



TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PANEL REPORT

# Realizing a New Vision for Chinatown Park

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 **Urban Land  
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# Table of Contents

ULI WASHINGTON PANEL & PROJECT STAFF	2
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	3
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	4
BACKGROUND & SCOPE	7
COMMUNITY VISION & WHAT WE HEARD	12
IMPLEMENTATION RECOMMENDATIONS	16
PROGRAMMING RECOMMENDATIONS	25
DESIGN RECOMMENDATIONS	28
CONCLUSION	34
PANELISTS	35

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# Executive Summary

Chinatown Park is an underutilized National Park Service park at the northeast corner of Chinatown, at the intersection of Fifth and Sixth Streets and Massachusetts Avenue in downtown Washington. The Park is similar to many National Park Service (NPS) properties within the downtown area in its simplicity, with a large lawn panel as the main element, as well as street trees lining the perimeter. Because it is located in Chinatown, the Park is of special interest to the DC Mayor's Office on Asian and Pacific Islander Affairs (MOAPIA), whose mission is to improve the quality of life for Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (AAPI) residing in the District of Columbia.

MOAPIA asked ULI Washington and its Technical Assistance Panel program to make recommendations regarding revitalization of the Park, including strategies, policies, partnerships, cultural features, design, management, and the potential impacts of revitalization.

Despite the fact that it is the only existing public open space in Chinatown, the Chinatown Park has been a passive public park and it is currently poorly maintained and underused by local residents and downtown office workers. The Park marks an important gateway to Chinatown from Massachusetts Avenue and from points north in the city, which makes it an essential location to preserve, and it deserves much attention. The adjacent Milian Park should also be incorporated into the planning process.

To successfully bring about positive change in the Park, the Panel first developed a vision for the Park as a key gateway into Chinatown that should be redesigned to incorporate Chinese themes and elements, and upgraded including the central lawn and the edges. The Panel also envisioned the Park serving as a window into the broader Asian and Pacific Islander culture, including a narrative that celebrates, promotes, and facilitates understanding of the AAPI culture.

To realize this vision, the Panel recommends that the MOAPIA first reach out to a variety of key partners—both within and outside of the DC government—and seek to establish a collaboration strategy with these entities. With stronger relationships and better communication with these organizations—including National Park Service (NPS), the DowntownDC BID, the Mount Vernon CID, the DC Office of the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development, other DC agencies, surrounding property owners, and others—MOAPIA will be able to better align their collective interests and bring their collective resources to bear on the shared goal of creating a better park.

Secondly, the Panel recommends that the MOAPIA seek to form a Friends of Chinatown and Miliian Parks organization that is solely dedicated to the successful design, programming, and operation of the parks. Potential Friends of Chinatown and Miliian Parks could include government agencies, the surrounding BID and CID, businesses and property owners, non-profit organizations, citizen groups, nearby museums, local universities, and various others.

The Panel also recommends that MOAPIA and the new Friends organization place a renewed effort on fostering activity in the parks. Programming of events and activities is essential for improving the perception of both the Chinatown and Miliian Parks. Especially for Chinatown Park, a key programming goal should be to use the Park to strengthen the AAPI community at large and to preserve and celebrate AAPI cultural identity via the long-term success of the Park. Programming should begin with outreach to the AAPI community.

More and better programming can improve the profile and identity of both parks within both the AAPI community and the surrounding neighborhood community. Event programming should include larger events that could take place within the I (Eye) Street right-of-way; I Street could be temporarily closed for such events, in coordination with the District Department of Transportation.

From a design perspective, the Panel believes that the redesign of the Park should recognize that the edges of Chinatown Park are important portals and frames for pedestrians and autos passing the park, and should be designed with this in mind. In fact, the edges of the Park are areas of special opportunity, as they are within the street right-of-way and not strictly within the NPS park space itself.

Three key recommendations related to the edges of Chinatown Park itself include 1) the creation of a woonerf – a street for both pedestrians and vehicles – on I Street, allowing the street to be used for events on special occasions; 2) the creation of a game table row along Sixth Street, which would help to activate the Park throughout the day and week; and 3) upgrades to

landscaping to improve continuity along Massachusetts Avenue and create a visual buffer between this busy street and the lawn. Other design recommendations include design improvements to the central lawn, including the addition of a feature element or sculpture, and the creation of an AAPI interpretive space on the eastern portion of the Park, featuring AAPI educational and cultural elements.

The ULI Panel believes that with a renewed effort from MOAPIA, a collaborative effort with other partner organizations, the creation of a Friends of Chinatown and Milian Parks organization, new design and physical improvements, and a more active programming effort, the Chinatown and Milian Parks could be transformed into real places and become important assets for the neighborhood and the AAPI community, creating value for the surrounding community and enhancing the public realm of the city.

Chinatown Park is an underutilized National Park Service park at the northeast corner of Chinatown, fronting on Massachusetts Avenue between Fifth and Sixth Streets.  
Source: Dean Schwanke.





# Background and Scope

Created in 1987, the mission of the DC Mayor's Office on Asian and Pacific Islander Affairs (MOAPIA) is to improve the quality of life for Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (AAPI) residing in the District of Columbia. To accomplish its mission, MOAPIA works with all levels of government and facets of the AAPI community. Its main focus areas are: advocacy, intergovernmental affairs, policy & research, and community engagement.

MOAPIA acts as the liaison between the District government and the AAPI community. A primary way MOAPIA achieves this is through advising the Mayor, Council, and District agencies on the views, needs, and concerns of the District's AAPI community. It also organizes and facilitates public and private programs on public safety, human rights, economic development, housing, employment, social services, public health, transportation, education, and multicultural development to ensure accessibility for the District's AAPI community.

One of the City's community assets of particular interest to MOAPIA is Chinatown Park, an underutilized National Park Service park at the northeast corner of Chinatown. The Park is similar to many NPS properties within the DowntownDC BID in its simplicity. A large lawn panel is the main element. Street trees line the perimeter with trees planted in the interior of the Park. The Park site is at street level with only a modest slope.

Broad walks line the west and south inner edges of the Park defining areas for seating along the perimeter. Paths have been worn through the lawn crossing the Park near the corner of 6th and I (Eye) Streets. Brick sidewalks define the outside boundary of the Park along the surrounding streets. Pedestrians frequently travel through the Park, which connects Chinatown to the residential neighborhoods to the north.

Despite the fact that it is the only existing public open space in Chinatown, the Park has been a passive public park and it is currently poorly maintained and under-used by local residents or downtown office workers. The Park marks an important gateway to Chinatown from Massachusetts Avenue and points north in the city, which makes it an essential location to preserve, and it deserves much attention.

In order to activate the Park, MOAPIA has begun programming community events and recently has seen more residents using the Park. In 2015, MOAPIA launched the “Chinatown Park Series”—an initiative that included fitness sessions and community events—in order to attract more visitors to the Park and promote a healthy and fit lifestyle for DC residents. Since then, the agency has arranged outdoor film screenings (“Movie Nights”) and fitness classes, including Tai Chi, barre classes and yoga sessions. MOAPIA also has hosted the “Chinatown Community Picnic,” which features cultural performances, family activities, and informational booths from community-based organizations. However, the Park remains largely unused when there is no planned programming.

