Sudden Valley
Naturally!

Whatcom County Options for Property Owner/ Resident Assistance

General
Opportunity Council - 360-734-5121 or 800-649-5121
Offers a wide range of services
1111 Cornwall Ave, Bellingham
www.oppco.org

Great Resource Directory! https://internal.oppco.org/resources/guide.php

Extend a Hand
Help with housing and medical needs
Administered by Opportunity Council

Salvation Army
Seasonal Assistance-Back to School, Summer Camp, Thanksgiving,& Christmas
Other Services
2912 Northwest Ave, Bellingham
https://bellingham.salvationarmy.org/

Whatcom County Veterans Assistance Program – 360-788-6050
509 Girard (Lower Level), Bellingham
http://www.co.whatcom.wa.us/866/Veterans-Program

Property Taxes
Whatcom County Assessor – 360-788-5050
Property Tax Exemption or Deferral for Seniors and Disabled persons
311 Grand Ave #106, Bellingham
https://www.whatcomcounty.us/297/Property-Tax-Relief-Exemptions
or https://dor.wa.gov WA State Dept Revenue

Utilities
Cascade Natural Gas – 888-522-1130
Low income assistance program
1600 Iowa St, Bellingham
www.cngc.com/customer-service/low-income-assistance-programs
or Opportunity Council 360-225-2192

Lake Whatcom Water and Sewer District – 360-734-9224
Help for low income or disabled persons
1220 Lakeway Dr, Bellingham
www.lwwsd.org
Must qualify for property tax exemption

Sudden Valley
Naturally!

Puget Sound Energy - 888-225-5773
Offers multiple services including
Budget Payment Plans, Payment Arrangements, & Bill-payment Assistance
www.pse.com
or Opportunity Council 360-255-2192

Sanitary Service – 360-734-3490
Senior Rate – contact City of Bellingham Finance Department
360-778-8010 www.cob.org/gov/dept/finance

Food
Bellingham Food Bank - 360.676.0392 | TTY 711 or 800.833.6388
1824 Ellis Street, Bellingham
https://www.bellinghamfoodbank.org/

Food Bank Hours
Monday: 11:00am – 3:00pm
Wednesday: 1:00 – 6:00pm
Friday: 11:00am – 3:00pm

Meals on Wheels & More – 360-746-6480
Senior Meal Assistance (Delivered to your home)
315 Halleck St, Bellingham (lower level)
http://wccoa.org/index.php/Nutrition/

Sudden Valley Community Cupboard
Offering non-perishable food items, pet food, household goods and toiletries to families in need. By appointment.
Call or text 360-399-6059

WIC – Women, Infants, & Children – 360-788-7150
Food & Nutrition Service
360-788-7150, 4455 Cordata Way, Bellingham
or 360-778-4280, 1764 Iowa St, Bellingham
https://www.doh.wa.gov/YouandYourFamily/WIC

Medical
Apple Health (Medicaid)
https://www.hca.wa.gov/health-care-services-supports/apple-health-medicaid-coverage

Property Tax Exemption for Senior Citizens and Disabled Persons

SEPTEMBER 2018

If you are a senior citizen or disabled with your primary residence in Washington State, there are two programs that may help you pay your property taxes and/or special assessments. Your household income and your age or disability determine your eligibility for both programs.

This publication provides an overview of the property tax exemption program that helps senior citizens and disabled persons reduce their payment of property taxes.

For information about the property tax deferral program, see the Property Tax Deferral for Senior Citizens and Disabled Persons fact sheet.

Program Overview

Under the exemption program, your property taxes are reduced. First, the value of your residence is frozen for property tax purposes and you are exempt from all excess property taxes, Part 2 of the state school levy, and the portion of the voter approved regular levy under RCW 84.55.050 if the exemption is identified in the ordinance. Depending on your income, you may also be exempt from a portion of the regular levies.

* The exemption is available for a primary residence and one acre of land. If local zoning and land use regulations require more than one acre of land per residence in the area where you live, you may be eligible for a property tax exemption on up to five acres of land.

Eligibility Requirements

To be eligible for this program you must meet the age or disability, ownership, residency, and income requirements Your application must include proof of your age or disability.

Age and Disability

On December 31 of the year before the tax is due, you must meet one of the following criteria.

- At least 61 years of age
- Unable to to work because of a disability OR a veteran entitled to and receiving compensation from the United States Department of Veterans Affairs at a total disability rating for a service-connected disability.

Example: Your 61st birthday is in November 2017. You may file a 2017 application requesting an exemption on your 2018 taxes.

Ownership

You must own your home in Washington State by December 31 the year before the taxes to be exempted are due. For example, to receive an exemption in 2018, you must own your home by December 31, 2017.

