



# LGBTQIA+ HISTORIC CONTEXT STUDY

PROJECT SUMMARY



Raleigh  
Planning

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MARCH 2025

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# Project Overview

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In 2019, the City introduced the Raleigh LGBTQIA+ Historic Context Study. The project identifies, contextualizes, and documents sites important to Raleigh's LGBTQIA+ history. This project is the first of its kind in the state. It is a first step and not a comprehensive history of Raleigh's LGBTQIA+ communities.



# Project Highlights

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# Study Area

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This citywide project begins in the early 20th century. To maximize research results, the consultant focused on the 1970s to the early 1990s. This time frame covers the start of the gay liberation movement through the end of the AIDS crisis. The study area covers the city limits of this period. The report tried to learn about many types of sites and the different people they served. This approach helps tell a fuller story of Raleigh's LGBTQIA+ communities.



# Site Types

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**Adult Bookstore/Cruising Spot**



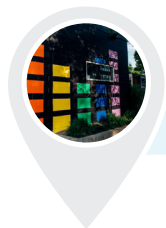
**Political-Related Site**



**Allied Business**



**Private Residence**



**Bar/Club**



**Professional Services**



**Healthcare**



**Recreation**



**Organization**



**Religious Institution**

# Work Scope

The project used community meetings, archival research, oral history interviews, and online surveys. These methods helped to learn about important historic places to the LGBTQIA+ community. The report also recommends future actions, partnerships, and research topics. Next steps will explore and recognize more LGBTQIA+ historic places in the city.



## Immoral Conduct Cited at Tavern

By LAURIE HOLDER JR.

A downtown Raleigh taproom described by police as a "hangout for homosexuals and lesbians" has lost its State permit to sell beer.

The State Board of Alcoholic Control voted unanimously Tuesday to revoke the beer license held by Macon Marshall Jefferys, manager of The Cardinal Room on West Martin Street.

Charges of allowing "immoral and improper language, conduct and practices" were lodged by the board against Jefferys after two ABC officers visited the Cardinal Room and later testified they found men kissing and women dressed up like males.

Board members, who had read a written account of a hearing held on the charge before coming to the meeting, did not discuss the case when they voted.

Hearing Officer Henry Newton, who brought up the case, said the hearing record "speaks for itself."

Charles Dandlake, another hearing officer, conducted the hearing for Jefferys April 22 and wrote this account of testimony from several witnesses:

ABC Officers D. S. Payne and Richard W. Winstead went to the Cardinal Room on March 12 after the board got "many complaints" about the place.

As soon as they entered they saw one man "wearing lipstick and rouge and other makeup," watched two other males "gazing into each other's eyes and then slowly going together and kissing" and observed women in men's clothes.

The officers noted that "the loving and kissing and petting . . . intensified greatly" from 8:15 to 9:30 p.m. Eventually, one man who identified himself as a California movie producer "put his arms around Officer Winstead's neck and then threw his legs around his waist and told Winstead: 'You're mine, sweetheart.'"

Another man identifying himself as a student at N. C. State University told Payne and Winstead that "all of the sweet far itself."

See TAVERN, Page Two



# Project Deliverables

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**5 community meetings**

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**Historic context report**

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**20 site evaluations with photos**

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**List of Raleigh LGBTQIA+ identified places**

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**8 oral history interviews**

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# Goals

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- 01 Identify places and sites important to Raleigh's LGBTQIA+ history.**

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- 02 Write a historic overview of Raleigh's LGBTQIA+ communities. Help contextualize these places within the city's bigger story.**

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- 03 Provide a framework to evaluate places for local landmark eligibility.**

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- 04 Propose alternative forms of non-regulatory recognition. This future program will be useful for demolished places and defunct locations/businesses. It can also be used when places are not eligible for landmarking or when property owner interest is low.**

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- 05 Make recommendations for future actions, programs, and research. Expand our public knowledge and celebration of Raleigh's LGBTQIA+ historic places.**

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# Challenges

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The COVID-19 pandemic delayed the project. The shutdown limited outreach options and access to archival collections.

Changing terminology and coded language made it hard to use search terms to find LGBTQIA+ spaces.

To protect people, many historic LGBTQIA+ spaces were secretive. When early LGBTQIA+ spaces appear in writing, they are usually part of a sensational new story. Places were rarely documented in more typical circumstances.

Much of Raleigh's LGBTQIA+ history is not written down or visible on the outside of a building. To learn about historic places, the project relied heavily on public participation.

Living as an open member of the LGBTQIA+ community is still not an option for many people. This fact may have limited engagement and information sharing with a public project.