Chinatown Park is maintained by the National Park Service (NPS). There are 34 NPS Reservations within the Downtown DC BID, and Chinatown Park, or Reservation 72, is one of them. The NPS is an agency of the United States federal government that manages all national parks, many national monuments, and other conservation and historical properties with various title designations. It was created on August 25, 1916, by Congress through the ‘National Park Service Organic Act’ and is an agency of the United States Department of the Interior. The NPS is charged with a dual role of preserving the ecological and historical integrity of the places entrusted to its management, while also making them available and accessible for public use and enjoyment.



The Panel during a tour of the site.  
Source: Dean Schwanke.

## Summary of the Problem

Chinatown Park is only a few blocks away from the Convention Center and from the Friendship Archway in Chinatown; it is also located in close proximity to organizations serving Chinese residents, like the Chinese Community Church and Chinatown Service Center. However, the Park does not have a strong presence as a public park that is inviting to people. In spite of a wonderful cultural history, Chinatown has lost some of its identity and many of its Chinese residents as the area has been redeveloped with the Capital One Arena and other new projects. Many Chinese immigrants who helped build the neighborhood have moved out due to redevelopment pressure, unaffordable housing, and lack of resources.

The main challenges Chinatown Park faces are 1) lack of amenities and vegetation, 2) limited accessibility, and 3) diminished cultural identity. There is no fixed park furniture or benches and not enough trees, which are essential elements for anyone to enjoy and play at a public park. Also, Chinatown's narrow sidewalks, along I (Eye) Street in particular, are causing congestion and hindering opportunities for commercial/cultural activities. Lastly, there is no strong cultural presence in/near the Park that tells a story of Chinatown. It is vital for DC Chinatown to uphold its cultural presence and celebrate its diversity.

Revitalizing Chinatown Park will be a symbolic yet practical initiative to advance for equity and celebrate the rich history of Chinatown. The transformation of the Park not only build on the existing culture and history, but can/should also strengthen the local neighborhood by balancing the needs of both existing and new community members in Chinatown.

In 2008, the DC Office of Planning (OP), in partnership with MOAPIA, started undertaking a Chinatown Cultural Development Strategy (CCDS) for DC's Chinatown. The CCDS provides strategies to help reposition Chinatown as the region's top destination for Chinese/Asian cultural businesses, programs, services, events and festivals. The CCDS was adopted as the "Chinatown Small Area Plan" by the DC Council in September of 2009. Throughout the planning process, strong community engagement by local members, organizations, and Chinese Americans have helped address the concerns and reflect the aspirations of the community.

MOAPIA seeks to create a place by engaging and introducing the most vulnerable existing community members to the new community in Chinatown. In this vein, MOAPIA has activated Chinatown Park, invested in infrastructure (new trash cans and metal banners), provided community resources (mobile market with non-profit partnerships), and engaged stakeholders (Mount Vernon CID, DowntownDC BID, Chinatown Service Center, Chinatown Community Church,

and various businesses) to ensure that the Chinatown community continues to be a sustainable part of Washington D.C.'s diversity.

In addition, the MOAPIA office also has been hosting the Chinatown Park Series since 2015. This event series runs from May through September and is comprised of fitness sessions, movie nights, and community picnics—all of which are held outdoors in Chinatown Park. Thirty-five public programs are scheduled for this fiscal year involving 700 anticipated participants. The work that MOAPIA has done has now led to groups taking over programming in Chinatown Park and has made advocating for the existing community a priority among the residents living downtown. However, in order to better understand the needs of this community, an update to the “Chinatown Small Area Plan” will be necessary.

The ultimate goal of this revitalization project is to redistribute public resources based on the community members' needs and protect strong cultural identity. MOAPIA wants to provide a landmark element to celebrate diversity and protect equity by building a sustainable park and a park that is a point of pride not only for Chinese Americans but all District residents. This project can serve as a tangible transformation that community members and tourists can physically see but also engage in a community space in Chinatown. The transformed Park also can support the stabilization of the faltering neighborhood for Chinese residents.

The Hampton Inn is located directly across from Chinatown Park, along Massachusetts Avenue, and is directly impacted by the success of the Park.  
Source: Dean Schwanke.



After receiving advice from the TAP, MOAPIA intends to continue collaborating with diverse local partners and community members—as well as with the NPS

and different DC government agencies and organizations—to get permits to take the transformation steps and establish long-term partnerships.

MOAPIA has implemented several initiatives for the Park but needs a broader, stronger effort to preserve the community. Many call Chinatown their home, and everyone deserves a place to enjoy and relax. Restoring a public park like this can involve a convergence between sustainability and social equity that promotes/protects diversity. It is MOAPIA's belief that, working with TAP panelists as well as other stakeholders, MOAPIA will be able to expand the scope of its Chinatown reactivation plans and tackle problems associated with gentrification and housing issues. MOAPIA is seeking TAP recommendations that will help develop sustainability in Chinatown Park and implement strategies that can be used to promote equity and protect the cultural identity in Chinatown.

## Questions for the TAP

The Panel was asked to address the following questions:

1. What strategies (including streetscape, design, street furniture, and more) could be implemented to assist in the Park's revitalization and in its transformation into communal open space and neighborhood amenity?
2. How can MOAPIA leverage strategic partnerships to assist in activating the Park?
3. What policies, designs, or plans can be implemented to leverage the area's unique cultural identity (existing Chinese community) while also recognizing the changing demographics that are occurring in the neighborhood around the Park? Conversely, what policies, designs, and plans should be avoided in order to prevent alienating potential users?
4. How can Chinatown leverage special vending laws and zones to better facilitate growth in Chinatown, and how should MOAPIA navigate this?
5. Is there a relationship between revitalizing the Park and addressing challenges relating to housing affordability in the area? In addressing the needs of the Park, what, if anything, can be done to preserve the existing stock of affordable housing—much of which is tied to the historic cultural identity of the area?
6. Are there national examples that MOAPIA can reference which provide lessons learned for similar challenges?



The Panel first developed a vision for Chinatown Park as a key gateway into Chinatown that needed to be redesigned to incorporate Chinese themes and elements. Source: Dean Schwanke.

# Community Vision & What We Heard

Parks and public spaces are critical elements in creating and maintaining the identity of communities, and ULI welcomes the opportunity to advise MOAPIA regarding how the Chinatown Park can be improved to benefit both the Park and the surrounding community. Following tours and interviews with numerous community leaders and residents, the Panel began by developing a vision statement—and outlining some challenges—regarding the Park and its place in the Chinatown and nearby community, to help guide the recommendations.

Chinatown Park is one of two parks bordering Fifth Street and Massachusetts Avenue, and the two together are often referred to as bowtie parks. Milian Park is the other half of the bowtie, and is located in the background on the other side of Fifth Street. Source: Dean Schwanke.



