



May 30, 2023

Marcel Quimby, FAIA  
Chair, Honor Awards Committee  
Texas Society of Architects  
500 Chicon Street  
Austin, TX 78702-2754

RE: Nomination of Darren James, FAIA for the Award for Community Service in Honor of James D. Pfluger, FAIA

Dear Mrs. Quimby and Distinguished Jury,

The AIA Dallas Community Honors Award Committee and Board of Directors unanimously nominate Darren L. James, FAIA for the 2023 Texas Society of Architects' Award for Community Service in Honor of James D. Pfluger, FAIA. Darren's dedication to his community has distinguished him as a true servant-leader in Dallas, the North Texas metro area, and throughout the state of Texas.

Darren's experience in service and the built environment began when he was young. He is generous, sharing his experiences and values daily. He fosters open dialogue in all activities he undertakes. This authenticity is the key to his ability to connect with people from a broad range of industries and walks of life.

It takes passion to animate these values and Darren has shown an enormous passion for engaging with multiple communities at many levels. This intrinsic motivation to connect with others is a valuable, rare quality that cannot be underestimated in today's society.

Economists often discuss the network effect, where the value of a service is enhanced by the size of the community that uses it. The authenticity and passion that have defined Darren's community service are a special combination that multiplies their impact. He has touched many lives directly, and even more by building friendships and alliances grounded in the value of design. More importantly, his authenticity and passion bring a vibrancy to service that strengthens our profession and builds stronger communities. We believe it is critical to recognize these well-earned achievements and to help Darren continue building.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kate Aoki'.

Kate Aoki, AIA  
President, AIA Dallas



**DARREN L. JAMES, FAIA**

**TxA HONOR AWARD NOMINEE 2023**

Award for Community Service in Honor of James D. Pfluger FAIA

Darren L. James, FAIA, NOMA, NCARB is President and equity partner for KAI Enterprises, a 155-person national design and construction services firm with offices nationwide. In his role, Darren is accountable for corporate marketing and strategic growth including individualized approaches for each of KAI Enterprises' four companies and Dallas/Fort Worth Executive & Civic Leadership.

**Darren seeks the most complex, culturally conscious, politically sensitive projects that provide lasting differences in the lives of those engaged with his design efforts.** Darren has been involved in some very important projects throughout his multi-decade career. He is most pleased by the outcomes from those that truly changed the narrative of communities, residents and patrons around creations such as: South Oak Cliff High School in Dallas, Reby Carey Youth & Family Library in Fort Worth, Walnut Park Branch Library in St. Louis, Billy Earl Dade Middle School in Dallas, and Dr. Robert L.M. Hilliard Center – University Health in San Antonio. Darren has been honored to work across the country on projects named for prominent Americans and more specifically eighteen national or local Black civic, political, social and educational trailblazers. In the midst of his distinguished career Darren was recognized by his national colleagues and elevated to the American Institute of Architects College of

Fellows in 2019. As an entrepreneur, architect and servant leader, Darren has spoken at national conferences and seminars. Darren is especially honored that KAI received AIA Dallas' 2021 Firm of The Year.



Darren was named one of D CEO Magazine's 2023 500 Most Influential Business Leaders in North Texas for the third consecutive year, 2022 Elite News Dr. R.E. Price Meritorious Service Award, recipient of the 2021 TxA Award for Equitable Practice in Architecture in honor of John S. Chase, Jr., a 2022 Dallas Black Chamber of Commerce Quest for Success recipient, and a 2021 KU Black Alumni Network's Mike and Joyce Shinn Leaders and Innovators Award.

In addition to KAI Enterprises, Darren serves as the inaugural President & Chair of Fair Park First, the non-profit selected to manage the National Historic Landmark, Fair Park - Dallas. Fair Park First was named D CEO's 2021 Non-Profit of the Year. He serves on the Board of Directors for the Dallas Citizen's Council, and Trinity Park Conservancy. Darren was named Chair Emeritus after completing his sixth term as presiding Chair of the Dallas Black Chamber of Commerce. Darren was appointed to the Texas Board of Architectural Examiners by Texas Governor Abbott in 2020.

As the Fair Park First President of the Board, his vision for inclusive conversations led to converting 56 acres of the existing 277-acre Fair Park to green space for a new Community Park and other public attractions as well and overseeing a \$750M campus-wide capital investment and revitalization program. Darren was instrumental in galvanizing legislative support to create two new state law changes providing previously untapped funds upwards of \$300M+ for Fair Park and in engaging former President George W. and First Lady Laura Bush as Co-Chairs for his philanthropic efforts. Darren believes in providing opportunity and mentoring for young people and seasoned professionals of all persuasions, especially young people of color interested in entering the design profession by providing advice on preparatory academic and development activities.

## International Relations

*Community Conversations Across the World*

### ISRAEL

**Mansour Abbas** | Knesset Member

**Naama Lazimi** | Knesset Member

**Yaakov Katz** | Editor-in-Chief: *The Jerusalem Post*

**Lt. Col. (res.) Jonathan Conricus** | Israel Defense Forces (IDF) – Black Arrow Former IDF Spokesman

**Amos Harel** | Middle East analyst, author and journalist

**Roni Keidar** | Settlement resident

**Shay Rosenzweig** | Head of the Local Council for Alfei Menashe (West Bank Settlement)

**Capt. (res.) Ilan Shulman** | Former IDF Paratrooper

**Col. (res.) Adv. Daniel Reisner** | Former Head of International Law Branch of the IDF

### PALESTINE

**Mohammad Shtayyeh** | Minister of the Palestinian Economic Council

### QUEBEC CITY, QUEBEC

**Danielle Monosson** | Consul General U.S. Embassy and Consulates in Canada

**Salim Yaye** | Quebec International

**Felix-Antoine Chavanelle** | Quebec International

## Professional History

**KAI Enterprises** | 2005-Present | President

**Texas Woman's University** | 2002- 2005 | University Architect/Asst. Director Construction

**Kennedy Associates/Architects, Inc.** (dba KAI Design & Build) | 1996-2002 | Architect

**By Design/Kansas City** | 1992-1995 | Graduate Architect

## Non-Profit Board Service

<b>Fair Park First</b>   President of the Board	2018-Present
<b>Dallas Citizen's Council</b>   Board Chair (2016-2022)	2017-Present
<b>Dallas Black Chamber of Commerce</b>	2007-Present
<b>Texas Board of Architectural Examiners</b> Appointed by Governor Abbott Secretary Treasurer	2020-Present
<b>Trinity Park Conservancy</b> Community Engagement Inclusive Neighborhood Committee Chair	2017-Present
<b>Fort Worth Metropolitan Black Chamber of Commerce</b>	2022-Present
<b>Paul Laurence Dunbar Young Men's Leadership Academy Advisory Council</b>	2017-Present
<b>Dallas Black Chamber – Center for Excellence (c6)</b> Board Chair (2016 – 2022)	2016-2022
<b>Dallas Regional Chamber of Commerce</b>	2016-2022
<b>VISIT Dallas</b>	2016-2019
<b>Dallas Arboretum</b>	2011-2017
<b>Dallas Center for Architecture Foundation</b>	2008-2017
<b>Big Brothers Big Sisters/Dallas County</b> Board Chair (2010-2011)	2007-2013
<b>Community Council of Great Dallas</b> Vice President of the Board (2008-2009)	2006-2009
<b>Oak Cliff Chamber of Commerce</b>	2013-2017
<b>Regional Black Contractors Association</b>	2012-2017
<b>Lone Star Investment Advisors Board of Advisors</b>	2017-2020
<b>The Real Estate Council</b>   Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Chair	2020-2022
<b>After8toEducate Advisory Council</b>	2017-2018
<b>U. of Kansas School of Architecture Advisory Board</b>	2001-2012

