



# Steering Committee Candidate Statements

## Quarterly All-Member NYC REIC Meeting, January 28<sup>th</sup> 2016

Candidates listed in alphabetical order by last name



**Todd Arena**

Crown Heights, Brooklyn

Todd Arena is a finance attorney serving, in his paid employment, financial institutions and renewable energy (and other) developers. His practice focuses on the project financing of wind and solar farms. In 2015, Todd was also a recipient of Lawyers Alliance for New York's Cornerstone Award for his pro bono work with community development financial institutions, particularly credit unions. Todd joined the NYC REIC at its April 2015 meeting and has been involved ever since, serving on the Case Studies and Inspiration Working Group as well as the Governance Working Group and Facilitation team. He

believes that, through the design of governance structures that ensure member control, cooperative financial institutions can build-in the values of democratic community control, balance citywide and local decision making, and collapse tensions and conflicts of interest that traditionally obtain in Wall Street financial institutions.



**Adele Eisenstein**

Jackson Heights, Queens

With over 25 years of experience internationally as curator, producer, project manager, working in museums, galleries and alternative spaces, and with non-profit organizations, and large international consortia, as well as editor, translator, writer in contemporary art, film, architecture, I have a range of skills including organizational, people and team-building skills, and strategic, planning, marketing and fundraising ideas for the benefit of institutions. With a background in psychology and film studies, I have been devoted to social issues and human rights for most of my life and career.

The most relevant experience I would bring to the Steering Committee would be as Former Chair and Board member of Amnesty International Hungary, for a period of eight years. In that capacity, I worked closely in a team on strategy to guide the organization and its advocacy campaigns, on outreach and program evaluation. As Chair, I led two director searches, and I also took part in conflict mediation and resolution.

I joined the NYC REIC in May 2015, and I have been a member of the PBIG, as well as working on the Newsletter team, giving me a broader overview of the process of all the WGs up to now. In the PBIG, I have been researching and doing community outreach around the Coney Island Pumping Station, and I gave testimony for its landmarking status at the NYCLPC.

I am committed to the values and ideas underpinning the REIC, and would be honored to be a part of the body guiding its next phase.



**David Glick**  
Williamsburg, Brooklyn

David Glick is an architect and urban designer, with nine years experience on cultural, educational, and public space design projects. He also holds a Master's degree in Urbanism from Harvard University, where he studied real estate, urban politics, and participatory planning, with a research focus on innovative community based initiatives in Europe. By highlighting keys to success from other examples he is inspired to dream about what is possible, while tethering this optimism to lessons learned from what has not worked. Extending these interests to the REIC has naturally led him to the role of facilitator for the Case Studies + Inspiration workgroup, where he has championed internal education as critical to ensuring we are making informed decisions. As a member of the interim facilitation team since its infancy, David's experience would bring valuable continuity to the steering committee. One of his top priorities would be to foster greater collaboration between workgroups; an effort he's made wide-ranging contributions to over the past two quarters. David is also passionate about tackling technical challenges ahead by helping to bridge a dialog between members with specialized expertise (legal, real estate, community organizing, etc.), and is committed to a participatory process that is transparent and inclusive. He's looking forward to the next phase, and to working together toward a board structure and our first project!



**Sam Gray**  
Greenpoint, Brooklyn

Sam Gray is a lawyer serving small businesses and entrepreneurs in New York City. His practice focuses on business formation and governance as well as contract drafting and negotiation. Sam is also a legal fellow with the Sustainable Economies Law Center (SELC) focusing on developing legal resources for people and businesses working in the new economy. Sam joined the REIC at its first meeting and has been involved ever since, serving on the Project Vetting Working Group as well as the Governance Working Group and Facilitation team. He hopes to use his professional experience as well as the amazing resources available at SELC to help the REIC grow and fulfill its goal of providing permanently affordable commercial space in New York City. If elected, Sam would focus on communicating with the existing working groups to create a plan for getting the REIC ready to make its first investment within six months. He would then work with the Steering Committee to appoint officers and create member committees to help make that goal a reality.



**Mara Kravitz**  
East Village, Manhattan

I have lived in NYC for the past eight years. Since 2013, I have been Project Manager for MatriArch Development, coordinating the development of a 90,000 sq. ft. mixed-use building in Pelham, NY, my hometown north of NYC. I continuously wondered how the mechanics of real estate – planning, investment, labor, programming – could be rearranged for social good. When I arrived at the first meeting of the NYC Real Estate Investment Cooperative last May, being in a room full of people incubating an answer to this very question gave me chills.