Documenting spaces tied to groups beyond white men was difficult. This reflects larger societal patterns and influences within the LGBTQIA+ community.

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# Community Input

Since 2019, the city hosted one virtual and four in-person meetings. At each meeting, staff and the consultant shared project details and updates. The project team also heard feedback and answered questions from the public. They gathered information needed to fill knowledge gaps in some areas of the project.

The project team conducted five online surveys. Two surveys collected location-based general input about important LGBTQIA+ spaces in Raleigh. Targeted questions asked about places related to women, African Americans, and transgender people. An anonymous survey option allowed residents to share more openly about their experiences. The online tool provided an easier way for people who now live somewhere else to engage. Later surveys asked the public to rank support of possible ways to recognize places without designating them. Surveys also asked the public to prioritize their interest in some of the identified LGBTQIA+ sites. The results helped the project team choose 20 places for extra research. The consultant also made an evaluation for potential landmark eligibility.



**Raleigh LGBTQIA+ Historic Context Study**

Take the historic places survey:  
[www.publicinput.com/Y0234](http://www.publicinput.com/Y0234)

Learn more at the project page:  
[www.bit.ly/3O3OuBV](http://www.bit.ly/3O3OuBV)

 Raleigh

Contact city preservation staff: [historicpreservation@raleighnc.gov](mailto:historicpreservation@raleighnc.gov) or 919-832-7238



# Historic Context

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## Pre-1970s: Raleigh Before the Gay Liberation Movement

Before the 1970s, there were almost no safe spaces for the LGBTQIA+ community. These identities were not publicly accepted in any form. The project explores the history of LGBTQIA+ social spaces in Raleigh, beginning in the mid-20th century. It details how non-heterosexual individuals formed community in a largely heteronormative society. This documentation effort was most successful for spaces serving gay white men. The environment was often segregated by race, gender and sexuality.

The report investigates key venues such as the Kitty Hawk Tavern and the Ex-Log Cabin. Here, LGBTQIA+ people could meet discreetly. Downtown establishments such as hotel bars provided some anonymity. These transient mixed spaces hosted soldiers, traveling salesmen, politicians, and other visitors. The Kitty Hawk Tavern, inside the Sir Walter Raleigh Hotel, provided a secluded environment for socializing. Other venues like the Ex-Log Cabin became known for LGBTQIA+ activity despite legal challenges. The growing presence of these spaces led to increased surveillance and police crackdowns. Enforcement targeted places where same-sex encounters occurred.

The drag scene began to flourish as a form of resistance and self-expression. This practice contributed to the broader LGBTQIA+ underground culture over time. These early spaces represented both the resilience and the need for secrecy within the LGBTQIA+ community in Raleigh during this era.



## Pre-1970s: Sir Walter Raleigh Hotel

### Address

400 Fayetteville St.

### Build Date

1924

### LGBTQIA+ Years

ca. 1940-1979

### Significance

The Sir Walter Raleigh Hotel housed two bars important in Raleigh's gay culture. This included the Kitty Hawk Tavern of the 1940s-1960s and the Admiral's Galley of the 1970s. The Kitty Hawk was not a gay bar, but rather a bar where gay and bisexual men met among the crowd. The Admiral's Galley was a secret bar in the basement of the hotel frequented by gay men in the 1970s. According to oral histories, a men's bathroom on site was also used as a tea-room for discrete sexual encounters.

