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## Testimony in support of Haven Green to the New York City Planning Commission

March 13, 2019

Members of the City Planning Commission,

I am Marc Greenberg, Executive Director of the Interfaith Assembly on Homelessness and Housing. I am here to offer my testimony in support of the Haven Green project of Habitat for Humanity NYC. Since its founding in 1985, the Interfaith Assembly has advocated for public policies that address New York City's crisis of homelessness and the serious shortage of truly affordable housing. For over two decades, we have been pleased to count Habitat for Humanity NYC as a strong ally in our advocacy efforts, which collectively have helped to create and preserve many tens of thousands of homes for some of the most vulnerable New Yorkers.

When we first learned of the Haven Green project, we were understandably sensitive to the loss of the Elizabeth Street Garden. Green spaces are crucial to healthy communities. However, after further consideration, we have come to the clear conclusion that the creation of 123 truly affordable units of permanently affordable senior housing – including 37 for people who have experienced homelessness. --- plus the inclusion of over 8,000 square feet of publicly accessible garden and green space, flexible community activity space and onsite community services – make this project a significant net gain for its neighborhood and our City. With over 63,000 men, women and children sleeping in NYC shelters each night, including over 5,000 seniors, New York City cannot afford to pass up any opportunity to develop affordable housing for our people in need. Additionally, the inclusion of publicly accessible green open space, in a project that utilizes state of the art energy efficient design can provide a prototype that all city based housing projects should look to replicate.

The loss of a wonderful community garden is regrettable, and the frustration of the neighbors who have celebrated community in the Elizabeth street garden is understandable. It is our hope that the community members who built and celebrated community in the garden will welcome their new neighbors with open arms and continue to invest their energy into a neighborhood that will now include new homes for 123 seniors who will be afforded the blessed opportunity to live out their twilight years in safety and security.

*Decent and Affordable Housing is a Basic Human Right*

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