

WAC 458-61A-102 Definitions. For the purposes of chapter 458-61A WAC, the following definitions apply unless the context requires otherwise:

(1) **"Affidavit"** means the real estate excise tax affidavit provided by the department for use by taxpayers in reporting transfers of real property. Both the seller/grantor and the buyer/grantee, or their agents, sign the affidavit under penalty of perjury. The term also includes the form used to report to the department transfers and acquisitions of a controlling interest in an entity owning real property in this state under WAC 458-61A-101.

(2) **"Agricultural land"** means farm and agricultural land and farm and agricultural conservation land, as those terms are defined in RCW 84.34.020, including any structures on such land.

(3) **"Consideration"** means money or anything of value, either tangible or intangible, paid or delivered, or contracted to be paid or delivered, including performance of services, in return for the transfer of real property. The term includes the amount of any lien, mortgage, contract indebtedness, or other encumbrance, given to secure the purchase price, or any part thereof, or remaining unpaid on the property at the time of sale. For example, Lee purchases a home for \$250,000. He puts down \$50,000, and finances the balance of \$200,000. The full consideration paid for the house is \$250,000.

(a) "Consideration" includes the issue of an ownership interest in any entity in exchange for a transfer of real property to the entity. For example, if Julie transfers title to 20 acres of commercial property to Smith Development, LLC in exchange for a 50% ownership interest in the company, that constitutes consideration for the transfer. In the case of partnerships, consideration includes the increase in the capital account of the partner made as a result of the partner's transfer of real property to the partnership, unless the transfer is otherwise specifically exempt under WAC 458-61A-211 or 458-61A-212.

(b) "Consideration" includes the assumption of an underlying debt on the property by the buyer at the time of transfer. For example, Ben buys a residence, valued at \$300,000, from Liza. Liza was purchasing the property on a real estate contract that has an outstanding balance of \$175,000. Ben gives Liza \$125,000 in cash and he assumes the obligation on the real estate contract, which Liza assigns to him. Real estate excise tax is due on \$300,000, which is the total consideration for the sale.

(c) "Consideration" does not include the amount of any outstanding lien or encumbrance in favor of the United States, the state, or a municipal corporation for taxes, special benefits, or improvements. For example, Mel buys residential property for \$300,000. The title is encumbered by a lien for unpaid property taxes in the amount of \$12,000, and a lien for municipal sidewalk improvements in the amount of \$6,000. Although Mel will become liable for those liens in order to take title to the property, they are not considered part of the purchase price for the purpose of calculating real estate excise tax. The real estate excise tax is due only on the purchase price of \$300,000.

(4) **"Consumer price index for shelter"** means the most current seasonally adjusted index for the shelter expenditure category of the consumer price index for all urban consumers (CPI-U) as published by July 31st by the Bureau of Labor Statistics of the United States Department of Labor.

(5) **"Controlling interest"** means:

(a) In the case of a profit corporation, either fifty percent or more of the total combined voting power of all classes of stock of the corporation entitled to vote, or fifty percent of the capital, profits, or beneficial interest in the voting stock of the corporation; and

(b) In the case of any other corporation, or a partnership, association, trust, or other entity, fifty percent or more of the capital, profits, or beneficial interest in the corporation, partnership, association, trust, or other entity.

(6) **"County"** means the county treasurer or its agent.

(7) **"Date of sale"** means the date (normally shown on the instrument of conveyance or sale) that ownership of or title to real property, or control of the controlling interest in an entity that has a beneficial interest in real property, is delivered to the buyer/transferee in exchange for valuable consideration. In the case of a lease with option to purchase, the date of sale is the date when the purchase option is exercised and the property is transferred. "Date of sale," "date of transfer," "conveyance date," and "transaction date" all have the same meaning and may be used interchangeably in this chapter. The real estate excise tax is due on the date of sale.

(8) **"Department"** means the department of revenue.

(9) **"Domestic partner"** has the same meaning as defined in chapter 26.60 RCW.

(10) **"Floating home"** means a building on a float used in whole or in part for human habitation as a single-family dwelling, which is not designed for self-propulsion by mechanical means or for propulsion by means of wind, and which is on the property tax rolls of the county in which it is located.

(11) **"Governmental entity"** means:

(a) The United States;

(b) The state of Washington ("state"), including its departments and institutions, as distinct from its corporate agencies or instrumentalities; and

(c) Any municipal corporation or political subdivision of the state of Washington.

