



Neighborhood Leadership

MEET THE 2024 COHORT

We are excited to introduce the 2024 Neighborhood Leadership (NL) cohort! These participants will use New York City as their classroom to explore how they can influence meaningful change and address complex challenges across NYC's commercial corridors. By the end of the program, participants will have developed a deeper understanding of policy and decision-making in the city, the skills to lead change in their organizations and communities, and a network of engaged and influential alumni to support them in reaching their goals.



Aleeia Abraham

FOUNDER, BLAQUE RESOURCE NETWORK

Aleeia Abraham is a digital marketer and visionary. She is the founder of The BlaQue Resource Network, where she empowers over 30,000 Black individuals in Queens. As Executive Director of ventures like BlaQue NY, BlaQue Community Cares, and BlaQue Label Apparel, Aleeia's entrepreneurial spirit shines. Queens Borough President Sharon Lee declared August 10th as BlaQue Resource Network Day in 2020, while City & State Magazine recognized her in the 100 Most Influential People in Queens in 2021. Acknowledged by Queens DA Melinda Katz in 2022, Aleeia proudly received the Rev. Floyd H. Flake Community Entrepreneurial Award in 2023.



Alice Liu

PROGRAM MANAGER, THINK!CHINATOWN

Alice Liu is a Program Manager at Think!Chinatown. Born and raised in Chinatown, Alice has always been deeply passionate about the intergenerational economic and cultural vitality of her "hometown." Now as a second-generation small business owner and longtime resident in the neighborhood, as well as an experienced cultural organizer within the non-profit realm, she draws from the deep knowledge that she holds of Chinatown, uses her fluent Mandarin, Cantonese, and Taishanese skills, and pulls on the connections that she fosters within the different facets of the community in order to serve her neighbors while also shaping the neighborhood.



Alice Tavener [in](#)

DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS & BID SERVICES, MYRTLE AVENUE BROOKLYN PARTNERSHIP

Alice Tavener is new to her position as Director of Operations & BID Services at Myrtle Avenue Brooklyn Partnership (MABP), serving Fort Greene and Clinton Hill. She began at Myrtle Avenue as a volunteer at their community food pantry. She was brought on to run the pantry as it expanded through the pandemic and then moved on to leading MABP's marketing- inaugurating their first-ever Restaurant Week. Previously, Alice spent ten years collaborating and storytelling as an associate costume designer on Broadway and off-broadway designer. She graduated from Pitzer College and California Institute of the Arts.



Carly Baker-Rice [in](#)

PROGRAM MANAGER, RED HOOK BUSINESS ALLIANCE

Carly Baker-Rice is currently Program Manager and sole staff at Red Hook Business Alliance, where she has worked since October 2022. She loves serving and learning from the many industries and people who call Red Hook home, including some of our newest New Yorkers. For more than a decade, she served as a consultant to over 100 companies, government entities, and nonprofits, designing learning and improving outcomes. She holds a Master's degree in Rhetoric from University of Wisconsin - Madison and has involved herself in nonprofit, community, volunteer, and advocacy work for over twenty-five years.



Craig Peterson [in](#)

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, LOWER MANHATTAN CULTURAL COUNCIL

Craig T. Peterson, currently the President of the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council, has served in numerous leadership positions at arts and cultural institutions over the past thirty years. For six years, he was the Vice President of Visual and Performing Arts at Henry Street Settlement and the Executive Artistic Director of the Abrons Arts Center. Previously he was the Director of Programs at Gibney Dance. From 2009 - 2013, Peterson was the Director of the annual Philly Fringe Festival, and during this time he also launched and directed the Live Arts Brewery (LAB), a research and development program supporting long term residencies for local and national artists. For ten years he served on the staff of Dance Theater Workshop and for four years he served as the organization's Co-Artistic Director. He is a graduate of the Executive Leadership Program of Columbia University's School of Business and he received a BA in Theater and Dance from Bard College.



