

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### CONTACT

Samantha Mehlinger  
DLBA Communications Manager  
[SamanthaM@dlba.org](mailto:SamanthaM@dlba.org)  
562-522-0530



**DOWNTOWN  
LONG BEACH  
ALLIANCE**

### **DOWNTOWN DISCUSSIONS WEBINAR SERIES TO BRING EXPERTS INTO LOCAL HOMES**

*“Design for Distancing – Creative Strategies to Adapt Public Space to the Pandemic and Beyond” featured on December 4*

**(LONG BEACH, CA – November 23, 2020)** The Downtown Long Beach Alliance (DLBA) is continuing its free webinar series, Downtown Discussions, which features regional experts addressing a variety of issues facing districts, cities, and regional municipalities.

“Design for Distancing – Creative Strategies to Adapt Public Space to the Pandemic and Beyond” will be presented on Friday, December 4, from 10 – 11:30 AM, and will examine COVID-19’s impact on public space in terms of use, access, and equity.

Moderated by David Downey, President & CEO of the [International Downtown Association](#), the panel of guest speakers will discuss lessons learned during the pandemic, creative solutions implemented to adapt to physical distancing, and how these experiences and initiatives could influence future planning and use of public space. The panelists are:

- Norma Garcia-Gonzalez, Director, [Los Angeles County Parks and Recreation](#)
- Shannon Heffernan, Urban Design Director, [Studio One Eleven](#)
- Midori Mizuhara, Planner + Urban Designer, [Gensler](#)
- Brian Ulaszewski, Executive Director, [City Fabrick](#)

All biographies and headshots may be found at the end of this release.

“Accessible, functional, equitable, and welcoming public space is so important to the well-being of communities, and particularly to denser urban environments like downtown areas,” said Downey. “I am looking forward to moderating this meeting of the minds to dig into how the health crisis has altered our understanding of the public realm, and how we might leverage those lessons to design spaces for all members of our communities.”

“DLBA is proud to assemble this group of professionals with diverse expertise in a crucial area, the public sphere, for the benefit of the community,” said DLBA President & CEO Kraig Kojian said. “With our Downtown Discussions Webinar Series, DLBA plans to raise the bar on free virtual resources for the community and encourage and facilitate dialogue on important issues.”

DLBA’s Downtown Discussions Webinar Series originated in Spring 2020 and was created to help the community adapt to the pandemic by providing access to experts in topics like business assistance, digital literacy, and public space. The new iteration of the series has a broader scope and is designed to connect a a greater community with experts in topics of importance to them – from public space to economic development, and more. The free webinars will take place on the first Friday of each month via Zoom and will also be livestreamed on DLBA’s Facebook page.

To sign up for Downtown Discussions, visit <https://downtownlongbeach.org/downtown-discussions/> .

(Continue to Page 2 for participant biographies)

## PARTICIPANT BIOGRAPHIES

### Moderator: David Downey



As President and Chief Executive Officer of the International Downtown Association, David is responsible for the overall strategic positioning of IDA as a world leader and champion for vital and livable urban centers. Prior to joining IDA, David served as the Managing Director for the American Institute of Architects' Urban Design Center and as Executive Director for the Michigan Chapter of the American Planning Association. David has been a city advocate since the 1980s having received his degree in Architecture and Design with a focus on Urban Design. He speaks frequently throughout North America and has delivered talks in the United Kingdom, Italy, Germany, Australia, Sweden, Denmark, El Salvador and Japan. David has served on numerous not for profit boards in the past 25 years and is currently serving on the boards of the Golden Triangle BID in Washington, DC and the Responsible Hospitality Institute.

### Norma García Gonzalez



Norma Edith García-Gonzalez was appointed as Director of the County of Los Angeles Department of Parks and Recreation and the Los Angeles County Regional Parks and Open Space District on July 7, 2020. She is the first woman and the first person of color to serve in this role since the Department was created in 1944. Before her recent appointment, she held the position of Acting Director and Chief Deputy. In her role, Mrs. García-Gonzalez was responsible for the Department's day-to-day operations of 182 facilities that include an annual budget of \$256 million, more than 2,600 employees and 6,477 registered volunteers. Previously, she also held the position of Deputy Director for the Department's Planning and Development Agency. In her thirteen-year career with the Department, Mrs. García-Gonzalez has held responsibilities in areas of planning, acquisition, development, and asset management of 71,249 acres of parkland and over 200 miles of trails.

