Speaker Look Book

ULI Coastal Forum 2022: Financing Coastal Resilience Improvements in Coastal Communities

April 20, 2022
Introduction
This Spring, ULI’s Coastal Forum will tackle the complex challenge of financing and investing in physical infrastructure for resilience in coastal communities.

According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), in 2021 alone, the U.S. experienced 20 separate billion-dollar weather and climate disasters including Hurricane Ida, the mid-February Winter Storm/Cold Wave, and the Western wildfires which totaled approximately $145 billion dollars in damages. Though they are among the most populated and economically burgeoning regions of the United States, coastal communities are uniquely vulnerable to climate hazards such as hurricanes, coastal storms, sea level rise, and flooding. For the real-estate industry, the threat to the trillions of dollars of assets concentrated in these areas posed by climate change is palpable and the urgency of building resilience is at the forefront of discussion among investors, developers, and local officials. Among the many questions posed by real estate professionals is, how to finance and construct the infrastructure and real estate projects within coastal areas.

About the ULI Coastal Forum
The mission of the Coastal Forum is to convene, collect, and share best practices and emerging market trends in coastal real estate development and community resilience, focusing on strategies to protect and strengthen communities at risk due to sea level rise, storms, and other climate hazards through innovative infrastructure and real estate projects within coastal areas.

The Coastal Forum seeks to provide an opportunity for members to meet and build a network with peers of different professional backgrounds involved in coastal development and/or resilience. The goals of the Coastal Forum are as follows:

- Offer a forum to share best practices for coastal development, resilience, and planning
- Provide a targeted group to share and provide private sector input into new tools and resources
- Provide an opportunity for leadership and expertise development in coastal development and resilience

ULI Coastal Forum Steering Committee

Garrett Avery, Senior Manager, AECOM
Wayne Cobleigh, Vice President, Client Services, GZA GeoEnvironmental, Inc.
Leigh Fletcher, Managing Member, Fletcher Fischer Pollack P.L.
Jason Hellendrung, Vice President, Planning and Design, Tetra Tec
Tom Jost, Chief Operating Officer at Sherwood Design Engineers
William Kenworthey, Regional Leader of Planning, HOK
James Murley, Chief Resiliency Officer, Miami Dade County

Josh Murphy, Senior Geospatial Analyst, NOAA Office of Coastal Management; Adjunct Faculty, Georgetown URP
Chuck Schilke, Director and Senior Lecturer, The Edward St. John Real Estate Program, Johns Hopkins Carey Business School
Jack Smith, Partner, Nelson Mullins Riley & Scarborough LLP
Rives Taylor, Firmwide Design Resilience Co-Leader, Principal, Gensler
Greg West, Chief Executive Officer, ZOM Living
Katie Wholey, Resilience Consultant, ARUP
Lian Plass, Senior Manager, Urban Resilience, ULI
2022 Coastal Forum Speaker Biographies
Becky (Rebecca) Smyth

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Becky Smyth is the West Coast Regional Director for NOAA’s Office for Coastal Management. Working across California, Oregon, Washington, and Alaska, she works with coastal resource managers on coastal hazards and climate adaptation, ocean management, and coastal community and habitat management. Roles include leadership on the West Coast Ocean Alliance, a tribal, state and federal partnership, and the National Coastal Resilience Fund, a grant program in partnership with the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation.

Becky began her career at NOAA as a Knauss Sea Grant fellow, working in NOAA’s Ocean Service headquarters working on policy and legislation. She moved to the west coast in 2002 to open the first west coast location of the office and has served as the overall Regional Division Chief as well as west coast director. Other personal and professional highlights include being an author on the Southwest chapter of the National Climate Assessment and being a team member and team honoree for the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society’s Team in Training.

Smyth received a master’s of science degree in environmental coastal ocean science from the University of Massachusetts - Boston and a bachelor’s degree in environmental studies with a minor in Russian and Eastern European studies from Boston College.
Deyra Aryan-Zahlan

Chief Harbor Engineer
Port of Los Angeles
Los Angeles, CA

Dina Aryan-Zahlan serves as Chief Harbor Engineer of the Engineering Division for the Port of Los Angeles, the nation's busiest container port. Appointed to her current position in 2022, Aryan-Zahlan oversees the day-to-day activities of the Engineering Division and is responsible for the planning and design of a wide variety of port infrastructure and facilities including wharves, terminals, rail, roadway, public access and other infrastructure improvements that support the diverse operations of the port complex.

Aryan-Zahlan most recently served as the Port's Assistant Chief Harbor Engineer since 2015, where she oversaw the planning, development and design of the infrastructure and facilities, including wharves, terminals, rail, roadways, waterfront development and other improvements that support the diverse operations of the nation's busiest seaport.