Danielle Wiseman

BUSINESS ENGAGEMENT COORDINATOR, STATEN ISLAND CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Danielle Wiseman is the Business Engagement Coordinator for the Staten Island Chamber of Commerce. In addition to providing small businesses with the resources that they need to thrive, Danielle also helps in serving the Chamber's membership base, grant-writes for businesses throughout Staten Island, and writes most of the Chamber's written content, including business highlight stories, award presentations, and event recaps. A graduate of Vassar College and native Staten Islander, Danielle has served over 2,000 businesses in all corners of the borough since she started at the Chamber in May 2022. She is an avid traveler and loves to meet new people.



Derong "Rosie" Li

SPECIAL PROJECTS MANAGER, CHINATOWN PARTNERSHIPS

Rosie Derong Li is the Special Projects Manager who manages a little bit of everything at the Chinatown Business Improvement District and Chinatown Partnership. Originally from central China, she has been studying and working in the United States for almost eight years. In her role, she focuses on grant management, stakeholder outreach, transcultural communications, and graphic design. She is passionate about storytelling with both qualitative and quantitative data. Outside of work, she enjoys hiking, watching documentary films, and making documentary films.



Evelyn Chango

DEPUTY DIRECTOR, SUNNYSIDE SHINES

Evelyn Chango was born and raised in Sunnyside, Queens, where she now serves as Deputy Director of the Sunnyside Shines Business Improvement District. Raised in a bilingual Ecuadorian family, she is deeply connected to her roots and community. She lived through the transformation of Western Queens into a diverse community. She graduated from John Jay College of Criminal Justice with a BA in forensic psychology. She is passionate about public service and works with the merchants of Sunnyside to help them overcome language barriers and navigate city, state, and federal support programs. She writes and curates the Sunnyside weekly newsletter as well as merchant bulletins. Since joining Sunnyside Shines, Sunnyside Shines has seen the social media footprint grow from 4K to 12K users!



Fanessa de la Rosa [in](#)

PROGRAM MANAGER, FORDHAM ROAD BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT

Fanessa E. de la Rosa is a dedicated leader in community development fostering the growth of over 300 businesses. Fanessa has a background in housing development citywide. Proficient in Spanish, French, and novice Wolof, Fanessa graduated from Lafayette College with a B.A. in Engineering Studies and International Affairs. Her global perspective was shaped by studying abroad in Senegal, Madagascar, and Honduras. Fanessa is a dynamic leader and is committed to using her skills to improve the Fordham area and greater Bronx borough.



Jane Rossman [in](#)

MANAGER OF STREETScape AND PLANNING, GARMENT DISTRICT ALLIANCE

Jane Rossman is the Manager of Streetscape and Planning at the Garment District Alliance in Midtown Manhattan. Born and raised in Brooklyn, she has always had a love for urban placemaking. From planning events with local art institutions at OHNY to leading volunteers renovating community centers at Rebuilding Together NYC, Jane is passionate about community engagement in the revitalization of neighborhood spaces. At the BID, she is responsible for leading and supporting a wide variety of programs and services in the areas of urban design, public art, advocacy, and planning. Jane has B.A. from Bryn Mawr College and a MSc. from the University College London Bartlett School of Planning.



Javier (Jay) Medina [in](#)

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, SOUTHERN BLVD BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT

Formerly, the Director of Ground Operations of the Bronx's Third Avenue Business Improvement District (BID), Javier implemented innovative ground operation programs aimed at enhancing the quality of life for organizational stakeholders. During his tenure at Third Avenue BID, Javier managed a dedicated team of sanitation professionals, coordinated with interagency partners to address district operational matters impacting the South Bronx, and worked with community partners to implement public health solutions in the District. Notably, he reduced the illegal dumping on the street corners throughout the Third Avenue BID. He also coordinated with the Department of Sanitation and local business to keep the corridor clean and free of graffiti. Jay has had an impressive track record of driving positive change and a steadfast commitment to community welfare. He continually strives to create thriving, inclusive, and secure urban environments.



