

APPLICATIONS FOR SENIOR PROPERTY TAX EXEMPTIONS MAILED; ALL SENIORS MUST APPLY TO RENEW THEIR EXEMPTIONS

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Oak Park residents sixty-five years of age or older should receive renewal forms for senior citizen property tax exemptions in early January, and will have until February 6 to complete them. Local seniors should feel free to call the office of Oak Park Township Assessor Ali ElSaffar for help with the forms.

Eligibility for Senior Citizen Exemptions. There are two senior tax exemptions:

- 1) The ***Senior Exemption***, available to all seniors regardless of income, reduces Oak Park property taxes by about \$975. It is available for any owner-occupied residential property if the owner was born in 1953 or earlier.
- 2) The ***Senior Freeze*** provides seniors with additional savings if the combined income of all members of the household is less than \$65,000, and if the senior has been an owner-occupant of the property since January 1, 2017.

The recently mailed senior applications are for the 2018 property taxes, which are paid in calendar year 2019. The savings from these exemptions will appear on second installment tax bills that will likely be mailed in late June of 2019.

Maximum income for Senior Freeze higher than in prior years. Between 2009 and 2017, seniors with annual household income of \$55,000 or less qualified for the Freeze. Last year, the maximum income rose to \$65,000, and it remains at that level. Seniors whose income was previously too high for the Freeze are advised to check to see if they now qualify.

New Senior Citizens. Homeowners who were born in 1953 turned sixty-five in 2018, and thus are likely to be eligible for the senior exemptions for the first time. “Taxpayers who recently turned sixty-five will probably not receive senior renewal forms in the mail,” Assessor ElSaffar said. “I encourage such individuals to call my office for information about the senior exemptions. Information is also available on the Cook County Assessor's web site.”

Homes formerly occupied by Senior Citizens. If a senior was living at a property on January 1, 2018, the property should be eligible for the 2018 senior exemptions (paid in 2019), even if the senior citizen ceased living at the property later in 2018. But special application forms have to be completed for properties eligible for the senior exemption under such circumstances. Owners of homes previously occupied by senior citizens should call the Township Assessor's office for further information.

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