



# THE URBS POST

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

## SPRING 2023

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### Full-Time Faculty

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

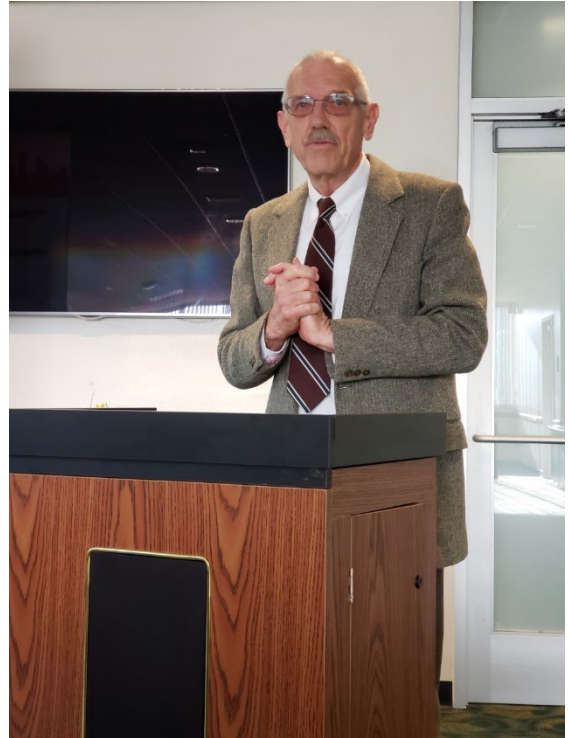
### Staff

Eva Simpson, Admin. Support  
 Coordinator  
 Arnold Kajiwaru , Student  
 Assistant



## Retirement News: Dr. Rob Kent

After 15 years of serving the Department of Urban Studies and Planning as Chair, Dr. Rob Kent (pictured right) will retire in Fall 2023. Dr. Kent is remembered as a great leader, mentor and friend to his colleagues. Faculty and staff in the department greatly benefited from his wisdom and knowledge in the field.



*“Dr. Kent has been a great leader, mentor and friend. His leadership has always been peppered with wisdom as he determined how to best help the students. As a mentor, he would explain how he arrived at the decisions and would welcome dialogue that would change decisions. And as a friend, he made being in the department fun, from a genuine warm greeting to lunch outside the Sierra Center.”* Dr. Craig Olwert

*“Rob has been instrumental in making our department a collegial work environment. As the Chair of our department he has skillfully balanced prioritizing students’ needs, supporting faculty, and maintaining a welcoming environment. He is an exemplary academic, who turned his calling into a lifestyle. Every choice he makes and every guidance he offers reflect his undeterred conviction that our job is to serve our students from the heart and with integrity. During the 15 years we worked together, he has been a great mentor, an industrious colleague, a true friend, and an occasional travel partner. Although his retirement will take him away from our daily routines at the department, he will forever remain one of us.”* Dr. Zeynep Toker

*“What is the one sentence that express Dr. Kent? Ummm... “A Chair with a heart”. Rob possesses great leadership skill which is instrumental for the Department of Urban Studies and Planning to be one of the noteworthy planning schools in Southern California. His commitment to planning and geography is unmistakable. He has been my go-to person for advice (professional and personal). His counsel is always honest. Rob is a noble individual and a great scholar. I am proud to call him my mentor and friend.”* Dr. Mintesnot Woldeamanuel

## Tillman Water Reclamation



URBS 400 Class visiting  
Tillman Water Reclamation Plant

On March 3rd, the students of Professor Paloma Giottonini from URBS 400 Planning for the Natural and Built Environment visited the Tillman Water Reclamation Plant located in Balboa Park. Richard, our tour guide and one of the engineers at the plant, explained the process that turns wastewater into reclaimed, usable water. The facility treats about 20 million gallons per day. The final product is sent to the lake in Balboa Park and the Japanese Garden, and is also shared with LADWP industrial water supply and the LA river to be reabsorbed into the groundwater.

