

GALIP Member Reflects on Life, Urban Planning in the Middle East

By Brian Lutenegeger

Newsletter editor Brian Lutenegeger interviewed Mike, a GALIP member working in the Middle East, via email. Although he was enthusiastic about sharing his experiences, Mike has asked that we not reveal his full identity in this article due to legal and employment concerns.

The challenge of how “out” to be is something that many LGBT planners think about every day at their workplaces. However, one GALIP member faces the added difficulty of working in an environment that criminalizes gay relations. Yet despite legal restrictions on his sexual identity, he has learned to appreciate and embrace his new life in the Middle East.

Mike grew up as an army brat and went to high school and college in Texas. He completed his Masters of Urban Planning at Texas A&M in 2005. After working for three years in Florida and Portland, Oregon, a former professor alerted Mike to

an open position in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates (UAE). He took the position and has been living there for four months.

Mike’s interest in the Middle East developed during college and graduate school. During college, he spent six months in Tunisia and Morocco and wrote his thesis on practices of sustainability in Tunisia. In his Masters program, he noticed that a lot of literature and best planning practices came out of almost every region of the world except the Arab-Islamic countries. As Mike began to study planning and sustainability in the region, he learned about some remarkable practices both current and historical that he

believes could serve as benchmarks for the rest of the world.

Mike is now an Urban Planner in Abu Dhabi with a range of duties. He says it is a fast-paced environment and much of his work involves management of a number of large projects. Abu Dhabi is focused on becoming a model of sustainability, so a lot of the projects relate to the goal of creating livable,

The Gays and Lesbians in Planning (GALIP) Division addresses planning topics and issues that relate to the gay and lesbian community by providing a forum for exchanging ideas and information. GALIP provides a professional network for planners who are division members and a mechanism that allows friends of the division and the gay and lesbian community to support GALIP’s mission.



American Planning Association
**Gays and Lesbians
in Planning Division**

Making Great Communities Happen

walkable communities.

Mike came out as gay after his high school graduation and feels fortunate to have supportive friends and family. He has found living in the Middle East as a gay man to be a challenge at times, but he has found society to be more accepting than he expected.

Gay Life in Abu Dhabi

On the one hand, in the United Arab Emirates “involvement in gay relations” is a legally prosecutable offense probably similar to the sodomy laws that existed until fairly recently in some U.S. states. It is rare for offenders to be charged and the country is careful to follow accepted international legal standards. The punishment may be jail time and hormone “treatment” may be offered.

Continued on page 4



View of The Corniche, a seaside promenade in Abu Dhabi, at night. Image Source: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/lucagorlero/1785657200/>

From the GALIP Chair...



Vince Papsidero, AICP
Planning Administrator
City of Columbus, Ohio
Email: vince@galip.org

Summer has ended and we're moving into the fall campaign season, as well as the budget process here in Columbus. Both bring a certain amount of anxiety to daily events.

In the case of the political season, we have national elections under the shadow of a severe economic downturn. Locally the city has six separate capital bond issues on the ballot, Columbus City Schools have a replacement levy, and there are several state issues, including one to allow casino gambling in Ohio. Again, all under the same economic shadow. For the first time in recent memory, Columbus had to lay off employees during a current budget year.

The Ohio Governor, Democrat Ted Strickland, recently spoke at the *2008 Ohio Summit - Restoring Our Prosperity: The State Role in Revitalizing Ohio's Core Communities*, co-hosted by GreaterOhio (a smart growth advocacy organization) and the Metropolitan Policy Program at Brookings. With attendance exceeding 1,000, the summit addressed a series of proposals for state policy reforms that reflect a critique of past policies, aimed at revitalizing communities throughout Ohio. Each recommendation addressed the unique assets and challenges of Ohio's 32 core communities whose revitalization is critical to the state as a whole.

These conditions obviously don't directly affect the activities of GALIP, but do establish a context for many of us in the daily conduct of our planning work. It's a challenging time for the public and private sectors in most parts of the U.S.

Speaking of GALIP, the division has been active with planning its activities for the 2009 national conference in Minneapolis. Two sessions are separately focusing on the definition of family and industrial waterfronts. The mobile workshop is in place. And planning for our reception and dinner events continues.

