

# America's Gayborhoods: A Study in the Cultural Preservation of LGBTQ+ Communities

## Introduction

My favorite sandwich is gone. It was a sweet and savory concoction of turkey, tomatoes, raspberry jam, bacon, and cheese all served on French toast. It was called the Einstein Grill and it was only served at one place here in Atlanta, Einstein's Restaurant. The restaurant served loyal patrons for 30 years at the corner of Juniper and 12<sup>th</sup> Streets. The property, along with sister restaurant Joe's on Juniper, were sold to a developer to make way for progress, a.k.a. a new high-rise residential building. The loss of a cultural institution to a big developer is not new or unique to Atlanta. In fact, it is a tale as old as time, a common plot for Hollywood film and television fodder, a la *Two Weeks Notice*. Now, Einstein's was not exactly a community center but, along with Joe's, was a center for community – the LGBTQ community. They were safe spaces for a mélange of people to gather, share stories and ideas, show off the latest fashions, and celebrate life's biggest events. I would not go as far to say that they were the epicenter of an LGBTQ movement in Atlanta, but they were certainly part of a once flourishing queer district.

Most large American cities have queer-centric districts; New York's Chelsea, San Francisco's Castro, D.C.'s Dupont Circle. European meccas like Paris' Marais, Madrid's Chueca and Berlin's Schöneberg – even ultra-conservative regions have their havens too, Tel Aviv, for instance. Bedecked with rainbow flags adorning the balconies of apartment and condo buildings or hanging in the windows of local businesses, these enclaves evoke a sense of acceptance, identity, and place. Understanding how and why these enclaves form is critical to securing their futures as safe havens for upcoming generations of outsiders, non-conformists, and activists.

In recent years, Atlanta has seen a boon in development, catapulting housing demand and prices, particularly in its densest and most desirable neighborhoods. Midtown's Garden District, commonly referred to as the 'Gayborhood' is one such place. Largely abandoned during white flight in the 1960s, "Weightman (1981) was among the earliest observers to link gay habitation patterns to neighborhood change, arguing that gays were linked to 'urban renovation and preservation programs, particularly in the restoration of decaying architecture' (p 109)" (Doan & Higgins, 2011, p 8). This is not because gay men and women had a particular affinity toward run-down Victorian mansions, but more so because the homes were cheap and, especially for lesbians at the time, attainable for single, unmarried women who were not ideal candidates to mortgage lenders. Furthermore, the queer community actively sought places of refuge where they could live their lives free of persecution, hate and acts of violence. Subconsciously, perhaps, thinking that there was strength in numbers, coupled with the knowledge that major cities provide more opportunities for socializing and for disappearing (not standing out from the crowd) "these enclaves in large metropolitan areas were initially gentrified by gay men and some lesbian residents fleeing discrimination elsewhere" (Doan & Higgins, 2011, p 6).

The large populations in cities supported a wide variety of people acting unconventionally and excused a mountain of unorthodox (for the time) living arrangements or indiscretions. Inner-city neighborhoods acted as safe havens for the LGBTQ community to live their lives openly, without too much controversy. "LGBT people are attracted to queer-identified neighborhoods for myriad reasons but the perception that these

areas are more tolerant is often critical in their decision making. [...] Participating in community building and being part of something larger than oneself or one's family are also important aspects of LGBT residential decisions. [...] especially among gay men, this translates into formal participation in majoritarian political institutions (neighborhood organizations, planning boards, and even elected office)" (Doan & Higgins, 2011, p 18).

Today, Midtown is a vibrant, desirable neighborhood experiencing significant redevelopment. This is driving property values to skyrocket, pushing out long-time residents. The exodus of queer trailblazers combined with an influx of new, heteronormative populations in dense new high rises, dilutes the proportion of LGBTQ+ anchor residents who patronized the shops and cafes that served as the backbone of this community. "Renovation has made them [LGBTQ+ neighborhoods] more attractive to non-LGBT individuals in search of in-town living. Higher demand for property in these neighborhoods has resulted in steep rises in rents, frequent conversion of rental properties to condominiums, and competition for commercial space, which make it difficult for less affluent LGBT people and businesses targeted to the community to remain in the neighborhoods" (Doan & Higgins, 2011, p 6). Further, the loss of long-time LGBTQ residents and increasing rents is also impacting the small businesses that catered to this population, forcing their closure or redistribution to other, more affordable areas of the city.

While gentrification is the impetus for this study and a driving force to advocates of preservation, it is not an indicator for what needs to be preserved. Nor does it align to any specific mechanisms of preservation. Susan Denyer, Secretary of the International Council on Monuments and Sites (United Kingdom) was quoted on their website as stating, "Cultural heritage is part of who we are, both individually and collectively, and has a profound impact on lives; but to deliver its full potential in guiding sustainable development, cultural heritage must be a cross-cutting theme, embedded in all the plans and policies that guide that development" (ICOMOS, 2023, <https://icomos-uk.org/50th-anniversary-conference-and-reception>). Leaning into her theory of embedding the themes of cultural heritage into planning practice and policymaking, the goal of this paper is to understand **what tools municipalities utilize in the preservation of historical LGBTQ+ landmarks, neighborhoods and/or places of cultural significance and how those techniques can be applied in other cities, like Atlanta, to further preservation efforts**. In support of this mission, it is imperative we understand 1) what are the drivers of preservation? 2) what needs to be preserved? 3) what has been the role of municipalities or the planning practice? And 4) what municipal or planning tools are available and how are they utilized and implemented in this context?

This exploratory effort will attempt to answer these questions by reviewing literature and research from other studies and governmental entities, and by conducting comparative analyses of planning interventions that other U.S. cities have recognized as potential tools towards cultural preservation. Through this analysis, I hope to identify several policies, ordinances, or other successful practices of stewarding the heritage of identity-based places, to prevent further erasure of Atlanta's LGBTQ+ enclaves.

## Literature Review

### **Terminology in Context**

As the queer community has evolved over time, terminology has followed suit. I thought it pertinent to point out several historical and modern terms, prior to continuing this writing.

As of this writing the most accepted terminology for the collective community is considered by the Human Rights Campaign to be "LGBTQ+" (HRC, 2023, <https://www.hrc.org/resources/glossary-of-terms>). There are many gender and sexual identities to be considered and their glossary is an excellent (and up to date) resource for exploring them independently. Throughout modern history (mid-20<sup>th</sup> century to now), the letters representing those who identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender have been used interchangeably and in varying order. Some of the cited works may refer to the community as "GLBT", "LGBT", or "GLB", depending on what was most widely acceptable at the time of their writing.

The collective community is sometimes lumped under the terms "gay community" or simply, "gays" by some of the writers cited throughout this report. This is a more casual usage that does not feel genuinely inclusive, so I will try to refrain from using it. It is still an acceptable descriptor for perception of a place as more or less "gay" than another and may be used in this context throughout. The term "gayborhood" is also used in this study. This refers specifically to neighborhoods that are (or were at some point) considered to be queer-centric enclaves.

As a member of the LGBTQ+ community, I am accustomed to using colloquialisms to refer to members of the community but will use "LGBTQ+" or "queer" interchangeably to describe the community, collectively. The term "queer" has been reclaimed by the community in recent years and is being used more frequently in academic writing to "include many people, including those who do not identify as exclusively straight and/or folks who have non-binary or gender-expansive identities" (HRC, 2023, <https://www.hrc.org/resources/glossary-of-terms>).

