



Neighborhood Leadership

MEET THE 2026 COHORT

We are excited to introduce the 2026 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.



Alexandra Byrne [in](#)

**COORDINATOR; PROJECT ADMINISTRATOR, THE BROADWAY ASSOCIATION;
MIDTOWN BID COALITION**

Alexandra “AB” Byrne brings a decade of experience in operations management, public relations, and government affairs. As coordinator of the 114-year-old Broadway Association—dedicated to the cultural and economic vitality of Midtown West—she supports Chair Cristyne L. Nicholas in planning and executing monthly informational programs for members. AB also serves as project administrator for the Midtown Business Improvement District Coalition, a partnership of seven Midtown Manhattan BIDs focused on strengthening public safety, improving services for the unhoused and seriously mentally ill, and advancing solutions to housing challenges. She is a graduate of Saint Michael’s College in Burlington, Vermont.



Andrea Ormeno [in](#)

DEPUTY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, QUEENS ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

With more than a decade of experience advancing small business development in New York City, Andrea Ormeno serves as the Women’s Business Center Director and Deputy Executive Director of Business Services at the Queens Economic Development Corporation (QEDC). She leads programs supporting women, immigrant, and minority entrepreneurs, overseeing a team of advisors and guiding over 1,000 clients each year in start-up development, planning, finance, permitting, and long-term growth. Andrea brings deep expertise in business counseling, data management, and program leadership, strengthened by her accounting background and years of community-focused work. Recognized with multiple awards and featured as one of QEDC’s most influential leaders, she is driven by a commitment to economic empowerment and expanding opportunity for underserved communities.



Benjamin Engel

PROGRAM MANAGER, COMMERCIAL REVITALIZATION, THIRD AVENUE BID

Benjamin Engel is a public administrative professional with almost 20 years of community experience in New York City. Ben obtained his MPA in 2024 from the Marxe School of Public & International Affairs at Baruch College. As the Program Manager for Commercial Revitalization at the Third Avenue Business Improvement District in The Bronx, he is implementing the Avenue NYC grant from SBS, realizing community driven projects in the Hub/Melrose/Mott Haven neighborhoods. At his work with the Business Improvement District, he connects with nonprofit organizations, small businesses, and local faith communities to secure funding for long lasting, impactful community programs. Ben previously worked as a Community Planning Fellow with the Fund for the City of New York on a green infrastructure mapping project for Brooklyn's Community Board 3. A big believer that change starts locally, Ben seeks to inspire collective strength within every neighborhood in New York City.



Caitlin Falk

DIRECTOR, POLICY & RESEARCH, TIMES SQUARE ALLIANCE

Caitlin Falk is the Director of Policy & Research at the Times Square Alliance, where she leads a broad interdisciplinary portfolio spanning homelessness response systems, economic development strategy, sustainability pilots, and public-realm policy. Having graduated from Columbia University with a focus on Urban Studies and Public Health, her work integrates data analytics, cross-sector stakeholder coordination, and project management expertise to help shape a more resilient and equitable Midtown. Across all her work, Caitlin brings a systems-thinking approach, deep stakeholder collaboration, and a commitment to improving quality of life for all New Yorkers. She is driven by a belief in collaborative leadership, data-informed policy, and the power of cross-sector partnerships to build more equitable and effective urban systems.



Camille Newman

DIRECTOR, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & ENTREPRENEURSHIP, LOCAL DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION OF EAST NY

Camille Newman is the Director of Economic Development and Entrepreneurship at the Local Development Corporation of East New York (LDCENY). She leads the Brooklyn Women's Business Center, the Entrepreneurship Assistance Center, the Opportunity Fund, and emerging workforce development initiatives that expand economic opportunity across East Brooklyn. In this role, Camille designs and oversees business training programs, access-to-capital pathways, and strategic partnerships that support entrepreneurs and job seekers in building sustainable livelihoods. Her work centers on strengthening local economies and advancing equitable wealth-building for underserved communities.



Cecil K. Brooks, Jr. [in](#)

SENIOR CAMPAIGN MANAGER, OPEN PLANS

Cecil Brooks Jr. joins the 2026 Neighborhood Leadership cohort as a proud Coro Fellows alum with a decade of experience in placemaking and globalism. He currently oversees merchant organizing at Open Plans, where he advocates for an improved Outdoor Dining program while maintaining relationships across our city's 76 Business Improvement Districts. Cecil previously served the Office of Congressman Ritchie Torres (a fellow Coro alum) with expertise in transportation infrastructure and financial inclusion. He started his career at the NYC Department of Small Business Services as his team implemented 30 mayoral commitments. Cecil looks forward to activating green spaces and uplifting international voices across all five boroughs. Of afro-indigenous Honduran heritage, Cecil has traveled extensively throughout Latin America, Asia, and Africa. He is a graduate of Georgetown University and Colby College.



