



Andrea Devening joined the Southwest Brooklyn Industrial Development Corporation (SBIDC) in January of 2013 and is the Director of Economic Development. Throughout her career, she has worked to strengthen communities and help those in underserved areas. Andrea manages SBIDC's community economic development initiatives. Her work also allows her to engage in policy related to industrial retention, environmental resiliency, and economic development in Southwest Brooklyn. Andrea was a Fellow at the Pratt Center for Community Development where she worked on community economic development and food policy research projects. Before residing in New York City, Andrea worked for seven years in the field of refugee resettlement in various capacities in both Washington, DC and Chicago. Andrea has a BA in Sociology and Anthropology from Mary Washington College and a Masters in City and Regional Planning from the Pratt Institute.

Andrea's Neighborhood Change project seeks to strengthen Red Hook's district marketing campaign to better serve the neighborhood businesses, residents and visitors.



Barbara Askins serves as President and CEO of the 125th Street Business Improvement District. She has over 20 years of experience in the field of improving cities as a public involvement specialist on transportation, environmental and facility planning projects. In 1993, she successfully created the first and only business improvement district in the Harlem community. She has served as the chair of the International Downtown Association, and Manhattan Community Board #10 and the Executive Board of New York City's BID Manager's Association. She has participated as a speaker in the TEDTalk series for TedxManhattan and served as a member of the Editorial Advisory Board for the Journal of Place Management and Development. Barbara has received numerous proclamations, citations, and awards from community organizations. Her efforts were realized worldwide when the American Planning Association named 125th Street one of the ten best streets in the country in 2007.

Barbara's Neighborhood Change Project titled "Connect the Dots" is an online cross promotion platform that the BID is designing for people in the area to participate by showcasing historical street scenes, individual and business achievements, cultural offerings and development projects. By consolidating existing communication formats, programs, and projects put forth by each of the businesses and cultural institutions she aims to tie together the unique characteristics of the converging neighborhoods in Harlem along 125th Street.



Chad Purkey serves as the Director of Planning & Economic Development at the Myrtle Avenue Brooklyn Partnership. Chad joined the group in June 2011 to manage their historic preservation initiatives and facade improvement program, and moved to his current position in June 2014. Within the neighborhoods of Fort Greene and Clinton Hill, Chad enjoys working with property and small business owners on preserving the "Main Street" function and appearance of Myrtle Avenue for local residents. In 2011, Chad graduated from Pratt Institute with a MS in City Planning and he also holds a BFA in Historic Preservation from the Savannah College of Art and Design. His personal interests include urban history and both leading and taking historic walking tours around NYC.

Chad's Neighborhood Change Project will focus on the Partnership's current work in business attraction, specifically focusing on bringing a gym to the district.



Daniella LaRocco is the Director of Planning and Economic Development at the Village Alliance and has been working in the Village community for over seven years. During that time, she has been involved in projects to enliven the streets of the Village through retail development and public space activation. Prior to the Village Alliance, Daniella has worked in the field of economic development and planning in various areas of Manhattan with positions at the New York University, Lower Manhattan Development Corporation, Times Square Alliance and the Municipal Art Society. Daniella has a BA from Vassar College in History and a MCP from University of Pennsylvania. She was raised in New York City and has been fascinated by the City since she was a child.

Daniella's Neighborhood Change Project focuses on repositioning West 8th Street in Greenwich Village as "Main Street Greenwich Village" for the area's growing number of singles, young families, empty nesters, and students.



Isa Abdur-Rahman serves as the Executive Director of Farmers Boulevard Community Development Corp., a non-profit organization focused on revitalizing the commercial corridor and neighborhoods around Farmers Boulevard in Hollis and St. Albans, Queens. He is also a community economic development attorney based in Jamaica, Queens. Since 2004 his practice has focused on real estate and business law. Isa assists individuals, families, companies, and non-profit organizations to acquire, develop, and sustain properties and businesses in the New York metropolitan area. Isa teaches business law and ethics as an Adjunct Professor in the York College School of Business & Information Systems. He holds a law degree from Howard University where he also obtained a bachelor's degree in finance. Isa lives in Jamaica, Queens, with his wife and their three young children.

