**Sample Letter to the Editor**

**State should address development tax break**

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Nobody likes wasting the public’s money. Unfortunately, an overly broad law on tax breaks is doing that. The Public Accountability Initiative and The Buffalo News have recently reported on a state law known as 485-a. It was intended to promote the conversion of abandoned downtown buildings into mixed-use projects with housing and retail or commercial space, but it is getting used in ways that defy the spirit of the law and plain common sense.

Two projects are particularly outrageous. Benderson Development got a property tax exemption worth $5.9 million for its One Canalside project, which is occupied by a hotel and a law firm. Where is the residential use? Solely in order to get the tax break, Benderson included one 904 square foot apartment in this 175,546 square foot building. Possibly even worse is Greenleaf’s Campus Walk project. Far from re-using abandoned downtown buildings, Greenleaf tore down 17 residential duplexes along Grant Street and replaced them with luxury student apartments, and yet got exemptions worth $2.6 million. This is a terrible waste of public dollars.

There have been similar abuses of the program in other cities. New York State should eliminate the 485-a exemption or change it to help small-time property owners to improve their properties, rather than doling out gravy to wealthy developers for dubious projects.

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