



DALLAS

LEARNING JOURNEY

**Reimagining
the Civic Commons**





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the Civic Commons**

Savoy Swing



WELCOME TO DALLAS, TEXAS

Howdy, y'all! If you're expecting to see some cowboy hats, boots, and big hair over the next couple of days, you may be disappointed. If you're expecting to see some innovative ideas on how to bring public spaces back to the forefront of neighbors' minds, you most definitely won't be disappointed. If you're expecting us to keep using y'all, well, you won't be disappointed in that, either.

We're excited to show you our home. Dallas is a great city on the cusp of some amazing things. As long as we pay attention to our public spaces, the city will flourish. Oak Cliff, specifically, has a lot to teach us.

When I moved to Dallas nine years ago, I was told to not go to Oak Cliff, because I'd get shot. Today, Oak Cliff is home to some of the best restaurants in town. It has one of the most walkable neighborhoods around. It has seen the return of the streetcar. And it is a diverse community with deep roots.

But the progress isn't always seen as a great thing. The neighborhood is changing. And not everyone loves the changes.

Over the next couple days, we'll show you around Oak Cliff and introduce you to some of the people who not only helped make it great, but are continuing to change, fight for, and engage the neighborhood.

Then we're going to give you some time to think about how this applies to your city. We'll have a writing workshop to talk about storytelling techniques, and then an action workshop to apply the lessons learned.

We'll also have some food. Okay, a lot of food. But that's what the bikes are for.

Welcome to Dallas! We hope you love it as much as we do. **-Krista Nightengale, managing director, Better Block Foundation**

REIMAGINING THE CIVIC COMMONS

Welcome to the first Civic Commons Learning Journey.

One of the best ways to learn is to see things in person and talk with the instigators themselves. Civic Commons learning journeys offer exactly that.

We are so pleased to have you participate in this exploration of Dallas.

Thanks to our local hosts, Jason Roberts and Krista Nightengale of Better Block, over the next few days, you'll have the opportunity to immerse yourself in the neighborhood of Oak Cliff. You will explore the neighborhood by bike and gain a deep understanding of the programming, communication, and action-oriented civic engagement that have shifted the narrative of this neighborhood.

Conversations with the advocates and doers behind the Texas Theatre, Klyde Warren Park, and Go Oak Cliff will offer additional insights on collaboration, transforming civic assets, and championing communities where everyone has a stake and everyone belongs. No pretenses, simply honest reflections on the work.

Moving from insight to action, on our last day together you and your team will have time to translate the tactics and strategies employed in Oak Cliff to your work on the civic commons.

And throughout, you'll have a chance to experience some of the tastiest restaurants springing up around the neighborhood and reconnect with colleagues from the Civic Commons Learning Network.

Looking forward to learning together. —Bridget Marquis, Director, Civic Commons Learning Network

Chicago

Detroit

Philadelphia

Memphis

Akron

ABOUT THE BETTER BLOCK

History of Better Block

The Better Block began with an idea from a group of neighbors who wondered, "How could we have bike lanes like those found in Holland? How could we have night food markets like those found in Thailand and beer gardens like those in Munich?" They realized they couldn't. There were decades-old ordinances on their city books that prohibited them from creating spaces like those they dreamed of.

So they did the only thing they could: they broke some rules.



For one weekend, they took over their block. They painted bike lanes, coordinated pop-up food markets and retailors, and created a beer garden. They called their experiment the Better Block, and through it, the community brainstormed together, learned together, and ultimately shared in the beautiful and vibrant spaces they helped create together.

The drive to make places better was placed in the hands of neighbors, and they ran with it.

Over the years, Better Blocks have been implemented from Portland to Detroit and Melbourne to Tahran.

In 2015, the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation gave Jason Roberts a capacity grant to create a nonprofit that could continue the work, and provide resources and tools to community leaders interested in creating their own Better Blocks. Thus the Better Block Foundation was born.

Mission

The Better Block is a 501(c)3 nonprofit that educates, equips, and empowers communities and their leaders to reshape and reactivate built environments to promote the growth of healthy and vibrant neighborhoods.



AGENDA

Sunday, March 12

Check In	Belmont Hotel <i>901 Fort Worth Avenue</i> <i>Room is under your name. You will need to put down a credit card for incidentals.</i>
7 pm	Welcome Drinks and Appetizers at Bar Belmont
8 pm	Dinner Smoke <i>901 Fort Worth Avenue</i>

Monday, March 13

9-10 am	Breakfast Tacos and What Is the Better Block? Better Block Headquarters <i>700 West Davis</i>
10 am - noon	Tour of Oak Cliff With Jason Roberts
noon - 1 pm	Overcoming Stigma With Angela Hunt, David Spence, Dr. Chris Dowdy, Byron Sanders Wild Detectives <i>314 West Eighth Street</i>
1 - 1:30 pm	Bike to Klyde Warren Park And check out the streetcar!

