

# NEIGHBORHOOD LEADERSHIP PROGRAM



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Small Business  
Services



## ABOUT THE NEIGHBORHOOD LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

The **Neighborhood Leadership Program**, a partnership among the New York City Department of Small Business Services (SBS), the Coro New York Leadership Center and the Association for a Better New York, provides 20 practitioners from neighborhoods across the City with the opportunity to develop their personal leadership skills and hone their commercial revitalization expertise under Coro's proven leadership development model.

This five-month leadership training program provides individuals working to strengthen New York City's commercial corridors with the tools, experiences, and networks they need to develop new ways to lead change in their organizations and communities.

The program seeks to provide participants with exposure to the following:

- ✓ *An unparalleled network of peers and relationships to last a lifetime*
- ✓ *Innovative personal leadership and management strategies that can be applied real-time to their careers*
- ✓ *Exposure to key stakeholders and resources critical to implementing effective commercial revitalization efforts*
- ✓ *Knowledge of resources and skills needed to drive retail sales and support small businesses, including small business services, marketing and placemaking, and retail leasing to improve tenant mix.*

Applications will be accepted for the Neighborhood Leadership Program 2012 beginning in the fall.

For more information, please visit [www.coronewyork.org](http://www.coronewyork.org)



## PARTICIPANT BIOGRAPHIES



**Kevin Alexander** is the Executive Director of Rockaway Development & Revitalization Corporation. Surrounded by the Atlantic Ocean and Jamaica Bay, his vision for the Rockaways is to create a thriving local economy that captures the attention of day travelers, tourists, nature lovers and water enthusiasts. He has helped raised the profile of RDRC as the local development corporation best positioned to manage a variety of projects that includes the Beach 20th Street Plaza and the Far Rockaway Commercial Revitalization Project. Kevin has over ten years of combined experience as CFO of Harlem Congregations for Community Improvement and Harlem Dowling West Side Center for Children & Family Services. He earned his BA Degree from St. John's University in Public Administration and Government and earned his MPA Degree in Public Finance and Management from NYU. He resides in Long Island with his wife Lorraine, daughters Denaee and Ja'Naya, and granddaughter Cheyenne.



**M. Blaise Backer** is the Executive Director of the Myrtle Avenue Revitalization Project LDC (MARP) and the Myrtle Avenue Brooklyn Business Improvement District (BID), with both organizations working together under the umbrella name, Myrtle Avenue Brooklyn Partnership. Blaise has worked at the organization since 2002 and was appointed Executive Director in June of 2004. He holds a Master of Urban Planning degree from New York University's Wagner Graduate School of Public Service, and a Bachelor of Science in Commerce from the University of Virginia. He is currently spearheading a transformation of a 4-block-stretch of Myrtle in Clinton Hill by overseeing a \$6 million streetscape and pedestrian plaza project and the development of a 23,000 sf mixed-use building.



**Laurel Brown** is the Director of Community Planning of Nostrand Park, a neighborhood revitalization organization in Crown Heights, Brooklyn. Infusing culture - from food to fashion - into the practice of commercial revitalization is a full-time passion for Laurel. An accomplished attorney, Laurel also has a knack for marketing and branding, which she brings to her work. She is spearheading the organization's flagship project - Destination Nostrand - to promote the local Caribbean culture and transform an underserved commercial strip into a premier destination. Wholly dedicated to neighborhood revitalization, Laurel is also the new Executive Director of the Jamaica Center BID in Queens.



**Ricardi Calixte** currently serves as the Director of Economic Development at the Queens Economic Development Corporation (QEDC). As Director of the Neighborhood Economic Development Division, Ricardi has managed multiple commercial revitalization projects in various neighborhoods in Queens. Ricardi provides technical assistance to local merchant organizations, Business Improvement Districts and development corporations in implementing neighborhood-based planning initiatives with a particular interest in underserved or low to moderate income communities. During this fiscal year, his work has focused on improving business conditions in the neighborhoods of Corona, Richmond Hill and St. Albans. Current priorities include establishing a BID on Liberty Ave., decreasing commercial vacancy on Farmers Blvd. and the development of a pedestrian plaza in Corona.



**Dale Charles** is Director of Economic Development at Pratt Area Community Council, working to improve communities of Fort Greene, Clinton Hill and Bedford-Stuyvesant. She initiated a comprehensive commercial revitalization strategy that targeted a distressed section of a major shopping corridor. Dale facilitated the creation of a merchant's association that led to a Business Improvement District. Prior to joining PACC, Dale was a business owner for 25 years and came to PACC 10 years ago as a LISC Americorps Volunteer. Her work allows her to partake in activities to help make Brooklyn's commercial corridors a better place to live, work and shop.



