



## Elizabeth Street Garden Questionnaire - Michael Blake

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

I have not yet had the opportunity to visit Elizabeth Street Garden but I very much hope to in the near future. I look forward to experiencing its character and charm for myself and fighting to protect its place in the community.

### **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?**

There is no question that we need more and better affordable housing in New York City, but we cannot allow for development on every inch of green space left in this city. City-owned land, that can provide more affordable housing, without destroying beloved community gardens, is a much better alternative and one that seems very feasible at 388 Hudson.

### **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 will focus on making sure the voices of our communities have power, not just voices from City Hall and REBNY. I will be honored to stand with ESG to defend your beloved garden, which is an integral part of the character and charm of the community. Our communities and residents need to be invited to the table, not kept from it. As a city, we know we need more affordable housing, but as elected officials, we also know we have a responsibility to protect our communities.

### **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?**

Green space, parks, and gardens are essential to our city. They provide New Yorkers with an escape from our concrete jungle, overcrowded subways, and busy streets. They provide us with a connection to nature, the ability to learn about sustainable food production, and space for our children to be free. As someone who grew up in the Bronx, I know how important this escape is, and how essential it is for us to protect these spaces for our communities. And I also know that we need to be doing a lot more to make New York City an affordable place to live. But these two priorities do not have to be a zero sum game.

We need more affordable housing, but we also need to focus on improving the systems and policies we already have in place, which do not take away from our community gardens. That's why I'm calling for a moratorium on Third Party Transfers, enforcing rent stabilization laws by rescinding J51 tax credits from greedy landlords and expanding SCRIE so that more seniors are able to stay in and afford their homes.