

Gramercy Park Block Association - Neighborhood News #511

Neighbors near Central Park are protesting skyscrapers casting shadows on the park

**Do we have a similar threat to Gramercy Park?
The answer is YES!**



Central Park advocates say new skyscrapers hurt its quality of life. (Warren St. John)

On Wednesday, hundreds of people packed the New York Public Library to speak out against a wave of skyscrapers that will cast huge shadows on Central Park. At least seven buildings are nearing completion or proposed for the area, and range from [779 ft tall to 1,500 ft tall, towering above the Empire State building.](#)

According to Michael Kwartler, president of the Environmental Simulation Center, an NYC nonprofit that creates shadow assessments, "The cumulative effect of these shadows will be to make the park less usable and less pleasant to be in."

Warren St. John, who wrote New York Times op-ed "[Shadows Over Central Park](#)" in October, made a personal plea, telling a story about bringing his daughter to Heckscher Playground when a shadow seemed to make everyone there leave. "It was a very sort of lonely feeling," he said. "Shadows make the park less pleasant."

According to Community Board 5's Sunshine Task Force Chair, "The difference in temperature in the sunlight and one in the shadow is 20 degrees. Just imagine where you are now, imagine if you dropped the temperature by 20 degrees? You would move."

The Gramercy Park Block Association expresses concerns

Since there are now several high-rise developments in progress within a two block radius of Gramercy Park, the threat of tall buildings casting shadows on the park has been a major discussion of the GPBA Board of Directors.

GPBA Vice President, former Landmarks Commissioner and Chair of the GPBA's Historic Preservation Committee Rev. Tom Pike has expressed concerns about the surrounding real estate developments' direct negative impact on Gramercy Park.

According to Pike, "Gramercy Park is a 'jewel' developers want to exploit, and these building are purposely being built extremely high to tower over the Park. There's no doubt they bring a much higher price per square foot when they have a view of Gramercy Park."

"New buildings overlooking the Park threaten both our quality of life and the sky by casting the Park into perpetual shadow," he added.

What we can do?

One conclusion from Wednesday's meeting was that [the protest against the skyscrapers may be futile](#), as the buildings are at this point *fait accompli*. While some buildings may require city approval, many are "as-of-right" developments and do not mandate review by community boards, the City Planning Commission or City Council.

It was suggested that the city needs to rethink zoning rules that allow these skyscrapers to go up without any input. Many agreed that now is the time for legislation (which many cities have) to address the problem.

For two decades the GPBA, through our countless historic preservation efforts and legal battles, has been protecting the unique historic character and quality of life of Gramercy Park.

This may well be our next battle to protect Gramercy Park.

What you can do today

[Join the GPBA for 2014](#)

**Your generous support will enable us to continue
leading the way to protect Gramercy Park.**

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