



Elizabeth Street Garden Questionnaire - Rafael Espinal

1. Have you visited Elizabeth Street Garden before? If so, please describe your experience.

Yes I have. I was in the neighborhood for a meeting and didn't realize how close I was to the garden until I walked by. The space was much larger than I had seen in photos on social media, and even though it was a little cold, the seats and gardens were nearly filled with people. There were clearly work meetings going on, friends catching up, and people letting their dogs walk on grass instead of concrete. The surrounding busyness of SoHo and tourist stops in Little Italy were the perfect backdrop for illustrating the importance of community gardens. It was the only space that was open to the public, didn't cost any money, and the only cluster of nature that I had seen south of Washington Square and north of Battery Park.

2. What is your position on the alternative site solution that would use 388 Hudson – a gravel-filled, city-owned lot – to provide 5x the amount of affordable housing and additional public open space while saving Elizabeth Street Garden?

I fully support this plan to develop on a site that is currently empty. I have urged the Department of City Planning to stop considering community gardens as soft sites for development. While we certainly have an affordable housing crisis, we also have an open space crisis.

3. Given the immediate threat, how as Public Advocate would you work with our community to protect and preserve Elizabeth Street Garden and use the alternative site for the proposed development?

See #4.

4. What is your position on how the City prioritizes public open green space and how community gardens are being pitted against the need for affordable housing?

I have called on the Mayor to issue a moratorium on the destruction of community gardens because there is a citywide threat to public open green space. I have a robust affordable housing platform and track record, but never in my experience have I found a circumstance where there was a reason to destroy the nearly 100 community gardens in my district. No matter where you live or how much money you make, you have as much a right to green space as you have a right to affordable housing. Green space is crucial to a sustainable community.