

Mapping the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Community in Atlanta

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Abstract

In 1982, Manuel Castells and Karen Murphy famously declared that “beautiful San Francisco has become the most prominent urban setting for the expression of gay culture”, citing an estimated 17% of the City’s population identifying as gay to be persuasive evidence (Castells & Murphy, 1982). San Francisco was cited as being the nation’s sole example of a lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community “being able to build up autonomous social institutions and a political organization powerful enough” to significantly influence local governance (Castells & Murphy, 1982). Castells and Murphy extolled San Francisco as being an example from which urban researchers and planners could learn “useful lessons about the interaction between city forms and cultural change” (Castells & Murphy, 1982).

Three decades later, the City of Atlanta has emerged as the San Francisco of the South. In San Francisco, the manner in which the gay and lesbian community relates to its environment has been researched extensively. Very little such research exists for the City of Atlanta. This paper seeks to remedy that issue by addressing how the gay and lesbian community in Atlanta has chosen to orient itself to its urban environment. The author begins by documenting the evolution of the gay and lesbian community within the city over time. The paper then identifies three large veins of academic research into urban gay and lesbian concentrations – and then unifies two in an examination of the spatial distribution of the LGBT population in Atlanta. This is done by mapping the gay and lesbian community’s public face (the location of widely known gay and lesbian residences, businesses and service) and geographically locating its more private aspects

(same-sex partners identified in the Census and American Community Survey). The paper concludes with an examination of how city planning policies and practices either help or hinder the process of building such a diverse community.

Introduction

Fortune Magazine made headlines in 2008 when it declared gay bars – along with record stores, crop dusting, and telemarketing – to be one of ten businesses in the United States that were “facing extinction”. The story cites the closure of several high-profile gay bars in the former gay metropolises of New York, Los Angeles and San Francisco as proof that “Generation X people and Generation Y people are less concerned about gay-exclusive socialization, and they’re more interested in a more-diverse environment” (Vanek-Smith, 2008). Proof for this assessment is anecdotal at best. Indeed, many commentators on the story pushed back – claiming that the demand for areas of gay-socialization still existed in many cities outside “New York and Los Angeles” (ibid).

During the past twenty years, the importance of the classically defined “meccas” of LGBT culture in America – New York, San Francisco and Los Angeles – have diminished as the more general trends in U.S. population have gravitated to the Sun Belt. In terms of straight population figures – the cities with the largest gay populations still mirror the largest cities in the U.S. (New York, Los Angeles, Chicago) (Gates, 2006). However, the national significance of a city’s LGBT community is also determined by the level of influence that community may exert over its local community as a whole. What may constitute that “influence” is perhaps best described by Manuel Castells and Karen Murphy in their description of 1970s San Francisco, where the

LGBT community's role in the City's trend of increased housing renovation (gentrification), its general visibility to the larger population (concentrations of LGBT-oriented businesses and "vital street celebrations, feasts, and public events"), and political influence ("election of gay supervisors Harvey Milk and Harry Britt") are all emphasized as signs of influence (Castells & Murphy, 1982). To be certain, large concentrations of LGBT populations as a percentage of total population are also significant in determining to what degree the community can exert any "influence" over the larger city as a whole. As a percentage of total population, San Francisco, Seattle and Atlanta have the largest LGBT populations among at 15.4%, 12.9% and 12.8% respectively (Gates, 2006).ⁱ

The fact that 12.8% of Atlanta's population identifies as LGBT puts it ahead of such historically important "gay meccas" as New York and Los Angeles and on par with the likes of that most esteemed "gay capital" – San Francisco. The similar population trends result in similar demands for areas of "gay-specific socialization". Supporting the argument that Atlanta has reached a new level of status within the national gay community, is *The Advocate Magazine's* recent crowning of the city as "the gayest in the country" (Albo, 2010). If Fortune Magazine's assertion that gay and lesbian bars and clubs are no longer important within the LGBT community as sites of socialization, then the proof should bear out in the spatial landscape of "America's gayest city". The facts, however, do not support such a thesis. In fact, the three most significant definitions of gay "space" – areas of socialization (bars, clubs, etc.), residential centers, and areas of activism – have all increased in Atlanta during the past twenty years. This paper will present data which shows that such an expansion is occurring, and examine how city planning policies and practices can facilitate such a process.

Literature Review

In this neighborhood type, we can expect the 11 factors Castells identified as correlating with “spatial areas of significant gay population” in San Francisco to be true here as well. In comparison to other neighborhoods in the Atlanta area, these factors would include: 1) a smaller percentage of resident population under the age of 18; 2) a smaller percentage of housing units that are owner occupied; 3) a higher percentage of high school graduates among residents aged 25 and over; 4) cheaper rents on average; 5) higher median housing values; 6) slightly smaller median family incomes; 7) a smaller percentage of “blue collar” employees among residents; 8) a significantly smaller percentage of African-Americans in neighborhood population; 9) increased percentage of “housing dilapidation”; 10) increased percentage of “housing decay”; and 10) a slightly smaller percentage of the total population that is over the age of 65 (Castells & Murphy, 1982).

Recent research into the spatialization of gay communities has begun to focus on the spatial orientations of either gay communities with small populations in cities not known for large numbers of sexual minorities or on the social organization of large gay populations in large U.S. cities (Knopp 1995; Kenney 2001). There is, however, one area of the country conspicuously lacking in organized research – despite the historical prominence of that region to its (private) gay communities and the subsequent significant growth in organized, publicly visible gay communities in that area: the South. Most research into gay communities within the United States has “primarily [been] a story of identity and culture formation in the cities...ignor[ing] the experiences of women and men of the South – a section that more slowly evolved from a rural, agrarian economy to an urban, industrial one” (Howard 1997).

This paper seeks to add a significant chapter to the understanding of the LGBT community of Atlanta. This will be done by examining the spatial organization of the gay community as it exists in Atlanta. The spatial organization of gay residences and businesses will be documented from 1990 to 2011.

