

## editor's note

by matt comer  
matt@gonotes.com

### East Charlotte gays could have impact



Last year, as the 2010 census ramped up to count all 300 million-plus U.S. citizens and residents, *qnotes* delved into old 2000 census information that showed East Charlotte's 28205 ZIP code — including neighborhoods like Plaza-Midwood, NoDa, parts of Elizabeth and parts of the 7th St./Monroe and Central Ave. corridors — as the most LGBT-populous locale in the entire state (see "Large LGBT presence key to East Charlotte development" at [gonotes.com/6043/](http://gonotes.com/6043/)). Those demographics might very well change as information from the most recent census is slowly released starting this year, though I expect East Charlotte will still rank highly on the places most populated by LGBT residents in North Carolina.

As explored in our March 2010 story, the LGBT community's presence has been key to East Charlotte development and history. Each of the city's primarily-LGBT faith congregations make their home in East Charlotte, along with three of the city's nine primarily-LGBT nightlife establishments. Two of the city's three largest, local LGBT-oriented organizations or businesses, including this newspaper, are in East Charlotte (and another used to be until moving downtown, another locale with a high population of LGBT residents). Finally, East Charlotte is home to dozens of LGBT-owned businesses that range from coffeehouses and restaurants to art galleries and antique shops.

If you're LGBT and live in Charlotte, odds are likely you make your home in the city's Eastside. If not, at the very least you work, eat, shop or drink here or have friends who live here.

I mention all of this as an LGBT-inclusive primer to this column on Independence Blvd., East Charlotte and public transit. The city has been engrossed in civic debate over the need, value, cost and potential benefits of rapid or reliable public transit systems since local government took it over in the 1970s. *The Charlotte Observer's* Mary Newsom hit upon that decades-old debate in her Jan. 14 column, "Can the hated boulevard be tamed?", in which she discussed a recent panel by the out-of-town Urban Land Institute's Rose Center and their slate of recommendations for a solution to the Eastside's public transit and Independence Blvd. woes.

Newsom drilled down the Rose Center's suggestions: "...scrap the idea of light rail

transit down the middle of Independence and instead build a Monroe Road streetcar. Independence would get bus rapid transit along limited-access lanes already planned, part of the state's decades-long Independence project."

That original proposal for bus transit, Newsom related, caused an avalanche of frustration for East Charlotteans, who have, at least since the late 1990s, dreamt of an extension of light rail to their side of town, similar to the current southern LYNX leg and planned northern leg toward UNC-Charlotte.

Though I'd debate the placement of a streetcar line on Monroe Rd. (it should be on Central Ave.), I fervently believe there's no reason for folks in East Charlotte *not* to want light rail or some other reliable public transit on their side of town; similarly, there's little rational basis for why the city hasn't prioritized and sped up such a streetcar line's construction. The South End LYNX blue line has proven a success. Before the Great Recession, and even now though to a lesser extent, the blue line has spawned the development of new residential buildings and businesses. Such development is needed on the Eastside and public transit will be key to its success.

But the public transit naysayers will never quit. "We don't have the money," they say. "Light rail and streetcar systems will never pay for themselves, just as the current public transit system fails to pay for itself."

Those naysayers, the majority of whom live comfortably outside the demographic which stands to benefit the most from public transit, neglect a few key facts when they jump on their "it'll never pay for itself" ideological train rides of fancy.

In modern times no mode of mass transportation in this country or elsewhere around the globe has ever come close to fully paying for itself. Particularly in this country, mass transit as we know it today exists solely because of its subsidization by local, state and federal governments and, by extension, taxpayers.

Daniel Baldwin Hess of the State University of New York's University at Buffalo and Rutgers University's Peter A. Lombardi write: "At the start of the 1950s, many of the nation's transit systems — the vast majority of which were

see *Editor's Note* on 5

## guest commentary

by Matthew Tsien :: guest contributor

### Generational change in the new GOP?

President Obama created a stir last month when he reiterated that while he doesn't support gay marriage, he still struggles with the issue. He said his views are "constantly evolving."

In the Republican Party, the fracture over issues concerning homosexual individuals revealed itself more clearly in the vote for repeal of the 17-year-old "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy that prevented gays from serving openly in the military.