Chante Lee [in](#)

PLANNING & OPERATIONS ASSOCIATE, HUDSON YARDS HELLS KITCHEN ALLIANCE

In her role, Chante partners with community members, business owners, property owners, and local stakeholders to strengthen their voice in shaping their built environment. Her work focuses on empowering communities by helping them understand and influence the planning processes that impact their neighborhoods. She closely observes and monitors inequities in local land-use regulations and policies, using these insights to advocate for fairer, more inclusive outcomes.



Emily C. Bell [in](#)

COMMUNICATIONS & OUTREACH SENIOR MANAGER, GOWANUS CANAL CONSERVANCY

Emily C. Bell is the Communications & Outreach Senior Manager at Gowanus Canal Conservancy, where she manages organizational communications, and works across departments to support programs, fundraising and events. She is managing the outreach effort for the Gowanus Business Improvement District Formation Effort. Working across fields to create compelling narratives, support changemakers and creatives, and build community, Emily's experience includes arts administration and marketing, nonprofit operations, fashion sustainability, and independent media, including co-founding Unsettled Podcast. She has a BA from NYU's Gallatin School for Individualized Study and is a certified Citizen Pruner through Trees NY.



Jaron Kaplan [in](#)

PLANNING RESEARCH AND DATA MANAGER, GARMENT DISTRICT ALLIANCE

Jaron is an urban planner who is passionate about bridging the gap between data and stakeholder engagement to create resilient communities. By working across policy, technology, communications, and outreach, he hopes to create lasting solutions to systemically challenging urban issues.



Juliet Spile [in](#)

COUNSEL, BROOKLYN NAVY YARD DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

Juliet Spile is a legal and economic development professional dedicated to strengthening communities through equitable growth. As Counsel at the Brooklyn Navy Yard Development Corporation, she advises on contracts, compliance, and policy initiatives that strengthen and support small businesses and local entrepreneurs. With experience spanning public, nonprofit, and private sectors, including the Fairfax City Economic Development Authority and NYLS Tribeca Pandemic Recovery Task Force, Juliet combines her legal expertise with a collaborative approach to problem-solving. Her work focuses on building systems that make economic progress accessible and sustainable for neighborhoods across New York City.



Laura Carlson Seidel [in](#)

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, MYRTLE AVENUE BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT

Laura Carlson Seidel is the new Executive Director of the Myrtle Avenue Business Improvement District in Ridgewood. She has now worked for Business Improvement Districts in three boroughs, including in the Operations Department of the Downtown Brooklyn Partnership and in Streetscape and Economic Development at the Lower East Side Partnership where she managed Pickle Day and learned to vinyl wrap cars. Prior to Myrtle Ave, Laura worked on Google's placemaking and art team during the expansion of their New York City campuses. In her free time you can find Laura tending to her plants or having a craftersnoon.



Laura Levine-Pinedo [in](#)

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, KINGSBRIDGE-RIVERDALE-VANCORTLANDT DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

Laura Levine-Pinedo (she/her), a proud Bronxite, transformed 20+ years in the restaurant and hospitality industry—and a BA in International Business—into a life of community service. In 2020, she founded The 4Bronx Project in honor of her grandmother, working to uplift the borough and push back against the “forgotten borough” narrative. Laura now serves as Executive Director of the Kingsbridge-Riverdale-VanCortlandt Development Corporation (KRVC) and organizes merchants across Riverdale, Kingsbridge, and Woodlawn to strengthen the local economy. She is the first point of contact for six Bronx shelters, supporting more than 600 families with essential resources and events. She also produces “The 4Bronx CommuniTea Podcast,” leads annual community events, and has helped install six murals in the Northwest Bronx. She extends deep gratitude to all volunteers and partners.



Lewis Anderson [in](#)

MANAGER OF STREETScape AND PUBLIC SPACE, ALLIANCE FOR DOWNTOWN NEW YORK

Lewis Anderson is a planner, public engagement facilitator and safe streets advocate, who currently serves as the Alliance for Downtown New York’s manager of streetscape and public space. In this role, Lewis coordinates the Alliance’s streetscape infrastructure, conducts community outreach and oversees the Alliance’s infrastructure budget. Lewis previously worked as a planner in New Zealand, where he grew up. Outside of work, Lewis volunteers with Transportation Alternatives, a safe streets advocacy organization, co-leading a campaign for safer streets in Bed-Stuy, where he lives. Last year, in coalition with 55 local businesses and organizations, this campaign fought for and won a 1.5-mile protected bike lane along Bedford Avenue. Lewis holds a bachelor of urban planning from The University of Auckland and an MS in urban placemaking and management from Pratt Institute.