Judith Prado [in](#)

SERVICE REFERRAL MANAGER, LA COLMENA

Born in Mexico City, Judith immigrated with her family to Staten Island in 2000. As a DACA recipient, Judith's background uniquely informs her dedication to supporting immigrant communities. At La Colmena, she oversees various focus areas, including city programs, digital content strategies, and collaborations with other local organizations and businesses. In 2023, she launched digital campaigns with LinkNYC to highlight immigrant-owned small businesses. In addition, she helped bring digital resources in Spanish all five boroughs. Judith has also worked as a Social Media Consultant for Staten Island Arts, a community organization striving to make the arts accessible to all community members.



Labeb Nasher [in](#)

CO-FOUNDER, ALLIANCE OF YEMENI AMERICAN BUSINESSES

Labeb Nasher is the CEO of ZAAD Corporation for Merchant services as well as CEO of X-Max Solutions for ATMs. Since 2016, Mr. Nasher has been active in the Yemeni Community in New York City. He's co-founder of Alliance of the Yemeni American Businesses Corp (AYAB). During mid-2022, he was the creator and director of the first Expo for the Yemeni American Business in the United States and was able to bring together over 150 businesses from the United States and abroad. Mr. Nasher started his Human Rights, Humanitarian Relief and Political Analysis related activities in 1995. During the period from 2009 until 2012, Mr. Nasher worked as Regional Project Manager in middle east and north Africa with the Swiss Geophysics company MARMOT.



M'kina Tapscott [in](#)

VISITING PROFESSOR, BROOKLYN ARTS COUNCIL

M'kina Tapscott's fifteen-year career has been dedicated to art advocacy, striving to connect community, culture, and creativity through the arts. She began her work as a teaching artist in Houston, TX, and continued through education and outreach positions at the Whitney Museum of American Art, the University of Maryland, the Museum of Fine Arts Houston, and various community-based art organizations throughout the United States. Tapscott has championed the primacy of the Arts in building community and advancing social change. Concurrent with her curatorial and administrative work, Tapscott has taught art history and studio art at all levels. Tapscott serves as the Arts in Education Manager at the Brooklyn Arts Council.



Michael Darryl Torres [in](#)

PROGRAM MANAGER, 161ST STREET BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT

Michael Torres is the Commercial Revitalization Program Manager for the 161st Street Business Improvement District (BID). Before joining the 161st Street BID, Michael spent two years at U.S. Senator Kirsten Gillibrand's New York City office as a Coordinator and Constituent Liaison. Born and raised in the Bronx, Michael has deep connections with the residents and businesses within the 161st Street BID. Previously, Michael spent three years as a Clubhouse Assistant to the New York Yankees where he learned the intricacies of working for one of the most historic franchises.



Nalisha Samlall [in](#)

PROGRAM MANAGER, RISEBORO

Nalisha is a Queens native and recent CUNY Baruch College graduate, where she majored in Public Affairs with a double minor in Journalism and History. She was first introduced to economic development through an internship at the Queens Economic Development Corporation, which provided her with a solid foundation before joining the Bayside Village Business Improvement District as a Program Manager. Outside of work, she enjoys browsing the New York Public Library's digital archives collection, practicing ceramics, and biking. She is thrilled to be a part of the Coro NL cohort this year!



Nick Guntli [in](#)

SENIOR DIRECTOR OF BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT, THE HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY OF NEW YORK

Nick Guntli is the Senior Director of Business Development at The Horticultural Society of New York (The Hort). He has a Bachelor's degree from the University of Missouri in Plant Sciences and a Master's degree from Baruch College's Zicklin School of Business with a focus on Sustainable Business. Over that past decade at The Hort, he has helped grow The Hort's impact across NYC community by community through the expansion of its workforce training program, therapeutic horticulture workshops and the number of greenspaces the Hort beautifies across the city. Nick has worked in many different facets of the green industry, including nurseries, landscaping and public gardens.



Nina Leonard [in](#)

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM MANAGER, FLATBUSH DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

Nina Leonard resides in Flatbush Brooklyn, where she also works as the Economic Development Program Manager at the Flatbush Development Corporation (FDC). At the FDC, she serves a population of predominantly South Asian, Latino and Caribbean families offering support with their small businesses, housing and food insecurity, and after school summer programming for children. Nina speaks Portuguese fluently and is working on her French and Spanish. After spearheading her fifth Flatbush Frolic, FDC's signature event, Nina was awarded the Community Leadership Award.