## Professional Recognition

<b>2023</b>	<b>Dallas 500: The Most Powerful Business Leaders in Dallas-Fort Worth</b>   <i>D CEO Magazine (D CEO)</i>
<b>2023</b>	<b>Top Places to Work (KAI)</b>   <i>St. Louis Post-Dispatch (SLPD)</i>
<b>2022</b>	<b>2021 Firm of the Year</b>   <i>AIA Dallas</i>
<b>2022</b>	<b>Dallas 500: The Most Powerful Business Leaders in Dallas-Fort Worth</b>   <i>D CEO</i>
<b>2022</b>	<b>Commercial Real Estate Awards Finalist</b>   <i>D CEO</i>
<b>2022</b>	<b>Quest for Success Award Winner</b>   <i>Dallas Black Chamber of Commerce</i>
<b>2022</b>	<b>"Dallas Boss Alert! Start Building with Issue's Dallas Boss Darren James"</b>   <i>Dallas Boss Magazine Summer 2022 Momentum Edition Cover Feature</i>
<b>2022</b>	<b>Dr. R.E. Price Meritorious Service Award</b>   <i>Elite News</i>
<b>2022</b>	<b>Top Places to Work (KAI)</b>   <i>SLPD</i>
<b>2021</b>	<b>Award for Equitable Practice in Architecture in Honor of John S. Chase Jr. FAIA</b>   <i>TxA</i>
<b>2021</b>	<b>Mike &amp; Joyce Shinn Leaders &amp; Innovators Award</b>   <i>U. of Kansas Black Alumni Network</i>
<b>2021</b>	<b>Dallas 500: The Most Powerful Business Leaders in Dallas-Fort Worth</b>   <i>D CEO</i>
<b>2021</b>	<b>Nonprofit and Corporate Citizenship Award: Organization of the Year (Midsize) (Fair Park First)</b>   <i>D CEO</i>
<b>2021</b>	<b>Top Places to Work (KAI)</b>   <i>SLPD</i>

**Leadership Award** | *Vistage Member Excellence Awards, Showcased in Vistage Perspectives Magazine Issue 8, Fall 2021*

**Diversity and Inclusion Excellence Award in the Mid-Sized Contractor Category Winner (KAI)** | *Association of General Contractors*

**2020** **FAIR PARK Master Plan Update** | *Executive Summary Co-Author*

**Award for Justice, Equity, Diversity & Inclusion: Tulsa Housing Authority Envision Comanche Master Plan (KAI)** | *NOMA NAACP Seed Awards*

**Unbuilt Dream/Study Award Winner: Fair Park Masterplan Update** | *GDPC Urban Design Awards*

**2019** **College of Fellows Investiture** | *American Institute of Architects*

**Sage Service Award** | *3T Ministries*

**Architect of the Year Award** | *Regional Black Contractors Association*

**2018** **Business Award** | *Inter-denominational Ministerial Alliance*

**William Sidney Pittman Award** | *Texas Assoc. of African American Chamber of Commerce*

**2017** **Professional Service Firm of the Year Finalist (KAI)** | *National Association of Minority Contractors - DFW*

**2015** **Star Award** | *Asian American Contractors Assoc.*

**Inaugural "The Herman Jerome Russell Award"** | *Regional Black Contractors Association*

**2014** **Dallas Business Journal Minority Business Leader** | *Dallas Bus. Journal*

**2012** **Luna Award Finalist** | *Regional Hispanic Contractors Association*



## Statement of Contributions

*Darren L. James, FAIA, NOMA, NCARB believes in transformational outcomes and community engagement leading to a collaborative vision. He leverages his passion for civic leadership and advocacy, architecture and non-profit trailblazing to improve the lives of the communities he serves.*

### Authenticity

Darren L. James, FAIA, NOMA believes in community-centric engagement because he has witnessed firsthand the power of community transformation throughout his life. As a child, Darren's father provided the spark to become an architect with a comment while Darren was playing with a construction toy called plates and girders. Darren determined at age six that architecture was his path and the profession he wanted to pursue, and he began to pay attention to his neighborhood and surrounding built environment as well as the similar communities of his extended families. Darren's initial observations were of well-maintained residential areas, but the main commercial corridors and public spaces appeared unkempt with a general lack of attention to detail, design and general maintenance and upkeep.

At the same time, Darren was exposed to the benefits of civic service through the example of his father and grandfather. Both were active Boy Scout troop leaders and his grandfather a lay leader in the local archdiocese. In addition to church and scout leadership, they both served on various boards, neighborhood and community organizations and were seen as leaders in their respective communities. His dad and grandfather made incremental and significant improvements through their active involvement in ways that made the lives of their neighbors better. They also unwittingly sparked an interest in civic service in Darren.

Observantly and by adjacency, Darren saw the influence and impact that civic and community involvement had on daily lives by giving voice to people who may have felt marginalized or unable to articulate their own individual concerns. **Watching his dad and grandfather, Darren saw a real impact and wanted to follow in their footsteps.**

*"Darren is one of those architects that goes the extra step by engaging the community in the design process. To him, it is more than a project; it is an event which starts with participation within the community."*

– Scott Layne, former Deputy Superintendent with Dallas ISD

In addition, Darren's mom and both his maternal and paternal grandmothers — all lifelong educators — ingrained in him awareness, insight and being a student of your surroundings from an early age. As he visited other cities and cultural destinations across the country he noticed a consistency of aesthetic approach and care for certain areas in particular neighborhoods defined by socio-economic demographics while other

areas of differing socio-economic levels had a greater attention to proportions, materiality, and natural light among other clever design principles.

This juxtaposition between communities was regularly reinforced through daily interactions and informed Darren's philosophy and approach to the practice of architecture and his role in shaping the future of communities; marginalized and otherwise. **Transforming communities is as much a mantra as a personal mission to leave each community stronger and better than it was before his involvement.** He genuinely believes he can bring his unique perspective providing creative solutions to the conversations about community improvement.

### Passion

*"Put your oar in the water; otherwise, the stream will take you wherever it flows, and you have no control over your journey."*

– KU School of Architecture Professor Harris Stone.

During a discussion about studio progress, Professor Stone stated that with all his gifts and talents, Darren appeared to let life dictate his course. From that point forward, Darren placed his oar in the stream and has steered and directed his life and taken that same perspective into his community engagement. Remembering the lessons of childhood and the frustration of seeing condescending and patronizing

approaches to certain communities, he could no longer float by without imparting his collective skillset on issues of the day with an eye to the future. **As a visionary strategist grounded in the principles of collaborative dialogue through the lens of architectural training and practice, he believed that he could assist and make communities stronger and better through strategic involvement.**

Darren began the journey of civic engagement through his Eagle Scout project of cleaning the grounds and façade of the historic Wilson Price Hunt house in Normandy, Missouri. Price Hunt built the home in 1906 and listed in the Missouri State Historical Survey in 1977, in the National Register of Historic Places in Washington D.C., 1980 and the Landmarks, St. Louis County, MO Historic Buildings Commission in 1984.

As a young professional in St. Louis, Darren embarked on seeking non-profit board service which led to two organizations, Places for People and a local non-profit that was acquired by Covenant House for unsheltered teenage girls. As a Board member of both organizations, the spark of non-profit service was ignited, and he dove in feet first.

