



THE **URBS** POST

NEWSLETTER OF THE DEPARTMENT OF URBAN STUDIES AND PLANNING,
AT CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, NORTHRIDGE

FALL 2023

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Full-Time Faculty

Zeynep Toker (Chair), Ph.D.
 Paloma Giottonini, Ph.D.
 Henrik Minassians, Ph.D.
 Craig Olwert, Ph.D.
 Ward Thomas, Ph.D.
 Mintesnot Woldeamanuel,
 Ph.D.

Part-Time Faculty

Bradley Calvert, M.A.
 John Dugan, M.A.
 Daniel Freedman, J.D.
 Scott Howard, J.D.
 Brettany Shannon, Ph.D.
 Dev Vrat, M.A., AICP
 Claude Willey, M.F.A.

Staff

Eva Simpson, Admin. Support
 Coordinator II
 Carol Sanchez, Admin. Support
 Coordinator I

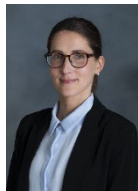


Message from the new Chair, Dr. Toker

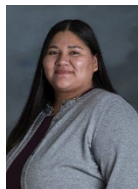


Urban Studies and Planning Department has a strong foundation. We have been granting undergraduate degrees since 1976 and graduate degrees since 2017. Our **alumni** practice urban planning in various capacities, mostly in California. Their impressive achievements are always a source of pride for the department and their continuous support of the department is always appreciated. Our **faculty** performs teaching, research, and service with commitment to student success. Our active research agendas yield publications and presentations improving the visibility of the department. We support our **students** to pursue their academic and career goals through regular departmental scholarships, research mentorship, advising, internship opportunities, and tutoring. Our **curriculum** offers the fundamental skills for practicing urban planning. Our courses address sustainability, environmental justice, and climate change. Many of our courses engage students with surrounding communities for experiential learning opportunities, which produce professional quality reports and plans benefiting those communities. The department’s student organization (**UPSN**) is dynamic and impactful, offering opportunities for students to be engaged. Our student ambassadors are recruiting more undergraduate and graduate students. This is a good moment in our department’s history, which allows for a new challenge: **PAB accreditation**. In the lengthy accreditation process, which we have started pursuing this semester, we will have our strengths highlighted even more with participation from our alumni, students, and faculty. Thanks to everyone who has participated in our focus group meetings in the past few months as we were working on one of the crucial steps of the accreditation process. We will be asking for more participation in the upcoming months. Your participation will be instrumental. I look forward to guiding our efforts in my new role as the department chair.

Our Office Managers



Eva Simpson is an Administrative Support Coordinator II with over three years of experience working for nonprofits and higher education. Eva joined the department in November 2022 and is responsible for the running of the department’s day-to-day operations. Eva is originally from Prague, Czech Republic and moved to the United States in 2012. In 2017, she earned a bachelor’s degree in history from Washington & Jefferson College in Washington, PA. In her free time, she likes to take her beagle for long hikes while exploring the beautiful nature in and around Los Angeles.



Carol Sanchez is the new Administrative Support Coordinator for the Urban Studies and Planning Department. Her experience comes from working in the non-profit sector implementing and coordinating community programs. Before coming to CSUN, Carol worked as a program assistant for a local non-profit in K-12 education. Carol’s educational background is in environmental education, with a B.A. degree in Environmental Studies from the University of California, Santa Cruz. Carol’s personal interests include gardening and cats.

Campus Spotlight: Maple Hall



California State University, Northridge's new Maple Hall, a \$43.4 million academic building equipped with technological advancements, is set to complete construction in Fall 2023. Formerly known as the Sierra Annex, Maple Hall is a 62,000-square foot academic building, and the sister building of Sierra Hall, along Etiwanda Avenue on the south end of campus. Constructed by Gilbane Building Company and the architecture firm Gensler, Maple Hall is a classroom-only building with no faculty offices. The complex will feature 38 classrooms ranging from 20-seat seminar rooms to a 130-seat lecture hall. CSUN filled these classrooms with technology, including HyFlex and smart screens, that will improve the academic experience for students and teachers alike. A large, open atrium features seating areas for students to form study groups or socialize under natural light. (Source: CSUN Sundial)

Campus Spotlight: Autodesk Technology Engagement Center

CSUN broke ceremonial ground on the Autodesk Technology Engagement Center on April 14, officially launching a center of innovation and exploration for students from preschool through college. The facility will accommodate academic programs in the university's College of Engineering and Computer Science, equity-focused STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics) programming, and Global Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) Equity Innovation Hub programming. Designed by architecture firm AC Martin, the facility will include state-of-the-art research, design and digital capture, and fabrication labs, as well as a maker space for the campus and wider community. There will be space for peer-led student support services, and the center will enable students' progression to graduation and help them transition to careers in STEAM and in the creative and tech economies. The center, scheduled to open in fall 2024, will be located next to Jacaranda Hall.