1:30 -	Refuel
2:30 pm	Klyde Warren Park <i>2012 Woodall Rodgers Freeway</i>
2:30 -	How To Create a City's Front Lawn
3:30 pm	With Veletta Lill, John Zogg, and Linda Owen
3:30 -	Back to the Hotel
4 pm	Belmont Hotel <i>901 Fort Worth Avenue</i>
4 - 6 pm	Recharge This is your free time. Use it how you'd like.
6:30 pm	Refuel Walk to Dinner at Small Brewpub <i>333 West Jefferson Boulevard</i>
8:30 pm	Recharge Back to the Hotel

Tuesday, March 14

8:30 am	Refuel Breakfast at Oddfellows <i>316 West 7th Street</i>
10-11 am	Activating a Community With Jason Roberts, Mary Katherine McElroy, Andres de la Casa Huertas, and Taylor Toynes

AGENDA CONTINUED

11 am - noon	Writer Workshop With Michael J. Mooney and Bradford Pearson
noon - 1:30 pm	Refuel Lunch at Eno's <i>407 North Bishop Avenue</i>
1:30 - 3 pm	Ideas To Action Time to Think, Plot, and Act
3 pm	Depart



RESOURCES FOR YOUR TRIP



Krista Nightengale, Tour Coordinator

405-615-2623

krista@betterblock.org

Save this number.

Should you have any issues (or get lost),
please give Krista a call.

Uber Code

This has been sent to you in email.

This gets you two \$100 rides (to and from the airport)

If you'd prefer, you can take Lyft, a cab, or the Orange Line on DART.

Please keep your receipt for expense reimbursement.



SPEAKER BIOGRAPHIES





Angela Hunt
Lawyer/Former City Councilwoman/
Better Block Board Member

Angela Hunt served four terms on the Dallas City Council, from 2005–2013, stepping down after eight years due to term limits. Elected at the age of 33, she was the youngest woman ever to serve and was re-elected with overwhelming support from her constituents. In 2013, Angela joined the law firm of Farrow–Gillespie & Heath where she advises clients on a wide range of governmental issues including complex zoning and land use matters, economic development programs, tax increment financing grants, public–private partnerships, affordable housing tax credits, and intergovernmental relations. As councilwoman, Angela focused on neighborhood quality of life issues, improving city services, expanding governmental transparency, and creating a more pedestrian- and bike-friendly urban core. She played a key role in the creation of Klyde Warren Park, a 5-acre deck park constructed over a sunken freeway.



David Spence
Founder
Good Space

Good Space was founded in 1995 by David W. Spence, an attorney who had fallen in love with the Oak Cliff section of Dallas. After 10 years in public service, David's first impulse was to create a community-development nonprofit, but on the advice of urban redeveloper Bennett Miller, David organized Good Space as a for-profit venture to rejuvenate charming but distressed buildings. In his first project, a condemned 16-unit apartment house built in 1928, David was mentored by business partner and architect Trey Bartosh. Their success with Bishop Terrace convinced David to focus exclusively on his adopted neighborhood, the Bishop Arts District.



Dr. Chris Dowdy

Special Assistant to the President/Institutional Research Assistant
Paul Quinn College

Chris Dowdy serves as Director of Institutional Effectiveness and Research at Paul Quinn College, collaborating with all divisions of the college in the development and implementation of the New Urban College Model. He received his Ph.D. in Religious Studies from Southern Methodist University. His research focus is on redress for historical injustice, and he is the author of articles on lynching memory and mercy. He is also the author of Dallas Untold, a multi-archival exploration of public memory at a downtown Dallas lynching site, and the curator of “Portrait of an Access Desert,” a PQC project using freely accessible data and maps to analyze overlapping deprivations in Dallas.



Byron Sanders

Vice President
U.S. Trust

Byron Sanders serves as Vice President for U.S. Trust, the private bank of Bank of America.

He serves on the Advisory Council of the Dallas Foundation, KIPP DFW, Big Thought, Children at Risk, the Mayor's Star Council, Kids Hope USA National Advisory Council, and is the Education co-chair of the WINS South Dallas Collective Impact initiative. A member of Dallas Assembly, Leadership Dallas '13, Leadership ISD '12, Greenhill Alumni Board, and several other service engagements, Sanders is a committed advocate for education, economic development, and creating equitable communities in the city.

Byron is a graduate of the University of Tulsa with a BSBA in Marketing.



Veletta Lill
Former City Councilmember
City of Dallas

Veletta Forsythe Lill believes she has been fortunate to enjoy a front row seat to Dallas' current renaissance. The retired Executive Director of the Dallas Arts District (2008–2012), former member of the Dallas City Council (1997–2005), and long-time community advocate has played a role in the development of many of Dallas' most high profile projects over the past two decades. During her tenure as a councilmember and Executive Director, she participated in the development and/or opening of the Latino Cultural Center, Nasher Sculpture Center, Dallas Black Dance Theater, AT&T Performing Art Center, Margaret Hunt Hill Bridge, Dallas City Performance Hall, and Klyde Warren Park. Over the past 20 years, she has served on numerous boards including the Dallas Museum of Art, the Parkland Foundation, and the National Trust for Historic Preservation.