## Vision

Chinatown Park is a key gateway from the north and east area of DC into Chinatown, and as such should be redesigned to incorporate Chinese themes and elements to make it clear that the Park is perceived as this gateway to Chinatown. The Park should also serve as a window into the broader Asian

and Pacific Islander culture, and should present a narrative that celebrates, promotes, and facilitates the experience of the AAPI culture.

The Park should be both a gateway and a center at the same time. The Park should be designed and programmed to serve as a community gathering space for a range of activities, events, and programs, including those related to AAPI culture as well as other community interests. Finally, as an NPS park, the Park should be a safe and comfortable space, and the design and programming of Chinatown Park should reflect and acknowledge the mission of NPS.



The Panel during interviews with community leaders, government officials, and property owners.

Source: Dean Schwanke.

## Challenges

Achieving this vision will require successfully addressing numerous challenges. Currently the Park lacks an identity; the Park is small, easily overlooked, and there is no central or distinctive feature in the Park that is compelling or memorable. There is no fixed seating, and temporary seating is not consistently available; parks without seating are seldom successful in attracting or retaining visitors. The edges of the Park are auto-centric, with Massachusetts Avenue especially serving as a major traffic artery, creating noise and visual pollution for Park visitors as well as a barrier for pedestrians crossing Massachusetts Avenue from the north. I Street to the south is unnecessarily too wide, encouraging more traffic than is needed on this street. In addition, the Park suffers from a safety perception problem, and is frequently used by the homeless, which can be a deterrent for others to visit or use the park. This perception can have a direct impact on the operation of surrounding

hotels, residential and office buildings, restaurants, and other properties and businesses.

The Park also suffers from poor maintenance, a worn and unkempt appearance, and poor placement of key features. The grass lawn is worn and unkempt, and the I Street planting strip is trampled. The post and chain bollard fence renders the main lawn inaccessible from I Street. The asphalt paving is unattractive. The Massachusetts Avenue street trees are unhealthy and there are too few of them. The I Street trees have too low a canopy, restricting visibility and connectivity between I Street and the Park. And the corners of the Park have been eroded by roadway turning lane improvements, reducing the Park's size while at the same time making it harder for pedestrians to enter the Park.

In addition, there are numerous operating interests involved in managing the Park, including the NPS, MOAPIA, the Office of Planning, the DowntownDC BID, and the Transportation Department, among others, resulting in the need for considerable coordination among these entities, a difficult task. As the owner of the Park, the NPS has jurisdiction, and its operating rules can be restrictive. Finally, there is a lack of dedicated funding to make improvements and to manage the park.

Most of the area surrounding the park consists of older historic properties or new development, such as 601 Massachusetts Avenue across from Chinatown Park. Source: Dean Schwanke.



As a result of all of these issues, there is limited activity in the Park outside of programmed events, there is very limited commercial activity on the edges that generate or sponsor activities, and the Park has not yet realized its potential to have a significant positive impact on surrounding properties or neighborhoods, including Chinatown. The Park lacks a champion that can collaborate



with many government, private, and institutional entities to address all of these issues. The Park needs a champion that is dedicated to successful park management, programming, and design, and to establishing the Park as a strong positive influence on the surrounding community and an important gateway to the Chinatown district.



The area surrounding Chinatown Park (subject area). The site is a gateway into Chinatown from the north.  
Source: Dean Schwanke.

# Implementation Recommendations

To successfully bring about positive change in the Park, the panel first recommends that MOAPIA reach out to a variety of key partners—both within and outside of the DC government—and seek to establish a collaboration strategy with these entities. With stronger relationships and better communication with these entities, MOAPIA will be able to better align their collective interests and bring their collective resources to bear on the shared goal of creating a better park. Secondly, the Panel recommends that the MOAPIA seek to form a Friends of Chinatown and Milian Parks organization that is solely dedicated to the successful design, programming, and operation of the parks.

## Strategic Collaboration and Coordination

There are numerous influential government agencies and private entities that have interests or oversight of the Park, and MOAPIA needs to navigate these key stakeholders, build better relationships with each, and strengthen collaboration among them to make improvements to the Park. The major entities that MOAPIA should reach out to or strengthen relationships with are described below.

**National Park Service (NPS).** Relevance to MOAPIA: Developing an appreciation for the NPS perspective on their assets is critical for MOAPIA's future success in improving the Park. DCs intergovernmental partners, such as the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development, can help MOAPIA better understand the NPS perspective. The Associate Regional Director for Lands, Resources, and Planning with the National Capital Region of NPS is the top decision maker for the future of the Park. MOAPIA should seek out anecdotal and historic examples of how the NPS has successfully established working relationships with other government agencies and private interests to improve and manage NPS parks.

The NPS has numerous levels of engagement regarding control and management of their park assets. These include the following:

- Permits – Allows entities to use the park for events;
- Licenses – Allows entities to use the park for ongoing activities;
- Leases – Allows entities to operate properties in the park;
- Transfer of jurisdiction – Allows for the transfer of a park to another government jurisdiction. In DC this would require NCPC and DC Government approval;
- Exchange of land – Allows for exchange of land with another entity. This would require an Act of Congress if it involves conveyance of a park to the DC Government;
- Cooperating agreements – A relatively new concept, such agreements would allow for cooperative management and improvements to a park. Such an agreement has been proposed for Franklin Park, involving the DowntownDC BID. Such agreements could allow for more freedom in planning events and activities, and more flexibility on funding. This might be a very attractive option to pursue for Chinatown Park.

The first three levels of engagement are relatively simple and easy, but the latter three are complicated and would involve a good deal of time and negotiation.

**DowntownDC Business Improvement District (BID).** Relevance to MOAPIA: The DowntownDC BID is a critical partner for negotiating partnership agreements and providing ongoing support and guidance on a variety of issues. The Chinatown Park (Res. 72) physically resides inside the BID footprint for maintenance and support, yet is located on the very outskirts of the BID district. The BID can provide potential staff and programming support for future events, and is active in homeless coordination, together with other stakeholders. MOAPIA should also seek to coordinate the activities of the BID and the CID as it relates to Chinatown Park and Milian Park.

**Mt. Vernon Community Improvement District (CID).** Relevance to MOAPIA: The Mt. Vernon CID is a critical partner for negotiating partnership agreements for Chinatown Park and its neighbor Milian Park; the CID is also very interested in securing and protecting financial support for both parks from the proposed SLS Hotel project at the corner of Fifth Street and Massachusetts Avenue; the proposed SLS hotel site is located within the CID. Milian Park (Reservation 74), the complementary “bow-tie” park to Chinatown Park, is located across Massachusetts Avenue, within the Mt. Vernon CID. While Chinatown Park is not within the CID, it is a critical border neighbor to the CID and has an important

influence on the much smaller CID. As such, the CID has a strong interest in seeing the two parks programmed and activated together.

**Office of the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development (DMPED).** Relevance to MOAPIA: DMPED is responsible for negotiating the development agreement with Peebles Development (the SLS Hotel site owner). This agency has past and current experience working with Federal partners on land transfer matters, including the 2006 Federal Lands bill that transferred a substantial amount of land from the Federal to the DC government. The SLS Hotel site agreement may include funding to support improvements to Chinatown and Milian Parks. The DMPED can also provide political support and cluster oversight with other key agency partners, as well as transactional support for agreements with business improvement districts.