Mrs. García-Gonzalez is an advocate for the well-being of children, families, and in bringing equity to communities throughout the County. This commitment is further demonstrated through her active participation in various civic and professional organizations. She currently serves on the Governing Board of Trustees for Rio Hondo College and the El Monte Promise Foundation.

Mrs. García-Gonzalez is a daughter of immigrants and the first in her family to attend college. She is a double graduate from UCLA with a bachelor's degree in Political Science and a master's degree in Urban Planning. She and her adventurous family of boys and dog, Cozmo, enjoy everything about parks!

### Shannon Heffernan



Shannon is Studio One Eleven's Urban Design Director and leads their Urban Design Practice, which is focused on the revitalization and transformation of cities. For the past 13 years, she has worked with cities and community groups to revitalize and enhance their districts, public spaces and celebrated places through visioning, design, and placemaking projects. These efforts have included collaborations between cities, Business Improvement Districts (BIDs), Community-based Organizations (CBOs), non-profits, and developers – and a robust outreach approach to ensure all stakeholders are being given a voice and providing input. Shannon is an experienced Project Manager. She recently led the Downtown Lomita Visioning project, which included an incremental transformation of Narbonne Avenue and turning a vacant lot within downtown into an urban plaza, managing the Glendale Arts & Entertainment Visioning project and streetscape design for Artsakh Avenue, and a nine-month activation for the new Civic Center Plaza in Downtown Long Beach. Shannon is currently working with the City of Glendale on their AI Fresco Glendale program and is a member of the Downtown Long Beach Alliance (DLBA), downtown Long Beach's BID, Public Realm Committee, where she beta-tested a curbside flex zone for outdoor dining.

Shannon has a Bachelor of Science degree from California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo in City and Regional Planning, and is also currently pursuing an Executive Master in Urban Planning from USC Sol Price School of Public Policy.

## Midori Mizuhara



Midori is planner and urban designer in Gensler's Cities + Urban Design group in Los Angeles. For the past 13 years, her work has focused on creating well designed and activated public spaces and creatively engaging communities to shape their city. From plazas, parks, sidewalks, streets, and leftover urban spaces, Midori has worked at multiple scales with a variety of community stakeholders to reimagine these spaces through active and tactical outreach strategies. In her former role as the Director of Planning & Urban Design at Community Arts Resources (CARs), she worked on public realm projects such as the Blaisdell Center Master Plan in Honolulu, Jones Plaza in Houston, and Pershing Square in Los Angeles. She has also led region-wide community outreach and creative marketing campaigns through her work with the Go Human active transportation campaign by the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) and the Go Little Tokyo campaign with the Little Tokyo Community Council and LA Metro. Midori is currently working on the redesign of Peppertree Plaza in Downtown San Pedro and various streetscape projects throughout Los Angeles.

Midori has a Bachelor of Architecture from the Southern California Institute of Architecture and a Master of City Planning from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT).

## Brian Ulaszewski



Brian Ulaszewski is the Executive Director of City Fabrick, a nonprofit urban design studio based in Long Beach, California. He has over two decades of experience working in the design and planning field on work spanning tactical interventions like pop-up plazas and parklets to building and landscape projects to regional-scale planning and state policy, all dedicated to improving communities. Brian has extensive experience working with local governments, developers, affordable housing providers, and nonprofit organizations on a wide variety of projects ranging from graphic, environmental, building, landscape and urban design. Brian is a recognized leader in city building, having been recognized by the American Planning Association – Los Angeles with the John Chase Visionary Award and invited to speak at several academic and industry publications.

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**About the Downtown Long Beach Alliance:** The Downtown Long Beach Alliance is a non-profit, community-based organization whose mission is to cultivate, preserve and promote a healthy, safe, and prosperous Downtown. By balancing the interests of the residents, as well as businesses, the DLBA creates tangible progress by way of vested interest and solidified partnerships across local, municipal, and commercial lines. For additional information, visit [www.downtownlongbeach.org](http://www.downtownlongbeach.org), follow on Facebook @downtownlongbeach, and follow on Twitter and Instagram @DLBA.