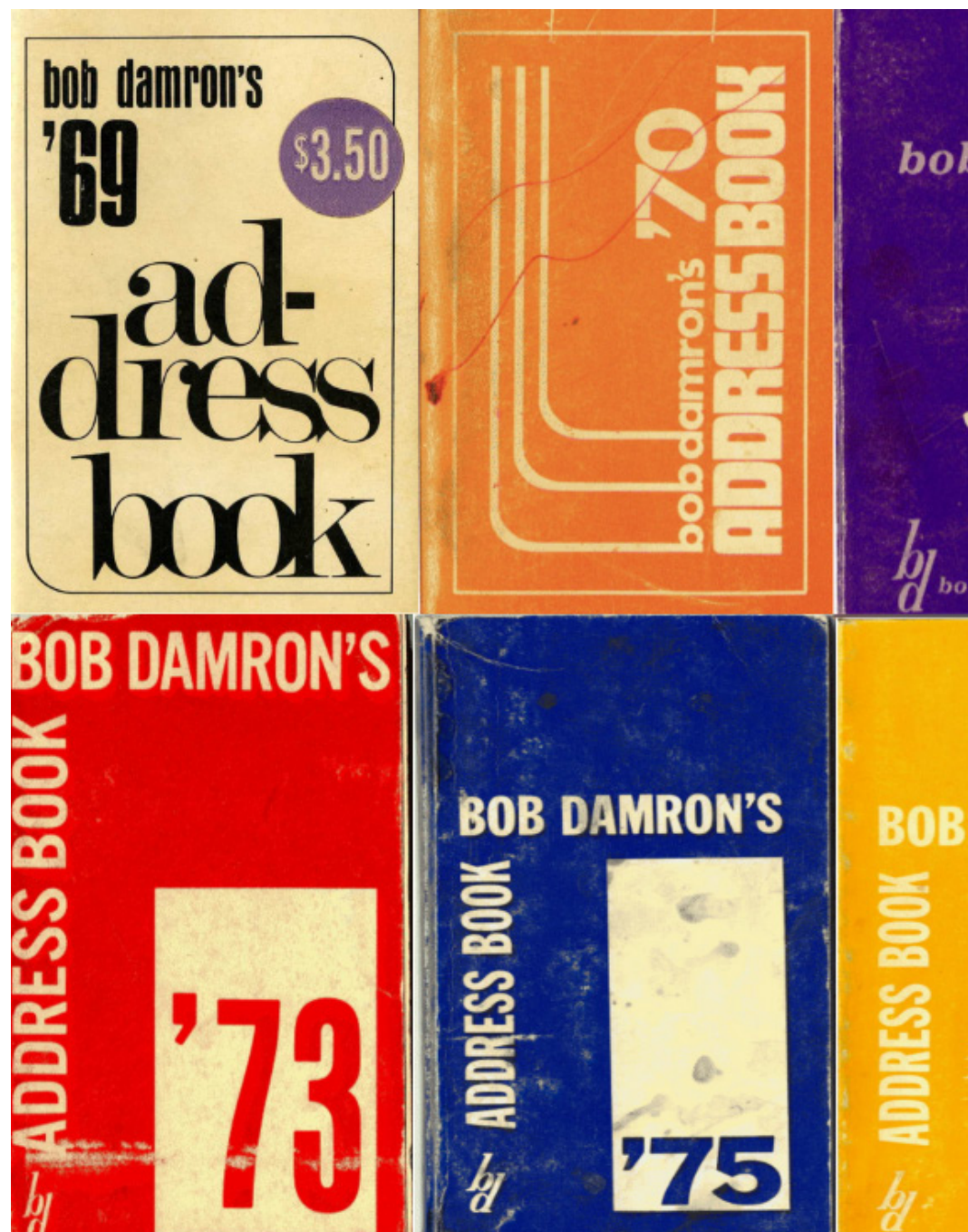


## 1970s: Leaning into Liberation

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The 1970s marked a pivotal time for the LGBTQIA+ community in Raleigh. Activists and individuals began organizing for visibility, civil rights, and support. Key figures founded groups seeking change, including the Triangle Gay Alliance (TGA). They played a major role in advocating for gay rights. These groups provided a safe space for individuals facing discrimination. Other groups, like the Women's Coffeehouse and St. John's Metropolitan Community Church (MCC), created inclusive spaces for lesbians, feminists, and LGBTQIA+ individuals.

Many of Raleigh's LGBTQIA+ gathering spaces remained self-segregated by race and gender. During this time, Raleigh displayed a conspicuous pattern of early church support. The backing spanned across multiple congregations in various degrees. This level of religious allyship was particularly uncommon in the Southeast region.



## 1970s: (former) Women's Culture Collective Coffeehouse

### Address

119 Hawthorne Rd.

### Build Date

1917

### LGBTQIA+ Years

ca. 1978-1984

### Significance

This bungalow was the meeting location of the Women's Culture Collective Coffeehouse. This was a lesbian-focused group in the first years of the gay liberation movement. Research has identified few places associated with lesbians in Raleigh. In the period, the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Raleigh (UUFR) owned the house. They made the space available to the collective. This project also evaluated the UUFR campus on Wade Avenue for association with other LGBTQIA+ focused groups.