### **#1: What are the drivers of preservation?**

#### **Gentrification**

"Markusen (1981) described gentrification as a dismantling of patriarchal structures in the suburbs because 'households of gay people, singles and professional couples with central business district jobs increasingly find central locations attractive' (pg. 32)" (Doan & Higgins, 2011, p 7). While the proximity to a central business district was likely convenient, the choice to settle there was likely more pragmatic. As mentioned in the introduction, LGBTQ+ persons sought safety and socialization in large cities which had the added benefit of privacy and anonymity. Furthermore, central business districts were becoming increasingly empty and desolate with white flight in the 1960s. This contributed to better affordability and choice for gay men and unmarried women where "gay men wished to create community spaces to combat homophobic oppression, and partly as a means of increasing the value of their capital investments" (Lauria and Knopp 1985, as cited by Doan & Higgins, 2011, p 8).

Beyond this wave of gentrification, cities today are dealing with a new wave where the dynamic has shifted. Whereas in the 1960s, when city centers were being abandoned for quieter life in the suburbs and left with

dilapidated tenements in the wake, this new wave is capitalizing on restored and renovated homes, vibrant economic districts, and charming street life created by the queer pioneers that landed in these parts of the city, beforehand. It is now desirable and posh to live in these districts where a sense of belonging and identity has been crafted over the past half century. This influx of residential demand is crippling the once literal, vibrant color of these neighborhoods by supporting supply of generic, block-sized apartment and condo buildings. "Municipal officials and planners, eager to capitalize on any glimmer of urban redevelopment, have often promoted wider urban revitalization, changing zoning codes to attract large-scale real estate firms, further exacerbating the rise in property value, and inviting a new wave of gentrification that alters the LGBT character of the neighborhood" (Doan & Higgins, 2011, p 6).

In Atlanta "city planners became major redevelopment sponsors by supporting those seeking to 'modernize' Atlanta with specific changes to zoning and to the development approval process that promoted urban redevelopment growth in ways that significantly altered the fabric of LGBT neighborhoods" (Doan & Higgins, 2011, p 20). While the residential gayborhood homes remain here, the resident population becomes less and less gay each day. The local business nodes that once served LGBTQ residents and visitors have nearly completely disappeared, mowed down to make way for concrete and glass high-rises, straightwashing the character right out of the neighborhood.

Petra Doan's article in 2011 suggests that there had been little-to-no preservation efforts nor interest, up to that time. It appears that the City and Midtown were at the infancy of an early-mid 2000s redevelopment boon and enacted policy decisions that promoted progress over preservation. "The Midtown Alliance and the planning department promoted gentrification by designating the Midtown Improvement District and the two Special Interest Districts. [...] 'the future of Midtown is being built on top of the rubble of the neighborhood's gay past'" (R. Lee 2007a, as cited by Doan & Higgins, 2011, p 16). For example, the two restaurants (successful, I might add) mentioned earlier in this report were bull-dozed in 2021 to huge outcry, in favor of another new apartment building, even though there is a city block-sized surface parking lot available catty-corner to where these establishments once stood. It does make one (okay, me) wonder whether Atlanta has anything left, worth preserving – hence this study.

### **Dilution and Dispersal**

As is the way with gentrification, these districts become more appetizing to other, non-LGBTQ groups, putting further strain on housing prices (rent and real property sales). This not only forces out many of the established residents but brings an influx of new. In the case of the gayborhoods, this shift in resident composition inherently makes the district less gay or rather, less proportionally LGBTQ. For instance, Palm Springs, CA has been a gay mecca for Hollywood's closeted elite for more than half a century. So much so, that the town became a weekend hot spot for gays (men in particular) from across the globe, creating a thriving economy all its own centered around gay arts and culture. Of course, these motifs were not exclusively enjoyable to the LGBTQ community and so, drew non-LGBTQ tourism to the small desert town. As the Gay Rights Movement progressed and queer 'lifestyles' became more approachable to the masses, non-LGBT communities began profiting from the cultural landscape - hosting events that capitalized on gay culture; art fairs, music festivals, nightlife (bachelorette parties are commonplace in most gay bars these days), even baked goods (naughty donuts, for example). "Leveraging of LGBT neighborhood capital by non-LGBT people represents the commodification – even the pillaging – of gay culture [...] Others view the commercialization of gay neighborhoods as one of the hallmarks of greater societal tolerance" (Doan & Higgins, 2011, p 15). With greater societal tolerance comes great opportunity.

There are other contributing factors to the dilution of LGBTQ populace aside from non-LGBTQ people moving *in*, and that is LGBTQ people moving *out*. In 2015 the U.S. Supreme Court ruling in *Obergefell v. Hodges* required all U.S. state laws to recognize same-sex marriages (Oyez, 2023, <https://www.oyez.org/cases/2014/14-556>). This was a significant turning point for the queer community across the nation, particularly in red states. A notable outcome of this newly acquired equality is a heteronormative ideal being achieved for the first time, at scale – queer community members moving to the suburbs. Acknowledging same-sex marriages now allows for new freedoms and choices, not previously afforded to same-sex partnerships. In fact, some small towns actively market to LGBTQ couples to catch some of that gay sunshine that made the gayborhoods so charming. “Non-gay residents of Azalea Park actively recruited gay men and lesbians at pride marches hoping they would come live in this rundown older suburb of smaller, often two-bedroom, homes – a strategy that had some success” (Forsyth, 2011, p 36).

Two efforts conducted during their studies by former graduates of Georgia Tech's city and regional planning program resulted in conflicting arguments related to the dispersal of LGBTQ+ residents. In 2011 Zachary Adriaessens found that the community was dispersing away from midtown into the suburbs and that midtown was becoming less proportionally queer-centric, while the group, Beduhn, Davis and Raven's, spatial analysis found that same-sex households are not dispersing – citing limitations of data accuracy, misrepresentation of married and unmarried couples in the US Census, and missing data to confirm the gender identity and sexual orientation of single or roommate households leading to many assumptions, but concluding that it may be too soon to track migration patterns accurately.

In Atlanta, and likely other cities, we see another compounding factor for those moving out – looking for the next affordable refuge. Re-establishing a new queer district elsewhere in the metro area sounds idyllic, and has been started and stopped many times over, Clarkston and East Point, GA come to mind, but it is not truly a practical solution – it takes a village to build a village, but it also takes a lot of money. The most affordable solution may be returning to our (LGBTQ community) roots, rolling up our sleeves and renovating the next best neighborhood like we did during white flight. This rainbow flight out of city centers just exacerbates an already burgeoning shift in demographics for Atlanta and kicks the gentrified can farther down the road. “There is an increasing dispersal of LGBT people throughout the Atlanta metropolitan area. Many of these individuals are struggling to re-create the feel of a queer neighborhood, but these efforts require large expenditures of sweat equity and may in fact result in the displacement of other poor minority groups from their neighborhoods” (Doan & Higgins, 2011, p 14).

This brings us to the issue of dispersal, the actual distribution where the LGBTQ population lands when all is said and done. It is an interesting note, but a bit tangential to understanding drivers for preservation. The opportunity in dispersal is about having a central gathering place to organize and build community together. The distribution of maturing LGBTQ residents to the suburbs and younger generations still vying for a place in the city lacks the community building components necessary for knowledge transfer and mentorship – critical elements to nurturing political activism. “The dislocation increases the vulnerability of traditional LGBT institutions and restricts the ability of LGBT people to organize resistance to challenges facing their community, to train future leaders through involvement in neighborhood governance, and to elect local officials responsive to LGBT concerns” (Doan & Higgins, 2011, p 20). Again, the relevance to this study in having a central community anchor that glues the generations together, combined with systems that make it possible for multiple generations from varying financial and social backgrounds to cohabitate and exchange intellectual capital.