**Lauren Elvers Collins** is Executive Director of the Church Avenue Business Improvement District, where she manages marketing, sanitation, government relations, business development and policy. She is former Executive Director of the Gowanus Canal Conservancy, co-founded the Windsor Terrace Alliance, and serves on Community Board 7 and the EPA's Gowanus Citizen's Advisory Group. A graduate of the CUNY BA Program and Fordham Law, she specializes in community planning and organizing. The BID is in the initial stages of a streetscaping grant and Lauren is addressing issues such as maximizing available funding and determining which features will best serve the BID's businesses and customers.



**Lauren Danziger** is the Executive Director of the Greenwich Village-Chelsea Chamber of Commerce, which serves the East Village, Union Square, the Flatiron District, SoHo and NoHo, in addition to Greenwich Village and Chelsea. Lauren is a 2002 graduate of Cornell University where she majored in Public Policy. She also has a degree in Culinary Arts from the Institute of Culinary Education and sits on Community Board 4. She has an extensive background in event planning and international event management and prior to joining the Chamber she ran her own gluten-free baking business.



**Elizabeth Demetriou** is the Director of Revitalization and Development at the Southwest Brooklyn Industrial Development Corporation (SBIDC). She has been focused on revitalization efforts in Red Hook since 2005 and manages the Red Hook Main Street Program, Avenue NYC-RH, and the Red Hook Green Roof Program. Elizabeth has a Masters of Urban Planning from Hunter College with a concentration in Economic Development. She is a member of the American Institute of Certified Planners (AICP) and sits on the Economic/Waterfront Committee of Brooklyn Community Board 6 and the APA NY Metro Chapter's Waterfront Committee.



**LaQuita Henry** is the Project Director at the Heritage Heights Village Commercial Revitalization Initiative (Heritage). She is a marketing and public affairs specialist whose experience spans the gamut of communications. Her work in the Hamilton Heights/Sugar Hill Historic District has garnered major program funding for property and streetscape improvements; and has spotlighted the area for consideration as a Business Improvement District. Her affiliations include: Manhattan Community Board 9 (Executive Committee), the Manhattan Borough Parks Commissioner's St. Nicholas Park Operations Committee, and Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority. LaQuita savors fashion and interior design, visits to art galleries, and get-togethers with family, friends and her pet Schnauzers.



**Ira Jones-Cimini** has 10 years of experience in the field of architecture. As an urban designer with the Town of Hoosick Falls, she worked with Mayor Laura Reynolds and community leaders to create a plan for future development. She has done similar work in post-war Bosnia, post-Hurricane Katrina New Orleans, and Hungary (Budapest). She has transitioned into the field of real estate development as a Project Manager in the Real Estate and Asset Management Department at Abyssinian Development Corporation. She is responsible for pre-development and construction, zoning analysis, financing, sale, and/or leasing of projects, including negotiating, managing, and administering all aspects of new construction, renovations and system replacement from initial conception through project completion. Ira received a Bachelors of Architecture from Temple University and a Masters of Architecture and Urban Design from Harvard University.



**Phillip Kellogg** is Manager of the Fulton Area Business Alliance (FAB) Business Improvement District (BID). Phillip spent twenty-two years in marketing before making a career change in October 2009 to run this new BID. A ten year resident of Fort Greene, Phillip organized the Dekalb Avenue Merchants, chaired the Fort Greene Association and volunteers as co-producer of the Fort Greene Halloween Festival. There are seven "Triangle Parks" in

FAB's district which are not well designed and are underutilized. Phillip sees these public triangle parks as assets to be leveraged. In particular, a re-imagined GATES Triangle Park that takes into consideration the needs of the community would help it serve as a destination and gateway to the Clinton Hill commercial corridor.



**Kevin Kong** is the Managing Director of Renaissance Economic Development Corporation, a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization that provides direct financing and technical assistance to small business owners and entrepreneurs in all five boroughs of New York City. Previously, Kevin was the General Counsel of two Nasdaq-listed publicly traded Chinese companies in Shanghai and Hong Kong and was a corporate finance lawyer practicing at law firms in New York City. A native of Chinatown in New York City, Kevin graduated from Columbia University and Cornell Law School. Through Coro's Neighborhood Leadership program, Kevin hopes to gain insights on how to scale up Renaissance's impact and to revitalize the Forsyth Plaza market, an area adjacent to the Manhattan Bridge in Chinatown that will be under the organization's management. In his spare time, Kevin's interests include US-China relations and organizing alumni events at his alma mater.



**Kerry A. McLean** is the Community Development Project Manager at the Women's Housing and Economic Development Corporation, a non-profit that builds 'green' affordable housing and offers innovative solutions to Bronx families. Kerry's neighborhood revitalization work includes community planning, business attraction, merchant organizing, and 'healthy' microenterprise development. Before joining WHEDco, Kerry was a Housing Planner in the office of former Bronx Borough President Adolfo Carrión Jr., and worked on permitting, land use and employment issues in Manhattan and the Bronx. Kerry also worked in the U.S. and overseas on Third World development issues. She has a graduate degree in Urban Planning.