John Zogg
Managing Director
Crescent Real Estate Equities, LLC

John L. Zogg, Jr. serves as managing director of leasing for Crescent Real Estate Equities, LLC, overseeing asset management in three of Crescent's office markets and managing the leasing efforts of more than 5 million square feet.

Mr. Zogg is a founding board member and visionary of Klyde Warren Park and served on the boards of various local civic organizations including Executive Committees of Uptown Public Improvement District, Woodall Rodgers Park Foundation, Downtown Dallas, and The Rise School of Dallas. He also was a member of The Dallas Assembly, Urban Land Institute, City Center Tax Incentive Finance District, as well as the Downtown Connection Tax Incentive Finance District. A graduate of the University of Texas at Austin, Mr. Zogg also holds a Master of Business Administration (MBA) Degree from the University of Dallas.



Linda Owen

Philanthropist

Linda worked at the Wald, Harkrader & Ross, a law firm, as a real estate associate. She is an alumnus of the University of Texas where she earned her Bachelor's degree in economics. Linda also earned her JD from the esteemed University of Texas School of Law. In Dallas, Linda has been affiliated to different philanthropic institutions such as The Family Place, the Circuit Trail Conservancy, and Crystal Charity Ball. At Woodall Rodgers Park Foundation, Linda played an instrumental role in the creation of Klyde Warren Park based in Dallas. Linda was also the president of The Real Estate Council (TREC).



Taylor Toynes

Community Impact Associate
Commit

Born and raised in Oak Cliff, it is important for Taylor to serve the community that has shaped him to become the person he is today. After graduating college, Taylor worked at the Dallas County District Attorney's office where he served as a Victims Advocate in the Family Violence division with the hopes of becoming an attorney. After reading an article on the cradle to prison pipeline, Taylor realized that he wanted to make a direct impact on students in his community and decided to join Teach For America, teaching fourth grade reading and writing at W.W. Bushman Elementary School. Taylor organized the first annual "For Oak Cliff" back to school festival in Glendale Park.

Taylor graduated from the University of North Texas in 2012 with a B.A. in Political Science and a Minor in Criminal Justice. Taylor also received his M.Ed. from SMU Simmons School of Education in 2016. Taylor is the husband of his high school sweetheart.



Michael J. Mooney

Freelance Writer

Michael J. Mooney is a New York Times best-selling author. He writes for ESPN the Magazine, Rolling Stone, GQ, Outside, Texas Monthly, SUCCESS, and Popular Mechanics. His stories have appeared in multiple editions of The Best American Sports Writing and The Best American Crime Reporting. He's also the co-director of the annual Mayborn Literary Nonfiction Conference. He lives in Dallas with his wife, Tara.



Bradford Pearson

Managing Editor

Southwest: The Magazine

Bradford Pearson currently serves as managing editor for Southwest: The Magazine, the in-flight magazine of Southwest Airlines, where he focuses on writing and editing the magazine's longform feature stories. Prior to that, he served as associate editor for D Magazine in Dallas, senior editor for D Magazine's business publication, D CEO, and as healthcare editor and online staff writer for the company. He spent his formative journalism years working for community weeklies, from New York to Maryland to Texas.

In 2014 he was honored alongside 28 other Americans to be granted a Marshall Memorial Fellowship by the German Marshall Fund of the United States. He studied transatlantic policy and relations (specifically the differences between American and European media) in Belgium, Germany, Spain, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and France. He was the youngest fellow selected in 2014.