I continue to be active on the Division Futures Task Force whose proposal will be considered by the full Divisions Council in Washington D.C. in late October. In a nutshell, the report recommends:

- ▶ Allowing the creation of sections within divisions and stand alone networks focusing on a particular subject.
- ▶ Increasing requirements for the creation of new divisions (must start as a network or section for one year, must have 250 signatures on the petition).
- ▶ Establishing a sunset provision for future divisions that fall below 300 members over three years, then revert to a network or section (excludes all existing divisions such as GALIP).
- ▶ Modifying by-right session allocation (divisions with 300-plus members get two sessions, divisions with less than 300 members get one session then compete for a pool of remaining sessions).
- ▶ Raising divisions' assessment fee to support Divisions Council to \$2.50 per member.
- ▶ Recommending further research of universal membership for all APA members in one division.

Marj Press, past chair, is representing GALIP at the Council. Marj continues her volunteer duties on the Divisions Council Leadership Task Force, which seeks to nurture new leadership within the Council.

Have a great fall!

GALIP Officer Elections Slated for February 2009

By Jeff Davis, Elections & Nominations Committee Chair

Amazingly, the time is drawing nigh for the next election of GALIP officers, and we will be seeking members to run for the positions of Chair, Vice Chair and Secretary/Treasurer. The last elections were held in February of 2007, and we will aim to have an online voting system set up by late January or February of 2009.

A call for nominations should go out early to mid-November with nominations due no later than the middle of December. Before Christmas (or in early January), the elections committee will confirm that those nominated will indeed run. Then the candidates will provide their "statements" by the middle of January. The election site link will be sent to GALIP members in late January or early February with a voting deadline of late February. The winning candidates will be notified shortly thereafter and then announced to membership during the GALIP business meeting at the APA conference in Minneapolis.

I will be heading the election committee again this year, and will be joined on the committee by Leo Lozano, Milton Phegley, Anthony Santaniello and Ben Weiner. More information will be available in November, but in the meantime, please feel free to write to me with any questions about the position duties, election process, etc.: jeff@galip.org. Please consider running or start thinking now about colleagues you'd like to nominate!

GALIP Membership Update

By Jeremy Lochirco, Membership Chair

As we enter 2009 and await the next APA National Conference in Minneapolis, GALIP membership continues to grow at a snail's pace and currently remains around 180; while membership levels have generally increased from previous years, we have not yet exceeded the "200" mark. As our new outreach program begins, however, we can anticipate overall membership levels to increase accordingly.

One of the new initiatives GALIP will be focusing on is the promotion of the division to APA accredited universities. Within the next few months, we will actively expand our member outreach to include LGBT organizations at colleges and universities in an attempt to provide leadership and resources for young planning professionals entering the workplace. While many schools do not provide a broad curriculum on social planning, GALIP understands that quality of life, neighborhood identity, and social equality are all planning-related issues that confront the LGBT community. We welcome the fresh ideas and motivation that our new planners can provide as members of GALIP.

With the environment in mind, GALIP is "going green" by electronically sending membership renewal letters to either your home or work email address. This will save time and money by eliminating the use of postage and paper. If you wish to continue to receive your renewal notices by conventional mail or would like to provide an alternate email address, please email me at: jeremy@galip.org.

Finally, if you would like to volunteer to take a more active role in GALIP or know of upcoming regional events in which GALIP should participate, let us know. Have a safe 2009 and we'll see you in the Twin Cities!



A GALIP member reflects on the Middle East...

Continued from page 1

On the other hand, Mike says, people in the UAE are typically less interested in your orientation, and more interested in how you can contribute to the community. If you are discreet and respectful of the Muslim society, then you should have no problems. But he admits that once he moved there he thought about whether to go “back in the closet.”

Mike finds that some cultural norms work in his favor. For example, men frequently hold hands as a sign of friendship without any sexual overtones. He expects that holding hands or cohabitating with a partner would not raise any concerns.

On the job, Mike handles the decision to come out to coworkers and clients just as he would in any setting where he expects to have a working or friendly relationship with others. He listens for inclusive language (“Do you have a partner,” for example) or other hints, and then comes out if an appropriate moment arises. Mike notes that Western and Arab friends alike have been accepting and positive, yet he remains very selective about whom to come out to at work. His goal is to be a good role model because, for many people, he may be the only out gay person they know.

