



NYC  
School Construction Authority



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**DESIGN EXCELLENCE &  
NETWORKING FORUM**

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# WELCOME! EVENT PROGRAM

**FRANK SINATRA SCHOOL OF THE ARTS**  
35-12 35TH STREET, ASTORIA, NY 11106



## **WIFI INFORMATION:**

Network Name: **DOEGuest**

Password: **NYC\$itevent**



# **NEW YORK CITY SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION AUTHORITY**

The School Construction Authority (SCA) manages the Department of Education's Capital Plan and is solely accountable for planning, real estate, and budgeting. The SCA is also accountable for the scoping, design and construction of new schools and additions, as well as capital improvements to existing schools.

## **OUR MISSION:**

**The School Construction Authority's (SCA) mission is to design and construct safe, attractive and environmentally sound public schools for children throughout the many communities of New York City.**

We are dedicated to building and modernizing schools in a responsible, cost-effective manner while achieving the highest standards of excellence in safety, quality and integrity. Over the past three decades, the New York City School Construction Authority (SCA) has sited, designed, and constructed stunning and innovative educational and recreational facilities for New York City public school students. Since its creation, the SCA has provided more than 300,000 new school seats for New York City students. In addition, the SCA has protected, repaired, and upgraded over 1,800 schools in over 1,400 school buildings, of which roughly 86 percent are over 30 years old, and the average age is 75 years old.



## WORK WITH US:

The New York City School Construction Authority (SCA) is thrilled to announce the launch of our Design Excellence Program, which aims to transform the landscape of K-12 education facilities. We are actively seeking partnerships with leading creative firms specializing in architecture, landscape architecture, and engineering (MEP/Civil/Structural).

Additionally, we are looking to identify other disciplines, as our projects require a comprehensive team of specialist consultants. These include Facade Consultants, Specialist Lighting Designers, Acoustic Consultants, Vertical Transportation Consultants, Cost Consultants, Technology/AV/IT Consultants, Specialist Engineering Demolition Consultants, Sustainability Consultants, Food Service/Kitchen Consultants, Specialist Structural Engineers, Historic Preservation Consultants, Pool Consultants, Fire Protection Engineers/Life Safety Consultants, and Traffic Engineers.

Our focus is on collaborating with firms that have a proven track record in delivering innovative and impactful designs within the education sector. By joining forces, we aim to create inspiring learning environments that foster creativity, growth, and excellence for students across New York City.

Join us in shaping the future of educational spaces and making a lasting difference in the lives of students and educators.

**2026 SCA DESIGN EXCELLENCE & NETWORKING FORUM**

# NEW YORK CITY SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION AUTHORITY



**NINA KUBOTA**  
President & CEO

Since joining the NYCSCA in 1998, President Kubota has dedicated her career to the mission of providing state-of-the-art educational facilities for NYC students. Since being appointed president in 2021, Nina has continued to build upon the previous successes of the SCA. As president, she is keenly focused not only on building world-class learning spaces for public school students, but also increasing participation from MWLBE contractors

through the SCA's heralded Mentor programs, which are emulated by other agencies and serve as a national model. President Kubota is also focused on building sustainably for the future and is leading the multi-billion dollar effort to convert existing school buildings to all-electric while also championing innovative design approaches to combat greenhouse gas emissions. With over two decades of service at the SCA, Nina has held roles in several departments including Architecture & Engineering and Administrative Services. Previously, Nina served as Senior Vice President of Capital Plan Development and Implementation where she oversaw the management of SCA's approximately \$19 billion 5-Year Capital Plan. This included the creation of approximately 83,000 new school seats and ensured that the roughly 1,500 school buildings in the city's portfolio received necessary capital repairs, keeping the school portfolio in a state of good repair and providing safe and beautiful facilities for the roughly one million public school students of New York City.



