

INDIANA BOARD OF TAX REVIEW

Final Determination Findings and Conclusions Lake County

Petition #: 45-001-02-1-5-01088
Petitioner: Broadway Area Com. Dev. Corp.
Respondent: Department of Local Government Finance
Parcel #: 001-25-42-0138-0014
Assessment Year: 2002

The Indiana Board of Tax Review (the “Board”) issues this determination in the above matter, and finds and concludes as follows:

Procedural History

1. The informal hearing as described in Ind. Code § 6-1.1-4-33 was held in February 2004, in Lake County, Indiana. The Department of Local Government Finance (DLGF) determined that the Petitioner’s property tax assessment for the subject property was \$15,900, and notified the Petitioner on April 2, 2004.
2. Petitioner filed the Form 139L petition on May 5, 2004.
3. The Board issued a notice of hearing to the parties dated March 3, 2005.
4. A hearing was held on April 4, 2005, and then continued on April 8, 2005, in Crown Point, Indiana before Special Master Dalene McMillen.

Facts

5. The subject property is located on 2020 Washington Street, Gary, Calumet Township in Lake County.
6. The subject property is vacant land.
7. The Special Master did not conduct an on-site visit of the property.
8. The assessed value of the subject property;

Record

12. The official record for this matter is made up of the following:
 - a. The Petition and all subsequent submissions by either party.
 - b. The tape recording of the hearing labeled Lake Co. #1443.
 - c. The following Exhibits were presented:

For the Petitioner:

Petitioner Exhibit 1 – A copy of the Form 139L petition.

Petitioner Exhibit 2 – Subject property record card for parcel #001-25-42-0138-0014.

Petitioner Exhibit 3 – Plat map of the subject area.

Petitioner Exhibit 4 – A letter containing the Petitioner’s argument.

Petitioner Exhibit 5 – Washington Manor site map.

For the DLGF:

Respondent Exhibit 1 – A copy of the Form 139L petition.

Respondent Exhibit 2 – A copy of the subject property record card.

Respondent Exhibit 3 – Two plat maps of the subject area.

For the Board:

Board Exhibit A – Form 139L petition, dated May 5, 2004.

Board Exhibit B – Notice of Hearing on Petition, dated March 3, 2005.

Board Exhibit C – Hearing sign-in sheet.

- d. These Findings and Conclusions.

Analysis

13. The most applicable cases are:
 - a. A Petitioner seeking review of a determination of assessing officials has the burden to establish a prima facie case proving that the current assessment is incorrect, and specifically what the correct assessment would be. *See Meridian Towers East & West v. Washington Township Assessor*, 805 N.E.2d 475, 478 (Ind. Tax Ct. 2003); *see also, Clark v. State Board of Tax Commissioners*, 694 N.E.2d 1230 (Ind. Tax Ct. 1998).