Gay and lesbian academic research is historically variable. However, a central focus has been the processes behind the geographical concentrations of sexual minorities within the urban environment. Another significant portion of research has focused on understanding the power dynamics and identity politics that accompany such concentration. There are three veins of research that focus significantly on issues related to sexuality and urbanism: 1) research that deals with mapping sexual “territory” (Castells & Murphy, 1982; Castells, 1983; Forsyth, 1997); 2) research that claims simply mapping sexual territory is insufficient to understanding how sex and sexuality relate to the process of urbanization (specifically the accumulation of capital) (Adler & Brenner, 1992; Valentine, 1993; Valentine, 1995; Knopp, 1995; Knopp, 1998; Klein, 1999; Doan & Higgins, 2011); and, 3) research that goes beyond mapping the physical manifestations of sexualized territory (gay bars, gay service institutions, etc.) to the far more fluid process of mapping sites of gay socialization, activism and identity (Kirkey & Forsyth, 2001; Kenney, 2001).

Of the three approaches to researching how gays and lesbians relate to their physical environments, the earliest to appear is the simple process of recognizing areas of concentration of sexual minorities through mapping. While many studies have done this, the two most widely

recognized are Ann Forsyth's *Out in the Valley* and Castells and Murphy's *Cultural Identity & Urban Structure: the Spatial Organization of San Francisco's Gay Community*. Castells and Murphy map the spatialized territory of the gay and lesbian community within San Francisco so as to "analyze the characteristics that allow or resist the process of spatial formation of the gay community" (p. 238). What Castells and Murphy (1982) find is that "the 'gay city' appears as a contiguous urban space with its own norms and institutions, a city within a city" (p. 246). The authors also examine what factors either do or do not foster a territorialized gay community. In all there are only two factors that are not conducive to homosexualized space: "property and family" (p. 247).

Castells' research of the San Francisco gay community was also some of the first to examine the historical evolution of a gay community and how that evolution shifted the community's spatial orientation to the city (Castells 1983). Castells first recognizes San Francisco's gay population as being significant to the city's urban culture both during and directly after World War II. During which time San Francisco served as the major port of entry for U.S. servicemen and women into the Pacific front. Some 40,000 men and women were dishonorably discharged from the Pacific front for homosexual-related activities. Most of these young men and women were dropped off in San Francisco and, too ashamed to return home to their families after the nature of their discharges, decided to remain in the city (Castells 1983). Such a historical examination of the gay community in a city is rare to see.

Researchers and larger societal sentiments tend to nationalize the LGBT experience in the United States (meaning, researchers often characterize the gay and lesbian experience as the same,

regardless of geographic location) or exclusively bicoastal – a circumstance that is undoubtedly inaccurate. To be sure, “mapping gay concentrations has been criticized for focusing on a small number of mainly US meccas and ignoring the experiences of the majority of gay men and lesbians who ‘spend most of their time living, working and socializing in heterosexual environments’” (Valentine, 1993: 246; Bell, 1991; Bell and Valentine, 1995) This research contributes to the geography of LGBT community beyond the metropolises of San Francisco and New York.

Research that will be performed in the City of Atlanta will follow the same schools of thought first outlined by Forsyth and Castells and Murphy. I will seek to identify the spatialized territory of the gay and lesbian community within the City of Atlanta. The goal is to track the evolution and growth of the community within the City. As Adler and Brenner put it:

To claim an urban territory takes more than residential concentration. It requires, in addition to this: (1) visibility – gay places, especially retail businesses and services run by and for gay people; (2) community activity – fairs, block parties, street celebrations etc., some kind of public, collective affirmation of the people who live in the neighborhood, even if it is only strolling out in the evening; (3) organization – of businesses and residents to defend the neighborhood’s interests, relate to city government, financially support the community activities which create and maintain the urban subculture, giving the neighborhood its distinct character. (Adler and Brenner, 1992)

Where mapping LGBT spatialization becomes difficult is in identifying and mapping those members or aspects of the community that are not visible (closeted, private, etc.). Following gay

and lesbian public concentration “behind closed doors” so to speak is a new and controversial research topic. Forsyth, for one, refused to sacrifice privacy for the possibility of more detailed data. While speaking about why she chose to *not* use formal interviews during her research process:

Using these less intrusive data sources I could engage in a project on ‘communities’ and public space in contemporary metropolitan regions – something that I believe will have an impact in the longer term – without intruding too much on other people’s time or, even, on their privacy. (Forsyth 1997)

Forsyth only examines the public face of the community because it has a public face to be studied. Forsyth is also stating that those portions of the LGBT community that are visible by choice are able to speak for and defend from intrusion both themselves and the private half of the community as well.

The concern for privacy is heightened because of the sensitive topic of sexuality, which is exactly the area in which academics such as Knopp, Bell and Valentine take issue with the process of “mapping” without understanding. A significant area of contention between the two largest schools of thought in researching the relationship between sexuality and urbanization is the importance of locating (read: mapping) sights of sexual socialization. Historically this has been limited to the process of mapping “gay bars” – a process that Lawrence Knopp (a major proponent of understanding the humanistic reasons behind concentration, rather than proving the concentration itself) has called “naïve” and “conventional” (1998). Knopp considers the base act of mapping over time insufficient, and urges researchers to look further into the deeper processes

in which sex and sexuality are related to urbanization and are further linked with such issues as class and race (ibid).

Knopp is correct in that simply mapping the “public” face of the gay community fails to take into account those members of the gay and lesbian community that may be “private” due to other issues related to identity politics and community power dynamics, it is a step too far to claim that mapping territorialized gay and lesbian communities is “naïve”. Failing to map the public face of the gay community leaves out just as significant a portion of the population as failing to map the private face of the community. Furthermore, Knopp’s vehemence against mapping represents an engrained belittling of gay neighborhoods that is all too common in academic circles (Waldheim & Ruedi, 2007). Indeed, Knopp “dismisses the significance of ‘vibrant gay commercial and entertainment scenes’ and areas of ‘gay gentrification’ in cities as just episodes of capitalism ‘eager to colonise new realms of experience and to undermine potential threats to its power’” (Waldheim & Ruedi, 2007). It is for these reasons that my research into Atlanta’s community will focus both on the public face as well as on areas of private residences. This will help disprove Castells assertion that “when gays are spatially scattered, they are not gay, because they are invisible” (Castells, 1983).

Methodology

For this paper, in order to effectively address both the “private” and “public” spatialization of the LGBT community, I will follow some of the same methods first set out by Forsyth and Castells to locate areas of geographic concentration of such a community. The resources used by the two researchers are found in the table below.

