2020 Program Participants

**Abeer Alharazi** is currently is the Deputy Director at the Yemeni American Merchants Association (YAMA). For two years, Abeer has helped YAMA to support the growth and development of Yemeni-American merchants and their families through education, capacity building services, information, networking, and advocacy. Formerly, she served as a Department of Justice Accredited Legal Representative (DOJ) at the Arab American Association of New York (AAANY) and has also worked at YCS Corp and Grayson Financial Services Limited Corporation. She received her Paralegal Certification from York College and holds a degree in Business Administration from Borough of Manhattan Community College. Prior to her arrival to the United States, she worked at the American Embassy in Yemen for five years.

Abeer's Neighborhood Change Project is YAMA ELEVATE, a program focused on building mentorship, creating educational initiatives, and providing direct small business related services.

**Jahnavi Aluri** is an architect, urban designer, community advocate, and a planner. She works at the intersection of planning, design, and advocacy and is committed to the creation of better urban spaces and policies. Currently, Jahnavi is the Avenue NYC Program Manager at the Jamaica Center BID, where she is pursuing the organization's mission to ensure Downtown Jamaica is an enjoyable destination for all to shop, live, work, and visit. She focuses on commercial revitalization, placemaking, streetscape improvements, and community engagement. Prior to joining the Jamaica Center BID, Jahnavi mapped the health indicators of every country in the world while employed at the UN, and also worked on developing the urban design framework for Kabul, Afghanistan. Jahnavi has a master's degree in urban planning from Columbia University.

Jahnavi's Neighborhood Change Project is a window merchandising project that will help small businesses attract customers and better compete with newly opened chain stores in the area.

**Sean Ansanelli** is a Program Manager at Rockaway Business Alliance. He has worked for over a decade in Community Development and Urban Planning. He also has experience working in the Tech & Innovation field and tries to bring these skills and insights to his work in the field.

Sean's Neighborhood Change Project is to create more food options and employment opportunities throughout the entire Rockaway community.

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Natalie Armstrong is the Manager of Public Spaces & Streetscape at the Downtown Alliance. She is responsible for maintaining ten parks and plazas in Lower Manhattan’s Business Improvement District. Over the past three years she has worked on infrastructure improvement projects and implemented upgrades to street furniture. Focused on urban space topics of identity and activation, she is bringing placemaking initiatives and interactive public art to the district by engaging with local partners. Prior to working at the Alliance, she was a GIS Analyst at the Golden Triangle BID in Washington, DC. She holds an MA in Geography and GIS from the George Washington University and a BS in Urban Planning from Ohio University.

Natalie’s Neighborhood Change Project is to establish a recurring placemaking program with interactive public art installations.

Lynette Battle is the Deputy Director at Bedford Stuyvesant Gateway BID. At the Bed-Stuy BID, she is responsible for the implementation and management of a robust Merchant Services program, working with merchants and providing more direct support to local businesses. Lynette markets the district as a whole and advertises events that help to make the commercial corridor a destination. Lynette’s passion for economic expansion, developing brands, fundraising & development and planning unique events has launched many industry-heralded campaigns. Lynette brings with her a wealth of knowledge gained from her years in not-for profit, sales, marketing and entertainment. Outside of her professional career, Lynette commits her time to community service activities, including The Crown Heights Service Center; advocating for children who were abused; and mentoring teenage girls. She joined Coro to be a part of a peer learning network to gain insight on how to efficiently develop merchant services and to become a more effective change-maker.

Lynette’s Neighborhood Change Project is to implement a merchant services program that provides businesses with the support they need to attract and retain customers.

Angella Brown has an accomplished background in account management including 15+ years in strategic B2B sales, retail and traditional marketing. In 2012, Angella created her consultation practice, iCandy Consulting, and re-directed her career path towards digital strategy and content, mostly working on behalf of clients who service small businesses, nonprofits and other organizations vested in community, social, and environmental responsibility. Angella’s experience includes a role as Marketing Manager at the Fulton Area Business (FAB) Alliance. There, she creates marketing strategy and works to elevate the profile and awareness of the BID through support of the area’s small businesses; conducts community, sponsor and institutional outreach; and establishes liaisons with local city government and social agencies regarding public space, services and issues affecting the neighborhood. Angella is a graduate of UCLA, where she received her BA in English, as well as Professional Certification in Public Relations. She also holds a Professional Certification in Brand Management, awarded by FIT-SUNY and is currently finishing up the Master’s program in Urban Policy and Leadership at Hunter College.

Angella’s Neighborhood Change Project is to create a welcome package to be distributed to new businesses in the district as well as an arts community event or series that activates small businesses and neighbors.
Kristen Brown is the BID services director at the Myrtle Avenue BID. She focuses her efforts on maintaining the day-to-day management of the BID's core services, ensuring the district's public spaces are clean, safe, and well maintained. Kristin also works to make sure Myrtle Avenue's 180 member businesses receive assistance by helping to navigate city government and connecting them to available resources. After receiving her M.S. in Urban Placemaking and Management, Kristin feels very fortunate to live in, and work for, the beautiful communities of Fort Greene and Clinton Hill.

