothetical. Your signed contract, lender, insurer, closing professional and applicable orders govern the actual work. Keep sensitive records in verified secure channels. Page-level references link the authorities; source dates are listed individually at the back.

STAGE 1 / 7 Preapproval + the money plan

01 First: preapproval. Then: the home search.

Before we book tours, turn a possible purchase into a budget that works in real life.

The order that protects your options

01 **Set a comfortable payment**
Include taxes after purchase, insurance, association dues, maintenance and the reserve you will keep.

02 **Ask the lender to verify the file**
Use a secure application and complete income, asset and credit documents. Ask what has actually been reviewed.

03 **Agree on the search brief**
Match price, property type, closing cash and timing to the lender's conditions and your household budget.

04 **Begin searching and touring**
Look at homes you can realistically pursue, then refresh the property-specific figures before each offer.

What happens before the first tour

01 You
Explain your move, income changes and source of closing money. Choose your comfort limit, even if approval is higher.

02 Loan officer + lender
Review documentation, identify conditions and discuss eligible products. Only the lender decides whether it can approve the loan.

03 Your agent
Turn the agreed payment and cash limits into a property brief. Flag condos, leaseholds, major repairs or an assumption for lender review.

THE HANDOFF
Ready to search: a conditional letter, a written payment/cash scenario, an expiration date and a list of outstanding requirements.

KEEP IN MIND

Why this is critical

Early review exposes documentation problems while time is flexible, prevents tours above your comfortable payment, tests whether your chosen property type fits the loan, and makes an offer's financing terms more credible. It does not guarantee approval or reserve an interest rate.

Reference desk: CFPB: Preapproval and its conditions · CFPB: Loan types, terms and rate structures

STAGE 2 / 7 Search + property-specific offer

02 Where this review fits in the purchase

Start investigating as soon as you have a serious address. Finish the required decisions within the actual contract dates.

Use the specialist chapters in this order

01 **Before committing**

Get the property documents and initial cost assumptions. Identify questions that could make the home or intended use unsuitable.

02 **During due diligence**

The relevant professional reviews the records, investigates gaps and prices the consequences. Coordinate findings with the lender.

03 **Before protections expire**

Choose to accept, negotiate a documented solution or use an available contract right.

04 **Before and after closing**

Confirm the promised documents or work, final costs and any ownership follow-up. Keep the evidence in your property file.

The handoff for this subject

01 **You + agent**

Request the right evidence and decide how the findings affect the offer and your willingness to proceed.

02 **Subject professional**

The county, insurer, inspector, association or attorney answers the specific question within its authority.

03 **Lender + closing professional**

Confirm any effect on financing, coverage, title, required cash or closing conditions.

THE HANDOFF

Record the question, source, answer date, responsible person and the contract deadline it affects.

Reference desk: CFPB: Preapproval and its conditions

STAGE 4 / 7 Investigate + decide

03 Why the seller’s bill can mislead

The purchase changes the owner and may change the tax calculation.

A long-term owner may have accumulated a large Save Our Homes assessment difference. That protection generally does not transfer to an unrelated buyer simply because it appears in the listing’s tax history.

The property appraiser determines the assessment; a sale price is relevant evidence, but it is not a promise that the tax assessment will equal that exact price.

Four values to keep separate

Term / Meaning for your budget

Purchase price
What you agree to pay for the property

Just value
The property appraiser’s market-value determination

Assessed value
Value after applicable assessment limits or portability

Taxable value
Assessed value after applicable exemptions; can differ by taxing authority

KEEP IN MIND

The reset rule has exceptions

Florida lists certain transfers between spouses, some transfers upon death, corrections of title, and other qualifying changes that may avoid reassessment. Ask the property appraiser and closing professional about your actual ownership structure.