Rachel Zurier [in](#)

VICE PRESIDENT OF PROGRAMMING OPERATIONS, BRYANT PARK CORPORATION + 34TH STREET PARTNERSHIP

Rachel Zurier is Vice President of Programming Operations for two Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) in Midtown, Manhattan, the Bryant Park Corporation and 34th Street Partnership (BPC/34SP). She leads the hiring, training and management of the districts' event assistant staff, who help to execute over 1,000 free programs in the districts each year. In winter, Rachel oversees all policies, prices and programs for the Bryant Park ice skating rink, the nation's busiest, which employs over 150 young New Yorkers. Rachel received a B.A. in Urban Studies from the University of Pennsylvania. She volunteers on the leadership team at Friends of St. Nicholas Park in West Harlem, and lives in Washington Heights with her husband, dog, and cat.



Saul Porter [in](#)

HOUSING PROGRAM DIRECTOR AND COMMUNITY COORDINATOR, NORTHFIELD COMMUNITY LDC AND STATEN ISLAND URBAN CENTER

Saul Porter is the Housing Program Director for Northfield Local Development Corporation, and Community and Business Coordinator for the Staten Island Urban Center. He does not directly work with immigrant groups, but his work for both organizations has led him to form partnerships with leaders in the Liberian and Mexican communities. Saul graduated from St. John's University in 2018 with a B.A. in History, and worked in various cultural and economic organizations including the Staten Island Economic Development Corporation (SIEDC) and Snug Harbor Cultural Center and Botanical Garden. In 2022, Saul was named one of the SIEDC's Top 20 under 40 recipients.



Tiana Wong [in](#)

OPERATIONS DATA MANAGER, TIMES SQUARE ALLIANCE

Tiana is a data and public space enthusiast with experience at several New York City Business Improvement Districts. She is the Data Operations Manager at Times Square Alliance, where she leads internal database systems ranging from contact relationship management, service requests and business directory listing. Before Times Square, she was organizing neighborhood events and initiatives in Chinatown Partnership and Columbus Amsterdam Business Improvement District while earning her bachelor's degree in Urban Studies at Barnard College.



Victor Prado [in](#)

PROGRAM MANAGER, QUEENS ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

In his role as the Program Manager at Queens Economic Development Corporation, Victor Prado spearheads commercial revitalization projects in Astoria. He collaborates with local stakeholders, plans proactively, and directs targeted investments for a thriving local economy. Previously, as Program Manager for the Avenue NYC Commercial Revitalization Grants, he led commercial district needs assessment projects, ensuring community alignment and data-driven insights for strategic planning. Victor is also the Founder of NinjaMan Media, a social media content creation agency. His extensive background includes roles at Bloomberg LP and Eze Castle Integration, showcasing expertise in strategic relationships, technical support, and dynamic client satisfaction.



Victoria Ortiz-Russell [in](#)

DIRECTOR OF MARKETING AND EVENTS, UNION SQUARE PARTNERSHIP

Victoria Ortiz-Russell, the Director of Marketing + Events at the Union Square Partnership (USP), brings a wealth of experience in the nonprofit sector since graduating in 2015. With a background spanning professional trade associations, cultural institutions, and international aid organizations, she skillfully combines her love for storytelling and data insights to develop successful multichannel marketing programs. In her role at USP, Victoria is dedicated to establishing a distinctive identity for the Union Square-14th Street district across various channels. She also produces a range of engaging events throughout the district, fostering connections among those who work, play, and reside in Union Square.



William Jourdain [in](#)

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, WOODSIDE ON THE MOVE

Meet William Jourdain, Woodside On The Move's dynamic Executive Director. With a diverse background encompassing military service, carpentry, and expertise in research, policy, urban planning, community affairs, operations, and Project Management, he is a driving force for positive change. Dedicated to impacting the lives of the communities Woodside On The Move serves, including Black and Brown, Latin X, and AAPI communities, William brings a wealth of experience. From wielding tools to helping with the shaping of policies, he steers Woodside On The Move towards a future marked by positive change and community betterment.