

# Built Around Health: Speaker Biographies



**Allison Arwady, MD, MPH**  
**Commissioner, Chicago Department of Public Health**

Dr. Allison Arwady, MD, MPH, is the Commissioner of the Chicago Department of Public Health (CDPH). Dr. Arwady started at CDPH in 2015 and served as Chief Medical Officer before being confirmed by the City Council as Commissioner in January, 2020. As Chief Medical Officer she oversaw the disease control, environmental health, emergency preparedness, and behavioral health divisions. She has worked on disease outbreaks, immunization promotion, tuberculosis response, lead poisoning prevention, substance misuse, and more. Prior to CDPH, she worked for the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) as an Epidemic Intelligence Service officer. In that role, she focused on outbreak response, including international work on Ebola and Middle East Respiratory Syndrome. While based at the Illinois Department of Public Health, she responded to disease outbreaks across the state. She has a bachelor's degree from Harvard University, a master's degree in public health from Columbia University, and completed medical school and clinical training at Yale University. She is a board-certified internal medicine physician and pediatrician, and continues to see primary care patients weekly.



**Basak Alkan, AICP, LEED AP, NCI**  
**Senior Urban Designer and Senior Associate, Perkins and Will**

Basak is an urban designer who strives to improve the health of individuals and communities through her design and planning work. A sought-after facilitator of interactive planning processes, she works closely with government, institutional, and community stakeholders to craft compelling shared visions for healthier campuses, districts and neighborhoods. Her recent work includes a master plan and zoning framework for a 1,000-acre multi-institutional health district in Baton Rouge, a community-centered master plan for an aging acute-care hospital in Atlanta, a transformative design for a 16-acre student health and residential district at UVA, and a resilience plan focused on health and equity for the City of Louisville. She has enabled the implementation of these visions by devising customized master plans, designs, and

zoning regulations that are adopted into city codes. Basak holds a Master of Architecture and a Master in City Planning from MIT.



**Cierra Higgins, NOMA  
Health Fellow and Designer I, Perkins and Will**

Cierra is a native of Kansas City, MO, and recently graduated from Washington University in St. Louis with her dual Masters in Architecture and Masters in Urban Design. Shortly after graduation, she was awarded the E. Todd Wheeler Health Fellowship with Perkins and Will, and is now based in their Seattle office. With this fellowship, she is afforded the opportunity to further explore her research in public health as it pertains to mental health and overall wellness within marginalized communities. During her final year at Washington University in St. Louis, she studied how communities stricken with blight, poverty, crime, and lack of resources can affect the mental fortitude and wellness of its residents, particularly as it pertains to anxiety, depression, and PTSD. Moving forward, she is currently seeking to correlate that research within this global pandemic, and to better understand how many marginalized communities are especially vulnerable to its physical, economical, and environmental effects.



**David Gamble, AIA, AICP  
Principal, Gamble Associates; Lecturer and Design Critic,  
Harvard Graduate School of Design**

David Gamble, AIA, AICP is Principal of Gamble Associates, a Cambridge-based design practice which focuses on community revitalization and neighborhood development. He is a Lecturer in the Department of Urban Planning and Design at Harvard's Graduate School of Design (GSD) and is the current Chair of the AIA's Regional and Urban Design Committee (2017-2021). David is a former recipient of the AIA's National Young Architects Award and the Gabriel Prize. David's research looks at the catalytic effects of urban design and planning projects with a focus on creative implementation strategies to enable redevelopment. Together with Patty Heyda (Washington University) he published "Rebuilding the American City" with Routledge Press in 2016. The book presents five paradigms for redevelopment and a range of perspectives on the complexities, strategies, successes and challenges inherent to rebuilding American cities today. His current research investigates

urban redevelopment at the scale of smaller towns, and he is editing a collection of essays about Boston's future.



**Ghigo DiTommaso, PhD.**  
**Director, Gehl Studio San Francisco**

Italian architect and urban designer, Ghigo DiTommaso has focused his research and practice on public space design for more than a decade. Trained at the Florence School of Architecture, Ghigo began his professional trajectory in Barcelona, where he worked with Gina Architects for several years before relocating to San Francisco to join the Rebar Art & Design Studio in 2012. As a member of Rebar, Ghigo spearheaded some of the group's most ambitious urban installation projects from inception through construction. Member of the Gehl Studio San Francisco since its founding in 2014, he now leads Masterplanning and public space design projects in cities across Northern, Central, and South America. Always engaged as an educator throughout his career, Ghigo taught at Universitat Ramon Llull, University of California Berkeley, and at University of Texas at Austin. Ghigo holds a Ph.D and MS.Arch from EtsaB, Barcelona School of Architecture, a M.Arch and a B.Arch from the University of Florence.



