URBAN AFFAIRS & PLANNING At HUNTER

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Peter Kwong Named CUNY Distinguished Professor



Peter Kwong

Dr. Peter Kwong, a Hunter professor of urban affairs and planning, has been named a CUNY Distinguished Professor, a title reserved for a highly select

group of scholars whose work has earned them international renown in their field. The title, which is granted by the CUNY Board of Trustees, was conferred on only five professors this year.

A pioneer in Asian American studies, a leading scholar of immigration, and an award-winning journalist and filmmaker, Professor Kwong is recognized around the world for his passionate commitment to social justice on behalf of oppressed and disadvantaged populations. He holds a doctorate in political science and a master's in engineering from Columbia, as well as degrees in math and physics from Whitman College. He has taught at Hunter since 1993.

Kwong, a bridge builder, connects the academic with the activist communities, adds academic depth to the art of journalistic writing, and holds filmmakers accountable for facts. He is also a builder for Hunter, having founded its Asian American Studies Program, the largest in both the CUNY system and the entire New York City region.

His extensive scholarly and journalistic contributions include *Forbidden Workers:* Chinese Illegal Immigrants and American Labor, which was selected by Barnes and Noble as one of the Ten Best Nonfiction

Books of 1998. A regular contributor to *The Nation* and the *International Herald Tribune*, he has been nominated twice for a Pulitzer Prize. Kwong has also been involved in the production of 21 documentary films; his most recent, *China's Unnatural Disaster*, concerning the Chinese government's mishandling of the 2009 earthquake, was nominated for an Academy Award as Best Documentary in 2010.

Kwong has been active in civil and human rights since the 1960s. His scholarship is informed by vigorous public activism and a belief in advancing social causes through a combination of media and academic disciplines. "What is important to me," said Professor Kwong, "is that this honor gives recognition to individual contributions beyond the academic – to journalism and to social activism as well."

UAP Alum Inducted into Hall of Fame



Don Capoccia and Hunter President Jennifer J.Raab

Donald A. Capoccia, MA'82, a pioneer in the development of affordable housing in emerging neighborhoods, was inducted into the Hunter College Alumni Association Hall of Fame last May. The founder and managing principal of the real estate development firm BFC Partners, Capoccia has combined a successful career in real estate with extensive civic activities devoted to public art and architecture initiatives, urban planning issues, and AIDS research.

Capoccia began his development and construction activities in New York in 1982, just before earning his MA in urban planning at Hunter. He has helped spur the resurgence of key New York City neighborhoods, including the East Village, East Harlem, Williamsburg, and Downtown Brooklyn, and has promoted affordable home ownership throughout the city. He has also been a leader in the production of sustainable "green" buildings.

Capoccia is co-founder and vice president of the New York State Association for Affordable Housing and has played key roles in a host of other professional and civic organizations including the Real Estate Board of New York, the American Foundation for AIDS Research, the Public Policy Committee of Lincoln Center, and LaMama Experimental Theater.

A strong supporter of Hunter initiatives as well, he has given \$10,000 to the Department of Urban Affairs and Planning for student scholarships and faculty research and \$10,000 to the College's Center for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Social Science and Public Policy.

Said Capoccia, "Without the education I received at Hunter, I would never have become involved with the extraordinary projects that have defined my professional life. It is important that young men and women coming into the UAP program today can also look forward to professional opportunities, and I am certain that my support will encourage that."



Greetings from the Chair

This second edition of the annual Alumni Newsletter marks a special time in the history of the department. On September 16, 2011, we held our first alumni celebration in which we granted a newly named distinguished service award in honor of the late Robert C. Weaver. Dr. Weaver was a Distinguished Professor in the Department of Urban Affairs and Planning from 1970 to 1978, a position he assumed after serving as the first secretary of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. An appointee of President Lyndon B. Johnson, Weaver was also the first African American ever to hold a cabinet position.

The first recipient of the Robert C. Weaver Distinguished Service Award is Mitch Silver, a 1993 graduate of the urban planning program and currently president of the American Planning Association. The event was held at Roosevelt House. (See page 4.) Many of you alums will remember Roosevelt House as that creaky double townhouse on East 65th Street that was once the home of Franklin and Eleanor, where Hunter students gathered for social and other extracurricular activities. Under the guidance of world-class architect James Polshek, the newly renovated building has recently reopened as the Roosevelt House Public Policy Institute, with a state-of-the-art auditorium, classrooms and conference facilities. What better place is there to bring together alumni, faculty and students?