YOUR WORKING NOTES · CONFIRM WITH THE RESPONSIBLE PROFESSIONAL

Bring these records

Parcel number / county / taxing district:

Seller’s just, assessed, and taxable values:

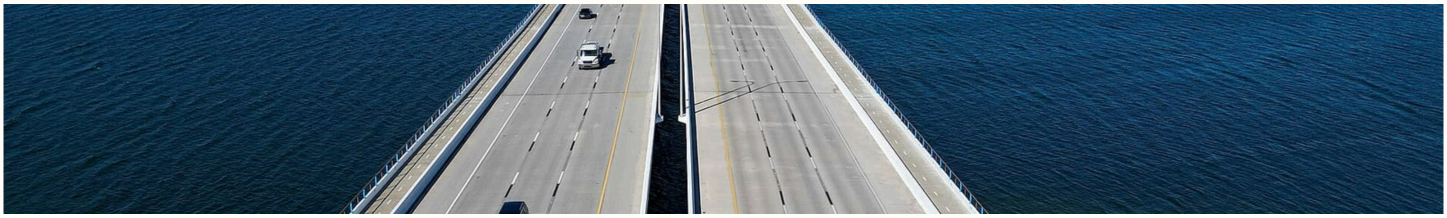
Buyer estimate requested from / date:

Reference desk: Florida DOR: Save Our Homes and portability · Florida DOR: Property tax forms and publications

STAGE 4 / 7 Investigate + decide

04 Build a buyer estimate

Calculate the change before it becomes an escrow surprise.



Ask for a purchase-based estimate using your intended occupancy, expected exemption eligibility, and any documented portability. Identify which millage rates apply to which taxable values. Include non-ad valorem assessments such as charges appearing separately on the tax bill. A broad county percentage is less useful than the correct parcel, taxing district, and buyer circumstances.

Teaching example, not a parcel estimate

Assumption	Annual amount
Hypothetical school taxable value $400,000 × 6 mills	$2,400
Hypothetical other taxable value $375,000 × 10 mills	$3,750
Hypothetical non-ad valorem charges	$300
Illustrative annual tax / monthly reserve	$6,450 / $537.50

One mill is $1 per $1,000 of taxable value. The values and millages above are invented to teach the calculation; they are not current local rates or standard exemption amounts.

If a seller's historical bill were $3,000 while your buyer estimate were $6,450, the annual difference would be $3,450, or $287.50 per month.

A lender collecting only the old amount could later need to increase the payment and address a shortage. Ask the lender which assessment it used and whether the initial escrow matches the buyer estimate.

KEEP IN MIND

Compare the right years

Closing-year prorations and next-year ownership costs answer different questions. A credit at closing does not guarantee that your next full-year bill will match the seller's bill.

Reference desk: Florida DOR: Property tax forms and publications · Florida DOR: Save Our Homes and portability

STAGE 4 / 7 Investigate + decide

05 Homestead is an application

Eligibility belongs to the owner and the facts of residency.

Discuss January 1 ownership and permanent-residency requirements with the county property appraiser. The ordinary filing deadline is March 1; ask the office about any applicable late-filing process rather than assuming an exception applies. A primary-home mortgage designation does not itself file a Florida property-tax exemption.

Prepare for the property appraiser

- ☐ Verify the deed and parcel information after recording.
- ☐ Collect the identity and residency evidence requested by your county.
- ☐ Disclose any other residence-based property-tax benefit you or relevant household members claim.
- ☐ Ask about portability, surviving-spouse, disability, military, or other exemptions when applicable.
- ☐ Retain the submitted application, supporting documents, receipt, and approval.

KEEP IN MIND

Use the current exemption calculation

Florida's additional homestead exemption has an inflation adjustment and does not apply identically to school and non-school taxes. Use the current county/DOR calculation; a flat "subtract $50,000 everywhere" shortcut can be wrong.

YOUR WORKING NOTES · CONFIRM WITH THE RESPONSIBLE PROFESSIONAL

Your application calendar

January 1 eligibility confirmed with: ______________________

Application deadline / submission confirmation: ______________________

Other exemptions or portability to evaluate: ______________________

Reference desk: Florida DOR: Property tax forms and publications · Florida DOR: Save Our Homes and portability

STAGE 4 / 7 **Investigate + decide**

06 Portability is separate from the cap

An existing Florida benefit may help, but the calculation matters.