**Jenny Roe, PhD.**  
**Director, Center for Design & Health, DeShong Professor of Design & Health, School of Architecture, University of Virginia**

Dr. Jenny Roe is an applied psychologist who specializes in understanding how access to restorative environments in our cities – including urban nature – create and sustain our health and well-being. She carries out applied research that aims to advance better design for health, well-being and social justice with a focus on youth, older people and those most vulnerable in our society. This includes a number of neuroscience related studies exploring how landscape – and cities – impact cortical brain activity. Her book, with co-author Dr Layla McCay, entitled "Restorative Cities: urban design for mental health" will be released Spring 2021 by Bloomsbury Press.



**Jess Zimbabwe, AIA, AICP, LEED AP  
Principal, Plot Strategies**

Jess Zimbabwe is the Principal of Plot Strategies. She served until recently for ten years as the founding Director of the Daniel Rose Center for Public Leadership—a partnership between the National League of Cities (NLC) and the Urban Land Institute (ULI). The Center’s flagship programs were the Daniel Rose Fellowship in Land Use and the Equitable Economic Development Fellowship. Before that, Jess was the Director of the Mayors’ Institute on City Design and Vice President for Programs at the American Architectural Foundation. Prior to that, Jess served as the Community Design Director at Urban Ecology, providing pro bono community planning and design assistance to low-income neighborhoods in the San Francisco Bay Area. Jess is a member of the urban planning faculties at Georgetown University and the University of Washington. Jess was an Urban and Regional Policy Fellow at the German Marshall Fund and a Fellow of the Women’s Policy Institute. She serves on the boards of Next City, the National Main Street Center, and Colloqate, and she held a mayoral appointment to the DC Green Building Advisory Council. She is a licensed architect, a certified city planner, and a LEED-Accredited professional.



**Katie Swenson, AIA  
Senior Principal, MASS Design Group**

Katherine W. Swenson is a nationally recognized design leader, researcher, writer, and educator. She is a Senior Principal of MASS Design Group, an international non-profit architecture firm whose mission is to research, build, and advocate for architecture that promotes justice and human dignity. Before joining MASS in early 2020, Swenson was vice president of Design & Sustainability at Enterprise Community Partners, where had had been an Enterprise Rose Fellow will Piedmont Housing. Katie’s work explores how critical design practice can and should promote economic and social equity, environmental sustainability, and healthy communities. A prolific writer, she is releasing two books in the fall of 2020: *Design with Love: At Home in America*, and *In Bohemia: A Memoir of Love, Loss and Kindness*, both by Schiffer Publishing. In 2008, she co-authored *Growing Urban Habitats: Seeking a Housing Development Model*. She is a contributing author to *Activist Architecture: Philosophy and Practice of Community Design and Expanding*

Architecture: Design as Activism. She holds a Bachelor of Arts in Comparative Literature from the University of California, Berkeley and a Master of Architecture from The University of Virginia. Katie was a Loeb Fellowship at the Harvard Graduate School of Design. She is fluent in French and is the single mother of three spirited daughters.



**Kim Irwin, MPH**  
**Executive Director, Health by Design**

Kim Irwin is the Executive Director of Health by Design, which works at the intersection of the built environment and public health, collaborating across sectors and disciplines to ensure Indiana communities have neighborhoods, public spaces and transportation infrastructure that promote active living for all. Health by Design envisions vibrant, thriving communities that help all people live active, healthier lives. Since January 2019, Health by Design has provided management services to the Indiana Public Health Association, which builds capacity among public health professionals and partners to achieve health equity and well-being for all across the state of Indiana. Ms. Irwin guides the strategic direction, partnership development and programmatic, operational and financial management of the organizations. She has a Master of Public Health from the Indiana University School of Medicine Department of Public Health and an undergraduate degree from Northwestern University. Her prior work experience includes health promotion activities and program and administrative management for the American Lung Association, the IU School of Medicine and in senior services.



**Nathan Ogle, AIA, LEED AP**  
**CEO, 12CHC | Design Management**

Nathan Ogle is the founder of 12CHC | Design Management, an Architectural, Real Estate, Contracts, Entitlements, and Design Consulting business geographically centered in the San Francisco Bay Area with award-winning design projects locally and beyond. His career spans practice, academia, business, construction and he writes extensively on sustainability, culture, thought and design trends. He currently serves on the AIA California Board of Directors, AIACA Urban Design Committee and Board of Governors for a San Francisco Non-Profit Agency, while educating students around the



world as an online foundation instructor in Architecture at the Academy of Art University. His passions are family, small stream fishing, tennis, high adventure camping, league basketball, mountain biking, kayaking and collecting mid-century modern furniture. He received his Master of Science in Architecture and Urban Design from Columbia University, Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation in the City of New York and a Bachelor of Architecture from Virginia Tech, College of Architecture and Urban Studies in Blacksburg, Virginia.