## #2: What needs to be preserved?

The National Park Service recognizes five categories within their criteria for evaluation for the National Register of Historic Places:

- Building – “such as a house, barn, church, hotel... created principally to shelter human activities.”
- Structures, “those functional constructions made usually for purposes other than creating human shelter... aircraft, automobiles, canal, fence, gazebo, lighthouse, tunnel, etc.”
- Objects, “those constructions that are primarily artistic in nature or are relatively small in scale and simply constructed. Although it may be, by nature or design, movable, an object is associated with a specific setting or environment.”
- Sites, “the location of a significant event, a prehistoric or historic occupation or activity, or a building or structure, whether standing, ruined, or vanished, where the location itself possesses historic, cultural, or archeological value regardless of the value of any existing structure.”
- Districts, “possesses a significant concentration, linkage, or continuity of sites, buildings, structures, or objects united historically or aesthetically by plan or physical development” (National Park Service, 1997, p 5).

These parameters are helpful in this context as they provide a framework within which to evaluate specific buildings and sites. As it relates to my research, those most applicable categories pertaining to the LGBTQ history are buildings, sites, and districts. Most prevalent across all research was the need to document oral histories, persons and events, and practices that are not tied to place.

### Buildings, Sites, and Districts

In a presentation for the American Planning Association Webcast Series (2016), *Razing the Bar: Tracing the Evolution of LGBTQ Enclaves in San Francisco*, Shayne Watson discussed, what I am calling, a ‘nomadic tendency’ of queer populations. The LGBTQ population would start frequenting a particular business, typically a bar or nightclub run by an ally (in today’s terms) and then other businesses catering to the same crowd (or a subset group) would open nearby, then another, and so on. Eventually the spots would become wildly popular, to the point of drawing too much attention, ultimately leading to either an influx of non-LGBTQ patronage (sound familiar?) or “sanitization” of some sort. No longer having safe spaces in this neighborhood the queer community would shift to other parts of the city, opening and frequenting businesses in a different neighborhood and, as it became too public, would move on again. From North Beach’s Barbary Coast to the Tenderloin to Polk Street and South of Market neighborhoods, etc. This nomadism is an expression of changing times and tolerance in early 20<sup>th</sup> century San Francisco.

A good example of an independent building warranting preservation given by Watson, is that of the Black Cat, a nightclub frequented by all people, heterosexual and homosexual, alike. The Black Cat is an interesting example because it is linked to significant LGBTQ historical events. One in 1949 where the club’s liquor license was revoked, “the heterosexual owner of the Black Cat, Sol Stoumen, fought the charges and appealed his case to the California Supreme Court and ultimately won in 1951. That case essentially legalized homosexual assembly in California, which prior to the ruling was a punishable offense” and a second, “because it served as the political headquarters for Jose Sarria’s 1961 campaign for the San Francisco Board of Supervisors. This campaign was the first time in history anywhere in the world [I think], that an openly gay candidate ran for elected office” (Watson, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qNbcioheUu0>). Another obvious example is the Stonewall Inn, a gay

bar in New York City's Greenwich Village that is credited as the birthplace of the gay liberation movement when riots broke out during a police raid in 1969.

During my literature review, I did not find examples of specific sites that have been landmarked or noted of importance, but I expect to during my analysis and will make special note of them in that section.

Understanding contributors to the establishment of queer-centric districts aids in identifying additional sites that, co-located and with enough significance between them, can become eligible for formal preservation, such as landmarking. As the queer community co-located to each other, businesses followed suit to be accessible to their target patrons. Bars and nightclubs were of particular use as gathering spaces, offering safe spaces to meet others socially or for political organizing. In turn, other businesses entered the fold: bookstores, cafes, shops, and the like. Today, "LGBT-focused businesses in traditionally LGBT-identified commercial zones still function as important nodes for that community, but their longevity is threatened by development pressure. These institutions are especially important in the lives of the most marginalized LGBT individuals, including people of color and transgendered people, who are frequently more visible and more concerned with safety and tolerance" (Doan & Higgins, 2011, p 20).

Combating closures and protecting the districts from redevelopment had not been a focus of civic leaders or planning professionals in the past (mid-late 20<sup>th</sup> century). These enclaves were left to fend for themselves. One tool that LGBTQ businesses utilized was collective action – they formed business guilds. "It was not until gay bar operators formed the Tavern Guild, and gay activists began organizing a series of at first social and later political organizations, that a more stable gay neighborhood like the Castro would develop" (Doan & Higgins, 2011, p 8). These guilds are powerful resources of like-minded business owners that not only support one another, but also have a large stake in how their communities develop. This is how many LGBTQ enclaves claimed their stake in big cities for the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

These guilds do not seem to be as prevalent in the current environment but revitalizing or reestablishing them may be beneficial in the future fight for (or against) redevelopment. "Some of these associations and guilds became quite large and it would be difficult for planners in the area to avoid interacting with them and their members. [...] These business groups can be resources for planners particularly in terms of economic development. [...] Certainly, there is an economic impact from such business clusters and the guilds provide an easy way for planners to interact with local business owners" (Forsyth, 2011, p 46). In recent years, the city of Atlanta has cemented its commitment to the queer community with a similar Division of LGBTQ Affairs to "protect and advance the rights of the LGBTQ community" (ATLGBTQ, 2023, <https://atlgbtq.atlantaga.gov/division>).

### **Oral Histories, Persons and Events, and Practices**

Throughout the research, several sources alluded to methodologies for commemorating activities and efforts of individuals. Whether this was by collecting oral histories of events, showcasing the work of specific people, or acknowledging particular businesses that were influential in the community, these efforts were considered to be just as important to the LGBTQ collective history as spaces recognized by the National Register of Historic Places. We will discuss practical applications in question #4, under subheading *Design Interventions*.



### #3: What has been the role of municipalities or the planning practice?

#### **Discrimination in Practice**

As a discipline, the planning practice receives much criticism, particularly around mid-century highway infrastructure projects and the disregard for community involvement or welfare at that time. This practice of ignoring community members has improved since the 1960s, but the anonymity and invisibility of LGBTQ narratives and identities has kept planning in the proverbial closet until recent years. The U.S. Census (a vital resource for planners to understand community composition) did not recognize same-sex households officially until the 2010 census. (U.S. Census, 2013, <https://www2.census.gov/topics/families/same-sex-couples/faq/sscplfactsheet-final.pdf>). The census did not provide questions to recognize sexual orientation or gender identity until 2020, contributing to “a lack of planning attention and even a perception that the concerns of gay, lesbian, and queer people are marginal to the core concerns of planning (whether in its more mainstream or activist dimensions)” (Forsyth, 2011, p 28).

Beyond recognition of individuals within the LGBTQ spectrum, recognizing and understanding their communities also remained enigmatic. Often leading to a disregard or omission from planning efforts and reports. It was not until 2014 that the National Park Service (the agency that oversees the National Register of Historic Places) even provided guidance and interest in collecting LGBTQ stories and narratives, as they relate to preservation. “While ethnic populations in enclaves have been frequently mentioned in plans and other planning documents, many of these lesbian and gay enclaves have been ignored or only obliquely referred to” (Forsyth, 2011, p 33).