The gay community in Abu Dhabi is made up of people from every nationality including locals. However, unlike in other countries, the Internet is not a good way to meet others and build community. Many dating and social networking websites (gay or straight), in addition to gambling and pornographic sites, are blocked using a national firewall because they do not adhere to Muslim values. Yet the UAE serves as a popular weekend and holiday destination for gays – not so much

due to gay rights, but as an escape from more constricting social environments in neighboring countries.

Planning and Tourism in Abu Dhabi

For visitors, Abu Dhabi has a wide range of cultural and environmental amenities. Tourists could enjoy a glass of wine at the Emirates Palace, a day at the beach, canoeing in the mangroves, and a trip to the high sand dunes of the Western Region. These activities could then be balanced out by a trip to see the trophy projects of neighboring Dubai.

Mike also notes that Abu Dhabi is one of the safest cities in the world and the stereotypes of the region are largely unfounded. Women are safe to travel on their own, and there aren't any laws requiring particular types of dress for men or women. Nonetheless, travelers should be respectful of local culture. Skimpy clothing, for example, will be frowned upon but not get women in legal trouble. LGBT visitors should probably avoid public displays of affection. Nonetheless, Abu Dhabi is a cosmopolitan place and attitudes toward any western values are far more relaxed there than in the neighboring Kingdom of Saudi Arabia or in Iran, for example. It also puts a strong emphasis on planning.

From a planner's perspective, Abu Dhabi faces challenges from the intense development pressure, poor planning and design of the previous decades, and the environmental constraints of the desert and heat. However, the mineral (oil) resources of the Emirate (similar to a U.S. state) of Abu Dhabi combined with a strong commitment by the royal family for sustainability and good planning, mean that urban planning ranks high on national priorities and planning budgets are very high. Some

Western standards have been adopted, and some new frameworks appropriate to the Emirate are created. Public involvement is slowly becoming an important value, something unheard of in neighboring emirates and countries.

Mike sums up his experience as follows. “Living in Abu Dhabi has broken down many stereotypes for me. This is a very gentle culture, with many of the same challenges we face in the United States. While the socially conservative atmosphere makes it far from my first choice of homes, the experience is well worth it,” he writes. “I don't know when values in this region will reflect the realities of the population, in terms of gay rights. However, we cannot begin to make change until we know what's out here, so it's important for LGBT folks to step outside of our comfort zones every once in a while.”



*Emirate Palace in Abu Dhabi at night.
Image Source: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/lucagorlero/344381362>*

Member Profile - Charles Starks

For this edition of the GALIP Gayzette, our roaming reporter, Jon Hoffman, an urban planner with JJR in Madison, Wisconsin, interviewed Charles Starks of the Ontario Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, in Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

Where are you currently living and working?

I live and work in downtown Toronto, Ontario, a city of 2.5 million people on the north shore of Lake Ontario. My office is a 15-minute walk from my house, but when it's really cold and snowy outside I cheat and take the subway to work. Toronto is a very multicultural city, with around 50 percent of the population born outside Canada, mostly from Asia, Africa, and the Caribbean. It's a place with considerable vibrancy, especially downtown, but also a lot of growing pains and challenges related to rapid changes in population and disparities between rich and poor.

Describe the planning work you do and your agency.

I work for the Ontario Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing. It is a provincial agency similar to a state-level department of community affairs in the United States. Unlike many American states, the Ontario government plays a very active role in local planning. It approves plans adopted by municipal councils, sets planning policies—dealing with everything from housing to urban design to environmental protection—with which municipal plans must be consistent, and, especially in the rapidly growing Toronto region, prepares regional plans to which municipal plans must conform.



Why do you think regional planning has a stronger role in Canada than in the United States?

In the past, Canada was a more homogeneous society than the United States. The cities were not racially segregated and “white flight” did not exist. So there was less impetus in Canada to create protected enclaves and give rights to local municipalities to control their own affairs than in the United States. Also, Canada lacks some of the protections for private property that are constitutionally guaranteed in the United States. So, in Ontario, for example, the government is able to place sharp restrictions on the residential development of agricultural lands in order to contain sprawl.