When Darren relocated to the DFW area, he sought similar commitment and began a long line of Board service as Vice Chair of the Community Council of Greater Dallas, Board Chair of Big Brothers Big Sisters of Dallas County (nee Big Brothers Big Sisters Lone Star), Dallas Arboretum, Dallas Black Chamber of Commerce as longest serving chair in the 96-year history of the organization, Dallas Regional Chamber, Fort Worth Metropolitan Black Chamber and the Advisory Board for the Fort Worth ISD Young Men's Leadership Academy, the University of Kansas School of Architecture Advisory Board, Trinity Park Conservancy,

Dallas Citizen's Council, President of Fair Park First Board of Directors appointed by Governor Abbot and currently serving as Secretary/Treasurer for the Texas Board of Architectural Examiners.

## Impact

Intersectionality is present in every community Darren serves either through civic engagement or his firms' practice. In that regard, solutions and approaches have been and will continue to be multi-faceted. Darren welcomes this complexity, and he has not shied away from difficult assignments as Board Chairs of the non-profits he has led. **Community outcomes require people willing to roll up their sleeves and provide creative thought leadership, perseverance, and fortitude.** All of this is done with an eye to a better future and outcomes for the residents of his organizations and projects touch and influence.

Darren has taken no easy assignments:

Fair Park First as the 501c3 partner with the City of Dallas is tasked with engaging the **community, connecting** with other partners and symbiotic organizations, enhancing the **cultural** attractions, celebrating **innovations**, encouraging **exploration**, and fostering **activities** in and at the Fair Park. Fair Park is the 277-acre home to the State Fair of Texas, the largest State Fair in the Country, the Historic Cotton Bowl, the Hall of State, Broadway Dallas, Children's Aquarium, the Coliseum, Texas Discovery Gardens, KERA Radio, and other cultural attractions including Dos Equis Pavilion.

Serving as Chair of the Dallas Black Chamber of Commerce for six consecutive terms in and of itself is a herculean fete. He has served the longest tenure on record, elected unanimously for two terms and then

## Statement of Contributions

subsequently elected for five additional one-year terms. ***The Chamber serves as an advocate for the creation, growth and general welfare of Black-owned businesses and organizations across North Texas.***

*"Darren's leadership, service and passion for building communities has made a lasting impact on the future of Dallas."*

– Katrina Keyes, CEO, K Strategies;  
Former Vice Chair, Dallas Black Chamber of Commerce

Darren's community focus does not stop at the door to KAI. During this past fall, October 2022, he initiated a new firm ten-year goal to **Transform 100 Communities in Ten Years**. He pursues the most complex, culturally-conscious, politically-sensitive projects that will make lasting differences in the lives he touches. He encourages his team to work with local organizations making a difference in the lives of their fellow neighbors. Through mentorship, development, passion, and focused career paths, he seeks to pour into the lives of his team so that they can grow to become the professionals and citizens they envision.

The convergence of community engagement and professional implementation is intertwined in Darren's personal philosophy and approach to life. Lift those that need assistance while recognizing you stand on the shoulders of those that came before. No one person is an island, but everyone has a part to play to make our community as strong as we can. If not me then who? We must all lean in. Darren's example of servant leadership

is being passed down to his mentees, his staff, his children, and other professionals in the community.

In his work with TBAE and thought leadership exhibited nationally through active participation at NCARB conferences, he has demonstrated his influence in two key areas. In the San Antonio market, he was instrumental in advocating for MWBE firms that previously were on the periphery but are now participating in much more substantial and meaningful ways. Additionally, the model he has created of encouraging active parental, student and residential voices on his high school and apartment community work has been adopted by clients and shared as best practices for others to follow.

*"I have had the pleasure of knowing and working with Darren James since the beginning of San Antonio's Eastside Promise Zone in 2014. He is a visionary, community-oriented, and committed to improving quality of life in disadvantaged communities. His architectural work has greatly contributed to the renaissance of the Eastside Promise Zone."*

– Mike Etienne, City of San Antonio

Darren's work, process and journey is available for others to follow, and he freely shares through speaking engagements at A4LE conferences in Virginia and Texas as well as NOMA conferences in Detroit and Nashville. Darren's roadmap is available to make our communities

viable and participatory in the economic cycles seen from afar but unattainable for some. His community-focused approach is predicated on opening doors and eyes, raising awareness, and providing collaborative avenues to solving difficult concerns.

**Darren seeks projects that can transform underserved and under-resourced communities as catalytic projects that infuse energy and good design while breathing life into the existing fabric of the neighborhood.**

### **Case Study: San Antonio Eastside Promise Zone**

Once a thriving community, the Eastside of San Antonio has experienced hard times. With high unemployment and poverty rates in this predominately African-American community, it was designated by President Barack Obama as a Promise Zone, a national place-based initiative designed to revitalize distressed neighborhoods. Darren felt it was imperative that he be part of the transformation but knew a single project would not truly move the needle. For the community to be healthier than when he arrived, **Darren looked at the entire Eastside area holistically where each subsequent project builds upon the success of the preceding.**

Through Darren's direct efforts working in concert with local civic leaders and organizations, the underserved neighborhood is making a comeback. He successfully completed four key projects: a high school, apartments, a credit union headquarters and community-based clinic — all leveraging each other, providing services long vacant from this area of town.

## **Statement of Contributions**



Community Engagement

### **Community Involvement**

Darren became an architect because he saw a need to make his community better. But he realized early in his career that transforming communities involves more than the design and development of new buildings and public spaces. Civic leadership is the true catalyst that makes a difference in the community. He has leveraged his many civic leadership positions to advocate for inclusion of all citizens in all facets of the business, health, education and residential economic sectors. Inclusion and equity permeate Darren's involvement in the community, and he regularly lends his voice to disparities in underserved communities.

Darren's work continues today with participation in CEO conversations about race, diversity, inclusion and opportunity. His leadership in the community as a respected voice carries weight as he was invited to Mark Cuban's "Courageous Conversation" held June 9, 2020, at the American Airlines Center. He continues to meet with Mayor Eric Johnson ensuring minority businesses are included in any recovery plans. He additionally authored two opinion pieces during the unparalleled pandemic season.

## Building Communities

As an architect, Darren's belief in transforming communities transcends buildings into true partnership with the surrounding businesses and residents. He is one of the most trusted voices in North Texas with a national impact. He is a respected civic leader and business mentor to emerging and established entrepreneurs. **Darren explains his community-based design philosophy by stating, "Your dollar is just as valuable as any other in this city, regardless of ZIP code."** From that introduction, neighbors understand Darren's approach is different. **He consistently delivers high quality design in the toughest, most underserved neighborhoods, ensuring the same design sensitivity is demonstrated regardless of neighborhood demographics and economies.**

There is a universal truth Darren acknowledges in all of his projects — if you respect the neighborhood and residents, they will trust and participate in the process, even after years of distrust. That truth has been demonstrated time and time again, shattering status quo and leading to better environments with well-designed buildings in neighborhoods where beauty is hard to come by. Darren's ability to calm the loud voices



Darren responded to a call for mentors to teach young men how to tie and wear a necktie at South Oak Cliff High, a project benefiting from his community leadership.

in contentious projects is noteworthy, leading him to choose the most complex, inflamed community projects and then resolve the conflict

through thoughtful design solutions. In that regard he has worked on South Oak Cliff High School, Highland Hills Branch Library both in southern Dallas, the Martin Luther King, Jr. Natatorium and Community Center in Atlanta, Northwest High School in Omaha, NE, the Reby Carey Youth Library in Fort Worth, the Dr. Robert L.M. Hilliard Community Clinic and the Promise Zone in San Antonio, as well as the Villas on the Strand in Galveston.