Alumni are the largest part of our departmental community, the only segment that is guaranteed to grow every year. The faculty and students want you to become a more integral part of our community. The September 16th event, planned with a committee of alumni, was an important step in that direction.

Joseph P. Viteritti

Thomas Hunter Professor of Public Policy Chair, Department of Urban Affairs & Planning

Faculty Spotlight



Meet Matthew Lasner, Urban Planning Historian, Admirer of New York

Matthew Lasner, who joined the Urban Affairs and Planning Department in September as an assistant professor, is a scholar in the history and theory of the built environment, with a primary focus on urban and suburban issues in late 19th- and 20th-century America. His first book, *High Life: Condo Living in the Suburban Century*, which examines the

emergence of co-ops and condos as alternatives to suburbia, will be published by Yale University Press next year.

Lasner, who earned his PhD in architecture and urban planning at Harvard in 2007, comes to Hunter from Georgia State University in Atlanta where he was an assistant professor in the history department, teaching courses in urban and architectural history and American-built environments.

He found living and working in Atlanta "fascinating," he now says – an opportunity to see the development of a modern American city and its suburbs firsthand. But the chance to return to New York was irresistible, since he finds it "the best laboratory there is for studying cities." The fact that Hunter's Urban Affairs and Planning Department is "terrific" made the opportunity an offer he couldn't refuse.

Now settled in a brownstone apartment in Boerum Hill, Brooklyn, Lasner has renewed his acquaintance with New York, "a city that is exciting because it is always changing." When asked if the changes don't sometimes sweep away desirable things, he replied, "That is true, and yet change in New York is somewhat 'sticky.' The old ways hold on longer than you would expect, like the mom-and-pop drugstores that were replaced long ago by chains in the rest of America but can still be found in communities here."

He sees similarities between teaching at Hunter and Georgia State, since both are public research schools. But Hunter students have proved to be "more sophisticated and more knowledgeable." He added, "We have wonderful conversations because Hunter has a culture of openness and dialogue."

Lasner earned his BA in urban studies from Columbia University in 1996 and an MS in regional and urban planning studies from the London School of Economics in 1997. He is an active member of the Society for American City and Regional Planning History, the Society of Architectural Historians, the Vernacular Architecture Forum, and the Urban History Association.

A New Tradition: Four Fulbrights in Three Years



Thomael Joannic

It started with Thomael Joannidis, MS '06, in 2009-2010 when she was awarded a Fulbright grant to research the participation of young women in conflict resolution on the ethnically divided island of Cyprus. Joannidis' work examined the social inclusion of these women in conflict resolution and civic society and sought to identify ways to promote meaningful participation and leadership opportunities for Cypriot women in particular. Following the completion of her Fulbright, Joannidis returned to Cyprus to present the findings of her research.

The following year, Heidi Exline, MUP '10, was also awarded a Fulbright. Her award was to study food systems in Ludhiana - a city of approximately a million people in the state of Punjab in India. Over the past nine months, she has worked with a professor from the Punjab Agriculture



Heidi Exline

University to learn about issues related to hunger and agriculture. Together they conducted community food assessments with residents of both Punjab and the state of Uttarakhand to understand how spikes in food prices affect Indians. Ultimately, her goal is to empower residents to make small changes in the food system that will mitigate some of the effects of future food-price spikes. She has also become a local advocate for biking on the university campus and communicates her experiences via blog.

This fall Neil Garry, MUP '11, will depart for Seoul, South Korea, his Fulbright destination. His research will focus on transportation systems. He will compare the planning process, development and implementation of the mammoth Seoul Metropolitan Subway system to transportation projects here in New York and the

U.S. in general. "South Korea is not as wealthy as the United States, but its economy has grown rapidly through innovation. In the last decade they have come up with some innovative ideas in transportation planning. They're committed to creativity," says Garry.