- b. In making its case, the taxpayer must explain how each piece of evidence is relevant to the requested assessment. *See Indianapolis Racquet Club, Inc. v. Washington Township Assessor*, 802 N.E.2d 1018, 1022 (Ind. Tax Ct. 2004) (“[I]t is the taxpayer’s duty to walk the Indiana Board ... through every element of the analysis”).
 - c. Once the Petitioner establishes a prima facie case, the burden shifts to the assessing official to rebut the Petitioner’s evidence. *See American United Life Insurance Company v. Maley*, 803 N.E.2d 276 (Ind. Tax Ct. 2004). The assessing official must offer evidence that impeaches or rebuts the Petitioner’s evidence. *Id.*; *Meridian Towers*, 805 N.E.2d at 479.
14. The Petitioner did not provide sufficient evidence to support the Petitioner’s contentions. This conclusion was arrived at because:
- a. The Petitioner contends that the subject property is assessed incorrectly, and should receive a “Developer’s Discount.”
 - b. Taxpayers may offer evidence relevant to the fair market value-in-use of a subject property to rebut their assessment and to establish the actual true tax value of the property. *See* 2002 REAL PROPERTY ASSESSMENT MANUAL at 5 (incorporated by reference at 50 IAC 2.3-1-2). The types of evidence that may be used for those purposes include actual construction cost, sales information regarding the subject or comparable properties, and appraisals prepared in accordance with generally recognized appraisal practices. *Id.*
 - c. “Developer’s Discount” is land assessed on an acreage basis that is subdivided into lots; the lots may not be reassessed until the next assessment date following a transaction which results in a change in legal or equitable title to that lot. *Ind. Code* § 6-1.1-4-12.
 - d. The Petitioner did not present any probative evidence showing that the current assessment is incorrect. Petitioner merely made conclusory statements that Broadway was the developer of land that was donated from the City of Gary and the Gary Park Department therefore it should be assessed in accordance to the “Developer’s Discount” guidelines. Petitioner concluded that the assessed value of the subject land should be \$300.
 - e. Conclusory statements do not constitute probative evidence and are not sufficient to establish a prima facie case. *Whitley Products, Inc. v. State Board of Tax Commissioners*, 704 N.E.2d 1113, 1119 (Ind. Tax. Ct. 1998); *CDI, Inc. v. State Board of Tax Commissioners*, 725 N.E.2d 1015, 1019 (Ind. Tax Ct. 2000).

- f. The Petitioner contends that similar lots are assessed for less than the subject. The Petitioner stated that the comparable lots are 25 feet by 125 feet, and assessed for \$100 or \$200 per lot. The Petitioner argues that since the subject lot is triangular in shape, the subject lot should be assessed for \$300.
- g. The Petitioner did not provide property record cards for the comparable lots. The Petitioner's statement that the lots are similar is a matter of opinion. A conclusory statement that something is comparable does not constitute probative evidence. Because the Petitioner did not present evidence that the property was comparable to its own, the Petitioner did not present a prima facie case. *See Blackbird Farms Apts., LP v. Department of Local Government Finance*, 765 N.E.2d 711, 715 (Ind. Tax Ct. 2002).
- h. Where the Petitioner fails to make a prima facie case, the Respondent's burden of proof is not triggered. *Lacy Diversified Indus. v. Department of Local Government Finance*, 799 N.E.2d 1215, 1222 (Ind. Tax Ct. 2003); *Whitley Products v. State Board of Tax Commissioners*, 704 N.E.2d 1113, 1119 (Ind. Tax Ct. 1998) (stating that taxpayer must do more than simply alleging an error exists to trigger the substantial evidence requirement).

Conclusion

- 15. The Petitioner failed to make a prima facie case. The Board finds in favor of the Respondent.

Final Determination

In accordance with the above findings and conclusions the Indiana Board of Tax Review now determines that the assessment should not be changed.

ISSUED: _____

Commissioner,
Indiana Board of Tax Review

IMPORTANT NOTICE

- APPEAL RIGHTS -

You may petition for judicial review of this final determination pursuant to the provisions of Indiana Code § 6-1.1-15-5. The action shall be taken to the Indiana Tax Court under Indiana Code § 4-21.5-5. To initiate a proceeding for judicial review you must take the action required within forty-five (45) days of the date of this notice. You must name in the petition and in the petition's caption the persons who were parties to any proceeding that led to the agency action under Indiana Tax Court Rule 4(B)(2), Indiana Trial Rule 10 (A), and Indiana Code §§ 4-21.5-5-7 (b)(4), 6-1.1-15-5 (b). The Tax Court Rules provide a sample petition for judicial review. The Indiana Tax Court Rules are available on the Internet at <http://www.in.gov/judiciary/rules/tax/index.html>. The Indiana Trial Rules are available on the Internet at http://www.in.gov/judiciary/rules/trial_proc/inde.html. The Indiana Code is available on the Internet at <http://www.in.gov/legislative/ic/code>.