Andres de la Casa-Huertas

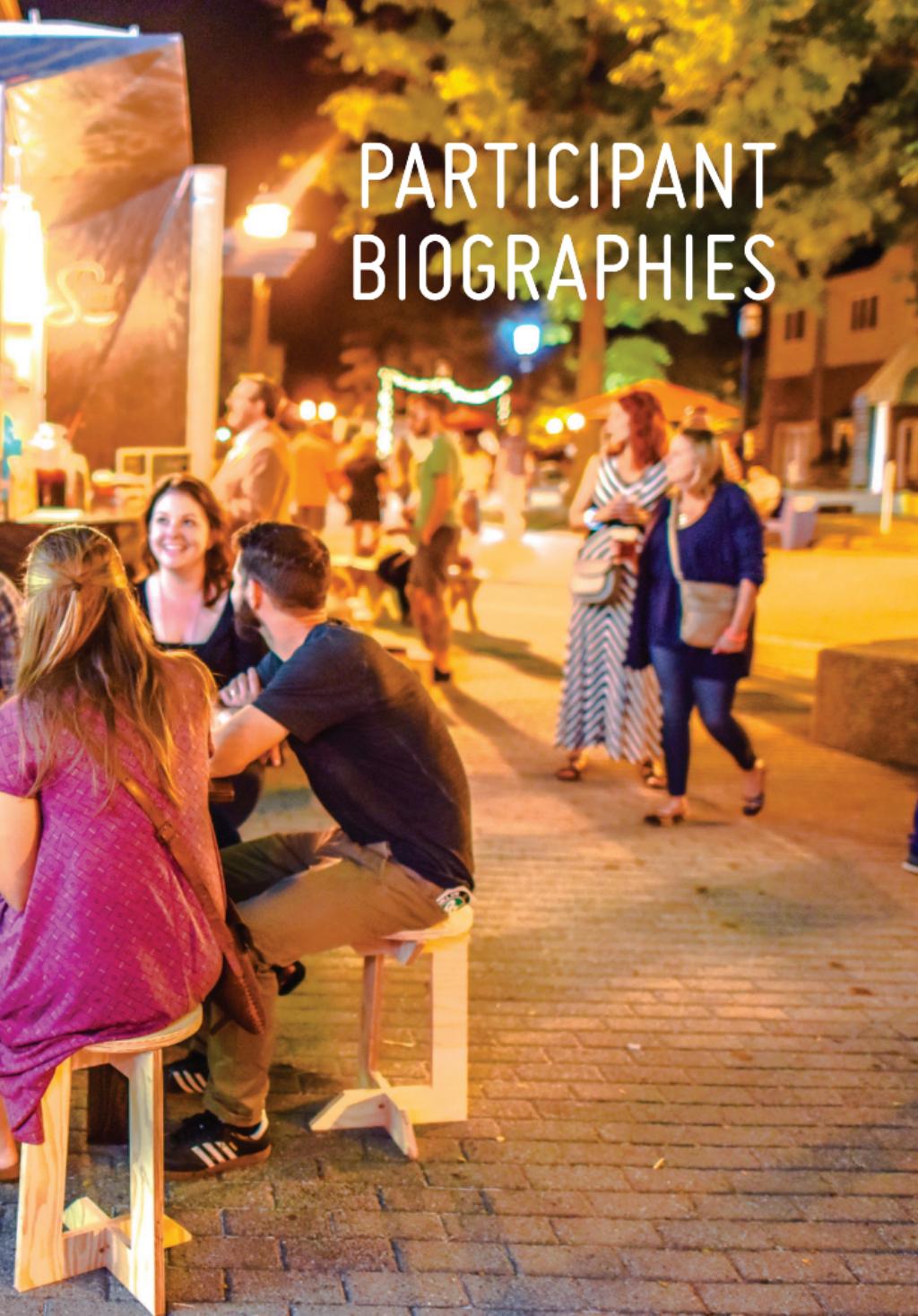
Brand Director
Wild Detectives

Andres de la Casa-Huertas is an advertising creative. After living in Spain, Ireland and UK, while working for brands such as Apple, PlayStation, McDonalds, and Ben & Jerry's (among others), he now considers Dallas home. Since 2015, Andres has been the Brand Director at The Wild Detectives, an independent Bookstore & Bar venue in Oak Cliff, that encourages community-driven cultural conversations. The Wild Detectives aims to become an important cultural agent; a stakeholder that effectively energizes the arts landscape in Dallas by making culture feel sexy, inclusive and approachable by everyone.

* AKRON
COFFEE
ROASTERS



PARTICIPANT BIOGRAPHIES





Kyle Kutuchief, Akron

Program Director
Knight Foundation
[Instagram](#) @kylekutuchief
[Twitter](#) @kylekutuchief

Kyle Kutuchief was named Akron program director for the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation in May 2015. The foundation invests in journalism, the arts, and the success of cities where its founders once published newspapers. In Akron, the birthplace of Knight Newspapers and the foundation, Knight focuses on downtown and its surrounding neighborhoods through investments in talent, opportunity, and engagement. Akron is also part of Reimagining the Civic Commons, a Knight-supported national initiative that seeks to counteract economic and social fragmentation by revitalizing and connecting public spaces.



Bronlynn Thurman, Akron

Program Associate
Knight Foundation
[Instagram](#) @_bront_
[Twitter](#) @_bront_

Bronlynn Thurman is a Program Associate with the Knight Foundation's Akron office. Previously, Bronlynn worked at the Akron-Summit County Public Library as an events assistant, where she handled the logistics of external programs while helping develop some of the internal teen and children's programming.

Bronlynn, an Akron native, serves on the city of Akron's Holocaust Arts & Writing Contest Committee; a member of the young professional organization, Torchbearers; runs a Northeast Ohio-focused blog, Tea Time With the Mad Artist; and does freelance design and illustration.

Bronlynn received a Bachelor of Science in advertising with an emphasis on design and marketing from Kent State University.



Eric Nelson, Akron

Executive Director

Students With a Goal

Twitter @SWAG Director

Twitter @EricNel43721744

Originally from Cleveland, Ohio, Eric Nelson moved to the Summit Lake community of Akron, Ohio, where he immediately began working with the youth of the neighborhood. In January 2016, he accepted a full-time Executive Director position with SWAG. Since moving to Akron, he has been heavily invested in youth development. He believes that God has called him to this work, and has led his steps toward this path. He is equally committed to the betterment of the Summit Lake Community in Akron.