Isa's Neighborhood Change Project is entitled "Earth Tones & Side Dishes", and is FBCDC's effort to fuse the concepts of healthy dining options and the musical heritage of Southeast Queens with the goal of promoting the local retail environment by creating vibrant "evenings out" for local patrons. Isa has made it his personal responsibility to cultivate rapport with the musicians, physicians, restaurateurs and other key individuals needed to make this program a growing success.



Jenna Petok is the Director of Marketing and Events for Long Island City Partnership. Jenna developed and led brand new events and enhanced marketing efforts for LICP, which have strengthened awareness of the organization within the community and beyond. Jenna has worked closely with local stakeholders, businesses, and media partners to create cohesiveness within LIC Partnership's constituencies. Jenna has a vested interest in inspiring people to celebrate their neighborhoods through local programming, and is excited to help knit the LIC community closer together through this project. Prior to LIC Partnership, Jenna led creative solutions and special projects at Time Out New York. Jenna holds a BA in American Studies and Dance from Connecticut College.

Jenna's Neighborhood Change Project idea is about redeveloping the LICP website as a comprehensive information hub for all things LIC, and developing a strategic marketing plan to coincide with a re-launch.



Johanna Zaki is the Executive Director for the Alliance for Coney Island. Johanna serves as an advocate for quality of life improvements for the benefit of Coney Island businesses, residents, and visitors; develops business assistance and workforce development initiatives; and works to promote visitorship to Coney Island's historic amusement district. Prior to the Alliance, Johanna attended and graduated from Rutgers University, earning a degree in Communications. After college she began her career at Central Amusement International later becoming marketing manager for the firm's amusement park operations in New York City, and forming part of the 2010 response team which eventually won the City's bid for the development and operation of the first amusement park to be built in Coney Island in over four decades – Luna Park.

Johanna's Neighborhood Change Project involves revitalizing Coney Island's commercial corridor by developing and implementing a strategic growth agenda that would interface with the historic amusement district and allow for the expansion of existing programs, such as area programming and supplemental sanitation, and include initiatives to address quality of life issues, as well as generate positive economic impact for the community at large.



John Rodriguez began his career with the Staten Island Economic Development Corporation in January of 2014. Coming from a background in Diplomacy and International Relations at Seton Hall University in which he received his BS and MA, economic development came as an unexpected challenge, which John has embraced in the year he has worked with SIEDC. As the Industrial Business Development Manager, John administers the Industrial & Transportation Business Solutions Program on Staten Island through New York City Small Business Services, as well as works on a myriad of other neighborhood development programs such as the West Shore and South Shore BIDS, New Dorp Merchants Group, and various studies across Staten Island addressing issues from stormwater management, to recovery and resiliency studies.

John's Neighborhood Change project is the corrective rezoning of North Shore neighborhoods on Staten Island including Tompkinsville, Stapleton, and St. George, where currently there is a plethora of new and exciting development. The goal is to encourage New York City to rezone vacant spaces to increase neighborhood density, such as commercial mixed-use residential, which would bring a greater number of people to the area, bring investment to address storefront vacancies, and also accommodate affordable housing requirements as mandated by the City.



Kathleen Sforza joined Northfield Community LDC as Economic & Community Development Coordinator in May 2014. Kathleen is responsible for attracting and retaining businesses along the Port Richmond Shopping District and carrying out the social media campaign for Discover Port Richmond and Northfield Community LDC. Prior to working at Northfield Community LDC, Kathleen was the owner of Town & Country Gifts, a brick and mortar store in West Brighton, Staten Island and she still owns and operates Kathleen Rose's Collection, an eBay Store and an Amazon Store. Kathleen holds a Bachelor of Science Degree in Marketing and an Associate Degree in Fashion Buying and Merchandising from The Fashion Institute of Technology. She also holds a Liberal Arts Degree from The College of Staten Island.