**THIERRY PARET,**  
**FAIA, NCARB, RIBA, ARB, MRIAI, LEED AP**  
Vice President, Architecture & Engineering

Thierry Paret is an acclaimed architect and seasoned leader with a wealth of international management experience across the U.S., Europe, and the Middle East. As the Vice President of the Architecture & Engineering Department at the NYCSCA, Thierry oversees the design and execution of renovations and upgrades for approximately 1,500 school buildings. Each year, his four studios

either design or oversee external consultants responsible for designing 10-12 new schools (Capacity Projects) and hundreds of CIP projects for the NYC Department of Education. This work is part of a \$20.9 billion 5-Year Capital Plan for the nation's largest unified school system, which serves nearly one million students. Prior to joining NYCSCA in 2023, Thierry led the New York State practice at IBI Group-Arcadis, overseeing operations in New York City and Binghamton. He has held senior design leadership roles at several high caliber international architecture firms, served as a Design Advisor to the government of Qatar, and acted as Campus Architect for the prestigious King Abdullah University of Science and Technology (KAUST) in Saudi Arabia which happened to be the first LEED Platinum campus in the

Middle East. A registered architect in multiple U.S. states, the United Kingdom (England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland), and the Republic of Ireland, Thierry's portfolio spans university campuses, corporate headquarters, life science facilities, and mixed-use developments, with a focus on sustainability. His commitment to the profession is evident through his service on numerous boards and committees, including the American Institute of Architects (AIA) National Board, and NCARB. Thierry was most recently elected to the AIA National Strategic Council as a Councillor for the 2025-2027 term. Thierry has been a presenter at architectural and industry conferences in the United States, Europe, Asia and the Middle East during his extensive international career. In 2014, Thierry was inducted into the College of Fellows of the American Institute of Architects, an honor held by only 2.5% of AIA members. He is also an AIA Richard Upjohn Fellow.



**ILLYA AZAROFF, FAIA**  
**President**  
**American Institute of Architects**

Illya Azaroff, FAIA, is an architect, geographer, and professor at New York City College of Technology (CUNY). As founding principal of +lab Architect, with offices in New York and Los Angeles, he focuses on uplifting underserved communities through resilient and regenerative design.

A leader in disaster mitigation and climate adaptation, Azaroff co-founded the Kalinago Institute for Global Resilience and Regeneration in Dominica and was honored as a 2023 Star of Oceana for his work in the Pacific and Caribbean. He has advised on New York's Hazard Mitigation Plan, the state's Climate Impact Assessment, and HUD's "Designing for Natural Hazards."

Internationally, Azaroff collaborates on climate strategies, including recent efforts in Moldova and Türkiye. With over 30 years of global experience, he advances equitable and resilient design solutions worldwide. He holds numerous leadership roles, serving as the 2026 AIA National President and as a member of the AIA National Board of Directors, and has led AIA delegations to COP-30 in Brazil and COP-28, while serving as an AIA delegate to COP-27.



**JAHAE KOO, AIA, LEED AP**  
**Sr. Director and Head of the In-House Design Studio,**  
**Architecture & Engineering**

Jahae Koo, AIA is a Senior Director and Head of the In-House Design Studio of NYCSCA, which is responsible for designing over 40% of new schools, additions, and modernizations for grades K-12. The In-House Design Studio is the only authority that designs its own new buildings from concept through construction. Ms. Koo has over 30 years of experience in design and leads her studio with an emphasis on design excellence and environmental stewardship.