While Garry is riding trains in Seoul, UAP's Professor Jill Simone Gross will embark on a Fulbright adventure of her own. Prof. Gross was awarded a Fulbright Scholar grant to conduct research in the European Union during the Spring 2012 semester. Jointly sponsored by the Fulbright program in the U.S. and the Schuman Program of the European Union, the five-month research award will enable Gross to examine the implications of European Union law on migrant inclusion in cities. She will study how these laws intersect with local inclusion policies to create what appears to be a type of "urban citizenship" separate and apart from more traditional notions of national citizenship. She will divide her time between two national migrant hubs in Europe, London and Dublin, with shorter trips to Amsterdam. Local host institutions will include: University College Dublin, University of Westminster, and the City of Amsterdam's Diversity Office.

The Fulbright program, sponsored by the State Department's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, is part of the U.S. government's flagship international exchange program. Its goals are promoting international understanding and finding solutions to shared concerns.



Neil Garry



Iill Simone Gross

2 urban affairs & planning At HUNTER 3

Mitch Silver Receives Distinguished Service Award



UAP Professor Sigmund Shipp with alumnus Mitchell Silver

Mitchell Silver, MUP '93, one of the Department of Urban Affairs and Planning's most prominent graduates, is the first recipient of the department's newly created Robert C. Weaver Distinguished Service Award. Silver is president of the American Planning Association (APA), a 43,000-member organization that provides leadership in community development.

The award was presented during a ceremony held September 16 at Hunter's newly restored Roosevelt House. The event also introduced the department's new Urban Dialogue series, which recognizes trail-blazers in urban planning and policy who uphold the ideals of Hunter's Urban Affairs and Planning Department – in particular, innovation, advocacy and commitment to diversity.

Silver is currently director of city planning in Raleigh, N.C. He has served as deputy director in the Office of Planning in Washington, D.C.; Northern Manhattan planning and policy director for the Manhattan Borough President's office; a planner in the New York City Planning Department, and president of the New York Metro APA Chapter. Articles by him have been featured in Time.com, *The New York Times, Planning Magazine*, CNBC.com, the *Triangle Business Journal*, *Crain's Business Journal* and on National Public Radio.

The Urban Affairs and Planning faculty created the Weaver Distinguished Service Award in honor of Robert C. Weaver (1907-97), who served as a distinguished professor in Hunter's UAP department from 1970 to 1978. Dr. Weaver was nationally recognized for his pioneering innovations in housing policy. In 1965 President Lyndon Johnson named him as the first secretary of the newly created U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, making him the first African American to serve in a presidential cabinet.

The inaugural Urban Dialogue was titled Planning and the Community: A Conversation with Mitch Silver and featured a conversation between Silver and Eugenie Birch, his former professor and mentor. Birch, a former chair of the UAP Department, currently serves as chair of the Graduate Group and co-director of the Institute for Urban Research at the University of Pennsylvania.

At one point in the dialogue, Silver laid out what many in the audience recognized as a new direction for planners: "We need to become a profession of big thinkers again, visionaries who think in the long term.... We need to fall back in love with planning."

Joseph Viteritti, chair of the UAP Department, summed up the ceremony, saying "What began as an event to recognize the work of one of our most accomplished alums, Mitch Silver, grew into an opportunity to celebrate Robert Weaver, the distinguished history of our department, and our common sense of purpose."

UAP Hosts First Fundraiser

The Urban Affairs and Planning Department organized its first fundraiser on Friday, September 16, 2011 to support the department and to celebrate the achievements of alumnus Mitch Silver, president of the American Planning Association. The evening was a great success, raising over \$20,000 for scholarships and programs.

Alumni, faculty and students came to Roosevelt House for the event and were delighted to reconnect with Eugenie Birch, the president of the International

Planning History Society and the former chair of Hunter's UAP department, who was Silver's professor at Hunter.

To make a gift in support of Hunter's Urban Affairs program, please visit www. hunter.edu, click on the "Make a Gift" tab and use the drop down menu to locate Urban Affairs.



Former UAP Chair, Eugenie Birch, interviews honoree Mitch Silver.



Students (l-r) Erin McAuliff, Hart Migda and Emily Anderson listen intently to the panel discussion.



UAP Professor Peter Kwong discusses the new Urban Dialogue series with MUP student Ahmed Tigani.



Alumnae Kerry McLean ('08) and Colette Gill-Pierre ('00) enjoy the evening program.



