

APBP Mentor Visit: Yvonne Mwangi & Kate Riordan

October 18, 2019

Meeting Kate

My mentor, Kate Riordan, planner with the City of Milwaukee Public Works Department's Multimodal Unit, had invited me to her office for the day. We were so happy to finally meet face to face, but since we had been talking for the better part of a year, we felt like old friends. Fun fact, as Kate and I got to chatting, we discovered that we happened to be reading the same book: *Invisible Women* by Caroline Criado Perez. Throughout this year, we have read books together but this was a total coincidence. "Great minds...". Kate introduced me to the team at the Multimodal Unit, which is housed in the Department of Public Works.



Meeting the Multimodal Team

Although we had met briefly earlier that morning, this was dedicated time for me to really get to know the Multimodal Unit. We all discussed how we came to planning, and they discussed the projects they were working on, which include bikeshare expansion, siting bike parking, and implementing their new pedestrian plan.

I only have non-profit experience so far, so I asked the group about working in the public sector. They were positive about it, but there were challenges such as navigating internal politics to get projects done. Patience is key, they advised, because project development always takes longer than it should. In general, though, the team felt the public was very enthusiastic about the work they were doing and appreciated it. There is a demand in Milwaukee for safer, and more bicycle- and pedestrian-friendly streets.



Meeting with Bob Schneider

The first meeting Kate had arranged was with Bob Schneider, Associate Professor of Urban Planning at University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee (UWM). He had recently been named APBP Research Professional of the Year (2019). Bob shared his career journey and a little about his current research, which seeks to measure the risk of pedestrian crashes based on pedestrian counts.



Lunch at St Paul's Fish Company

After the meeting, Kate and I took the streetcar a few blocks down to St. Paul Fish Company. The streetcar, called The Hop, is free to ride and has been for a year, thanks to sponsorship from a local casino. Its route is only about a mile long for now.

We hopped (yes, pun intended) out at our stop, the market in the Historic Third Ward. We were there to meet my RTC colleague, Willie, Project Manager for the Route of the Badger trail network project. Willie's ever-cheerful disposition warmed us up on that chilly Fall day.

Meeting the DCD Team

After lunch, Kate and I met with a trio of planners from the Department of City Development, the city's planning office. Again, I was struck by how winding the road to being a planner can be. One person started out doing freelance theater lighting. Another worked for a toy company, and found planning as she was writing a children's book about eco-friendly careers for girls.

The women discussed what they loved about their jobs with the city: having a supportive boss that will go to bat for you was a big plus. There was also a sense of pride in being able to see the impact of their work in the face of the city. On the flipside, there could be more supportive policies for moms in the workplace, a subject that is also discussed in *Invisible Women*.



Bike Tour of the City

The next item on the day's timetable had us going outside. Despite the chill, I was eager to get on a bike and see the city. I rented a bike from the city's bikeshare, BublR Bikes. Kate led the way, and we used a combination of bike lanes and the Oak Leaf Trail to get to the park at Lake Michigan. We rode the recreational paths, although the wind whipping the surface of the lake added to the challenge of riding, especially for me, a fairly recent cyclist.

We criss-crossed the lakefront and made sure to get some photos. Then we had to head back. Because what's a visit to Milwaukee without visiting a brewery?

Good City

My time in Milwaukee could not end without Kate taking me to one of her favorite local spots: Good City Brewing. The whole Multimodal Team was there with us too. Good food, good drinks and a fun game of Cards against Urbanity was how we rounded out the day. My only regret is that I never got to try cheese curds, but hey, there's always next time.



Tomorrow is the last day APBP is accepting applications for the 2020 Mentorship Program. With a mission of connecting bicycle and pedestrian professionals who are new to the field with more experienced practitioners, the mentorship program will foster networking, enhance career development, encourage cross-generational learning and inspire friendships.

Participants in the APBP Mentorship program will also have the opportunity to apply for a John Williams Travel Scholarship to meet their mentor match in person. This is an invaluable experience limited to only those in the APBP mentor program!



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Deadline to apply for the 2020 Mentorship program is November 27, 2019.