Ms. Koo manages over 195 in-house architects, engineers, managers, and administrative staff, leading their efforts in successfully designing sustainable institutional buildings. During her six-year tenure at SCA, she has managed hundreds of Capital Improvement Projects, and over 15 new school designs. One of her studio's newest designs is the Annex school at Governors Island, the first new building built on the island in decades, with a progressive façade design showcasing an NCAA competition sized pools, aquaculture labs and hydroponic labs. Ms. Koo is also pioneering the use of AR technology in massing studies during schematic designs to better understand neighboring sites and deploying the use of lidar and AR technology in monitoring construction for accuracy against contract documents. Prior to joining SCA, Ms. Koo established her practice focusing on mixed used developments with priority on building community and cultural centers. Her innovative outlook and placemaking ideas stem from spending several years with renowned architect David Rockwell of the Rockwell Group. Her prior experience includes Senior Associate at Helpert Architects and Design Director at BL Companies and AECOM. She received a Bachelor of Architecture degree from Cornell University. She is an AIA member of the New York Chapter, LEED AP and a Certified Passive House Designer. Ms. Koo's approach to design has set the standard for her studio, resulting in the creation of building environments that nourish healthy and curious minds.



**MANAN KHALID P.E., LEED AP BD+C**  
**Director, Building Envelope Unit, In-House Design Studio,**  
**Architecture & Engineering**

Manan Khalid has been with the NYCSCA since 2008. He began his career in the Design Consultant Management Studio and transitioned to the In-House Design Studio in 2010 as a Managing Engineer, where he led a team of more than 30 architects. Under his leadership, the unit was reorganized and successfully delivered nearly 200 projects, including gymnasium, auditorium, and library upgrades; full window replacements; playground improvements; and the design of numerous athletic fields. He also managed the design of R070, a new school building on Staten Island. In 2018, Manan was appointed Director of the newly established Building Envelope Unit. Under his leadership, the unit has become the largest contributor toward the agency's 40% in-house design mandate. The unit designs and supports construction for some of the largest and most complex building envelope projects in SCA's portfolio, averaging approximately \$500 million in design turnover per cycle, while simultaneously supporting between \$1 billion and \$1.5 billion worth of projects under construction.

In addition, Manan oversees the Structural Design Unit, which has evolved into one of the most qualified and highly skilled units within the organization. The 12-person team designs and supports a substantial portfolio of Capacity and CIP projects, including all in-house electrification projects. Prior to joining the SCA, Manan worked with the New York City Department of Transportation's Bureau of Bridges, the Office of Construction Mitigation and Control at NYCDOT, and the New York City Housing Authority. He has been actively involved in developing policies, technical guidelines, and training presentations aimed at strengthening staff capacity and improving the efficiency and quality of design delivery.

Manan holds a master's degree in civil engineering and has completed postgraduate studies in infrastructure rehabilitation and leadership at the NYU Polytechnic School of Engineering and Baruch College in New York. He is a licensed Professional Engineer in New York State and a LEED AP BD+C.



### **ASHRAF ELIAS, P.E., LEED AP BD+C**

#### **Director of Operations and Small Business Consulting Unit Studio, Architecture & Engineering**

Ashraf Elias is a highly accomplished engineering executive with nearly four decades of experience in architecture, engineering, and construction management in the United States and internationally. He has successfully managed a wide range of educational, residential, commercial, transportation, and governmental projects from concept through closeout.

As Director of the Operations and Small Business Consulting Unit Studio within the Architecture & Engineering Division at the NYCSCA, Mr. Elias plays a critical leadership role in advancing the planning, design, and delivery of capital projects that support the nation's largest public school system. Mr. Elias's portfolio includes new school buildings, additions, Capital Improvement Program (CIP) projects, RESO A projects, and LSP and CTF projects, with cumulative project values exceeding \$1 billion across both the private sector and NYCSCA.

In his current role, Mr. Elias is responsible for managing and guiding Minority and Women-Owned Business Enterprise (MWBE) professional consultants through the Design Opportunity Partnership Program (DOPP), supporting them in the scoping and design of school modernization projects. In addition, he oversees the operational management of the entire Architecture & Engineering Department. He leads multidisciplinary teams of Design Managers (DM) and Design Project Managers (DPM), ensuring technical excellence, fiscal accountability, schedule adherence, regulatory compliance, and effective interagency coordination. Mr. Elias also coordinates targeted training initiatives in collaboration with the Building Development Department (BDD) to strengthen consultant performance and project delivery outcomes. He has been instrumental in developing and implementing standardized processes, consultant fee structures, and performance metrics that enhance consistency, transparency, and accountability across large capital programs. Prior to joining NYCSCA, Mr. Elias served at STV Inc., where he managed the design of major projects for NYCSCA, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the New York City Transit Authority, the Office of General Services, the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, and the New Jersey School Development Authority.