**Peebles Development – SLS Hotel Site Owner.** Relevance to MOAPIA: Ongoing deal negotiations with DMPED may provide a platform for aligning new priorities for the Park with a reliable funding source. Peebles Development, which controls the SLS Hotel site at 5th and I Streets, is a potential funding source for Reservation 72 and 74. Peebles is an engaged stakeholder poised to see improvements to both parks that would enhance the experience for their future hotel guests and visitors.

The only property facing directly onto the Park that is currently vacant is the SLS Hotel site controlled by Peebles Development, an engaged stakeholder with an interest in both Chinatown and Milian Parks.  
Source: Dean Schwanke.



**Gould Property Company – 600 Massachusetts Avenue Owner.** Relevance to MOAPIA: Relationship building with this stakeholder (property owner along 6th Street) could be beneficial for event planning and activating future uses in the Park. Gould is an interested business stakeholder that owns/operates this office building, which includes a lower level restaurant, and has

a great interest in seeing improvements to Chinatown Park. Gould representatives have expressed interest in providing some financial support for future park improvement and/or programming efforts.

**Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services (DMHHS).** Relevance to MOAPIA: The Deputy Mayor for HHS can provide status updates on ongoing homeless coordination in the area and throughout the city. Given the challenges created by the homeless population in the planning footprint, including the Park's close proximity to the Federal City Shelter, DMHHS is a critical resource for cooperative efforts to address this problem in the Chinatown Park neighborhood. Establishing a closer relationship with DMHHS will allow MOAPIA to play a role in decision making and participate in this conversation.

**Office of Planning.** Relevance to MOAPIA: Staff designees for this agency report to the Zoning Commission and have direct and constant involvement with the NPS designee on the Zoning Commission. Key staff members in this office are knowledgeable about dealing with the National Park Service, and they are also familiar with past planning efforts in this area. They can provide support in navigating planning challenges and approvals.

**District Department of Transportation (DDOT).** Relevance to MOAPIA: DDOT has authority and purview over public space in the street right-of-way (ROW) and will need to provide approvals for future events and improvements as it relates to this public space ROW. They provide planning support for improvements in the public realm, and can serve as potential allies with the Public Space and Urban Forestry Administrations. DDOT will be essential partners regarding any proposed changes to the edges of Chinatown Park along I Street and Sixth Street.

**Department of General Services (DGS).** Relevance to MOAPIA: Potential to provide operational support and cost forecasting for future negotiations with Business Improvement Districts. Since being created in 2011, DGS can provide support, guidance, and perspective on the management of land and related resources.

**Office of Federal and Regional Affairs.** Relevance to MOAPIA: This agency could assist MOAPIA in navigating priorities and help provide strategic alignment with other city initiatives. It could also provide support in engaging Federal partners, as well as perspective and guidance on legislative affairs with Congress.

**Georgetown University.** Relevance to MOAPIA: Georgetown University is committed to being a partner in this area and in downtown as a whole. The University is also actively involved in homeless coordination in the area. The

School of Continuing Studies and the Law Center, both located nearby, and the Office of Community Affairs may have interest in being invited to the discussion.

**Events DC – Convention Center.** Relevance to MOAPIA: Events DC, which operates the DC Convention Center located only two blocks from Chinatown Park, could be a valuable resource to the Park and help with planning ideas and operational support. The core mission of the organization is to promote the District of Columbia, and Convention Center special events on DC assets are always attractive to the organization. Moreover, a successful Chinatown Park and an improved neighborhood around the Convention Center would be helpful in attracting events to the Convention Center and guests to surrounding hotels.

**National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC).** Relevance to MOAPIA: Depending on the future direction of the Park, relationship building with the NCPC and knowledge of their approval process is important. The Commission provides overall planning guidance for federal land and buildings in the region by reviewing the design of federal and certain local projects. NCPC is also responsible for approving transfers of jurisdictions for land and properties, and commemorative works in the Park will require NCPC approval.

**Commission on Fine Arts (CFA).** Relevance to MOAPIA: Future plans for the locations could trigger CFA engagement. The CFA is charged with giving expert advice to the President, the Congress, and the Federal and District of Columbia governments on matters of design and aesthetics.

**DC Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR).** Relevance to MOAPIA: This agency has considerable experience working with neighborhood groups and nonprofit organizations with 501c3 status and a stated mission to support a DPR park or facility. Designated groups steward, advocate, and host fundraising events for park sites to help maintain the grounds/buildings and assist in the planning process for the park or facility. DPR also has had considerable experience working with “Friends of the Park” organizations.

## A Friends Group for the Two Parks

While MOAPIA has been an important and earnest advocate for Chinatown Park, the Panel believes that the Park really needs a champion that is solely dedicated to the successful design, development, and management of the Park, working closely with the NPS. The Panel recommends that MOAPIA seek to develop a new entity to take on the role of champion not only for Chinatown Park, but also for Milian Park, which is located across 5th Street and north of Massachusetts Avenue, and complements Chinatown Park as

though it were the other half of the bowtie of the original L'Enfant design of the District of Columbia. The entity should take the form of similar Friends of the Park organizations, and could be named Friends of Chinatown and Milian Parks.

The Panel believes that the two parks need to be managed and programmed in a coordinated manner, to maximize their positive impact on the surrounding neighborhood. Currently, the two parks are in two different business/community improvement districts, and are located in separate wards in the District of Columbia, making it difficult to coordinate activities. A new Friends organization overseeing activity in both Parks could be much more effective in managing the parks and facilitating and programming events that are coordinated and mutually supportive of both parks.

A Friends organization could also be very effective in raising funds for the two parks, as the goals of a Friends organization would be very focused on the parks themselves; those entities with a strong interest in improving the parks would be able to target their giving/funds to support that one goal. This could be especially appealing to property owners and other interests that are most directly affected by the success of the parks, especially property owners and organizations that are directly adjacent to the two parks.

While there are concerns that further improvements in the area may jeopardize nearby affordable housing, the Panel believes that most of the major changes and new development in the neighborhood have already occurred and that improvements to the parks will not have a significant negative effect on nearby affordable housing.

MOAPIA should begin the process of forming a Friends organization by reaching out initially to NPS, the DowntownDC BID, the Mount Vernon CID, and the DC Department of Parks and Recreation; the latter coordinates many other Friends of the Park activities in DC. Together, MOAPIA and these organizations could work to establish the basic goals and legal/organizational structure of such an entity, following other examples in DC, such as the Friends of Rose Park (<https://www.roseparkdc.org/>), Friends of McMillan Park (<http://friendsofmcmillan.org/>), Friends of Georgetown Waterfront Park (<https://georgetown-waterfrontpark.org/>), Friends of Mitchell Park (<http://www.mitchellparkdc.org/>), Friends of Stead Park (<https://friendsofsteadpark.org/>), Friends of Meridian Hill (<https://www.pps.org/reference/successwashington-3/>), and many other examples in DC and elsewhere. Friends groups for DPR parks hold quarterly public meetings to engage the public, encourage voluntary membership, and submit quarterly reports to share outcomes from activities and events (<https://dpr.dc.gov/page/friends-parks>).

