Promoting Economic Mobility:
Putting Evidence to Action for Communities

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Jacqueline Alexander is director of development for The Community Builders Inc. mid-Atlantic region. Alexander directs the real estate development activities and manages the project management staff within the mid-Atlantic region. Previously, Alexander was an assistant commissioner with the New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development, where she oversaw the disposition, financing, and stabilization of rental and homeownership programs in the office of development. Before that, Alexander worked for Carver Federal Savings Bank, Banco Popular North America, and Fannie Mae, where she helped manage the NYC Community Business Center. She was also director of housing production for Enterprise Community Partners and began her career in community development as a project manager at Abyssinian Development Corporation in Harlem. Alexander holds a BA from Binghamton University and an MS in urban policy analysis and management from The New School.

Shaun Donovan is the 40th director of the Office of Management and Budget. He was the 15th secretary of the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), where he managed the department’s $47 billion budget, made critical investments to speed economic growth, offered new savings proposals, and ensured fiscal responsibility. Donovan also chaired the Hurricane Sandy Rebuilding Task Force. Before joining the Obama administration, Donovan was commissioner of the New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development, and before that, he worked in the private sector on financing affordable housing and was a visiting scholar at New York University. Donovan was also a consultant to the Millennial Housing Commission and served in the Clinton administration as deputy assistant secretary for multifamily housing at HUD, where he was the primary federal official responsible for privately owned multifamily housing. He was also acting commissioner of the Federal Housing Administration in the early 2000s. Donovan holds master’s degrees in public administration and architecture from Harvard University.

Carol Galante is the faculty director of the Terner Center for Housing Innovation at the University of California, Berkeley, and the I. Donald Terner distinguished professor in affordable housing and urban policy. She also cochairs the policy advisory board of the Fisher Center of Real Estate and Urban Economics. Previously, Galante was appointed by President Obama to be assistant secretary for housing and federal housing commissioner at HUD. She also developed signature initiatives, including Choice Neighborhoods and the Rental Assistance Demonstration Program. Before her appointment at HUD, Galante was president and chief executive of BRIDGE Housing Corporation, the largest nonprofit developer of affordable, mixed-income, and mixed-use developments in California. Before BRIDGE, she was executive director of Eden Housing Inc. She has held volunteer leadership positions at the Housing Partnership Network, OneCalifornia Bank Foundation, California Housing Consortium, Center for Housing Policy, and the Urban Land Institute. She has received many notable honors, including HousingWire’s “Influential Woman in Housing 2012” and induction into the California
Homebuilder Hall of Fame. Galante holds a bachelor’s degree from Ohio Wesleyan University and a master’s degree in city planning from the University of California, Berkeley.

**Ben Hecht** is president and CEO of Living Cities, which deploys more than $140 million in grants, loans, and influence to reengineer obsolete public systems and connect low-income people and underinvested places to opportunity. Before joining Living Cities, Hecht cofounded One Economy Corporation, a nonprofit organization focused on connecting low-income people to the economic mainstream through innovative, online content and increased broadband access. For 10 years, he taught at Georgetown University Law Center and built the premier housing and community development clinical program in the country. Hecht is chairman of EveryoneOn, a national initiative founded by the Federal Communications Commission to connect low-income Americans to digital opportunity. He also sits on the national advisory board for StriveTogether and Duke University’s Center for Advancement of Social Entrepreneurship advisory council. In 2013, Hecht was selected as one of the top 100 city innovators worldwide in urban policy.

**Loretta E. Lynch** is the 83rd attorney general of the United States. In 1990, after a period in private practice, Lynch joined the United States Attorney’s Office for the Eastern District of New York in Brooklyn, where she forged an impressive career prosecuting cases involving narcotics, violent crimes, public corruption, and civil rights. In 1999, President Clinton appointed her to lead the office. In 2002, Lynch joined Hogan Lovells as a partner in the firm’s New York office. While in private practice, Lynch performed extensive pro bono work for the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, established to prosecute human rights violations in the 1994 genocide in that country. As special counsel to the tribunal, Lynch investigated allegations of witness tampering and false testimony. In 2010, President Obama asked Lynch to resume her leadership of the United States Attorney’s Office in Brooklyn. Under her direction, the office prosecuted corrupt public officials, terrorists, cybercriminals, and human traffickers. Lynch received her AB cum laude from Harvard College and her JD from Harvard Law School.

**Brandee McHale** is president of the Citi Foundation and director of corporate citizenship at Citi. She oversees the Citi Foundation’s global grantmaking strategy and leads Citi’s citizenship efforts, including volunteerism and environmental sustainability. McHale joined Citi in 1991 and has served in several business management and philanthropy-related leadership roles, including director of operations for Citi Community Capital and senior relationship manager in Citi’s then community relations and Community Reinvestment Act units. Most recently, she was chief operating officer of the Citi Foundation. From 2004 to 2007, McHale worked at the Ford Foundation, where she developed a portfolio of investments that supported the efforts of low-income households to achieve financial success and helped establish a business case for financial inclusion. She is board chair of the Corporation for Enterprise Development and serves on the board of directors of the Local Initiatives Support Corporation, Living Cities, and America’s Promise Alliance.

**Conor McKay** is a political and policy advisor who has worked in the government, public, private, and nonprofit sectors at the federal and local levels. McKay was chief of staff for the bipartisan Simpson-Bowles debt reduction commission, helping write and develop the report that proposed a commonsense, bipartisan blueprint to address the nation’s fiscal challenges. He worked in the Obama administration as a direct aide to Vice President Joe Biden’s chief of staff. McKay provided key policy development and data analysis for Detroit mayor Mike Duggan’s efforts to revitalize basic city services through LEAN process improvement initiatives. He has also worked on budget policy at the
nonpartisan Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget. His published works include a white paper analyzing trends in census data in the early 2000s called “The Lost Decade,” policy-focused op-eds, and blog posts. McKay holds a bachelor’s degree in English from the College of William and Mary, and a master’s degree in public policy from the University of Michigan.