## Cottonwood Urban Farm in Panorama City

On March 9, the students of URBS 400 Planning for the Natural and Built Environment visited Cottonwood Urban Farm in Panorama City, one of the few urban farms located in the LA Metro Area. The Farm is also a hub for LA Compost, an NGO dedicated to educating the community about the benefits of composting. Volunteers at the farm receive compostable food scraps and manage the process of composting. Through our chat with Elliot Kuhn, the founder of the farm, we learned about the many difficulties to obtain the permits and the utility connections necessary to run an urban farm in the middle of the city, which was a bit surprising to us especially after all the efforts to make cities more sustainable.



Visit to Cottonwood Urban Farm in Panorama City

## Speed Mentoring



Alumni and students at  
Speed Mentoring event

On Monday, April 17, 2023, thirteen alumni mentored thirteen students in our first in-person Speed Mentoring event since the pandemic. The event was exciting and lively as resumes were reviewed, cover letters were edited and interview questions answered. The preparation for the students was invaluable. Thank you to

our mentors: Samantha Avalos, Carlos Contreras, Nelli Derderian, Andres Di Zitti, Phillip Hirrel, Andrew Kent, Yvette Lopez, Alejandro Martinez, Linda Mendez, Dang Nguyen, Roxy Rivas, Andy Rodriguez, and Anna Vidal.

## The Santa Susana Rail Depot

On Sunday April 16th the Urban Planning Students of Northridge took a tour and learned the history of the importance of The Santa Susana Rail Depot. The Santa Susana Rail Depot is a historic train station located in Simi Valley, California. It was built in 1903 by the Southern Pacific Railroad and was used for passenger and freight transportation until 1971. The Santa Susana Rail Depot served as a major transportation hub, connecting the San Francisco Bay Area with Los Angeles and other parts of Southern California. During World War II, the depot played a critical role in transporting troops and supplies to and from military bases in the region. However, with the decline of passenger rail travel in the mid-20th century, the depot fell into disrepair and was eventually closed in 1971. For many years, it sat abandoned and unused, a forgotten relic of a bygone era. The depot was restored in the early 1990s and now houses a museum that showcases the history of the Southern Pacific Railroad and the Santa Susana Pass. Today, it is an important landmark and cultural institution in the Simi Valley community.

## URBS Alumni

**Ash Amroyan (BA '21)** is a cognitive project lead at Amelia, an IPsoft Company in New York City.

**Tom Chaffee (BA '10)** is a planner for the County of Ventura.

**Carlos Contreras (BA '07)** is an associate planner with the City of Thousand Oaks.

**Shelby Cramton (MUP '17)** is an environmental planner for Rincon Consultants in Santa Cruz.

**Madison Dederick (MUP '22)** is an assistant planner with the City of South Lake Tahoe.

**Nelli Derderian (MPA/URBS '15)** works for METRO/LA and is the Director of Financial Services for the office of Countywide Planning.

**Alen Estrada-Rodas (MUP '17)** is an associate planner II at PlaceWorks in Los Angeles.

**Joe Fiss (BA '89)** is director of planning for TW Land Planning & Development in Ventura.

**Adrian Flores (BA '19)** is an assistant planner for the City of Bell Gardens.

**Samuel Gutierrez (MPA/URBS '12)** is principal planner with the Department of Planning and Development in Santa Clara County.