Save Our Homes limits annual assessed-value increases on qualifying homesteads after the initial year to the lower of 3% or the change in CPI. It does not cap the total tax bill at 3%: millage, assessments, exemptions, and other circumstances can change. The accumulated difference is an assessment benefit, not a cash credit.

A move from a prior Florida homestead may allow portability of all or part of that assessment difference. DOR says the new homestead must be established within three years of January 1 of the year the previous homestead was abandoned. That is not simply three years after the closing date. File the required transfer application with the new homestead application and obtain the county's calculation.

Questions that change the answer

Question / Who confirms it

Was the old property a qualifying Florida homestead?
Previous county property appraiser

When was the old homestead abandoned?
Property appraiser using your circumstances

How much benefit transfers to this new property?
New county property appraiser

Does ownership or a move by one owner affect the share?
Property appraiser and closing/tax adviser

KEEP IN MIND

Do not budget a benefit twice

Portability affects assessed value. Homestead exemptions affect taxable value. Ask for a worksheet showing each step rather than subtracting the same benefit twice.

Reference desk: Florida DOR: Save Our Homes and portability

STAGE 6 / 7 Review + close + receive possession

07 Your tax and escrow checklist

Turn the research into a documented decision.

Save the dated documents supporting your decision with the transaction file. Write down who confirmed each open issue and when the answer is due.

If the answer affects affordability, financing, insurability, legal use, or resale, resolve it while your contract still gives you the relevant choices. Your agent coordinates the process; the lender, insurer, association, government office, or closing professional confirms the fact within its role.

YOUR WORKING NOTES · CONFIRM WITH THE RESPONSIBLE PROFESSIONAL

Your decision record

Buyer-based annual tax estimate / assumptions:

Monthly tax reserve / lender escrow amount:

Homestead / portability application status:

Next assessment notice review date:

Before removing a contingency

- [ ] Review the actual documents and written estimates, including exclusions and assumptions.
- [ ] Separate recurring costs, immediate cash needs, and possible future liabilities.
- [ ] Confirm unresolved items, the person responsible, and the contractual response deadline.
- [ ] Ask whether a new fact changes your price, terms, financing, or decision to proceed.

KEEP IN MIND

A useful question for every professional

What would make this estimate or approval change before closing, and what evidence would tell us that has happened?

Reference desk: Florida DOR: Property tax forms and publications · Florida DOR: Save Our Homes and portability

FOLLOW THE EVIDENCE

The original guidance.

Consult the source before relying on a changing amount, deadline, policy or contact. Individual source review dates appear below.

01

CFPB: Preapproval and its conditions

https://www.consumerfinance.gov/owning-a-home/explore/get-a-preapproval-letter/
Reviewed 2026-09-08

02

CFPB: Loan types, terms and rate structures

https://www.consumerfinance.gov/owning-a-home/explore/understand-the-different-kinds-of-loans-available/
Reviewed 2026-09-08

03

Florida DOR: Save Our Homes and portability

https://floridarevenue.com/property/Documents/pt112.pdf
Reviewed 2026-09-06

04

Florida DOR: Property tax forms and publications

https://floridarevenue.com/property/Pages/Forms.aspx
Reviewed 2026-09-06

Apply the rule to your situation

This is an educational resource. Your lender, closing professional, insurer, property appraiser and installation offices confirm matters within their roles. No government agency, military installation or lender sponsors or endorses this publication. Source review dates change only after actual verification.

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RECOGNITION

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20 years of military service. 11 personal PCS moves.

$25M+	**60+**	**99.89%**	**8.1%**
Transaction volume	Families helped in the past year	List-to-price ratio Seller clients	Average price reduction Buyer clients

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Let's plan your next move.

(850) 266-5005

greggcostin@gmail.com

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Performance figures provided by Gregg Costin, September 6, 2026.
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