

Redevelopment Eligibility-Blight

Overview

The Community Development Block Grant program is a federal program that provides flexible funding for communities to address a wide variety of community development needs. The funding allocations for the Community Development Block Grant are guided by three national objectives with the elimination of slum and blight conditions as one of those national objectives. The City of Spokane does not currently utilize the slum and blight elimination tool, the adoption of a local ordinance that creates a definition and process for blight declaration would provide the community with a new tool for redevelopment. The City of Spokane developed a stakeholder group of community representatives, businesses, and local organizations to determine the feasibility of a blight tool in our community. The stakeholder group developed a process and definition of blight that would be added to the Spokane Municipal Code Chapter 17F.070 Existing Building and Conservation Code. If the stakeholder group recommendation is adopted then the Spokane community would be eligible for the use Community Development Block Grant funds to address conditions of blight.

Stakeholder Group Recommendation Summary

Blight Definition

The Definition of a Blight property or area is one that “substantially impairs or arrests the sound growth of the city” or “retards the provision of housing accommodations or constitutes an economic or social liability, and/or is detrimental, or constitutes a menace, to the public health, safety and welfare”.

Factors that contribute to blight

The general state of deterioration of the property exhibits the following: physical deterioration of buildings/improvements; Abandonment of properties; Chronic high turnover rates or abnormally low property values relative to other areas in the community; known or suspected environmental contamination”.

Additional factors in define blighted properties or areas include: substantial physical dilapidation, deterioration or obsolescence, overcrowding, unsanitary or unsafe conditions, dangerous or unhealthful conditions, hazardous soils or substances, Inappropriate or mixed uses of land or buildings, defective or inadequate street layout or lot layout, subdivision, platting, excessive land coverage, persistent and high levels of unemployment or poverty, diversity of ownership, or tax or special assessment delinquencies.

Authority to declare blight

The Building Official is authorized under the Spokane Municipal Code section 17F.070.480 to determine if properties are substandard, unfit or meet the definition of blight defined in this section.

The definition and factors that contribute to blight were primarily adopted from the Washington State Community Renewal Law (RCW 35.81) and the federal government Community Block Grant (24 CFR 570.208(b)) definitions of blight. The blight designation only applies to specific properties.

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Frequently Asked Questions

How would a property or structure get designated as blighted?

A property or structure could be declared blighted by filing a complaint or by self nomination of a property owner through the City of Spokane Office of Neighborhood Services and Code Enforcement. The designation of blight would be an administrative decision that is determined by the building official.

As a property owner what would it mean if my property or structure is designated as blighted?

In the self nomination process a property owner the blight designation would not impose additional restrictions on the property, rather there is an increase in the availability of redevelopment tools. The blight designation would have the option of appeal if the property owner was not interested in redevelopment activities. The complaint based designation through the substandard building definition would require hazardous conditions to be cured.

What redevelopment activities could occur with a blighted property?

The redevelopment of property or structures could take many forms such as, infrastructure improvements, rehabilitation of a dilapidated building, remediation of hazardous soil contamination or the restoration of a historic building. For redevelopment to occur with the financial incentives of the Community Development Block Grant funds the property or structure must be considered blighted under federal law.

Would my property be condemned if designated as blighted?

The ability to condemn property is a right of any municipality under eminent domain, regardless of whether or not it is designated as blighted. The use of condemnation by government is limited to instances deemed necessary for the “public good” and usually as a last resort. The blight designation does not inherently change the ownership of a property or structure.

Does a blight designation require a loan to be closed on?

No. The blight designation simply shows an interest from the community to invest in a property.

Would a blight designation be required to be stated on the title of a property?

The administrative decision to declare a property or structure as blighted is not required to be documented on the title but if the property is considered substandard with blight as one of the thirteen factors then yes. The property owner would receive a letter notifying them that their property has been identified as having substandard conditions.