

An aerial photograph of a city street. A wide, multi-lane road runs vertically through the center. To the right of the road is a large, ornate building with a clock tower and a red brick facade. To the left is a parking lot filled with cars and a residential area with smaller houses. The text 'NAHRO ATTENDS THE INTERNATIONAL URBAN DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION CON' is overlaid in large, white, sans-serif capital letters across the middle of the image.

NAHRO ATTENDS THE INTERNATIONAL URBAN DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION CON

BY JOHN PAPAGNI

The streets were still wet from the previous night's rain when I arrived at the Kursaal Center early on Sunday, October 24. The building's barren glass and metal frame was a stark contrast to the ornate facades of 19th century structures nearby. I was there for the 34th annual International Urban Development Association (INTA) Congress in San Sebastian, Spain: an intensive, four-day marathon of tours, plenary sessions and workshops. Thanks to an agreement executed three years earlier between NAHRO and INTA to promote exchanges, I attended the conference as NAHRO's representative. After checking in, I was ushered downstairs to a wood-paneled conference room where the pre-conference meeting of the World Urban Development

Council was already underway (the World Urban Development Council, a permanent INTA think tank, meets annually to discuss major trends and issues in urban policy). I picked up headphones at the door and listened as interpreters provided real-time translation in French, English and Spanish. The issues raised by speakers were familiar—sustainable development, inclusion, exclusion, population growth, migration, the tension between urban and rural development and the impact of technology.

Pre-conference meetings and site visits with dozens of participants moved quickly into the full conference the following day. Hundreds of participants filled the main hall at the opening session and dozens of workshops that would follow.

PLANNING CONGRESS

Podzamcze—a former Jewish district destroyed in World War II, located north of Old Town, Lublin, Poland. The road and area located on the left was the subject of a public dialogue on redevelopment in May 2010.

PHOTO: PIOTR MACIUK

small and interconnected the world has become. A Polish architect remembered a group of architects visiting Poland from Baltimore in 1971; the Director of Physical Planning from Singapore recalls studying Baltimore's Inner Harbor as a model for waterfront redevelopment. And, of course, everyone had seen *The Wire*.

From Poland to Pasajes: Local Efforts Pay Off

This year's Congress, titled "Rethinking Your Urban Region," provided a platform for discussion of local initiatives with a regional impact and paralleled the renewed focus on regional planning in the United States. INTA offers an opportunity to learn from practitioners confronting familiar issues in unfamiliar settings. How are officials in Cairo, Egypt preserving historic structures and scale in a white-hot real estate market? How is Poland's young democracy involving citizens in local planning? How is Rotterdam in the Netherlands (the largest port in Europe) planning to make the waterfront more attractive for residential development

"The same... but different."

while preserving industrial uses? As Joe Montgomery, Director General of Communities and Regions in the United Kingdom, commented, "It's the same...but different."¹

The host city, which is poised to undergo a major redevelopment, provided a shining example of the theme of this year's Congress. A new, regional port on the Atlantic coast, planned for completion in 2022, will allow for the redevelopment of portions of the existing Port of Pasajes, which is already under pressure from encroaching residential development.

Like NAHRO, INTA manages its conferences with a small staff and relies heavily on volunteers, who give presentations and moderate workshops. One of those volunteers was Marc Glaudemans of the Netherlands, who moderated a workshop titled "Identity, Heritage,

¹ Joe Montgomery, Director General of Communities and Regions in the United Kingdom, remarks at keynote panel, October 25, 2010, San Sebastian, Spain

FOR THOSE four days—both before and during the conference—it was easy to forget I was in Spain, as the Kursaal Center became an international space for this gathering of professionals from more than 40 countries. A mayor from Latvia, a governor from Morocco, a housing official from Israel, a local government official from Iran, and a community development director from the United Kingdom were among the dozens of professionals I had the opportunity to meet in San Sebastian. While domestic conferences provide opportunities to build relationships and learn from colleagues in other parts of the country, INTA provides those opportunities within a global network of community development professionals [see box, page 21].

When I told people at the Congress that I was from Baltimore, Maryland, I was reminded of how

PHOTO COURTESY INTA

Mikal Olano, Council Leader of Gipuzkoa Province, addresses INTA congress opening session as translators in booths above provide translation in French, English and Spanish.



“It was amazing to have delegates from Israel and Iran in the same room.”