A Friends organization could also be an important advocate for the parks, coordinating with all of the various entities mentioned above. The eventual development of a Friends website would also be an essential tool in improving the profile of the parks as well as creating an easy to use platform for scheduling and promoting events in the parks. One additional organization that might be helpful is the National Park Foundation and its Friends of National Parks Friends Alliance program (<https://www.nationalparks.org/about-foundation/partnerships/community-partnerships/national-park-friends-alliance>).

Potential Friends of Chinatown and Milian Parks could include government agencies, the surrounding BID and CID, businesses and property owners, non-profit organizations, citizen groups, nearby museums, local universities, and various others, as outlined below.

**Government Entities and BIDs.** The core group that would need to be initially involved in forming the Friends group would likely consist of the National Park Service, MOAPIA, the DowntownDC BID, the Mount Vernon CID, and the DC Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR). In addition, there are other DC government special entities that have had a special interest in the parks, including the DC Public Library, which has sponsored events in Chinatown Park in the past, and Events DC, which has a strong interest in maintaining an attractive and safe environment for DC Convention Center visitors and hotel patrons.

**Surrounding Businesses and Property Owners.** The surrounding businesses and property owners with significant adjacency and interest in the parks, as well as the financial resources to back up their interest, include Gould Property Company, the owner of 600 Massachusetts Avenue, as well as one of the building's lead tenants Venable LLC; the owners of 601 Massachusetts Avenue, and their lead tenant Arnold and Porter; the Hampton Inn at the corner of Sixth Street and Massachusetts Avenue; and the SLS Hotel site owner at the corner of Fifth Street and Massachusetts Avenue. Other smaller businesses very near the two parks would likely also be interested, but may be less able to supply significant financial support to the parks. These include the Farmers and Distillers restaurant, the Texas de Brazil restaurant, La Colombe Coffee Roasters, SoulCycle Mount Vernon Square, and Gallery Market and Café.

**Non Profits/Citizen Groups.** Several religious institutions are directly adjacent to the Chinatown Park—including the Chinese Community Church and the Sixth and I Historic Synagogue—and will likely have a very strong interest in participating in a Friends organization, as they are directly affected by the success of the Park. Other important non-profit and citizen groups with potential interest include the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association





The Hampton Inn is one of many surrounding property interests that are potential members of a Friends of Chinatown and Milian Parks organization. Source: Dean Schwanke.

(adjacent to Chinatown Park); the Chinatown Community Cultural Center; the Chinese Culture and Community Service Center (CCACC); Asian Pacific American Film, Inc.; the Wah Luck House and its Chinese residents; other AAPI community groups/partners; other nearby resident associations; homeless advocacy groups; and affordable housing developers and organizations in the area.

**Museums and Universities.** There are several museums that could have an interest in participating in a Friends organization. The Freer Museum and the Sackler Gallery, the Smithsonian’s museums of Asian art, have a mission to showcase Asian art and culture, and the Park could be an important venue for this mission. The National Portrait Gallery, the Smithsonian American Art



The Chinese Community Church is located along I Street and faces directly onto Chinatown Park. Source: Dean Schwanke.

Museum, and the National Building Museum are each located nearby and could see value in supporting the parks to improve the larger neighborhood.

Several Washington area universities are also potential Friends. As noted earlier, the Georgetown University Law Center as well as the School of Continuing Studies are both located in the neighborhood, and thus will have a strong interest in the Park. The Georgetown University Department of East Asian Languages and Cultures may also have an interest. Other Universities with Asian programs that could have an interest in Chinatown Park include the Office of China Affairs at the University of Maryland, the Confucius Institute at George Mason University, and the Confucius Institute at George Washington University.

# Programming Recommendations

As noted, programming of events and activities is essential for improving the perception of both the Chinatown and Milian Parks, as well as their collective positive impact on the surrounding neighborhoods. Especially for Chinatown Park, a key programming goal should be to use the Park to strengthen the AAPI community at large and to preserve and celebrate AAPI cultural identity via the long-term success of the Park. More and better programming can improve the profile and identity of both parks within both the AAPI community and the surrounding neighborhood community.

## Identity Awareness within AAPI Community

Programming should begin with outreach to the AAPI community via two actions.

Action 1: MOAPIA staff should contact all AAPI community groups/partners and present and solicit options for park use. This effort should:

- Highlight the Chinatown Park and Milian Park as resources, and emphasize that opportunities exist for the AAPI community to utilize the Park
- Make event scheduling easy for the AAPI community as well as other groups, including a website and a centralized calendar of events with easy booking ability
- Provide direct contacts for scheduling events
- Establish guidelines for use of the parks, such as permitting, trash collection, and vendor requirements

Action 2: Showcase AAPI identity in Chinatown Park in a physical way

- Add culturally inspired and themed signage
- Add cultural education placards about the different AAPI communities



The Panel recommends that Chinese themes be showcased throughout Chinatown Park. Source: Dean Schwanke.



The Panel recommends that tables and chairs are available daily in the parks throughout the year. Source: Dean Schwanke.

- Develop a mobile application that could tie into wayfinding and other informational materials
- Post rules and regulations to shape use of the Park

## Parks as Community Assets

MOAPIA should seek to build park value as an AAPI community and Mount Vernon/Chinatown neighborhood resource, to create capacity and sense of identity and to give people a reason to come to both parks.

Action 1: Improve space management. Work to demonstrate to the community that the Chinatown Park, together with Milian Park, is a priority for MOAPIA, the DowntownDC BID, the Mount Vernon CID, and eventually for the Friends of the Parks entity, once established.

- Prioritize the space for people, not vehicles
- Ensure daily set-up of the parks to show this commitment, via a dedicated staff member on the MOAPIA team or via another resource
- Ensure that tables and chairs are available daily throughout the year
- Demonstrate that the parks are well cared for and a priority for the city and the neighborhood
- Provide a dedicated MOAPIA staff member to attend to park issues generally

Action 2: Provide more strategic community-based programming and use of the parks by AAPI groups, allowing these groups to showcase their culture within the larger context.

- Feature AAPI dance, music, art, and fitness
- Exhibit temporary art (perhaps in partnership with museums and other organizations)
- Showcase AAPI culture, via architectural tours, story time events, and history talks

Action 3: Take advantage of use opportunities in adjacent right-of-ways (especially I Street) to increase the capacity of the Chinatown Park space.

- Seek permission to temporarily close I Street adjacent to Chinatown Park for larger festivals and events
- Foster the development of such events (such as Taste of Chinatown, Moon Dance, Open Streets, and PARKing Day) with vendors on I Street and 6th Street

- Design the edges of Chinatown Park in the street right-of-way to increase activity, and use this area for activities such as chess and other games, as outlined in the following design section

Action 4: Measure and evaluate the success of existing programming to determine a future path for the parks.