Madhumitha Vasu [in](#)

PLANNING & CAPITAL PROJECTS ASSOCIATE, HUDSON SQUARE BID

Madhumitha Vasu (Madhu) is a Planning and Capital Projects Associate at the Hudson Square Business Improvement District, where she advances data-driven streetscape, public space, and community initiatives that strengthen the district’s identity and livability. She has led key efforts, including a first-of-its-kind participatory public art project, a stewardship framework for the Business Improvement District’s award-winning tree program, and the redesign of the district’s neighborhood survey to deepen community insight and advocacy. Before joining the Business Improvement District, Madhumitha worked with city agencies and nonprofits across India, East Africa, and the United States on sustainable mobility, climate resilience, and community planning. She holds a Master’s in City and Regional Planning from Cornell University and a Bachelor’s in Architecture from Anna University. Outside of her work in urban planning, she is a passionate creator who enjoys exploring new cities, discovering local food, and third spaces.



Taylor Jones [in](#)

DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS & HUMAN RESOURCES, DOWNTOWN BROOKLYN PARTNERSHIP

Taylor Jones is the Director of Operations and Human Resources at the Downtown Brooklyn Partnership, where he leads governance operations, HR strategy, and organizational effectiveness across multiple entities. Before transitioning into urban planning and community development, Taylor spent over a decade in education data leadership, building systems that advanced decision-making, equity, and organizational performance across schools and nonprofits. His mid-career shift reflects a deepened commitment to using data, policy, and human-centered design to strengthen communities and drive sustainable urban growth. Taylor holds a master's degree in Urban Planning from NYU and brings a systems-oriented, equity-driven approach to his leadership and organizational development work.



Megan Brosterman [in](#)

CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER, GOTHAM PARK

Megan has been a New Yorker since 2001 and a Lower Manhattan resident since 2008. She brings to Gotham Park a diverse background spanning finance, corporate law, sustainable fashion, and regenerative gardening. Megan views public green spaces as uniquely catalytic for our city—these places support healthy activity and social connection, revitalize communities and business districts, serve as vital intersections of nature-based solutions and grassroots engagement for climate resilience, and much more. She is thrilled to help strengthen the social, economic, and environmental resiliency of Lower Manhattan through her work at Gotham Park.



Michael Palma [in](#)

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, WEST HARLEM ARTS ALLIANCE, INC.

Michael Palma Mir is the Executive Director of the West Harlem Arts Alliance, Inc. (WHAA). He has a Master of Fine Arts and a Bachelor of Arts degrees from Columbia University. With more than 25 years' experience working in the arts, Mr. Palma's area of focus before joining WHAA centered on institutional capital planning and development for projects that included new construction, renovations and major equipment system procurement. Mr. Palma has a strong understanding of non-profit business operations and best practices. His skills in strategic planning, campaign development, sales and marketing, together with his ability to develop and maintain relations with private, corporate and governmental donors have all played a part in his success in the nonprofit field. As a lifelong and a second-generation resident of Harlem, Hamilton Heights, Mr. Palma has been a community activist. He divides his time between work in the arts and photography as well as being an advocate for a better quality of life in West Harlem.



Monica Diaz [in](#)

MARKETING & COMMUNICATION ASSOCIATE, MADISON AVENUE BID

Monica Diaz is the Marketing and Communications Associate at the Madison Avenue Business Improvement District, where she supports initiatives that enhance and promote one of New York City's leading retail and cultural corridors. Drawing on over 25 years of experience in the fashion industry, she brings expertise in luxury retail, product development, and sustainable fashion education to her work in the community. Monica has collaborated with global brands and emerging designers and is the creator of the Stylishly Sustainable podcast, which highlights conscious innovation in fashion and culture.



Tonisha Hurd [in](#)

CHIEF OF STAFF, THE BRONX CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Tonisha Hurd is a Bronx native and accomplished public administrator dedicated to advancing community and business development. She serves as Chief of Staff at the Bronx Chamber of Commerce, where she leads strategic operations, cross-functional initiatives, and stakeholder engagement to strengthen the Chamber's impact across New York City. A proud graduate of the University of Delaware, Tonisha holds both a Master of Public Administration and a Bachelor's degree in Public Policy, with concentrations in Public Health and Organizational & Community Leadership. Her career spans government and nonprofit sectors, with a focus on equity, efficiency, and civic leadership. Recognized for her strategic vision and collaborative approach, Tonisha continues to champion opportunities that drive growth, inclusion, and innovation in the Bronx and beyond.



Winnie Siclait [in](#)

PROGRAMS MANAGER, BUSINESS & CAREER CENTER, BROOKLYN PUBLIC LIBRARY

Winnie Siclait is a visionary leader and program designer dedicated to expanding opportunity and fostering economic empowerment. As Programs Manager at the Brooklyn Public Library's Business & Career Center, she leads cross-sector initiatives supporting entrepreneurs, job seekers, and creative professionals. Winnie spearheaded the development of LevelUP, a comprehensive program that equips Black women with practical skills for career advancement and drives flagship initiatives such as the PowerUP Business Plan Competition and the BKLYN Fashion Academy, which bridge creativity, business, and mentorship. Known for her ability to turn ideas into scalable programs, she excels at building partnerships, securing philanthropic support, and designing experiences that strengthen communities. Winnie brings a leadership approach grounded in strategic innovation and a commitment to developing transformative programs that create meaningful social and economic impact.