Trends in Data Resources for Mapping U.S. LGBT Communities

Castells (1983)	Adler & Brenner (1992)	Forsyth (1997)
Gay men San Francisco	Lesbians Unnamed West Coast City	Lesbians (mostly) Northampton and CT River Valley
10 key informant interviews. Pollsters for gay electoral campaigns 1950s- 1970s.	10 key informant interviews	Informal key informant interviews
Multiple male households from voter registration files (1977)		1990 census counts of unmarried partner couples
	Mailing lists from two local lesbian orgs (1150 names)	Mailing list from nat'l marketing company (2900 addresses)
Votes for Harvey Milk in a local election		Votes for Claire Higgins (1993)
Location of gay bars and social gathering places, 1964-80	Location of gay bars and social gathering places	Location of gay bars and social gathering places, 1970-95
Members of gay business association		Members of lesbian and gay business association

Table 1

In order to identify locations of LGBT-oriented sites of socialization, businesses and organizations over time, thorough examinations of LGBT periodicals published between 1990 and 2011 – many of which providing “gay guides” to the City of Atlanta, highlighting sites of entertainment for LGBT persons to visit – were conducted. Each magazine examined was searched for advertisements specifically publicizing businesses or establishments that catered to the LGBT community (LGBT bars, leather stores, cabaret shows, etc.). In addition, many of the publications already maintained lists of such establishments within each publication as “gay guides” to Atlanta. Each publication was examined cover-to-cover, with each advertisement that

also listed an address being added to the list of LGBT establishments for that year. Other than the example of the “gay guides” offering lists of LGBT establishments with addresses, the individual advertisements themselves were not typically concentrated within a specific section of a given publication, but were spread throughout. The advertisements also generally lacked organization within the publications around specific target groups (racial, economic, gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, etc.) – that is to say the advertisements were not separated within the publications according to desired target groups. However, when advertisements *did* mention specific target groups (often informally within the text of the ad), it was noted. In addition, assumptions *were* made regarding the nature of the publication within which the advertisement was found. For example, Clikque magazine is self-styled as a “Black Gay & Lesbian Monthly publication”; therefore, those establishments advertised within its pages were extrapolated to *also* target the Black gay and lesbian population specifically.

In addition, for those publications from 2011 (specifically *David Atlanta* and *Fenuxe Magazine*), while the physical periodicals themselves were still scanned for the criteria previously mentioned, the magazine websites were also consulted (both of which maintain standing lists of LGBT entertainment establishments). were supplemented by online websites Once the set list of establishments was gathered, those establishments that were not identified as having a target group were cross-referenced with non-serial (larger) “gay-guide” publications, such as *ATLANTAboy: An Insider’s Guide to Gay Atlanta* which helped to further classify the establishments by target group (McAuley, 2005).

While LGBT publications are often a great resource for lists of LGBT-oriented establishments and organizations, there are a number of caveats that accompany using such data.

The most significant caveat for the purposes of this paper is the limited number of periodicals

Publications Consulted for Lists of and Advertisements for Gay Establishments

Publication	Volumes	Issues	Publication Dates	Specific Target Group
Advocate	-	557, 587, 590	08/1990-11/1991	-
Atlanta's HotSpots!	1	10-39	2/1990-8/1991	-
Cite Guide	-	-	2/1990-6/1990	-
Etcetera	6	8-23, 44	2/1990-11/1990	-
Clikque Magazine	2	4	9/1998	Black LGBT
David Atlanta	1	1-8	10/1998-12/1998	-
Etcetera	14	22-52	2/1998-12/1998	-
David Atlanta	-	631-641	1/2011-4/2011	-
Fenuxe	1	-	1/2011-4/2011	-

Table 2

still around today that were able to be examined for lists of and advertisements for LGBT-oriented business and organizations. While the Atlanta History Center maintains an extensive archive of LGBT-related publications from the past 70 years, there are continuity gaps – both within individual publications themselves and in chronology in general. Also significant is the possible bias that the available publications contain – for example, *Atlanta's HotSpot's!*, one of the publications relied on heavily for 1990 data, was often filled with photos of scantily clad gay men, a fact that is suggestive of a target audience, although it was never explicitly mentioned and some (although noticeably fewer) advertisements for lesbian establishments were present.

Additionally, despite the fact that Atlanta's population since 1990 has been majority African American, few of the publications examined – other than Clikque – represented proportional depictions of LGBT persons of color. In fact, some periodicals (most notably *Atlanta's HotSpots!*) contained sections devoted to showing photographs taken at LGBT-oriented

establishments the previous weekend, and even a cursory examination of the photographs tends to suggest demographic biases among the bars being mapped (as nearly *all* persons depicted within the photographs are young white men). Despite these biases, the sheer number of establishments presented via this method of analysis and identification of LGBT-oriented businesses is suggestive that a large number of the total (if not entirely representative of the larger demographic characteristics within the LGBT community) is being captured.

After collecting the addresses of establishments advertised within the publications and listed on their various gay guides, the years with the largest available data (the most businesses cited – 1990, 1998 and 2011) were used as the sources of the addresses to be mapped. The addresses of the establishments for those years were then georeferenced within Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and layered on top of a street map of the Atlanta area. Changes in the distribution of establishments over time were noted by mapping the distributions of the establishments in differing years (for example, 1990 and 1998) on the same map – allowing for easy identification of those establishments present in 1998 that were not present in 1990 (as well as in 2011, but not in 1998 or 1990), as well as those establishments identified in advertisements or magazine “gay guides” in 1990 but not identified again in 1998 (or 2011).

The maps documenting the spatial distribution of the LGBT-oriented establishments in 1998 and 2011 were then overlaid with maps of LGBT residential concentrations derived from 2000 Census and 2005-2009 American Community Survey data respectively. These two data sources also provide an excellent opportunity to track trends in the growth/spatialization of same-sex households from 2000 to 2009. Using the 2000 Census data, it is possible to track the number of

same-sex households as a percentage of total households per census tract. Doing so for the immediate 5-counties around the City of Atlanta within the Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) (Fulton County, DeKalb County, Cobb County, Clayton County and Gwinnett County) provides a regional context for the trend of growth in same-sex households over time. Additionally, the residential concentrations that were mapped within census tracts, where the total numbers of “same-sex unmarried partner households” (separated between female-female and male-male) were recorded – as well as the percentage of the total households within a given census tract that these households made up – were then overlaid onto the previously mapped commercial concentrations. In this way, relationships between the two trends were identified and analyzed.