Wanting to learn more, I joined the Case Studies and Inspiration Workgroup/REIC U and volunteered to be a facilitator a few months later. We have researched examples of community wealth-building, cooperative governance, mechanisms for perpetual affordability, and strategies for transforming social injustice while working on educational tools for members. You might recognize me from co-presenting our research at the September 28th All-Member Meeting, or facilitating the card-based activity on Cooperative Principles at the November 18th governance meeting. As a member of the Steering Committee, I would bring my commitment to the REIC, professional experience in and knowledge of real estate, community organizing experience, and an education in anthropology that reminds me to listen. I will continue to work with this talented group of New Yorkers—the REIC's workgroups, committees, appointees and/or advisors—to fulfill the Steering Committee's Charter and steer us towards securing space for culture, small business, cooperation and community benefit. Places like these are necessary and life-changing.



**Michael Loew**  
Ditmas Park, Brooklyn

There's an amazing "Jazz and Justice" radio station in Washington, D.C., (98.3 FM) that I still listen to after leaving the region five years ago. The diversity and vibrancy of its staff, programming, and listeners are to me the essence of what the REIC could be if we succeed; a community-supported and -focused organization whose model could serve as an inspiration to those in other cities, whose supporters feel confident that the culmination of their labor and dollars won't be sold to the highest bidder, and whose offerings to the community are as varied as those within it.

I joined the Case Studies working group at the REIC's founding last April to explore the financial, legal, and social strategies available to us in pursuing these ideals. As a member of the steering committee, I hope to begin converting our research of cooperative real estate territory charted by inspiring groups around the world into a legal, socially-conscious, and economically viable framework within the next few months. There are also a host of local organizations such as the Park Slope Food Co-op and 4th Arts Block whose membership overlaps with our own (I'm a member of the former), and I'm interested in teasing out ways in which this overlap could make us all stronger.

Longer-term, I believe that my connections through working at a local real estate and zoning consultancy can help the REIC navigate its way through NYC's dense zoning regulations and other legal hurdles to get our dreams approved.



**Oksana Mironova**  
Flatbush/Midwood, Brooklyn

Oksana has been involved with the REIC since May 2015, as a co-facilitator of the public building inventory group and a member of the steering committee. She has a background in affordable housing, non-profit fundraising, data analysis, writing, advocacy, and research. Oksana is interested in: ensuring a democratic and transparent governance process for the REIC; developing a sustainable financing mechanism for the permanent preservation of affordable commercial/industrial properties in NYC; developing partnerships with stakeholders in communities where we will invest; and building a membership base that reflects the racial, ethnic, and economic makeup of NYC as a whole.



**Joe Rinehart**  
Kensington, Brooklyn

For the past decade, I have worked to ensure that communities have access to the tools necessary to build just and sustainable economies. As a worker-owner in Firestorm Café and a cooperative developer with the Democracy at Work Institute, I came to understand the vital role that ground-floor retail spaces play in supporting communities and movements and the desperate need that socially-oriented businesses have for affordable space in NYC. I now work with NYC neighborhoods to ensure they have access to the ownership structures and financial institutions that help residents build assets. I recognize how critical it is for communities, not developers, to control commercial spaces so that a just local economy has the space to thrive. As a member of the REIC Steering Committee I will work with the members and NYC communities to design an organizational structure able to harness the power of social investment capital to create affordable commercial space for community use. The task of the Committee is to quickly establish an organizational structure able to inspire trust in communities, cooperative members, and social impact investors – the three stakeholders that the REIC needs to be successful. This means designing a structure that is resilient in the long term, able to respond quickly to opportunities, engage members and communities, and, ultimately, be accountable to the membership. As a member of the Committee I look forward to helping the REIC find the delicate balance between mission, member benefit, and market forces that cooperatives need for long-term success.



**Sara Romanski**

Lower East Side, Manhattan

*Transcribed from Jan 14<sup>th</sup> Candidate Meeting:* I've trained as an urban planner and I became a community activist by job and by circumstance. I've worked on the Lower East Side for years advocating for cultural and community character, around preservation, around small business retention, around retail diversity, around loss of cultural space and nonprofit office space etc...

It would be an honor to help out with the experience I've had as a planner and an organizer, I conceived of, built, and funded a merchant's association which included building the entity around it in the east village in 2012 and 13, I got all of the expert help that was required for that, and I have some technical experience on this and I'd be happy to share that along with my technical expertise as well as my experience and interest in anchoring community by and around it's spaces.



**"K" Samuels**

Harlem, Manhattan

*Transcribed from Jan 14<sup>th</sup> Candidate Meeting:* I'm a born and raised Harlemit I have strong concerns about what is happening in my community so that the cultural character is changing so that it doesn't look like Harlem anymore. And I think that things can be done so that [cultural changes like that] do not have to take place, either in Harlem or Chinatown or in the many places that made New York what it is, and what has made people want to come here. I want to see more of the cultural integrity of places across New York maintained, I think that it can be done and I am interested in doing that.

I have a strong concern that the community is heard and that they're not considered less intelligent than anyone else - if they want something different than downtown wants, those needs are understood as what makes those communities special. I would like to be involved to help bring that position [to the REIC steering committee] so folks will remember it. I also would like to be involved so that the committee is diverse not just in terms of race but also in terms of age.