



Elizabeth Street Garden Questionnaire - Ifeoma Ike

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

I have not been to the Elizabeth Street Garden, but I've enjoyed it vicariously via pictures upon learning about this current dilemma and intend to visit within the upcoming week.

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?

City-owned property should always be at the top of the list for our current housing crisis. As Public Advocate, I intend to identify existing city-owned properties that should be considered priority locations for new housing developments—including 388 Hudson. Housing is a priority. And so are our public spaces—which our City should be investing more in, not talking it away.

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?

As Public Advocate, I would inject myself into the now approved ULURP process, call for the project to continue but at a different location, and make sure the voices of community members are meaningfully included. I will also point out that the reason we even have ULURP is because of the "Robert Moses-like" way of using government to takeover public land to displace and to control. In light of the Amazon HQ scandal, I am concerned at the manipulation of current electeds to pit community interests against each other, and the abuse of systems to ultimately benefit corporate interests.

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?

As a candidate who specializes in how to make equity work within systems, and a professor who teaches about the legal developments of our time and how it impacts marginalized communities, I am disheartened that the priority of housing—which is most urgent, especially for LGBTQ communities and seniors—has been pit against the underprioritized need for accessible green space. The facts are these: we need housing, and that is a priority. And there are sites that are available including an identified empty, city-owned lot at 388 Hudson Street. We also need the voices of our communities to matter because without that, people lose trust in the very democratic system we desperately need more people to engage in. Equity requires us to balance not only the "why" of a project, but the "how" of the process, and the precedent that we will set when we approve, in this case, real estate projects. We will solve housing insecurity. And it should not be at the expense of publicly enjoyed spaces.