Finally, in an effort to document the extent to which planning influences LGBT concentrations of residences and commercial establishments, the maps depicting residential and commercial concentrations for 1998/2000 and 2009/2011 were overlaid with zoning data for the City of Atlanta in 2000 and 2010. In this way, any correlations between increased densities of residences and/or commercial establishments and zoning types/changes is identified and analyzed.

Gay Atlanta in the 20th Century

As lesbians, gays, bisexuals and transgendered individuals have always existed, the LGBT history of Atlanta is undoubtedly as old as the history of the city itself. However, only within the past century has the LGBT community begun to manifest itself physically on the city’s spatial landscape (Chenault & Braukman, 2008). Gay bars, lesbian hang outs, drag-cabaret shows, and the like all began to make their mark on the City of Atlanta around the mid 20th century (Braukman & Chenault, 2008). By the time the gay liberation movement began in

earnest in the 1970s, gay Atlanta had already stitched itself permanently into the fabric of the City. *David Magazine* is a famous and important magazine in the history of gay culture in the southeastern United States. The magazine itself began publishing in 1970, and shortly thereafter published one of the first “maps” of gay Atlanta – as a guide for gay men who visited the city to use in order to identify those locations where it was possible to meet strangers for discrete, anonymous sexual encounters (cruising), or simply those locations oriented towards the LGBT community where members would be sure to meet people of similar sexual orientations (Figure 1) (Chenault & Braukman, 2008).

The earliest researched identifications of emerging concentrations of gay-men and women in Atlanta focus around Midtown (Howard, 1997) and Candler Park, respectively – both of which began to form in the 1970s (Chestnut & Gable, 1997; Sears, 2001). In addition, circumstantial yet persuasive evidence suggests that Midtown Atlanta was undergoing intensive gentrification processes by homosexuals in the 1970s (Doan & Higgins, 2011). Indeed, “historical accounts have indicated that from the early 1970s onward gays and lesbians began moving into older in-town Atlanta neighborhoods to rehabilitate the properties” (ibid). While an affordable and desirable housing stock was one factor that drew homosexuals to Midtown in the 1970s, another was the neighborhood’s close proximity to Piedmont Park, “a traditional venue for gay cruising” (Howard, 1997). Following the influx of residences in the 1970s was a flurry of LGBT establishments. During the decade, “a gay bookstore – Outwrite Books – and a number of gay bars opened in the vicinity and helped to create a burgeoning gay community” (Doan & Higgins, 2011). Adjoining neighborhoods – such as Virginia Highlands and Ansley Park – maintained far more stable housing markets prior to the 1970s, “but also attracted significant concentrations of

“Gay Atlanta” – Map of Gay-Businesses from 1971 Issue of *David Magazine!*



Figure 1

gay and lesbian partners” (ibid). While gay men were gentrifying Midtown, a similar process was being undertaken by lesbian couples in the Candler Park neighborhood at the same time. White flight left the nearby commercial center of Little Five Points with significant vacancy issues, thereby further dragging down the areas already sagging home prices (Doan & Higgins, 2011). The affordability of the neighborhood, “attracted young feminists and lesbians looking to

create community” (ibid). These gendered and geographically disparate concentrations would endure for the next four decades.

1990 Analysis

By researching LGBT-oriented publications from 1990 (specifically *Etcetera*, *Advocate*, *Cite Guide* and *Atlanta’s HotSpots!*), 68 separate LGBT-oriented establishments are found to have been areas of gay socialization at the time. By georeferencing the addresses of the 68 establishments in GIS, four separate concentrations of LGBT-oriented establishments within the Atlanta area (which closely resemble the concentrations first revealed in the *David Magazine* map from 1971) emerge (Figure 1).

The first concentration is based within the Midtown neighborhood of the City of Atlanta. In 1990, this concentration largely consisted of bars and nightclubs oriented to gay men, a fact that correlates to previously identified trends (Doan & Higgins, 2011). The area of the distribution is bounded by 14th St. to the north, Ponce de Leon Ave. to the south, I-75/I-85 to the west, and Monroe Ave to the east. No less than 18 separate establishments are located within this one defined area – with two distinct sub-clusters emerging (one north of 10th Street – roughly correlating to the Atlanta neighborhoods of Ansley Park and Morningside – and the other south of it – the Midtown neighborhood). This distribution seems to most closely resemble the classic model of “gay ghetto” as defined by Castells and Murphy (Castells & Murphy, *Cultural Identity and Urban Structure: The Spatial Organization of San Francisco's Gay Community*, 1982). These factors fall in line with the current popular sense of Midtown being the “gay neighborhood” in the City of Atlanta – and, as the map in *David Magazine* from 1971 showed, the roots of the