Erika Poethig is an Institute fellow and director of urban policy initiatives at the Urban Institute. Poethig assembles in-house experts to help local leaders draw insights from research and navigate policy challenges facing urban America in the 21st century. She also leads partnerships to develop new programs and strategies, translate research into policy and practice, and align philanthropic investments and federal policy. Before joining Urban, Poethig was acting assistant secretary for policy, development, and research at HUD, where she was responsible for research, policy, and market analysis, and program development assistance. During her tenure in the Obama administration, she was deputy assistant secretary for policy development and was a leading architect of the White House Council for Strong Cities and Strong Communities. At the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, she was associate director for housing. She also was assistant commissioner for policy, resource, and program development at the City of Chicago’s Department of Housing. In the late 1990s, she developed Mayor Richard M. Daley’s campaign to combat predatory lending, prevent foreclosures, and stabilize communities. Previously, Poethig was associate project director of the Metropolis Project, which produced the Metropolis 2020 agenda for regional leadership around the major issues faced by the metropolitan Chicago area. Poethig was a Phi Beta Kappa member at the College of Wooster, a Fulbright Scholar at the University of Vienna, and has an MA with honors in public policy from the University of Chicago.

Teófilo Reyes is national research director at the Restaurant Opportunities Centers United, which seeks to improve wages and working conditions for the nation’s low-wage restaurant workers. Before that, Reyes was codirector and staff writer at Labor Notes, director of TiE Global in North America, helped found the National Coalition for Dignity and Amnesty, and was a community organizer with the United Farm Workers. Reyes holds a PhD in comparative human development from the University of Chicago.

Palak Shah leads the National Domestic Workers Alliance’s experimental and market-based approaches to improve working conditions, services, and employment opportunities for domestic workers. Most recently, Shah was a leader at Wellmont Health System, an eight-hospital health system in northeast Tennessee and southwest Virginia. Shah developed the health care system’s strategic responses to the Affordable Care Act and the rapidly changing health care environment. She was previously a member of Massachusetts governor Deval Patrick’s administration, serving as a member of the governor’s budget team and then as the commonwealth’s deputy director of performance management. Shah previously worked in the private sector as a management consultant at Accenture’s strategy practice. In 1996, she cofounded VISIONS Worldwide, an internationally recognized nongovernmental organization focused on the HIV/AIDS crisis in India. Shah received a dual degree in political science and broadcast journalism from Northwestern University. She received a master’s degree in public policy from the Harvard Kennedy School, where she was awarded the prestigious Public Service Fellowship and Presidential Scholarship.

Courtney R. Snowden was appointed in 2015 by Mayor Muriel Bowser to be Washington DC’s first Deputy Mayor for Greater Economic Opportunity. Her office focuses on issues related to household financial security, entrepreneurship, workforce, and community development. She was elected
alternate national committeewoman to the DC Democratic State Committee and later ran for an at-large seat on the DC Council. Snowden received her BA in political science from Beloit College. After graduating, she joined the legislative staff of Congresswoman Tammy Baldwin (D-WI) on Capitol Hill. An active leader in the city’s LGBT and African American communities and a staunch public education advocate, Snowden has a record of coalition building and bringing people from different backgrounds together from across the city.

Margery Turner is senior vice president for program planning and management at the Urban Institute, where she leads efforts to frame and conduct a forward-looking agenda of policy research. A nationally recognized expert on urban policy and neighborhood issues, Turner has analyzed residential location, racial and ethnic discrimination and its contribution to neighborhood segregation and inequality, and the role of housing policies in promoting residential mobility and location choice. Among her recent publications is the book Public Housing and the Legacy of Segregation. Before joining Urban, Turner was deputy assistant secretary for research at HUD from 1993 through 1996, focusing HUD’s research agenda on the problems of racial discrimination, concentrated poverty, and economic opportunity in America's metropolitan areas. During her tenure, HUD's research office launched three major social science demonstration projects to test strategies for helping families from distressed inner-city neighborhoods gain access to opportunities through employment and education. Turner has a BA in political science from Cornell University and an MA in urban and regional planning from the George Washington University.

Sarah Rosen Wartell is the third president of the Urban Institute. During her tenure, Urban has articulated its strategy to “elevate the debate” by bringing more of its research insights to federal, state, and local government and practice; becoming a leader in research communications and data visualization; and undertaking an ambitious program of business systems and technology modernization. Previously, Wartell was deputy assistant to the president for economic policy and deputy director of the National Economic Council. At HUD from 1993 to 1998, she advised the federal housing commissioner on housing finance, mortgage markets, and consumer protection. Later, she was a consultant to the bipartisan Millennial Housing Commission. After government service, Wartell was the founding chief operating officer and then executive vice president of the Center for American Progress. Her work focused on the economy and housing markets, and she directed the Mortgage Finance Working Group and "Doing What Works" government performance program. Before her tenure in government, she practiced law with the Washington, DC, firm Arnold & Porter. Wartell serves on the boards of the Low Income Investment Fund, Center for Law and Social Policy, and Center for Urban Science and Progress at New York University. She is also a Penn Institute for Urban Research Scholar. Her areas of expertise include community development, consumer finance, asset building, and housing finance. Wartell has an AB degree with honors in urban affairs from Princeton University’s Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs. She has a JD degree from Yale Law School.