### Case Study: Dallas ISD South Oak Cliff (SOC) High School

Because of his proven leadership and influence, Darren was offered his choice of Dallas Independent School District assignments. He chose the most controversial project in the 2015 Bond Package mired in the most conflict — South Oak Cliff High School, originally built in 1952.

Previous renovation programs insufficiently addressed all of the deferred maintenance needs. The situation reached a boiling point December 2015 when students walked-out in protest of the deplorable conditions. The educational spaces were inadequate and below the technology standards of other schools in the district.

The passion of the students motivated parents and the alumni association into action demanding a better school facility, soon attracting local and national media. The community's frustration and distrust, fueled by years of failed renovations and broken promises, led to vocal disruptions at DISD board meetings, prompting the school board to act. A 2015 Bond allocated \$9 Million to the renovations at South Oak Cliff High School, but the budget was woefully insufficient to fix previous renovations while addressing the lack of educational equity.

## Statement of Contributions

Community meetings were not civil. There were screaming matches and name calling that tried the patience of both sides. Darren led these meetings, standing in the middle of conflict answering countless questions from students, parents and community leaders. **His empathic listening and supportive suggestions calmed the community. They were distrustful of the district, but they were convinced Darren would fight and advocate for the school.**

*"Darren L. James has been instrumental in providing support to the South Oak Cliff High School community. Whenever called upon, Darren and his team have unselfishly donated their time and resources. We now consider him a part of the SOC Nation!"*

- Elvis Williams, Former Principal, SOC

Without a contract, Darren and two KAI staff members participated in 3-day charrette to ensure continuity in planning once an agreement was in place. It was immediately clear that the many deficiencies necessitated a full school replacement. Darren worked diligently to increase the budget from the revised earmark of \$13 Million, past the promised \$25 Million, to a final total project budget of \$52 Million. The recommended renovations Darren proposed ensures this legacy high school can restore the rich academic and athletic tradition to the Oak Cliff community.



## Exhibit: Fair Park First Board of Directors

Darren has been the only President of the Corporation and Board of Directors for Fair Park First, the c3 Non-Profit in agreement with the City of Dallas for Private Management of Fair Park. Fair Park is the 277-acre crown jewel of the Dallas Parks & Recreation Department's municipal parks system. It is home to the State Fair of Texas, the largest and longest in the United States and the largest collection of single-owner art deco buildings and art in the United States. In addition to the State Fair, Fair Park is also home to 7 other resident cultural institutions; African American Museum, Dallas Historical Society, Daughters of American Revolution, Broadway Dallas, WRR Classical Radio, and Texas Discovery Gardens. Fair Park is a National Historic Landmark and hosted the 1936 World's Exposition in coordination with Texas' Centennial and is prepared to host a variety of new activities and events.

Fair Park was founded in 1904 and over the last 119 years has seen many ebbs and flows. In 2013, after years of deferred maintenance and exodus of other cultural attractions, former Mayor Mike Rawlings initiated a Task Force to study the future of Fair Park. One suggestion was to turn over daily management and operations to a non-profit and let them exercise a new vision to re-ignite people's imaginations and interest in the park. Fair Park First was chosen after a competitive selection process to lead the charge in 2018. **Darren took over leadership of the non-profit shortly after incorporation and has been the inaugural and only President of the organization since June 2018.**

During his tenure, he has led the formation and growth of the board; established four pillars: activation, community culture and history; stood up a start-up organization; hired a CEO/ED; created a rebrand and new identity; established a marketing campaign; completed a 300-page Master Plan update; developed a 1,000-page feasibility study for eight campus buildings; reconnected the various cultural institutions that were uncoordinated and working in silos; launched a capital



Bandshell Rendering

campaign; hired internationally-recognized and award-winning firms; reconnected and established new connections with the surrounding neighborhoods that had been neglected for sixty plus years; launched a \$160 million Capital Campaign; and changed State Law to include Fair Park in a taxing structure to benefit bills through the Brimer Bill/Prop A initiative. The Prop A Hotel Tax Revenue should net Fair Park approximately \$300+M for capital improvements to six buildings on campus. Those buildings are the historic Cotton Bowl, Band Shell, Coliseum, Automobile & Centennial Buildings and the Music Hall.

Additionally, Darren has presided over the introduction of four new tenants to the Park ZoOceanarium: operator of the Children's Aquarium, the Dallas Sports Commission, KERA public broadcast, and Texas State Representative D100 Vinton Jones' community-based offices. He was also instrumental in bringing the Rolling Stones and Mick Jagger back to the park for the first concert at the Cotton Bowl in 25 years, Cold Play's North American Tour Launch with H.E.R. as the opening act, and Karol G Labor Day weekend concert. The Cotton Bowl is back on the concert circuit and was ranked the 31st most attractive concert venue in the world last year. As Mick Jagger toured the grounds, he visited the African American Museum and was amazed by

its incredible collection. Chris Martin, lead singer of Coldplay, publicly stated he loved the intimacy of the Cotton Bowl and imagined a host of other entertainers would like the size and feel.

Fair Park First also hosted six international soccer matches including a CONCACAF Gold Cup friendly match between FC Barcelona and Juventus, and the United States' first professional volleyball league uses the recently renovated Coliseum as the home of the entire league.

Finally, Darren and his team are responsible for delivering on a 60-year-old promise to provide a neighborhood park accessible and available year-round gratis. Once the State Fair descends upon Fair Park, it is typically unavailable for free activities. **This new neighborhood park will address this unmet verbal commitment from the 1960's when homes were taken through eminent domain.** Through an extensive community engagement process including over 750 different conversations and touch-points, the Master Plan update led to a location in the boundaries of Fair Park for a new neighborhood park and associated structure parking solution. The neighborhood park grew in scale and size with an additional 250 unique conversations related directly to its design. With over 18+ new acres of programmed park space inside the 277 acres, Fair Park has recognized that the size and scale of amenities is larger than a neighborhood park and now has named this area of Fair Park the **Community Park**. The Community Park will be open and free to use even during pay events with a relocation of the perimeter fence and open invitation to the immediately surrounding residents to visit and use all the various features and programming offered by Fair Park First. With 23 distinct neighborhoods around the park, engagement was decidedly non-traditional involving Darren convening in church basements, upper rooms in local restaurants, living and dining rooms of local residents and HOA and neighborhood meetings.

## Exhibit: Texas Board of Architectural Examiners

Darren serves on the Texas Board of Architectural Examiners. He was appointed by Governor Abbott in Fall of 2020. As his service on the board matured, he was elected to serve as the Secretary/Treasurer of the Board. In that capacity, he is responsible for officiating over the minutes and roll call for all members. He, along with the Board Chair and Vice Chair, signs all new Texas registrant Certificates on a quarterly basis for Architects, Interior Designers and Landscape Architects.

Darren has attended NCARB National and Regional Summits as a non-voting member representing the State of Texas for NCARB Region 3 during his current term on the board. During those meetings, he advocates for governance and policy issues and positions that affect the architectural profession locally, regionally, and nationally.

The TBAE Board meets on a regular schedule in person in Austin, TX with meetings open to the public. TBAE also administers the Architect Registration Examination Financial Assistance Fund (AREFAF). During the last two years at the Board's request and in a concerted effort among AIA and NOMA to close the registrant gap for women and minority candidates, TBAE has increased their social media and other outreach to NOMA, LIA, & AIA and universities across the State highlighting the grant opportunity for candidates seeking assistance.