The type of ownership must be in total (fee owner), as a life estate (including a lease for life), or by contract purchase.

A home owned jointly by a married couple, a registered domestic partnership, or by co-tenants is considered owned by each spouse, domestic partner, or co-tenant. Only one person must meet the age or disability requirement. If you share ownership in a cooperative housing unit and your share represents the specific unit or portion where you live, you will be eligible for the exemption of your unit.

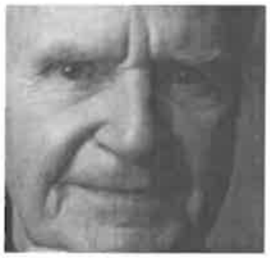
If your primary residence or the land under your primary residence is owned by a government entity and you meet the program requirements, you may be eligible for a leasehold excise tax credit.

Residency

The property must be your primary residence by December 31 the year before the tax is due. For example, you must be living in your home by December 31, 2017, to receive an exemption on your 2018 property tax. To keep your exemption going forward, you must live in your home for more than six months each year.

Your residence may qualify even if you are in a hospital, nursing home, boarding home or adult family home. You may rent your residence to someone else during your stay in one of these facilities if the rental income is used to pay the facility costs.

Property used as a vacation home is not eligible for the exemption program.



Household Income

Your annual household disposable income may not exceed $40,000. If your household income is between $40,000 and $45,000, you may qualify for the deferral program. See the Property Tax Deferral for Senior Citizens and Disabled Persons fact sheet for more information.

Household income includes the combined disposable income of you, your spouse or domestic partner, and any co-tenants. A co-tenant is a person who lives in your home and has an ownership interest in your home.

Household income does not include income of a person who:

- Does not have ownership interest and lives in your home, except for a spouse or domestic partner. However, you must include any income that person contributes to the household.
- Has ownership interest in your home but does not live in the home. If someone living elsewhere has any ownership interest, the amount of your exemption will be based on the percentage of your ownership interest in the property.

Property Tax and Levies Eligible for Exemption

The value of your residence is "frozen" as of January 1, 1995, or January 1 of the initial application year, whichever is later.

Example: If you meet the qualifications in the 2017 application year, the taxable assessed value for your residence will remain "frozen" at the 2017 level, unless there is a change in your status or new construction.

The assessor will continue to establish the property market value, but you will only be billed for taxes on the lower of the market value or the frozen value.

If your annual income for the application year is $40,000 or less, your home will be exempt from all excess and special levies and from Part 2 of the state school levy. Excess and special levies are in addition to regular levies. They require voter approval and provide money for a specific purpose.

In addition, if your income is $35,000 or less, a portion of the regular levy amount may be exempt.

- If your household income is between $30,001 and $35,000, you are exempt from regular levies on $50,000 or 35 percent of the assessed value, whichever is greater (but not more than $70,000 of the assessed value).

  For example:

Household income	$31,000
Assessed home value	$150,000
Taxable property value	**$97,500**

  (35 percent of $150,000 = $52,500)
  ($150,000 - $52,500 = $97,500)

- If your household income is $30,000 or less, you are exempt from regular levies on the first $60,000 or 60 percent of your home's assessed value, whichever is greater.

  For example:

Household income	$12,000
Assessed home value	$150,000
Taxable property value	**$60,000**

  (60 percent of $150,000 = $90,000)
  ($150,000 - $90,000 = $60,000))

Computing Disposable Income

The maximum amount of annual income you may receive and qualify for the exemption is $40,000. The disposable income you receive during the application year determines your eligibility.

Example: You are filing a 2017 application requesting an exemption on your 2018 taxes. You must use your 2017 income to qualify.

Disposable income includes income from all sources, regardless of whether the income is taxable for federal income tax purposes. Some of the most common sources of income include:

- Social Security and Railroad Retirement benefits.
- Military pay and benefits other than attendant-care and medical-aid payments.
- Veterans benefits other than attendant-care payments, medical-aid payments, veteran's disability compensation and dependency and indemnity compensation.
- Pension receipts. Include distributions from retirement bonds and Keogh plans. Include only the taxable portion of Individual Retirement Accounts (IRA's).
- Business or rental income. Depreciation cannot be deducted and you may not deduct business or rental losses or use those losses to offset other income.
- Annuity receipts. For purposes of this program, "annuity" is defined as a series of long-term payments, where long-term means a period of more than one full year from the annuity starting date.

A one-time, lump sum, total distribution is not an "annuity" for purposes of this section and, in this instance, only the taxable portion included in federal adjusted gross income should be included in disposable income.

