



**Healthy Neighborhoods Fund
Learning Collaborative Meeting
Dates: June 15 and 16, 2015
East Harlem Neighborhood and The Ford Foundation**

Speaker Biosketches

Vanessa Briggs is Managing Director, Health Promotion for the Public Health Management Corporation and Executive Director of the Health Promotion Council of Southeastern Pennsylvania. In these roles, she has led, managed and participated in a variety of local and regional healthy community initiatives, including *Healthy Kids*, *Healthy Communities* funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and Communities Putting Prevention to Work funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Collectively, these initiatives have increased access to healthy, affordable foods and opportunities for physical activity, resulting a decline in childhood obesity rates—including among children of color—across the city of Philadelphia. Recent successes include the development, implementation and scaling of Healthy Living Guidelines for Out-of-School Time programs in more than 209 sites citywide, impacting approximately 20,000 children each year.

Previously, Vanessa was a regional dietitian for Marriot Sodexo Health. She currently serves on the executive committee of the College of Physicians of Philadelphia, Public Health Section. She is also a committee member of the Greater Philadelphia Business Coalition on Health. Vanessa earned a B.A. in Home Economics Dietetics from Rowan University. She also holds an MBA in Health Administration from Eastern University in St. Davids, PA.

Jason Cooper, Program Officer, oversees efforts at the Community Safety Initiative at LISC that assist city and neighborhood leaders to address the challenges of increasing public safety in neighborhoods with disproportionately high levels of serious crime, disorder, blight and distrust of police. This includes focusing on expanding departmental initiatives on ex-offender reentry, housing and economic development, community policing, and public health. Prior to joining LISC, Jason has worked for more than a decade leading nonprofit organizations with a focus on building cross-sector partnerships, developing leadership and implementing strategies within diverse communities, organizations and individuals across the country on a variety of issues ranging from immigration to housing to affirmative action.

Joanna Frank is founding Executive Director of the Center for Active Design. Prior to launching the Center, Ms. Frank worked for the City of New York, where her positions included Director of Active Design and Director of the NYC FRESH program. Before working for the City, Ms. Frank was a Partner at Bright City Development, LLC, where she was responsible for the development of mixed-use residential buildings using sustainable design criteria.

Dr. Samina Raja is an Associate Professor of urban and regional planning and the Principal Investigator of the Food Systems Planning and Healthy Communities Lab at the University at Buffalo, The State University of New York. Dr. Raja's research, which spans local, national and global settings, focuses on the role of local government planning and policy in building healthy communities and sustainable food systems.

Dr. Raja currently directs [Growing Food Connections](#), a comprehensive, 5-year national action research project funded by the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) to build local governments' capacity to use planning and policy to promote food security and viability of small and medium-sized agriculture. *GFC's* research, conducted in more than 15 Communities of Innovation (COIs) across the United States, informs technical training and assistance in Communities of Opportunities (COOs) in Georgia (Dougherty County), Kansas (Wyandotte County), Maine (Cumberland County), New Mexico (Luna and Dona Ana Counties), New York (Chautauqua County) and North Carolina (Polk County). *GFC* partners include the American Farmland Trust, the national American Planning Association, Cultivating Healthy Places and the Ohio State University.

In her Western New York community, Dr. Raja is involved in a number of community-led initiatives to create healthier environments through policy and planning change. She remains an active partner in the community coalition seeded by the *Healthy Kids, Healthy Communities* grant of the Active Living by Design program of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. The HKHC-Buffalo partnership facilitated the creation of the Buffalo-Erie Food Policy Council, ensured inclusion of food in the city of Buffalo's new land use plan and unified development ordinance (*Buffalo Green Code*), and developed a food assessment ([Growing Together](#)) that serves as a technical report for [One Region Forward](#), the new sustainability plan for the Buffalo-Niagara region.

Committed to advancing university-community partnerships in low-resource settings across the globe, Dr. Raja is a co-lead of the newly launched [University at Buffalo Community of Excellence in Global Health and Equity](#).

Dr. Raja is a recipient of the 2014 Dale Scholar Prize for excellence in urban and regional planning and Western New York's 40 Under Forty Award, given for professional success and commitment to the community. She is passionate about Kashmiri cuisine and enjoys martial arts training with her daughter, Hijab; both hold a second degree Black Belt in Tae Kwon Do.