Of the eight Republican senators who voted for repeal, five are among the youngest in the upper chamber — and they're not all moderates. They are rather right-wing and the type of Republican that the gay press and their activist class reflexively demonized as ultra-homophobic nut-jobs.

Sens. Lisa Murkowski of Alaska, John Ensign of Mormon Nevada and Richard Burr of Dixie North Carolina — yes, that's Jesse Helm's North Carolina — maintain relatively conservative voting records. They are 53, 52 and 55, respectively.

Their colleagues Mark Kirk and Scott Brown have been lumped into the more moderate wing of the party, but they, too, are some of the youngest GOP senators. Both are 51.

Yet, as far as "gay issues" go, the GOP might be more generational in their views.

Nearly all young service members supported the repeal of DADT because it simply doesn't matter to them what anyone's sexual orientation is — as long as you can live within the military Code of Conduct — and many happen to know and are friends with gay people.

In terms of the recent Senate vote, as we know most U.S. senators are old and many of the Republicans are from a generation that are clinging to old-school thoughts of a time long ago. However, Republicans under the age of 60 tend to be more inclusive, even if they are rightfully labeled "conservative" in their voting records on other non-gay issues.

In fact, looking beyond the rigidly left-wing gay world, many people, including centrist and GOP Gays, would argue that conservatives and Republicans in general aren't any different than anyone else in America.

Republicans, over the past number of years, have seen more and more gay people feeling free to come out and to live their lives openly and honestly, within the very ranks of Republican culture, such as traditional

families, churches, Fortune 500 companies, Republican think-tanks and other Republican Party activities.

For that reason the younger generations of Republicans are becoming increasingly familiar with issues affecting homosexual Americans. Older generations, generally don't have that same experience of having as many contemporaries who are openly gay.

Yet, the solidly right-wing Republican North Carolina Sen. Richard Burr rationalized inspirationally, his decision to support the repeal of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" in generational terms:

"Given the generational transition that has taken place in our nation, I feel that this policy is outdated and repeal is inevitable," he said.

Post-vote, there is more evidence that gay issues may continue to show fractures and changes within the GOP: several prominent conservative groups have announced that they will boycott the largest annual gathering of conservatives in the country, the Conservative Political Action Committee Convention, in Washington this February, due to Gay Republicans hosting their own hospitality reception suite and a membership sign-up booth for Gays leaning decidedly to the Right.

It will be inspiring and exciting to see if some of the potential GOP presidential contenders who will speak at this famous right-wing conclave, might express more inclusion toward gays in their activist Army. After all, several of the big names being thrown about as the next Republican President are under they age of 60. And that includes right-wing divas Sarah Palin, and Michelle Bachmann, the Queens of the Tea Party movement; and also irreverent, but fiscally conservative, Republicans like the Governors Mitch Daniels (Ind.), Chris Christie (N.J.) and Tim Pawlenty (Minn.).

You heard it here first. ::

— Tsien is the former public affairs director for the Washington, D.C., chapter of Log Cabin Republicans.

*qnotes* strives to provide the community with an open forum for discussion and commentary. The views of guest commentators do not necessarily represent the official views or positions of *qnotes*, its editorial staff or publisher.

SUBSCRIBE!

**These rates only cover a portion of our true cost, however, our goal is to serve our community**

Mailed 1st class from Charlotte, NC, in sealed envelope.

**Subscription Rates:**

1 yr - 26 issues = \$48     1/2 yr - 13 issues = \$34

name: \_\_\_\_\_

address: \_\_\_\_\_

city: \_\_\_\_\_ state: \_\_\_\_\_ zip: \_\_\_\_\_

credit card - check one:     mastercard     visa     discover     american express

card #: \_\_\_\_\_ exp. date: \_\_\_\_\_

signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Meeting Date: Tuesday, February 15, 2011  
 Program: John Arrowood  
 Former North Carolina Court of Appeals Judge  
 Crowne Plaza, 201 S. McDowell St.  
 Cash Bar Social/Heavy Hor d'oeuvres @ 5:30 pm  
 Program starts @ 6:45 pm  
 Cost: \$20  
 To Reserve: Call 704-565-5075 by 12 pm  
 Friday, February 11, 2011  
 or email [businessguild@yahoo.com](mailto:businessguild@yahoo.com)  
 to request tickets for this event



CHARLOTTE BUSINESS GUILD