- Interest and dividend receipts.
- Capital gains other than the gain from the sale of your primary residence that was reinvested in another primary residence within one year. Capital losses may not be deducted from income or used to offset capital gains.

If there was a change in your circumstances prior to November 1 that is expected to last indefinitely and also affected your income for at least two months, you may be able to estimate income using income averaging. Check with your county assessor.

Example: You retired in September and your monthly income is reduced from $2,000 to $1,000 beginning in October. Multiply $1,000 x 12. The total, $12,000, is your new estimated annual disposable income.

Deductions from Disposable Income

To determine your combined disposable income you may take deductions for the following expenses paid by you, your spouse, or your domestic partner:

- Non-reimbursed amounts paid for you, your spouse, or your domestic partner to live in a nursing home, boarding home, or adult family home.
- Non-reimbursed amounts paid for prescription drugs for you, your spouse, or your domestic partner.
- Insurance premiums for Medicare under Title XVIII of the Social Security Act.

- Non-reimbursed amounts paid for goods and services that allow you, your spouse, or your domestic partner to receive in-home care. The care received must be similar to the care provided by a nursing home.
  In-home care includes medical treatment, physical therapy, Meals on Wheels (or similar services), and household and personal care. Personal care includes assistance with preparing meals, getting dressed, eating, taking medications, or personal hygiene. Special furniture and equipment such as wheelchairs, hospitals beds, and oxygen also qualify.

Applying for the Exemption

Your county assessor administers this program and is responsible for determining if you meet the qualifications. Please contact your local assessor's office to request an application form.

If you want an exemption for taxes due in 2018, your application is due December 31, 2017. Your assessor has the authority to accept late applications and, because the assessor uses your 2017 income to determine whether you meet the income requirements, most assessors request that you wait until you receive your year-end income information to submit your application.

Appeal Process

Your county assessor must notify you in writing if your application is denied. You may appeal the assessor's decision to the county Board of Equalization. The county Board of Equalization must receive your appeal by July 1, or within 30 days of when the denial was mailed, whichever date is later.

Refunds for Prior Years

If you paid prior years' taxes because of a mistake, oversight, or a lack of knowledge about this program, you may be eligible for a refund. You must meet all of the qualifications for the exemption as if you had applied at the time the application was due. Separate applications must be submitted for each of the tax years. In order to receive a refund, applications must be filed within three years of the date the taxes were due. Refunds will not be made beyond the three years.

Renewal Applications Every Six Years

A renewal application is required at least once every six years. After your initial application and approval, you will be notified by your county assessor when it is time to submit a renewal application. However, it is your responsibility to notify your assessor's office if you have a change in status that may affect your exemption level or your eligibility for exemption. Examples include, but are not limited to, changes in income, ownership, or residency.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q. What if my circumstances change?
A. A Change in Status Report must be filed with the assessor's office if changes in your income or living circumstances affect the exemption. Change of Status Reports are available from your county assessor or on the Department of Revenue's website at dor.wa.gov under forms, Property Tax.

Change in status includes:

- Death of the eligible applicant (survivors must notify assessor)
- Change in income
- Sale or transfer of the property
- Move to an alternate primary residence
- Change in disability status
- Change in zoning or land use designation if your principle residence includes more than one acre of land

Q. In the event of my death, will my surviving spouse or domestic partner continue to receive the exemption?
A. Your surviving spouse or domestic partner may continue to receive the exemption if he or she is at least 57 years old and meets all of the other eligibility requirements.

Q: In the event of my death, will my heirs have to repay the exemption I received in previous years?
A: No. The exemption you receive under this program is a "gift" and does not have to be repaid. Upon your death, the taxes will be recalculated and pro-rated beginning with the day after your death.

Q. If I sell my home, will the new owner continue receiving the exemption?
A. If you sell your home, the exemption will continue through your period of ownership. The taxes will be recalculated without the exemption for the remainder of the tax year and the new owner will be billed for the portion of taxes for his/her period of ownership.

Q. Can my exemption be transferred to a different residence?
A. If you sell, transfer, or are otherwise displaced from your residence, you may transfer the exempt status to a replacement residence. However, you may not receive an exemption on more than the equivalent of one residence in any year. When an exemption is transferred to a new residence, the value of the new residence is frozen as of January 1 of the year of change.

If you are moving to Washington, you may transfer an exemption from another state to your new Washington residence, providing you meet all other eligibility requirements and provide proof of the prior exemption and its cancellation date.

