

Where Feet Meet the Street: Innovative Public/Private Placemaking Projects

Speaker Biographies



Prema Katari Gupta joined The University City District in 2010 and directs the organization's work relating to the development and stewardship of public spaces (including The Porch at 30th Street Station as well as Philadelphia first parklets and pedestrian plazas), bike/ped improvements, business attraction and retention, transportation management, sustainability, market research, and urban planning. She has represented UCD nationally at the Artplace Creative Placemaking Summit and the Project for Public Spaces Placemaking Leadership Council. Prema was most recently Real Estate Manager at PIDC, the City of Philadelphia's economic development authority. She has also worked at Yale University and at the Urban Land Institute, where she authored a book on placemaking in mixed-use development. She is on the executive committee of ULI Philadelphia and on the board of the Preservation Alliance for Greater Philadelphia.

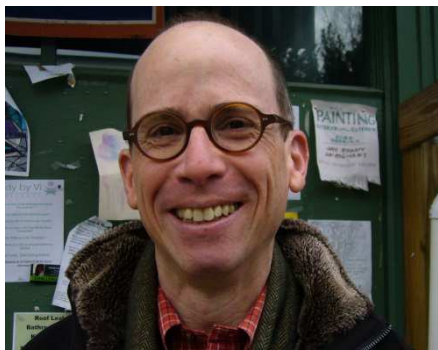
Prema's work is informed by her vast experience people-watching in public spaces; her love of travel has taken her to over 30 countries. Raised in Connecticut, Prema is a graduate of Bowdoin College, where she studied art history and economics. She has a master's degree from PennDesign and a certificate in Real Estate from the Wharton School. In her spare time, Prema enjoys long distance running, photography, and exploring the Wissahickon. She lives in Mount Airy with her husband and two small children.



Gary Toth has helped communities, environmental interests and transportation agencies collaborate during his 40 year career as a transportation engineer. He helped the New Jersey Department of Transportation establish a sustainable and community orientation, highlighted by the establishment of Context Sensitive Solutions and NJ Future in Transportation programs. The latter fostered healthy living and sustainable communities via integration of transportation and land use.

He later became involved with CSS at the National Level, being a member of the AASHTO CSS Task Force and several National and Regional CSS Peer Exchanges. Since 2007, Gary has advanced place and community based transportation as Senior Director of Transportation Initiatives for the Project

for Public Spaces. He has done extensive work in Community Based Street and Network Planning and Design and has helped communities such as New York City, Abu Dhabi, Cleveland, Red Deer Alberta, Los Angeles, Honolulu, Maui, Kauai, San Antonio, Sand Point Idaho, South Burlington Vermont and Brunswick Maine rethink their approach to transportation. He remains involved with several national initiatives, such as the Strategic Highway Research Program, the American Public Transit Association and the Congress for New Urbanism. He is one of seven instructors certified to lead the National Highway Institute's Transportation and Land Use Course. He is one of the leading experts in the country on how to engage DOTs via the transportation planning, funding, and project development and design processes to achieve sustainable and livable outcomes. He summarized his insight in a 2009 book – the Citizen's Guide for Engaging Transportation Professionals.



Josh Bloom is a principal at the Community Land Use and Economics Group (CLUE Group), a small, specialized consulting firm that helps community leaders create vibrant commercial centers and sustainable economic development. Josh teaches communities how to revitalize their downtowns first by gaining an understanding of their local economies and then helping them apply that knowledge to a series of market-driven and achievable projects. He has particular interests in using research on local customers to deepen the picture painted by traditional demographic data sources, and in cultivating sustainable clusters of chain and independent businesses. He has published articles on both of these subjects.

Josh was the Main Street Manager in South Orange, New Jersey, from 1992-1995. Before joining CLUE Group in 2005, Josh spent ten years as a program officer at the National Trust for Historic Preservation's National Main Street Center. While there, he was the Main Street Center's technical services provider to Main Street New Jersey. He was also instrumental in expanding the program's urban reach to cities that included Boston, Cleveland, St. Louis, Los Angeles and others.

Josh received his B.A. from Columbia University and a master's in historic preservation from the University of Pennsylvania. He is a former molecular biologist. In 2007 he completed a two-year course in preservation carpentry at the highly regarded North Bennet Street School in Boston.