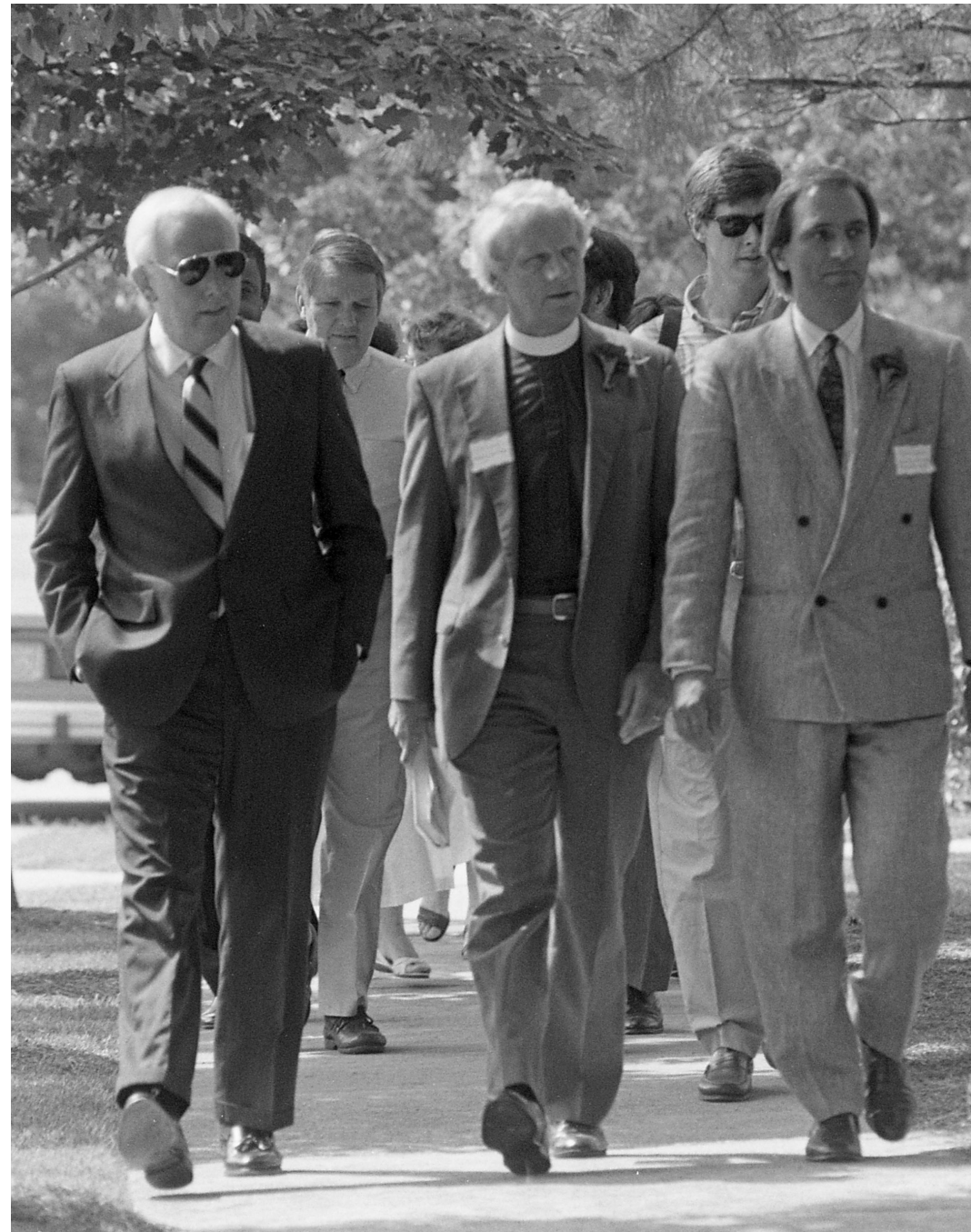


## 1980s: Politics and Pushbacks, Advocacy and Aids

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In the 1980s, Raleigh saw major strides in LGBTQIA+ advocacy. A growing network of activists and support systems raised awareness and pushed for political change. In 1980, their work led the Democratic Party of Wake County to pass a resolution calling for legal protections for homosexuals and lesbians. This marked a major milestone in the city's political landscape. Conservative groups posed strong opposition, including protests during the 1984 elections. Despite this, activists pushed for the repeal of discriminatory laws. Although political support was limited, their efforts laid the groundwork for future progress.

Organizations like the Gay & Lesbian Helpline of Wake County and A Safer Place Youth Network (ASPN) were crucial during this time. They offered resources and safe spaces for LGBTQIA+ youth to meet. People could talk openly and prioritize mental health, creating a vital support network in the community.





## 1980s: (former) Gay & Lesbian Helpline of Wake County

### Address

608 W. Johnson St.

### Build Date

1956

### LGBTQIA+ Years

1991-ca. 2007

### Significance

The small office building at 608 W. Johnson St. is the Glenwood South Executive Office Suites. The building reportedly housed the Gay & Lesbian Helpline of Wake County. The dates that the helpline located in this building have not been verified.



