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COMMUNITY BOARD NO. 2, MANHATTAN

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August 24, 2015

Joseph Chan, Chairman
Lower Manhattan Development Corporation
1 Liberty Plaza – 27th Floor
New York, NY 10006

Vicki Been, Commissioner
Housing Preservation & Development
100 Gold Street
New York, NY 10038

Dear Chairman Chan and Commissioner Been:

At its Full Board Committee meeting on August 20th, 2015, Community Board #2, Manhattan adopted the following resolution:

A motion opposing a request from Housing Preservation & Development to Lower Manhattan Development Corporation funding for an affordable housing project at 21 Spring Street, aka Elizabeth Street Garden.

Whereas:

Housing Preservation & Development (HPD) has requested funding from the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation (LMDC) in the amount of \$6 million for an Affordable Housing project at 21 Spring Street;

LMDC approved criteria for the use of the available funds includes that “The project demonstrates a high level of community interest and support”;

Community Board 2 Manhattan was not advised of this funding request by HPD;

No proposal to use of this site for housing has ever been publicly reviewed and the specific proposal to be funded has not been presented to CB2 or even publicly announced or made available to the public in any way;

CB2 has proposed to HPD the use of another city-owned site within our district where far more affordable housing can be built with less harm to public open space;

6. The proposed housing at 21 Spring Street would eliminate the Elizabeth Street Garden, an important and much-loved green space;

1. In January, 2014, CB2 passed a resolution that:

- a. “Supports the permanent preservation of the Elizabeth Street Garden in its entirety as a public open, green space and urges the City to transfer jurisdiction over this lot to the Parks Department;
 - b. Supports the efforts of the Elizabeth Street Garden volunteers to form an independent non-profit group dedicated to improving the garden, guaranteeing open public access, and providing programming, community events, and opportunities for volunteers;
 - c. Commits to an ongoing strategic and activist effort alongside our elected officials and government agencies to expand and preserve affordable housing in the district.”
2. Since then, Friends of Elizabeth Street Garden has:
- a. Established a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation with an independent board of local residents and business owners;
 - b. Organized almost 400 local volunteers to beautify the garden and keep it open to the public all year, including over 40 hours per week seasonally, and sent regular mailings to an email list of more than 3,800 subscribers;
 - c. Programmed more than 150 free public events each season - including gardening and educational programming for adults and children, wellness programming such as yoga, tai chi and meridian tapping, summer movie nights, live music performances, and an annual Harvest Festival attended by more than 2,000 neighbors;
 - d. Released its [2014 Annual Report](#) highlighting its accomplishments; and,
 - e. Raised \$23,000 through a combination of fundraising and grants.
1. Elizabeth Street Garden provides a heavily-used and much loved green oasis for local residents, workers and visitors to Little Italy and SoHo, a neighborhood:
- a. With only *three* square feet of open space per resident, and virtually all of this parkland is paved;
 - b. With an open space ratio of just 0.07 acre per 1,000 residents as compared with New York City’s planning goal of 2.5 acres per 1,000 residents (109 square feet per resident), and this includes the planted medians on Houston Street;
 - c. That is part of the only downtown Manhattan neighborhood that the New York City Parks Department identifies as “*underserved*” by open space in its City Environmental Quality Review Technical Manual;
 - d. That is part of the broader neighborhood of Community Board 2 that also lacks adequate open space with an 0.58 acre of parkland per 1,000 residents (25 square feet per person), one of the lowest ratios of public open space in the City; and
 - e. That is characterized by long blocks with narrow streets, small apartments that depend on air shafts for light and air, and none of the small neighborhood squares and green spaces that provide respite in other parts of the CB 2, where much of the district’s open space is concentrated in Hudson River Park and Washington Square Park, 1.2 miles and 0.9 miles respectively from the Garden,

Therefore it is resolved that Community Board 2 Manhattan:

1. Reiterates its support for the permanent preservation of the Elizabeth Street Garden in its entirety as public open green space and urges the City to transfer its jurisdiction to the Parks Department;
2. Urges the LMDC to adhere to its guidelines and therefore to not provide funding for a project that has not even been presented to the community, much less demonstrated a “high level of community interest and support”;

Urges HPD to withdraw this funding application and to work with CB2 and local elected officials to comprehensively assess the best opportunities for affordable housing within the district so that all concerned parties may work collaboratively and constructively to advance the critical goals of affordability and diversity in our district while also preserving our necessary public open space.

VOTE: Unanimous, with 16 Executive Committee members in favor.

Please advise us of any decision or action taken in response to this resolution.

Sincerely,



Tobi Bergman, Chair
Community Board #2, Manhattan

TB/EM

- c:
- Hon. Jerrold Nadler, Congressman
 - Hon. Daniel Squadron, NYS Senator
 - Hon. Brad Hoylman, NYS Senator
 - Hon. Sheldon Silver, NYS Assembly Member
 - Hon. Deborah Glick, NYS Assembly Member
 - Hon. Gale Brewer, Manhattan Borough President
 - Hon. Margaret Chin, NYC Council Member
 - Hon. Corey Johnson, NYC Council Member
 - Hon. Rosie Mendez, NYC Council Member
 - Alicia Glen, Deputy Mayor for Housing and Community Development
 - Mitchell J. Silver, Commissioner, Department of Parks & Recreation
 - Carl Weisbrod, Chair, City Planning Commission