

SUPPORT FOR THE ELIZABETH STREET GARDEN AND AGAINST NYC DEVELOPING THE SITE

The Downtown Independent Democrats have fought hard for over 40 years for affordable, senior, and loft-tenants housing.

But we do not support the proposed development on the site of the Elizabeth Street Garden which has become a valuable community center.

This garden has become an amazing community resource for seniors and children alike. Older people have found a safe haven where they can sit and converse, join in activities and not be isolated.

In fact, this garden can be defined more accurately as a valuable community center with its many and diverse activities. It should rightfully be known as the 'Elizabeth Street Garden Community Center.'

It also provides greenery and open space in a plant-starved area. The district in which it exists has one of lowest ratios in all of NYC of green space per capita. Whether asthma or breathing disorders, we must acknowledge the importance of these spaces to our health.

Around us NYU has taken much park space for its own use, to be replaced by institution-like plazas. One-third of the teeny-tiny Petrosino Park has been allocated to Citibikes.

Sara D. Roosevelt Park is primarily asphalt, and its uses are different with basketball, soccer and similar activities. To our sorrow, it also has an extremely high homeless and drug-use population. It lacks lacks a safe place with grass for children and seniors alike and has very different uses and activities than the Elizabeth Street Garden.

To take more of the little pieces of green we hang on to would be criminal.

Ironically, NYC itself has in the past few years sold its own downtown real estate for luxury development, which could have been affordable housing. We encourage the Mayor, the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation, the Department of Housing Preservation & Development, and other government agencies to pause and look further for sites more suitable than this one.

Furthermore, this City administration promised that the old-boy network top-down approach to development and large-scale projects in our neighborhoods would henceforth be a bottom-up approach, involving local groups and Community Boards in dialogue and planning at the outset as it should be.

Instead the top-down approach is even worse than before, with projects and zoning decisions being 'done deals' before the local community is told and little or no consultation on planning at the local level.

The Elizabeth Street Garden site was negotiated away WITH NO NOTICE AND IN A BACK-ROOM DEAL to make up for lack of ability to negotiate enough affordable housing at the Seward Park site, a development not even close to the garden.

For those who do not live in this and the surrounding neighborhood, it is hard to assess the positive impact this Elizabeth Street Garden gives. But there is an overwhelming support for the garden - by the people who live here. Both the old-timers, the newcomers, and the small businesses surrounding the garden.

These local people very much support affordable and senior housing - but this garden, and its role as a community center for young and old, is also important and overrides development on this site.