Kathleen's Neighborhood Change Project is to establish a social media presence in the Port Richmond shopping district via the newly launched "Discover Port Richmond" Facebook Page, Blog, and Twitter and also the website by June 2015. The goal is to promote positivity in the Port Richmond Shopping District and a result of the increased social media awareness, Port Richmond will be able to attract customers to the businesses and ultimately support the goal of attracting new businesses to the shopping district.



Lamgen Antonio Leon joined the Chinatown Partnership Local Development Corporation (CPLDC) as Office Manager in 2006, and was very instrumental on the formation of the Chinatown District Management Association (Chinatown BID) in 2011. Prior to that he worked briefly at the Ford Foundation and at the Museum of Chinese in America in Chinatown for over 13 years in different capacities. He served two terms as Council Member for Community Education Council at School District 24 in Queens, and was a Board Member/Treasurer of the Latin American Cultural Center of Queens (LACCQ). Lamgen graduated from Hunter College and had compiled a bibliography, “Asians in Latin America and the Caribbean.” He is fluent and trilingual in English, Spanish and Cantonese.

Lamgen’s Neighborhood Change Project is to work with the real estate and commuter bus industries to promote Chinatown as a destination to do business in strategy to reduce the vacancy rate.



Lawrence Blaber Jr. joined Hope Coalition America, a division of Operation Hope, in June of 2013 as a Small Business Program Manager. Lawrence is an avid political junkie and enjoys discussing politics and economic policies. A fan of soccer and rugby, he currently writes for a rugby website, still plays rugby and coaches a youth team. Mr. Blaber possesses a Master’s Degree in Business Administration, with a specialization in International Business from Niagara University.

Lawrence’s Neighborhood Change Project is designed to help the hundreds of documented and undocumented immigrants that own businesses in New York City. The majority of these businessmen and businesswomen start and operate businesses without awareness of all the funding opportunities, resources and operational help available to them through The City of New York and other organizations. The goal of the program is to cut through the distrust with government agencies and communication barriers that impede their success.



Nupur Chaudhury is the Senior Project Manager at Rebuild by Design. With a focus on communities, the built environment and public health, Nupur is currently working with the Lower East Side and the Hunts Point neighborhoods to ensure that the Rebuild by Design project proposals are implemented with effective community input. Prior to working at Rebuild by Design, Nupur led the community planning and health department at the Brownsville Partnership in Brownsville, Brooklyn. In Brownsville, Nupur was responsible for designing and implementing the department work around Community Planning, Engagement, and Health. She holds a BA in The Growth and Structure of Cities from Bryn Mawr College, a MUP from New York University’s Robert F. Wagner School of Public Service, and a MPH from Columbia University.

Nupur’s Neighborhood Change Project involves increasing awareness of and participation in the implementation of the Rebuild by Design resiliency projects in both the South Bronx and the Lower East Side, for the purpose of ensuring community led change in these neighborhoods.



Rhonda Binda joined the Jamaica Center Business Improvement District as the Executive Director in December 2014. With expertise in forming effective public-private partnerships and tri-sector public, private and non-profit experience she looks forward to advancing the BID to make it an even more thriving business hub and enjoyable shopping and cultural destination. Prior to joining the BID Rhonda worked with local governments globally for the U.S. Department of State, and at the Office of Public Liaison at the White House. Most recently she served as Vice President of Public Private Partnerships Global Management where she focused on enhancing the urban landscapes in downtown districts with state of the art technology, mixed media, environmental, and aesthetic upgrades. She holds a BA in Public Policy and Economics from Duke University and a JD from Georgetown University and is from Jamaica, Queens.

Rhonda's Neighborhood Change Project will focus on attracting a more dynamic and modern mix of restaurants and retailers to the BID.



