

Elaine Mitchell Attias

527 North Elm Drive
Beverly Hills, CA. 90210
USA

April 28, 2017

Mr. Herb Wesson, Jr., Council President
City of Los Angeles Council District 10
1819 S. Western Avenue
Los Angeles, California 90006

Dear Mr. Wesson,

My father, Edward D. Mitchell, founded Beneficial Standard Life in 1940, and my brother, Joseph N. Mitchell, joined the company in 1946. Joseph became the President of Beneficial Standard Life Insurance Company and Beneficial Standard Corporation, holding company, and decided to build the company's headquarters, Beneficial Plaza, at 3700 Wilshire Boulevard in 1965.

A unique feature of Beneficial Plaza, and now known as Wilshire Park Place, is Liberty Park. The concept of the 315-foot building setback and a park as a community space came from Joseph and was noted at the time of completion as the deepest setback for a commercial building in the nation. My brother's grand gesture of community park space on the privately held property was a response to the general lack of landscaping around office buildings at the time. Joseph was honored by a proclamation from the City of Los Angeles in 1966 and by the highest award of the U.S. Treasury Department, Savings Bond Division in 1969 for his contribution to the community - decades ahead of his time when developers now insert pocket parks for community benefit.

In addition to serving as community open space, Liberty Park was originally intended by Beneficial Insurance Group as a monument to the nation's heritage and an outdoor museum of patriotic objects heralding great moments in American History. Postwar optimism was highlighted by the display of a replica of the Mercury space capsule in 1968, a full-scale model of the Apollo space capsule for lunar missions in 1969, and an actual Titan rocket in 1970. The first object to go on display, an exact replica of Philadelphia's Liberty Bell cast by the same London foundry and in the same molds as the original, has been a permanent feature of Liberty Park since its unveiling on July 4, 1968. Beneficial Plaza was dedicated the previous year on Veterans Day, November 11, 1967.

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In 1968, the Planning Department and the Planning commission changed the zoning of Liberty Park from commercial (C4-4) to parking (P-4). The P zone was used as a means to ensure that land would not be developed except for specific uses (typically but not always surface parking). In this case, the use of the P designation likely was the most powerful means available to the Planning Department and the Planning Commission, short of City purchase for public open space, to protect an open space resource that is readily acknowledged and significant.

As a representative of the Mitchell family, I believe that Liberty Park should remain a community green space as originally intended. I strongly urge the City Council and the City Planning Department to protect the park as a community resource.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Elaine Attias". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Elaine Attias (nee Mitchell)

cc: Los Angeles City Planning Department