

# THOMAS WIRTH ASSOCIATES, INC.

L A N D S C A P E   A R C H I T E C T U R E

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June 3, 2017

The Honorable Bill de Blasio  
Mayor of New York City  
City Hall  
New York, New York 10007

Re: Greenacre Park – Sunlight preservation

By way of introduction, I am Tom Wirth, the landscape architect on the team responsible for the design of Greenacre Park while employed by Sasaki Associates. My training at Rutgers in plant science and horticulture and in landscape architecture at Michigan was put to immediate use for developing ideal habitat for all the plantings, and capturing sunlight on all the carefully detailed surfaces in this award-winning Park.

At Sasaki Associates, we innovated unique growing conditions for the trees by installing a continuous deep soil layer over the existing bedrock and built a raised deck of precast concrete panels over an elevated structural concrete grid. Thus, the Bosque of 12 Honey Locust trees at the center of the Park are essentially growing in one large tree pit that is provided with a subsurface feeding system for each tree, and underground irrigation and drainage. The trees were obtained at a nursery with 6-inch diameter trunks, and now most exceed 12 inches nearly 47 years later.

Every year since the Park's installation in 1971, I have been involved in some way with the Park's plantings, and for the past 30 years supervising the pruning of the Honey Locust trees to maintain canopy height and sufficient openings to allow sunlight into the plaza and planters below, and to support lower branch foliage. Over the years I have directly observed how the Park is such an integral part of the neighborhood's culture, and the community that depends on it for a respite from the City. The magic of the multiple water sounds and effects of the dappled

sunlight reflections and patterns is evident on the expressions of all visitors young and old.

In 1980 I was invited to be the landscape architect appearing on PBS's "This Old House" and "The Victory Garden" programs, and took a leave of absence from Sasaki to write "The Victory Garden Landscape Guide" published in 1984. I then started my own practice in Sherborn, MA with Sasaki's blessing, appeared on "This Old House" through 2000, and continued to consult with Greenacre independently to date.

It has been brought to my attention the potential reduction of sunlight to the Park from new zoning where future building heights if allowed would cause shading during some hours. I have studied the diagrams and data provided and would assert that any diminishing of sunlight would be detrimental to the health and vigor of trees and other plantings; and also to the effects of sunlight on the waterfall, runnels, and stone relief wall where the grazing afternoon light was intended to accentuate nature.

The mid- afternoon sunlight is welcomed on cool Spring and Fall days as well. Most importantly, the full morning hours of sunlight that exist as well as the mid-afternoon hours are critical for plant growth and the full enjoyment of the space.

I urge you to endorse and assert measures that will preserve the existing sunlight levels for the continued sustainability of this cherished Greenacre Park.

Sincerely,

Thomas Wirth, ASLA

cc: Gail A. Brewer, Manhattan Borough President  
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