LGBT-Oriented Establishments as Found in the 1990 Periodical Survey

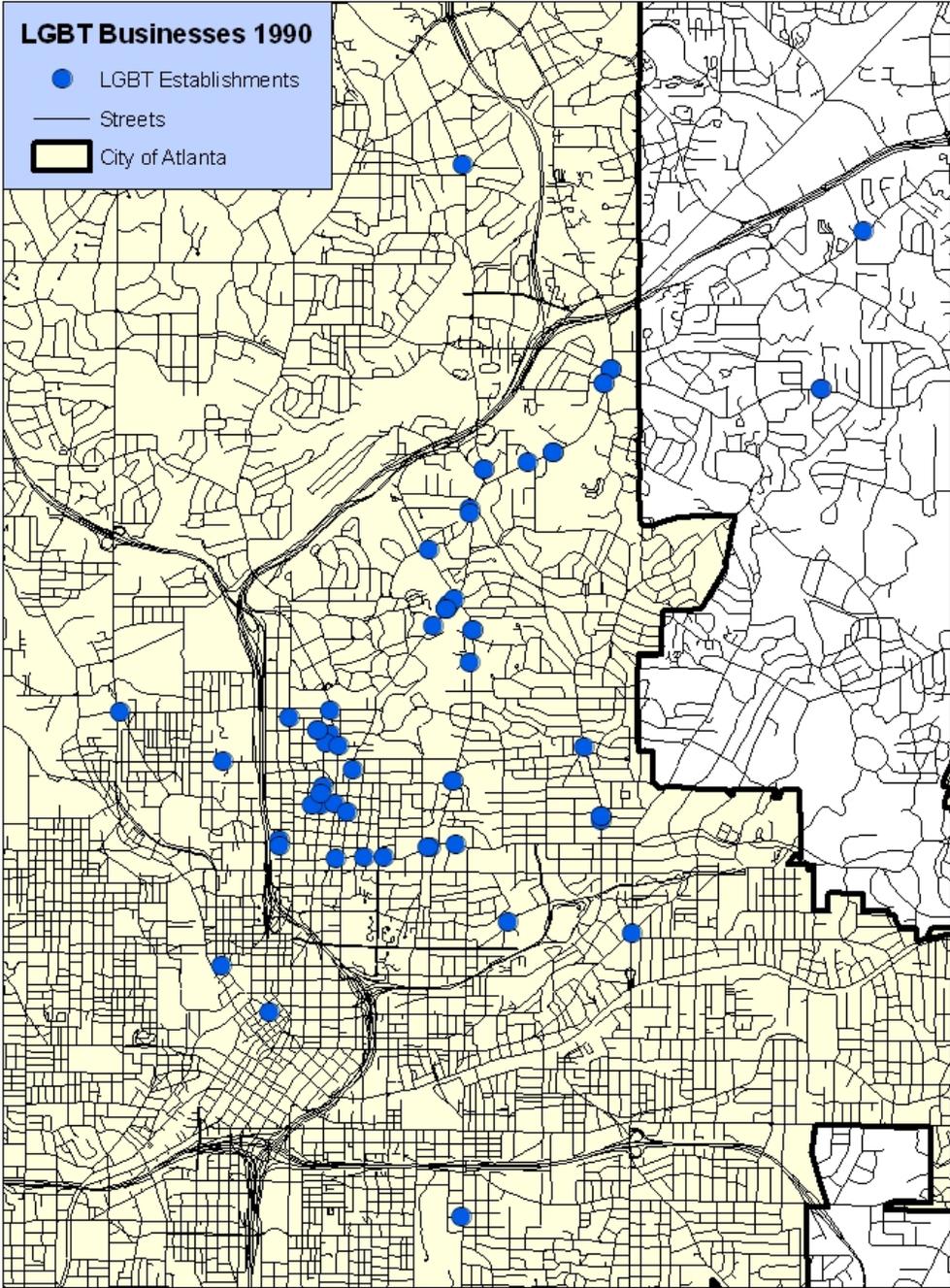


Figure 2

gay community in the City do run deep in this area of the City. However, it is important to note that – given the types of businesses found in Midtown in 1990 – this neighborhood was probably only a significant area of “gay socialization” for young, gay, professional men – a notion further supported by research into residential trends in the area (Doan & Higgins, 2011).

A second sub-cluster of LGBT-establishments in 1990 centers on Ponce de Leon Ave NE – radiating eastward from the southern tip of the Midtown cluster. While only six separate establishments exist within this area, the unique subset of the LGBT community to which a majority of these establishments markets themselves (as made clear via both the language within the establishments’ advertisements and their accompanying photographs) makes them just as important as their geographic concentration, due to their appeal to Atlanta’s “leather” community. Leather subcultures are communities organized around distinct “aggressive” sexual activities, and are often most visible via the prominent wearing of leather garments during intercourse. In addition, the leather subculture within the LGBT community is prominently male and noticeably older than other concentrations/communities of gay men (Rubin, 1997). The distinct spatial separation between Atlanta’s leather community and its more “traditional” gay community is notable in that it closely resembles the segregated nature of San Francisco’s gay-male community as mapped by Castells (Castells & Murphy, Cultural Identity and Urban Structure: The Spatial Organization of San Francisco's Gay Community, 1982).

A third unique sub-cluster of LGBT establishments in the Atlanta area in 1990 is concentrated to the north and east of Piedmont Park – specifically focused on the Ansley Mall/Ansley Square and Amsterdam Avenue areas. Eighteen separate LGBT establishments are found in this area,

which is also the most geographically concentrated of the five sub-clusters in terms of total area. The Ansley-Amsterdam sub-cluster also represents the most diverse range of establishments in the Atlanta area, with clothing stores, bookstores, video and music stores combining with fitness centers, restaurants, clubs and travel agents to present the Atlanta area's most diverse LGBT concentration. Although still overwhelming in its marketing to gay men – the Ansley-Amsterdam sub-cluster also represents the only significantly concentrated area of businesses oriented to lesbians as well – although this is probably a function of the broad market appeal of the businesses located there more than anything else. Additionally, the Ansley-Amsterdam sub-cluster represents the only location in the Atlanta area where housing opportunities were marketed explicitly as “gay-oriented”. Morningside Chase Apartments, Midtown Manor and Ansley Apartments were all marketed as affordable rental opportunities for gay (men) to live and “play” (Morningside Chase Apartments, 1990).

A fourth significant sub-cluster of LGBT establishments in 1990 is strung out along Cheshire Bridge Road just north of the Ansley-Amsterdam sub-cluster. Nine individual establishments are located on or near the Cheshire Bridge Road thoroughfare. Other than their shared geographic concentration, the nine establishments are notable only for the diversity of interests which they represent, “drag queen cabaret” shows, gay sports bars, and two separate charitable organizations for people with HIV/AIDS. Like most of the other sub-clusters within the Atlanta area, the establishments within the Cheshire Bridge sub-cluster are also overwhelmingly oriented towards gay men.

The fifth and final sub-cluster of LGBT establishments in 1990 is not really a cluster at all, but is instead peripheral. The peripheral sub-cluster consists of all those LGBT establishments found outside the four traditional concentrations. Thirteen separate establishments are located within the peripheral sub-cluster and represent the most diverse cross-section of the LGBT community within the Atlanta area. Within the peripheral sub-cluster are the Atlanta area's only examples of establishments oriented specifically to LGBT persons of color – Traxx, Tower Lounge – the latter of which is famous as one of the earliest locations where television personality RuPaul first performed in drag (Tower Lounge, 1990). The peripheral sub-cluster also represents the Atlanta area's most prominent example (at least in 1990) of a bar/club oriented solely towards lesbians (The Otherside) – as well as the area's oldest lesbian institution, Charis Books & More. Adding to the diversity of the peripheral sub-cluster is the area's many notable and non-traditional community organizations. These include two separate branches of the LGBT Christian denomination First Metropolitan Community Church (MCC) , as well as an LGBT chorale organization – Atlanta Lamda Chorale – and an LGBT 12-step recovery program – Lamda Group Narcotics Anonymous.