# 1990s: Advocacy Work Continues

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In the 1990s, Raleigh's LGBTQIA+ community was deeply impacted by the rise in AIDS cases. The epidemic led to the formation of advocacy groups like the N.C. AIDS Service Coalition. Organizations like Husted House rose to support those affected. Fundraising events like the Crape Myrtle Festival grew in scale to support AIDS services. Their efforts symbolized community resilience.

Raleigh also hosted the 1990 Southeastern Conference for Lesbians and Gay Men. Tracks focused on issues like AIDS awareness and the repeal of sodomy laws. The city saw the rise of LGBTQIA+ businesses. Place like White Rabbit Books and local gay clubs became community hubs. This decade marked a period of greater visibility within Raleigh's LGBTQIA+ community.



# 1990s Site Feature: Legends Nightclub

## Address

330 W. Hargett St.

## Build Date

1958

## LGBTQIA+ Years

1991-present

## Significance

Legends Nightclub is a long-running and much-loved Raleigh LGBTQIA+ club complex. Legends and another nightclub, FLEX, are the two most commonly cited by this project's survey respondents. They are significant social spaces associated with the LGBTQIA+ community. This is due in part to the longevity of both bars. (The original location of FLEX was also evaluated as part of this project. Legends will move later this year.) Legends also has significant connections to the history of drag performance in Raleigh.



# 20 Site Evaluations

Of over **250 properties identified** during the project, **20 sites received more documentation.** The public helped choose the sites by voting in a series of online surveys. The project team selected the sites for a diversity of race and gender, decade, and site type. The evaluations only included buildings thought to still be standing.

Each entry describes the place's historic importance and physical condition. The consultant photographed each property. They also determined whether each site is eligible to become a local historic landmark. Of the 20 sites, one is already a landmark and three are not eligible due to being heavily altered or demolished. The consultant recommended the remaining 16 places for likely landmark eligibility.

## Rank your top 5 historic LGBTQIA+ places for **Political-Related Site**.

Drag and drop your top 5 places to order them.

Raleigh Memorial Auditorium - Historic Address: 2 E. South St. - 1970s	Avg. Rank: 1.80	38%
City Council Chambers - Historic Address: 222 W. Hargett St. - 1980s	Avg. Rank: 2.00	23%
North Carolina Legislative Building - Historic Address: 16 W. Jones St. - 1990s	Avg. Rank: 2.00	8%
Moore Square - Historic Address: 201 S. Blount St. - 1990s	Avg. Rank: 2.14	54%
Boyer Hall, St. Augustine's College - Historic Address: 1315 Oakwood Ave. - 1980s	Avg. Rank: 2.25	31%
National Organization for Women, NC - Historic Address: 204 N. Person St., Room 202 - 1980s	Avg. Rank: 2.40	38%
Broughton High School - Historic Address: 723 St. Marys St. - 1980s	Avg. Rank: 2.50	15%
Enloe High School - Historic Address: 128 Clarendon Cres. - 1990s	Avg. Rank: 2.50	15%
Reynolds Coliseum - Historic Address: 2411 Dunn Ave. - 1980s	Avg. Rank: 2.67	23%
State Capitol Grounds - Historic Address: 1 E. Edenton St. - 1980s	Avg. Rank: 2.86	54%
Radisson Plaza Hotel / Raleigh Plaza Hotel - Historic Address: 420 Fayetteville St. - 1980s	Avg. Rank: 3.00	15%
Wake County Superior Court - Historic Address: 300 S. Salisbury St. - 1990s	Avg. Rank: 3.50	15%
National Organization for Women, Raleigh - Historic Address: 111 Ridgewood Dr., #1401 - 1980s	Avg. Rank: 4.00	38%
Archdale Building Grounds - Historic Address: 512 N. Salisbury St. - 1980s		0%

## Rank your top 5 historic LGBTQIA+ places for **Recreation**.

Drag and drop your top 5 places to order them.