Branding and Quality of Life.” He was impressed with the enormous number of cultural backgrounds represented at the Congress and INTA’s role as convener. “INTA is able to bring together all the stakeholders,” he noted. “It gives them a unique position in urban development. It is a network which is truly global.”²

INTA also provides opportunities for exchange of information and ideas that seem to transcend national boundaries. “It was amazing to have delegates from Israel and Iran in the same room,”³ Glaudemans noted about a session he moderated. That sentiment was echoed by Hussein El Gebaly of Egypt, who stated, “Whatever our backgrounds, we were all cooperating and participating,” and added, “INTA is one of the best international forums for gaining experience with different parts of the world.”⁴

The large (at times mind-numbing) volume of information at the Congress was too much to present here. The following are a few examples of approaches to urban challenges that illustrate the diversity of the topics covered:

² Marc Glaudemans, Director, European Urban Design Laboratory, Fontys University, Tilburg, The Netherlands. Personal communication, December 9, 2010.

³ Marc Glaudemans, *ibid.*

⁴ Eng. Hussein El Gebaly, Supervisor, Housing Sector, Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, Egypt. Personal Communication, December 3, 2010.

PHOTO COURTESY INTA



Joe Montgomery, Director General of Communities and Regions, United Kingdom (center) moderates workshop on “Thinking the Urban Region Across Scales”.

Egypt: Preserving Urban Heritage

In Cairo, increasing land values in the late 1980s and 1990s led to the demolition of historic low-rise buildings to make way for high-rise structures. The result was a loss of historic architecture and incompatible land uses. Modern buildings more than 20 stories high were constructed next to historic two- and three-story homes.

The pressure on historic resources is driven by dramatic population growth and limited land. Cairo’s population rose from 6.4 million in 1975 to 10.8 million in 2003; it is projected to exceed 13 million by 2015.⁵ The impact on real estate close to the waterfront has been particularly dramatic. Real estate near the Nile River in the Cairo region is among the most expensive in the world. Prices can exceed \$900 per square foot for lots near the central business district.⁶ Meanwhile, historic villas on the waterfront are subject to rent control, creating a disincentive to preserve them in a strong real estate market.

Since the existing building law was not sufficient to protect historic

⁵ “World Urbanization Prospects,” United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, New York, 2004


⁶ Eng. Hussein El Gebaly, *ibid.*

buildings, the Prime Minister issued a decree in 1998 prohibiting further demolition of historic buildings. However, the law was overturned in court as unconstitutional in 2005. A new law, passed in 2006 established national criteria for historic preservation and required local technical committees to define and register historic structures. Like historic preservation in the U.S., registered buildings may reflect special architectural, historical assets and resources that support heritage tourism. Since 2006, about 2,200 buildings have been registered in Cairo alone.

Unlike in the U.S., owners of registered buildings in Egypt have the right to compensation for lost value associated with historic preservation. However, since the law took effect, few owners have sought compensation. Compliance with the law is enforced; penalties for violation range from one to five years in jail and fines of up to \$800,000. Contractors involved in illegal demolition or alteration of historic structures can be prevented from doing further work for two years.⁷

The new law is already having an impact. Hussein El Gebaly of

⁷ Eng. Hussein El Gebaly, Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, Egypt, presentation delivered on Monday, October 25, 2010, San Sebastian, Spain.



A villa near the Nile River, constructed in the early 1940's, is surrounded by new high-rise development.

PHOTO: DR. AHMED REHAFI

the Egyptian Ministry of Housing and Urban Development notes, "there is a remarkable increase in preservation activities" and that some projects are already moving forward "with full participation of the private sector". This reflects both support for, and increased awareness of the law. Examples of buildings preserved by the law include the Misr Bank building, the first national bank Egypt, constructed in 1917; the Diplomatic Club, constructed in 1907; and the residence of the late President Anwar Sadat.⁸

Israel: Rebranding a City to Attract Families with Children

In the 1990s, the City of Holon was confronted with a familiar urban challenge: how to attract and retain families with children. Roni Vardi, Chief Engineer for the City's Building Construction Commission,

⁸ Eng. Hussein El Gebaly. Personal Communication, January 23, 2011.

About INTA

In 1976, at a time when large-scale urban development projects were conceived to promote economic growth, INTA was organized in Paris as the International New Town Association. One of its founding principles was the importance of international exchanges among urban development professionals. Now known as the International Urban Development Association (but retaining the acronym, INTA), the organization operates out of offices in The Hague in The Netherlands.