Katelyn Freil, Akron

Communications Coordinator

Ohio & Erie Canalway Coalition

Instagram @kateforeal

Twitter @KatelynFreil

Katelyn Freil is the communications coordinator for the Ohio & Erie Canalway Coalition, a nonprofit in Akron dedicated to developing the Ohio & Erie Canalway National Heritage Area and Towpath Trail. Before becoming communications coordinator, Katelyn served in other capacities for the organization, including event and development coordinator and intern.

Katelyn attended The University of Akron from 2010 to 2014, where she interned with The News Outlet, a partnership of Northeast Ohio universities and media partners, and worked as the news editor for The Buchtelite, the University of Akron student-run newspaper. She graduated in December 2014 with degrees in mass media and public relations, and a minor in environmental ethics. Katelyn is a recent alumna of the National Arts Strategies Creative Community Fellowship.



Demetrius Lambert Falconer, Akron

Outreach Manager

Summit Metro Parks

Instagram @let_dave_livef

Twitter @Demetrius Falconer

Demetrius Lambert Falconer joined the Community Engagement staff in May of 2016 with the purpose of connecting non-users to Summit Metro Parks. Demetrius has extensive experience creating and designing outreach programs for a variety of underserved populations – early learners, urban youths, and seniors. Through awareness efforts, Demetrius creates experiences via speaking engagement presentations, nature-based educational programs, and recreation adventures for new groups of patrons. Demetrius has a master's degree in Curriculum and Instructions for Cleveland State University and a Bachelors of Arts from the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff. She is a graduate of the National Recreation and Park Association Supervisor School. She is a past recipient of Kaleidoscope Magazine–Cleveland 40/40 Club award. On a personal note, Demetrius is a mother of four who enjoys spending time with her husband and children.



Lauryce Graves-Mciver, Memphis

Assistant Director, Strategic Partnerships

Memphis Public Library

Lauryce Graves-Mciver believes we are all better when we gain knowledge and support from others with more experience and insight. An innocent conversation about genealogy at a dinner party could lead to someone offering help on how to research your family tree and to avoid the same rabbit holes that they did. Lauryce loves what she does at the library. Helping MPL reach and teach is key. Being a part of the team that will help revitalize the Cossitt branch along with Memphis' riverfront is energizing. It will allow her to use the skills she has, but most of all, will expose her to the processes and ideas others are deploying to bring people and communities together for shared experiences and opportunities. She is a native of Charleston, South Carolina, and worked in corporate America as a merchandising executive until moving to Memphis in 2003. She met her husband here in Memphis, no children.



Mairi Albertson, Memphis

Administrator

City of Memphis Division of Housing and
Community Development

Mairi Albertson is the Planning Administrator for the City of Memphis Division of Housing and Community Development. Mairi has over 18 years experience with the City, providing oversight of neighborhood and city-wide planning efforts and coordinating research and grant writing related to housing and community development. This includes recommending programs and funding based on the needs identified for the community, with an emphasis on providing housing and services to the most vulnerable populations in Memphis. A significant part of this work involves facilitating strategic partnerships that will leverage the resources necessary to meet the community's needs.



Maria Fuhrmann, Memphis

Grants Coordinator

City of Memphis

Maria Fuhrmann oversees Grants and Partnerships for the City of Memphis, managing special projects and serving as the Executive Team liaison and to the City's philanthropic, quasigovernmental, and community partners. Maria came to city government in 2006 as a Research Analyst for the Memphis City Council and previously served as Special Assistant to the Mayor for Research and Innovation. Maria is a graduate of the University of Memphis and has lived in her adopted hometown since 1991. Maria is passionate about leveraging Memphis' unique assets to create a vibrant and thriving urban core, encourage quality infill development in the inner city, and provide a range of safe, convenient, sustainable mobility choices.



Rosalyn Willis, Memphis

Vice President

McCormack Baron Salazar Development, Inc.

Rosalyn Willis has over 35 years of experience in the areas of construction, development, and community and historic preservation. As Vice President and Project Manager at McCormack Baron Salazar, she is responsible for the implementation of mixed-income and mixed-use projects, leveraging and securing project financing, and coordinating public and private partners. Currently based in the St. Louis Corporate office, Rosalyn helped to lead the McCormack Baron Salazar Memphis office for eight years and oversaw two HOPE VI developments. Currently, she is overseeing the Memphis South City Transformation Plan, is engaged with a team of consultants and external partners, and is working to bring the South City transformation plan to fruition. Rosalyn is the founder and president of a general contracting company and was the first African American woman in the state of Tennessee to become a general contractor.



