

Pride Toronto Board of Directors Candidate Reference Document:

Personal Details:

Name: Victor

Last Name: Perez-Amado

Pronouns: He/ Him /His

Biographical Overview:

Victor Perez-Amado is an Assistant Professor (tenure track) at the Toronto Metropolitan University School of Urban and Regional Planning. Perez-Amado grew up in Caracas, Venezuela and lived in Miami and Boston before settling in Toronto. He is trained as an architect and urban designer, graduating from the Harvard University Graduate School of Design and the University of Florida.

His academic research centres on aging-in-place studies and multigenerational housing, including in 2SLGBTQI+ communities. These projects include Aging Together and Queering Home, a partnership with Egale-Canada. Before joining TMU, he worked on various masterplans and designs for independent and assisted living, focusing on seniors with dementia and autism in Boston. On another scale of engagement with the city, Perez-Amado is interested in activating public spaces by designing and building interactive and educational installations in the public realm. His methodology is based on theories of placemaking, where he explores prototyping, visualization, activation, and community engagement. These include installations along King Street West, Ontario Place, Winter Stations in the Beaches, and Toronto Climate Action public parks. His work has been exhibited at the Seoul Biennale of Architecture and Urbanism, the World Urban Pavilion in Regent Park, and the Harvard GSD Grounded Visionaries, among others.

Revised Candidate Questionnaire:

Why are you interested in joining the Board of Pride Toronto?

As an Assistant Professor at TMU, I address the needs of 2SLGBTQI+ people amid structural and systemic challenges. My research centres on aging-in-place studies and equitable public space activation focusing on older adults. I aim to create more equitable and inclusive urban environments, aligning with Pride Toronto's mission.

As a board member, I would bring expertise in addressing the critical housing issues for 2SLGBTQI+ older adults and propose active engagement with citywide communities to foster inclusivity through design in urban spaces and events, emphasizing the importance of "walking the talk." I believe this organization can bring about tangible change, echoing our university's commitment.

How will your experience, talents, and skill contribute to advancing Pride Toronto's Mission, Vision, and Values?

I am a professor at the Toronto Metropolitan University, trained as an architect and urban designer with work experience with 2SLGBTQI+ communities, particularly older adults. My professional background includes collaborations with the Downtown Yonge BIA and Egale

Canada, as well as designing and building urban spaces for equity-deserving groups in Toronto. I am excited to bring this experience to Pride Toronto and foster an inclusive city for 2SLGBTQI+ individuals of all ages; my goal is to empower those who need it the most by actively initiating change, bridging the gap between community and academia, and translating words into action, especially by strengthening the connections between students, the community, and Pride Toronto.

Pride has had a history of anti-Black and anti-Indigenous racism, and we are working to address and combat this. What is your experience in working against racism, particularly anti-Black and anti-Indigenous racism? What is your vision for Pride Toronto's external work in combating racism?

As part of my experience, I currently serve as a co-chair of the Anti-Systemic Racism and Discrimination Working Group at the School of Urban and Regional Planning at TMU. The Working Group, formed in 2020, includes faculty, students, and alumni. The goal is to train planners to be mindful of systemic discrimination and transform the school into a space that actively confronts and addresses racism.

Through Pride Toronto and TMU, we can bridge the gap between academia and community, empowering younger generations who feel threatened to have a voice in our city, particularly concerning issues such as ageism and transphobia.

What is your experience in addressing and combating transphobia, transmisogyny, and transmisandry?:

My research involves creating new housing types, urban spaces, and policy changes in the city and province to support 2SLGBTQI+ older adults. Understanding the specific needs of diverse 2SLGBTQI+, including Indigenous Two-Spirit and transgender individuals, is essential. Additionally, I emphasize the importance of addressing intersectional issues, particularly for racialized and migrant 2SLGBTQI+ individuals. The intersection of transphobia, housing and aging is an underexplored and important thread that I want to emphasize.

I would bring these considerations to the table, collaborating with the team to make our community more equitable and accepting. This topic has been discussed in our Anti-Systemic Racism and Discrimination Working Group at TMU, which can be bridged with Pride Toronto.

Accessibility is a crucial aspect for Pride Toronto's celebrations, but we still fall short in providing a completely accessible Festival, especially for people with mobility issues, and the D/deaf and Hard of Hearing communities. What experience, resources, and knowledge do you have in engaging and supporting these communities?

I am an architect, urban designer, and professor with expertise in built work and accessibility. Currently, some of my partners include the Downtown Yonge BIA, with whom I collaborate to enhance the accessibility of the neighbourhood for people of all ages. I have also partnered with the City of Toronto Department of Energy Division to create accessible and aesthetically pleasing spaces/parks in equity-deserving areas across our city. I am eager to bring this valuable experience to collaborate with Pride Toronto.

Pride Toronto's Membership has voted to ban instruments and symbols of policing, including uniforms, cars and weapons, from participating in the Pride Parade and

StreetFair. If elected to the Board, how would you ensure that this commitment is upheld?:

I would collaborate with the City of Toronto, the Downtown Yonge BIA, and the Toronto Metropolitan University, in conjunction with Pride Toronto, to ensure the fulfillment of this commitment. We need to forge a city that fosters a sense of safety not through coercion but rather by establishing an inclusive, stable environment that provides comfort, reliability, and well-being for individuals from diverse backgrounds and identities. I will insist on upfront, transparent, continuous, and robust communication as a vital necessity for upholding our commitments to the safety and comfort of our community.