



Neighborhood Leadership

MEET THE 2025 COHORT

We are excited to introduce the 2025 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, they'll 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.



Andrea A. Haynes

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, GREATER NEXUS, GREATER JAMAICA DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

Andrea, a native New Yorker and proud Bronxite, is the Executive Director of Greater Nexus, downtown Jamaica Queens' first coworking facility. Andrea transitioned from media-focused roles in the music industry to the public sector, now holding roles such as Strategic Analyst at the New York City Department of Citywide Administrative Services, Project Manager at the NYC Mayor's Office of MWBEs, and Director of Economic Development for the City of Mount Vernon. Her vision for Greater Nexus is to create a vibrant, inclusive, and innovative environment that fosters collaboration and economic growth for all. Andrea remains committed to leading civic engagement activities and empowering local communities to create positive changes needed to close the wealth gap.



Aquilino Cabral

VICE PRESIDENT OF OPERATIONS, LINCOLN SQUARE BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT

Aquilino is an experienced professional with over 18 years in operations management, community advocacy, and program leadership. Holding a Master of Social Work with a focus on organizational leadership, Aquilino is a passionate advocate for New York City's growth, with expertise in public safety, community engagement, and operational efficiency. As Vice President of Operations at Lincoln Square BID, he oversees field activities, manages subcontractors, and collaborates with key stakeholders to address critical quality of life issues. Previously, as General Manager of GrowNYC's Union Square Greenmarket, Aquilino led operations, strategic planning, and vendor relationships to foster a vibrant and sustainable market. Fluent in English and Spanish, he excels at building partnerships, resolving complex challenges, and enhancing program outcomes.



Dakota Devereux Scott [in](#)

MANAGING DIRECTOR, FOURTH ARTS BLOCK

Dakota Devereux Scott (she/they) has been the Managing Director of Fourth Arts Block (FAB) since 2019. She is a lifelong resident of the Lower East Side (LES), the community in which FAB works, bringing arts strategies to fight community displacement and increase equity & access to cultural resources and public space. She leads on neighborhood-wide efforts such as LES History Month and the LES Arts & Culture Open House, and she organizes the LES Community Hero Awards annually. She has 10+ years of experience in arts administration, beginning at the Brooklyn Academy of Music, and a background in event production and performance as a company member of Downtown Art and Nature Theater of Oklahoma. She holds her B.A. in Creative Writing and writes about home, family, community histories, landscape, and cultural traditions.



Darry Saldana [in](#)

DIRECTOR OF SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT THE BRONX CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Darry joined the Bronx Chamber family in 2021, during the COVID-19 pandemic. He has worked hard to assist businesses overcome difficulties brought on by the pandemic. He continues to help small, family-owned businesses in the Bronx by providing essential support, resources, and services. His passion for community and social justice led him to this role, where he can directly impact the lives of Bronx entrepreneurs. Darry's dedication to helping small businesses in the Bronx is unwavering. He is working tirelessly with the New Bronx Chamber of Commerce to ensure these businesses have the tools and knowledge they need to succeed. In addition to his work with SBRN, Darry has been involved in several Neighborhood Development Grant Initiatives (NDGI) and has collaborated with local elected officials to promote financial literacy and business education within the community."



Dekendra Dazzell [in](#)

PROGRAM MANAGER, STREET LAB

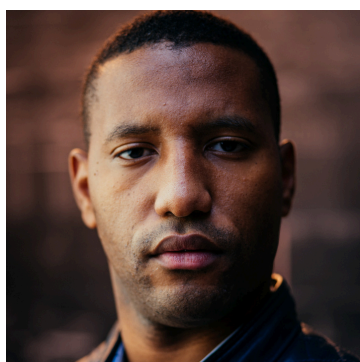
Dekendra Dazzell has a background working with nonprofits that support youth development, social justice, and urban farming, and she brings a focus on urban revitalization and community organizing in and for BIPOC communities to her role as Program Manager at Street Lab. Dekendra is passionate about holistic wellness and creating public spaces that provide healing through different modalities. She received her BA in Sociology from SUNY Fredonia and has managed public events and implemented sustainable initiatives in New York City as well as Jamaica and Madagascar.