Jamie Gauthier, Philadelphia

Senior Director of Public Partnerships

Fairmount Park Conservancy

[Instagram](#) @robynjam1

[Twitter](#) @jamiegauthier1

Jamie Gauthier joined the Fairmount Park Conservancy in January 2017. She brings with her a depth of experience related to community development, grassroots engagement, economic development, and nonprofit administration. Most recently, Jamie served as Executive Director of the Sustainable Business Network of Greater Philadelphia (SBN), where she led the organization through a strategic planning process that enabled the growth of its programming, including the creation of a new public policy department. Jamie also expanded SBN's human resources. Prior to SBN, Jamie worked as a Program Officer with Local Initiatives Support Corporation. Jamie holds a master's degree in City Planning from the University of Pennsylvania, a bachelor's degree in Business Administration from Temple University, and views parks as community assets vital for gathering, recreation, and overall neighborhood health. She is a resident of West Philadelphia, and is mother to two sons, Xavier 13, and Nathaniel, 9.



George Matysik, Philadelphia

Executive Director

Philadelphia Parks Alliance

[Twitter](#) @PHParksAlliance

George Matysik serves as Executive Director of the Philadelphia Parks Alliance, the leading advocacy, public policy, and community engagement nonprofit for public spaces in Southeastern Pennsylvania. Since joining the Parks Alliance in September 2015, George led the successful advocacy efforts for largest investment in public space in the city's history—the \$500 million Rebuild Philadelphia initiative—and has fostered a dramatic increase in community engagement at the city's 150+ recreation centers. Over the past year, George has grown the Parks Alliance from a traditionally one-person shop to a diverse team of more than 20 staff, interns, skilled volunteers, and AmeriCorps VISTAs. A lifelong Philadelphian, George is a graduate of the University of Pennsylvania, where he earned his degree in Urban Studies in the evening, while working his way through school as a janitor there.



Erin Engelstad, Philadelphia

Park Stewardship Manager

Fairmount Park Conservancy

[Instagram](#) @engelser

[Twitter](#) @engelser

Erin Engelstad began her life at the Conservancy in 2013. She was thrilled to join the Stewardship Team, with whom she supports park volunteers and friends groups all over the city in full collaboration with Philadelphia Parks & Recreation. Erin assists park groups with event and physical improvement grants and is available for ongoing general support to park volunteers and friends groups. She supports the East Fairmount Park Coalition, a group of over 40 stakeholders in and around East Fairmount Park. Her passion for Philadelphia's parks began in 2004 when she moved to the City of Brotherly love from Virginia and began to organize cultural events in her local park in West Philadelphia, Clark Park. Before working at the Conservancy, she served as Associate Director of the Office of Student Affairs at the Perelman School of Medicine at the University of Pennsylvania.



Meg Wise, Philadelphia

Executive Director

Smith Memorial Playground

[Twitter](#) @MegPWise

Meg Wise moved to Philadelphia from Arizona in 1991 to attend graduate school at the University of Pennsylvania. After completing a PhD in Comparative Literature, her love for the city drew her to community-based organizations in the nonprofit sector. For the past six years, she has served as the Executive Director of Smith Memorial Playground and Playhouse, a beloved 118-year old resource for families located in East Fairmount Park. Smith is really unique! Housed in a historic mansion, it provides and promotes opportunities for unstructured free play for children. Under Meg's leadership, Smith staff and board have developed new programs and built strong community connections that led to Smith doubling its audience, staff capacity, and operating budget within a few years. The organization is now engaged in an ambitious capital plan that will expand programmed space in the Playhouse by 25 percent, increase outdoor play areas by 50 percent, and open a new Urban Nature Preschool for kids ages 3-5.



Gaston Nash III, Detroit

Founder

College Core Block Club

Gaston Nash III is one of the founders of College Core Block Club, a community group devoted to the improvement of the area between Marygrove College and the University of Detroit Mercy. Gaston was chosen as a Black Male Engagement Leader in 2013 and helped to revitalize Lollo Park, a local park in the area that was slated to be closed by the city.



Stephanie Harbin, Detroit

Civic Commons

Stephanie Harbin is a native Detroiter. Detroit is known as the “Come Back City” to revive, restore, and renew intercity neighborhoods of Detroit. Stephanie graduated from Mumford High School, attended Detroit College of Business, and graduated with an Associate’s Degree in Business Administration. She later attended Destiny School of Ministry and received a Master’s Degree of Theology from Destiny Christian University. She was employed with General Motors Company for 30 years as an Auto and Homeowners Claims Representative and a Legal Assistant for the Intellectual Property Staff. Stephanie is a newly retired from General Motors Company. Stephanie has volunteered for A World In Motion, Street Law Program, Big Brothers Big Sisters, Tutor Mate, and Greening of Detroit. Stephanie actively volunteers within the community as a Board Member with Fitzgerald Community Council, President of the San Juan Block Club, DCDC College Core, and the Fitzgerald Revitalization Project.



Lauren Hood, Detroit

Acting Director
Live6 Alliance

Lauren Hood specializes in community engagement and authentic dialogues. She leads Live6, a nonprofit development organization whose mission is to enhance quality of life for residents living in Northwest Detroit. Prior to joining Live6, Lauren spent her career in leadership positions in economic development for the City of Highland Park, as the Director of Community Engagement at Loveland Technologies, and Principal of her racial equity consultancy, Deep Dive Detroit. She serves on the Board of Directors of Preservation Detroit and as a Mayoral appointee to the City of Detroit’s Historic District Commission. She speaks regularly on panels, conducts workshops, and facilitates dialogues on community engagement and inclusive development. In addition to being a regular guest columnist in local Op-ed pages, she is active at her alma mater, University of Detroit Mercy, where she received a Masters in Community Development and undergraduate business degree.