The analysis of the spatial distribution of the major LGBT establishments present in Figure 2 reveals the diversity of the community that existed in 1990. In addition, the five distinct sub-clusters that revealed themselves upon analysis of the spatial distribution of the establishments are notable in that they would shape continued development of LGBT establishments in the years to come.

1998 Analysis

Immediately upon viewing the spatial distribution of the LGBT establishments present in 1998 one thing becomes clear – the area of distribution has increased dramatically. The distribution of LGBT establishments in 1998 proves the Atlanta area’s first forays into suburban development. Of particular note is the establishment of the bar/club Le Buzz, located in Marietta. Le Buzz’s establishment is significant in that its presence in 1998 comes only five years after Cobb County’s Board of Commissioners voted to approve an infamous anti-gay ordinance. Passed in 1993, the Cobb County Board of Commissioners (based in Marietta) “passed a resolution supporting ‘the traditional family structure’ and condemning ‘the life styles advocated by the gay community’ as incompatible with Cobb County standards” (Applebome, 1993).

The greatest expansion of LGBT establishments in the Atlanta area during the eight years from 1990 to 1998 occurred within the peripheral sub-cluster. This cluster not only saw growth in its bottom line numbers, but also saw its spatial distribution grow substantially. By 1998, the peripheral sub-cluster has grown to 17 separate establishments, ranging from all-male adult entertainment venues (Swinging Richards) to clothing stores (Body Body Wear) and a notable increase in bars/clubs (Le Buzz, Marquette Lounge, The Vault, etc.). To be certain, the increase in the spatial distribution of LGBT establishments is due – in part – to the rapid growth in development/population in the Atlanta area between 1990 and 1998 in general. As larger and larger amounts of people moved to the Atlanta area for jobs and affordable housing opportunities, the LGBT community grew as well and subsequently provided demand for services and retail opportunities not afforded to them by typical heteronormative establishments.

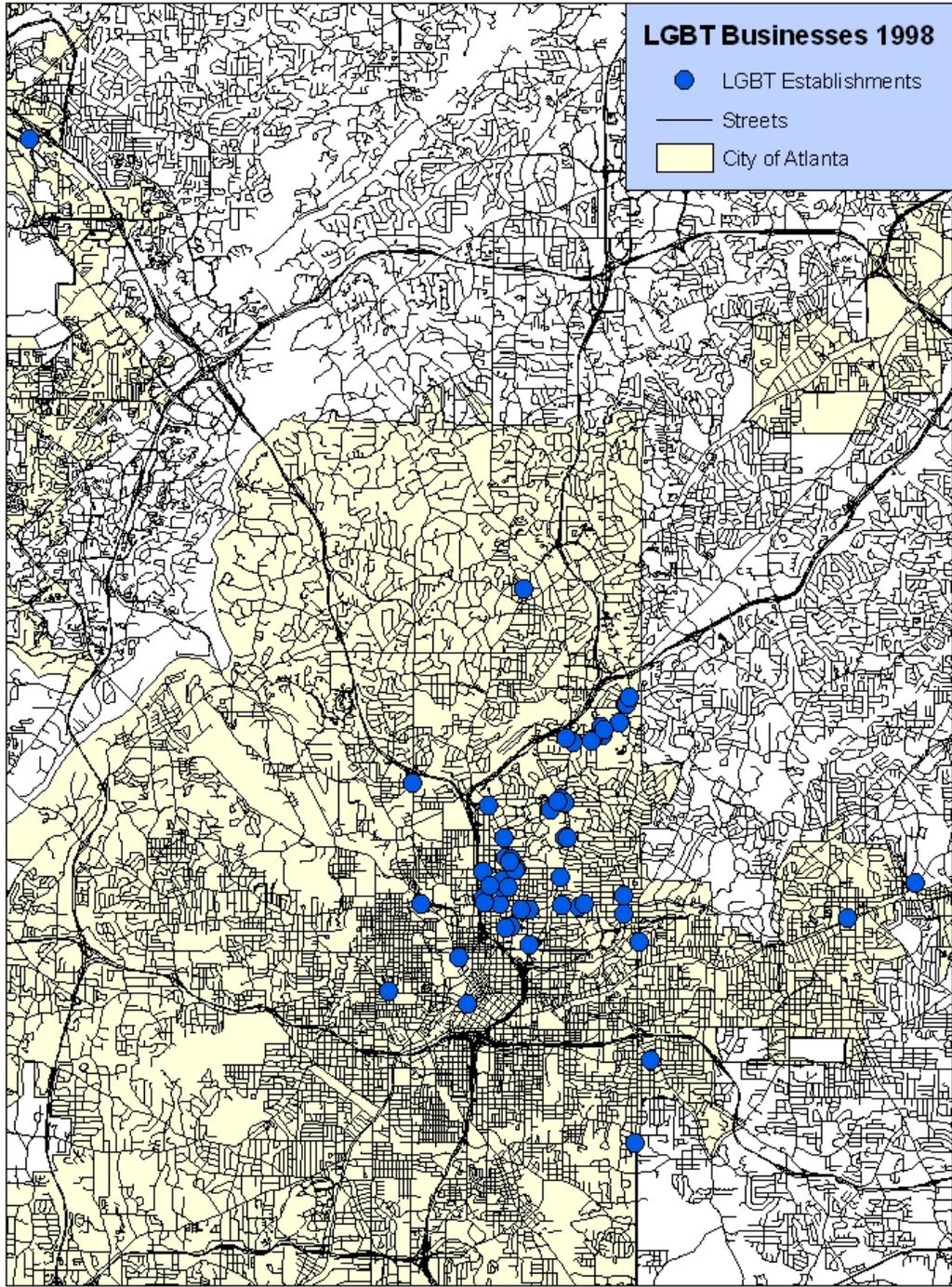


Figure 3

Upon examining a closer view of the portion of the LGBT distribution located centrally in and around the City of Atlanta (non-peripheral clusters) some subtle changes to the sub-clusters mentioned in the 1990 analysis become obvious. The presence of 15 establishments within the Midtown sub-cluster denotes a significant “hollowing-out” of the LGBT concentration that had been present there in 1990. Additionally, of the new LGBT establishments present in the Midtown sub-cluster, many are restaurants (Einstein’s, Joe’s on Juniper, The Prince George, etc.) that are more easily marketed to larger population subsets outside of the traditional LGBT community. This deconcentration in the heart of Atlanta’s “traditional” gay neighborhood is more than likely a result of rapid gentrification and redevelopment that was taking place in the area between 1990 and 1998 along the Peachtree Street corridor (Doan & Higgins, 2011). Indeed, one current, prominent LGBT publication recently lamented that “the future of Midtown has been built on the rubble of the neighborhood’s gay past” (Lee, 2007).