Coming together to celebrate with Mitch Silver are (back row, l-r) Mary Rocco, Richard Bass, Donald Burns, James Rausse, Sigmund Shipp. (front row, l-r) Joseph Viteritti, Eugenie Birch, Silver, and Joanna Oliver.

Robert Weaver: Planner, Teacher, Civil Rights Pioneer, Public Servant



Robert C. Weaver (1907-1997) earned his bachelor's ('29), master's ('31) and doctorate ('34) in economics from Harvard, a rarity for an African American in the pre-civil rights era. He served as an informal adviser to President Franklin D. Roosevelt and crusaded to ensure that African Americans received their fair share from the New Deal. In 1944, he became head of the Mayor's Committee on Race Relations in Chicago, then moved to

New York where he wrote such works as The Negro Ghetto, a seminal study of housing segregation in the North.

In 1956 he became New York State rent administrator, the first African American to hold a state cabinet post. In 1961 President Kennedy named him administrator of the Housing and Home Finance Agency, the highest federal position ever held by an African American. In 1965 President Johnson nominated Weaver as secretary of the newly created Housing and Urban Development Department, making him the first African American in a presidential cabinet. He served until 1968.

Weaver was president of Baruch College from 1969 until 1971, when he became Distinguished Professor of Urban Affairs at Hunter. He taught and directed the Urban Affairs Research Center until his retirement in 1978. In 2000, three years after his death, the HUD building in Washington, which he had dedicated in 1968, was renamed in his honor.

4 urban affairs & planning An HUNTER urban affairs & planning An HUNTER

Lishawn Alexander, MUP '07, works as a capacity building and oversight analyst in the Mayor's Office of Contracts. She works with the city's contracted nonprofit vendors.

Betsy A. Beasley, MS '09, is a PhD student in American studies at Yale, where she is focusing

on the intersections between cultural history and urban economic development. Her dissertation will focus on the cultural, political, and economic role of Sunbelt metropolitan development in the construction of neoliberal political ideologies during the last third of the twentieth century.

Calvin Brown, BA '00, MUP '02, is in a doctoral program for public and urban policy at the Milano: New School for Management and Urban Policy. In April 2011, he passed his qualifying exam and is now working on his dissertation.

Nicole Campo, MUP '07, is working as the deputy director of the Land Use Review division of the New York City Department of City Planning.

Paula Di Stefano, MUP '00, is a marketing manager at Bloomberg LP, responsible for the Bloomberg New Energy Finance business as well as the company's sustainability and wellness programs. She will be attending the Graduate Center's PhD program in environmental psychology, with a concentration in demography.



Soribel Genao, MS '05, recently completed a PhD in public administration from Rutgers University- Newark. Her primary research interests are collaboration in urban

education settings and school-based organizational behavior. Genao has presented nationally on issues related to collaboration and performance measurement in urban education. She is currently preparing for travel to Haiti and Dominican Republic to conduct research with collaborators on a future publication.

Christopher Illum, MS '10. Since 2008, Illum has been working in the field of af

fordable housing, specifically shared-equity cooperatives in NYC. He works in preservation which ranges from policy and advocacy work to direct service work, and compliance monitoring. He is also the coordinator for the task force on city-owned property, a group of affordable-housing advocates, community groups and lawyers who work toward policy-based approaches to affordable housing issues in NYC.

Emily J. Kronenberger, MS '06, works as a health educator at Princeton, where she provides health promotion and education programs to students and manages the peer health advising program. She is the founder of New Wave Grrrl, an information and resource-sharing blog for women with a focus on health disparities that impact women with disabilities, women of color, and the LGBTQI community. Since graduating, she has also completed professional certificates in developmental disabilities and non-profit/ public management from the Rutgers University School of Social Work, and a master of public health from West Chester University.



Erika Lerner, MS '06, is an associate staff analyst for the City of New York Human Resources Administration/Department of Social Services. Her primary function is

ter partnerships with other organizations providing social services and economic assistance to low-income individuals and families. Since taking on this role in 2007, she has facilitated the procurement of approximately \$47 million in funding. Lerner also serves as a writing facilitator/ tutor at the Hostos Community College Academic Learning Center.



Josh Margul, BA '11, is continuing his studies in urban planning at the Harvard University Graduate School of Design. He will focus on international housing development in

order to achieve his ultimate career goal of steering policy within the UNDP. While at Hunter, Margul interned with the Public Advocate's Office.