#### **Desexualizing or decontextualizing gay districts for heteronormative allure**

“In the US, zoning has a preoccupation with families – housing types that in other countries would have such labels as detached housing or apartments, are labeled single family and multi-family in the US with families defined within the local zoning codes. This shows a widespread cultural interest in the social character of the inhabitants rather than the physical character of the buildings” (Forsyth, 2011, p 38). As noted above, U.S. Census lacked appropriate representation of LGBTQ populations. Prior to approximately 1996, all government “surveys changed reported same-sex spouses to opposite-sex spouses” (Taylor, 2020), exacerbating the issue of invisibility, promoting the erasure of non-conforming family makeup, and furthering the practice of heteronormative planning. This practice continued through other regulatory bodies, policies, and ordinances at various levels of government. “Plans and policies that promote urban redevelopment frequently used zoning to establish narrow definitions of what constitutes a family and fail to consider the effects of other policy changes on the LGBTQ populations” (Doan & Higgins, 2011, p 9).

Compounding the lack of attention to LGBTQ priorities and advancement of traditional perceptions of families, “gay, lesbian, and queer people have been stereotyped as only concerned about sexual behavior (and as a corollary, for example, businesses oriented to this population can then be seen as sexually oriented in zoning and excluded)” (Forsyth, 2011, p 50). There was a time that Midtown was the LGBT mecca of the South. In the 1990s there was significant activity and a vibrant nightlife on Cheshire Bridge Road, including the presence of adult businesses which are a staple in the LGBT community as the only constant safe space for gender and sexual expression. The 1999 Cheshire Bridge Transportation Study’s, “goal to change the character of the neighborhood by reducing the presence of these adult businesses and making the streets more pedestrian friendly promoted a neighborhood that would be attractive to heterosexual families at the expense of the LGBT community” (Doan & Higgins, 2011, p 14).



## **#4: What municipal or planning tools are available and how are they utilized/implemented in this context?**

### **Federal, State, and Local Mandate**

At the Federal level, the National Park Service oversees two programs that provide a framework for preservation efforts: the National Register of Historic Places and the LGBTQ Heritage Initiative. Since both have been addressed earlier in this paper, I will not belabor their attributes. I will emphasize, however, that the framework they provide also informs individual state and municipal policy of the same topics. The state of Georgia, for example, maintains most of the same requirements as the National Register, whereas another state (or a city) may advocate for additional protections. An exhaustive analysis to determine which states and/or cities have additional requirements, beyond that required by federal mandate, was not performed for this paper.

### **Design Interventions**

There are other efforts that may occur in response to another. This category of 'Design Interventions' could be a project intended to support an actionable plan, or it may have been initiated outside the formal planning realm, perhaps by a grassroots organization, as a passion project for a city official, or sponsored by philanthropy. For example, the cities of Chicago and San Francisco chose to commemorate important LGBTQ narratives and persons, while also distinguishing their queer-centric districts, so "the city proposed rainbow gateway elements and street pylons for a six-block stretch in the Halsted Street area, a focus for gay businesses and services. [...] San Francisco's Market Street near the Castro Street area, also the recipient of streetscape improvements in the 1990s, used rainbow flags alone to mark the street. By 2005 the area had formed a special tax district – the Castro/Upper Market Community Benefit District with special taxing powers" (Forsyth, 2011, p 34).

### **Literature Review Summary**

Generally, research on LGBTQ histories and narratives is available, however, specific areas of interest seem to be widely underrepresented or unavailable. Of the research I have reviewed in this process, much of the information is centered on equity, social activism, and discriminatory planning practices (whether unintended or otherwise). Broader topics such as gentrification are discussed in relation to affordable housing but remain equally broad, likely due in part to limitations of available, reliable quantitative data for same-sex households and LGBTQ individual households. Some of the most useful research cited in this paper was completed over ten years ago. While the writing and terminology may be out of date, the concepts are ever-present today.

More recent efforts appear to come in the form of cultural context statements, as mentioned in the previous section. These documents can be specific to any group and are an emerging tool that seem to focus on community assets to better understand a localized culture. While these are a helpful step forward, they have their own limitations. First, they don't seem to be very prevalent, yet. Second, they are fairly recent and many of their recommendations have yet to be implemented, nor tested. My research efforts were also limited in producing information around small businesses acting as community anchors and the role of community centers within the context of LGBTQ enclaves. I found virtually no information on efforts to preserve enclaves, aside from one op-ed piece speaking out against it.

The lack of information specific to cultural preservation efforts currently in practice, allows this discussion and analysis to focus on the specific tools that *are* available and being effectively used or implemented by municipalities. Although addressing emerging issues is daunting, it brings about opportunity to ask many questions. Hopefully this paper will spark some interest in the topic for others to consider and ask their own questions.

## Data & Methods

While many cities across the United States have queer-centric neighborhoods this exploratory study compares the efforts of two major metropolitan cities to preserve them. Numerous cities were considered for comparison and **Table 1** displays those cities and the initial resources that were reviewed for this paper. These locations were considered because they are well-known hubs for LGBTQ communities. The literature review revealed many references to work done in San Francisco and Chicago that relates to the subject matter of this paper, in particular design interventions, previously mentioned. Having found limited research during the literature review of other cultural preservation efforts specific to the LGBTQ community by other cities, an assumption that the visibility efforts made by San Francisco and Chicago may lead to more fruitful planning practices and additional resources, was made. Greater attention was paid to Chicago, IL, San Francisco, CA, and Washington D.C. as several of the other cities were missing similar plans, such as implementation strategies or needs assessments for the LGBTQ community. Chicago, San Francisco, and Washington D.C. had readily available resources for review.

Plan Type / City	Los Angeles, CA	New York, NY	Provincetown, MA	Riverside, CA	Washington D.C.	Chicago, IL	San Francisco, CA	Atlanta, GA
Comprehensive Plan			x		x		x	x
LGBTQ Historic Context Statement	x	x		x	x		x	x
LGBTQ Cultural Context Statement						x	x	
LGBTQ Action/Implementation Plan						x	x	
LGBTQ Needs Assessment						x	x	
LGBTQ Community Center					x	x	x	
Design Intervention (LGBTQ Placemaking)					x	x	x	x
Municipal Equality Index (HRC)	93	98	93	95	n/a	93	95	100
Municipal Equality Index (HRC), including <i>flex scores</i>	108	115	102	102	n/a	104	112	112

Table 1 – Cities for consideration by resources available.

The Human Rights Campaign has published Municipal Equality Indexes (MEI) for all the cities considered, except for Washington D.C. Initially, the MEI was considered a potential indicator in city selection, however all cities were highly ranked scoring over the 100-point maximum when including *flex scores*. Ironically, as it concerns this study, Atlanta was the highest scoring city of those considered excluding the *flex score*, at

a solid 100. Washington D.C. was not ranked by the MEI because, “Washington D.C. is a federal district. This means that it has powers and limitations so significantly different from the municipalities the MEI rates that the comparison would be unfair— for example, no city rated by the MEI has the legal capacity to pass marriage equality, as Washington, D.C. did in 2009” (HRC 2022, [https://reports.hrc.org/municipal-equality-index-2022?\\_ga=2.121530762.384652899.1698792426-269810924.1695494441#city-score](https://reports.hrc.org/municipal-equality-index-2022?_ga=2.121530762.384652899.1698792426-269810924.1695494441#city-score)). It is for this reason that Washington D.C. was eliminated from further investigation for this study, as well.

The analysis consisted of comparing the relevant plans, policies, practices, and interventions available at the municipal or state level, employed by Chicago, IL, and San Francisco, CA. Similar policies were reviewed for the city of Atlanta to serve as the baseline for comparison. The analysis did not include mandates at the Federal level, as these will not differ from one state to another, and as all states should comply with these requirements.

## Results

The intent of this analysis is to gain possible metrics or best practices to create final recommendations for the Atlanta Department of City Planning and any of its partners (Central Atlanta Progress, Atlanta Regional Commission, the Midtown Alliance, and others) to consider in future planning activities, applicable to the stewardship of Atlanta's LGBTQ assets and their relationships to cultural placemaking.

