



Neighborhood Leadership

MEET THE 2024 SUMMER COHORT

We are excited to introduce the 2024 Summer 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.



Alex Gutierrez

COMMUNITY ORGANIZER, RISEBORO COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

Alex Gutierrez graduated from Hostos Community College, where he actively participated in the CUNY/SUNY Stands with Puerto Rico initiative under Governor Cuomo. He has a strong background in youth athletics, coaching baseball, basketball, and football, as well as teaching physical education to special needs children. He earned a Community Leadership Certificate from the School of Labor and Urban Studies. Currently, Alex leads civic engagement initiatives, manages community gardens, and improves commercial corridors by providing business support, space activation with outdoor events and beautification efforts along the avenues to enhance retention.



Anika Batson

NYC HOUSING AUTHORITY ENGAGEMENT LEAD, NYC FERRY

Anika Batson is currently the NYCHA Engagement Lead with NYC Ferry, where she has worked since July 2022. Her commitment to community service began in childhood when she started volunteering to care for her community. As NYCHA Engagement Lead, Anika brings opportunities to collaborate, travel and connect with local communities, businesses, and schools to NYCHA residents across New York. She is responsible for organizing collaborative community-based events, developing outreach initiatives, and maintaining strong stakeholder relationships. Her work focuses on improving access to reliable, affordable transportation, and addressing specific community issues. Anika is dedicated to making sustainable changes to the communities she serves, and is eager to contribute her energy and ideas to benefit marginalized communities.



Ariana Bon [in](#)

PROGRAM MANAGER OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT, THE WOMEN'S HOUSING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

Ariana Bon manages neighborhood planning and commercial revitalization in the Highbridge/Concourse community surrounding WHEDco's flagship mixed-use affordable housing development in the South Bronx. With significant experience in political communications, she excels at integrating stakeholder engagement and implementing comprehensive outreach strategies across diverse contexts. Her roles have ranged from executing national media campaigns and developing core messages for governmental platforms in Mexico, to managing bilingual marketing efforts for affordable housing initiatives in New York City. Ariana holds a Master's in Urban Planning, with a focus on Community and Economic Development from Columbia University, and a Bachelor's in Social Anthropology from San Diego State University. Originally from Tijuana, Mexico, she is bilingual in Spanish and English.



Dipna (Edith) Cordova [in](#)

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM ASSISTANT, FLATBUSH DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

Dipna Edith Cordova is the Economic Development Program Assistant for the Flatbush Development Corporation. She has successfully owned and managed a Mexican Restaurant by the name "Cinco de Mayo" for 20 years. After the closure of her business, she has since completed a bachelor's degree in Business Administration at Fairleigh Dickinson University, and is currently working at Flatbush Development Corporation with the Economic Development Department as an Economic Development Program Assistant in connecting and supporting the small business in the community.



Gian Peralta [in](#)

SENIOR PROGRAM MANAGER, NYC DEPARTMENT OF YOUTH AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Gian Peralta is an experienced employee with a demonstrated history of working in the public and non-profit organization management industry. With a B.A. focused in Spanish Language and Literature from St. Thomas Aquinas College and an MPA from Alfred University, Gian Peralta brings a strong educational background to the table. While working at NYC Department of Youth and Community Development, Gian has acquired skills in Nonprofit Organizations, Event Management, Fundraising, and Fiscal Management. With a passion for community service and a commitment to excellence, Gian is dedicated to making a positive impact in the world through effective management and strategic planning.



Jae Hyung Ryu [in](#)

DIRECTOR OF NONPROFIT AND SMALL BUSINESS CLINIC AND ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF LAW, NEW YORK LAW SCHOOL

Jae Hyung Ryu is the Director of the Nonprofit and Small Business Clinic and Associate Professor of Law at New York Law School. The clinic provides no-cost transactional legal assistance to low- to moderate- income entrepreneurs, small businesses, and nonprofit organizations. Jae's work ranges from legal entity selection and formation and board governance to form document and contract review and negotiation. Prior to this role, Jae taught a similar clinic at the Maurice A. Deane School of Law at Hofstra University and practiced at leading corporate law firms in New York. Jae's interests include vegetarian cooking, meditation, and reading.



Johari Jenkins-Taylor

DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE AFFAIRS OF BROOKLYN, CON EDISON

Johari Jenkins-Taylor is an experienced executive and proven leader overseeing Con Edison's community affairs and government relations activities. She is committed to enhancing Con Edison's community relationship and projecting Con Ed's clean energy and sustainability. Johari manages a \$1M+ corporate giving portfolio, including grants that support the company's philanthropic initiatives. She leads public engagement, employee engagement, and volunteer programs that involve the community and other stakeholders. Her educational background includes a Master of Science degree in Nonprofit Leadership from Fordham University and a Bachelor of Arts from the Rutgers University - School of Communication and Information. She is an active member of Blacks United in Leadership Development at Con Edison and a member of The American Association of Blacks in Energy.



Kevin Wu [in](#)

ASSISTANT DISTRICT MANAGER, MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD 8

Kevin Wu is a dedicated public servant with public administrative experience across Manhattan and Queens. He has extensive experience and interest in the direct impact of local, state, and federal policies on specific neighborhoods in New York City. Kevin's work ranges from facilitating open meetings and the delivery of feedback between community stakeholders and the relevant policy-making branches and agencies, and working with such agencies to address individual constituent cases. Kevin began his community relations career as a fieldwork intern and quickly rose up to the rank of assistant manager for a Community Board in the historic Upper East Side. Looking back at his past achievements with appreciation he excitedly looks to the future for whatever comes next as he works towards a brighter future for all New Yorkers!