Kassy Nystrom, MUP '09, is a program manager for Food Access Initiatives at Myrtle Avenue Revitalization Project in Fort Greene, Brooklyn. She coordinates and manages initiatives under the project's Myrtle Eats Fresh program, which includes a community-run farm stand, chef program, food assessment and food council, assistance for community gardens, and the development of a program that will bring more regional foods to local businesses.

Steven D. Schrager, BA '73, serves as the director of research at SMC Fixed Income Management, LP. He is a member of the National Federation of Municipal Analysts and the Municipal Analyst Group of New York. In September, he joined the Hunter faculty as an adjunct professor in Urban Affairs and Planning, where he teaches public finance.



Kevin Tolan, MUP '08, is the director of BID services and programs for the Fulton Mall Improvement Association which is managed by the Downtown Brooklyn

Partnership. He works with merchants, property owners, and contractors to improve the business environment and quality of life for the Fulton Street area. Tolan is also the primary BID liaison for all stakeholders during the \$15 million Fulton Streetscape Improvement Project. In addition, he serves on Manhattan Community Board 2 and is a participant in the inaugural Coro New York Neighborhood Leadership Program.

Carol Van Guilder, MUP '92, is vice president of urban planning for the Real Estate Board of New York, Inc. Van Guilder contributes to planning initiatives such as those relating to the reuse of manufacturing-zoned land, improvements to the review process for development projects, and revisions to the landmark designation process. She is the co-chair of the American Planning Association New York Metro Chapter's Housing and Neighborhood Revitalization Committee and a member of the American Institute of Certified Planners.

To submit a Class Note please email at: urban@hunter.cuny.edu

Alum's Documentary on "The Domino Effect" Out This Fall



Alumnus Brian Paul (r) and students Daniel Phelps and Megan Sperry have collaborated on a film about real estate development in NYC.

Recent MUP graduate Brian Paul ('11) is following in the footsteps of his former professor, Peter Kwong, by creating a compelling documentary. His upcoming feature film, The Domino Effect, which will be released later this year, is a collaboration with Hunter students Daniel Phelps and Megan Sperry of Hunter's Integrated Media Arts MFA program. The film explores the process of real estate development in New York City and digs deep to uncover the complex networks of

banks, developers, politicians, and non-profit organizations that shape our cities. In 2009 Distinguished Professor Kwong's documentary, China's Unnatural Disaster, was nominated for an Academy Award.

Told through the voices of longtime residents, the film conveys the impact of gentrification on individuals while also shedding light on issues encountered by residents of cities all across the country. Why, the film asks, have decent jobs and affordable housing for the middle and working classes become increasingly scarce while gleaming towers of luxury condos, high-end retail, and offices continue to rise? What is at stake in the shaping of the 21st century city and how can people intervene to protect the neighborhoods they love? Despite the widely recognized negative impacts, development continues to proceed in the same fashion—high-rise towers pair thousands of luxury condos with small numbers

of "affordable housing" aimed at incomes far above what the average Williamsburg resident actually earns, with the developers receiving tens of millions of dollars of public money for

The Community Preservation Corporation's "New Domino" project—the redevelopment of the Domino Sugar Factory on the East River into a complex of 2,200 apartments and condos in towers up to 40 stories high—serves as the film's case study for examining the complex politics of urban development in the 21st century.

When not making documentaries, Paul works for Common Cause on a project that is drawing a model non-partisan redistricting plan for the entire state for Congress, State Senate, and State Assembly. For the past few months, he's been putting the GIS skills he learned at Hunter to work doing demographic analysis regarding New York State redistricting.

A Conversation with Christina Prince



Christina Prince, 19, a Hunter senior with a double major in urban studies and political science, expects to graduate in May. She plans to attend graduate school in urban affairs next fall.

Why did you decide to major in urban affairs? Is there any particular area that

interests you? I grew up on Long Island, but I've been in love with New York City for years. Once I started learning about the urban planning profession and how it would work in a city like New York, I knew it would be a career I could be passionate about. I'm specifically interested in community advocacy in the development process—closing the gap between planner and neighborhood. Every community should have a voice in the aesthetic changes in its area.

