

**GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA**  
**OFFICE OF THE CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER**  
**OFFICE OF TAX AND REVENUE (OTR)**



**OTR TAX NOTICE 2013-06**

**Real Property Owner's Guide to the  
Tax Sale Redemption Process**

***THIS NOTICE REPLACES AND SUPERSEDES  
OTR TAX NOTICES 2008-03, 2012-04 and 2013-02.***

If your property has been sold at tax sale because you owed delinquent real property taxes, business improvement district taxes or certified taxes, assessments or fees owed to a District of Columbia agency, you can pay the delinquencies and redeem your property by following the instructions in this brochure.

Redeeming your property means stopping the government from transferring your real property to someone else.

Although it is to your benefit to redeem your property as quickly as possible, you may do so at any time – from right after the tax sale until a Superior Court judge enters a final order to foreclose or end your right of redemption.

**What Must I Pay to Redeem My Property from Tax Sale?**

No matter when you redeem your property, you must pay:

1. All amounts appearing on the property's **current** real property tax bill issued by the Office of Tax and Revenue (OTR), which may include, *inter alia*, real property taxes, certified liabilities from other DC agencies and DC Water<sup>1</sup>, and certain tax sale buyer expenses generally limited to \$331.50<sup>2</sup> (if other remaining expenses are billed separately).
2. If applicable, business improvement district taxes and vault/public space rental charges, together with penalties and interest, due to OTR.
3. Expenses not included on the real property tax bill but billed by the tax sale buyer's attorney. These remaining expenses include legal fees and costs, and will increase as litigation ensues. Remember that legal fees and costs must be reasonable, and are subject to judicial review

---

<sup>1</sup> The District of Columbia Water and Sewer Authority does business as DC Water since June 2010.

<sup>2</sup> The pre-complaint expense amount of \$331.50 shall be applicable beginning with the July 2012 and subsequent tax sales. For tax sales prior to July 2012, the pre-complaint expense amount is \$326.50.

upon request. If you redeem your property after the tax sale buyer files a foreclosure action in the Superior Court (which can be as early as six months after the tax sale), you may be liable for expenses exceeding the \$331.50 stated in paragraph 1, above.

### **Where Do I Find Out What Outstanding Taxes Are Due Against My Property, and How Do I Get a Bill to Pay Them?**

For informational purposes, the OTR Web site lists the delinquent real property tax and any certified liability from another DC agency or DC Water under the tab “Real Property Tax/Pilot Fee,” and if applicable business improvement district taxes and vault/public space rental charges under their separate tabs. The Web site is [www.taxpayerservicecenter.com](http://www.taxpayerservicecenter.com) – click on “Real Property Service Center,” then click on “Real Property Tax Database Search,” then click on “Search Real Property Assessment Database.” Please note that the \$331.50 expense amount becomes owed four months after the tax sale, and will not appear on a tax bill issued before such time; you must be certain to get the latest issued tax bill at OTR’s Customer Service Walk-in Center located at 1101 4<sup>th</sup> Street, SW, Second Floor, Washington, DC if you redeem after 4 months from the tax sale.

You may get a current real property tax bill from OTR’s Customer Service Walk-in Center. You may also call OTR’s Customer Service at (202) 727-4TAX (4829) and ask that a real property tax bill be mailed to you. The bill will include expenses generally limited to \$331.50 if you are redeeming after 4 months from the tax sale. However, other expenses may be owed to the tax sale buyer, including a reasonable attorney’s fee and additional costs, and these must also be paid to redeem. These expenses typically do not appear on the real property tax bill, but are generally collected by the tax sale buyer’s attorney – these expenses may only become owed after 6 months from the tax sale.

**You must ask for *the most current* real property tax bill to get the proper tax balance with interest calculation for redemption purposes. Be sure to tell the Customer Service representative that you want to redeem your property from tax sale, and need the most current real property tax bill.**

**You must also pay any business improvement district tax and vault/public space rental charges, if applicable, regardless of whether such liabilities were certified. These liabilities may not appear on the real property tax bill. The Customer Service representative will inform you whether such liabilities are owed.**

To ensure you pay the most current amount owed for business improvement district taxes, please visit the D.C. Business Improvement District Council website at <http://www.dcbidcouncil.org/> to locate the appropriate business improvement district in which your real property lies and contact it. The business improvement district representative will then obtain a current bill on your behalf from OTR with a current due payoff which you will then have to pay to redeem your property.

With respect to the most current vault/public space rental charges, please contact the District’s Department of Transportation (DDOT) representative at OTR at: (202) 442-6641. This representative can provide you with the most current amounts owed by the real property.

### **How Do I Pay the Real Property Tax Bill?**

You must pay the real property tax by certified check, cashier’s check or money order. Before

you pay, make a copy of the certified check, cashier's check or money order to keep for your records.

You may pay at any D.C. branch of Wells Fargo Bank. Keep the receipt you get as proof that you paid.

### **How Do I Pay the Business Improvement District Taxes or Vault/Public Space Rental Charges Due against My Real Property?**

If applicable, you must pay any business improvement district taxes or vault/public space rental charges due against your real property by certified check, cashier's check or money order. Before you pay, make a copy of the certified check, cashier's check or money order to keep for your records.

You may pay at any D.C. branch of Wells Fargo Bank. Keep the receipt you get as proof that you paid.