However, Canada has been changing very rapidly due to globalization and high rates of immigration. Culturally it has become more diverse and less egalitarian—more like the United States. One of the challenges facing planners in Canada is to adapt Canada's traditions of

regional planning to this changed context.

What types of projects really captivate you personally?

I'm especially interested in how the underlying structure, or urban form, of a place affects the environment and our perception of the city. For example, and this is a broad generalization, cities like Toronto and New York, where I used to live, are compact and gridded, whereas Atlanta, where I went to planning school, is sprawling and outside the downtown many of the streets end in cul-de-sacs. As a result, these cities have different kinds of impacts on the environment and different senses of place. I'm interested in projects that consciously shape settlement form to achieve planning goals.

Recent well-publicized research blames the suburban sprawl pattern for everything from air pollution to obese teenagers. Do you think the suburbs can be redesigned to be more sustainable?

There is actually great work being done in redesigning suburbs throughout North America. Particularly in hot markets such as Washington, D.C. and Vancouver, the areas around suburban transit stations are getting makeovers that are transforming them from dated office parks and one-story shopping centres to mixed use hubs of activity with urban densities. On a

Continued on page 6

Member Profile - Charles Starks

Continued from page 5

smaller scale, this is also happening at suburban “grayfield” shopping malls even without transit, where parking lots are becoming street grids and filling in with mixed uses. It takes both political will and smart planning to make that happen, but there are now models out there of how to do it. There was a study that looked at attempts to create new urban nodes in existing suburbs in the Toronto region. It found that the most successful node was the one that replicated a traditional downtown block pattern with street-facing retail, while those that retained the post-war suburban paradigm of ring roads surrounding giant mixed-use complexes didn’t work as well.

Transforming the vast areas of single-family homes far away from transit will be harder. One of the projects I’m working on right now is to develop best practice guidelines for Ontario municipalities that are faced with the need to increase densities in these areas. It’s a real challenge. We’re looking at policies that encourage various forms of accessory dwelling units and allow sensitive increases in density—for example, two-family and row houses that meet design criteria.

If you had the chance to do your whole career over, would you do anything different or are you happy with just the way it is?

I wish I had obtained more exposure to international planning, especially outside the English-speaking world, when I was younger. The world has an incredible diversity in the design of human settlements and we in the U.S. and Canada are cut off from most of that because it happens far away and we don’t speak the language.

What are elements of non-European societies that might be incorporated into how we live in the US and Canada?

Many countries have never adopted the rigid separation of uses we take for granted here. In Taiwan, where my partner is from, many homes, even in mainly residential areas, have space on the ground floor that’s used for business. That facilitates a live-work arrangement where commuting is less necessary and it’s easy to start your own business.

How do you handle your sexual identity in your workplace? With clients?

I’m totally out in the workplace, and because I moved to Toronto with my partner so that he could take a job here, my sexual identity is part of any conversation about why I, an American, am living and working in Canada. Fortunately, Torontonians seem to be very accepting of gay people and I don’t feel that I’ve been treated much differently than if I were partnered with a woman.

When I worked as a consultant, I was generally not out with clients. In most client interactions, there’s no opportunity for the subject to arise, but I did edit myself while engaging in small talk with clients from more conservative communities. Interestingly, I’ve found myself doing less of that editing here in Canada, where there is legal recognition for my relationship.

If a GALIP member were to visit Toronto, what is the one place they must go?

The Church-Wellesley neighbourhood has been the centre of gay life in Toronto for decades. Like much of the city, it’s a pretty nondescript area physically, with a plain commercial street surrounded by blocks of apartment towers and row houses, but there’s an incredible concentration of gay men and, to a lesser extent, lesbians living there, with plenty of shops, restaurants, bars and even a live theatre catering to the community. And because it’s a walking neighbourhood, this is all visible on the surface.

Sneak Peak...GALIP Sessions & Mobile Workshop at 2009 APA National Conference in Minneapolis

By Patrick Finn, GALIP Conference Session Coordinator

Following are the titles and a brief description the two GALIP sessions at the 2009 American Planning Association National Conference in Minneapolis April 25-29. This year GALIP sought session proposals that addressed topics that extended beyond LGBT specific issues and concerns. We believe that conference sessions are an opportunity to showcase the professional skill and expertise of division members as well as illustrate the intersection of LGBT perspectives with those of other divisions.