During this research, four categories of reports became apparent contributors to historic and cultural preservation efforts.

- Comprehensive Plans: typically published by cities to guide development and land use and help agencies understand the city's priorities and how to support them. Atlanta has a recent Comprehensive Development Plan that, “shows the important relationships between land use, transportation, housing, economic development, nature, historic preservation, and other aspects of city building” (Atlanta, 2021, p vii).
- Historic or Cultural Context Statements: the goal of a historic or cultural context statement is to provide additional background on a specific topic or area of interest. Several statements were found during this research and will be evaluated in the upcoming comparative analysis.
- Implementation Strategies or Action Plans: supporting strategies that push previous work forward, often manifesting in the form of building projects, social programs, or funding mechanisms. Some examples are given in the upcoming subsection: Design Interventions.
- Community Needs Assessments: also focusing on a specific topic or area of interest, needs assessments are data collection mechanisms to provide an understanding of a subject's immediate and emerging needs. “The Chicago LGBTQ Community Needs Assessment [gathers] data on current needs, issues, strengths and resources of the Chicagoland LGBTQ community” (Morten & Farmer-Smith, 2019, p 2).

**Table 2**, found later in this paper, is a compilation of recommendations from each of the focus city's plans, relevant to this paper. More detailed findings from the work of each city are explored in the following discussion.

## Discussion

### Chicago

Chicago has a rich planning culture providing a wealth of resources between the city, county, private foundations, and public non-profits. Comprehensive-type plans, *Go To 2040* and *We Will Chicago*, offer aspirational goals at a broad level, but lack the implementation strategies required to preserve cultural spaces in a manner that befits the focus of this study.

There are several efforts that focus on LGBTQ issues and priorities but, there is a lack in connectivity between them. Many of the LGBTQ-centric plans that are recent and available, focus their efforts primarily on housing affordability, safety, and public services. Furthermore, although focused specifically on the LGBTQ community, at large, neither the *Healthy Chicago LGBTQ Community Action Plan*, nor the *2019 LGBTQ Community Needs Assessment* offered recommendations relevant to local economic activity, anchor institutions, or community building. The most promising recommendations for placemaking were from a non-LGBTQ plan, the 2012 Chicago Cultural Plan. These recommendations provide attainable tools for enhancing the public realm and communicated the benefits within a cultural district that can easily serve any community, including that of the LGBTQ community.

- “Celebrate every neighborhood’s cultural expression and heritage.
  - “One-Stop Shop” website and physical information centers for ticket-buying, program registration, user-generated calendars and search engine, reviews, discussion boards.
  - “You Are Here!” cultural kiosks at transportation hubs or retail nodes.
  - User-generated online maps populated by stories that are geographically linked to specific locations within a neighborhood.
  - Guides and tours of neighborhoods featuring locally generated guides to cultural assets such as landmarks, gardens, public art, local history, etc.
  - Coordinated public relations campaign to expand news coverage of citywide cultural events regionally, nationally, and internationally.
  - Designate city parks for distinctive cultural qualities by offering marketing, programming, and residencies coordinated to provide a specific niche to specific parks” (DCASE, 2012, p 22).

Regarding historic and cultural preservation, and the reason Chicago was selected as a comparative city for this study, are the placemaking efforts established to commemorate LGBTQ narratives and histories - the Rainbow Pylons, dedicated in 1998 and the subsequent Legacy Walk in 2012. The pylons were “the first streetscape in the United States to represent the LGBTQ community, and it marked the first time that a city government had officially recognized and thereby legitimized a LGBTQ community” (Wicklund & Crawford, n.d., p 16). Chicago made a statement that LGBTQ peoples and their stories are important, worth telling and even more so, preserving. “It recognizes the wealth of diversity within the LGBTQ community and offers the public accessible history to better know and fully appreciate the degree to which LGBTQ people have shaped the world” (Wicklund & Crawford, n.d., p 17).

There were no codes discovered in this analysis that catered, specifically, to historic preservation or the LGBTQ community, at large. However, the Human Rights Campaign Municipal Equality Index does indicate that non-discrimination ordinances are available at the state, county, and municipal levels. Also, the Chicago Department for Planning and Development indicates on their website, several historic preservation

initiatives. Those which may be useful in the context of this study are the *Black Chicago Heritage Initiative*, the *Citywide Adopt-A-Landmark Fund*, and the *Class L Property Tax Incentive*.

## San Francisco

San Francisco's comprehensive plan, the 'General Plan' was adopted in 1945 and has been continually updated as a living document. The current format, an online repository and directory of planning initiatives, links the components of the plans together into varying categories and planning disciplines. The most useful feature that I have come across during all this research is that the General Plan also links directly to the most current versions of, what appears to be, ALL of San Francisco's completed planning efforts. It is an incredibly rich and dynamic resource that more cities should look to as a guide for organizing their planning activities. Beyond the incredible user-friendliness of the document itself, it is also the only comprehensive effort in my research to specifically call-out LGBTQ-related goals, action items, and policies.

The General Plan contains two topical areas (Community Facilities and Housing) that have policy directly related to the focus of this study. Not surprisingly both sections address gentrification by promoting housing affordability and "culturally appropriate commercial and social spaces" to help combat displacement and "redress histories of dispossession, social disruption, and physical displacement" (San Francisco Planning, 1945, [https://generalplan.sfplanning.org/l1\\_Housing.htm](https://generalplan.sfplanning.org/l1_Housing.htm)) – moving the needle to correct former injustices from previous discriminatory practices in planning, and otherwise. Both chapters also stress the importance of community centers to serve as anchors that not only activate and engage the public space but are also culturally "responsive to the broad needs and desires of the community served" (San Francisco Planning, 1945, [https://generalplan.sfplanning.org/l7\\_Community\\_Facilities.htm](https://generalplan.sfplanning.org/l7_Community_Facilities.htm)). I would have expected this from a chapter about community facilities, but describing the importance of this relationship to housing was an excellent marriage to further "elevate expression of cultural identity." In addition to the neighborhood centers, the housing chapter also stresses the usage of urban design and architecture to "foster neighborhood belonging" that "sustains San Francisco's diverse cultural heritage" (San Francisco Planning, 1945, [https://generalplan.sfplanning.org/l1\\_Housing.htm](https://generalplan.sfplanning.org/l1_Housing.htm)).

The General Plan also links to three neighborhood plans with policy that serve the LGBTQ community: Western South of Market, Central South of Market, and Market Octavia. All three neighborhoods' plans have LGBTQ-specific language calling for attention to identifying, preserving, and supporting cultural resources, especially in consideration of redevelopment and zoning or land use changes. Western South of Market, or Western SoMa, has a more demonstrative interest in this area, dedicating five policies across four objectives in their plan. They appear to have explicit desires to include reinforcing diversity and upholding the character and charm of the neighborhood in their plan and policy recommendations.

Like Chicago, San Francisco also has a recent needs assessment for the LGBTQ community which includes concerns of affordability, safety, and public services. They also cited concerns for public gathering spaces. "Others suggested the importance of creating spaces for community members to hold events, to get together, and gather, particularly in regions beyond San Francisco" (Horizons Foundation, 2018, p 92). Unlike Chicago, whose action plan is specific to LGBTQ medical services, San Francisco's LGBTQ+ Cultural Heritage Strategy offers a phased approach of actionable strategies in the areas of well-being, culture, and opportunity. Related to this study, key recommendations from this plan include:

- "Centralize LGBTQ+ Initiatives.
- Support LGBTQ+ Cultural Districts.
- Establish a permanent museum of LGBTQ+ history and culture.

