



Written by [Jack Kenny](#) on June 1, 2010

\$92 Million Green Facelift for IRS Center

The Internal Revenue Service is collecting taxpayer dollars in more ways than one, thanks in part to the roughly \$800 billion in economic stimulus money approved by Congress. The IRS has been awarded \$80.5 million of federal "stimulus" money for a \$92 million renovation of its complex in Andover, Massachusetts.

The agency already has \$11.4 million on hand for the project, the *Boston Herald* reported. The renovated facility will include an art gallery, indoor gardens, a 7,000-square-foot cafeteria, and an amphitheater, the paper reports. But in a state with 9.5 percent unemployment, no one, apparently, can say what jobs, if any, will be created once the project is completed in August of 2012. IRS spokeswoman Peggy Riley told the *Herald* in an e-mail that "nothing has changed" since April when she replied: "It is premature to speculate on what, if any, new types of jobs might come to Andover."



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Architect Jonathan Levi, whose firm received \$8.3 million for design of the project, said the renovated compound would provide space for up to 2,000 employees, or double the number working there now. Yet the IRS laid off 1,400 workers at the site last year, saying the increase in electronic returns had reduced the number of people needed to handle the paperwork.

Officials at the U.S. General Services Administration said the \$80.5 million awarded the agency under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act—the formal name for the stimulus program—was to "put people back to work quickly" and "transform federal buildings into high-performance green buildings."

The renovations and "green upgrades" at the 400,000 square-foot complex will create "a comfortable, collaborative environment," and a sense of "community and belonging," architect Levi told the *Herald*. "It will be welcoming for the people who use it."

But the project may not seem so welcoming to the nation's taxpayers providing all those millions of green currency for it. They might well wonder how the presence of an art gallery, indoor gardens and reflecting pools at the tax collection center will create jobs in the "green" economy. While key supporter Rep. Niki Tsongas (D-Mass.), and other top Democrats in the region have claimed the project will improve "productivity and customer service" at the 50-year-old federal complex, critics have called it a "boondoggle," saying the money could have been better spent fixing roads, bridges and dams.

If jobs were truly the goal, the money might better have been left in the private sector, where it might



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have been invested in practical, profit-making enterprises that would foster expanded and productive employment instead of providing plush surroundings for tax collectors. It appears that more than \$90 million federal dollars have been committed to meet the twin goals of growing the federal bureaucracy and supporting environmentally correct causes.



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