When is a Single Family not a "Family" - or whose family is it anyway?

Despite the issue's lengthy history, many communities still become ensnarled in debates over what constitutes a "family" for zoning purposes. Challenges to commonly used definitions of "family" often cite inherent cultural biases or socio-political agendas. This session will explore this topic by illustrating the need for objective, culturally neutral standards and provide examples of appropriate regulatory approaches. This session has received broad support from other APA Divisions. GALIP appreciates the support and also wishes to thank the Planning and Law, Planning and Women, and Housing and Community Development Divisions for their assistance in identifying speakers.

Saving Blue Collar Industrial Jobs through Land Use Planning

Strong efforts are being made to protect traditional industrial lands and their related jobs in new economy cities such as Seattle. Hear how land use planning, zoning, and permitting are being used to preserve family wage jobs and how new development continually threatens to eat away Seattle's traditional economies. This session will present techniques and policies being developed by City leaders to preserve family wage jobs.

Mobile Workshop: The Minneapolis LGBT "Diaspora"

Like other cities, the history of the LGBT community in Minneapolis is similar in many ways to the history of immigrants. As gays and lesbians sought social cohesion/protection, a concentration was established, namely the Loring Park Neighborhood near downtown. As gays and lesbians established social institutions and acceptance by the broader community, the need for geographic concentration diminished. Geography student Jerry Kramer in his Ph.D. thesis referred to this as the "queer diaspora" that coincided with redevelopment in the 1970s.

With urban renewal and gentrification, the LGBT population shifted south, spreading throughout south Minneapolis neighborhoods, forming families and contributing to neighborhood revitalization. Powderhorn Park became the home of the Gay Pride celebration during the 1980's before shifting back to Loring Park. While Minneapolis no longer has a "gay neighborhood" like the Castro or Greenwich Village, integration brought involvement in mainstream urban planning and policy issues. LGBT political candidates have enjoyed considerable recent success; and the LGBT community is significantly involved in urban planning issues as well as arts and culture.

The mobile workshop will tour areas that have historically been the center of the LGBT community and its institutions. The tour will begin with a walking tour of the Loring Park neighborhood including a visit to the LGBT Youth Center. A bus will transport participants along Hennepin Avenue in downtown Minneapolis, home to a number of gay bars and nightclubs. Participants will meet with long-time community members and elected officials to discuss how the role of social institutions has changed, and how LGBT leaders are involved in the larger planning issues, including arts and culture. Finally, participants will visit sites where housing issues are being addressed: for people living with AIDS, LGBT-friendly senior housing, and revitalization of historic homes.

Upcoming Events

- ▶ 2008 Washington-Idaho APA Regional Conference, October 13-15, 2008, Spokane, Washington: www.washington-apa.org/
- ▶ 2008 National Gay Men's Health Summit, October 17-21, 2008, Seattle, Washington: www.gmhs2008.org/.
- ▶ Election Day, November 4, 2008. Remember to vote!
- ▶ Maryland/Delaware Chapters of APA Regional Conference Growing Greener - Planning Healthy Communities for a Healthy Planet, November 19-21, 2008, Annapolis, Maryland: www.delawareapa.org.
- ▶ 2008 International Gay & Lesbian Leadership Conference, December 4-7, 2008, Washington, DC: www.glli.org/files/conference2008/
- ▶ Creating Change: National Conference on LGBT Equality, January 28-February 1, 2009, Denver, Colorado. www.thetaskforce.org/events/creating_change
- ▶ APA 2009 National Conference, April 25-28, 2009, Minneapolis, Minnesota: www.planning.org.
- ▶ 2009 Womens Transportation Seminar (WTS) conference, May 19 - 24, 2009, Seattle, Washington: www.wtsinternational.org/

Member Updates

- ▶ **Jeff Davis** has agreed to chair GALIP's nominations and elections committee. Thanks Jeff!
- ▶ **Jason Greenspan, AICP** was recently appointed to the position of Director of Planning and Community Development for Middletown, New Jersey. Middletown is a suburban community of about 68,000 residents located 40 miles outside of New York City. He was promoted to this position after serving five years as the Township's Senior Planner.
- ▶ **Marj Press** has been appointed to the Diversity Sub-Task Force of APA's Membership Committee. She has also been appointed to the APA Division Council's Task Force on Leadership.