Carol Coletta

Senior Fellow
Kresge Foundation

Carol Coletta is a senior fellow with The Kresge Foundation's American Cities Practice. She is leading a proposed \$40 million collaboration of foundations, nonprofits, and governments to demonstrate the ways in which a connected set of civic assets—a civic commons—can yield increased and more widely share prosperity for cities and neighborhoods. She formerly was vice president of Community and National Initiatives for the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation. She led the two-year start-up of ArtPlace, a public-private collaboration to accelerate creative placemaking in communities across the U.S. and was president and CEO of CEOs for Cities for seven years. She also served as executive director of the Mayors' Institute on City Design, a partnership of the National Endowment for the Arts, U.S. Conference of Mayors and American Architectural Foundation. For nine years, she was host and producer of the nationally syndicated weekly public radio show Smart City, where she interviewed more than 900 international leaders in business, the arts, and cities.



Lynn Ross

Consultant
Knight Foundation
[Instagram](#) @mslynnross
[Twitter](#) @mslynnross

Lynn M. Ross, AICP is the founder of Spirit for Change Consulting, LLC, a boutique consulting firm dedicated to creative solutions for people and places working to serve the common good. She brings over 15 years of experience and passion for housing affordability, city and regional planning, equitable community development, evidence-based policy making, and organizational change. Most recently, Lynn directed the \$40 million Community and National Initiatives program at the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation. She continues to consult with Knight Foundation on the Reimagining the Civic Commons initiative. Lynn has deep experience in the field including past leadership roles at the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, ULI Terwilliger Center for Housing, National Housing Conference and Center for Housing Policy, and the American Planning Association. Lynn holds a Masters of Regional Planning from Cornell University and a B.S. in community and regional planning from Iowa State University.



Bridget Marquis

Director

Civic Commons Learning Network

[Twitter](#) @CivicCommonsUS and @bamarquis

Bridget is the project manager for Reimagining the Civic Commons, a national initiative supported by The JPB Foundation, the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, The Kresge Foundation, and The Rockefeller Foundation that seeks to counter economic and social fragmentation in our cities by revitalizing and connecting public spaces such as parks, plazas, trails, and libraries to bring together people from different backgrounds. In this role, she acts as director for the national Civic Commons Learning Network, hosted by U3 Advisors, that provides coordinated learning, impact assessment, and storytelling across the five demonstration cities. Prior to working with U3, Bridget supported the Knight Foundation's Community and National Initiatives portfolio as an independent consultant. As part of this work she collaborated with the William Penn Foundation on the launch of the Reimagining the Civic Commons pilot project in Philadelphia and consulted on the development and launch of the Knight Cities Challenge grant program.

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BETTER BLOCK BIOGRAPHIES





Jason Roberts
Founding Director
Better Block Foundation
[Twitter](#) @mannytmoto
[Instagram](#) mannytmoto

Jason Roberts is originator of the Better Block Project, founder of the Oak Cliff Transit Authority, co-founder of the Art Conspiracy and Bike Friendly Oak Cliff, and candidate for U.S. Congress. In 2006, Jason formed the nonprofit, Oak Cliff Transit Authority, to revive the Dallas streetcar system, and later spearheaded the city's effort in garnering a \$23 million TIGER stimulus grant from the FTA to help reintroduce a modern streetcar system to Dallas. In 2010, Jason organized a series of Better Block projects, taking blighted blocks with vacant properties in Southern Dallas and converting them into temporary walkable districts with pop-up businesses, bike lanes, cafe seating, and landscaping. The project has now become an international movement, and has been featured in the New York Times, Dwell magazine, TEDTalks, and National Public Radio. Jason a Champions of Change award from the White House in 2012.



Krista Nightengale
Managing Director
Better Block Foundation
[Instagram](#) @knightengale
[Twitter](#) @knightengale

Krista Nightengale is the managing director of the Better Block Foundation. The small startup aims to make the world better one block at a time by showing community members that they have the tools and resources they need to affect change. After graduating from the University of Oklahoma, Krista started her career at D Magazine Partners. She worked on the company's weekly newspapers before moving to the managing editor role at D Magazine. She launched a leadership group called D Academy, which spearheaded the literacy nonprofit Big D Reads. Nightengale then helped launch an intellectual series and a Super PAC aimed at removing barriers between neighborhoods. She then served as executive editor of Dallas Innovates, a media platform promoting DFW as a hub of innovation. Nightengale currently serves on the steering committee of TEDxSMU, as a board member of AIA Dallas, and a working board member of the New Leaders Council. She is a graduate of Leadership Texas 2016, and a former member of the Dallas Commission on Homelessness.