**The Texas Board of Architectural Examiners (TBAE) exists to protect those who live, work, and play in the built environment of Texas. In practice, what that means is that TBAE oversees thousands of Architects, Landscape Architects, and Registered Interior Designers to ensure that they practice their profession honestly, ethically, and according to state regulations. To meet our regulatory obligations, we enforce the law as it is written by the Legislature.**  
([tbae.texas.gov/whatwedo/](http://tbae.texas.gov/whatwedo/))



TBAE - NCARB Regional Summit

## Exhibit: Dallas Citizens Council

Darren joined the Dallas Citizens Council in January 2016 as a member. As Board Chair of the Black Chamber, Board Member of the Dallas Regional Chamber and member of the Dallas Citizens Council, Mayor Mike Rawlings, former Mayor Leppert and the Chair of The Citizens Council asked Darren to testify before the Texas House Pensions Committee related to the Dallas Police and Fire Pension financial crisis in the spring of 2017. The resolution avoided a pension fund default in Dallas and also established precedent and a pathway for other municipalities across the State of Texas. Although this was a local issue resolution needing legislative change to modify policy, it brought about important change so that **all of the Dallas**



Texas House Testimony

**community could experience economic prosperity.** In 2018, Darren was asked to join the Dallas Citizens Council Board of Directors.

Darren has worked very closely with the last three DCC Chairs, Fred Perpall, FAIA, Rob C. Walters and Arcilia Acosta as well as CEO Kelvin Walker on a variety of community-based initiatives, such as a listening sessions with other ethnic chamber organizations and organizations that represented specific geographic locations around the City of Dallas. During his first year as a Board Member, Darren scheduled meetings with The Regional Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, the Regional Hispanic Contractors Association, Regional Black Contractors Association, Dallas Black Chamber of Commerce, Latino Center for Leadership Development, and Oak Cliff Chamber of Commerce, among others.

Dallas Citizens Council is comprised of the area's CEOs and top business leaders who provide guidance on the policy issues that will move Dallas forward and serve in the moments that matter the most for the city. The officers and board dedicate their time and expertise

to acting on behalf and at the behest of their fellow members, serving as the organization's governing body.

### **Dallas Citizens Council aims to foster an environment where economic growth and prosperity extend to all residents of the Dallas area.**

Darren led the initiative as President of Fair Park First Board of Directors in concert with VISIT Dallas to change Texas State Legislature to include Fair Park and the Dallas Convention center in the Brimer Bill Hotel Tax Bond fund distribution. The potential \$1.2 Billion of future revenues would be used for capital investment and renovations to the Historic Fair Park and complete replacement of the Kay Bailey Hutchinson Convention Center. The legislation, signed by Governor Abbott in early 2021, authorized the City of Dallas to hold a local referendum requiring approval by voters before the funding could be earmarked for the Convention Center and Fair Park in an 80/20 split. Darren presented this procedural step to the DCC and worked diligently to put together a comprehensive awareness campaign and advocacy for an affirmative vote. The proposition won with 67.68% of the vote, a wide margin of victory.



Darren serves on the Issues Analysis Committee (IAC), which reviews the most pressing topical issues of the day, seeking consensus on legislative agendas and coordinating communication with state and local officials. They communicate with the Greater Houston Partnership, among other local and state-wide businesses to address community-building. The issues facing our North Central Texas region are complex and require diverse leadership, including:

- **Housing** – Affordability of single- and multi-family housing continues to be a challenge in Dallas. As the population in this region grows, the need for affordability is becoming more acute. Dallas Citizens Council will convene with our public and private sector experts to understand what efforts are being made to address housing affordability.
- **Workforce** – Creating pathways to living wage jobs is imperative so that more of our Dallas residents can enjoy the region's economic prosperity. As a leading voice in the business community, we will continue to work with key stakeholders in our educational and philanthropic sectors to make this a reality.
- **Water** – The growth of our region requires that we think long-term about our water needs. We are conferring with local experts to understand what actions must be taken in the near-term to ensure the future viability of the North Texas region.

For the last three mayoral administrations, there has been a lot of talk of investing in Dallas' Southern Sector with disproportionate success compared to traditional development areas north of the Trinity River, which has been the traditional racial and socio-economic dividing line in Dallas. Through Darren's efforts and his community-focused business acumen, he has persuaded other business leaders to recognize the value of significant and meaningful southern sector investment in jobs, broadband and Class A office space avoiding the typical cursory non-substantive PR moves. The business community now understands at a deeper level the business case for investment in people and infrastructure for this formerly ignored portion of the city which is larger in land area than the City of Atlanta.

Darren believes in providing insight and lends his voice to opening eyes and hearts to rethink long-held beliefs and/or practices. Darren's service on DCC is catalyzing to make Dallas the world-class city it aspires to be: welcoming to all — economically, culturally and socially.



## Exhibit: Dallas Black Chamber of Commerce Examiners

The Dallas Black Chamber of Commerce, founded November 21, 1926, is the oldest continuously-operating black chamber in the United States. Darren, a Board Member since 2007, agreed to participate on the 2016 Nominating Committee to compile a slate of new board members and officers for the coming year. Individuals participating in the nominating committee could not currently hold an executive office or expect to hold an office in the upcoming year.

Due to prior commitments, Darren was unable to attend the first committee meeting. Shortly thereafter, another member asked Darren to resign from the committee so that the members could nominate him as Chairman of the Board. The members knew his calm leadership skills could help right the oldest and largest Black Chamber in the country again. Darren was unanimously elected Chairman of the Board on September 12, 2015.

His term began January 1, 2016, and it became immediately clear the 91-year-old Chamber was at a nadir, the lowest of low. Membership was falling, fund balances were low, and the relevance and impact of the Chamber was non-existent. Other organizations were filling the gaps, recruiting chamber members and monopolizing the market share. Chamber members were isolated from one another and disenfranchised from the business community. The Chamber's historic reputation for being at the forefront of every major economic and social change in the history of Dallas was in danger of being relegated to stories of the past.

Darren immediately began to renew the relevance of the chamber by realigning the organization to become a peer resource and networking organization. Under Darren's direction, the board split operations into two separate organizations with a fully autonomous Board of Directors, making him the Chair of two boards.

He recruited strong financial and development professionals for the 501c3 board of directors and renamed the charitable organization the Dallas Black Chamber Center for Excellence to more accurately reflect its mission and purpose. These strategic decisions unlock the potential to shape the future for the Chamber, its members and the business community it serves.

### **Darren's vision for the Chamber is to facilitate business conversations, investments and economic growth in the heart of this historic African American community.**

As an architect, Darren is led to create a new physical manifestation of the Dallas Black Chamber of Commerce on the corner of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard and Malcolm X Boulevard – the intersection that honors the history of the community, poised for the future.

The plans for the new Chamber office four blocks from Fair Park include retail and commercial space on the first floor, educational and training rooms on the second floor. The Chamber offices and a research institute will be located on the third floor with a rooftop patio for chamber events. It is a visible investment of the Chamber into the community, magnifying the new investments planned with the privatization of Fair Park, collaborative investment from City Square/The Real Estate Council, and St. Phillips School.

In addition to building the new Center, Darren plans to retire the outstanding debt on the current dated facility, then return the parcel to green space and create legacy Pocket Park, honoring those who have come before and the difference they made in the economic climate of Dallas.

