

CITY OF EAST LANSING

GUIDELINES FOR POVERTY EXEMPTION REVIEW

General Overview

The Board of Review of the City of East Lansing recognizes the need to have available a procedure by which residents in need of assistance under Michigan Compiled Law (MCL) 211.7u can make an application for property tax relief. The Board further recognizes that, pursuant to statute, as well as case law, they must adopt procedures and guidelines, approved by City Council, to be used as standards when considering appeals made based on financial hardship. The Board of Review understands that it must adhere to these guidelines when reviewing poverty appeals, and reserves the right to make individual considerations within its authority, as it determines necessary. ***Any poverty exemption application that is submitted that is inaccurate or not fully completed will result in the denial of the appeal.*** All information in the application and submitted with the application is subject to verification from the Board of Review or the Assessor's Office.

Basic Filing Requirements

To be considered for exemption under MCL 211.7u each applicant **must**:

1. Complete and submit a poverty exemption application supplied by the City of East Lansing Assessor's Office. The application can be obtained from the Assessor's Office at City Hall or arrangements can be made to have it mailed.
2. Not sign the application until returning it.
3. Have the application witnessed by the Assessor or Assessor's Office staff upon receipt.
4. Own and occupy the property as a principal residence/homestead, defined by law, for which the request is being made. This may include vacant contiguous property as long as it is considered part of the principal homestead/homestead.

5. Submit income verification as required. This must include **current** federal and State income tax returns, State homestead property tax credit forms, or any additional information requested by the Board of Review.
6. Produce a valid driver's license or other acceptable methods of identification.
7. Produce a deed, land contract, or other evidence of ownership, as specified by the Assessor.

Review Process

- Applications may be reviewed by the Board of Review without the applicant being present. However, the Board may request that an applicant be physically present to respond to any questions the Board or Assessor may have. This could mean that the applicant may be called to appear on short notice.
- The applicant should be aware that they may have to answer questions regarding their financial affairs, their health, the status of people living in their home, etc. at a meeting before the Board which is open to, and may be attended by, the public at large.
- Applicants appearing before the Board shall be administered an oath to affirm evidence and testimony.
- Applications will be evaluated on data submitted, testimony taken from the applicant (if applicable), and information gathered from any source the Assessor or Board may wish to use.
- Applicants may be subject to personal investigation by the City to verify information submitted or statements made to the Assessor or Board of Review in regard to their hardship exemption appeal.
- Exemptions are granted annually. Partial exemptions may be granted by the Board as well.
- The filing of a poverty exemption application constitutes an appearance before the Board of Review for purpose of preserving the right to appeal to the Michigan Tax Tribunal.

Income/Asset Level Guidelines

Unless there are substantial and compelling reasons for deviating from the income guidelines established by the City Council of the City of East Lansing, the Board of Review shall adhere to those guidelines. In determining qualifications for poverty exemption, the Board of Review shall consider every variable on the application, including household income, the nature and duration of the income stream, the quality and accuracy of the information submitted, and any other such evidence it determines appropriate in making its decision. The following guidelines have been adopted by the City of East Lansing and shall assist the Board of Review in its decisions:

- Applicants shall not be eligible for consideration if total household assets exceed ten thousand dollars (\$10,000), excluding the primary residence and one automobile.
- Applicants shall not be eligible for consideration if they do not meet the federal poverty income standards annually determined by the United States Department of Health and Human Services.
- An exemption shall not be granted if the applicant owns real property other than the subject principal residence. However, a joint interest, life estate, or remainder interest in property which is the principal residence of another will not be considered.

Summary

The Board of Review has been given exclusive jurisdiction over the granting of property tax relief due to financial hardship. The Board of Review for the City of East Lansing takes this task seriously and attempts to provide relief to all deserving residents within the City. The Board of Review may deny any appeal, regardless of income, if the financial hardship appears to be self created by the actions of the person or persons making the application.