(12) **"Growth of the consumer price index for shelter"** means the percentage increase in the consumer price index for shelter as measured from data published by the Bureau of Labor Statistics of the United States Department of Labor by July 31st for the most recent three-year period for the selling price threshold adjustment in 2022, and the most recent four-year period for subsequent selling price threshold adjustments.

(13) **"Mining property"** is property containing or believed to contain metallic or nonmetallic minerals, and sold or leased under terms that require the buyer or lessee to conduct exploration or mining work thereon, and for no other purpose.

(14) **"Mobile home"** means a mobile home as defined by RCW 46.04.302.

(15) **"Mortgage"** has its ordinary meaning, and includes a "deed of trust" for the purposes of this chapter, unless the context clearly indicates otherwise. The term "underlying debt" may also be used to refer to a mortgage or other security interest.

(16) **"Municipal corporation or political subdivision of the state of Washington"** means any county, city, town, school district, fire protection district, or other authority identified as a municipal corporation or political subdivision of the state of Washington by stat-

ute and that qualifies for the property tax exemption provided by Article VII of the Washington state Constitution.

(17) **"Park model trailer"** means a park model trailer as defined in RCW 46.04.622.

(18) **"Real estate"** or **"real property"** means any interest, estate, or beneficial interest in land or anything affixed to land, including the ownership interest or beneficial interest in any entity that owns land, or anything affixed to land, including standing timber and crops. The term includes condominiums and individual apartments for which the buyer receives a warranty deed. The term includes used mobile homes, used park model trailers, used floating homes, and improvements constructed upon leased land. The term also includes any part of an irrigation system that is underground or affixed to the land. The term does not include irrigation equipment that is above the ground or that is not affixed to land. See RCW 82.12.020 for the tax treatment of sales of irrigation equipment that is not included in the definition of "real estate."

(19) **"Real estate contract"** or **"contract"** means any written agreement for the sale of real property in which legal title to the property is retained by the seller as security for the payment of the purchase price. The term does not include earnest money agreements or options to purchase real property.

(20) **"Sale"** means:

(a) Any conveyance, grant, assignment, quitclaim, or transfer of the ownership of or title to real property, including standing timber, or any estate or interest therein for a valuable consideration, and any contract for such a conveyance, grant, assignment, quitclaim, or transfer, and any lease with an option to purchase real property, including standing timber, or any estate or interest therein or other contract under which possession of the property is given to the purchaser, or any other person at the purchaser's direction, and title to the property is retained by the vendor as security for the payment of the purchase price. The term includes the grant, relinquishment, or assignment of a life estate in property. The term also includes the grant, assignment, quitclaim, sale, or transfer of improvements constructed upon leased land.

(b) The term "sale" also includes the transfer or acquisition within any thirty-six-month period of a controlling interest in any entity with an interest in real property located in this state for a valuable consideration. For the purposes of this chapter, all acquisitions of persons acting in concert are aggregated for the purpose of determining whether a transfer or acquisition of a controlling interest has taken place. For purposes of establishing the applicable thirty-six-month period for a transfer or acquisition pursuant to the exercise of an option, see WAC 458-61A-101.

(c) The term "sale" also applies to successive sales of the same property. An owner of real property is subject to payment of the real estate excise tax upon the entry of each successive contract for the sale of the same parcel of property. For example, Bob owns a house that he sells to Sam on a real estate contract. Real estate excise tax is paid on the transfer from Bob to Sam. Sam makes several payments, until he becomes unemployed. Since Sam can no longer make payments on the property, he conveys it back to Bob. Bob then makes a subsequent sale of the house to Sally. Real estate excise tax is due on the transfer from Bob to Sally. See WAC 458-61A-209 for the tax implications on the conveyance from Sam back to Bob.

(d) The term "sale" does not include:

(i) Those real property transfers that are excluded from the definition of "sale" and exempted from the real estate excise tax under RCW 82.45.010(3) and this chapter, including transfers without valuable consideration.

(ii) The transfer of lots or graves in an established cemetery. An established cemetery is one that meets the requirements for ad valorem property tax exemption under chapter 84.36 RCW.

(iii) The transfer of an interest in real property merely to secure a debt or the assignment of a security interest, release of a security interest, satisfaction of a mortgage, or reconveyance under the terms of a mortgage or deed of trust.

(iv) A deed given to a purchaser under a real estate contract upon fulfillment of the terms of the contract provided that the proper tax was paid on the original transaction. The fulfillment deed must be stamped by the county treasurer as required by WAC 458-61A-301, and the stamp must show the affidavit number of the sale for which the deed is fulfilling.

