

Special Valuation – A Property Tax Incentive Program for Historic Buildings

Administered by the City-County Office of Historic Preservation Since 1985



In 1985, the City of Spokane adopted a state program, Special Valuation Tax Exemption, to "encourage maintenance, improvement and preservation of privately owned historic landmarks." The benefit of special valuation is that during the ten year special valuation period, property taxes will not reflect substantial improvements made to the property, if an amount equal to at least 25% of its assessed value of the property is spent on rehabilitation. The program applies to properties listed on the Spokane Register of Historic Places, and rehabilitation work must be done in compliance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation.

Eligibility

To be classified as eligible for special valuation, a property must first meet the following criteria:

1. The property **must** be listed on the Spokane Register of Historic Places, individually, or certified as a contributing property within a Local Register District.
2. The Historic Landmarks Commission must have approved the work that was completed.
3. Work must have been completed no more than 24 months prior to the application.
4. Rehab costs must be equal to at least 25% of the assessed value of the structure, not including land, prior to rehabilitation. The County Assessor's Office sets the value of the property.

Definition

"Special Valuation" is the revision of the assessed value of a historic property which subtracts, for up to ten years, such rehabilitation costs as are approved by the Spokane City-County Landmarks Commission.

Guidelines for Rehabilitation

All work must comply with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards. Standards can be reviewed at http://www.nps.gov/hps/tps/standards_guidelines.htm.

Application Process

- Step 1: Property is listed on the Spokane Register.
- Step 2: Property owner applies for application on proposed work then rehabilitates building in accordance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards.
- Step 3: Property owner files application for Special Valuation with the County Assessor's Office prior to October 1.
- Step 4: Preservation Office meets with applicant to discuss application requirements and procedures.
- Step 5: Property owner files paperwork and Preservation Office processes application.
- Step 6: Landmarks Commission conducts public hearing on application.
- Step 7: If approved, Preservation Office sends approved amount to the Assessor.
- Step 8: Property owner sees a reduction in Spokane county property tax bill within 2 years.

Deadlines to Remember

- Application for special valuation must be made no later than 24 months after the beginning date of the rehabilitation work included therein.
- October 1 is the deadline for applications when special valuation is desired for the following year. NOTE: due to the lag in property tax payments, the tax reduction will appear two years after approval, and it applies until the year following the end of the 10-year special valuation period.

Important Considerations

- It is recommend that work not be done before a property is listed on the Spokane Register or reviewed first by the Landmarks Commission.
- Improvements must be consistent with the historic character of the building, and meet the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation. A Certificate of Appropriateness should be issued before work is started.
- In order for a historic property to be eligible for special valuation, it must have been substantially rehabilitated (25% of assessed value) within 24 months prior to the date of application.
- The property must be maintained in good condition as long as the special valuation is in effect.
- Applications may be submitted at any time; however, the deadline is October 1 when special valuation is desired for two years following approval. Reduction in property taxes appears two years after special valuation approval and applies until the year following the ten-year period of special valuation.
- Property owners who receive special valuation for a rehabilitation project may also apply for the federal Investment Tax Credits for the same project.

Penalty

The penalty for violating the agreement or other program requirements is substantial: all back taxes that would otherwise have been owed, interest on back taxes and a penalty equal to 12% of back taxes and interest may be due.

Appeal Process

Any decision on disqualification of historic property for special valuation exemption or any other dispute may be appealed to the current year Board of Equalization by July 1st or 30 days after the disqualification, whichever is the later, except the denial on the original application.

Application Fees

- \$150 for residential property
- Commercial properties:

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| Less than 1 Million at time of filing | \$250.00 |
| 1 Million to 5 Million at time of filing | \$500.00 |
| Over 5 Million or more at time of filing | \$1000.00 |

Examples of Expenditures that Qualify

Exterior

Windows
Doors
Painting
Roofing

Interior

Plumbing
Electrical
Lighting
Wiring
Flooring
Doors Windows
Heating/air conditioning
Finish Work
Cabinetry (affixed to the wall)

Other

Architectural/consultant fees
Taxes, insurance, and utilities during construction
Construction administration expense
Construction phase interest expense

Examples of Expenditures That Do Not Qualify

Homeowner Labor
Acquisition Costs
Enlargement of the Building
Any additions considered non-historic
Costs for Permanent Financing
Overhead Costs
Fixtures that are not attached
Landscaping Costs
Appliances: Not built-in

Contact Information

Spokane City-County Historic Preservation Office

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Spokane County Assessor

Spokane County Courthouse
Mail Stop OCH-1
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Spokane, WA 99260-0010
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