Darren has created new excitement in directing process improvements gleaned from his many years as an entrepreneur and civic leader. The Annual meetings are the place to be every October with nationally-renowned

keynote speakers. Under Darren's direction, the Chamber's keynote speaker selections have influenced other area organizations to bring the same level of prestige to the Dallas-Fort Worth business community.

He created a new quarterly event for Dallas/Fort Worth education thought leaders to share ideas and knowledge. Byron Sanders, CEO of Big Thought and three-time HBCU Male President of the Year and Dr. Michael Sorrel of Paul Quinn College have already been recognized. Dr. Terry Flowers is slated for the third luncheon.

Annual scholarship awards were increased from \$1,000 a student to \$2,000 per student, regularly awarded to 25-30 students each year.

Darren has served the longest tenure on record, elected unanimously for two terms and then subsequently elected for five additional one-year terms.





## Exhibit: International Community Engagement

Darren was invited to go to Israel in December 2022 by the National Black Empowerment Council (NBEC), as part of a national cohort of community stakeholders seeking to engage Middle Eastern elected officials, mental health entrepreneurs, journalist, editors, international negotiators, alternative food research-preneurs focused on food security, and the Israeli Defense Force.

The purpose of the trip was to seek answers, insight

**The National Black Empowerment Council's (NBEC) mission is to empower leaders to work together strategically to close the systemic wealth, influence, and achievement gaps between African Americans and more structurally advantaged groups.**

and lessons learned from Jewish and Palestinian communities and political leaders to improve our communities here in the U.S. We met with two members of Knesset (Israel's Parliament): Mansour Abbas and



Knesset - Mansour Abbas | Jerusalem, Israel

Naama Lazimi. Monsour Abbas is the first Arab-Israeli elected to Knesset in the history of Israel. Arab Israeli's are a minority Israeli citizen that structurally have fewer rights than Jewish Israeli citizens. After leaving Knesset, we then visited the West Bank to meet with three mental health entrepreneurs and the Palestinian Prime Minister, Mohammad Shtayyeh. We met with Colonel (retired) Adv. Daniel Reisner the Israeli negotiator responsible for establishing the Abraham Accords, which encouraged intercultural dialogue between the three Abrahamic religions, enabling full diplomatic relations toward maintaining and strengthening peace in the Middle East.

During our week-long visit to Israel, we visited various residents, mayors, editors of papers, business owners and community leaders learning individually and collectively of their robust entrepreneurial spirits – so much so that they have been labeled the startup nation by many business publications.

In the Spring of 2023, as part of a Texas business association, Darren visited Quebec City, Canada and

Monosson. During the visit to the consulate, representatives from Quebec International (QI) were in attendance. Darren engaged the Consul General and Salim Yaye, Felix-Antoine Chavanelle of QI regarding the investment and attraction of talent to power the explosive job growth focused on health care, bio-tech and gaming. Quebec has a significant impact globally on technology sectors and has similar challenges of job growth out-pacing supply of talented workers.

As a current member of the Dallas Citizen's Council Board of Directors, former Chair of the Dallas Black Chamber of Commerce and board member of the Dallas Regional Chamber, Quebec International's unique approaches are helpful for business communities across the State of Texas.

Their approach with help from Canadian national and the Quebec provincial governments provides community integration support through education and cultural connectivity for worker's families to make sure any new migrant workers are welcomed to their new adopted cities.

Darren has taken inspiration from these trips and has already spread lessons learned through his various civic and community-based organizations across the State of Texas, improving communities along the way.



U.S. Consul General | Quebec City, Quebec, Canada



Ramallah West Bank - Mohammad Shtayyeh

## Exhibit: AIA, TxA, A4LE & NOMA Industry Engagement

During the past few years, Darren has taken on a larger role of mentoring young design professionals: architects, engineers, tech designers and trade organization administrators. Darren has spoken at TxA El Paso, Galveston, San Antonio, Fort Worth; AIA in Chicago; A4LE in Roanoke, Virginia, Fort Worth, Austin and Dallas; and NOMA in Detroit and Nashville.

Darren has worked with NOMA Leadership and NCARB on expanding outreach for minority candidates closing the registrant gap. He has also worked very closely with NOMA on an in-depth approach to practice as minority architects navigate this profession and the inherent implicit and explicit biases faced by BIPOC architects.

Darren has spoken on DFW NOMA's virtual conversation during the pandemic on the journey of three Black architects from graduation to Fellowship. When Darren moved into his new Las Colinas office, he created a

place for community organization use large enough to accommodate 60-70 attendees. As a NOMA member, he has hosted multiple member meetings in his office as well as Women In Architecture Breakfast meetings.

Darren hosted the Fort Worth Alumni Chapter of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity Incorporated's Young Scholar Program in the Spring of 2021. 23 Fort Worth and Arlington high school boys and girls attended the Saturday tour and presentation on the profession of architecture. During the fall of 2022, Darren hosted the University of Texas at Arlington School of Architecture class. As part of the studio, they conducted surveys of all bus stations within a specific geographic area, interviewed the riders and then developed new designs that were reflective of their findings and incorporated a better approach to providing excellent service to DART patrons. Darren hosted the four teams in his office in preparation for their final presentation to DART staff and leadership.

Darren mentors former DFW NOMA president Brien Graham and sponsored his nomination and congratulated him on his selection as one AIA National Young Architects of the Year. At the AIA Chicago Convention, Darren and Kai-Uwe Bergmann of BIG coordinated their approach to community engagement for the National Juneteenth



AIA Chicago



the stage with a former city councilman from San Antonio and non-profit leader for historic Houston 3rd Ward. The story of Fair Park and its re-emergence as the 277-acre crown jewel of the Dallas Park System resonates with residents from all corners of the state. Lessons learned at Fair Park are woven in the fabric of the history of the State and Darren has shared that story at TxA multiple times.

Museum to be built in Fort Worth.

Darren and one of his colleagues, Derwin Broughton, spoke on Stakeholder Engagement for Underserved Communities in Detroit for the NOMA National Convention. One of the architects from Memphis who had practiced for 20+ years came to Darren after the presentation and told him he learned new techniques that he would use on all his future projects. He was extremely complimentary on the depth of process and technique and the willingness to share key details that could provide proprietary competitive advantages. This insight and presentation was then shared in Roanoke, Fort Worth and Austin. Darren received similar responses from architects across the country.

At TxA El Paso, Darren shared his community engagement process for Fair Park, sharing



NOMA Nashville



## Exhibit: San Antonio Mayor's Housing Policy Task Force

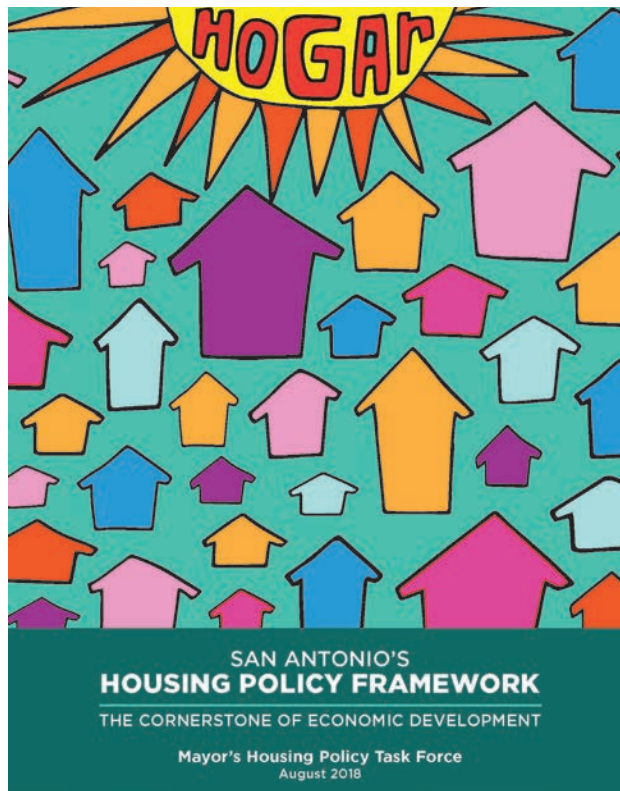
Lourdes Castro Ramirez, President/CEO of the San Antonio Housing Authority as Chair of the Mayor's Housing Policy Task Force (MHPTF) asked Darren to serve on the San Antonio Mayor's Housing Task Force. The 56-page San Antonio's Housing Policy Framework was presented to San Antonio's City Council in August 2018. The task force was charged with creating affordable housing initiatives and creative approaches to encouraging affordable communities city-wide instead of concentrated in traditional lower socio-economic areas.