**Carlos Hernandez (BA'11)** is assistant to the city manager for the City of San Fernando.

**Miguel Hernandez (BA '20)** is a planning assistant with the City of Los Angeles.

**Sylvia Jacobs (BA '14)** is a project manager for the Robert Group in Los Angeles

**Larry Jenkins (BA '15)** is a project manager for the Sacramento Housing and Redevelopment Agency.

**Myrna Jimenez-Parra (BA '09)** is a senior planner with Southern California Edison.

**Nadar Khalil (MUP '19)** is an associate planner at CSG Consultants in Orange.

**Amanda Liu (BA '10)** is a senior account executive with Old Republic Title Company in Oakland.

**Rogelio Martinez (BA '16)** is an economic and community development planner II with the City of Bakersfield.

**Susana Martinez (BA'17)** is an associate planner with the City of Signal Hill.

**Robert Miller (BA '12)** is a home energy rater for IPermit in Thousand Oaks.

**Jocelyn Morales (BA '20)** is a housing advisor in San Diego.

**John Moreno (BA '93)** is an environmental planner for Infrastructure Engineer's in Brea.

**Christine Parra (BA '03)** is the Emergency Preparedness Coordinator for the Culver City Fire Department.

**Daniel Savala (BA '10)** is executive director of the Del Paso Boulevard Partnership in Sacramento.

**Yixuan Zhu (MUP '19)** is an urban planner with the Xi'an Urban Planning and Design Research Institute planner in Xi'an, China

## Scholarship Recipients

### Urban Studies and Planning Alumni Scholarship

Angelique Soliz  
Noah Laber

### James H. Ring Graduate Scholarship

Kassie Vickers

### James H. Ring Undergraduate Scholarship

Sassan Nowshiravani,  
Cameron Younger,  
Victor Zepeda,  
Josh Darrow,  
Raul Felix

## Graduates- Class of 2023

### BA in Urban Studies and Planning

Christopher Aldana  
Stephanie Banuelos  
Nicholas Burgnon  
Jahaira Cardenas  
Pedro Cardenas  
Alva Carrasco  
Matthew Fox  
Alexia Guevara  
Andy Ha  
Jacob Hartmann  
Sasha Kassab  
Peter Kato  
Bela Kiyork  
Noah Laber  
Ricardo Leyva  
Brett McMahon  
Michael Meneses



## BA in Urban Studies and Planning Continued...

Sassan Nowshiravani

Michelle Ramirez

Ashley Ramos

Faith Smith

Jailah Smith

Angelique Soliz

## Master of Urban Planning

Benjamin Uhrig

Karla Velazquez Torres

Tiffany Zeytounian

Josue Chavez-Chavez

Yesenia Cruz – Rios

Wreiko Dawson

Alexandra Day

Jennifer Lee

Andrea Magana Withers

Aminullah Prince

Ann Rosenthal

## Student Engagement: APA Conference

The 2023 American Planning Association (APA) conference held in Philadelphia was a dynamic and engaging event that brought together urban planners, policymakers, and professionals from across the country to discuss the latest trends and innovations in city planning. The conference was held at the Pennsylvania Convention Center from April 1 to April 4 and featured a variety of sessions, workshops, and networking events that focused on creating sustainable, equitable, and livable communities. Through partial funding CSUN was able to send 6 Urban Planning and Studies students. The conference covered a wide range of topics, including transportation planning, housing affordability, community engagement, urban design and climate action. Students had the opportunity to learn about the latest planning strategies and best practices from experts in the field, as well as to connect with peers and exchange ideas. The UPSN plans to attend Planning Conferences in the future and hopes that as the club expands more students will take advantage of the amazing opportunities a Conference offers.

## Recent Faculty Publications

**Eleni Gebremeskel and Mintesnot Woldeamanuel**, “Vulnerability and coping strategies: The experience of public transit users in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia”, Case Studies on Transport Policy, Volume 10, Issue 4, December 2022, Pages 2300-2310.

**Mintesnot Woldeamanuel and Eleni Gebremeskel**, “Vulnerability and coping strategies: The experience of public transit users in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia”, 64th International Meeting of the Transportation Research Forum in Chicago, IL, April 27th to 28th 2023.

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. Rob Kent at [rkent@csun.edu](mailto:rkent@csun.edu); phone: 818-677-4372.

## 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. Rob Kent at 818-677-4372.

## Contact

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