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The Opinion Pages | LETTERS

A Tax on Views of Central Park?

JAN. 18, 2016

To the Editor:

Max Frankel (“Make Them Pay for Park Views,” Op-Ed, Dec. 31) makes an excellent case for a Central Park vista tax, if the case for prohibiting new “supertall” towers south of the park does not gain traction with New York City.

While the first priority should be to limit the number of these mega-sun-blockers from casting their shadows on the park, a proposed luxury vista tax on newly constructed apartments with views of the park is definitely an alternative.

Though the city would benefit financially from the added income this tax procures, we who love and use the park would still lose.

PETER SAMTON

New York

The writer is an architect.

To the Editor:

Max Frankel's proposal to impose a tax on windows over Central Park to make the rich pay for their fabulous views from all those new towers around the park has a certain appeal. But the legality is questionable at best.

Parks are not assets to be monetized. They belong to the people, and that includes rich as well as poor. Put another way, New York City has no more right to charge the rich for their view of a public park than to charge the poor to enter it and take a walk.

On the practical side, tell the Department of Finance that the city can raise money by charging for views of parks, and next thing you know, it will be pushing to upzone the neighborhood as a dandy way of raising still more money from more people having those great views.

In the end, you only generate more towers and make the situation worse. Better would be to downzone areas along parks, and waterways, too, to prevent those towers in the first place.

MICHAEL GRUEN

New York

The writer, a lawyer, is president of the City Club of New York. The letter represents his personal views.

To the Editor:

There is a much simpler solution to the problems addressed by Max Frankel in his proposal to tax apartments based on the number of windows with views. How about restructuring New York City's tax policy to shift much of the heavy lifting from income tax to property tax?

If structured right, those who both work and live in the city would see

their tax burden remain more or less the same. There would be a big increase in burden for those who own expensive homes but who do not earn money here.

If large numbers of foreigners want to spend their money to buy apartments the likes of which most New Yorkers can only dream about, that is their right, but the city should make sure that they pay for the upkeep of the city they feel is such a good investment.

JEREMY M. POSNER

New York

To the Editor:

New York City doesn't need a scheme to tax "views." What it needs is a property tax system that is rational and equitable. Unfortunately, our current system — established in 1981 — is stacked in favor of the wealthiest New Yorkers and against lower income renters.

As the Furman Center at New York University has found, dozens of individual co-ops have sold for more than the Department of Finance's estimated market value for the *entire building*, while the effective tax rate of expensive condos and co-ops is a fraction of that paid by owners of rental properties, which house the majority of New Yorkers.

The city's property tax may be the proverbial "third rail" of local politics, but at a time when families throughout the five boroughs are confronted with an affordable housing crisis, now is the time to push for fundamental reform.

ANDREW L. KALLOCH

New York

The writer is deputy policy director to New York City Comptroller Scott

Stringer. The letter reflects Mr. Kalloch's personal views.

A version of this letter appears in print on January 18, 2016, on page A20 of the New York edition with the headline: Park Vu: How About a Tax With That?.

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