By 1998, the Ponce de Leon Ave sub-cluster had also undergone some noticeable changes. The addition of three more LGBT oriented establishments along the Ponce corridor (all to the east of previously established businesses/organizations) mirrors continued development along the corridor towards Virginia-Highlands. In addition, the three new establishments fall directly in between the previously established businesses/organizations along North Highland Avenue and Ponce de Leon Avenue – forming a spatial bridge between the formerly disparate clusters, and bringing North Highland establishments out of peripheral cluster, and into the Ponce de Leon sub-cluster. Also notable, is the fact that the newly developed establishments within the Ponce de Leon sub-cluster diverge from the cluster’s traditional “leather” community characteristics. For example, Buddie’s Tavern Midtown is a restaurant while Model T is a “normal” bar/club that did

not specifically cater to the leather community, but rather to the larger white, gay male population as a whole. The significant presence of leather concentrations had not dissipated by this time, however, as notable leather community institutions (such as the Eagle) were still present and thriving.

The third sub-cluster of LGBT establishments in the Atlanta area (the Ansley-Amsterdam sub-cluster) had also seen significant growth in spatial distribution and rote numbers by 1998. Most significantly within the Ansley-Amsterdam sub-cluster was the explosive growth of LGBT establishments south of the cluster's traditional center (Ansley Square/Ansley Mall), along Amsterdam Ave – directly abutting the east side of Piedmont Park. Of particular note is the great diversity of the establishments that opened up on Amsterdam Ave. and within the Amsterdam Walk development. The establishments – Miss Q's Bar & Billiards, Fusion, E.D.'s Gourmet – represent three distinct organizations. Miss Q's Bar & Billiards was a bar that catered to both gay men and lesbians, while Fusion was a bar/club that marketed itself directly to gay men of color. Finally, E.D.'s Gourmet is not a bar at all, but rather a video and music store. The diversity of these three establishments reflects the diversity within the Ansley-Amsterdam sub-cluster as a whole. A final important shift that took place in the Ansley-Amsterdam sub-cluster is the removal of affordable housing opportunities marketed directly to LGBT persons, such as the Morningside Chase Apartments and Ansley Apartments that marketed themselves as “gay friendly” places to live just eight years earlier.

The fourth sub-cluster of LGBT establishments in the Atlanta area – the Cheshire Bridge sub-cluster – also underwent significant expansion between 1990 and 1998. The most notable

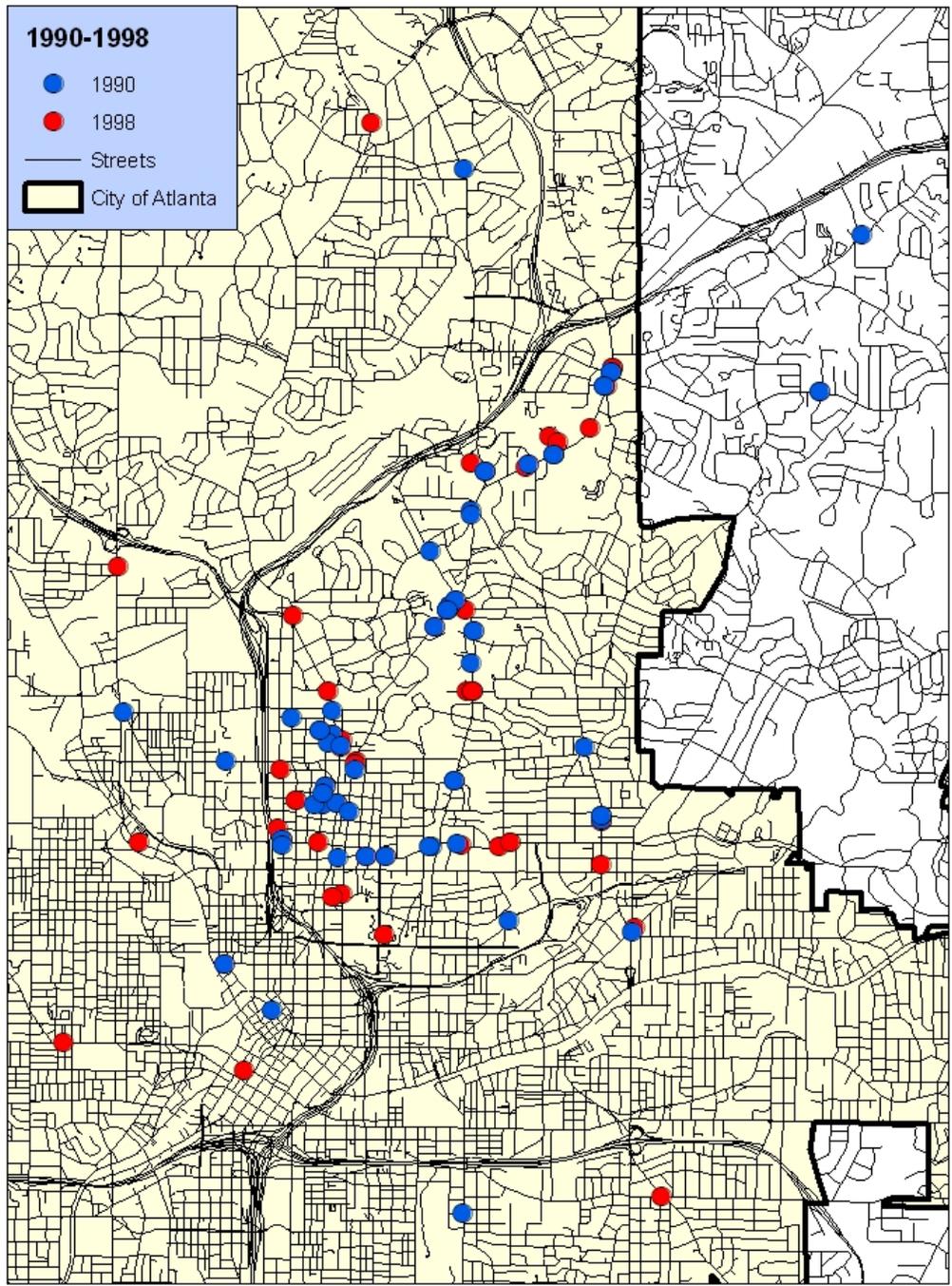


Figure 4

addition of new establishments to this area is found within the “Faulkner Rd” development. Several new LGBT establishments sprouted up along this narrow access road between 1990 and 1998, including The Chamber and Mid-City Fitness. These newly added establishments add to the eclectic mix of LGBT establishments that have popped up along the Cheshire Bridge thoroughfare.