- Form a historic preservation advocacy group.
- Create LGBTQ+ heritage educational programming.
- Enhance community resource hubs.
- Increase business and entrepreneur support” (San Francisco Planning 2020, p 13).

Also, unlike Chicago, San Francisco has also adopted an LGBTQ Historic Context Statement. Historic context statements appear to be a somewhat newly developed resource (within the past seven to ten years). They are topic-specific, detailed studies to help inform decision-making and planning determinations in the realm of historic preservation. Very few cities have historic context statements for the LGBTQ community and only five of the cities considered for this study exhibited one on file. San Francisco's statement “was developed to serve as a first step in documenting the historic properties associated with the events, people, and organizations that define this important history” (Graves & Watson, 2016, p. 357). While the recommendations within this statement are centralized around physical preservation strategies for historic properties, neighborhoods, and culture, the plan also includes strategies for educational programming to further knowledge sharing, generationally. For example, creating historical placards or interpretive exhibits that display “text and images that provide a valuable and instructive experience” or by funding programming to engage youth, “an essential part of maintaining cultural memory and transmitting traditional knowledge and skills from generation to generation” (Graves & Watson, 2016, p 361-364).

## Atlanta

Unlike Chicago and San Francisco, Atlanta has not completed any recent LGBTQ needs assessments. The Atlanta Pride Committee began collecting data for one in 2022 but their survey remains open (as of this writing, November 2023) and does not disclose any plans to compile or publish its findings. Previous assessments have been completed for Atlanta on the national and state levels in relation to the needs of HIV awareness, treatment, and prevention. The Atlanta Youth Count did conduct their own assessment in 2015 of homeless youths in Atlanta. While this effort was not specific to the needs of LGBTQ+ youth, they found that “28.2% of the homeless youth surveyed self-identified as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and/or Transgender (LGBT)” (Wright, 2015), reinforcing the argument that a well-defined, affordable, queer district with centralized resources could be a critical need to support upcoming generations of LGBTQ+ people.

Atlanta has a rich and dynamic place within American history. Its pre- and post-Civil War identity is well-documented nationally in literature, film, and television, and locally in historical artifact exhibitions and interpretive signage throughout the city. Atlanta's role in the Civil Rights movement is equally well-documented, however, the contributions of the LGBTQ community to Atlanta's historical fabric are nascent and require additional considerations. The Gay Liberation Movement is so recent, that its early rumblings are just now coming into focus through a historic lens. This pushes Atlanta, and other cities who experienced this movement to “redefine historic. Understand and expand the definition of what is considered historic to Atlanta” (Atlanta Department of City Planning, 2021, p 141), or any other city, for that matter.

Pushing that forward, is a recent effort (April 2023) to identify and evaluate historic LGBTQ+ resources for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places. The Atlanta LGBTQ+ Historic Context Statement is the first effort for Atlanta to collectively document these resources and recognizes that there have been no LGBTQ+ significant spaces registered up to this time. The study has identified an initial 120 resources

for cataloguing and consideration for preservation efforts within nine themes, of which six have relevance to this study:

- Atlanta's LGBTQ+ Social Spaces.
- Political Activism in Atlanta's LGBTQ+ Communities.
- Atlanta's LGBTQ+ Community Organizations.
- LGBTQ+ Media in Atlanta.
- LGBTQ+ Arts in Atlanta.
- Atlanta's LGBTQ Neighborhoods and Enclaves.

This holistic effort is a massive step forward in preserving LGBTQ+ history in Atlanta. Its recommendations go beyond evaluation of individual buildings or sites for the national registry and include the identification and designation of historic or landmark districts as well as providing municipal mechanisms to further support LGBTQ-related economic activities, community gathering, or essential services – programs such as expanding interpretive signage to include LGBTQ+ sites and creating a legacy business program to support further longevity. The historic context statement also remarks on areas in which the study faced limitations and recommends further research be conducted, particularly of LGBTQ populations of color, the transgender community, and for influences and histories from outside the city's boundaries.

Similarly, to both Chicago and San Francisco, Atlanta has called attention to its LGBTQ heritage through streetscape design. In 2015, rainbow crosswalks were unveiled at the intersection of Piedmont Avenue and 10<sup>th</sup> Street as a temporary installation in response to fundraising efforts to commemorate Pride. The following year, after the Pulse Nightclub shooting in Orlando, Florida, the crosswalks were restored and rededicated in memoriam to the lives lost in the event. The crosswalks “bring the advancement of unity and awareness of human rights through public art...” and serve as a daily reminder that, “you are welcome here, you are safe here and you will be treated with respect and dignity and the City of Atlanta itself stands behind you” (ATLRC, 2017, <https://www.atlrc.org/>).

### **Historic Districting & Property Value**

Historic districts are not a new concept, but the implications may be different in cases where buildings may be historic independently of the events that happen within them, and vice versa. Prioritizing the historic narratives of these spaces, may be impactful (positively or negatively) to the development happening around them by limiting the demolition of existing structures to accommodate higher uses and densities. The tradeoff is that this priority enhances opportunities for unique interventions to avoid the closure of existing businesses serving the LGBTQ community. Interventions that might be explored or born out of these policy changes might include a tax allocation district that can allocate funds to subsidize property taxes, or offset high millage rates, or provide support for infrastructure that might be recommended as part of a special interest zoning overlay.

Another method for slowing gentrification is to discourage demolition. This can also be achieved through tax credits, policy, zoning overlays and a slew of other methods. The reason this is of note in this study is that historic preservation districts and special interest overlays may limit what can be achieved with an existing structure. If the structure itself is historic, much can be done to preserve it including restoration and renovation, but it may still be razed so long as its contribution to the historical landscape is well documented. If the structure itself is not historic but is within a historic district or a special interest overlay (depending on the terms of the overlay), it may be subject to those ordinances and remain in place if it



contributes to the character of the district, even if it is of little significance, individually. This can be a game changer for a long-time resident or commercial tenant.

Rent controls may assist in stabilizing housing and commercial markets. Tactics like these can help to quell redevelopment by giving tenants the opportunity to remain in place for longer periods of time. For residents, this is helpful for those looking to be in the heart of the district but have less affluent means to purchase a home or who have been long time residents facing constructive eviction or rent spikes due to increased demand. Commercial tenants (business owners) may have similar fears in times of economic peaks or expansion. While rent controls can help during these times, other small business incentives can help businesses become more resilient during recessions and economic downturns. For example, a local restaurant may get a tax credit for switching from gas to electric cooktops. Work opportunity tax credits are another easy option for businesses to consider. Many small businesses do not know there are credits available to them, and this is where guilds or city-sponsored organizations, like the Division of LGBTQ Affairs, may be able to assist in the district. Further, the guilds may help to bring a greater variety of businesses to the district creating new opportunities to encourage and enhance the vibrant active spaces that we observe now.

Finally, the most volatile of consequences, for better or worse, will be changes to property values - both explicit and implicit values will be expected to rise. Explicit values (the dollars and cents of it all) will increase due to the limited availability to expand within the district and the increase in implicit value, combined. The implicit value, the value that comes from living/working/experiencing a historic/special interest district will inevitably increase as well, as businesses thrive in the newly rejuvenated environment.

## Policy Recommendations

On the following pages, **Table 2** provides a comprehensive list of resources for the two focus cities and the respective categories under which their recommendations were evaluated. After comparing the recommendations of both cities against current recommendations already present in the reviewed Atlanta plans, I am making further recommendations for Atlanta to consider as it pursues the landmark designation recommended by its 2023 LGBTQ+ Historic Context Statement.