**Richard Plunz**  
**Professor of Architecture, Columbia University**

Richard Plunz is an architect and urbanist based in New York City. He is Professor of Architecture and Earth Institute Professor at Columbia University, where he has served as Acting Chair of the Division of Architecture and as Director of the post-graduate Urban Design Program. He is founding Director of the Urban Design Lab at the Columbia University Earth Institute and is on the faculty of the Data Science Institute. On numerous occasions he has been Visiting Professor at the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven. Recent books include a revised edition of *A History of Housing in New York City* (2016) and *City Riffs: Urbanism, Ecology Place* (2017). He has been named Centennial Historian of the City of New York and is a member of the New York Academy of History. He has been recipient of the Andrew J. Thomas Pioneer in Housing Award from the American Institute of Architects for his contributions to housing research. Major research support has included the Ford foundation (for community development), the United Health Foundation and the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation (for urban health and food systems). His National Science Foundation support has included projects related to urban infrastructural innovation, urban coastal resilience, and social media and urban public space.



**Rona Rothenberg, FAIA**  
**Senior Manager, Judicial Council of CA (Ret.)**  
**Capital Program Manager, Alameda County, CA (Ret.)**

Rona G. Rothenberg, FAIA, has led major capital programs in government and industry for the past 33 years. Over the past 19 years she served both as a founding team member of the historic State of California \$9B courthouse building program and as capital

program manager for Alameda County. She has contributed to planning and delivery over 100 institutional building and campus programs and her work has been recognized with the AIA's 2020 Thomas Jefferson Award for Public Architecture. Rona is a past Knowledge Community Advisory Group and Conference Chair and is currently the AIA California Board Vice President for Government Relations. Rona is involved in local community and government work as a citizen architect, and currently holds appointments on the City of Alameda, California Planning Board and the California Architect's Board Communications Committee.

A long-term resident of the Bay Area, Rona is engaged in environmental conservation, advocacy for the blind, crafts, music and anything involving dogs. She has been married to a U.S. Navy Veteran for 41 years and is a proud mother and grandmother! She has appreciated the value of being an architect within institutions, improving workplaces and communities for the public "from the inside out."



**Sameh Wahba**

**Global Director, Urban, Disaster Risk Management, Resilience and Land Global Practice, World Bank**

Sameh Wahba, an Egyptian national, is the Global Director for the World Bank's Urban, Disaster Risk Management, Resilience and Land Global Practice, based in Washington, D.C. The Global Practice, which also covers territorial development, geospatial and results-based-financing issues, has a portfolio of close to \$30bn in commitments in investment project, program-for-results and development policy lending and about 450 staff. Mr. Wahba holds a Ph.D. and Master's degree in urban planning from Harvard University, and a B.Sc. and M.Sc. in Architectural Engineering from Cairo University. He speaks Arabic, French, English, and Portuguese. He co-authored the World Bank's flagship publications on "Regenerating Urban Land: A Practitioner's Guide to Leveraging Private Investment" and "The Hidden Wealth of Cities: Creating, Financing, and Managing Public Spaces", as well as the "Culture in City Reconstruction and Recovery" Position Paper jointly with UNESCO.



**Scot Latimer, FAIA, ACHA**  
**Principal and Director of Strategy, Academic and Child Health and Wellness, Gensler**

Scot Latimer is among the North America's best-known and most sought-after healthcare strategists. His area of consulting emphasis is the deployment of resources to create health systems – hospital and physician networks – which deliver on the promise of population health in terms of access and efficiency. He is best known for his work with large, integrated organizations including academic medical centers and children's hospitals. Scot has led major consulting practices and joined Gensler's Health and Wellness practice in 2018 to partner his strategic and business planning expertise with the power of Gensler's design work. He firmly believes that the future environment will require greater access to specialist knowledge and tolerate less of the overhead and inefficiency inherent in large firm consulting. He works directly with health systems on matters of importance and, when called-for, to form networks with other experts offering greater agility and advantage to client organizations.



**Steve Wilson, AIA, AICP**  
**North Central Cities and Urban Design Lead, Gensler**

Steve is Gensler's Cities and Urban Design leader for the North Central Region, helping clients and communities imagine and achieve their future cities and towns through design and development strategies. Trained as an architect and planner, he has 26 years of experience in planning and urban design and has worked in more than 40 communities across the country. His master planning experience includes downtowns, urban districts, neighborhoods, corridors, transit oriented development, campus planning for healthcare and higher education, and mixed used developments. Steve holds a Master of Architecture in Urban Design from Harvard's Graduate School of Design. He also an active member of the AIA's National Leadership Committee for Regional and Urban Design, Chicago ULI, and the Ely Chapter of Lambda Alpha International.