Seattle-area GALIP Members:

You are invited to join us for an open house at ICF Jones & Stokes' brand new downtown Seattle office space.

Refreshments provided.

Tuesday, October 28 4-7pm

710 Second Ave, Suite 550 (corner of 2nd and Cherry), Seattle

Please RSVP to Linda Amato at lamato@jsanet.com if you will attend.

-Linda Amato & Brian Lutenegger

Human Rights Campaign Foundation Guide Advises Employers on Benefits for Same-Sex Spouses

The Human Rights Campaign Foundation, the nation's largest gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender civil rights group, released a guide in August 2008 advising employers on how to address marriage for same-sex couples in their spousal and partner benefits packages. Among the topics covered in "Marriage for Same-Sex Couples: Considerations for Employers" are taxation of health benefits, complications due to varied degrees of legal recognition of same-sex couples, and the impact of marriage equality in California and Massachusetts.

"There's never been a more crucial time to educate employers on the far-reaching implications of increased legal recognition of same-sex couples," said HRC Foundation Workplace Project Director Daryl Herrschaft. "Inconsistent federal and state laws concerning marriage for same-sex couples are a significant challenge to employers seeking to ensure that all workers receive equal benefits. This year, we have created guidelines for these employers in states with and without marriage equality."

As of July 31, 2008, both California and Massachusetts offer full marriage rights to same-sex couples, and neither state requires to be permanent residents in order to marry there. New York, which does not have a statewide law or constitutional amendment limiting marriage to one man and one woman, has taken steps to recognize same-sex spouses married in other states. As a result, employers across the country must assess their employee benefits with respect to same-sex spouses.

"This report is a must-read for benefits administrators, human resource professionals, managers and business leaders," said Samir Luther, senior manager of the HRC Foundation Workplace Project. "In coming years, the most successful businesses will be those that do the right thing by offering equal benefits to all their employees."

The guide can be accessed at: <http://www.hrc.org/issues/10982.htm>.

GALIP Newsletter Committee Reorganizes

Linda Amato, who has been our newsletter editor since 2004, has turned over the reigns to Brian Lutenegger. Brian will now oversee and design the newsletter. Linda and the rest of the Executive Committee will support Brian and his team. Thank you, Brian, for stepping up and taking on this important responsibility.

-Linda Amato



Leadership Roster

Vince Papsidero, AICP
Chair
City of Columbus, Ohio
Phone: 614-645-8030
E-mail:
E-mail: vince@galip.org

Michael E. Levine, AICP
Vice Chair
Phone: 212-533-7757
E-mail: michael@galip.org

Linda Amato, AICP
Secretary/Treasurer
ICF Jones & Stokes
Phone: 425-518-1426
E-mail: linda@galip.org

Marj Press
Immediate Past Chair
Phone: 206-548-1549
E-mail: marj@galip.org

Brian Lutenecker
Newsletter Editor
ICF Jones & Stokes
Phone: (206) 801-2825
E-mail: brian@galip.org

Jeremy Lochirco
Membership Chair
City of Walnut Creek, California
Phone: (925) 943-5899 x251
E-mail: jeremy@galip.org

Jeff Davis
Elections & Nominations Chair
E-mail: jeff@galip.org

GALIP Website

Check out the GALIP website for the latest news about our division including business meeting reports, financial data, and leadership contact information.

Members may log in to view past newsletter issues and see a roster of other members.

<http://www.planning.org/divisions/galip/>

While you are there, check out the completely redesigned American Planning Association national website! You can also log in to your APA member account there to make sure your personal information is current.

Volunteers Welcomed!

GALIP is always looking for volunteers to help with our many activities including membership, newsletter, website, national conference, local events, and research. There are volunteer opportunities for every interest and skill!

Interested?

Contact any Executive Committee member at left for more information.



APA National Conference 2009

April 25-28, 2009

Minneapolis, Minnesota