Kristen's Neighborhood Change Project is to improve the space under the BQE to ensure that her community's businesses and residents can access the development and jobs being brought in by the Brooklyn Navy Yard and the Hall.

James Campbell is the Business and Community Coordinator for the Atlantic Avenue BID in Brooklyn, New York where he's responsible for assisting in the day-to-day management of all BID program areas, with a specific emphasis on marketing and streetscape initiatives. Prior to joining the Atlantic Avenue BID, James was a Fellow in the second cohort of the NYC Department of Small Business Services' Neighborhood 360° Fellows Program, a leadership development program with the objective of training emerging professionals in new ways to lead change in their organizations and communities. As a Neighborhood 360° Fellow placed at the Park Slope 5th Avenue BID, James managed the BID's Shop Local marketing campaign, which included organizing 15 events throughout the year. James is a graduate of Haverford College, where he majored in Urban Studies. Through his senior thesis which focused on urban development in a Philadelphia neighborhood, James developed a passion for local economic development and community outreach. James enjoys listening to political podcasts and learning more about the town he was born and raised in -- New York City.

James' Neighborhood Change Project is an art project celebrating long-standing business owners through a public photography display.

Yasmin Cruz is the Executive Director at Westchester Square BID. Prior to joining WSBID, Yasmin created and established Image Marketing Inc., a premiere marketing and event planning company, and served as its Chief Executive Officer for over 12 years. Her role as President/CEO was instrumental in building relationships with an array of partners from small businesses and Corporate 500 companies representing a wide range of industries, and helping them meet their marketing, communications, and event-related needs. Yasmin's prior experiences reflect a rich history of providing marketing, branding, event planning and other business services to companies including Salsa Caterers & Special Events Inc., formerly serving as marketing director, and Think 360 Advertising Agency as branding project coordinator. She is also a licensed real estate agent and offers expertise to Cappytann's Corner Presents variety television show as executive producer. Yasmin holds a Bachelor of Science in International Marketing from Fordham University and a Master of Business Administration from Iona College with a concentration in marketing, international business, and mass communication/advertising.

Yasmin's Neighborhood Change Project is the development of an information packet about regulations for business owners.
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**Philip Gordon** is the Director of Operations for the Lincoln Square Business Improvement District, where he manages all operations programs, contracts, schedules, and reports pertaining to area maintenance, sanitation, public safety, and streetscape. Prior to working for Lincoln Square, Phil held multiple operations and facility related positions across several different sectors including tourism and fitness. Phil holds a Bachelor’s of Science in Sport Management from West Virginia University.

Philip's Neighborhood Change Project is to improve his BID's public safety program by improving officer engagement and behavior and advocating for the community regarding public spaces.

**Jonathan Hawkins** is the Manager of Streetscape Improvements and District Planning for the Garment District Alliance. He manages the Alliance's capital improvement program and implements projects to make the Garment District more vibrant and inviting by improving its streetscape and public spaces. A graduate of NC State University and Rutgers University, he previously held planning roles with MTA New York City Transit and the Alan M. Voorhees Transportation Center.

Jonathan's Neighborhood Change Project is advancing The Broadway Plaza capital project.

**Tiffany Jung** advocates for neighborhood improvement that promotes economic development, healthy food access, and commercial revitalization. She currently manages the Avenue NYC Commercial Revitalization Grant in the East Village, funded through the NYC Department of Small Business Services. After spending a decade in the food and beverage industry working for family-owned food businesses and as the sole entrepreneur of a food business in Paris, France, Tiffany understands firsthand the challenges that face small businesses. She holds a Master's degree in Food Studies from New York University where she conducted research on alternative food retail business models. In her free time, Tiffany enjoys baking, photography, and exploring New York City on her bike.

Tiffany's Neighborhood Change Project is to increase foot traffic and improve representation of LES businesses.
Kimberly Lynch is the Senior Marketing Associate for the Flatiron/23rd Street Partnership, a Business Improvement District dedicated to the economic development of the Flatiron and NoMad neighborhoods. Kimberly started with the Partnership as a program intern, accepted a full-time role managing Flatiron's economic research portfolio, and then transitioned into a marketing role. She is currently responsible for digital content creation, event planning, collateral development, and community outreach. Kimberly holds a Master of Public Administration from Baruch College's Marxe School of Public and International Affairs, and a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science from Providence College. Kimberly is a native New Yorker who has worked for local politicians and nonprofits across various cities with missions of community development, educational equity, and urban sustainability.

Kimberly's Neighborhood Change Project is to help rebrand her BID as it expands.

Nikkole Mojica is the Director of Communications and Cultural Engagement at Hudson Yards Hell's Kitchen Alliance. She is a cross-cultural communications practitioner with experience in the U.S. and abroad, currently managing a range of marketing projects and public art campaigns in the Hudson Yards/Hell's Kitchen area. She is a motivated self-starter, and her expertise is best exhibited in strategic planning/partnerships, brand management, cross-cultural communications, and cultural programming.

Nikkole's Neighborhood Change Project is the formalization of HYHK Arts, a department within her organization that will serve as a public art platform for the neighborhood as it continues to develop.

