

Innovative

The Wilmington Senior Tax Assistance Program was launched in January 2012 by Delaware State Housing Authority (DSHA) to prevent City of Wilmington homeowners aged 62 and older from falling into foreclosure due to unpaid property taxes and/or water and sewer bills. The need was identified while providing mortgage foreclosure prevention assistance to homeowners, when a large number of seniors with delinquent city obligations contacted the Authority. As the provider of the Delaware Emergency Mortgage Assistance Program (DEMAP) and the Emergency Home Loan Program (EHL), DSHA had significant resources to prevent foreclosure due to mortgage default, but no resources for those facing foreclosure due to delinquent property taxes. The City of Wilmington initiates foreclosure proceedings if property owners fail to pay or default on payment plans agreed to with homeowners.

DSHA began exploring what options were available, and formed a solution through a public/private partnership. Funds provided by the City of Wilmington (\$50,000) and United Way of Delaware through a grant from the Jessie Ball duPont Fund (\$120,000), were pooled to make available one-time grants of up to \$3,000 to cure these delinquency. The application process was streamlined, requiring only a brief application, proof of age, proof of primary residency, copy of delinquent city obligations and proof of income to ensure we are assisting our low- to moderate-income target population.

Part of the process is to also identify residents who may be eligible for property tax abatement that is available to older homeowners who may have been unaware of eligibility for tax reduction, and have them complete submit the city's exemption form. This reduces the future property taxes due, to help prevent them from becoming delinquent again.

Respond to an Important State Need

Seniors are often pillars in their community, but they sometimes struggle to make ends meet, especially if they are on fixed incomes. This program prevents the loss of housing of senior citizens, many of whom are stabilizing forces within the neighborhoods. The loss of the home also results in the loss of their neighbor support group, loss of contact with friends, their place of worship as well as a safe and familiar place to live.

DSHA worked extensively with the City prior to the development of this program and concluded that many seniors could avoid foreclosure with just a little help — a small, one-time grant to help them catch up on two specific expenses: their property taxes and their sewer/water bills.

The City of Wilmington's Delinquent Accounts Division and a number of agencies that provide services to seniors have identified qualified seniors, and helped them complete and submit the application packages.

The City of Wilmington provided DSHA with a list of contacts who verify amounts that need to be paid and postpone further legal and punitive actions (water shut off) to allow time for DSHA to make payment.

Benefits Outweigh the Costs

The cost of providing services to displaced seniors is much greater than the \$3,000 maximum program benefit. If there is a successful eviction, they will still need housing – straining an already burdened system.

Since 2007, DSHA has been providing foreclosure prevention funds through DEMAP, and through the federally time-limited EHLF in 2011. The funds available to families for these programs are much higher than WSTAP, and achieve the same results. DEMAP provides \$25,000 and the EHLF provided up to \$50,000 to pay delinquent mortgages – which most often included property taxes escrowed as part of the mortgage payment. Unfortunately, these two programs were not available to the seniors – many of whom had lived in their homes for decades and had paid off the mortgage – but were delinquent on property taxes. Although the maximum available per homeowner through WSTAP is \$3,000, the average grant to cure the delinquency and stop foreclosure is under \$1,100.

DSHA receives modest administrative fees through funding sources, which cover our direct and indirect costs. Because of our larger foreclosure program infrastructure, the costs to the agency to administer WSTAP are minimal through economies of scale.

Achieve Intended Results

Many of our senior homeowners are on limited incomes. In these difficult times, it is important to assist them in any way we can to ensure their homes are not moving toward foreclosure. This program allows our most vulnerable senior homeowners to get the assistance they need.

DSHA already had a larger-scale mortgage foreclosure assistance program in place, therefore the WSTAP program was able to be quickly launched and made operational utilizing existing systems. The forms were created using desktop word processing and PDF fill-able forms were made available on our website. The forms were also distributed to local nonprofit community agencies to assist homeowners with the applications process. Homeowners without internet access could call and have an application package mailed to them. By having the forms filled out in advance, the application appointments move quickly. The simplicity of the process enables DSHA to promptly grant approval - often the same day – and keep seniors in their home.

Through the WSTAP, DSHA has been able to approve more than 80% of applicants who have applied for the grant. This small amount of funds is the difference between foreclosure and remaining in their homes.

From: [Update News](#)
Subject: WILMINGTON SENIOR PROPERTY TAX PROGRAM | Streaming News from the City of Wilmington
Date: Tuesday, March 13, 2012 2:33:56 PM
Attachments: [image001.png](#)
[image015.png](#)



CITY OF WILMINGTON

Update News | WITN22



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Wilmington Senior Property Tax Assistance Program

VIDEO: [Wilmington Senior Property Tax Assistance Program](#)

“A new program has been launched to help senior citizens avoid facing foreclosure. The Wilmington Senior Property Tax Assistance Program will help senior citizens whose mortgages are paid off, but who still face foreclosure...”

As a City of Wilmington employee, you may not be able to access this video link from your work computer, please forward it to a computer that can access YouTube. And forward this email to co-workers, community groups, constituents, family, friends, colleagues, or anyone affected by or associated with this story. Hopefully this will allow those who did not see the show, or are not able to get our channel, a chance to see the Update News segment. Feel free to share the link or video on Facebook, Twitter, Blog, Website, etc.

Update News is news and information that impacts the residents and employees of Wilmington, Delaware and beyond.

More 'Update News' segments are available on our [YouTube Channel](#) which is [WITN22Wilmington](#) To watch the entire show - [Click Here](#)

Leave us a comment, click thumbs up or down or send a quick reply to this email. We want to know what you think.

Regards,
Paul & Paul

Click logo to visit our [WITN22.org](#) website for all our live and archived productions:



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Delaware State Housing Authority

Providing quality, affordable housing opportunities

WSTAP Wilmington Senior Tax Assistance Program

What is WSTAP?

The Wilmington Senior Tax Assistance Program is designed to assist homeowners in Wilmington who are 62 or older and facing imminent foreclosure due to delinquent property taxes, or sewer and water bills. The maximum grant amount available under this program is \$3,000.

How does it work?

WSTAP provides a one-time payment of taxes and or water/sewer bills. Payment for approved applicants is made by DSHA directly to the City for the delinquent amount(s). A letter acknowledging the amount and type of payment that has been made is then mailed to the homeowner.

Am I eligible?

Applicants must meet the following eligibility requirements:

1. Be 62 years or older as evidenced through photo ID or other form of official government-issued identification.
2. Property must be located within the Wilmington City Limits, be the primary residence of the applicant who must be listed as the property owner on the tax records.
3. Household income may not exceed \$93,725 per year.



Required Application Documentation

- Completed Application
- Copy of ID verifying proof of age
- Signed Authorization to Release Information form
- Copy of Delinquent Tax and/or Water bills
- Most recent year's Federal Tax Return and/or proof of SS income
- If 65 or older, copy of Application for Property Tax Exemption.

**To apply, please contact DSHA at
(302) 577-5001
to set up an appointment.**

About the Delaware State Housing Authority

The Delaware State Housing Authority (DSHA), formed in 1968, is dedicated to providing quality, affordable housing opportunities and appropriate supportive services to responsible low- and moderate-income Delawareans. In addition to its role as the State's Housing Finance Agency, DSHA is unique in that it also serves as a Public Housing Authority and acts as a Community Development and Planning Agency. As a Public Housing Authority, DSHA receives funding from HUD to build, own and operate public housing in Kent and Sussex counties, two of Delaware's three counties.

For more information about the Delaware State Housing Authority, please call: (888) 363-8808 or visit our website at: www.DeStateHousing.com.