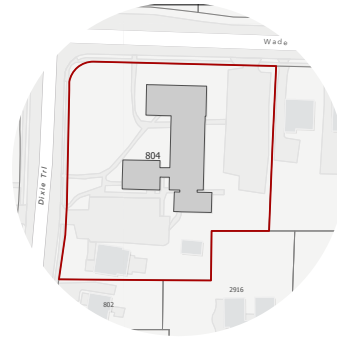
Holshouser Building, NC State Fairgrounds - Historic Address: 4900 Hillsborough St. - 1990s	Avg. Rank: 1.00	6%
Rialto Theater - Historic Address: 1620 Glenwood Ave. - 1970s	Avg. Rank: 1.70	63%
Raleigh Little Theatre - Historic Address: 301 Pogue St. - 1990s	Avg. Rank: 1.89	56%
Studio I & II Drafthouse Theater - Historic Address: 2526 Hillsborough St. - 1990s	Avg. Rank: 2.00	6%
Halifax Park; Halifax Community Center - Historic Address: 1023 Halifax St. - 1990s	Avg. Rank: 2.25	25%
Park Studio Theatre / Theatre Raleigh / Theatre in the Park - Historic Address: 107 Pullen Rd. - 1980s	Avg. Rank: 2.50	13%
J.C. Raulston Arboretum - Historic Address: 4415 Beryl Rd. - 1980s	Avg. Rank: 2.86	44%
William B. Umstead State Park - Historic Address: 8801 Glenwood Ave. - 1980s	Avg. Rank: 3.00	44%
NCSU Stewart Theatre - Historic Address: 2610 Cates Ave. - 1990s	Avg. Rank: 3.00	13%
Triangle Sports Alliance - Historic Address: 814 Dixie Trl. - 1990s	Avg. Rank: 3.00	13%
Eliza Battle Pittman Auditorium, St. Mary's School - Historic Address: 900 Hillsborough St. - 1980s	Avg. Rank: 3.00	6%
Studio One Theatre - Historic Address: 2420 Hillsborough St. - 1980s	Avg. Rank: 4.67	19%
NCSU Thompson Theatre - Historic Address: 2241 Dunn Ave. - 1990s	Avg. Rank: 5.00	6%
NCSU Talley Student Center Annex Cinema (Witherspoon Cinema) - Historic Address: 2810 Cates Ave. - 1990s		0%

Closed to responses | 16 Responses

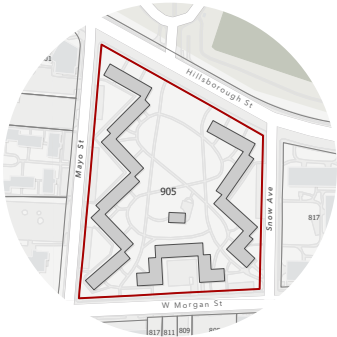
# 20 Site Evaluations



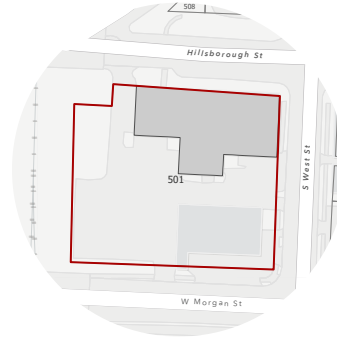
(former) **Androgyny Center**  
220 N. Boylan Ave.



**Community United Church of Christ (UCC)**  
814 Dixie Trl.



**Cameron Court Apartments (Queen's Court)**  
905 Hillsborough St.



(former) **FLEX Nightclub**  
2 S. West St.

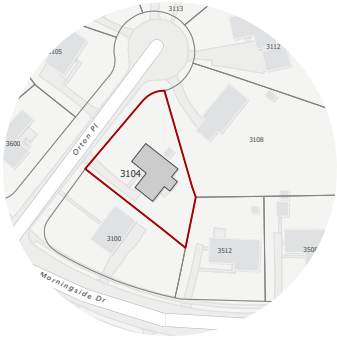


(former) **Capital Corral**  
(former Queen Bee)  
313 W. Hargett St.

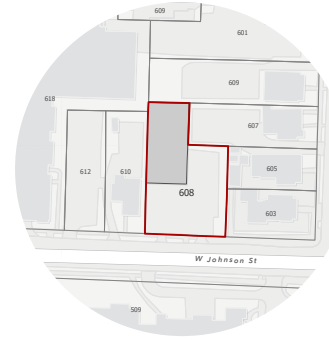


(former) **Gay & Lesbian Helpline of Wake County**  
608 W. Johnson St.

# 20 Site Evaluations



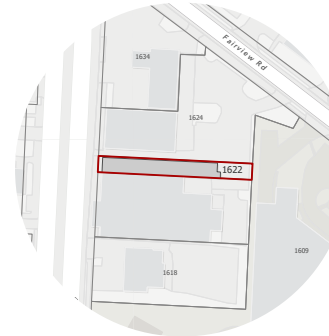
(former) **Hustead House**  
3104 Orton Pl.