With more than 3,000 members and associates in more than 100 countries, INTA is a global organization of high-level policy makers and urban practitioners. The organization provides a platform for sharing knowledge, tools and experience for integrated urban development; its exchanges integrate physical, social and cultural aspects of urban policy with a focus on equitable urban development. Activities include an Annual World Urban Development Congress, conferences and seminars, the World Urban Development Council, prospective roundtables, brainstorm sessions, study visits and advisory panels, in which a group of members advises another member institution on a particular urban project (similar to the advisory panels organized by the Urban Land Institute in the U.S.).

In 2007 NAHRO and INTA executed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to facilitate exchanges between the two organizations through complimentary institutional memberships, conferences, and participation in committees. The partnership between the oldest and largest housing and community development association in the U.S. and an international urban development network represents an exceptional opportunity for NAHRO members. Through activities sponsored by both organizations, NAHRO members have the opportunity to share ideas and information and to collaborate on projects.

Specific benefits to both organizations from the MOU include:

- Complimentary institutional memberships for both organizations to promote the exchange of information and newsletters.
- A member of NAHRO's International Committee is invited to join INTA's Executive Committee, which meets three times annually.
- NAHRO and non-USA INTA members will be able to attend each other's annual conference at the member rate.
- NAHRO will offer three free registrations to INTA members for its annual conference and INTA will offer the same benefit to three NAHRO members.
- NAHRO and INTA will make publications and materials available on each other's organization available at their annual conference.

Other potential areas of cooperation include:

- Cooperation between program committees of the respective organizations;
- NAHRO support for and appearance in an INTA international meeting in North America;
- Co-sponsorship of special educational events offered by INTA;
- Conference speaker exchange;
- Participation in expert panels with some travel paid;
- Seminars on specific topics of mutual interest; and
- Joint education and training programs outside the USA.

For more information on INTA, visit <http://www.inta-aivn.org/en/home>.

International Urban
Development Association

Association Internationale
du Développement Urbain

INTA

NAHRO's International Committee

NAHRO's International Committee collects and disseminates information on housing and community development in foreign countries. The committee identifies innovative programs, development techniques, and management systems that may be usable in the United States. The committee also shares information on U.S. programs with its foreign counterparts. For more information regarding the International Committee, resources and international partners, visit www.nahro.org/international-resource-page.

explained that the challenge is complicated by competition with neighboring Tel Aviv for residents. "The city's image was very poor, people were moving [away] to better socioeconomic situations."⁹

To improve its image and attract families, the city launched a 1993 campaign to become a "children's city." Today, residents and visitors enjoy Israel's only children's museum, opened in 2001, along with storybook parks, each designed with a theme from a well-known children's book.¹⁰ Thirteen public gardens operate throughout the city, each displaying outdoor sculptures inspired by children's poems and stories. The parks are part of an effort to turn Holon into a national culture center for children and families in Israel.¹¹

The campaign has done more than improve the city's image. Mr. Vardi reports that housing prices have risen 40-50 percent, and that most new housing is designed for families with children. A future focus will be on attracting art galleries and cultural institutions.

Singapore: Waterfront Development

The country's more than 5 million residents¹² live on a Southeast Asian island about one-tenth the size of New Jersey. Densely populated and squeezed for space, the country has been forced to undertake intensive urban planning. Singapore's Urban Redevelopment Authority leads the effort, from master plans to concept plans that

⁹ Roni Vardi, personal communication, December 7, 2010.

¹⁰ Lior Dattel and Itzik Ezra, "Holon: The Good, the Bad and the Mediocre," *Haaretz.com*, August 25, 2008.

¹¹ Roni Vardi, Chief Engineer, Building Construction Commission, City of Holon, Presentation at INTA 34 Congress, San Sebastian, Spain, Monday, October 25, 2010.

