

Written by Kathy

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CLEVELAND, Ohio— The Cleveland Foundation Board of Directors today announced that distinguished architect Lillian Kuri has been unanimously named the organization's 10th president and CEO, effective Aug. 1, 2023. She will succeed Ronn Richard, who in January announced that he will be retiring this summer after a 20-year tenure at the helm of the foundation.

Kuri, 53, is the first woman to hold the president and CEO position full time in the 109-year history of the Cleveland Foundation, the world's first community foundation and one of the largest today with reported assets of \$2.5 billion and annual grants of more than \$100 million.

The daughter of Lebanese immigrants and a Northeast Ohio native, she earned a master of architecture in urban design from Harvard University and a bachelor's degree in architecture from Kent State University. She is also licensed as an architect in Ohio.

Leading up to her new position, she was promoted to executive vice president and chief operating officer at the foundation last March. And just a year earlier, she was elevated to senior vice president for strategy for her work on the planning and design of the foundation's new home in MidTown at the corner of Euclid Avenue and East 66th Street on Cleveland's east side.

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“Lillian brings a proven track record and a sense of creativity to the way she looks at the work of the foundation and its role in the community,” said Constance Hill-Johnson, chairperson of the Cleveland Foundation Board of Directors. “She knows the city like the back of her hand and has an amazing ability to foster and build relationships – to really put people at ease. Furthermore, her heart is always in the right place, and we are confident in her ability to lead the foundation in service to the residents of greater Cleveland.”

Hill- Johnson also praised Richard for his longtime tenure leading the organization.

“On behalf of the entire board, the foundation staff and our donors, I’d like to express deep gratitude for Ronn’s two decades of service to greater Cleveland,” she said. “His vision and leadership have made a lasting impact on our community.”

Richard called Kuri a "trusted advisor" and said that he is pleased that she was chosen to follow in his footsteps as president and CEO, and Kuri said that she is excited about her new job, which she described as an opportunity of a lifetime.

“I am humbled and grateful to have been selected by the Cleveland Foundation Board of Directors,” said Kuri. “I firmly believe that this is an exceptional moment for greater Cleveland. We have a new generation of local leadership that includes civic, government and nonprofit leaders who are bringing fresh perspectives to their jobs and a track record of working together – even before taking on their new roles. I am excited to be joining their ranks.”

As part of her post-graduate work at Harvard Kuri participated in the planning of the redevelopment of Beirut’s waterfront, while working at the same time for the city of Boston in affordable housing. A member of the Cleveland Planning Commission since 2007, she was named chair in January 2022 – becoming the first woman to ever hold that role.

She joined the Cleveland Foundation in 2005 as a project consultant for the revitalization of Greater University Circle and her efforts have been cited as a national model by outlets such as [The Guardian](#)

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[Forbes](#)

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[CNBC](#)

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[U.S. News & World Report](#)

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[Fast Company](#)

She officially joined the foundation staff in 2007 as a program director and in 2016 was promoted to vice president for strategic grant-making, arts & urban design. In that role she focused her work on arts, culture and place-making, including the foundation's arts mastery initiatives, which bring year-round programs to 5,000 under-served children each year.

Over the last several years she has played a key role in the foundation's support for development in under-resourced neighborhoods. She also co-leads the foundation's impact investing strategy, which now includes a portfolio of nearly \$385 million in direct and indirect investments that deliver both a financial and social return.

Prior to joining the Cleveland Foundation, Kuri was a project coordinator for the Graduate School of Design at Harvard University and was executive director of Cleveland Public Art She was also a project manager for the city of Cleveland's Citywide Plan under then mayor Michael R. White.

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We interviewed former president Barack Obama one-on-one when he was campaigning for president. As t

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