A dedicated public servant with more than 30 years of experience as an engineer, Aryan-Zahlan first joined the City of Los Angeles as Civil Engineering Assistant with the Department of Public Works' Bureau of Engineering Harbor District in San Pedro. There, she gained a strong background in engineering design on a variety of public works improvements including streets, storm drains, wastewater, and private development programs.

Aryan-Zahlan joined the Port of Los Angeles as a Construction Manager in 2000, then promoted to Harbor Engineer-Chief of Design in 2003, and again to Assistant Chief Harbor Engineer in 2015. For the past two decades, Aryan-Zahlan has managed the Port's Transportation Program, Terminal Development Program and LA Waterfront Program, which represent more than $2 billion in combined infrastructure improvements.

During her tenure at the Port, Aryan-Zahlan has been pivotal in the transformation of cargo terminals, transportation improvements and waterfront development projects. From 2008 to 2022, she led the Port's LA Waterfront development team and has played a key role in the Port's public access infrastructure development program. Thanks to her efforts, pedestrians, cyclists and visitors to the LA Waterfront have experienced improved connectivity and access to the San Pedro and Wilmington Waterfronts and the California Coastal Trail.

Under her leadership, the Port developed the 2003 Port-wide Transportation Master Plan resulting in transportation projects, including the I-110/SR-47 Connector and John S. Gibson Ramps Improvements, I-110 Freeway/C Street Ramps and South Wilmington Grade Separation. She also led the team that planned and designed the modernization of the TraPac container terminal, the first of its kind in the nation.

Aryan-Zahlan obtained her Bachelor of Science in civil engineering and Executive Master of Leadership degree from the University of Southern California. She is a registered civil engineer in the State of California, certified Project Management Professional® and Senior Certified Professional from the Society of Human Resources Management (SHRM-SCP). She serves as director-at-large of the Los Angeles Chapter of Women in Transportation Society (WTS-LA) and is an active member of American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE), American Public Works Association (APWA) and Project Management Institute (PMI).
Michael Galvin is the director of waterfront and commercial real estate at the Port of Los Angeles, the nation’s leading container port. The Port of Los Angeles is a landlord seaport, covering 7500 acres of land and water, with more than 300 leaseholders. In this role, Galvin is responsible for development and management of the Port’s LA Waterfront including commercial development opportunities, cruise passengers, commercial fueling, recreational marinas, hotels and restaurants that create public access to the Port’s expansive waterfront amenities.

Galvin also oversees the Port’s redevelopment program for marine oil terminals under the State of California Marine Oil Terminal Engineering and Maintenance Standards (MOTEMS). The Port’s MOTEMS program will deliver over $200 million in capital improvements to the Port’s marine oil terminals which support regional refinery operations, LAX aviation fuel logistics and the San Pedro Bay bunker fuel market.

Appointed to his current position in April 2015, Galvin previously served as the Port’s director of special projects. Galvin first joined the Port in 2004 as a real estate officer. He quickly promoted to assistant division head for the Department of Public Works’ Bureau of Engineering, Real Estate Division and then returned to the Port in 2005 as deputy director of real estate before promoting to director of real estate in 2007. He began his City career in 2000 as a real estate associate for the Bureau of Engineering.

Galvin holds a bachelor of arts in U.S. history from the University of California, San Diego and received his Juris Doctor from Western State College of Law in 2015. Galvin is a licensed attorney and real estate broker in the State of California.
Brian Saenger is the President and Chief Executive Officer of The Ratkovich Company, a Los Angeles-based real estate development company specializing in urban infill and historic rehabilitation of landmark properties. He previously served as the Company’s Chief Operating Officer and General Counsel and was responsible for overseeing the Company’s operations, including development management, property management, and legal and administrative functions. In 2021, Brian was named to the Los Angeles Business Journal’s list of 500 Most Influential People in Los Angeles.

Brian is a respected business and civic leader in Los Angeles, having been asked to serve as a founding member of the UCLA Anderson Forecast Board of Advisors. The Forecast is one of the most widely watched and often-cited economic outlooks for California and the nation. It was the first major U.S. economic forecasting group to declare that the recession caused by the COVID-19 pandemic had already begun. Founded in 1952, the Forecast has distinguished itself as the leading independent economic forecast for greater Los Angeles, the state of California, and the United States.

Brian is a member of the Board of Directors of the Los Angeles County Business Federation (LA BizFed) and a member of BizFed PAC, the only business political action committee focused on local elections in all 88 cities in L.A. County. Representing more than 180 business organizations and 400,000 employers with 3.5 million employees throughout L.A. County, LA BizFed advances policies and projects that strengthen the regional economy. Brian also serves on the Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce’s “The CEO Council,” an advisory group of top business leaders focused on ensuring affordable housing for middle-income families and building a workforce that is prepared for the good-paying jobs of the future.