A licensed Professional Engineer, Mr. Elias is a LEED AP BD+C and a Certified Passive House Designer (CPHD), reflecting his long-standing commitment to sustainability, energy efficiency, and high-performance building design. Throughout his career, he has been recognized for his integrity, strategic leadership, and dedication to public service, continuing to support NYCSCA's mission to deliver safe, sustainable, and high-quality educational facilities for New York City students.



**CALEB CRAWFORD, AIA, LEED AP BD+C**  
**Director of Sustainable Design and Resiliency**

Caleb Crawford is the Director of Sustainable Design and Resiliency at the NYCSCA. Crawford comes to the SCA from private practice, where he was a partner in the award-winning firm Coggan + Crawford Architecture + Design. He has taught design and sustainability at many institutions, including Pratt Institute and City College. Mr. Crawford is a registered architect in New York State, a Certified Passive House Designer, and a LEED AP BD+C. Mr. Crawford

studied fine arts at the University of Michigan and film at Hunter College before completing a Bachelor of Architecture degree at Pratt Institute. He went on to complete a Master of Architecture degree at the Southern California Institute of Architecture (SCI-Arc).



**AILEEN DEL PRADO, P.E., LEED AP BD+C**  
**Sr. Director, Design Consultant Management CIP Studio,**  
**Architecture & Engineering**

Aileen del Prado, P.E., is the Senior Director of the Design Consultant Management CIP Studio within the Architecture & Engineering Department at the NYCSCA. She supervises a team of project management professionals who manage hundreds of architectural and engineering design consultants. Projects managed by the DCMS CIP Studio include building envelopes, MEP

upgrades such as building electrification (including HVAC upgrades and low voltage systems), as well as RESO A projects.

Aileen has been with the SCA for over 20 years and has been directly involved in some of the agency's most important projects and initiatives, including the HS Restructuring Program, IPDVS Program, Capital Task Force Program, the Superstorm Sandy Projects, the UPK Initiative and the 3K Initiative. One of her proudest achievements came as the Design Manager for 62 Richmond in Staten Island, NYC's first net-zero school, which has won multiple awards internationally and served as the SCA's sustainability lab.

Prior to the SCA, Aileen started her career at the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey as a structural engineer and project manager on multiple infrastructure and transportation projects at various tunnels, bridges, terminals, rail stations and airports. Aileen is a New York State Licensed Professional Engineer and a LEED Accredited Professional in Building Design and Construction (AP BD+C). She received both her Bachelor of Engineering and Master of Engineering degrees in Civil Engineering from Manhattan College, where she was the recipient of the De La Salle Medal for Civil Engineering and was president of the Chi Epsilon Civil Engineering Honor Society.



## **KEISHANNA DENNIS**

### **Sr. Director of Procurement & Contract Administration, Operations**

Keishanna Dennis is a seasoned public-sector leader with more than sixteen years of experience strengthening procurement, contracting, and operational systems across New York City government. As Sr. Director of Procurement & Contract Administration, Operations at the NYCSCA, she oversees key procurement functions that support the delivery of safe, modern, and high-quality learning environments for students citywide. In this role, she leads six specialized teams, guiding policy implementation, compliance, vendor integrity, and strategic sourcing efforts that are essential to the agency's mission.