- Record the number of attendees for various events
- Survey attendees via satisfaction surveys and interviews
- Provide strategic planning and SMART (Specific, Measurable, Agreed Upon, Realistic, Time-Based) analysis

# Design Recommendations

Chinatown Park is one part, roughly half, of a larger bowtie park that is bisected by Massachusetts Avenue and 5th Street. The Park is in an important gateway location to Chinatown, but it has yet to live up to gateway status. A better design for the Park could address a variety of shortcomings. Outlined below are five opportunity areas and physical improvements that the Panel believes should be addressed and that would help to transform Chinatown Park into a more attractive, inviting, and active gateway and public realm.

## Study Area and Opportunities Plan

Chinatown Park is in a gateway location for those entering Chinatown from the northeast, but there is very little in the Park to indicate that it serves such a role. Commuters and pedestrians traveling south into the downtown area often overlook both Chinatown Park and Milian Park, as they are small and easily lost among the various streets that separate them.

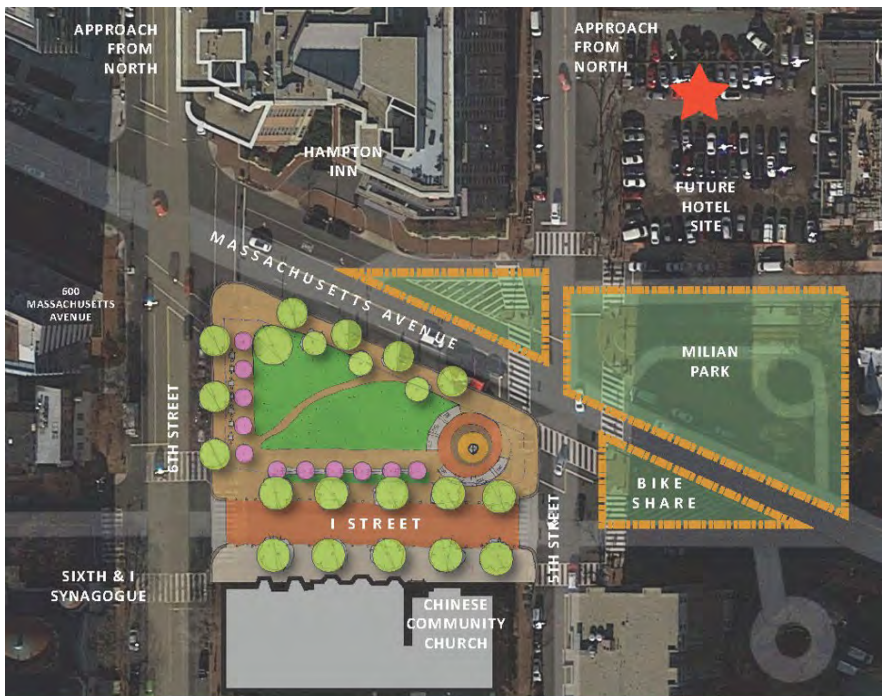


A walkway in Chinatown Park along I Street, with a fence separating I Street from the Park.  
Source: Dean Schwanke.

Chinatown Park itself is surrounded by older historic buildings to the south, and newer and more dense development to the north and west. Key properties around the Park include the Hampton Inn and the proposed SLS hotel site to the north, the 600 and 601 Massachusetts Avenue office buildings and the Sixth and I Historic Synagogue to the east, and the Chinese Community Church and the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association to the south. With the exception of the undeveloped SLS Hotel site, the surrounding parcels are unlikely to change much in the future, as they are either historic properties or new, recently developed properties.

However, the Park and the neighborhood will likely become more central to the city as development continues to the east, especially with the completion of the Capital Crossing project several blocks to the east along Massachusetts Avenue. Chinatown Park is located directly between Capitol Crossing and the Washington Convention Center, and pedestrian traffic between these two centers of activity will likely increase substantially once the Capitol Crossing is opened.

As noted, Chinatown Park and Milian Park are two parts of a bowtie, together with two other small triangle spaces that together make a large rectangle. In general, the Panel believes that these four parcels should be designed and knit together as much as possible. The Panel also believes that the redesign of Chinatown Park should recognize that the Sixth and Fifth Street edges of the Park are important portals and frames for pedestrians and autos entering the downtown from the north, and should be designed with this in mind.



The Panel identified five opportunity areas where design and physical improvements could be used to greatly improve the Park.

Source: ULI Washington.

## Specific Areas for Improvements

One of the things the Panel focused on was the right-of-way boundaries for the Park – the areas of the Park that are outside the NPS boundaries – and what could be done with the area outside of these boundaries. Three key recommendations that emerged from this were that Chinatown Park itself could be improved by the creation of a woonerf on I Street, a game table row along 6th Street, and upgrades to landscaping to improve continuity along Massachusetts Avenue. Other recommendations include design improvements to the central lawn and the creation of an AAPI interpretive space on the eastern portion of the Park.

Architecture and urban design is in large part about setting the stage for urban life and urban activities, and the recommendations that follow are intended to help the Park to become a more effective and compelling stage.

**The I Street Woonerf.** A woonerf is a Dutch term for a street that is used by both pedestrians and vehicles. The Panel believes that I Street can become a type of woonerf, or perhaps a street that is designed to be closed off during events, when it can become a pedestrian-only area. If closed, I Street could greatly expand the Chinatown Park area while also improving accessibility into the Park from the south. Adding the option of closing I Street could result in more commercial and event activity along and within I Street, without NPS oversight. This is where a market could be set up, preferably on a regular basis. To achieve integration between I Street and the Park, the tree canopy in the Park along I Street would need to be trimmed to raise the canopy and thus improve visual connections. The fence along I Street would also need to be removed and the general landscape between the Park and the Street could be redesigned to achieve greater integration of the space. In time this may lead the buildings along I Street to become more commercially oriented, which



A cross section of I Street and the Park.  
Source: ULI Washington.



A sketch view of the edge of the Park along I Street.  
Source: ULI Washington.

A conceptual view of how I Street could be transformed into a pedestrian zone during events. The street here has been redesigned with street pavers, new street trees, existing trees with lifted canopies, and wider sidewalks.  
Source: ULI Washington.





could further serve to activate the Park. I Street is now removed from the Park, and the Panel believes it should be an active contributor to the Park.

**6th Street Game Table Row.** The right-of-way area along 6th Street outside of the NPS area is another area of opportunity. The Panel believes that this area could be redesigned as a game table area, with chess boards, table tennis, and other games.



Chess, table tennis, and other leisure activities could be part of the activities along Game Table Row on Sixth Street.

Source: ULI Washington.

**Central Lawn Panel.** The central lawn area is the centerpiece of the Park and an important defining element. The Panel liked the worn path through the center of the lawn, and incorporated this path into the conceptual design for this area. This path is a remnant from the past that also splits the lawn in two, potentially allowing different things to happen on each half.



The central lawn area is the centerpiece of the Park and should be used for various programs and a place for temporary sculpture.

Source: ULI Washington.