### **To advance district affordability:**

1. Pursue housing support services and funding mechanisms that enable long-time residents to remain in their homes within the district, such as offering right of first refusal, renter protections or even rent controls, if possible.
2. Conduct migration studies and surveys to collect more data on why LGBTQ people leave Midtown.
3. Explore programs to engage LGBTQ residents in civic pride and in serving their community (the LGBTQ district) by hosting LGBTQ focused events throughout the year, encouraging residents to volunteer and participate, like Chicago's International Family Equality Day at the Chicago Children's Museum, or their International LGBTQ+ Film Festival.

**To preserve physical and cultural assets:**

4. Recognize, Support, and enhance vibrant cultural districts: through landmark designation, city resources for maintenance, incentives for preserving LGBTQ historic properties, incentives for colocation within the district, and coordinated urban design/streetscapes.
5. Recognize the social and cultural heritage values and properties of the LGBTQ District, already acknowledged and documented by its own community and local history through landmarking, public art installations and/or interpretive signage.
6. Encourage and support the preservation and adaptive re-use of historic and social heritage neighborhood resources, such as the former Atlanta Eagle (306 Ponce De Leon Avenue) which is currently vacant, and existing structures at the rainbow crosswalks, particularly where Outwrite Bookstore & Coffeehouse was located (991 Piedmont Avenue).
7. Form a historic preservation advocacy focus area under the Mayor's Division of LGBTQ Affairs.
8. Partner with the Atlanta History Center and local educational programming to create exhibits, scavenger hunts, self-guided tours, etc. highlighting LGBTQ history.

**To promote inclusive practices in planning:**

9. Consider an endowment fund for anti-discrimination programming against LGBTQ people, particularly those most vulnerable like the transgender community, older adults, and LGBTQ people of color.
10. Ensure municipal data collection is inclusive of all gender expressions and sexual orientations for more reliable future analyses. Additionally, consider performing audits of U.S. Census data to align with the city's new inclusive response categories.
11. Ensure future planning efforts are inclusive of all family compositions and representative of all gender identities and sexual orientations when collecting demographic information via survey.
12. Ensure LGBTQ-literacy with municipal employees through training programs on interfacing with all gender identities and sexual orientations, particularly for municipal divisions working directly with the public, especially with those in distress. This should be required for police, fire safety, emergency medical providers and other first responders.

**To enhance the public realm:**

13. Consider recommending the inclusions of an LGBTQ+ Community Center in future district planning exercises to support programs that build community and foster connections amongst residents and visitors.
14. Use Public Participation GIS program, or other mechanisms to create a map or resource guide for LGBTQ residents, and visitors (tourists) to locate significant LGBTQ resources, services, and destinations.
15. Explore funding mechanisms to maintain the existing rainbow crosswalk and expand the program throughout the landmark district. This fund should also support future streetscape designs that continue to enhance the district's identity (streetlamps and banner, painted bollards, benches, etc.).
16. Develop a comprehensive cultural tourism plan: including key transportation connections, self-guided itineraries, calendar of events, and booking packages between local businesses.
17. Measure the size, strength, and impact of the cultural sector: through impact assessments on public safety, health, economic activity.

# America's Gayborhoods: A Study in the Cultural Preservation of LGBTQ+ Communities

Laurence Brennan

2023.12.07

Plan Type / City	San Francisco, CA	Chicago, IL	Atlanta, GA	Additional Recommendations to Carry Forward - Atlanta
Comprehensive Plan	San Francisco General Plan	-	Atlanta 2021 Comprehensive Development Plan	-
LGBTQ Historic Context Statement	Citywide Historic Context Statement for LGBTQ History in San Francisco	-	Atlanta LGBTQ+ Historic Context Statement	-
LGBTQ Cultural Context Statement	LGBTQ+ Cultrual Heritage Strategy	Cultrual Plan 2012	-	-
LGBTQ Action/Implementation Plan	-	Healthy Chicago LGBT Community Action Plan	-	-
LGBTQ Needs Assessment	San Francisco Bay Area LGBTQ Community Needs Assessment	2019 Chicago LGBTQ Community Needs Assessment Data Summary	-	-
Design Intervention (LGBTQ Placemaking)	-	Community Streetscape Markers: Context Statement	Rainbow Crosswalk	-
Preventing Gentrification	Eliminate displacement of vulnerable communities and communities of color	Prioritize grant applications that work on affordable housing issues with the LGBTQ community.	Consider creating a Legacy Business program for the City of Atlanta that recognizes and provides assistance to long-standing businesses in the City.	Pursue housing support services and funding mechanisms that enable long-time resident to remain in their homes within the district, such as offering right of first refusal, renter protections or even rent controls, if possible.
	Increase access to affordable housing and workspace for LGBTQ+ artists	-	Incorporate the preservation of historic LGBTQ+ places and spaces into existing and future City of Atlanta master planning efforts.	-
	Increase housing and support services	-	-	-
	Housing supports for all and for aging and older adults, in particular.	-	-	-
Preventing Dilution and Dispersal	-	-	-	Conduct migration studies and surveys to collect more data on why LGBTQ people leave Midtown.
	-	-	-	Explore programs to engage LGBTQ residents in civic pride and in serving their community (the LGBTQ district) by hosting LGBTQ focused events throughout the year, encouraging residents to volunteer and participate, like Chicago's International Family Equality Day at the Chicago Children's Museum, or their International LGBTQ+ Film Festival.
Preserving Buildings, Sites, and Districts	Invest in and expand access to cultural anchors, land, and spaces that are significant to American Indian, Black, Japanese, Filipino, and other communities directly harmed by past discriminatory government actions including redlining, urban renewal, the Indian Relocation Act or WWII Japanese incarceration to redress histories of dispossession, social disruption, and physical displacement.	Recognize, Support, and enhance vibrant cultural districts: through landmark designation, city resources for maintenance, incentives for colocation within the district, and coordinated urban design/streetscapes.	Cultural Mapping: Create a process for community members to indicate areas of importance to them outside of traditional history qualifications, also called Public Participation GIS (PPGIS).	Recognize, Support, and enhance vibrant cultural districts: through landmark designation, city resources for maintenance, incentives for preserving LGBTQ historic properties, incentives for colocation within the district, and coordinated urban design/streetscapes.
	Encourage and support the preservation and adaptive re-use of historic and social heritage neighborhood resources	-	Create new protection options within the City's Historic Preservation Ordinance.	Recognize the social and cultural heritage values and properties of the LGBTQ District, already acknowledged and documented by its own community and local history through landmarking, public art installations and/or interpretive signage.
	Recognize the contributions of the Filipino and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transsexual and Queer (LGBTQ) communities by creating Social Heritage Special Use Districts	-	Undertake a comprehensive city-wide historic resources survey that is targeted at (but not limited to) the included Inventory in this report.	Encourage and support the preservation and adaptive re-use of historic and social heritage neighborhood resources, such as the former Atlanta Eagle (306 Ponce De Leon Avenue) which is currently vacant, and existing structures at the rainbow crosswalks, particularly where Outwrite Bookstore & Coffeehouse was located (991 Piedmont Avenue).
	Recognize the social and cultural heritage values and properties of the LGBTQ District, already acknowledged and documented by its own community and local history.	-	Develop new nomination for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.	Form a historic preservation advocacy focus area under the Mayor's Division of LGBTQ Affairs.
	Support the preservation, recognition, and wellbeing of the neighborhood's cultural heritage resources	-	Amend existing listings in the NHRP in the City of Atlanta to include LGBTQ+ history as an area of significance.	-
	Continue to identify, document and designate LGBTQ historic properties in SF	-	Explore the creation of City of Atlanta Historic or Landmark Districts in areas of the City of Atlanta with high levels of LGBTQ+ significance.	-
	Support historic and new strategies to preserve historic LGBTQ properties, neighborhoods, and culture	-	Establish a prioritized list of significant places & spaces that would be potential candidates for designation as City of Atlanta Landmark Buildings/Sites.	-
	Continue to offer incentives for preserving LGBTQ historic properties	-	-	-
	Support LGBTQ+ cultural districts	-	-	-
	Form a historic preservation advocacy group	-	-	-
	Establish a permanent museum of LGBTQ+ history and culture	-	Develop online StoryMaps highlighting the City's past, historic places, and great stories.	Partner with the Atlanta History Center and local educational programming to create exhibits, scavenger hunts, self-guided tours, etc. highlighting LGBTQ history.
Preserving Oral Histories, Persons and Events, and Practices	Create LGBTQ+ heritage educational programming	-	Community Liaison Program: Create community points of contact for City historic preservation staff to exchange information about historic preservation.	-
	-	-	Incorporate the information and recommendations of this Historic Context Statement work into the initiatives and programs of the City of Atlanta's Future Places Project and use recommendations of the Future Places Project's "Call to Action" to advance the understanding of LGBTQ+ history in the City of Atlanta.	-