The Mayor's Housing Policy Task Force consists of five (5) advisors appointed by the Mayor to assist with the development of a comprehensive and compassionate policy framework to address the pressing affordable housing challenges that our city faces with input from community stakeholders.

Housing is as essential to the economic engine of our city as water, energy and transportation. With this principle in mind, we identified five key actions along with a set of recommendations and implementation steps infused with theoretical, practical, and boots-on-the-ground thinking:

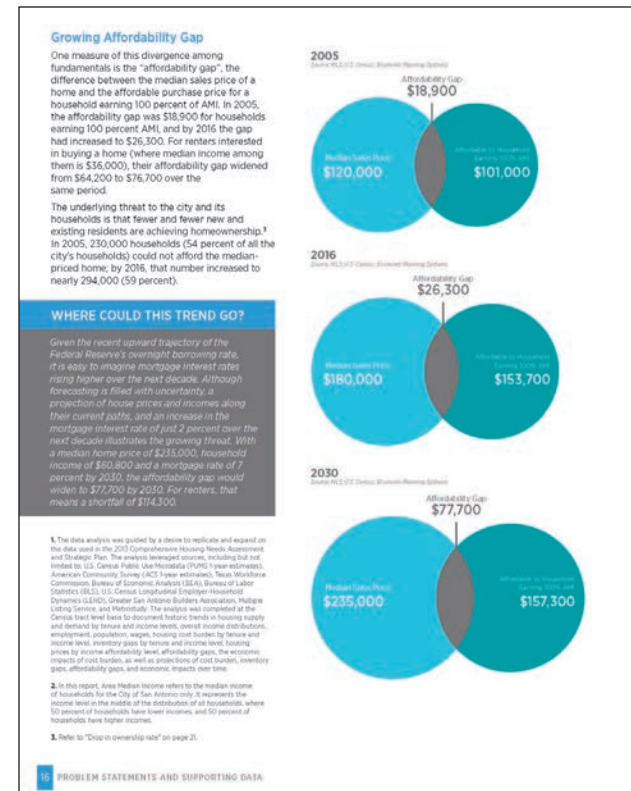
1. Develop a Coordinated Housing System
2. Increase City Investment in Housing with a 10-Year Funding Plan
3. Increase Affordable Housing Production, Rehabilitation and Preservation
4. Protect and Promote Neighborhoods
5. Ensure Accountability to the Public

(Source: <https://www.sanantonio.gov/Portals/0/Files/HousingPolicy/Resources/SA-HousingPolicyFramework.pdf>)



We discussed alignment of mass transit routes with the current distribution of affordable housing as well as future decentralization. The task force was divided among non-profit housing providers, representatives from VIA (the transit authority), SAHA (San Antonio Housing Authority), the City of San Antonio City Mayor's Office, Council members and Staff, various community leaders and a consulting team.

As one of the few architects on the task force, Darren provided insight and perspective from designing mixed-income communities across southern Texas, Louisiana and Tennessee. Working in Galveston, Beaumont, Memphis, and New Orleans helped inform



his approach when working for SAHA on the Phyllis Wheatley Community and HACA's (Housing Authority of the City of Austin) Rosewood Courts.

Lourdes worked closely with Darren for the Phyllis Wheatley Community, now known as East Meadows Apartments, and specifically asked him to serve as one of her appointees to this task force. The task force met over several months and Darren attended all of the meetings and reviewed the conclusions from the other sub-committees as we developed a comprehensive approach that was presented to the full City Council for adoption.

## Exhibit: Community Engagement At-Large



Darren works with various community, non-profit, and educational organizations outside of his board service providing his unique perspective and insight when requested. Darren has set the tone as a kick-off presenter, led workshops, participated as a panelist, co-presented, presented individual and served as keynote speaker.

ULI – DFW hosted their **Pathways to Inclusion** forum for emerging developers and Darren was asked to discuss in great detail opportunities and obstacles for developers in the Dallas' Southern Sector and most specifically new initiatives surrounding Fair Park. Tamela Thornton, the Executive Director of ULI -DFW, and Darren have known each other for almost two decades and Tamela leaned on Darren's expertise in this area to enlighten the new developers as they embarked on launching their businesses and sought to make a difference in the underinvested communities across the State of Texas.

For the last four years, Darren has been asked by The Real Estate Council to serve as a panelist for the TREC Community Investors **Real Estate Bootcamp** Day 1 Introduction to the Development Process & Site Feasibility. This program is specifically built to create and teach new and smaller developers important lessons on their respective journeys to becoming a commercial investor or developer.

Darren was asked by the University of Texas at Arlington to serve as Discussion Moderator for the UTA Dillon Symposium **Don't Sell the Land – Community, Housing, and Design Justice**. The panelists were:

Everett Fly, FASLA – Architect/  
Landscape Architect – keynote  
Address and Panelist

Kofi Boone, FASLA – Professor,  
North Carolina State University

Latosha Herron Bruff – SVP of  
Community Engagement for  
the Dallas Regional Chamber

Louis Mozingo – Professor,  
University of California at  
Berkley

Libby Viera-Bland – AICP,  
Project Row House

Darren was invited to speak at the 5th Annual EMPOWERING Conference on his personal journey providing inspiration and awareness on his motivation as well as thoughts on how others could learn and use his life experiences and lessons in their own respective paths. Darren's topic was **Convergence**, illustrating how his civic leadership was connected to his mentorship and

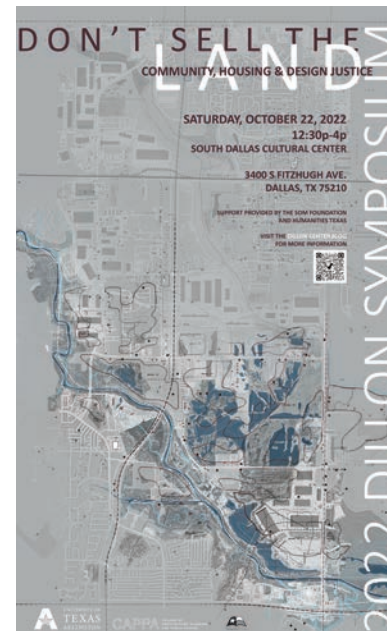
desire to improve the communities he serves across the various facets of his daily interactions.