Community Partner: Sherman Oaks BID

This semester (Fall 2023), two students from our department (Hakob Shishikyan and Cameron Younger) are interning at Sherman Oaks Business Improvement District (BID). The Village at Sherman Oaks Business Improvement District is a property based district formed by a vote of the commercial property owners that assesses themselves for localized improvements. The BID stretches from Hortense Street on Van Nuys Blvd. to Cedros Ave. on the North side of Ventura Blvd. The Village At Sherman Oaks Business Improvement District is managed by a non-profit corporation to provide services within the VSOPBID zones, above and beyond what the city alone can deliver. These services help make the district a cleaner, safer, and more beautiful destination for the community. The Village ranks as one of the Valley's most recognized destinations for shopping, dining and spending quality time with friends and family. It offers numerous unique boutiques, specialty shops, restaurants, fitness studios, and service providers in a beautiful outdoor space. The eclectic collection of trendy shops in The Village offers a main street shopping experience with a relaxed and fun atmosphere. It's also home to some of the best restaurants in Los Angeles, with eateries representing cultures and flavors from around the world.

Department News

Fall 3032 Guest Lectures

Kim Lee, Manager, Transit Customer Amenities, Long Beach Transit gave a guest lecture on "Bus Stops and the Customer Experience"

Jonathan Pacheco Bell, a practicing urban planner, gave a guest lecture on "Embedded Planning"

Student Recruitment Efforts

In an effort to increase the number of students majoring and minoring in Urban Studies and Planning, the department conducted several recruitment efforts this semester. With Dr. Woldeamanuel and Dr. Toker's supervision, students Hakob Shishikyan and Elizabeth Fregoso made presentations to lower-division GE classes. Their presentation included the mission, vision, and curriculum of the department and the job prospect of graduates from the department of Urban Studies and Planning. We also had tabling events to create awareness about the department.

Accreditation

The Department of Urban Studies and Planning is going through the accreditation process. We submit the application to Planning Accreditation Board (PAB) and conducting a self-study as part of the process.

Alumni News



It is with great sadness that the family of Cynthia Campana-Contreras announced her passing after a tragic car accident on Monday, November 27, 2023. Cynthia was a graduate of Urban Studies and Planning Department (2014) and a current graduate student in the Master of Public Administration program at CSUN. She was an active alumna who continued supporting

the department in many ways after her graduation. She will be missed.

Alumni Spotlight



Dr. Michael Méndez is an assistant professor of environmental policy and planning at the University of California, Irvine, an Andrew Carnegie Fellow, and Visiting Scientist at the National Center for Atmospheric Research (through a National Science Foundation Early Faculty Career Award).

Dr. Méndez earned his B.A. from California State University, Northridge (CSUN), where he was also recognized with the Outstanding Undergraduate Thesis Award by the CSUN Association of Retired Faculty and the Bobbi Paine Outstanding Graduating Senior Award from the Department of Urban Studies and Planning. He has a graduate degree from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and a Ph.D. from UC Berkeley's Department of City and Regional Planning, where he was a Ford Foundation Fellow and UC Chancellor's Fellow.

Recent Faculty Publications

Olwert, C. T., Wang, C. H., Arellano, V., & Oulrey, D. (2023). Retailer behavior near fixed transit lines in Los Angeles: A spatial autoregressive probit model to evaluate retail clustering. *Journal of Planning Education and Research*. 43:4, 799-814.

Wang, C. H., Chen, N., **Olwert, C.** (2023). Investigating accessibility resilience of emergency and lifesaving facilities under natural hazards. *Natural Hazards*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11069-023-06272-8>.

Olwert, C, Toker, Z., Minassians, H. (2023). Best practices from 28 planning program-community partnership projects. In J. Mittal and M. LaFrombois. (Eds.), *Partners in Planning: University-Community Partnerships in Planning Education*. Oxfordshire, England, UK: Routledge.

Toker, Z., Olwert, C. (2023) How to improve any street: Common perceived pedestrian environment characteristics in different socio-economic status neighborhoods. Paper presented at the *Environmental Design Research Association (EDRA) Conference*, Mexico City, Mexico.

Toker, Z. (2023) Expectation to perform community engagement tasks from women of color in urban planning practice: A gift or a burden? Paper presented at the *American Collegiate Schools of Planning (ACSP) Conference*, Chicago, Illinois.

Gebeyew T. Deyas, **Mintesnot G. Woldeamanuel**, Sitotaw H. Erena (2023), Customers' satisfaction towards Addis Ababa City's minibuss taxi service, Heliyon, 9:11.

Eleni Gebremeskel, Berhanu Woldetensae & **Mintesnot Woldeamanuel** (2023) Travel mode preference in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia: empirical observations, *Urban, Planning and Transport Research*, 11:1.

The goal of The URBS Post is to maintain communication with our alumni, faculty, and students. We love correspondence from our alumni! Please keep in touch with us. We would like to know what you are doing, along with learning about exciting events and accomplishments in your life. Please keep us updated on any changes of home and e-mail addresses. Let us know if you have suggestions on how we can improve our newsletter. We hope to hear from you soon!! If you would like to send us information for upcoming issues, or if you have any questions, contact the Chair of the Department Dr. Zeynep Toker at zeynep.toker@csun.edu; phone: 818-677-2872.

Internships

We are expanding our internship program. Let us know if your company offers internships and we will share this information with our students.

Donations

Please consider giving: no donation is too small. Donating provides both financial support and encouragement to students. [Visit our Giving Webpage](#) or call Dr. Zeynep Toker at 818-677-2872.

Contact

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