Evelin Caballero Omana [in](#)

N360° PROJECT MANAGER, LA COLMENA

Evelin is currently La Colmena's N360° Project Manager. She works closely with Port Richmond businesses to ensure that they have access to the resources that they need and that their voices are heard. Evelin was born and raised on Staten Island's North Shore and feels a connection to Port Richmond because, growing up, her family frequented the Mexican-owned businesses in the neighborhood. Her background includes participation in the Port Richmond Partnership Leadership Academy and the Bonner Program. She graduated from Wagner College with a B.S. in Mathematics and a minor in Civic Engagement.



Gregory Hernandez [in](#)

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, BRONX INDEPENDENT CINEMA CENTER

Gregory is a Video Producer, Entrepreneur & Filmmaker from the Bronx. He enjoys the collaborative process of storytelling through film and videos. He believes filmmaking to be the most inclusive art form. His debut documentary feature film, '1.5 Million' was completed in 2022. It has screened in nine film festivals since 2023 and won three awards so far. In 2019 he started a video production company, 'Green Canvas Productions,' which currently has studio and office space in the south and central parts of the Bronx, respectively. In 2022, Gregory founded a nonprofit organization called 'Bronx Independent Cinema Center' with a mission to develop a single screen movie theater/incubator in the Fordham area of The Bronx. That same year, he launched 'Uptown Films' a podcast dedicated to highlighting the cinema landscape in uptown NYC and the array of career opportunities within the film and television industry.



Harry Chen [in](#)

DIRECTOR OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, MANHATTAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Harry Chen is the Manager of Business Services at the Manhattan Chamber of Commerce, where he leads initiatives like the Small Business Resource Network (SBRN) to empower entrepreneurs and strengthen NYC's small business community. With expertise in program management and stakeholder engagement, Harry collaborates with public, private, and nonprofit partners to deliver resources that drive economic growth. Passionate about creating a thriving, inclusive business ecosystem, Harry works closely with business owners, policymakers, and community leaders to address challenges and foster opportunities. His efforts are dedicated to supporting small businesses as vital contributors to New York City's economy and vibrancy.



Hsun-Fang “Emerson” Chang [in](#)

PROGRAM MANAGER, ARTS SERVICES, LOWER MANHATTAN CULTURAL COUNCIL

Emerson Chang (she/her) is an arts administrator, arts education advocate, and firm believer in the transformative potential of artistic experiences in community settings. At LMCC, Emerson manages the annual regrant programs for Manhattan’s individual artists and small arts organizations with the support of public and private funding. She also oversees SU-CASA, a program pairing teaching artists and senior centers, partnering with the NYC Department of Cultural Affairs and City Council. Emerson specializes in facilitating artists’ projects, with a keen dedication to creative aging initiatives. Originally from Taiwan, Emerson holds an M.A. in Arts Administration from Teachers College, Columbia University (2019) and a B.A. in Business Administration from National Chengchi University (2016). Before moving to New York, Emerson coordinated communications for the Migration Music Festival, an international music festival in Taiwan.



Isaac I. Scott [in](#)

CHIEF EXECUTIVE, ISAAC’S QUARTERLY

Isaac is a Multidisciplinary Visual Artist and entrepreneur. He was ordained in 2018 at God's Touch Healing Ministry, where he served with dedication for three years as the Associate Pastor. Currently, Isaac is actively engaged in ministry within the African Methodist Episcopal church, holding a Certificate of License to Preach, where he integrates faith, art, and social justice. Isaac is an experienced community organizer, currently serving as the Director of Community Initiatives at Another Choice Youth and Family Outreach Inc as well as the Chairperson for the Human Services Committee at Manhattan Community Board 11. His leadership as President of the Justice Arts Coalition and his ongoing service on the National Religious Campaign Against Torture’s Prison Program Advisory Council highlight his deep understanding of the intricacies of both the prison and reentry systems.



Jalisha Hunte [in](#)

SUPPORTIVE SERVICES MANAGER, GRAHAM AVENUE BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT

Jalisha is born, raised and educated in Brooklyn. She was raised in the neighborhoods that she currently serves, Bedford-Stuyvesant, Williamsburg and East New York. From her youth activities and engagements, her intentions and goals to give back and improve her community are evident. Jalisha is passionate about creating memorable guest experiences and is eager to continue her career in event planning in a way that serves her community. She seeks to gain the leadership skills, community, and acumen to help her communities thrive and collaborate.



