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Disappointed about Elizabeth Street Garden RFP

Last week, New York City Department of Housing and Preservation Development (HPD) released the Request for Proposal (RFP) for the development of 21 Mott Street, also known as the Elizabeth Street Garden site. The RFP solicits that developers submit a plan to redevelop the open-green space at Elizabeth Street garden to include 100% affordable senior housing and 5,000 square feet of open space as part of their proposal. This RFP comes after much community opposition to the destruction of the garden, alternative affordable housing site suggestions submitted by Community Board 2, and the denial of a grant from the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation (LMDC). Nonetheless, this Administration and HPD has chosen to continue their goal of increasing affordable housing in the City by usurping open space that is used by and needed for our park-starved community.

In Lower Manhattan, density continues to increase while dwindling park space becomes more scarce and difficult to find. This RFP represents a disregard for the will of this community and their desire to see both affordable senior housing be constructed and open-green space be preserved. Once again, residents in New York City are told they must choose between constructing housing stock or preserving parkland. This occurs while flagrant violations and harassment against existing tenants in affordable housing continue unabated. To then know that this Administration wants to pursue both the Elizabeth Street Garden site, as well as the alternative sites proposed by Community Board 2, is staggering. Furthermore, there are examples in other Community Boards where city-owned land, not currently operating as park space, is being transformed into city-mapped park land.

I am opposed the destruction of Elizabeth Street Garden and implore the de Blasio Administration and HPD to find solutions that will produce both permanent affordable senior housing and preserve existing open space. Our city is in dire need of housing solutions that ensure middle-class New Yorkers can stay in their neighborhoods but also find nearby open space they can use. Unfortunately this RFP will destroy existing open space in order to create temporarily affordable housing for seniors