This area could be used for various programs and activities, including exercise, seniors activities, movies, entertainment, as well as a place for art and temporary sculpture.

**AAPI Interpretive Space.** This area could be focused on the AAPI culture, including educational features and signage, interactive features, and even architectural elements that could address APIO history and culture and the history of Chinatown and the surrounding area. This area is right in front of the Chinese Community Church, and is visually connected to that institution in the conceptual plan. The plan also features a circular plaza that sets this area apart from the lawn; the plaza might have an obelisk at the center to highlight this corner as a gateway. The objective would be to create a sense of place at this corner.



The interpretive space should be focused on AAPI culture.  
Source: ULI Washington.

**Massachusetts Avenue Continuity.** The Panel also recommends making improvements along Massachusetts Avenue in the street right-of-way, including a new landscape with two rows of trees to protect the lawn area and provide better screening along this busy avenue. This tree plan would also continue the double row of trees that has been established along the 600 Massachusetts Avenue block just to the west.

## MASS AVE CONTINUITY



The Panel recommends that two rows of trees be added along Massachusetts Avenue. Source: ULI Washington.



The current landscape along Massachusetts Avenue. Source: ULI Washington.

# Conclusion

Chinatown Park, and the adjacent Milian Park, are underused and underappreciated park assets in a fast changing part of downtown DC. Much of the area around the parks has been redeveloped as new development has marched eastward within the City, transforming the Chinatown Park area from a fringe and blighted location to a much more central and vibrant location with growing pedestrian activity. However, Chinatown and Milian Parks have not really kept up with these improvements.

The ULI Panel believes that with a renewed effort from MOAPIA, a collaborative effort with other partner organizations, the creation of a Friends of Chinatown and Milian Parks organization, new design and physical improvements, and a more active programming effort, the Chinatown and Milian Parks could be transformed into real places and become important assets for the neighborhood and the AAPI community, creating value for the surrounding community and enhancing the public realm of the city.



The ULI Panel and MOAPIA sponsors during a visit to the Park.  
Source: Deborah Bilek

# Panelists

## Robert S. Goodill, APA

Torti Gallas + Partners  
Silver Spring, MD

Mr. Goodill is a Principal at Torti Gallas + Partners where he directs The Region and Town Planning Segment. His work involves planning and urban design in the realms of public, private, and public-private partnerships; and in a variety of practice areas and scales including neighborhood revitalization, suburban infill, sprawl repair, retail driven mixed use, and transit oriented developments in the United States and abroad. His expertise includes placemaking, visioning, concept design, programming, and physical planning and urban design. He leads a talented group of planners and urban designers who embrace planning and urban design projects and also collaborate and support the architectural groups in the office.

Often called upon to work on politically sensitive sites, Mr. Goodill has led and participate in design charrettes and workshops, and is adept at achieving consensus solutions to difficult development opportunities. Mr. Goodill's efforts have been honored nationally by such prestigious organizations as the American Institute of Architects, the Urban Land Institute and the Congress for the New Urbanism.

Prior to the 22 years he has been with Torti Gallas, Mr. Goodill was an Assistant Professor of Architecture at Syracuse University both in Syracuse and in Florence, Italy. He has served as a Guest Critic at universities around the country, including Syracuse University, Cornell University, The University of Maryland at College Park, The Catholic University of America and the University of Notre Dame. Mr. Goodill received a Bachelor of Architecture degree from the University of Notre Dame and a Master of Architecture in Urban Design from Cornell University. His professional affiliations include the Congress for the New Urbanism, the American Planning Association, and the Urban Land Institute.

## Suzie Battista

Fairfax County Park Authority  
Fairfax, VA

Suzie Battista, AICP, has ten years of experience in local government. She is currently the Development Review Supervisor for the Park Planning Branch of the Fairfax County Park Authority and has previously held positions in Fairfax County's Office of Community Revitalization and the Department of Planning and Zoning. Suzie has extensive experience in all stages of development review with a specific focus on parks and public spaces, design elements, and implementation. She has worked on a number of large and small scale projects across the County, from the redevelopment of TOD areas such as Tysons and Reston to site-specific place-making efforts. Prior to joining Fairfax County in 2007, Suzie spent some years in the private sector doing land planning and landscape architecture work. She is a Connecticut native with a Bachelor's degree in Landscape Architecture from Penn State and a Master's degree in Urban and Regional Planning from Virginia Tech.

## Tatiana S. Bendeck, LEED AP

Beyer Blinder Belle  
Washington, DC

Tatiana Bendeck is an urbanist, passionate in creating sustainable, integrated live-work play-learn places for all. Today's cyberconnected world only highlights the need to have places that allow people to physically connect and socially engage. Her culturally diverse upbringing has influenced much of her work, daily life and passion for social responsibility. Tatiana has over 15 years of experience in the fields of architecture, interior design, and planning, with a specialty in mixed-use transit-oriented developments. Her mixed-used portfolio includes projects such as The Wharf at the Southwest Waterfront, in Washington, DC and The Boro in Tysons, Virginia. She has worked on K-12 schools including Roosevelt High School in Washington DC, which is seeking LEED Platinum. Tatiana recently completed Moorings Park, a high-end senior living community in Naples, Florida, in which she served as Project Manager.

Her experience includes managing design teams, coordinating design presentations, jurisdictional approvals, and construction documents. Tatiana has also been active in collaborating with developers and contractors on design, constructability, building codes, and life safety issues. In 2014, Tatiana participated in UN Habitat's World Urban Forum in Medellin, Colombia, which focuses on the broader issues of housing and transportation needs and trends worldwide. She has balanced her career with volunteering for different organizations including, the Urban Land Institute (ULI), the American Institute of Architects (AIA), the District of Columbia Building Industry Association (DCBIA), and Habitat for Humanity. As a visiting critic at the Corcoran School of the Arts and Design and The Catholic University

of America, Ms. Bendeck has shared her knowledge and experience with future Designers and Architects. On her free time Tatiana enjoys painting, reading, and being outdoors.

Ms. Bendeck has been a resident of Washington, DC for over 15 years since receiving her Bachelor of Science and Masters in Architecture from The Catholic University of America, in Washington, DC. Tatiana is a LEED Accredited Professional in Building Design and Construction and a graduate of the Urban Land Institute's (ULI) Washington Regional Land Use Leadership Institute.

## Bill Bonstra, FAIA

Bonstra | Haresign ARCHITECTS

Washington, DC

Bill Bonstra, FAIA is the founder and managing partner of Bonstra Haresign Architects LLP. After distinguishing himself at several notable Washington firms, he founded the firm in 2000 and has designed prominent and award-winning landmarks such as Citta 50, Woodley Wardman, The Erie, Q14 Condominiums, Solo Piazza, Lamont Lofts, The Tapies Condominium, and The Studio Theatre. These projects contribute exemplary contemporary design to the historic architecture of the nation's capital. For this reason Mr. Bonstra was elevated to Fellow in the American Institute of Architects in 2010, one of the highest honors bestowed to members of the architecture profession.

