

MY TURN

BY LUKE REGIER

Preserving open space: A battle we all fight for, a burden few bear

Increasingly, our surrounding communities are creating Community Preservation Funds to fund the preservation of open space for the purpose of sustaining the Hudson Valley's rural character. The Builders Association of the Hudson Valley (BAHV) is supportive of Community Preservation Funds and fully supports municipalities who value and take action to safeguard the rural landscape.

There is no arguing that open space acquisition, historic property preservation and the conservation of agricultural character are notions that those who love the Hudson Valley treasure. The Builders Association firmly believes that programs created to preserve such community values, which undoubtedly stand to benefit the community at-large, should be funded by the entire community. The Builders Association resolutely opposes the use of transfer taxes as a funding mechanism for such initiatives.

A growing reliance on transfer taxes by local governments to fund Community Preservation Funds is adding to the rising cost of housing in the Hudson Valley market. As transfer taxes and other regulatory costs rise, thousands of families are priced out of the opportunity to own their own homes.

Transfer taxes are charges levied against new and existing development in order to generate revenue to pay for capital improvements or environmental preservation. Such fees are consequential taxes on the purchase of homes or

property.

Whereas proponents of the transfer tax often equate home builders' position on the tax as that of apprehension, for fear of lost income, economists and home builders alike acknowledge that these fees are simply passed on to the consumer - those families that purchase a new home.

This funding mechanism, chosen by the Town of Warwick, shifts the focus from general open space preservation to a parcel-by-parcel attempt at curbing development. Transfer taxes, like the one on the November ballot in the Town of Warwick, increase the price of every home - even those of growing families with generations of history in the area in need of upsizing - whether that be for the new baby or the in-laws.

The Builders Association of the Hudson Valley believes in the value of open space, we appreciate the meaning of rural character and we understand the significance of preserving our community's history. However, approving this Transfer Tax initiative on November's ballot, and future ballots, is an irresponsible course of action toward funding this important effort. Please vote "no" and bring this important debate back to the table.

Luke Regier is president of the Builders Association of the Hudson Valley (www.hvbuilder.com), which has its headquarters in New Windsor.

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