

Isles 2023 Virtual Forum



We extend our heartfelt gratitude to everyone who made the Isles 2023 Forum an extraordinary and impactful event! Over the course of three engaging and thoughtful days, we explored the central role Justice plays – whether it be social, economic, or environmental – in shaping effective and meaningful community development.

With hundreds of enthusiastic participants, the sessions delved into a range of pressing issues on topics as diverse as mitigating the effects of urban heat islands, promoting building electrification, sponsoring community public safety initiatives, and examining the after-effects of marijuana legalization. The breadth and depth of these sessions fostered an environment of collaborative problem-solving and innovative thinking.

“This year’s forum, facilitated by Isle’s new Johnson Center for Impact and Learning, reflected the center’s mission to engage thought-leaders, policy-makers, and practitioners in various fields, forging connections that extend well beyond the event and to impact learning, research and policy.

What excited me the most about the Isles Forum is the intentional approach to create opportunities to share expertise from diverse voices critical to community development,” said Johnson Center Director Laura Fenster Rothschild. “The Forum creates an opportunity for grassroots leaders, community organizations, government officials, and researchers to share and learn together. In our model, each person is an expert with a great deal to contribute to making progress in

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community development. This year, each perspective was critical to addressing historic injustices in our communities.”

Important voices like Kim Gaddy of Clean Water Action spoke about her activism in environmental justice in Newark and the surrounding areas. Kim shared strategies for raising awareness about industrial pollution, helping rally support to demand environmental cleanups and advocating to choose sites for potentially dangerous industries away from residential neighborhoods.

Our panel on housing highlighted the need for government and grassroots interventions to promote housing stability for low and moderate-income families. This conversation has continued with the beginning of a collaboration between Mercer County and Tha Block, a grassroots organization in Trenton.

The forum also gives us the opportunity to ignite new conversations. This year we began a dialogue about building electrification, its importance for environmental sustainability, healthier homes, and how issues of environmental justice are critical to meet energy goals.

These conversations demonstrate how the Johnson Center has become a hub of transformative knowledge and expertise, transmitting the ideas and strategies discussed at the Forum to participants across the region while informing our own ongoing work at Isles within the greater Trenton community.

If you were unable to attend The Forum, we have good news for you! You can still be a part of this transformative experience by accessing the recorded sessions at your convenience.

The recordings capture the essence of each session and are available for viewing on our website at: <https://isles.org/forum>.

We continue to be committed to providing high quality education, such as the forum, for no cost to our community. By supporting Isles and the Johnson Center for Impact and Learning, you become an integral part of a movement that is actively reshaping communities and fostering justice at their core. Join us in our mission to empower communities, unlock their full potential, and create a brighter future for all. Together, we can make a lasting impact that reverberates far beyond the confines of a single event.