Josh Thompson

**ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF SPECIAL PROJECTS AND BUSINESS OPERATIONS,
UNION SQUARE PARTNERSHIP**

Josh has an extensive portfolio that includes coordinating special event permits in the district, managing vendor procurement, and overseeing the landscaping for Union Square Park and streetscape planters. Josh also serves as the lead on interdepartmental coordination, maintains the calendar for community events, and manages board communications and governance proceedings. Previously, Josh served the Assistant District Manager for Manhattan Community Board 2, where he addressed constituent concerns, led digital communication efforts, and supported the work of multiple committees. He also worked as a Community Planning Fellow at Brooklyn Community Board 6, analyzing zoning and development opportunities. Originally from the Greater Boston, Josh now lives in Kensington, Brooklyn.



Kenya Cummings

PROGRAM MANAGER, I AM CARIBBEING

Kenya is the Program Manager for I AM CARIBBEING/Little Caribbean, where she leverages her creative talents and passion for cultural & economic enrichment to strengthen community connections. She designs & coordinates unique cultural programs, including the Best of Little Caribbean Awards, Annual One Love Fest, and the I AM CARIBBEING 8th Annual Holiday Market Experience. Through these initiatives, Kenya celebrates the rich diversity & heritage of Caribbean culture, highlighting its depth beyond traditional festivities. She holds a BS in Anthropology & a minor in Biology, equipping her with a unique perspective to promote cultural awareness & appreciation within the community. Kenya's commitment to cultural programming & economic development fosters a deeper understanding & connection to Caribbean heritage, making it accessible & engaging for all.



Mark Landolina

DIRECTOR OF REAL ESTATE AND PLANNING, DOWNTOWN BROOKLYN PARTNERSHIP

Mark uses data-driven strategies and urban planning expertise to drive economic growth and enhance the district's real estate landscape. He specializes in spatial analysis and economic development research to identify market opportunities that deliver community-centered outcomes. Previously, Mark served as a Senior Planner for Baltimore County and an Assistant Town Planner for Coventry, CT, where he led revitalization strategies, guided development approvals, conducted housing research, and facilitated public engagement. Mark holds a B.A. in Geography, a B.S. in Environmental Studies, and an M.S. in Urban Planning.



Nicholas Hlat [in](#)

OPERATIONS MANAGER, WEST VILLAGE BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT

Nicholas is a highly passionate and motivated urban planning professional with over seven years of experience. He takes great joy in utilizing his knowledge of the built environment, gained from both professional experience and education, to provide unique and effective solutions to difficult situations. Nicholas's overall goal is to help improve the way people experience metropolitan environments through strengthening their communities and the implementation of more sustainable and environmentally-friendly strategies.



Pedro Suarez [in](#)

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, THIRD AVENUE BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT

Pedro is the Executive Director of the Third Avenue BID. He is a native Bronxite who most recently served as a Program Director for a national nonprofit, LIFT, that provides economic mobility supports to low-income families. Previously, he was a Senior Partnership and Outreach Specialist at the NYC Department of Sanitation, where he worked on commercial waste zoning and commercial waste reduction. With the NYC Department of Small Business Services, he provided technical assistance to small businesses at the NYC Business Solutions Centers in Upper and Lower Manhattan. Pedro has a Master's Degree of Public Administration from Baruch College, completed the 9-month Coro Leadership New York program, and acquired an Executive Management certification from Hostos Community College. He is also a proud graduate of Villanova University and Cardinal Hayes High School.



Ra Amen Nu Jah Baddal

DIRECTOR OF PROGRAM CONTRACTS AND COMPLIANCE, BEDFORD STUYVESANT RESTORATION CORPORATION

Ra is a seasoned program management and contract compliance professional with over eight years of experience in the city government and nonprofit sector. His achievements include increasing the utilization of Minority and Women-Owned Businesses (MWBs) in City, State, Federally and privately funded projects throughout the City which equates managing the multi-year Hurricane Sandy Restoration NYS Grant at Prospect Park, which ensured the woodland areas and park paths were safely available to patrons. He came to the Bedford Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation from his most recent experience as a Senior Project Manager at the NYC Department of Finance, where he provided managerial support to senior leadership and transformed the agency's workforce compliance operations into a more seamless digitized workflow.



