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## COUNCIL, MAYOR FIGHT OVER VACANT LOTS

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Response by Scott Baker, NY, NY, Sept. 15, 2016

In the November 24, 2013 issue of Crain's, de Blasio was quoted as saying vacant lot owners should "put up or shut up" in an article by the same title. The Mayor rightly called for increasing taxes on vacant lots to match comparable properties, often right next door. That would have commensurately reduced prices as well as returning site value back to the city.

This is hardly new, and the idea goes back to at least the time of Henry George, the prime advocate for Land Value Taxation, who also nearly became Mayor of New York City in 1886.

And much more recently, then-Public Advocate Scott Stringer took up the mantle, as the Crain's article pointed out in 2013:

"Mr. de Blasio's proposal would primarily be aimed at those very neighborhoods. It would apply only to vacant properties in the boroughs outside Manhattan, except for parcels in flood zones.

Mr. de Blasio's plan is nearly identical to a campaign that was successfully waged in Manhattan in 2007 by Borough President Scott Stringer and state lawmakers, which resulted in the tax change being made to all properties north of 110th Street. Below that line, vacant properties had historically been taxed at more costly commercial rates."

It's a shame for the city that the Mayor has abandoned his own good idea, and indeed, even reversed himself to placate the real estate industry. <<

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