Are you interning? Yes. I work for a City Council member in Queens. I'm a constituent correspondent; I handle complaints and requests from constituents as they come into the office. Recently I've also been viewing audits and reports for the chief of staff. I also go to local events and to City Hall. I get an overview of all of the aspects of a well-run political office.

Can you tell us about one or two especially rewarding courses you've taken? I've found every undergraduate class at Hunter to be challenging as well as beneficial in helping me determine my future. However, my interest in the Urban Studies program grew out of the Urban Studies 101 course I took with Professor Robyn Causey in my freshman year. The class requires you to look at life in New York City through the lenses of a variety of people, including a homeless youth, a political official, and a victim of domestic violence. We had a range of outside speakers who had dramatically different views of the city because of their

disparate experiences. The ideals of community building I've learned from Professor Causey's class changed my perspective on life.

Any other courses you want to mention? Professor Sigmund Shipp's class introduced a new perspective on how planners work. Hesays that by exploring race, class, and gender while serving the public, planners can better understand the needs and values of the community they are working with. In the final project, we worked closely with Taller Boricua, a community arts organization that promotes Latino culture in East Harlem through art, dance, and music. We filmed a documentary showcasing the organization's cultural impact on the community while also showing the effects that gentrification has had on the group's ability to continue strengthening the area's Latino culture.

What are your future plans? I'm applying to graduate schools and hope to practice planning for public/community advocacy.

Join us for these upcoming events

Fall 2011 Student Presentations

7pm, Monday, December 5 8th Floor Faculty Lounge Students will be presenting their Fall 2011 studio and workshop proposals.

Hunter UAP Annual Holiday Celebration

6-9 pm, Monday, December 19, 2011 Faculty Dining Room RSVP: urban@hunter.cuny.edu

urban affairs & planning A HUNTER 6 urban affairs & planning 🛕

Pedestrian Projects Group: Some of the Finest Grads at Work



Randy Wade

Randy Wade, MUP '00, is the director of the Pedestrian Projects Group at New York City's Department of Transportation. Under her leadership, a group composed of planners, engineers, architects, and urban designers studies, designs and oversees improvements that create safe and enjoyable streets, especially at complex intersections. The multidisciplinary team delves into traffic issues, addresses bicycle access, creates landscape plans and and plans innovative street designs.

Through Hunter's Career Services Office, Wade began an internship at New Yorkers for Parks. The first federal transportation bill to flex highway building money to transit and bikes had just been passed and she was allowed to attend a meeting to find out if this money could plant trees. Stunned by the effective, talkative bicycle advocates, she was amazed that nobody spoke up on behalf of pedestrians. With advice from professionals and the commitment

of a small group of citizens, Wade founded Walk New York.

The organization espoused the idea that funding for pedestrian improvements would support vibrant downtowns, improve safety and add landscaping opportunities.

As director, Wade has overseen many of the streetscape changes and improvements we enjoy today, such as the Madison Square project. Her proudest achievement is "the number of amazing, smart, fun, hard-working and generous professionals that I have hired and thrown into the thick of the work here over the years."

A little-known fact about the Pedestrian Projects Group is the number of Hunter Urban Affairs and Planning alums who have been brought on to Wade's team as interns and eventually as staff. For example, Heidi Wolf, MUP '09, began at Pedestrian Projects as an intern and now manages the creation of a plaza at the Schermerhorn subway station and a complete street design for Crotona Avenue in the Bronx. She also oversees the photographic documentation on all pedestrian projects initiatives.

Rich Carmona, MUP '10, plans and manages projects such as access to the new Harlem River Park and creating a roadbed plaza at Water and Whitehall Streets. He also conducts traffic analysis.

Julio Palleiro, BA '10, and current MUP student, brings a film making and graphic arts background to the office. Laura MacNeil, MUP '11, joined the group as graduate intern and helped to produce the internal book that graphically lays out the work program for DOT projects. She learned AutoCad while doing the internship and designed several street improvements with her new skills. Wade claims, "Hunter graduate students tend to have interesting backgrounds that enrich their work."

While the path to complete streets in New York City may be turbulent, Wade remains optimistic, saying, "every day someone new impresses me with their personal commitment to public service and willingness to move forward in a helpful way."



Pedestrian Projects Group members include (l-r) UAP alums Rich Carmona, Julio Palleiro and Heidi Wolf.



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