



Creating Policy and Building Infrastructure for Local Hire Programs That Reduce Poverty

Panelist Bios

Julian Gross is the Director of the Community Benefits Law Center, a project of Partnership for Working Families. Julian has represented coalitions of community-based organizations in negotiation of many ground-breaking community benefits agreements. He has also drafted numerous local hiring and contracting policies, including the East Palo Alto policy, and has worked on living wage policies and many other community economic development initiatives.

Alex Paxton is the Special Assistant to the Deputy Chief of Operations at the Community Redevelopment Agency of the City of Los Angeles. With an annual budget of over \$726 million and a work program covering 32 project areas throughout the City of Los Angeles, the CRA/LA is the largest redevelopment agency in the State of California. At the CRA/LA, Ms. Paxton has developed policies and practices to ensure that the Agency's investments promote middle-class job opportunities for LA residents, including the landmark Construction Careers and Project Stabilization Policy and accompanying project labor agreement, and a permanent jobs first source policy that is in formation.

Bernida Reagan is the Director of Community and Client Relations with Merriwether Williams Insurance Services. Prior to joining the Merriwether firm, Ms. Reagan served as the founding Director of the Port of Oakland's Division of Social Responsibility. In that capacity she was responsible for directing the Port's community benefit and social equity programs which are designed to increase local participation in employment and business opportunities. As part of her responsibilities, Ms. Reagan provided oversight for the Port's small and disadvantaged business enterprise programs, Maritime and Aviation Project Labor Agreement, and Employment Resources Development Program.

Marie McKenzie is the Economic Development and Redevelopment Project Manager for the City of East Palo Alto's Redevelopment Agency, and she oversees the First Source Hiring and Local Business Enterprise Programs. She has been recognized for several very notable redevelopment projects, including CRA award-winning Class A office towers, University Circle, the largest California IKEA retail store, Four Seasons Hotel at East Palo Alto, and Magic Johnson's urban franchise of Starbucks to name a few. Prior to her appointment in East Palo Alto, Marie served as Community Services Manager for the County of San Mateo.