

South Brooklyn Hit Hard with Property Taxes

BY: Brandon Sapienza

“This is a very serious issue, New Yorkers can’t afford to live here anymore,” said Assemblywoman Nicole Malliotakis in a press conference on February 1 in response to outrage over many Brooklyn residents’ crippling property tax estimates. South Brooklyn, specifically Bensonhurst, Bay Ridge, and Dyker Heights were hit hardest by the estimates.

According to Malliotakis, the property tax levy in New York City has gone up 44 percent in the past five years. This year alone it was increased by eight percent.

The reason why residents in south Brooklyn are feeling the brunt of these increases is because of the fractional assessment system that gives homeowners in more wealthy areas breathing room with lower tax levies.

“I’m being choked by this city,” said homeowner and Bay Ridge resident Frank Lazara. “I just don’t know how much longer I can keep up with the price of living here. I’m paying nearly \$7,000 in property taxes alone this year.”

By contrast, Mayor de Blasio who is a resident of Park Slope pays far less in his more expensive home in comparison with the average price of a home in south Brooklyn

“There is such a disparity. The mayor’s property tax bill is \$4,500 for a house worth \$1 million,” said Malliotakis.

She is calling for a bypassing of any help from the New York City Council and instead pleading with Governor Cuomo to help alleviate the pressure on homeowners. “We cannot trust Mayor de Blasio and the City Council to do the right thing.”

With rising property taxes, homeowners are finding it increasingly difficult to pay their bills as the new tax law passed by the Trump administration limits the amount of State and Local Tax deductions at \$10,000.

“If I’m paying \$6,000, closer to \$7,000 per year in property taxes and I can only write off a total of \$10,000, I don’t have much room to play with,” said Angela Campanale. “This city already forces us to pay so much in taxes from our paychecks and in our yearly earnings, we’re becoming cash strapped with each passing year.”

The increase in taxes isn’t limited to just homeowners though, business owners are also being hit hard with taxes as many residents in Dyker Heights can see with the closure of the longstanding Costello’s Ace Home Center as well as the various empty storefronts that remain on main commercial districts.

In an interview with the Home Reporter, George Poulakakos, who owns a multi-use building on Bay Ridge's most business friendly street, said he is being slammed by taxes.

"The taxes were \$16,500 when I bought the building 23 years ago. Last year, I paid over \$70,000," he said. "The city doesn't want the rents to go up, and I agree with that, but they keep raising the property taxes. They keep raising the water bill.

Malliotakis also addressed this pervasive issue with building owners. "High property taxes also hurt apartment renters. The cost is passed onto you in the form of rent increases."

In her press conference, Malliotakis said that when the city budget is increased, taxes need to go up and usually the property tax levy is the way of achieving a balanced budget.

This does not bode well for these south Brooklyn residents as Mayor de Blasio recently presented his new \$95.3 billion budget for the next fiscal year.

"Hearing budget numbers like that makes me completely reconsider my current life here in the city." Campanale said. "Let's face it, as long as de Blasio and his Democrat friends are in office, the budget is only going up. I might as well prepare for the worst now instead of being hit in the future."

State Senator Andrew Gounardes, who represents numerous neighborhoods in South Brooklyn wants to see change to his affected constituents.

"I have two bills that would help," Gounardes said. "One is a circuit breaker to provide relief to low and middle income New Yorkers and the other lifts assessment caps for homes of a certain value when the household has a high income."

As for Lazara, he doesn't know what's next. "My family and I will take it day by day, and we'll see what happens."

New York politicians on both side of the aisle remained poised on enacting change, led by Gounardes, "I believe the time is now to act to make a difference."

South Brooklyn Property Tax Increases Compared to Park Slope

● South Brooklyn ● Park Slope

