



New York's new urban oasis: custom-designed ERCO outdoor luminaires for optimum plant growth and high visual comfort at '550 Madison Avenue Garden'

A green wonder thrives in one of New York's most densely built-up corners. In Midtown Manhattan, the Norwegian-American architectural firm Snohetta transformed an open space of 2,000m² into an artfully designed paradise. A partially covered landscape garden has been created on Madison Avenue between 55th and 56th streets consisting of over 300 shrubs, 15,000 flowers and 40 trees. ERCO [Kona](#) outdoor projectors in the green oasis, installed on the steel beams of the glass roof, provide sufficient light and brightness for visitors and plants.

Project data:

Project:	550 Madison Avenue Garden and Revitalization, New York / USA
Architecture:	Snohetta Oslo / Norway
Lighting design:	ARUP New York / USA
Photography:	Barrett Doherty, New York / USA

Upgrading the exterior space of a skyscraper icon

Inaugurated in 2022, "550 Madison Avenue Garden" is part of the revitalisation of the legendary AT&T Building, a New York high-rise icon that is listed as an imposing post-modernist monument. In 1984, US star architect Philip Johnson designed the 37-storey skyscraper as the headquarters of the AT&T telephone company. In the course of the building being taken over by the Olayan Group extensive renovation was carried out – with the "550 Madison Avenue Garden" as its

centrepiece, designed as a public recreational space.

Sophisticated natural experience with efficient lighting

The lighting design was realised by Arup. "We quickly realised that high, energy-efficient luminous output was essential to generate enough brightness for the nature experience," says Matt Franks from Arup. This is because relatively little daylight manages to penetrate between Manhattan's striking high-rise buildings. 80 custom-made [Kona](#) outdoor

projectors with 96W LED were installed. The lighting technology developed by ERCO is based on the principle of projection. Lenses direct the light precisely onto the target surface, even over long distances, and without relevant losses from spill light. The energy consumed is thus used as effectively as possible. With the light point height of around 20m planned in the project, this results in an outstanding ratio of illuminance to connected load of 1,6lx/W.

One luminaire, two light colours: different colour temperatures for plant growth and quality of stay

In each of the custom-made [Kona](#) projectors the proportion of LEDs is split with regard to light colour: 25 percent have a colour temperature of 3000K (warm white light), functioning as general lighting for the new urban garden. 75 percent of the LEDs have 4000K (neutral white), which is ideal for supporting the daylight and enabling the plants to grow healthily. In the evening hours the 4000K LEDs are almost completely dimmed down, thus providing the necessary night rest for the plants. The LEDs with 3000K ensure a pleasant quality of stay in the during the dark hours. All Kona projectors provide continuous light – this was also important to the lighting designers for aesthetic reasons. The two light colours of the Kona projectors make it possible to generate an effect similar to tunable white. The lighting can be precisely adapted to create uniformly harmonising lighting conditions – with illumination of the lobby of the „550 Madison Avenue“ tower and with the street lighting on 55th and 56th Street.

Recreation space for all, in the middle of nature

The new garden is a hybrid between indoors and outdoors, and designed with a flowing transition between inside and out. Despite that though, it feels like you're in the middle of nature, says architect Jake Levine from Snohetta. The five thematically planted areas connected by small paths have been designated „rooms“ by Levine. Each of these „rooms“ has its own atmospheric character and conveys its own mood. Jake Levine says Philip Johnson was also an inspiration here: for example his sculpture garden designed for MoMA in 1939, just a few blocks away from 550 Madison. Or Johnson's world-famous, iconic „Glass House“ in Connecticut, where architecture and nature seem to merge.

550 Madison Avenue Garden is a successful example of how contemporary green regeneration and urban design can be. The old New York tradition of so-called pocket parks is also continued. The result is a garden in private ownership that enriches urban life and is accessible to everyone: for enjoying lunch on a bench under the trees, for getting together with friends and colleagues, for relaxing by a rushing waterfall or simply for catching your breath.

Find out in the ERCO whitepaper why light is crucial for healthy plant growth, and what you should pay attention to when illuminating plants in architectural surroundings:

<https://www.erco.com/press/7435/en>

Luminaires used in the project



Kona

About ERCO

ERCO is an international specialist for high-quality and digital architectural lighting. The family-owned company, founded in 1934, operates globally in 55 countries with independent sales organisations and partners.

ERCO understands light as the fourth dimension of architecture – and thus as an integral part of sustainable building. Light is the contribution to making society and architecture better and, at the same time, preserving our environment. ERCO Greenology® – the corporate strategy for sustainable lighting – combines ecological responsibility with technological expertise.

At the light factory in Lüdenscheid, Germany, ERCO develops, designs and manufactures

luminaires with a focus on photometric optics, electronics and sustainable design. The lighting tools are developed in close collaboration with architects, lighting designers and electrical designers. They are used primarily in the following applications: Work and Culture, Community and Public/Outdoor, Contemplation, Living, Shop and Hospitality. ERCO lighting experts support designers worldwide in transforming their projects into reality with highly precise, efficient and sustainable lighting solutions.

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