Miguel Matos [in](#)

PRESIDENT OF SMALL BUSINESS ADVISOR AND TAX SPECIALIST, TAXFOCUSED COLLAB.

Miguel Matos is an Enrolled Agent with the IRS. For the past eight years, he has served local small businesses, individuals, and nonprofits in the Bronx, helping them navigate tax matters. In the last two summers, Miguel has dedicated his expertise to working with the Bronx Chamber of Commerce and the NYC Small Business Resource Network, impacting hundreds of businesses throughout the Bronx. His dedication lies in assisting small businesses to manage the complexities of the NYC tax and compliance system and fostering financial literacy among small business owners and communities that lack critical information necessary for economic success. Currently, Miguel is enrolled at the Lehman School of Business, working towards becoming a CPA.



Patrick Downer II [in](#)

COMMUNITY RELATIONS SPECIALIST, MOSHOLU PRESERVATION CORPORATION

Patrick Downer was born and raised in The Bronx, New York. He attended Harry S. Truman High School located in the Baychester area of The Bronx. After graduation, he attended Roberts Wesleyan University where he played collegiate DII basketball and graduated with his bachelor's in Cross-Disciplinary with a focus in history and psychology. Upon finishing his undergraduate studies, Patrick received his master's at Manhattan College in organizational leadership. Patrick has been involved in many fields such as sales, hospitality, medical, and filmmaking. Patrick is excited to be apart of the MPC team to help build communities within The Bronx.



Raul Rubio [in](#)

OPERATIONS COORDINATOR, NYC DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND MENTAL HYGIENE

Raul Rubio Jr. is an Operations Coordinator in the Bureau of Community Awareness, Action, Response, and Engagement at the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. There, he collaborates on grant funded programs and the City's Mental Health Training initiatives. For 13 years, Raul worked in several non-profit agencies with the focus of community mental health. For almost 20 years he has served on Community Board 4 in Bushwick and is the current 2nd Vice Chair. Raul has also served on the board of MESA Charter High School, Traditional Educational Services, and S.T.A.R.R. Inc, which he also co-founded. Before his work at DOHMH, he was the Local Planner for the Bushwick Agenda for Children Tomorrow (ACT) Collaborative and then became the Program Director for the ACS Community Partnership Program for 14 years.



Sanket (Sunny) Hendre [in](#)

CORONA PLAZA MARKET MANAGER, QUEENS ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

Sanket is a community development professional with diverse work experience. He is currently the Corona Plaza Market Manager for the Queens Economic Development Corporation. He is most interested in pursuing the intersections between small business, cultural programming, and public engagement.



Sara Nordmann [in](#)

CONSULTANT, TOWN SQUARE

Sara Nordmann is a placemaking professional who guides nonprofits and government agencies in improving their governance and operational practices. She got her start at Bryant Park in 2012, and has since served in executive roles at seven BIDs in NYC.



Sharon Pope-Marshall [in](#)

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, CIVITAS CITIZENS

Sharon Pope-Marshall, an ardent urbanist, has professional expertise in urban planning and civic engagement. Currently, Sharon is Executive Director of CIVITAS, a non-profit community planning organization. Since 1981, CIVITAS has focused on improving neighborhood quality of life on the Upper East Side and El Barrio/East Harlem. Prior to becoming CIVITAS' Executive Director, she was Director of Citywide Community Engagement and Membership Program at Bike New York, a non-profit cycling advocacy organization. Previously, at the New York City Department of City Planning, Sharon analyzed, assessed, and disclosed environmental impacts of real estate development projects as an Environmental Planner. Sharon is a Manhattan Community Board 8 member, where she served as co-chair of its Zoning and Development Committee. She earned a Bachelor of Science degree from Morgan State University.



Yeon Joo Kang

COMMERCIAL CORRIDOR REVITALIZATION PROGRAM MANAGER, ASIAN AMERICAN FEDERATION

Yeon Joo serves as the Program Manager for Commercial Corridor Revitalization at Asian American Federation, focusing on community engagement and effective program management in Queens. She has been dedicated to nonprofit and advocacy work since June 2023, after completing her Master's degree in Regional Planning from Cornell University. With a background in urban planning and global business culture, Yeon Joo brings experience in fostering community connections and advocating for social justice, particularly within Korean-speaking small business communities. She plans to expand her outreach to provide direct services within Queens. During her free time, she enjoys knitting and exploring diverse neighborhoods through thrift shopping.



Yvette Richardson

PRINCIPAL, SRW ENGINEERING AND ARCHITECTURE

Yvette Richardson is a founding Principal of Sabir Richardson & Weisberg Engineering Architecture and has over twenty-five years experience in design, construction, facilities management, and construction financing in the public and private sectors. Before SRW, Yvette was a Project Manager at Bovis Lend Lease on the World Trade Center Memorial and Museum and managed over \$80 million dollars of construction, a Vice President at Citibank Community Development and managed the engineering risk of Citibank's Northeastern US community development lending portfolio valued at over \$400 million dollars and held various other positions at New York Presbyterian Hospital, Meyer Strong & Jones and electrical contracting companies. She is active in the community as an officer, member and volunteer for various professional, philanthropic and non-profit organizations involving youth mentorship. Yvette is a Professional Engineer registered in NY, NJ, MD, NC, VA, & RI and a LEED Accredited Professional.

Neighborhood Leadership is run in partnership with:

**WELLS
FARGO**

NYC
Small Business
Services

careers
businesses
neighborhoods

abny
association for a better new york