Mr. Bonstra and his work has been recognized with over 50 national and regional awards for exemplary design, historic preservation, and adaptive re-use. He and his work have been featured in over 40 national and regional design journals and publications including the AIA Guide to the Architecture of Washington, DC - Sixth Edition, Architectural Record, Residential Architect, Builder, the Washington Post, ULI/Urban Land, ArchitectureDC, Washingtonian Magazine, and in the Second Edition of James M. Goode's book Best Addresses, A Century of Washington's Distinguished Apartment Houses. Internationally, his work has been published in well-known design magazines such as BRAVACASA, Aspekti and Idealen Dom. As a mentor to young architects he teaches a masters design studio at The Catholic University of America, regularly lectures at the University of Maryland in their real estate development program, and frequently participates in lectures, juries, and presentations at leading institutions such as The University of Maryland, The Catholic University of America, and Virginia Tech Alexandria Center, to name a few.

Mr. Bonstra is on the Board of Directors for Cultural Tourism DC, a council appointed member for the DC Zoning Task Force and a member of the Council of Advisors at the University of Maryland for both the architecture and real estate development programs. He is Past President of the Maryland Architecture Alumni

Chapter, Past Director of the Greater Washington Boys and Girls Clubs, and Past Chair of the LCCA Historic Preservation Review Committee.

He received his Bachelor of Architecture degree from the University of Maryland, from which he graduated with honors. Mr. Bonstra is a member of the Cosmos Club in Washington DC.

## Michael Durso

WGL/Washington Gas  
Washington, DC

Michael Durso currently manages Economic Development for WGL/Washington Gas in the District of Columbia. In this role, Michael works with government, institution and private developer clients to position a variety of energy solutions focused on leveraging the natural gas infrastructure system throughout the District of Columbia. His role requires him to engage on policy matters, advocacy issues, and trends impacting large users of energy.

He joined WGL/Washington Gas after serving as the Director of Local Government Affairs at Georgetown University. He also worked in the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development and the Office of the City Administrator during both the Fenty and Gray Administrations. While serving in the Executive Office of the Mayor, he managed a variety of development projects on city owned land and played an integral role with a variety of District agencies, the National Park Service and stakeholders during the implementation of the 2006 D.C. Federal Lands Transfer Act. He also has private real estate development and commercial real estate brokerage experience.

Michael is a former middle school teacher, avid runner, and addicted golfer.

## Connie Fan

LSG Landscape Architecture Inc.  
McLean, VA

Connie Fan brings extensive professional training in both architecture and landscape architecture to her work, as well as a considerable depth of expertise in sustainable strategies for the natural environment. Ms. Fan has led commercial, institutional, and planning projects, ranging in size from small-scale streetscape revitalization efforts to large-scale campus and community developments. Throughout her 20-plus year career, Ms. Fan has brought energy and enthusiasm to her leadership on projects, and to a number of organizations, as well. Ms. Fan is a contributor, panelist and participant in organizations around the region, including CReW of Northern Virginia (for women in Commercial Real Estate), AIA DC's Portfolio Review program and AIA DC's annual conference, ASLA's planning



committee for annual meetings, McLean Planning and Zoning Committees, McLean Project for the Arts (Logistics Committee Member), US Green Building Council (USGBC), SMPS Washington and Tysons Partnership (including Urban Design Council, Sustainability Council) and service with the Greater Washington Asian American Real Estate Professionals.

## Mark J. Herbkersman

Massa Multimedia Architecture, PC  
Washington, DC

Mark J. Herbkersman is an experienced architect and has worked on a variety of projects ranging from single-family homes to large scaled mixed-use developments and urban planning. He has served many roles such as designer, project architect, project manager and principal-in-charge. He is experienced nationally and internationally having designed projects in Asia, South America, Europe and the Middle East and this work has resulted in awards and notable citations. The project types include commercial, retail, hospitality, senior living, office, interior design, master planning, graphic design, single and multi-family residential design and historic renovations. His work has appeared in trade and business journals and he has spoken at conferences for architectural design, urban economic development and creative innovation. Mark is often called upon to provide clear, organized solutions to complex design and planning problems. Mark was previously a principal and design director with BCT Architects in Baltimore and Sr. Associate with RTKL International.

## Rob Mandle

Crystal City Business Improvement District  
Arlington, VA

As Chief Operating Officer for the Crystal City Business Improvement District (BID), Rob has spent the past decade working together with the President/CEO to build a new organization from the ground up, craft a cohesive vision, create innovative programming and marketing strategies, and initiate key strategic initiatives that have made Crystal City a model for downtown urban management.

Outside of Crystal City, Rob has repeatedly demonstrated a knack for quickly learning what makes neighborhoods tick and developing a vision for community action that embraces creativity, efficiency, and partnership building in order to proactively make change, not just advocate for it. In his two years in Norfolk, Virginia, Rob founded a Civic Association, regularly tutored homeless children, and led the reengagement of a key downtown professional group's membership. As a resident of Petworth in the District of Columbia, Rob launched and led a farmers market, led numerous community enhancement efforts, and was elected to the Advisory

Neighborhood Commission, where he moved forward several traffic calming projects and earned the respect and trust of then Ward 4 Council Member and current Mayor of the District of Columbia, Muriel Bowser, as evidenced by his being nominated into several public charges.

Rob earned a graduate degree in Urban and Regional Planning at Virginia Tech's regional campus in Old Town Alexandria. Specializing in Physical Planning and Community Design, Rob focused on how the relationship between the built environment and public space defined the public realm and an area's sense of place and identity. Rob is also a graduate of Bowdoin College of Brunswick, Maine having earned a degree in Economics and Environmental Studies. Rob resides with his family in the quiet Petworth neighborhood of Washington, DC.

## Dean Schwanke

Schwanke Consulting and Communications  
Arlington, VA

Dean Schwanke is a principal with Schwanke Consulting and Communications, a small real estate consulting and communications firm. Prior to this, he served as Senior Vice President, Case Studies and Publications at the Urban Land Institute. In this role, he oversaw the development of ULI case studies, textbooks, and other publications. Prior to this he was Senior Vice President and Executive Director of the ULI Center for Capital Markets and Real Estate, which he planned and launched within ULI in 2009; his work in this position involved the management and development of the Emerging Trends in Real Estate publications, the ULI Real Estate Consensus Forecast, and several real estate capital markets conferences.

Over the past 30+ years he has directed the development of over 90 books and reports (including Emerging Trends from 2004-2012), and has personally authored or coauthored numerous publications, including Mixed-Use Development: Nine Case Studies of Complex Projects (2016); Small-Scale Development (2016); Multifamily Housing Development (2016); Mixed-Use Development Handbook (2003); Place Making: Developing Town Centers, Main Streets, and Urban Villages (2002); and the Resort Development Handbook (1997). He has organized numerous conferences, served on many ULI advisory services assignments, and made over 100 presentations on a variety of topics, including emerging trends, place making, mixed-use development, retail development, and real estate capital markets.

He holds a BA degree from the University of Wisconsin--Madison and a master of planning degree from the University of Virginia.





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