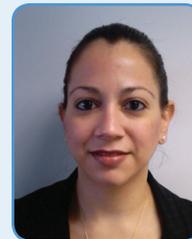


**Ralph Memoli** is currently Chief of Staff & Vice President of Marketing and Special Projects at the Lincoln Square Business Improvement District where he has been employed since 2001. Ralph is responsible for all administrative and marketing aspects of the BID and plays an integral part in producing Winter's Eve – New York City's largest holiday festival. He is working to make Lincoln Square's public spaces congruous with the area's significant commercial, cultural and residential improvements.

Ralph has a Bachelor of Arts from the University of South Florida and has studied at NYU and Stranieri University in Italy. He resides in Riverdale and enjoys exploring New York's cultural institutions.



**Simone Louise Price** is the Executive Director of the Sutphin Boulevard Business Improvement District (BID). Simone manages the daily operations of this non-profit organization with a budget of over \$200,000. Simone meets with community stakeholders and political leaders as a liaison and advocate for BID members. Simone is on the Board of Directors for the Martin De Porres Lasallian Organization; a member of the Greater Jamaica Development Corporation; a United Way of NYC alumna; and a member of the Board of Trustees for the Greater Allen A.M.E Cathedral of NY. Simone volunteers her personal time to church functions, community outreach projects, shelters and at-risk youth forums throughout the year. She hopes to be a change agent for her community through the neighborhood leadership initiative. Through local retail marketing, expansion of the Sutphin Boulevard BID and an educational marketing campaign, Simone envisions a thriving revitalized commercial corridor.



**Angelina M. Ramirez** is the Executive Director of the Washington Heights Business Improvement District. Prior to that, Angelina worked at American Express as a Senior Manager, focusing on the strategic and day-to-day management of global client relationships representing \$5B in annual sales volume. She led cross-functional teams in targeted marketing, cost reduction, operational servicing and revenue generation. Before joining American Express, Angelina worked at PepsiCo as a Brand Manager on the Pepsi brand team focusing on building brand equity and driving sales volume with the Latino demographic. At PepsiCo, she also served as a Customer Marketing Manager strengthening the partnership and driving profit with a national customer with over \$130MM in revenue. Additionally, she worked with Philip Morris on their flagship Marlboro brand, responsible for the development and execution of experiential marketing programs. Angelina holds a B.A. and an M.B.A from New York University.



**Michele Sledge** is the Community & Economic Development Program Manager at Northfield Community LDC in Port Richmond, Staten Island. She implements programs which build and support the area's commercial district and its neighboring communities. Her vision is to utilize existing resources and create new partnerships which effect sustainable commercial revitalization for communities in need. Her background includes several years as community investment officer for several Wall Street financial institutions; she is also a licensed NYS Real Estate Broker. Her interests include music, art, and fundraising. Her memberships include National Association of Realtors (NAR), National Council of Negro Women (NCNW), and NAACP.



**Lisa Thompson** is the Deputy Director of the Bed-Stuy Gateway Business Improvement District. Before joining the BID, she managed the West Girard and Fairmount Avenue commercial corridors in Philadelphia, where among other projects, she was responsible for coordinating an impactful commercial façade matching grant program and outreach initiatives aimed at increasing business owner participation in merchant associations and marketing efforts. In addition to her work in economic development, Lisa has an extensive background in land use and redevelopment planning. Lisa has a BA in Political Science from Bard College and a graduate degree in City and Regional Planning from Rutgers University's Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy.



**Kevin Tolan** serves as the Business Services Manager for the Fulton Mall Improvement Association which is managed by the Downtown Brooklyn Partnership. His civic interests lie very close to the heart of his current position which is providing a well managed urban environment through services and programs that enable existing stakeholders to operate successfully and to attract further investment to Downtown Brooklyn and the city-at-large. His project includes developing a more robust small business commercial revitalization program, working with small businesses to help them keep existing customer base, and also identifying strategies to attract new customers as part of the ongoing transformation of the district. Kevin's other civic interests include participation as a Brooklyn Bridge Park Conservancy Junior Committee Member and a public member of Manhattan Community Board 2. Kevin enjoys photography, hiking and a day at the beach.



**Bob Zuckerman** is the Executive Director of the Lower East Side Business Improvement District (LES BID) since April 2010 and has more than 20 years of experience in the progressive advocacy and economic development arenas. Prior to joining the LES BID, Bob was a candidate for City Council in New York City. His areas of expertise are in public policy, government and community relations, and fundraising and management. In addition to his leadership skills, Bob is recognized for his entrepreneurial pursuits, experience with start-ups, and his ability to bring people together to solve problems and forge consensus. Bob is also a longtime community activist. He is currently a public member of both the Economic Development and Land Use Committees of Manhattan's Community Board Three, and previously served as a full member of two other New York City community boards. Bob is also a Leadership New York Alumnus. He lives with his partner of 13 years, Grant Neumann and their two rescue cats, Ozzie and Willie.