Colin Amos
Project Manager
Better Block Foundation

Colin Amos is a Project Manager with the Better Block Foundation. Originally from North Carolina, Colin graduated from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in 2016 with a degree in Environmental Studies and a minor in Urban Planning. He continued his studies of urban planning and design through the University of California-Berkeley's [IN] City summer program.

Colin first became interested in urbanism and planning as a solution to many of the world's environmental problems. Then, during a semester abroad in Copenhagen, Denmark, he studied human-centered urban design and realized the profound impact it can have on cities and people's lives. At Better Block, Colin has become interested in tactical urbanism and the role digital fabrication can have in reimagining cities.



Zach Allen
Architectural Designer
Better Block Foundation

Zach Allen was born in Oak Cliff and grew up in the Dallas area. He studied sculpture and ceramics at Hardin-Simmons University in Abilene. After graduating, he continued his pursuit of designing functional art, which manifested itself in creating fine furniture. He began researching traditional joinery and construction methods and combined those with contemporary design. In addition to freelance woodworking, Zach worked as a Display Coordinator for Anthropologie for 5 years, designing and constructing displays, and then as the Custom Woodworker for Sutherland Furniture, building prototypes and customized versions of their current lines. He is now the Architectural Designer at Better Block. He creates custom pieces of furniture and home goods using a combination of hand and power tools. He and his wife, Frances, an artist and teacher, live in the White Rock area of Dallas with their dog, Millie.



Victoria Ferrell-Ortiz

Programming and Development Coordinator
Better Block Foundation/AmeriCorps VISTA

Victoria Ferrell-Ortiz is the Programming & Development Coordinator of the Better Block Foundation. Victoria attended the JBS Law Magnet at Townview Learning Center in Oak Cliff, Dallas. She has worked at several law offices around the area with a wide range of specialities, including tax law, probate, and the Frank Crowley Court House. After graduating high school, she attended the University of North Texas where she pursued a degree in Integrative Studies. She joined the NCCC after graduating from college. She left for California to complete a 10-month term of service with the National Civilian Community Corps, through AmeriCorps. Due to a family emergency she returned home after just two months and began looking for a local opportunity to serve.

Now Victoria is living out her dream of working in and helping the city that has invested so much in her. Although her passion is helping others, her real purpose in life is to get to the heart of the issues the people of Dallas face so that they do not need her help at all.



Emmanuel Melendez

Dallas Project Manager
Better Block Foundation/AmeriCorps VISTA

Emmanuel Melendez serves as a volunteer at the Better Block Foundation through AmeriCorps VISTA. Emmanuel is a native of Puerto Rico where he studied Art History and Urban Planning at the University of Puerto Rico in San Juan. While in college, he studied foreign languages, such as English and French, and served as a volunteer for a foundation dedicated to offering free public education to low-income communities in Mexico City for three months.

After graduating, Emmanuel moved to the United States where he lived in Boston and Los Angeles, then moved to Nebraska to serve as an AmeriCorps VISTA in a small rural town helping with urban planning at the municipality. His eternal passion for historic buildings took him to Muncie, Indiana, where he studied Historic Preservation. His passion to serve, urban development, and the growing opportunities that the DFW metro area has to offer, encouraged him to move to Dallas to help the Better Block Foundation in the next projects to develop in the city.



Katie Beck
Program Director
Better Block Foundation/AmeriCorps VISTA

Katie Beck serves as AmeriCorps VISTA/Program Director for the Exchange House, which works to engage the diverse international community that exists in Akron, and to provide a space that creates invitation for additional immigrants to temporarily reside in the North Hill neighborhood, transfer skills, and build barriers between communities.

Katie Beck is also a director, writer, actor, and teaching artist based in Northeast Ohio. She is the artistic director of Gurn-Dip Theatre, a community-based theater company that creates plays for, with, and about the Rust Belt. She is an Akron native and graduated from Allegheny College with a BA in Theatre and Values, Ethics, and Social Action. Katie is a Knight Foundation Arts Challenge winner for her project called "Nepali Applause: an open air market/performance festival," which is a multilingual variety show that will be produced in North Hill, Akron in spring 2017. She is also a fellow with the Akron League of Creative Interventionists, which uses public art to reimagine the social and physical landscapes of our city.



Kai Wick
Project Manager
Better Block Foundation/AmeriCorps VISTA

Kai Wick is the project manager of Wikiblock, a new program under the Better Block Foundation. Wikiblock is an open-source online forum where anyone can download the files, and use a CNC router to create furniture and outdoor projects for free. These recipe files are to inspire a community DIY initiative in creating park benches, gardens, and other projects to help bring more people out into the community to help with growth.

Kai graduated from Kent State University in 2015 with a Bachelors of Fine Arts degree in Sculpture. Since graduating, she has been featured in multiple galleries in the Northeast Ohio area, and in March 2016, started a small art blog called Match Magazine. During the summer of 2016, Kai completed a marketing internship with the Portage County Domestic Violence Shelter. She currently works out of the Exchange House in Akron, Ohio. She hopes to move more into urban development in the future in creating safer and environmentally friendly neighborhoods.

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