(former) **Gay and Lesbian Christian Alliance, Talley Student Center**  
2610 Cates Ave.



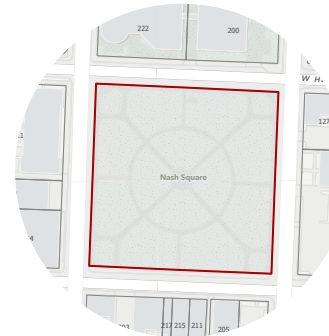
(former) **J.C. Raulston House**  
318 E. Davie St.



(former) **The Mousetrap / Glenwood Park / 1622**  
1622 Glenwood Ave.

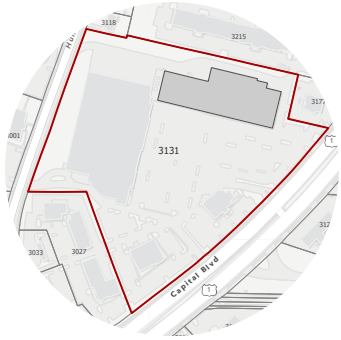


**Legends Nightclub**  
330 W. Hargett St.

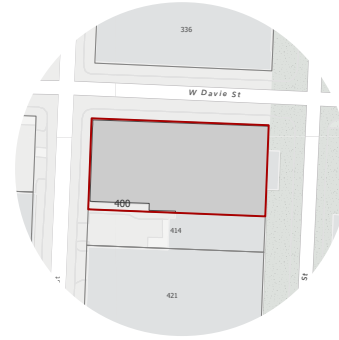


**Nash Square**  
200 S. McDowell St.

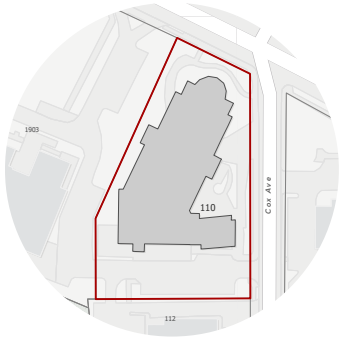
# 20 Site Evaluations



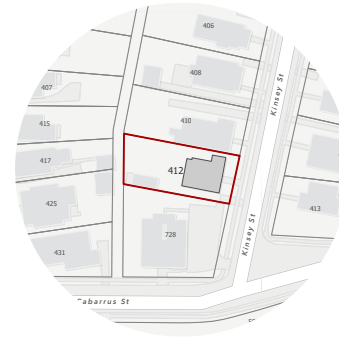
(former) **Power Company**  
**(building demolished)**  
3151 Capital Blvd.



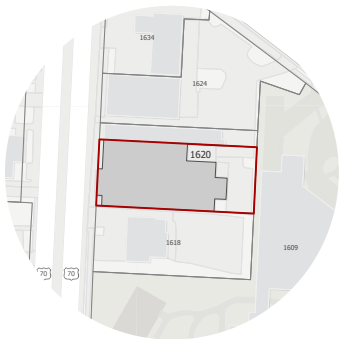
**Sir Walter Raleigh Hotel**  
**(Kitty Hawk Tavern,  
Admiral's Galley)**  
400 Fayetteville St.



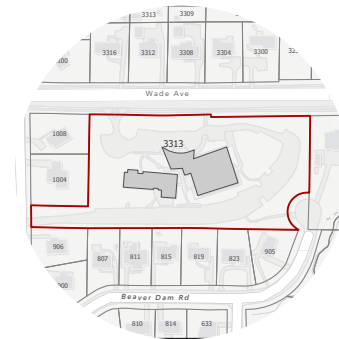
**Pullen Memorial Baptist  
Church**  
1801 Hillsborough St.



(former) **Triangle Gay  
Alliance**  
412 Kinsey St.



**Rialto Theater**  
1620 Glenwood Ave.



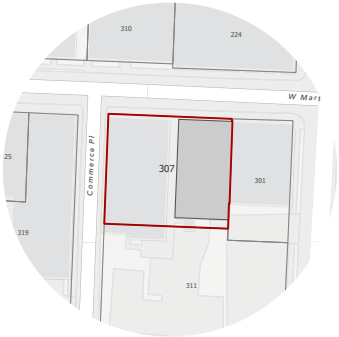
**Unitarian Universalist  
Fellowship of Raleigh**  
3313 Wade Ave.

# 20 Site Evaluations

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(former) **Women's Culture  
Collective Coffeehouse**  
119 Hawthorne Rd.



(former) **White Rabbit  
Books & Things / The Front  
Page production office**  
309 W. Martin St.





