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Big Deal | Paying Extra to Smell the Flowers

By SARAH KERSHAW

Fred R. Conrad/The New York Times The new 245 Tenth Avenue condo, center, will require residents to contribute to the High Line.

Saturday, 4:42 p.m. | Updated Supporters of New York City's parks and gardens have long asked residents of nearby buildings to help pay for the upkeep of these green spaces.

Consider the tulips, cherry trees and begonias along the median of Park Avenue. Mary Woodard Lasker, a philanthropist and a champion of medical research, was considered a pioneer in the 1950s when she urged her fellow citizens to make donations for the plantings on the avenue. That led to the creation of the [Fund for Park Avenue](#), which, like the [Central Park Conservancy](#) and other groups that raise money for city parks, depends on annual donations from neighboring buildings and their residents.

But should those who live on Park Avenue, Central Park or Prospect Park, or along the High Line, be required to pay for them as if they were an amenity?

Some groups have tried to persuade nearby buildings to formalize donations, perhaps through required payments included in common charges or association fees, usually to no avail. Others, like [Friends of the High Line](#) and [Friends of Hudson River Park](#), have explored or are testing the waters with special tax districts around the parks, making the argument that these residents enjoy higher property values. But these can be prickly proposals, with New York City's [real estate taxes](#) already a sore point.

Now, though, some new developments are requiring park contributions as part of the package for apartments on sale.

A new condominium on the High Line, [245 Tenth Avenue](#), which stood empty for almost 18 months before being refinanced several months ago and was to hold its first open house this weekend, will require contributions to the park as part of the monthly common charge.

The offering plan for the building, which has 18 condos and 2 commercial spaces, and is steps from the nearly finished second phase of the park, says the residents and commercial

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• [Go to Section »](#)

Timothy A. Clary/
Agence France-Presse — Getty Images Donations pay for the tulips, cherry trees and begonias

tenants will make an annual \$10,000 donation, or about \$500 per unit, on average, depending on size. The money will go to Friends of the High Line, which raises 70 percent of the park's budget. **that line the Park Avenue median.**

It is the only such arrangement Friends of the High Line has with a building, the group said, although neighboring buildings and residents have made contributions on their own.

The High Line has drawn millions of visitors and become a major selling point for new developments in the area, prompting something of a West Chelsea boomlet. The first section runs from Gansevoort to West 20th Street and the next will stretch from 20th to 30th Street.

Given the \$153 million cost of the two sections, \$10,000 from the 11-story building at 245 10th isn't much in the scheme of things. (Prices of units for sale now range from \$1.725 million, for a one-bedroom, to \$5 million for a two-bedroom penthouse.) Even so, Joshua David, a co-founder of Friends of the High Line, said in an e-mail, "their support demonstrates their leadership and deep understanding of the challenges we face in keeping the High Line thriving at the high standards we have all come to love."

Leonard Steinberg, a broker with Prudential Douglas Elliman who is marketing the condominium, said, "I'm hoping this building will guilt the other buildings in the neighborhood into saying they will make a contribution."

Todd Lippiatt, a managing principal of Aristone Realty Capital, which is working with the original developer, [Grasso Holdings](#), and helped buy out the condo project's crippling debt, said the common charges were on par with those of neighboring buildings. That is because the condominium does not have some of the lavish amenities found in the other buildings, like [200 Eleventh Avenue](#), which has a sky garage with car elevators. So the idea is that the High Line is the main amenity, he said.

Across the East River, residents of [One Brooklyn Bridge Park](#), at 360 Furman Street, are contributing to their park through common charges and payments in lieu of real estate taxes, according to the Brooklyn Bridge Park Corporation. Under the plan for [Brooklyn Bridge Park](#), payments from businesses and apartment buildings on the park's footprint would finance most costs associated with construction and maintenance. The plan requires a similar arrangement with other new residential buildings on the unfinished park, although city officials are considering other options amid opposition to using luxury condos to pay for the green space.

Jessica Ebelhar/The New York Times

Chester Higgins Jr./The New York Times [One Brooklyn Bridge Park](#), top, is helping with construction and maintenance costs for the new park.

The Central Park Conservancy works with about 200 buildings on the park's perimeter to raise money, but there are no official donations to the conservancy set up through common charges, said Scott Johnson, a spokesman for the conservancy.

A few years ago the [Prospect Park Alliance](#) approached the boards of a handful of large buildings along the park to ask about making donations, said Eugene Patron, a spokesman for the alliance. But Mr. Patron said that co-op boards were not eager to do so because many residents were already making donations.

Now that some new developments are requiring contributions, he said, perhaps the idea would catch on.

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This post has been revised to reflect the following correction:

Correction: April 17, 2011

A report in the Big Deal column last Sunday about residential buildings and private groups in New York City that give money for the upkeep of nearby parks misstated the objective of one group, the Prospect Park Alliance, when it approached the boards of a handful of large buildings along the park a few years ago. It was seeking donations, not asking the boards to require residents to donate.