



# CANDIDATE for SECRETARY/TREASURER (3-year term)

Peter Robinson, Cornell University

## Candidate Statement

I would like to offer my nomination to serve on the board of directors of ACSA in the position of Secretary/Treasurer beginning in July 2023. As a demonstrated leader in the areas of diversity, equity and inclusion, my teaching, research and practice agendas have sought to integrate scholarship, professionalism and community engagement.

I currently serve as the Financial Accountability Committee Head at BlackSpace Urbanist Collective and Vice Chair, to the Board of Trustees at AIA NY Center for Architecture. I believe the following examples make me an excellent candidate for ACSA Board service by illustrating my alignment with ACSA values and strategic plan.

### Creating Access and Pathways

In Fall 2020 I taught Cornell NYC studio, Housing + Sociality: My Brother's Keeper. That studio partnered with the My Brother's Keeper (MBK) initiative of The Obama Foundation and Medgar Evers College Preparatory High School (MECPS) in Brooklyn, NY to focus on living via the perspective of young Black men. These students worked one-on-one with Cornell students throughout the semester with all design decisions being prioritized by the local knowledge and expertise of the MBK students. Regarding that studio, Dr. Lester Young, Chancellor, NYS Board of Regents stated, *"The Cornell / Medgar Evers Prep. HS event that I witnessed was an amazing example of a MBK Model School/Program. I feel strongly that we should do whatever we can to incorporate this partnership within the NYSMBK portfolio. As you know, I rarely make this type of recommendation; however, I believe it is a transportable model that has the potential of changing lives and futures"*.

### Mentorship and Youth Empowerment

The summer of 2021 I engaged MBK students with Brownsville Heritage House (BHH) in Brooklyn, NY. BHH is a room at the Stone Ave. Library in Brownsville, Brooklyn that houses an over 100-year-old collection of Black life in Brooklyn. They are now looking for ways to make their space more efficient and engaging to the community they serve.

The work took shape with a six-week paid internship experience to introduce MBK students to the architecture and urban design/planning professions. Students were introduced to the professional practice of producing a design strategy report, the techniques to document a site, and creative ways to develop and present concepts to neighborhood stakeholders and professionals.

During this experience, colleagues at BlackSpace Urbanist Collective, architects at Gensler and community stakeholders, joined me in mentoring and guiding these young people to be active change agents in their communities. They learned how to talk with community leaders and got to know that their input was valuable. Elisha Amadasu, MECPS Senior / NYCMBK offered: *"Design strategy has taught me to effectively plan by imagining to the fullest extent, and then being able to organize the most pertinent information for use. This is yet another useful way to look at planning life."*

These students would later present a lecture for the Cornell Mellon Design Justice Workshop, *"Black Memory Workers and their Spatial Practices: Explorations on African American Heritage Spaces in NYC"*, that I co-taught with Professor Riché Richardson.

After that lecture, George Patterson, Senior Director of NYC My Brother's Keeper, who was present said: *"...I had the opportunity to see President Obama's vision of My Brother's Keeper come to fruition in a major way. Through collaboration between MBK, WorkUrban, BlackSpace, Cornell University, MECPS, and NYCDOE, a group of students presented their "Design Strategy Report" to students, faculty and staff and the university. To quote one of the professors who attended the presentation, "They owned the room!" This bridge of opportunity could not have been done without the tutelage of Peter Robinson who introduced the students to architecture and urban design and assembled a team of Cornell graduate students and mentors to work with the students on this project. This was a major investment into our young scholars and I could not be more pleased with the outcome."*

### Pathways to a Sustainable Model

Creating a MBK and sister organization MSK chapter at Cornell will provide a sustainable model for further youth engagement that will expose students to the vast opportunities of higher education while ensuring that supportive resources are available.

I have been invited by NYC Mayor Eric Adams and NYC Schools Chancellor David Banks to participate in an initiative that links organizations supporting Black boys in NYC public schools. This provides a network of support among organizations with similar youth focused agendas. Additionally, constructing a relationship with NYC Department of Education the NYS State's Chancellor's office and ECornell will provide access to learning resources expanding opportunities for research all while exposing marginalized youth to a larger array of opportunities.

### Regional Connections

I will be working extensively on a north to south exchange, which promises to open a national conversation in engaging youth in a pathway rooted in the practice of architecture, urban design and urban planning. Youth will be introduced to the tools of our shared disciplines in order to promote effective urbanism around their communities.

I believe the work I am doing in NY, both locally and regionally, is in alignment with the mission of ACSA. The broad collaborative and national reach of ACSA coupled with the work I am doing, would no doubt provide an unprecedented opportunity to amplify the bridge to accessing pathways.





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### Biography

Peter (he/him) is the founder of WorkUrban, a design consultancy with the principal mission to promote effective urbanism around the world through community engagement and participatory design. WorkUrban partners with communities, institutions and individuals while engaging students on a pathway toward leadership and empowerment. WorkUrban's recent collaborations include Brownsville Heritage House, Medgar Evers College Preparatory School, Universe City and My Brother's Keeper Alliance.

As a founding board member of BlackSpace Urbanist Collective – a nonprofit organization that demands a present and future where Black people, Black spaces and Black culture matter and thrive – Peter utilizes his strong belief in the power of collaboration to advance student advocacy and create community change. BlackSpace was recognized as one of “The 10 Most Innovative Architecture Companies of 2021” by Fast Company.

A sought-after leader in the field of architecture, urban design and design consultancy, Peter has recently been elected Vice Chair to the Board of Trustees at AIA New York | Center for Architecture; where he presented at the organization's inaugural Presidential Lecture Series. Peter also serves on the Board of Advisors for BRACE: Building Research + Architecture + Community Exchange. Previously, Peter served as Treasurer for the New York Coalition of Black Architects and has worked with the organization in the areas of student and professional advocacy.

Peter – a native of Kingston, Jamaica – was raised in both Kingston and New York City, where he graduated from the High School of Art and Design. He earned a Bachelors of Architecture degree from Cornell University and a Masters of Science in Architecture and Urban Design from Columbia University. Peter has worked at a number of noted architectural practices in the areas of design, management and design strategy, greatly contributing to the successful futures of leading corporate, cultural, religious and academic institutions.

Peter previously taught architecture design and urban theory at Barnard College at Columbia University, Syracuse University, Parsons School of Design, and was a Visiting Critic at Cornell University's Gensler Family AAP NYC Center. He has been a guest critic at Cornell, Columbia, Rhode Island School of Design, China Academy of Art and Harvard.

Peter is the Assistant Professor of Architecture | Social Justice and Equity Cohort, in the College of Architecture, Art and Planning at Cornell University; where he was also the Fall 2021 Mellon Scholar.

Peter's research focuses on cultural subjectivity and the city, broaching parallels and interferences among architecture, urban design, planning and cultural practices/theories as a means to engage/ inform social action.