



THE CITY OF NEW YORK  
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR  
NEW YORK, NY 10007

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE** May 22, 2015

**CONTACT:** [pressoffice@cityhall.nyc.gov](mailto:pressoffice@cityhall.nyc.gov), (212) 788-2958

**MAYOR DE BLASIO AND FIRST LADY MCCRAY ANNOUNCE APPOINTMENT OF PAUL GUNTHER AS EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE GRACIE MANSION CONSERVANCY**

**NEW YORK**—Mayor Bill de Blasio and First Lady Chirlane McCray today announced the appointment of Paul Gunther as the executive director of the Gracie Mansion Conservancy. An experienced historical preservationist, civic advocate, and arts programmer, Gunther is charged with bringing a new vision of engagement with Gracie Mansion to New Yorkers.

“2017 marks the 75th anniversary of the LaGuardias’ arrival as the first mayoral residents to Gracie Mansion. With that in mind, now is the ideal time to realize its full potential as a place where history is made and measured,” said **Mayor Bill de Blasio**. “We are thrilled to have Paul join our Gracie Mansion family, and lead the way in forging new paths to experience and interpret the Mansion as a place of discovery.”

“Gracie Mansion is not only home to Dante, Chiara, Bill and me – it’s the *People’s House*. With Paul Gunther we have selected someone who truly understands the scope and depth of history told and untold, who will work with our vision and advisors to breathe new life into the mayoral residence. Mr. Gunther will help make Gracie Mansion an accessible resource for all New Yorkers and visitors to New York City,” said **First Lady Chirlane McCray**.

A veteran of New York’s land use, arts education, and design world, Gunther joins the Gracie Mansion Conservancy after 35 years as an executive, consultant and author. As executive director of the conservancy, Gunther is tasked with ensuring that not only are the historic fabric and contents of the great 1799 landmark well preserved, but that it thrives in today’s modern society. His first priority is to construct a vision for how New Yorkers can engage with the house and its history, firmly holding it to its mission as “The People’s House.” His responsibilities include planning and implementing public programs and events, engaging the public, overseeing the conservancy’s administration, and fundraising.

“I look forward to fulfilling the many interconnected duties of the Gracie Mansion Conservancy,” said **Paul Gunther, Executive Director of the Gracie Mansion Conservancy**. “I am committed to maximizing its enduring place as a source of civic pride and public education by working in partnership with the First Family, board members, artists, teachers, policy makers, and the Mansion’s many loyal volunteers. And I will do so while being mindful of the Mansion’s diamond anniversary as the People’s House.”

“I am confident that Gracie Mansion is in good hands with Paul, whose vision for this historical site reflects the Mayor and First Lady’s vision for this city – a place that is open and welcoming to all and one that strives constantly to improve and better serve the people of this great city,” said **Gabrielle Fialkoff, Senior Advisor to the Mayor and Director of the Office of Strategic Partnerships**.

“Ever since Mayor Fiorello La Guardia moved in to Gracie Mansion, it has been a landmark for all New Yorkers and part of our collective identity,” said **Cultural Affairs Commissioner and Chair of the Gracie Mansion Conservancy Tom Finkelpearl**. “Paul Gunther brings deep experience and real passion to the position of Executive Director and I look forward to working with him to activate Gracie as a home and historic

site that brings the full breadth of our city's rich story to life and makes it a vital place for the celebration of contemporary New York."

"Paul Gunther is a man of exceptional energy, intelligence, and experience, and I am confident that he will make Gracie Mansion a place of pride and excitement for all. New Yorkers are fortunate to have someone of his caliber at the helm," said **Kenneth T. Jackson, Jacques Barzun Professor in History and the Social Sciences at Columbia University**.

"Through his decades of work in the historical preservation and cultural community, Paul has maintained a deep, infectious passion for New York City. He is not only a champion of the city's history, but also a true believer in New York's matchless cultural diversity. This appointment seems like the ideal fit for Paul, and for the Gracie Mansion Conservancy," said **Jan Ramirez, Chief Curator at the National September 11 Memorial & Museum**.

### **About Paul Gunther**

Paul Gunther began his career in public affairs as a civil servant, working as Special Assistant to the Commissioner at the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, Henry Geldzahler, under Mayor Ed Koch. Before joining Gracie Mansion, Gunther was president of the Institute of Classical Architecture & Art, an NYC-based national education and presenting organization dedicated to the Classical tradition.

Gunther brings decades of experience to his new role, having worked as an executive and consultant on a number of local cultural and historical organizations. He has written on a range of topics, including architecture, landscape design, preservation, land use, and art history, examined through the social lens of contemporary significance and application.

Gunther formerly served as Vice President of Institutional Advancement and Director of Development at The New-York Historical Society, Director of Development and American Liaison at The American Center in Paris, and the Director of Development and Public Affairs at The Municipal Art Society. He has held volunteer positions at a number of historic, cultural and civic organizations in New York and beyond, including The Municipal Art Society, the Staten Island Historical Society at Historic Richmondtown, London's Sir John Soanes Museum Foundation, and The City Club of New York. Gunther grew up in Rochester, New York and earned his bachelor's degree in Architectural and Art History from Yale College in 1978.

### **About the Gracie Mansion Conservancy**

The Gracie Mansion Conservancy is a private not-for-profit corporation established in 1981 to preserve, maintain and enhance Gracie Mansion – one of the oldest surviving wood structures in Manhattan and a member of the Historic House Trust. The Conservancy's mission is to raise funds to restore the historic structure and acquire furnishings that illustrate the rich history of New York, improve the surrounding landscape and gardens, and provide educational services, including publications and tours.

Gracie Mansion is temporarily closed to the public due to asbestos abatement. Public programming and tours will resume in the fall after the renovations and roof work are completed, and will be multi-disciplinary in approach, encompassing many art forms and media platforms.

###