Division Award Nomination

For each nomination, the following information should be provided:

1. **Division name:** LGBTQ in Planning
2. **Division contact person and contact information:** David Perlmutter, dperl88@gmail.com 206-384-8768
3. **Award Category:** Best Original Newsletter Article: Emphasizes outstanding content in an individual division newsletter article or series.
4. **Name of the Division project, program or process being nominated:** LGBTQ Pride Month Ends, LGBTQ Streetscapes Just Beginning
5. **Description of the project, program or process, including the targeted audience:** The Article examines the emerging prevalence of LGBTQ-themed streetscapes and what the trend means for Planners. The article argues that the larger planning community should pay attention to this trend and discuss its implications for cities across the nation.
6. **Identify how the project, program or process:** The article is an important one because it not only is directly relevant to the Division’s mission of examining how planning relates to the LGBTQ Community but more generally it attempts to elicit an expanded discussion about the role of communities in the built environment and the responsibility of planners to advocate on behalf of communities. The subject is a timely one as planners are increasingly becoming engaged in these type of initiatives. And the article calls on planners to think proactively and anticipate this work. Exploring the partnership between planners and the LGBTQ Community extends beyond the LGBTQ Community – it has relevance for the relationship between planners and all types of communities of people, particularly communities of people that have been underserved, oppressed, or marginalized.
As 2017 LGBTQ Pride Month Ends, LGBTQ Streetscapes are Just Beginning

Perris Straughter

In a midnight spectacle of bright lights, paint, and steam, voices shouting and camera flashes, dozens of surprised onlookers—teeming with excitement when they realized what was happening—witnessed a group of construction workers painting rainbow crosswalks on the corner of Christopher and 7th Avenue late last month. Just in time for Pride.

The intersection is less than a stone’s throw from Stonewall, now the nation’s first national landmark in honor of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ) history.

Somewhat surprisingly, NYC’s West Village, undeniably one of the oldest and largest LGBTQ neighborhoods in the nation, received its stripes after many other cities, including LA’s West Hollywood, San Francisco’s Castro, DC’s Dupont Circle, Atlanta’s Midtown, and many more.

The trend of LGBTQ branding as part of streetscapes began decades ago. Although it has become more widespread as of late, markers of LGBTQ identity on the urban landscape are nothing new. Rainbow street signs adorned Philadelphia’s Gayborhood long before the appearance of crosswalks there. In Chicago there are rainbow pylons and other streetscape fixtures that are part of the Legacy Walk on North Halsted Street, a whole streetscape project dedicated to LGBTQ culture and history.

Although volumes have been written about these initiatives in LGBTQ circles, that dialogue has not extended into planning circles to the same extent. It’s a phenomenon worth looking into for urban planners and for economic development professionals, particularly as the trend could extend beyond the largest cities and most well-known LGBTQ neighborhoods to smaller ones.

As a way of priming that dialogue, I want to throw out some questions urban planners should consider:

• Do concrete representations of LGBTQ culture and history in the physical landscape help solidify their presence and status?
• Do these interventions have a positive impact on tourism, local businesses, and/or property values?
• How can we gather data about this?
• Will LGBTQ spaces become tourist destinations and contribute even more to local economic development than they do now?

It goes without saying that there is a social benefit to these spaces—which arose as the only safe spaces for LGBTQ people and are even themselves tarnished with a history of violence—Stonewall being a celebrated example with the 1969 uprising.

Today, throughout the world, LGBTQ people (merely because of their place of birth) still face death and torture. They flee certain countries for their lives—often to urban centers in safer countries like the United States—as first points of safe haven.

We know that extrajudicial killings of people for being “presumed gay” are still being conducted daily. Are we doing enough to advocate for them and prepare for what we know will be the inevitable arrival of these

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displaced and marginalized people as they seek asylum in our communities?

Furthermore, do planners across the country have an affirmative role in partnering with local LGBTQ communities to anticipate these demographic shifts and to identify ways to represent LGBTQ culture and history in the built environment, even as LGBTQ identity and politics remains controversial in many parts of the country?

What do these big city examples mean for smaller cities? Should every small city’s “gay street” be branded an LGBTQ street or neighborhood in brick and mortar if local stakeholders demand it?

Moreover, is it likely that this trend will extend across gay neighborhoods and streets and corners across the nation?

APA’s LGBTQ and Planning Division welcomes dialogue on this, and remains active in writing articles and even sponsoring talks at APA conferences and other venues on this very issue.

Beyond discussing and measuring the impacts of LGBTQ branding or placemaking of neighborhoods, planners need to consider neighborhood change. Especially as urban neighborhood experience gentrification and even neighborhoods like the West Village have arguably become “less gay” over the decades, it’s important to understand how the various ways planning, development, and capital improvements affect LGBTQ neighborhoods.

Will these LGBTQ neighborhoods—destinations for LGBT people but also symbols of LGBTQ history and struggle—remain LGBTQ as time goes on? Should they? Are LGBTQ neighborhoods at risk along with many urban ethnic communities?

It is now time for planners across the country to elevate these issues to mainstream discourse, and address these complex questions with much greater rigor and urgency.

Perris Straughter, AICP, is Co Vice-Chair for Programs & Research of the LGBTQ and Planning Division.

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Mazzoni, cont’d from page 8

The new building also features a ‘town hall’ gathering space, where community events, educational programs, and wellness workshops will take place. As Ms. Jagannathan and Board of Directors members advocate about the new facility: “Providing our staff with a more functional and efficient work environment is another important step in improving overall delivery of care. Our staff is truly the heart and soul of what we do, and the reason that so many people have entrusted us with their care for so many years. Bringing the full staff together under one roof will foster more effective staff collaboration and communication, with common spaces designed and configured to promote meaningful interaction among our many care and service providers.”

The APA’s LGBTQ and Planning Division wishes the Mazzoni Center the very best in its efforts to strengthen it accountability and transparency needed to reconcile relations with our community and continue to fulfill its exceptionally important mission in the Philadelphia region. Congratulations on a successful transition to your new home, where we hope the newly restructured and community-based organization will provide improved services for decades to come.

Justin Dula, AICP, is Co Vice-Chair for Communications of the LGBTQ and Planning Division. Neal Stone, AICP, is Past Chair of the LGBTQ and Planning Division.

Photos courtesy of Justin Dula and Christian Xtn Hansen.

Streetscapes, cont’d from page 9

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Division Shout-Out!

Congratulations to Division member Abdulla Al Shehhi whose article “(Trans)forming Planning: The Inclusion and Seclusion of LGBT Individuals in Contemporary Planning Theory and Practice” from the Spring 2016 issue of LGBTQ & Planning Quarterly will be reprinted as The Commissioner feature in the October 2017 issue of Planning magazine.