(v) A qualified sale of a manufactured/mobile home community, as defined in RCW 59.20.030.

(e) **Examples.** The following examples, while not exhaustive, illustrate some of the circumstances in which a transfer may or may not be taxable. These examples should be used only as a general guide. The status of each situation must be determined after a review of all of the facts and circumstances.

(i) John paid off his home mortgage and wants to get a loan to make improvements and buy a new car. John obtains an equity loan, secured by his home as collateral. This transaction is not subject to the real estate excise tax.

(ii) Bob purchased real property from Sam pursuant to a real estate contract. Real estate excise tax was paid on the purchase price at the time of the sale. Bob has now paid off the property, and Sam is issuing a fulfillment deed to Bob indicating that the real estate contract has been satisfied. The fulfillment deed from Sam to Bob is not subject to the real estate excise tax.

(iii) Diane has made the final payment on her mortgage, and the bank issues a full reconveyance of her property, indicating that the mortgage is paid in full. The reconveyance is not subject to the real estate excise tax.

(iv) Bill is refinancing his mortgage for a lower interest rate. There is a balloon payment on the new loan that will require that he refinance again in five years. Neither transaction is subject to the real estate excise tax.

(21) **"Seller"** means any individual, receiver, assignee, trustee for a deed of trust, trustee in bankruptcy, trust, estate, firm, partnership, joint venture, club, company, joint stock company, limited liability company, business trust, municipal corporation, quasi municipal corporation, association, society, or any group of individuals acting as a unit, whether mutual, cooperative, fraternal, nonprofit or otherwise, but it does not include the United States or the state of Washington. The term "grantor" is used interchangeably with the term "seller" in this chapter and has the same meaning for purposes of the real estate excise tax.

(22) **"Selling price"** means the true and fair value of the property conveyed. There is a rebuttable presumption that the true and fair value is equal to the total consideration paid or contracted to be paid to the seller or to another person for the seller's benefit.

(a) When the price paid does not accurately reflect the true and fair value of the property, one of the following methods may be used to determine the true and fair value:

(i) A fair market appraisal of the property; or

(ii) An allocation of assets by the seller and the buyer made under section 1060 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as amended.

(b) When the true and fair value of the property at the time of sale cannot reasonably be determined by either of the methods in (a) of this subsection, the market value assessment for the property maintained in the county property tax rolls at the time of sale will be used as the selling price. RCW 82.45.030.

(c) When the sale is of a partial interest in real property, the principal balance of any debt remaining unpaid at the time of sale will be multiplied by the percentage of ownership transferred, and that amount added to any other consideration to determine the selling price.

(d) In the case of a lease with option to purchase, the selling price is the true and fair value of the property conveyed at the time the option is exercised.

(23) "**Timberland**" means land classified under chapter 84.34 RCW or designated under chapter 84.33 RCW, including any structures and standing timber on such land, and standing timber sold apart from the land upon which it sits.

(24) "**United States**" means:

(a) The federal government, including the executive, legislative, and judicial branches, its departments, and federal entities exempt from state or local taxation by reason of specific federal statutory exemption.

The mere fact that an entity is a federal entity, such as an instrumentality of the federal government or a federal corporation, does not mean that the entity is immune from tax. The taxability of a federal entity depends on the benefits and immunities conferred upon it by Congress. Thus, to determine the current taxable status of federal entities, the relevant portion of the federal law should be examined.

(b) "United States" does not include entities associated with but not a part of the United States, such as the National Guard (an instrumentality of the state of Washington). Nor does it include entities contracting with the United States government to administer its programs.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 82.45.150, 82.32.300, and 82.01.060(2). WSR 20-04-063, § 458-61A-102, filed 1/31/20, effective 3/2/20. Statutory Authority: RCW 82.01.060, 82.45.150, 12 U.S.C. § 2077 and 531 U.S. 316 (2001); 164 Wn.2d 310, 324 (2008). WSR 13-21-016, § 458-61A-102, filed 10/4/13, effective 11/4/13. Statutory Authority: RCW 82.45.150, 82.32.300, and 82.01.060. WSR 11-16-106, § 458-61A-102, filed 8/3/11, effective 9/3/11. Statutory Authority: RCW 82.45.150. WSR 08-24-095, § 458-61A-102, filed 12/2/08, effective 1/2/09. Statutory Authority: RCW 82.32.300, 82.01.060(2), and 82.45.150. WSR 05-23-093, § 458-61A-102, filed 11/16/05, effective 12/17/05.]