If you have any questions regarding business improvement district taxes, please visit the D.C. Business Improvement District Council Web site to locate the specific business improvement district in which your real property lies. The DC Business Improvement District Council Web site is: <http://www.dcbidcouncil.org/>.

For questions related to vault/public space rental charges, a DDOT representative within OTR may be reached at (202) 442-6641.

### **Do I Need to Pay the Other Taxes, Assessments, Fees and Costs Due Against My Real Property to Redeem that Appear on the Web site?**

Other taxes (real property taxes, BID taxes and vault rents excepted), assessments, fees and costs, which are not certified, but which appear on the Web site, do not need to be paid to redeem your property from tax sale. Regardless of whether certified or not, delinquent real property taxes, BID taxes and vault rents must be paid to redeem. If you have questions about whether a particular liability has been certified by other District agencies or DC Water, please contact OTR Customer Service at (202) 727-4TAX (4829) and a Customer Service representative will assist you.

### **What Happens After a Buyer Files a Foreclosure Complaint in Superior Court?**

The tax sale buyer may start a foreclosure action 6 months from the date of the tax sale. This may happen as early as January following the tax sale, if the tax sale occurred during the preceding July.

After the buyer files a foreclosure action, you will be served with a Complaint, a Summons and an Initial Order.

If you redeem your property after the buyer files the Complaint, you must pay to OTR the current real property tax bill, which may include, *inter alia*, real property taxes, certified liabilities from other DC agencies and DC Water, and certain tax sale buyer expenses generally limited to \$331.50 (if other remaining expenses are billed separately). If applicable, you must also pay business improvement district taxes and vault/public space rental charges.

*Moreover, you must pay the tax sale buyer's expenses, including a reasonable attorney's fee and costs (foreclosure action filing fee, service of process, publication, mailing, etc.). You may always ask the court to fix the amount of expenses that you must pay.*

### **How Do I Get a Bill for the Expenses Incurred by the Tax Sale Buyer in a Foreclosure Action?**

You may contact the tax sale buyer's attorney or the buyer himself if he has no attorney. The appropriate name and contact information will be on the Complaint and Summons.

#### **Expenses of the Tax Sale Buyer**

If you have not gotten a Complaint, Summons and Initial Order, and you do not know if you have to pay expenses to the tax sale buyer, tell OTR that you are trying to redeem the property from tax sale and that you need a pay-off statement for a tax sale buyer's expenses incurred for each tax sale. OTR will request a pay-off statement from the tax sale buyer(s), and forward any statements it gets to you.

*If you have questions about the expenses pay-off statement, you must direct them to the tax sale buyer or his/her attorney, at the telephone number on the statement.*

If you have a dispute about the reasonableness of the expenses, including the attorney's fee, you may ask the D.C. Superior Court to resolve. The Superior Court has a mediator available on Wednesdays to assist with discussions on what is a reasonable amount of expenses, including the attorney's fee, for a particular case.

### **How Do I Resolve the Superior Court Action?**

After you have taken all steps to redeem your property, you must ensure that all issues about the foreclosure action have been resolved and the foreclosure action has been dismissed.

- You may consult an attorney.
- If you are unable to afford an attorney, ask for help from the Tax Sale Resource Center, D.C. Superior Court, 500 Indiana Avenue, NW, Witness Room for Hearing Room 519, open every Wednesday from 10 a.m. to 12 noon. The Tax Sale Resource Center is sponsored by the DC Bar Pro Bono Program, and offers some services to anyone who does not have an attorney for a tax sale matter.
- To get additional services, including possible representation, you must meet eligibility criteria. To find out if you can get help, ask at the Tax Sale Resource Center.

### **How Do I get an Official Record that My Property Was Redeemed from Tax Sale?**

A Certificate of Redemption gives official notice that the property has been redeemed. Although it is not required, it is advisable to get one.

To obtain a Certificate of Redemption, please submit a written request to OTR- Tax Sale Unit at 1101 4<sup>th</sup> Street, SW, Suite W550, Washington, DC 20024, and include a \$100 processing fee by

certified or cashier's check or money order payable to the D.C. Treasurer. Attach copies of the receipts you got from OTR, from a business improvement district, for payment of vault/public space rental charges, and for proof that you paid all expenses owed to each tax sale buyer, as applicable.\*

If you do not have all of these documents, the Certificate of Redemption cannot be processed until:

1. The real property tax payments for all outstanding, current and certified taxes have posted to the real property tax account;
2. If applicable, business improvement district taxes and vault/public space rental charges have been paid and OTR has been provided with releases; and
3. If applicable, all tax sale buyers have given releases for their expenses for which they are entitled to be reimbursed. If not applicable, please so state. A foreclosure lawsuit can only be filed against you beginning 6 months after the tax sale; thus for a tax sale in July, the lawsuit could not be filed until the following January at the earliest. If you are redeeming before such January, there are no expenses and thus no releases are necessary.\*

*\* Note that a release of expenses (including the attorney's fee) will only be required if a foreclosure action has been filed against you. If you were served with a Complaint, a Summons and an Initial Order, a foreclosure action has been filed against you. If you are unsure whether a foreclosure action has been filed against you, please check the D.C. Superior Court records.*

After OTR reviews these documents, it will issue a Certificate of Redemption. You may record the Certificate of Redemption with the Recorder of Deeds for the usual recording fee to give public notice that the property has been redeemed from tax sale.