Laws and Rules

Revised Code of Washington (RCW) Chapter 84.36 379-389—Exemptions (Property Tax)

Washington Administrative Code (WAC) Chapter 458-16A-100 through 150—Senior Citizen/Disabled Persons Property, Tax Exemptions

For More Information

If you need help or have questions regarding the property tax exemption, application form, or the application process, contact your local county assessor's office. The telephone number is listed in the local county government pages (usually the blue pages) of your telephone book.

Visit our website at https://dor.wa.gov

To request this document in an alternate format, visit https://dor.wa.gov or call 1-800-647-7706. Teletype (TTY) users may call (360) 705-6718.

Department of Revenue
Washington State

Prepared by the CEC Division

09/18 PTFS0017EX

This material is intended for general information purposes and does not alter or supersede any administrative regulations or rulings issued by the Department of Revenue.

Property Tax Deferral for Senior Citizens and Disabled Persons

JANUARY 2018

If you are a senior citizen or disabled person with your primary residence in Washington State, there are two programs that may help you pay your property taxes and/or special assessments. Your household income and your age or disability determines your eligibility for both programs.

This publication provides an overview of the property tax deferral program that helps senior citizens and disabled persons postpone the payment of their property tax and/or special assessments.

For information about the property tax exemption program, see the Property Tax Exemption for Senior Citizens and Disabled Persons fact sheet.

Program Overview

Under the deferral program, the Washington State Department of Revenue pays the property taxes and/or special assessments* on your behalf.

The deferred amount, plus interest, becomes a lien in favor of the state until the total amount is repaid. Property tax deferral is available for property taxes and/or special assessments on your primary residence and up to five acres** of land. Mobile homes may qualify, even if the land where the mobile home is located is leased or rented.

*A special assessment is for a local improvement that directly benefits your property. Examples include assessments for sewers, lights, water, paving, or curbing. Special assessments are also known as Local Improvement Districts (LIDs) or Utility Local Improvement Districts (ULIDs).

** The deferral is available for a primary residence and one acre of land. If local zoning and land use regulations require more than one acre of land per residence in the area where you live, you may be eligible for a property tax deferral on up to five acres of land.

Eligibility Requirements

To be eligible for this program you must meet the age or disability, ownership, residency, and income requirements.

Age or disability

This program is only available to residents and property located in Washington State. You must meet one of the below criteria:

- At least 60 years of age by December 31 of the year you apply.
- Unable to work because of a disability.
- At least 57 years of age and the surviving spouse or domestic partner of a person who was receiving a deferral at the time of his/her death.

Your application must include proof of your age or disability.

Ownership

You must own the home. An irrevocable trust may qualify.

A home owned jointly by a married couple, a registered domestic partnership, or by co-tenants is considered owned by each spouse, domestic partner, or co-tenant. Only one person must meet the age or disability requirement.

You are NOT eligible to defer your taxes if you have only a share ownership in cooperative housing, a life estate, a lease for life, or a revocable trust.

This material is intended for general information purposes and does not alter or supersede any administrative regulations or rulings issued by the Washington State Department of Revenue.

Residency
The property must be located in Washington State and be your principal home at the time you apply for the deferral. You must occupy the home for more than six months each year.

Your residence may qualify even if you are temporarily in a hospital, nursing home, boarding home, or adult family home. You may rent your residence to someone else during your stay in one of these facilities if the rental income is used to pay the facility costs.

Property used as a vacation home is not eligible for the deferral program.

Household income
Your annual household disposable income may not exceed $45,000. For more information on how income is calculated, see Calculating Your Disposable Income.

If your household income is $40,000 or less, you must apply for the Property Tax Exemption Program for Senior Citizens and Disabled Persons before you apply for the deferral program. Contact your local county assessor's office for an application packet.

Household income includes your disposable income and the disposable income of your spouse or domestic partner and any co-tenants. A co-tenant is a person who lives in your home and has an ownership interest in your home.

Household income does not include income of a person who:

- Lives in your home but is not your spouse or domestic partner and does not have an ownership interest in your home. However, you must include any income that person contributes to the household (for example, rent, utilities, groceries, etc.).
- Does not live in your home but has an ownership interest in your home. If someone living elsewhere has an ownership interest in your residence, the amount of your deferral will be limited by your ownership equity in your home.

Property Taxes and Special Assessments Eligible for Deferral

The amount of equity you have in your home determines the amount of property taxes and/or special assessments eligible for deferral.

Equity is the difference between the assessed value of the property and any debts secured by the property. On your application form, you must provide current balances for all debts that are secured by the property.

Providing you meet all qualifications and maintain adequate fire and casualty insurance, you may defer taxes and special assessments in an amount up to 80 percent of your equity.