# Non-Regulatory Recognition

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In Raleigh, historic designation is an honor, but it may not be a good fit for all places. Local designation requires regulating a building's appearance by law. Federal designation requires a building to have "architectural integrity." This means the appearance cannot have changed very much or be unrecognizable to people who used the space during its most impactful period. Neither program addresses places that are already gone. Owner support is usually expected as well.

**The report offers ideas for new non-regulatory programs to celebrate important cultural places. No such programs currently exist in Raleigh. Ranked in order of public survey support, ideas include:**

## **Historic Markers**

A sample program exists in Winston-Salem. This provides visual documentation of history and a destination for people to visit. Depending on the materials, size, and number of markers chosen, a program could be very expensive to implement.

## **Digital Mapping**

A digital map is an online accessible site. Users can search to view where places are located. Entries can include a written history, photographs, and dates. The map could be researched by a professional, students, or crowd sourced. Implementation could pair this tool with a physical marker on site. An example is a plaque with a QR code that links the viewer to more information.

## **Oral History Program**

An oral history program is crucial to document the experiences of LGBTQIA+ individuals in Raleigh. It could help address the lack of primary source material about LGBTQIA+ life in the 20th century. This program would provide a deeper understanding of the places connected to the lives and work of LGBTQIA+ people. This is particularly true for those who are not cisgender, LGBTQIA+ people of color, and lesbians. Implementing this program is an urgent need. The effort will preserve and expand knowledge about these important histories.

## **Cultural Districts or Heritage Communities**

The city's Comprehensive Plan mentions this inactive program. The concept showcases Raleigh's cultural importance through districts and heritage trails. Greensboro has an example Heritage Communities program. It would recognize the history of neighborhoods without adding regulations or historic status. Public arts projects could enhance the district's sense of place and historical impact. An official process is needed to implement the program.

## **Legacy Business Program**

This program could recognize the role LGBTQIA+ allied businesses have played in shaping the city's culture and economy. Some programs limit participation to businesses that have existed in a city for more than 25 years. The program could include special recognition for older businesses as a marketing tool. A sample program exists in San Antonio, Texas.

## **Printed Guidebook**

This book would be available to buy. The book would describe the city's LGBTQIA+ history and places. There are many possible ways to customize a guidebook. It could be thematic or chronological. Several examples exist across the country.

# Top Recommendations

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The project consultant recommended many ideas to continue the work of this project. The top suggestions are:



## **Prioritize both historic marker and digital mapping**

as the best first steps to recognize and interpret LGBTQIA+ places identified in this study. Digital platforms can share more details than a physical marker. They can display photos, play oral history recordings, and link to historical records or maps. The map can provide easy and intuitive public access to geo-located information. This includes information about LGBTQIA+ historic places that no longer exist.



## **Pair the digital mapping tool with physical plaques**

on buildings or in the right-of-way. These markers can have a QR code linking the viewer to more information online. They also provide a visual cue to passersby that a location is of interest. Digital interpretive tools tell more thematic stories of Raleigh's LGBTQIA+ historic places.



## **Conduct more oral histories.**

Conduct robust oral history sessions to engage with under-documented LGBTQIA+ communities. Focus on people who are not cisgender or who are lesbian, bisexual, or LGBTQIA+ people of color. Better understand and document the places connected to these groups. Possible program sponsors include the RHDC, City of Raleigh Museum, Raleigh Arts, or a local university partner. The story collection could be accessible to the public in a digital repository. People could hear and share recordings about Raleigh's LGBTQIA+ historic places and experiences.



## Other Recommendations

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1. Contact owners of properties evaluated by this project for landmark eligibility. This will help identify candidates for historic designation.
2. Establish an LGBTQIA+ History Steering or Advisory Committee. The group can assist with future research projects and provide an opportunity for public involvement.
3. Recognize LGBTQIA+ history connected with City property.
4. Explore other types of City-sponsored LGBTQIA+ research and interpretation. This may go beyond the place-based work of the Historic Preservation Unit.
5. Facilitate public-private partnerships like collaborating on university student projects.
6. Commission or assist in more historical research. The full report document suggests several topics and themes.
7. Prepare a context statement in the future for the first quarter of the 21st century.
8. Complete preliminary documentation of all sites identified during the project, including current photos.
9. Continue to compile a list of people who have or may make significant contributions to Raleigh's LGBTQIA+ history. Consider future research projects to record and tell their individual stories.



Raleigh  
Planning

[raleighnc.gov](http://raleighnc.gov)

search: LGBTQIA+