

2026 Tax Preparation Checklist for Georgia Property Owners

O'Connor discusses a tax preparation checklist for Georgia property owners.

ATLANTA, GA, UNITED STATES, March 2, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- 2026 is off to a roaring start, and as things finally begin to warm up, the people of Georgia have a lot to get ready for. While property taxes will not be due until December, there are many avenues open to get a reduction, which begin around this time. Whether a new or existing homeowner, there are possibilities that need to be looked into. Businesses should be aware of issues related to business personal property as well. March is the perfect time to get prepared for tax assessments that are usually sent out in May.



Tax Preparation Checklist for Georgia Property Owners

April 1, 2026, is the deadline for Returns of Real Property and to file for Georgia's many property tax exemptions. These can be very helpful when it comes to lowering property taxes, and supporting future appeals. Also, if property owners are considering an appeal in the future, it is best to get started on gathering evidence and proof early, so it will be ready when the appeal window opens in May.

Property Tax Returns for Real Property

From January 1 to April 1, residents in Georgia can file a Taxpayer's Return of Real Property. For homeowners, this allows them to declare any improvements or depreciations that their home experienced. If they put on a new roof, did a major renovation, or any other major upgrade, this should be declared on their return. Conversely, if they suffered major damage, this should be listed as well. Owners can also put forward their own figure for the fair market value of their

property.

Fair market value is used to determine their assessed value, which is what taxes are based on. While the assessor does not have to follow what the owner declares on their return, it does put their opinion on paper, which can be used in a future appeal. If they do not file a return by the deadline, then the board of assessors will assume that the value from the previous year is the correct value. This also applies to any exemptions on the property, which will carry over without a new return. If the owners bought a piece of real estate or made a major improvement, they must file a return or face penalties.

Personal Property Returns

Unlike real property, these returns are due by April 1 of every year. This is mostly focused on the tangible income-generating property for a business, but also includes furniture, fixtures, inventory, and machinery. The first \$20,000 of this personal property is exempt from taxation but still needs to be reported. If the owner is under this threshold, they will receive no bill. Boats, airplanes, and mobile homes are also covered under personal property, and returns for them should be filed as well. If owners wish to file a freeport exemption to shield inventory from taxation, it must be filed by April 1.

Filing Exemptions

April 1 continues to be the magic date, as the cutoff for the current tax year's exemptions are set on that date as well. If homeowners do not have a homestead exemption, they are certainly paying too much and should get one as soon as possible. This exemption not only helps lower taxes, but can be built upon by other exemptions, giving owners even more savings. This exemption will renew every year without requiring updates. There are many other exemptions available in Georgia, and their value can differ from county to county. Some have age, income, or other restrictions, with their exempted amounts varying between counties.

Exemptions Include:

Standard Homestead

Senior Homestead

Income-based exemptions for seniors

Floating Inflation-Proof Exemption

Disabled Veteran or Surviving Spouse

Surviving Spouse of U.S. Service Member

Surviving Spouse of Peace Officer or Firefighter

Depending on the county, there could be many more exemptions, each with its own valuation protections and requirements. For instance, the counties around Atlanta offer much larger homestead and other exemptions than most of Georgia. Owners should contact their local assessor to see all of the exemptions that they qualify for, as there could be some that they have

missed.

Property Valuation Freezes

Georgia has many options for freezes on property valuations. Many of these occur automatically when owners apply for a homestead exemption for the first time. Usually, these lock in the home's value to when the exemption was granted, only changing with inflation. This prevents large spikes and helps older residents stay in their homes. Many other counties will also have senior freezes. If owners have lived in a home for years or decades and already have a homestead exemption, they may need to apply for a freeze that came into law between first getting the exemption and present day. Other freezes are currently going on the books in certain counties and should be accounted for. Once again, owners should check with their local assessor to see what they qualify for.

Gathering Evidence for Appeals

Property tax appeals in Georgia are high-stakes, not just because of the large taxes involved. A successful appeal can result in a three-year freeze, which locks in the property to the amount the appeal was able to achieve. This is even better than the freezes offered by most exemptions. Since the system was abused in the past, winning an appeal takes more evidence and effort than ever. Now is a good time to start putting together a collection of evidence for when appeals open in May. Take photographs, find sales records, assemble similar properties in the neighborhood to prove unequal taxation, and more. Gathering evidence now can make the effort in the coming months much easier and helps owners understand what their chances for victory might be. The window for appeals opens in May and usually goes to July, with some counties even going to August.

About O'Connor:

O'Connor is one of the largest property tax consulting firms, representing 185,000 clients in 49 states and Canada, handling about 295,000 protests in 2024, with residential property tax reduction services in Texas, Illinois, Georgia, and New York. O'Connor's possesses the resources and market expertise in the areas of property tax, cost segregation, commercial and residential real estate appraisals. The firm was founded in 1974 and employs a team of 1,000 worldwide. O'Connor's core focus is enriching the lives of property owners through cost effective tax reduction.

Property owners interested in assistance appealing their assessment can enroll in O'Connor's Property Tax Protection Program™. There is no upfront fee, or any fee unless we reduce your property taxes, and easy online enrollment only takes 2 to 3 minutes.

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