# America's Gayborhoods: A Study in the Cultural Preservation of LGBTQ+ Communities

Laurence Brennan

2023.12.07

Plan Type / City	San Francisco, CA	Chicago, IL	Atlanta, GA	Additional Recommendations to Carry Forward - Atlanta
Discouraging Discriminatory Practices	-	Conduct bullying training for school staff and faculty with a focus on how LGBT students are disproportionately impacted and on appropriate interventions in schools to end all forms of bullying.	-	Consider an endowment fund for anti-discrimination programming against LGBTQ people, particularly those most vulnerable like the transgender community, older adults, and LGBTQ people of color.
	-	Empower the LGBT community to address violence by publicizing resources for reporting violence, holding seminars on proven strategies to avoid violent situations, and informing community members of sources of victim assistance.	-	Ensure municipal data collection is inclusive of all gender expressions and sexual orientations for more reliable future analyses. Additionally, consider performing audits of U.S. Census data to align with the city's new inclusive response categories.
	-	Include sexual orientation and gender identity indicators on CDPH's impending citywide community health survey, and other data collection instruments, in an effort to better identify health disparities among the LGBT community.	-	Ensure future planning efforts are inclusive of all family compositions and representative of all gender identities and sexual orientations when collecting demographic information via survey.
	-	Prioritize grant applications that highlight strategies to build community safety within the LGBTQ community	-	-
	-	Consider developing a specific LGBTQ safe space and violence prevention platform as one of the key priority areas for the Fund.	-	-
Challenging Heteronormative Concepts	LGBTQ-competent providers and services	Provide educational information to parents regarding the creation of healthy, supportive home environments for children with alternative sexual orientation or gender expression.	-	Ensure LGBTQ-literacy with municipal employees through training programs on interfacing with all gender identities and sexual orientations, particularly for municipal divisions working directly with the public, especially with those in distress. This should be required for police, fire safety, emergency medical providers and other first responders.
	-	Prioritize organizations, programs and strategies that support increasing accessibility to human and government services.	-	
Distinguishing LGBTQ Places	Develop centers to serve an identifiable neighborhood.	Celebrate every neighborhood's cultural expression and heritage: through interpretive signage, interactive guides (virtual or real) and tours (guided, or self-guided).	Consider developing an LGBTQ+ history Interpretive Plan for the City of Atlanta (taking into account extensive community engagement and discussion) that would highlight LGBTQ+ places and spaces through interpretive signage.	Consider recommending the inclusions of an LGBTQ+ Community Center in future district planning exercises to support programs that build community and foster connections amongst residents and visitors.
	Elevate expression of cultural identities through the design of active and engaging neighborhood buildings and spaces.	Consider developing a project under the Fund where a graduate student, intern or volunteer uses the diverse resources and program information shared by needs assessment respondents to develop an online resource guide for LGBTQ community members.	-	Use Public Participation GIS program, or other mechanisms to create a map or resource guide for LGBTQ residents, and visitors (tourists) to locate significant LGBTQ resources, services, and destinations.
	Shape urban design policy, standards, and guidelines to enable cultural and identity expression, advance architectural creativity and durability, and foster neighborhood belonging.	The design of the marker(s) must employ the use of symbolism or imagery that is significant and/or reflects a certain social, ethnic, or cultural group. The work does not only recognize a geographic place within the city (street, neighborhood, or community area).	-	Explore funding mechanisms to maintain the existing rainbow crosswalk and expand the program throughout the landmark district. This fund should also support future streetscape designs that continue to enhance the district's identity (streetlamps and banner, painted bollards, benches, etc.)
	Support cultural uses, activities, and architecture that sustain San Francisco's diverse cultural heritage.	The community marker(s) must be visible from the public-right-of-way.	-	-
	Prioritize maintenance and support funding for cultural and service facilities and events such as street fairs that support the LGBTQ community	The marker(s) is a work of original art and/or architectural designed by an artist or architect. It is not a stock piece, or an element comprised of prefabricated components.	-	-
	Develop Programs for interpretation and education	-	-	-
	Enhance community resource hubs	-	-	-
	Programming to build community and foster connections	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-
Business & Finance	Increase business and entrepreneur support	Grow and diversify sources and methods of support.	-	Develop a comprehensive cultural tourism plan: including key transportation connections, self-guided itineraries, calendar of events, and booking packages between local businesses.
	-	Tax incentives for creative industry start-ups and job creation activities.	-	Measure the size, strength, and impact of the cultural sector: through impact assessments on public safety, health, economic activity.
	-	Microfinancing programs for artists and creative industries.	-	-
	-	Incubation of creative start-ups (incentives, coordinated training, shared services, and networking opportunities).	-	-
	-	Fund Neighborhood cultural planning: through grants and endowments.	-	-
	-	Measure the size, strength, and impact of the cultural sector.	-	-
	-	Develop a comprehensive cultural tourism plan.	-	-
	-	Advocate for funding strategies among philanthropic, private, and public sectors that respond to the cultural sector's operating realities.	-	-

Table 2 – Recommendation comparison table for focus cities: Chicago, IL, San Francisco, CA, Atlanta, GA.

## Conclusion

I encountered several hurdles in conducting this research. It was difficult to remain within 'scope' as there are so many layers to studying people, in general, but particularly people who have been historically marginalized, displaced, and omitted from previous histories. Beyond maintaining within this field of vision, I faced many limitations in available data relevant to this study.

Generally, and as mentioned earlier, there is a severe lack of reliable, holistic data due to improper collection, editing, categorization and omission of self-reported mechanisms, leading to misrepresentations of gender identity and sexual orientation for nearly the past century. At the municipal level, there is more promising movement toward inclusivity, but at the federal level, it may be a long-time coming. In addition, there is a severe lack of history and narratives from queer communities of color, the transgender community, and other marginalized groups within the LGBTQ+ sphere. "Graves and Watson recommend further original research on, and documentation of properties associated with LGBTQ people of color, lesbians, and people who identify as transgender or bisexual" (Graves & Watson, 2016, p 361).

Other areas for potential research based on this field might be successful business districts that have municipal resources focused to operational assistance, successful cultural preservation and urban design initiatives related to other communities, such as Little Italy or Chinatowns, and initiatives that celebrate cultural heritage based on race or ethnicity, such as the Latin and Asian American communities in Doraville GA, or the Black Chicago Heritage Initiative.

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