



Certified Louisiana Assessor

LAWRENCE E. CHEHARDY, CLA

ASSESSOR, JEFFERSON PARISH
200 Derbigny Street
Gretna, Louisiana 70053
(504) 362-4100 (504) 736-6370
FAX (504) 366-4087

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Dear Homeowner,

Please find enclosed a two part card. The card marked "1" is your homestead exemption receipt. Your homestead exemption is now permanent. You do not have to reapply each year to keep it. You will keep your homestead exemption by continuing to **own and occupy** this property as your home. However, if you no longer own **and** occupy this property as your home, you must contact this office immediately so that the exemption can be cancelled. You should retain this card for your records as proof that you have your homestead exemption for 2007.

The second card, marked "2", is an application for the special assessment level for a homeowner who is sixty-five years of age or older and who has an adjusted gross income of \$60,498.00 or less on the homeowner's 2006 federal income tax return. If you believe that you qualify for the special assessment level which freezes your assessment at its current level please follow the instructions located on the card and fill out the card completely. If after filling out the card you meet the requirements to qualify for the special assessment level, please sign the card and return it to this office prior to the return date indicated on the card.

I. Market Value of Jefferson Parish Homes Post-Katrina and Rita.

Since Katrina and Rita I have closely monitored the sales prices of homes in Jefferson Parish. The average value of a home which sold in 2006 was \$217,000 on the East Bank and \$141,000 on the West Bank. The parish wide average was \$181,000. These are record numbers and include properties that were damaged by the storms as well as those that were not. As you can see the value of residential real estate in Jefferson Parish has risen despite the effects of the hurricanes on our community.

I will continue to monitor this rise in property values as well as the pace of recovery in Jefferson Parish neighborhoods. I assure you that I will do my best to make certain that damaged properties and neighborhoods are not overtaxed. Property taxes should not be an obstacle to recovery.

II. Property Tax Changes

Katrina and Rita have resulted in a number of changes to Louisiana's property tax laws. These changes have not been easy to accomplish since state bureaucrats have been an obstacle in many ways. Fortunately, the legislature, with the support of the Jefferson delegation, resisted these bureaucrats and made changes that have

benefited property owners in Jefferson Parish whose property was damaged or destroyed during the storms.

First and foremost I sponsored legislation that guaranteed that any home owner whose home was damaged or destroyed in the hurricane would not lose their homestead exemption because they could not occupy their damaged home. (Previous law required that the owner must also occupy the property to receive the homestead exemption.) I also sponsored legislation that made certain that senior citizens who have the benefit of the special assessment level would not lose this tax break simply because they had to repair their homes at a cost which would have otherwise disqualified them from the special assessment level.

In addition, I, along with other assessors and many legislators, worked to change state law to allow assessors to value and assess storm damaged property in its damaged condition. This change resulted in a major tax benefit for property owners whose property was damaged in the storms. Some wanted to tax such property in the year it was damaged as if the property was not damaged. This was wrong and the legislature agreed with me and others who resisted such arguments.

III. State of Jefferson Parish

These past nineteen months have been difficult for many people. Fortunately, most of Jefferson Parish has made a strong recovery from Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. This recovery, however, has not been easy. Many home and business owners have struggled to complete repairs to their property. At this time most people have completed the necessary repair work; and Jefferson Parish is thriving. For those whose repairs are not completed, please don't give up. Jefferson Parish needs you and wants you to remain a part of our community.

In closing, I want to thank you for allowing me to serve you in public office as your assessor. I look forward to serving you in the future as your assessor.

With kindest personal regards, I remain

Very sincerely yours,

Lawrence E. Chehardy, CLA
Assessor
Jefferson Parish