Assessments up $350 million

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Assessments on property in East Baton Rouge Parish in 1985 increased more than $350 million over last year, Assessor Frank Granger III said Friday.

The announcement bolstered the morale of the city-parish administrators, who calculate the increase will mean $1.2 to $1.6 million more than anticipated in the general fund budget for 1985.

The overage in revenue, however, simply offsets the bad news from earlier in the week when it was anticipated sales tax declines in August will plunge the city-parish deeper in the hole — by another $800,000.

Walter Monsour, top mayoral aide, had trimmed $8.2 million of an anticipated $9 million deficit, so even the most optimistic figure of a $1.6 million increase would simply keep the city-parish on an even keel through September.

The good news from the assessor's office apparently will enable the city-parish to operate without further layoffs through September.

Granger calculated a $1.3 million increase in the city and parish general funds, without including the revenue-sharing money the city-parish gets from the state to make up for homestead exemptions.

He said, however, the various public bodies receive about 80 percent of what the taxes would be on homestead-exempt property, which totals $430 million this year, as compared to $418.6 million last year.

Granger pointed out the figures are preliminary figures, noting that the final figures will not be available until the tax rolls have been approved by the Louisiana Tax Commission.

The deadline for filing the rolls with the Tax Commission is Nov. 15, and Granger anticipates the local rolls won't be ready to submit until near the deadline.

The total parish assessment for 1985 comes to

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$1,758,197,730 as compared to the 1984 total of $1,604,646,376. The increase of more than $530 million in assessments comes, in spite of a decline in industrial assessments from $119 million last year to $114 million this year.

The industrial figure even includes $39 million coming onto the tax rolls for the first time after 10 years of tax exemption. Granger said the increased valuations are primarily due to commercial developments and construction of large residences during the past year. But, the assessments also got a boost in the area of public utilities, which are assessed by the Louisiana Tax Commission.

The public utilities assessment climbed from $183.7 million last year to $189.7 million in 1985. The regular assessments — those other than industry and public utilities — climbed from $1.1 million in 1984 to $1.3 million in 1985.

The increase in assessments in the parish outside the city limits also boosted the Consolidated Garbage District, whose assessed values climbed from $3.8 million in 1984 to $4 million in 1985.

Granger. The city-parish general funds are used to augment the actual cost of the garbage collection and the road lighting districts.

As a result of the increases in the assessments in those two districts, the general fund will be relieved of more than $68,000 that was due to be transferred to those special districts under the 1985 budget.

Monsour said late Friday the city-parish had certainly not anticipated the overages that will apply to the 1985 budget, and Finance Director Lynn Schofield had not been able to secure even the preliminary figures on Thursday when he called the assessor's office.

He said Schofield will try next week to get the assessment figures and make a faster study of the effect of the increased assessments on the city-parish revenue picture.