Keishanna's career reflects a deep commitment to public service and organizational excellence. Before joining the SCA, she held leadership roles at the NYC Department of Design and Construction and the NYC Department of Housing Preservation & Development, where she advanced supplier diversity initiatives, improved procurement processes, and strengthened the governance structures that support major city programs and capital investments. She has broadened her expertise in alternative project delivery and construction procurement through completion of the Design Build Institute of America (DBIA) 3-Day Design Build Training Program. Keishanna is also pursuing her Doctor of Education in Leadership and Innovation degree at NYU Steinhardt, where her scholarship centers on systems thinking, organizational improvement, and public-sector innovation. Across her roles, Keishanna remains focused on building strong teams, elevating operational standards, and ensuring that procurement practices advance equity, integrity, and long-term value for New York City's communities.



## **LOIS E.P. FAHIE, ESQ.**

### **Director of Operations, Business Development**

Lois E.P. Fahie, Esq., is the Director of Operations for the NYCSCA Business Development Department (BDD). As Director of Operations, Lois is responsible for MWLBE certification and oversight, as well as the administration of the SCA's Opportunity Academy, an innovative workforce development program that provides back-office support to construction industry professionals. Lois started with the SCA in 2008 as the Manager of Operations for the Labor Law Compliance Division. Prior to her work at the SCA, Lois worked as the Director of AIDS Housing with the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene and as the Director of Contracted Personnel for the New York City Department of Housing, Preservation and Development (HPD). As an attorney, Lois has represented the United States Virgin Islands as an Assistant Attorney General in criminal and civil proceedings and served as Legal Counsel for the Virgin Islands Housing Authority. Lois earned a Bachelor of Arts degree from Fordham University and a Juris Doctor Degree from Tulane Law School and is admitted to practice law in New York State.



## **RICARDO FORDE**

**Sr. Manager in Operations, Prequalification Division**

Ricardo Forde is a Senior Manager in the Operations unit of the Prequalification Division at the NYCSCA. He has been with the SCA for over 26 years, with experience spanning Contract Administration (Procurement) and Contractor Prequalification. In his current role, Mr. Forde supports the review of contractor eligibility and responsibility, helping ensure that firms meet the Authority's requirements to perform work on SCA projects. His background in

both procurement and prequalification contributes to consistent, transparent, and well-informed contracting decisions across the SCA's capital program.





AVENUE STREET

# KEYNOTE SPEAKERS



## **JEAN-CLAUDE BRIZARD**

**President and CEO  
Digital Promise Global**

Jean-Claude Brizard is President and CEO of Digital Promise Global, a global, nonpartisan, nonprofit organization focused on shaping the future of learning and advancing equitable education systems by bridging solutions across research, practice, and technology. He is a former Senior Advisor and Deputy Director at the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation where he focused on PK-16 education. He has also led several strategies supporting Washington State's educational system. The Carnegie Corporation of New York honored Brizard in the 2023 class of "Great Immigrants, Great Americans," a prestigious honor celebrating naturalized citizens who have enriched and strengthened our society. He received the distinguished Aspen Institute 2024 John P. McNulty Prize for his work with Anseye Pou Haiti. The award recognizes courageous leaders tackling critical issues, from environmental injustice and disaster recovery to addressing a national crisis of leadership and education.

He is former Chief Executive of Chicago Public Schools. Prior to his appointment in Chicago, he was Superintendent of Schools for the Rochester, NY School District. Mr. Brizard's experience also includes a 21-year career as an educator and administrator with the NYC Department of Education. He served as a Regional Superintendent, supervising more than 100 schools in the Borough of Brooklyn and he also served as the system's Executive Director for its 400 secondary schools. He is a Fellow of the Broad Center, a Fellow of the Pahara-Aspen Institute, and a member of the Aspen Institute Global Leadership Network.