Following is an example of the equity calculation:

	Equity
Land assessed value	$100,000
Dwelling assessed value	+ $150,000
Total assessed value included in calculation	$250,000
Mortgage balance	- $150,000
Equity value for deferral program	$100,000
80 percent of equity value – maximum deferral	$80,000

You must carry fire and casualty insurance, and the State of Washington Department of Revenue must be listed as a "Loss Payee" on your policy, otherwise, we cannot include the value of your dwelling in the calculation. Provide a copy of the summary declaration for your policy when you submit your application.

Calculating Your Disposable Income

The disposable income you receive during the year before you submit your application determines your eligibility. You must use your 2017 income to qualify for this deferral in 2018. If there was a change in your income prior to November 1 and the change is expected to last indefinitely, you may estimate annual income by multiplying your new average monthly income by 12.

Disposable income is defined in statute (RCW 84.36.383) and includes income from all sources, whether or not the income is taxable for federal income tax purposes. You must include nontaxable income such as social security, and you may not deduct losses and depreciation or use losses to offset gains.

Legislation passed in 2008 allows the exclusion of veterans' disability compensation and dependency and indemnity compensation paid by Department of Veterans Affairs.

You may deduct non-reimbursed amounts paid by you, your spouse, or your domestic partner for the following:

- Amounts you pay for yourself, your spouse, or your domestic partner to live in a nursing home, boarding home, or adult family home.
- Insurance premiums for Medicare under Title XVIII of the Social Security Act.
- Amounts paid for prescription drugs for yourself, your spouse, or your domestic partner.
- Amounts you pay for goods and services that allow you, your spouse, or your domestic partner to receive in-home care. In-home care includes medical treatment, physical therapy, Meals on Wheels (or similar services), and household and personal care. Personal care

includes assistance with preparing meals, getting dressed, eating, taking medications, or personal hygiene. Special furniture and equipment such as wheelchairs, hospitals beds, and oxygen also qualify.

Applying for the Deferral

Your county assessor administers this program and is responsible for determining if you meet the qualifications. Contact your local assessor's office to request an application form.

You should apply at least 30 days before payment of the property taxes and/or special assessments is due. Filing a complete application at least 30 days before your tax and/or special assessment is due helps avoid late payment penalties and interest. If you are applying to stop the county treasurer from foreclosing for unpaid taxes, you should apply within 30 days of receiving the foreclosure notice. If you have unpaid taxes or special assessments from prior years you may request payment for the prior years on the same application form. You do not need to submit a separate application for each year.

Sign the Application

You, your agent, or your legal guardian must sign the application. Any others who have an ownership interest in the property must also sign the application.

The lien holder's (mortgage holder) notarized signature must be on the application if ALL three of the following apply:

- The property is under mortgage, purchase contract, or a deed of trust.
- The mortgage or purchase contract requires a reserve account for the payment of taxes.
- The lien holder (mortgage holder) wants their lien to have priority over the deferred tax lien.

Annual Application

The deferral is not automatic and you must file a renewal application each year.

If you are deferring special assessments, you must choose the installment payment method if it is available.

Appeal Process

The county assessor must notify you in writing if your application is denied. You may appeal the assessor's decision to the county Board of Equalization. The county Board of Equalization must receive your appeal by July 1, or within 30 days of when the denial notice was mailed, whichever date is later.

Repaying the Deferral

The deferred amount and interest must be repaid when one of the following occurs:

- You transfer or convey your property to someone else.
- You no longer permanently reside at the residence.
- Your property is condemned.
- You no longer maintain fire and casualty insurance listing the Washington State Department of Revenue as a loss payee in an amount that is sufficient to protect the interest of the state, and the deferred amount exceeds 100 percent of your equity in only the land value.
- Upon your death, unless your surviving spouse or domestic partner is at least 57 years old, meets the qualifications for the deferral, and files an application with the county assessor within 90 days of your death.

Rate of Interest

Taxes deferred on or after January 1, 2007 accrue interest at an annual rate of 5 percent. Taxes deferred before January 1, 2007 accrue interest at an annual rate of 8 percent.

Laws and Rules

Revised Code of Washington (RCW) Chapter 84.38—Deferral of Special Assessments and/or Property Taxes

Washington Administrative Code (WAC) Chapter 458-18—Property Tax - Abatements, Credits, Deferrals, and Refunds

For More Information

If you need an application form or have questions about the application process, contact your local county assessor's office (listed in the local county government pages of your telephone book).

Visit our website at https://dor.wa.gov

To request this document in an alternate format, visit https://dor.wa.gov or call 1-800-647-7706. Teletype (TTY) users may use the Washington Relay Service by calling 711.

Department of Revenue
Washington State

Prepared by the CEC Division
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