Nicole Paynter is the Executive Director of the Columbus Avenue Business Improvement District. In this role, she focuses on community engagement, merchant support, and placemaking. Nicole has served the Columbus Avenue BID in various capacities since May 2017, most recently as the Deputy Director. Nicole has a background in historic preservation and adaptive reuse with a focus on sustainability and economic development. Prior to joining the Columbus Avenue BID, Nicole worked in marketing, communications, and business development at a New York City architecture firm.

Nicole's Neighborhood Change Project is to develop and implement creative placemaking initiatives throughout the Columbus Avenue BID in order to reactivate the district.
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Ann Marie Selzer is Census Outreach Associate at Project Hospitality. She has worked on Staten Island’s economic and community development for over 15 years with experience in community revitalization through public art, merchant organizing and fundraising. She recently managed the Neighborhood 360° funding for the Staten Island Arts Council, producing a Pop Up independent Movie House called Cinema Connex in the Bay Street Corridor of Staten Island. Additionally, Ann Marie is the proud float producer and winner of the 2017, 2018 and 2019 Coney Island Mermaid Parade with “The Wu Tang Clams” an inclusive island-wide collaboration. Representing hard for the where she lives, works and plays.

Ann Marie’s Neighborhood Change Project is Cinema Connex, a film series created to fill the community’s need for a movie theatre and promote other businesses in the corridor.

Sam Smouha is Queens Economic Development Corporation's program manager for commercial revitalization, working with the Department of Small Business Service's Avenue NYC program in South Richmond Hill. Sam is now conducting a commercial district needs assessment of the Liberty Avenue and 101st Avenue corridors, engaging property owners, business owners, residents, and community stakeholders to determine the local needs and priorities for the community. Having grown up on Long Island, he came to know Queens through his grandparents living in Jackson Heights. He is passionate about supporting small businesses, and appreciates the cultural impacts that they have in Queens' neighborhoods. Sam earned his Master's in Urban Planning at Hunter College and his Bachelor's in Urban Studies at Vassar College. As an artist and filmmaker, he believes in using creativity as a tool for community engagement and development. Sam is currently a Co-chair of the Arts & Culture Committee of the American Planning Association's New York Metro chapter.

Sam’s Neighborhood Change Project is to create programs reflective of the Commercial District Needs Assessment including local cultural events, improved sanitation, placemaking, and a storefront improvement program.

Anish Thakkar is a NYS-certified Business Advisor at the Pace University (Manhattan) Small Business Development Center (SBDC). From an early age, Anish has been immersed in his family’s businesses, which has led to his enthusiasm for spearheading innovation and development of small companies. With his background in various business endeavors, Anish is able to provide clients with advisement on business planning, financing, marketing, and operations. Prior to working with the SBDC, Anish was the chief operating officer at Vbar&Company, a hospitality group in Downtown Manhattan. Before that, he worked as an operations manager for a privately held retail chain in the greater New Jersey and New York areas. Additionally, he has independently consulted for a wide variety of retail and hospitality operations ranging from dollar stores and convenience outlets to hotels and restaurants. Anish has a Bachelor of Science in Hospitality Administration with a concentration in Operations from Boston University. He is also an AMA Certified Digital Marketer and Wix Webmaster.

Anish’s Neighborhood Change Project is to develop a 6-8 week interactive digital marketing boot camp for small businesses.
Katherine Torres is the MWBE Specialist for Project HOPE, a division of Urban Health Plan Inc where she is committed to the support of minority and women-owned businesses. She provides comprehensive technical assistance in government contracting procedures, and assist companies in doing business with the city, state, and local government agencies. She has a combined 15 years of experience in Business Banking, Business Development, Financial Literacy, city, state and federal business certification. Katherine has years of experience in both the private and public sector. She has previously worked for SoBro’s Procurement Technical Assistance Center and the Small Business Development Center at Lehman College. Katherine is a licensed Investment Adviser and holds a Bachelor of Arts in Business Administration from Lehman College.

Katherine's Neighborhood Change Project is to increase MWBE certification among Hunts Point businesses and help them navigate the process after certification.

Brandon Zwagerman joined the SoHo Broadway Initiative in February 2019. Prior to coming to the Initiative, he served as a project consultant to the Flatbush Avenue and Church Avenue Business Improvement Districts in Brooklyn, worked for Manhattan urban design and architecture firm Cooper Robertson, and acted as community outreach coordinator for Brooklyn grassroots arts collective The Silent Barn. His additional experience includes work for public planning agencies, non-profit community development organizations, and cultural venues, as well as founding a long-running benefit music festival. Brandon holds both a Master of Urban Planning and a Bachelor of History from the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. He aims to bring his diverse experience in planning, communications, management, outreach, events, history, and the arts to serve the residents, businesses, and visitors of the SoHo Broadway community. Brandon's interests lie in the intersections between place, identity, culture, and community. When not at the SoHo Broadway Initiative, he enjoys attending live music and cultural events, following baseball, and traversing the far corners of the city on bike and foot.

Brandon's Neighborhood Change Project is to create more public space in SoHo and to improve his organization's weekend walk strategy.