Sasha Ortiz [in](#)

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, CASTLE HILL BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT

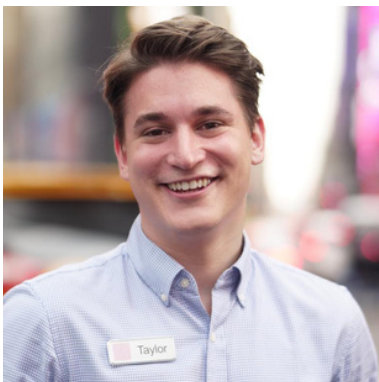
Ms. Ortiz has dedicated the past five years to the Westchester Square BID as the Director of Community Engagement. In this role, she has served as a vital liaison between local communities and organizations, facilitating positive relationships throughout the district. As a Bronx native, she has passionately given back to her community, supporting local businesses and fostering growth. Now, as the new Executive Director of the Castle Hill BID, she is committed to continuing her efforts to improve the Bronx.



Shahriar Hossain [in](#)

VICE PRESIDENT OF COMMITTEE DEVELOPMENT, QUEENS CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Shahriar Hossain is the Vice President of Committee Development at the Queens Chamber of Commerce, where he fosters impactful partnerships and manages the Chamber's monthly Queensborough magazine. He also serves as the Tech Incubator Coordinator for the Queens Tech Council, supporting tech startups through mentorship, funding access, and industry connections that drive innovation in Queens. With a background in business recovery, Shahriar has extensive experience helping businesses navigate challenges and connect with community resources. He is a volunteer Board Member for Friends of Maple Grove Cemetery, promoting cultural and community initiatives. Shahriar holds a Bachelor's degree in Accountancy from Baruch College and certifications in Google Project Management and Data Analytics. As a first-generation American and immigrant, he is committed to empowering local communities.



Taylor Varga [in](#)

DIRECTOR, PRODUCTION AND OPERATIONS, TIMES SQUARE ALLIANCE

As the Director of Production & Operations at the Times Square Alliance, Taylor oversees a complex daily flow of 320,000 pedestrians, coordinates logistics for almost 100 annual events—including New Year's Eve—and leads a portion of the Sanitation team. Known for designing efficient operations solutions, fostering interagency collaboration, and implementing data-driven strategies, Taylor brings expertise in large-scale project management and public space optimization. He is a Magna Cum Laude graduate in Business Administration from Ithaca College with a track record of creativity and customer engagement from roles in Disney Theatrical Group and CBS Television.



Victoria Pennacchio [in](#)

PLACEMAKING MANAGER, ALLIANCE FOR DOWNTOWN NEW YORK

Victoria is the Placemaking Manager for the Alliance for Downtown New York. She activates the streets of Lower Manhattan with public art, performances, and urban design interventions to increase economic development in the neighborhood and highlighting its rising arts and culture. A native Staten Islander, she received her B.A. in Political Science and Urban Studies from College of the Holy Cross and a Master of Urban Planning from Hunter College, where she had the opportunity to study for a term at University College London's Bartlett School of Planning. She has experience with a number of NYC agencies, including the Landmarks Preservation Commission, and is very interested in improving the public realm. She is looking forward to being a part of the latest Neighborhood Leadership cohort.



Yazan Mansi [in](#)

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT MANAGER, GRAND STREET BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT

Born and raised in Queens, Yazan's passion for public spaces and placemaking was cultivated by the community he grew up in. This led to him studying Public Affairs at The Austin W. Marxe School of Public and International Affairs at Baruch College. He was inspired to pursue a career in the public sector, with hopes of working to better the lives of his fellow New Yorkers. Throughout his career Yazan has acted as a communicator and placemaker, working as a liaison for the New York City Council before joining the Grand Street BID as a Community Engagement Manager. Yazan has brought his experience in community building and his passion to improve New York City to the BID, where his work focuses on cultivating the BID's connections with both the businesses and the community of Grand Street.

Neighborhood Leadership is run in partnership with:

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