

Embedding Equity in Public Space: The Community First Toolkit Launch

Speaker Biographies

Rebecca Cordes Chan is the Executive Director of the Friends of the Rail Park, a position she has held since March 2020. Prior to joining the Rail Park, Rebecca was the program officer for the National Economic Development and Creative Placemaking programs at Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC), where she managed a portfolio of projects focused on using arts- and culturally-based strategies as tools for inclusive economic development. A preservationist by training, Rebecca's work centers empathy, creativity, and social justice as the foundation for solving complex community development challenges. She received her MS from the University of Pennsylvania's Weitzman School of Design, and a BA from the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign.

Mychal Cohen is an Associate at Lafayette Square. Prior to that, he was a research associate in the Metropolitan Housing and Communities Policy Center at the Urban Institute. His work focused on affordable housing, neighborhood initiatives, and community development. Before joining Urban, Cohen was a policy and development associate at the National Housing Trust, where his work focused on state and local preservation of affordable housing, especially through the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit. Cohen holds a BA in government from the University of Virginia and an MPP from Georgetown University.

Stephen Gray is an Associate Professor of Urban Design at Harvard University Graduate School of Design and founder of Boston-based design firm Grayscale Collaborative. His work acknowledges the relationship between race, class, and the production of space; interrogates design's contribution and complicity with structural racism; and develops methodologies and interventions that address inequality, exclusion, and social injustice. Stephen is currently co-leading an Equitable Impacts Framework pilot with the Urban Institute and High Line Network aimed at advancing racial equity agendas for infrastructure reuse projects across North America.

Asima Jansveld focuses on the intersection of social, environmental and economic impacts of place-based development and policies. She currently leads the High Line Network, a strategic hub and peer learning community for leaders reimagining urban infrastructure as equitable open spaces across North America. Asima is passionate about the potential for peer-to-peer learning to jumpstart innovation, and the power local communities have to affect change when armed with the right resources. Asima's past leadership roles include NYC Economic Development Corporation, European Urban Knowledge Network and HR&A Advisors. She's also worked across jurisdictions and agencies, including developing a citywide industrial policy, building a racial equity program for national mayors, and supporting ten American cities in developing resilience strategies through the 100 Resilient Cities network. Asima also serves on her town's local Planning Board and volunteers for Impact100 Garden State.

Tony Moore is President and CEO of Trinity Park Conservancy, tasked with overseeing the development of one of the largest natural green spaces in the city of Dallas, over 10,000-acres. The first project of this development is the undertaking of a 230-acre, community park, called the Harold Simmons Park. Prior to joining Trinity Park Conservancy, Moore served as Executive Director and CEO of Gathering Place, Tulsa's Riverfront Park. Gathering Place opened in 2018 and has since transformed more than 70 acres of riverfront property into nationally acclaimed park for all the communities of Tulsa. In his career spanning over 30 years, Moore has held senior leadership roles with leading attraction brands such as SeaWorld,

Universal Studios, Discovery Cove, and Aquatica Water Park. He is a veteran leader in the parks and public attractions industry with prominent experiences in park operations, content development, brand management, marketing, and community engagement. Prior to joining Gathering Place, Moore served as the Chief Operating Officer for Zoo Tampa, where he relaunched the Zoo's brand and oversaw attendance growth.

Peter A. Tatian is a senior fellow at the Urban Institute and research director for Urban–Greater DC. He is an expert on US housing policy, particularly in the areas of housing assistance and affordable housing preservation. He advises nonprofits on performance management and evaluation and heads Urban's work providing technical assistance on data collection and use to grantees of the US Department of Education's Promise Neighborhoods initiative. He provided coaching and guidance to HLN Equitable Impacts Framework pilot participants and helped prepare tools for the Community First Toolkit.

Sonia Torres Rodríguez is a research analyst in the Metropolitan Housing and Communities Policy Center at the Urban Institute. Rodríguez's research interests include racial equity, community empowerment, and economic mobility. Before joining Urban, Torres Rodríguez was a research fellow for Stanford's American Voices Project, a national qualitative and ethnographic study of poverty and inequality in the United States. Sonia graduated from Rice University with a bachelor of arts degree in mathematical economic analysis.

James Warren is a storyteller and a strategist, passionate about the intersections of human and digital, and brands, culture and communities. James is the Vice President of Brand Strategy at JMI, a brand strategy and consulting firm uniquely focused on brand community engagement. He is also the Founder and CEO of Share More Stories, a human experience research company that delivers deeper human insights and solutions through storytelling and machine learning, to help brands and organizations create more value for and with their constituents. For nearly 25 years, James has used his unique blend of marketing, storytelling, strategic planning, organizational development and innovation experiences to help companies form lasting connections with their employees, consumers and communities. Over the last several years, James and his team have led groundbreaking studies focused on the travel experiences of historically excluded and underrepresented consumer groups, helping clients at the state and local level develop more authentic engagement and improve the visitation experience. A sought-after advisor, facilitator, contributor and convener, James serves on the BridgePark Foundation's Board of Directors and Executive Committee as Chair; the YMCA of Greater Richmond's Board of Directors, Executive Committee, and Mission, Equity and Inclusion Committee; and The Dwight School Foundation's Diversity Equity and Inclusion Board. James studied economics and literature at Princeton University and creative writing at Columbia University, and also writes for Richmond magazine on family, community, and lifestyle. Originally from New York City, James and his family now call Richmond, Virginia home.