Darren was asked about challenges faced by Dallas's Southern Sector during a conversation with a journalist. The journalist shared the conversation with his editor which led to a Dallas Business Journal cover story title **How to Bridge the Digital Divide**. That cover story brought to light an issue that had been circulating under public perception for at least a decade and led to some difficult conversations but focused the business and

public on a sector that had been disconnected largely due to systemic disinvestment. The article, Darren's continued work on this issue and the subsequent global pandemic led to a state-wide initiative to close this gap in underserved and rural communities that were limping along with less than adequate internet speeds. The State of Texas, along with local government and corporate citizens, have banded together to provide a solution addressing broadband speed and connectivity state-wide. The cover story was an initial push leading one of the world's largest communication companies to engage more publicly than they had previously.

Darren's work and civic investment transcends his board service. These

few examples are representative of the respect for his perspective and the effort and impact he brings when engaged. He believes in utilizing those strengths to assist others and offers his support on efforts that will truly transform communities for the better.





## Exhibit: Dallas Museum of Art Architect Selection Committee

The Dallas Museum of Art (DMA), founded in 1903, is among the ten largest art museums in the U.S. In 1984 it moved from its home of over 60 years in Fair Park to a 370,000 s.f. Edward Larrabee Barnes-designed building as the anchor of the new Arts District in downtown Dallas. The DMA's collection of over 26,500 works of art spanning 5,000 years is exceptional. The growing collection includes one of the most important museum holdings of modern and contemporary art in the U.S., as well as strong holdings of the arts of the ancient Americas, Africa, and South Asia, and in European and American painting, sculpture and decorative arts.

The DMA's Board of Directors initiated a Facility Condition and Needs Assessment accommodating the growth of the modern art collection and desire to improve the patron experience through reorganization of the existing collections and indoor and outdoor galleries for stored artwork due to existing gallery sizes and configuration.

Darren was asked to serve on the Architect Selection Committee (ASC) for the Dallas Museum of Art along with a few other community leaders, select trustees and the Museum's Director. The first task was solicitation of a Selection Consultant to assist with criteria and generate global interest from design firms. Malcolm Reading Consultants from London, England was selected after a competitive process including interviews. Malcolm Reading recommended a selection competition after a formal release of competition materials.

After receiving 153 responses from architectural firms from around the world, our Committee short-listed six firms through a three-step competition. The first phase included interviews, and the second phase consisted of office visits to two firms in Los Angeles, two in New York

City, one in London, England and one in Berlin, Germany. The final phase was a last round of interviews with architectural models which stayed on public display in a special DMA exhibition through the summer and early fall.

**Essentially, the DMA needs to be welcoming to all. As Dallas Museum of Art's Eugene McDermott Director Dr. Agustín Arteaga explains: 'The Museum is committed to the principle that art is at the center, and equity and community are at the core of all we do.'**

**The DMA devised a strategic plan following the COVID-19 pandemic that responds to audiences' need for connection and meaningful encounters.**

**The plan offers a roadmap to a transformed and sustainable campus that inspires the local community as well as bringing national and international visitors to Dallas to enjoy: 'a space of wonder and discovery where art comes alive...'**

During talks with the six short-listed firms, they remarked that the DMA's process was more open than typical European competitions in that the architects were encouraged to engage the selection committee through inquisitive dialogue. Additionally, three firms from London that were not advanced inquired about coming to the public presentations after the short-list interviews because they were surprised at how open the DMA was to engaging the architectural community as well as the future patrons in creating a museum of the future that was more open to inviting everyone to its galleries and exhibition spaces.



Hammer Museum Tour | Los Angeles



Michael Maltzan Models | LA Office

## Exhibit: Community Partnerships

Darren works with numerous community leadership stakeholders and iconic individuals advancing their respective causes and initiatives to improve the lives of their communities and impact future generations.

Darren is working with The **D.O.C.**, the trailblazing rap artist and writer, in his mission to teach young people of Dallas how to expand their musical gifts and talents to the business side of music. As a native of Dallas growing up in the rough streets of West Dallas, he knows how to reach the youth of today and is most passionate about reducing gun violence among young Black boys. He recognizes their talents and wants to teach them how to produce, review and structure contracts to their benefit. Darren has been working with him since 2022's Tribeca Film Festival on outreach to potential financial partners and providers. The D.O.C. is working with an e-Sports provider to teach coding and other STEM-based initiatives to the youth of Dallas.

Darren met **Ms. Opal Lee**, the grandmother of Juneteenth, a few years before President Biden signed the bill naming Juneteenth a U.S. National Holiday. Darren assists Ms. Lee in spreading the word on the museum through public meetings with community leaders, organizers and elected officials. The non-profit responsible for realizing the National Juneteenth Museum has leaned on Darren's non-profit expertise to guide them through establishing, governance and fundraising objectives as well as donor targets, collateral and best practices.

Darren is working closely with **Dr. Harry Robinson**, founding director of the African American Museum



housed at Fair Park. Darren became involved with the museum through various community-centered programming in 2016. In the past few years, Darren's involvement has grown through working with Dr. Robinson on his annual Black Rodeos, Jazz Music events, educational activities for local school children and most recently his desire to have an exhibit celebrating the life and works of John S. Chase, Jr, FAIA. Darren led the committee in concert with Brien Graham to work with the Black Architects in Dallas on this effort.

Darren invited **Marc Morial**, President of the National Urban League, **US. Rep. Emmanuel Cleaver** and former national TV journalist and political strategist **Donna Brazile** to share their stories with the business community of Dallas. They each laid out the challenges our communities face today and how Texas business leaders could and should engage to provide better outcomes. As national leaders in their own prolific rights, they provided unique perspectives that pushed people beyond their comfort levels into action on civil rights topics. Darren intentionally sought national leading powerful speakers to challenge status quo.

Over the last 10 years, Darren's community acumen has led to insightful and powerful partnerships with four of the most recent **Dallas Mayors: Ron Kirk, Tom Leppert, Mike Rawlings, and Eric Johnson**. Mayors Rawlings and Johnson have leaned on Darren's skill with navigating the extensive socio-economic and racial history of Fair Park to successfully engage the community. Mayor Rawlings asked Darren to speak on the importance of open space to civic psyche at the annual Dallas Arts Month speaker series and to step into the racially-charged dialogue and conversations around the removal of confederate statues and the pro bono refresh of historic Pioneer Cemetery. Mayor Leppert tapped Darren for his insight on the business community in a series of town hall conversations. Mayor Kirk and

Darren serve together on the Dallas Citizens Council, and he and Darren work closely on funding initiatives for Dallas' southern sector parks and businesses as well as state-run initiatives and legislation.

### Senior Pastor Bryan L. Carter

asked Darren to serve on the Concord Council of Elders Board almost three years ago. Concord is known state-wide for its extensive community outreach and its own Community Development Corporation. Pastor Carter asked Darren to serve because of his connectivity to the business community at all levels as well as the respect Darren has garnered for the work he does in the community. As Concord navigated pandemic shut-downs, Darren's business expertise helped guide the church through creating a digital Sunday service and navigating the financial challenges associated with the lack of physical attendance. Concord ended up growing through this time and was able to reach parishioners from across the country.



Bexar County **Judge Nelson Wolff** asked Darren to sit on an invite-only committee of eight business and community leaders to discuss ways to open doors for minority businesses in San Antonio. The committee challenged assumptions and biases that were hindering greater equity and inclusion in publicly-funded contracting opportunities across the city and county. Darren was candid in his approach and delivery, knowing that this conversation was larger than him or his firm and had the opportunity to provide avenues to generational wealth for others. Darren's insight was invaluable in helping open doors for existing and emerging businesses in the central Texas region.