Brian is a member of the Urban Land Institute (ULI) and serves on the Urban Development and Mixed-Use Council. ULI is the oldest and largest network of cross-disciplinary real estate and land use experts in the world. He is a member of the Board of Directors for the San Gabriel Valley Economic Partnership and a member of the Central City Association of Los Angeles. Brian previously served on the Board of Directors for the California YMCA Youth & Government program and was a past Chair of the Board.

Brian joined The Ratkovich Company as the Vice President of Acquisitions and played a leading role in the Company’s acquisition of The Bloc, a 1.8 million square foot, mixed-use property in downtown Los Angeles consisting of retail, office and hospitality uses. He represented the Company in the successful negotiation of a 66-year ground lease for the development of West Harbor (formerly known as the San Pedro Public Market), a $150-million transformation of a 42-acre site along the Los Angeles waterfront in San Pedro. In August 2021, West Harbor was featured in the Los Angeles Times for landing seven high-profile restaurant and entertainment leases during the pandemic.

Prior to joining the Company, Brian served as the Company’s outside counsel when he practiced with the international law firms of DLA Piper and Pillsbury Winthrop Shaw Pittman. Brian received his Juris Doctorate from Loyola Law School, Los Angeles, with honors, where he served as the Editor-in-Chief of the Loyola of Los Angeles Law Review. He received his Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of California, Los Angeles. Brian is a member of the State Bar of California and a licensed California real estate broker.
Ms. Brodeur is a Senior Coastal Engineer for the County of Orange, California. Susan holds a Bachelor Degree in Physics from Illinois Wesleyan University and a Bachelor of Science Degree in Ocean Engineering from Florida Atlantic University. She has more than 30 years of experience as a coastal engineer working on a broad range of projects including shore protection, coastal processes, wetland restoration and navigation projects. She is a registered professional engineer in the State of California and holds a credential as an Envision Sustainability Professional.
Ann Carpenter is dedicated to building and fostering the global Blue Economy entrepreneur ecosystem. She serves as an advisor to deep tech companies in ocean/maritime, transportation and goods movement, and related industrial sectors. She brings more than 30 years of experience in strategic planning, marketing, business development, and community outreach. As co-founder and CEO of Braid Theory, a vertically integrated venture advisory, Ms. Carpenter is responsible for strategic partnership building with ports, public agencies, and private industry. She serves on the Boards of Directors of Smart Freight Centre and Ocean Exchange to further initiatives towards efficient and zero emissions global freight and logistics, and sustainable ocean solutions. Her civic appointments include Chief Innovation Officer of the City of Los Angeles, Council District 15; and Commissioner of the County of Los Angeles Small Business Commission. After graduating from the University of Michigan with a degree in Mathematics, Ms. Carpenter spent the first decade of her career in computer and aerospace industries.
Dr. Andrew Rella is a Coastal and Environmental Engineer specializing in nature inclusive design of shoreline stabilization and flood protection measures, with ten years’ experience in the design, permitting and construction of natural and nature-based features within coastal and marine infrastructure schemes. Currently serving as the Technical Director of Business Development for ECOncrete Inc. (www.econcretetech.com), a company offering innovative ecological solutions for concrete based coastal, marine and offshore infrastructure. Previously, Andrew worked as a postdoctoral researcher and lecturer at Stevens Institute of Technology where his experience included being a member of the Coordinating Team of the Hudson River Sustainable Shorelines Project, consulting with the NJ USACE and American Littoral Society, developing workshops for the Departments of Remediation and Environmental Protection, as well as co-authoring the NJDEP Living Shorelines Engineering Guidelines. Andrew is also currently working with the New York City Economic Develop Corporation to develop oyster encasement technologies for enhancing marine piles. Andrew has a Ph.D. in Ocean Engineering from the Center of Maritime Systems at Stevens Institute. He holds a B.E. in Environmental Engineering and a M.E. in Ocean Engineering, with a concentration in Coastal Engineering.
Jason Hellendrung, ASLA is a Vice President and Director of Planning at Tetra Tech. In this role he directs landscape architecture, planning, and urban design work on a wide range of complex urban, public infrastructure projects. Mr. Hellendrung maintains a special interest and practice in the evolution and transformation of cities through infrastructure improvements, including the redevelopment of urban waterfronts and the integration of transit. His past projects include the HUD Rebuild by Design project for the Jersey Shore, developing 8 community reconstruction plans for NY Rising, redevelopment of the Allegheny Riverfront in Pittsburgh, and development of Shelby County's application to HUD's National Disaster Resilience Competition. Mr. Hellendrung served as Managing Principal of the Cedar Rapids River Corridor Redevelopment Plan and implementation of several design projects developed to guide the city's recovery from their historic flood in June 2008. He was also the project manager of the urban design and landscape architecture for the Healthline BRT and transformation of Euclid Avenue in Cleveland. He is responsible for project management, coordination with clients including multi-stakeholder teams, and leading and facilitating public participation.