Ryan Pukos is a Senior Project Manager with the Grand Central Partnership (GCP). He is responsible for managing GCP's digital platforms and helping to oversee neighborhood and business marketing efforts, pedestrian counting program and stakeholder and public communications. Prior to joining the GCP, Ryan worked in Puerto Vallarta, Mexico where he co-founded a non-profit organization that promotes economic development by combining sustainable tourism and microfinance. He also spent three years working on political issue campaigns in Boston and Chicago. Ryan holds a BA in Political Science and Spanish from Hartwick College.

Ryan's Neighborhood Change Project will focus on planning, developing and implementing a process utilizing technology that will allow GCP to monitor the conditions of its streetscape assets around East Midtown – including planters, tree pits, light poles, illuminated street signs benches, bike racks and other amenities – in real time.



Sarah L. Hornung joined the East Midtown Partnership as Director of Marketing and Business Development in January, 2014 with an interest in community programming and public art. Prior to joining the East Midtown Partnership, Sarah was a graduate student in Art Education at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. Prior to that, Sarah spent almost 5 years as the Design and Print Production Manager in the Education Department of The Metropolitan Museum of Art. In this role, she was responsible for the production and art direction of all the department's printed materials. Sarah holds a BA in English Literature from George Washington University. In her free time, she volunteers as a writing adviser at the not-for-profit Minds Matter of New York City, helping high-achieving, low-income high school students craft their college essays.

Sarah's Neighborhood Change Project is to implement a public art program that enhances East Midtown's distinctly urban locale.



Tasemere Gathers is the Business Services Coordinator at the South Bronx Overall Economic Development Corporation (SoBRO). Prior to joining SoBRO in 2014, Tasemere built an impressive service resume in the public and private sector. Having served in various administrative and programmatic positions through New York City, her focus has centered on community and economic development in urban areas. Of significant note has been Tasemere's management of all five (5) Bronx industrial business zones; where she provides expertise in the area of industrial development and business services. In this capacity, she engages with all Industrial Business Zones, and commercial corridors in the SoBRO portfolio, and is accountable for continual program development and sustainability. Additionally, she supports community revitalization projects along Bruckner Blvd and 149th Street and 3rd Avenue. Ms. Gathers holds a BA in History from State University of New York at Oswego, and a MA in Urban Studies from Long Island University.

Tasemere's Neighborhood Change Project will be focused on Roberto Clemente Plaza in the Third Avenue Business Improvement District (BID). Roberto Clemente Plaza has been a barren, cement waiting area for city buses that detracted from growth in the commercial corridor. Tasemere's project will be a multi-faceted strategy to make Roberto Clemente Plaza a flourishing community attraction section of the South Bronx.



Tom Harris is the Senior Vice President of Security and Operations for the Times Square Alliance, where he oversees a fifty-person proprietary security force, a seventy person sanitation team, and serves as a liaison between local businesses and city agencies. The Times Square Alliance works to improve and promote Times Square - cultivating the creativity, energy and edge that have made the area an icon of entertainment, culture and urban life for over a century. Prior to joining the Alliance, Tom spent twenty-five years as a member of the New York City Police Department, rising to the rank of Inspector. Tom holds a Masters of Public Administration from Marist College and is a graduate of the Columbia University Police Management Institute.

Tom's Neighborhood Change Project is to create meaningful regulatory reform for the newly created pedestrian plazas in Times Square.



Victor Wong is the Director of Business Outreach at the Partnership for New York City, one of the city's leading business groups. In this capacity, he leads GoBizNYC, a network of local business organizations representing over 25,000 small businesses across the five boroughs. Prior to joining the Partnership, Victor worked at the New York City Economic Development Corporation, where he developed and implemented programmatic initiatives to drive entrepreneurship and economic growth in various industries. Victor is a lifelong New Yorker and chairs Brooklyn Community Board 11's Planning & Zoning and Commercial Development Committees. He holds a BA in Sociology and a secondary degree in Government from Harvard University.

Victor's Neighborhood Change Project is to build upon efforts to create a coordinated advocacy platform from which small business leaders can more directly and meaningfully engage in the public policy issues that impact their ability to survive and thrive in this city.