

COMMON GROUND PRESENTATION (from page 11)

PHASE TWO

(1) Commission and pay appropriate individuals to produce a Professional Feasibility Study to:

- (A) Examine all the ramifications of the proposed changes
- (B) Write the legislation necessary in the appropriate form
- (C) Answer all the anticipated objections

PHASE THREE

(1) Publicize and gather endorsements from prominent and local citizens

PHASE FOUR

(1) Recruit local politicians to support the introduction and enactment of the proposed changes

Henry George clearly enunciated this idea over 130 years ago. Since then a modified version of his idea has been tried in some small towns and foreign cities, and briefly in New York City in the 1920's and 30's. But its time has come again. Perhaps the above strategy is the way to go forward. What do you think?

Close the Gap in the East Side Esplanade

Project Leader: Scott Baker

The idea of this project is to complete the "green necklace" or esplanade, around Manhattan, used by bikers, walkers, and park-goers. There are 3 ~1-mile gaps in the Greenway esplanade, the most expensive and most troublesome, being the detour from 38th street to 61st street, along the East River – commonly called the "UN Gap" because part of it runs past the United Nations.

A complicated land swap deal has been presented as the "Plan" for over 10 years, involving the U.N. taking over neighboring Robert Moses Park to expand their campus, and then paying for part of the esplanade as mitigation, while the city sells off property it owns – 1 & 2 U.N. Plaza – to pay for the rest of the esplanade. The state and city have agreed, but the U.N. has not yet signed off on the deal, despite several town halls and later direct appeals by city councilman Dan Garodnick, Assembly member Brian Kavanagh, and State Senator Liz Kreuger.

A "Plan B" was presented to the three main principals above at the last of 3 Town Halls in the Fall of 2011, as well as separately to the assembly member and State Senator in their offices. CGNYC's proposal is to raise the required amount - \$200m, possibly more by now – with a LVT on a 38 square block Local Improvement District (LID) running from 38th street – 61st Street, east of Second Avenue (the area most affected) – an increase of 14.6%, spread over 10 years, repaying a bond issued at the beginning of the period (amounts will need to be adjusted to reflect current conditions and costs). The idea has precedence in a proposal to provide maintenance for the Hudson River Park via a fee on a LID. The ROI would be expected to exceed the cost, over time, as evidenced by the \$2B ROI to the local area near the Highline Park, as delineated in a recent NY Times article.

To date, this alternate proposal has not been adopted in lieu of the original plan.

These are our current big plans, but much of our work is day-to-day running of the group and management, etc. So it goes everywhere, I suspect.

(Scott Baker may be emailed at ssbaker305@yahoo.com)

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MORE WRITE ON

RE: SPECIAL ECONOMIC ZONES

Crain's New York Business, NY, NY, 5-22-13

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Comment by Scott Baker, NY, NY, ssbaker305@yahoo.com

Removing sales taxes is a good idea, especially as they hit the poor and working classes disproportionately, but removing property taxes is exactly the wrong approach. It encourages land speculation/hoarding, puts profits in their pockets, and deprives the state of both revenues and new buildings. What the Governor ought to do is untax the building portion of the property tax, and then increase the tax on land to make up for it in a revenue-neutral way. This will encourage the most efficient use of land, encourage development. The Land Value Tax has been tested and proven for over 100 years, going back to Henry George. See my editorial in the Empire Page "We Need a Land Value Tax, Not a Property Tax Cap," here: <http://www.empirepage.com/2013/3/3/we-need-a-land-value-tax-not-a-property-tax-cap>.

But, don't take my word for it. Listen to 25-year Mayor Steven Reed of Harrisburg of Pennsylvania giving the closing speech at the Council of Georgist Organizations last summer: <https://vimeo.com/48735884> (start about 8 minutes in). Harrisburg has a 6:1 Land/Building ratio tax. Reed says "The Land Value Tax works, and works, without exception to grow and produce the kinds of beneficial effects..." He also says there is zero administrative cost.

(note: Gov. Andrew Cuomo unveiled the first of a series of planned initiatives to create tax-free zones across the state. The proposal, expected to pass this session, would treat areas around each of the 64 State University of New York campuses as neighborhoods where businesses would not have to pay sales or property taxes.) <<