## **MICHAEL W. BISCHOFF, AIA, LEED AP**

**Partner  
Pei Cobb Freed & Partners**

Michael Bischoff has devoted much of his practice to the creation of meaningful campus environments for institutional, university, and corporate clients. He has served as a lead designer for projects ranging from facilities at academic institutions across the country—most recently UCLA, Princeton, and Quinnipiac—to corporate campuses in Kansas City, Santa Clara, Orange County, and Sarasota, as well as Amsterdam and Bangalore. He is currently leading the design of NYCSCA's St. John Villa campus on Staten Island, which includes three new school buildings, a regulation athletic field, and a community learning center housed in a historic chapel.

Michael was an early proponent of sustainable strategies, an interest developed during his work on the pioneering AAAS headquarters, the first building in Washington DC to be certified LEED Platinum EB. He has continued to guide his firm's sustainable design initiatives and directs its participation in the AIA 2030 Commitment. In addition to his professional practice, Michael plays an active role within the academic community and has served as a mentor and design critic at numerous universities.



MORRIS HIGH SCHOOL

# EVENT PROGRAM

8:00am - 8:50am **NETWORKING BREAKFAST AND REGISTRATION**

8:50am - 8:55am **WELCOME REMARKS**

Presenter: **Nina Kubota, SCA CEO/President**  
Location: Auditorium

8:55am - 8:58am **ARCHITECTURAL INDUSTRY REMARKS – THE IMPORTANCE OF DESIGN**

Presenter: **Illya Azaroff, American Institute of Architects  
National President**  
Location: Auditorium

8:58am - 9:30am **PIVOTING TO DESIGN EXCELLENCE AT THE SCA**

Presenter: **Thierry Paret, SCA A&E Vice President**  
Location: Auditorium

9:30am - 10:30am **DESIGNING THE ST. JOHN VILLA CAMPUS**

Presenter: **Michael Bischoff, Design Partner, Pei Cobb Freed**  
Location: Auditorium

**COFFEE/REST BREAK – 10:30AM – 10:45AM**

10:45am - 12:00pm **THE AGE OF HUMAN INTELLIGENCE: IMPLICATIONS FOR DESIGN**

Presenter: **Jean-Claude Brizard, Digital Promise, President & CEO  
(10:45am - 11:35am)**  
**Fireside Chat with Jean-Claude Brizard, Michael Bischoff  
and Thierry Paret (11:35am – 12:00pm)**  
Location: Auditorium

**LUNCH – 12:00PM – 1:00PM | LOCATION: CAFETERIA – FIFTH FLOOR**



**2026 SCA DESIGN EXCELLENCE & NETWORKING FORUM**

1:00pm - 1:45pm

### **BREAKOUT SESSION 1:**

#### **HOW TO DO BUSINESS WITH THE NYCSCA**

##### **MWBE CERTIFICATION**

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Presenters: **Keishanna Dennis, Ricardo Forde, and Lois Fahie**  
Location: First Floor Black Box Room (Adjacent to Auditorium)

**This breakout session is designed for prospective and new consultants and covers types of contracts and procurement requirements to do business with the NYCSCA.**

1:00pm - 1:45pm

### **BREAKOUT SESSION 2A:**

#### **WORKING WITH THE SCA ON CAPACITY PROJECTS**

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Presenters: **Austin Harris, Jahae Koo, and Caleb Crawford**  
Location: Auditorium

**This breakout session is designed to educate prospective and existing vendors about NYCSCA's design standards and expectations for contractors.**

### **COFFEE/REST BREAK – 1:45PM – 2:00PM**

2:00pm - 2:45pm

### **BREAKOUT SESSION 2B:**

#### **WORKING WITH THE SCA ON CIP PROJECTS**

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Presenters: **Aileen del Prado, Ashraf Elias, and Manan Khalid**  
Location: Auditorium

**This breakout session is designed to educate contractors about how to effectively partner with the SCA on CIP projects.**

2:45pm - 3:30pm

### **CONSULTANT SPEED DATING NETWORKING SESSION – OPTIONAL**

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Location: Auditorium Pre-function Area on First and Second Floor

### **EVENT CLOSEOUT – 3:30PM**



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# **THANK YOU FOR ATTENDING!**

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