

September 20, 2016

Thank you for sharing your concerns about the future of the Elizabeth Street Garden.

I appreciate how strongly you and many members of the community feel about the site, and understand its significance to the neighborhood; indeed I have visited it many times myself as a resident of CB2. I received hundreds of letters on the issue, including many thoughtful comments and suggestions.

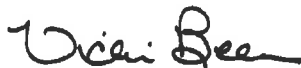
Our public land is a precious resource. As the commissioner of the City's housing agency, I take the stewardship of that resource very seriously. While we are committed to using the public sites in HPD's jurisdiction to provide much-needed affordable housing, we recognize that there are many competing interests for the little City-owned land that is left. We also understand that communities have many varied needs and priorities, which is why we have spent many months working towards an approach that balances the dire need for affordable housing with the legitimate desire for open space.

Throughout the process, it has been suggested that we develop other public sites in the community instead of this one. The reality is that there are very few City sites in Community Board 2, and even fewer that are feasible for housing development because of their size or their current use. More importantly, over the past decade, only 70 new affordable units have been developed in the neighborhood. It is therefore essential that we explore the potential for affordable housing on every public site so we ensure more low-income New Yorkers have access to all our City's great neighborhoods.

After evaluating all the feedback, HPD recently released a Request For Proposals for a 100% affordable housing complex for seniors on the Mott-Elizabeth Street Site that will require a portion of the Site to be preserved as public open space. Any proposal submitted under this RFP must include at least 5,000 square feet of publicly-accessible open space that preserves important elements of the existing space. We hope to work together with neighborhood stakeholders to create the best possible project – one that doesn't leave us with a false choice between affordability and gardens, but rather embraces both these values.

Thank you again for your letter, and for expressing your concern. We hope to work with you to bring high-quality affordable housing to New Yorkers in need, enabling them to stay in or move to a neighborhood that provides significant opportunities to build better lives, and to establish dynamic open space that will serve as a neighborhood asset for generations to come.

Sincerely,



Vicki Been