¹² Singapore Department of Statistics, "Key Annual Indicators," 2010.

guide development 40 and 50 years into the future.¹³

Marina Bay is one of the outcomes of Singapore's intensive planning effort. This nearly 900-acre development will occupy land reclaimed from the sea in the 1970s to provide room for future growth of the city. Today, this prime real estate in the heart of Singapore's downtown is part of a dense mixed-use development that includes planned commercial, residential and recreational spaces. Inclusion of public spaces and amenities are key planning and design considerations. The planned development includes public open spaces and pedestrian-friendly amenities such as shaded sidewalks, covered walkways, and underground and elevated links.¹⁴

The project is breathtaking in scale, taking on the appearance of a new city within the city. Plans include more than 30 million square feet of office space and the tallest residential towers in Singapore—one reaching 70 stories.¹⁵ The City has invested \$7.5 billion in infrastructure alone to support the development.¹⁶

Poland: Promoting Citizen Participation in Lublin

Lublin has been a capital city of the southeastern Poland region since 1474. Having endured the tragedy of World War II and the oppression of the Cold War, this historic city was faced with a new challenge in the 1990s—how to actively engage its citizens in planning. In a presentation titled "The Recovery of

¹³ Fiona Chan, "Reflections of a City," *Skyline*, March-April 2009.

¹⁴ Urban Redevelopment Authority, "Marina Bay" brochure, 2010.

¹⁵ Ching Tuan Yee and Benjamin Ng, "Realising the Marina Bay Vision," *The Business Times*, March 22, 2008.

¹⁶ Marina Bay Fact Sheet, Singapore Urban Redevelopment Authority, 2010.

Citizenship," architect Ewa Kipta described the process and outcomes of Lublin's recent experience with participatory democracy. "[People] need to feel that they are having an impact on where they are living to feel safe and influence their quality of life," she said.¹⁷

Because Poland was not a democracy until 1989, she explained, the discussion of urban planning that was taking place in other parts of the world in the 1980s "didn't happen in Poland—Poland is catching up." She stated that an inclusive dialogue creates "opportunities for integrated solutions to the problems of cities. We are at the stage of redefining what planning should be."¹⁸

The "Local Initiative Program" is an early example of civic engagement in Poland. Between 1991-93, the initiative engaged residents and community leaders in planning for urban rehabilitation of two 19th-century districts in Lublin. Through public meetings, the city sought to devise solutions to local challenges

¹⁷ Ewa Kipta, Architect, City of Lublin, personal communication, November 26, 2010.

¹⁸ Ewa Kipta, *Ibid*.

“We are at the stage of redefining what planning should be.”

by increasing public awareness and using residents' local expertise to develop solutions.

Since 1994, the focus has been on implementation. The recovery of private ownership for the majority of properties created interest in new uses and opportunities for reinvestment not possible with limited public resources. Tax incentives and direct public investment spurred private investment. Throughout the implementation phase, residents continued to be active participants in the design and implementation of projects.

The result was a transformation of the community. Between 1992-98, 75 percent of the properties in the two districts were improved. The number of small businesses increased from seven to 123. The number of renovated private homes increased from 137 to 391. Substantial public and private investments were made in public infrastructure.¹⁹

The medieval Old Town of Lublin required a more comprehensive revitalization strategy. Between 1995 and 2003, the city undertook infrastructure improvements and resurfaced streets. Cultural activities in renovated buildings brought vitality back into Old Town, and private investment has picked up.

As a next step, public planning will be focused on the area north of Old Town. In spring 2010, a public

dialogue was organized regarding the redevelopment of a Jewish district demolished by the Nazis in 1943. The district is currently vacant or occupied by temporary structures. The resulting local plan includes standards for design and reflects multicultural values.

Conclusion

My experience in San Sebastian gave me a sense of something greater than the Congress: the continued awareness that someone on the other side of the world is struggling with the same housing and development challenges, albeit in very different terrain. I also felt a fellowship of urban development professionals that transcends national boundaries—and we hope to make such bonds of fellowship even stronger. Following the Congress, INTA's General Secretary, Michel Sudarskis, expressed hope for strengthening ties between

INTA and NAHRO. He suggested that NAHRO “use INTA as a platform to project internationally the experience of its membership in urban renewal and development,” including participation in conferences and expert panels, and collaboration on events located in the U.S.

Thanks to NAHRO's relationship with INTA and modern technology, members of both organizations can now experience some of the Congress without the jet lag. Many presentations, including video of some of the sessions, are available on INTA's website: <http://www.inta-aiavn.org/en/home>.

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¹⁹ Ewa Kipta, *The Recovery of Citizenship: Examples of urban dialogue in Lublin*, Presentation at INTA Congress, Monday, October 25, 2010.