2011 Analysis

Several trends in recent development pop out right away upon close examination of the spatial distribution of LGBT establishments in 2011. The most obvious growth from 1998 occurred once again in the “peripheral sub-cluster”. Of special import is the emergence of two separate clusters within the peripheral clusters itself. These clusters are areas of smaller concentrations within the peripheral sub-cluster and are centered on Buford Highway and downtown Decatur. The emergence of the Buford- and Decatur-clusters is significant in that it not only represents the increased establishment of LGBT organizations in the Atlanta area’s suburbs, but also the shift of entire clusters into the suburban arena.

Upon examining the non-peripheral establishments of the 2011 spatial distribution of LGBT businesses and organizations, the most noticeable shift from 1998 is the relatively small growth in number and distribution of establishments in all four of the central sub-clusters (Midtown, Ponce de Leon, Ansley-Amsterdam, and Cheshire Bridge Rd). When compared to the growth in number and distribution of businesses that took place from 1990 to 1998, the expansion that took place in the following thirteen years is weaker than in earlier periods – with each of the four centrally-located sub-clusters adding one or two establishments at the most (and with each

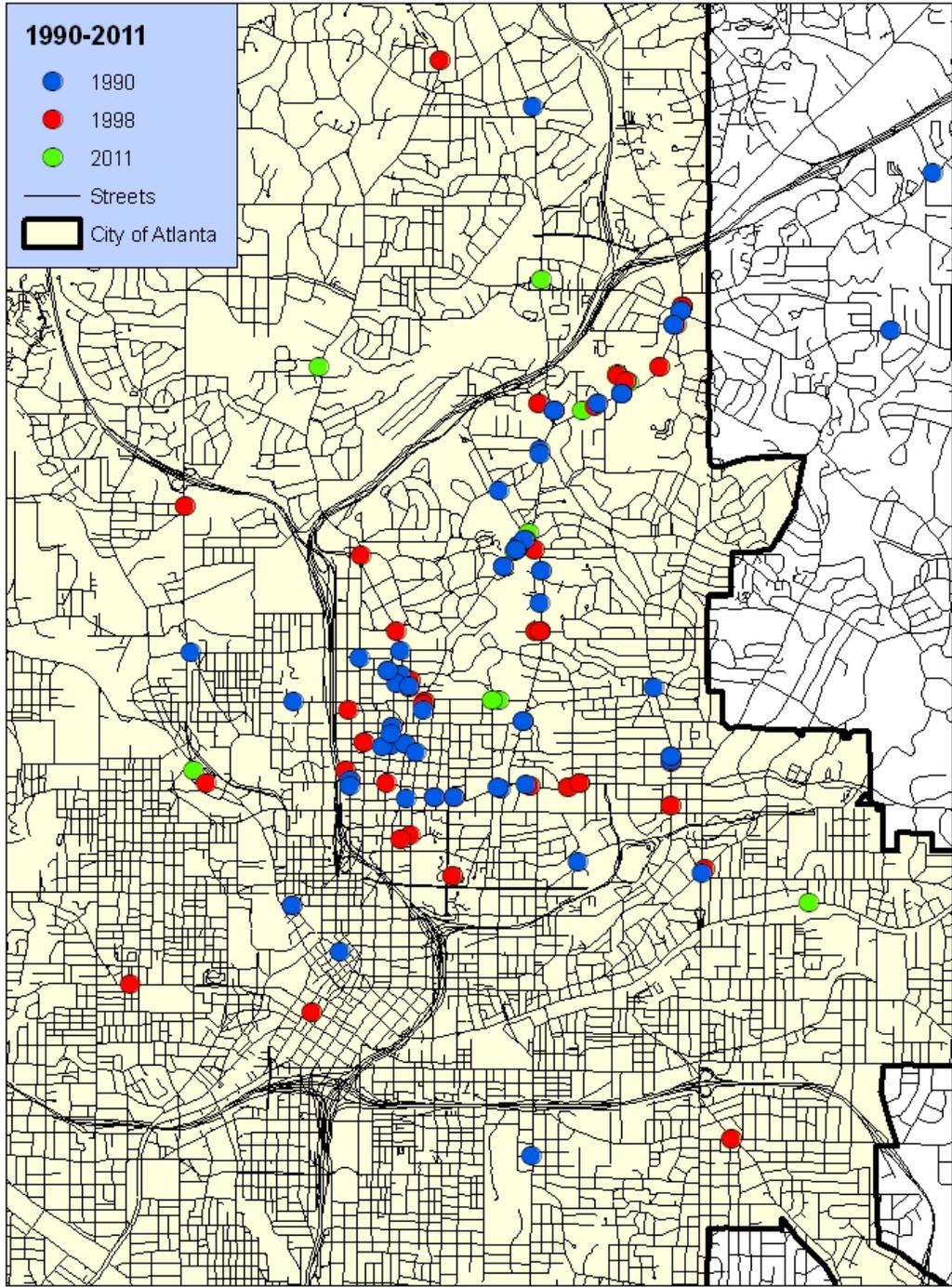


Figure 5

addition having little effect on the overall distribution of establishments at all). For this reason, it becomes even more obvious that the most significant expansion of LGBT establishments between 1998 and 2011 occurred in the peripheral sub-cluster – making dramatic and significant enroads into Atlanta’s suburbs.

Trends in Male-Male and Female-Female Households, 2000-2010

In order to obtain an accurate picture of the spatial locations of the LGBT community within the City of Atlanta, it’s vital to not simply map where the community socializes, but also to locate where the community lives. Unfortunately, there is no truly perfect way to locate where the LGBT community lives. The U.S. Census Bureau’s tracking of same-sex households is a start, but offers an imperfect solution to the problem. One of the few ways in which to obtain a semi-accurate portrayal of LGBT residences is by using data collected by the 2000 Census and 2005-2009 American Community Survey. In both instances, the surveys collect data on unmarried, same-sex households. While this data does not do *anything* to help locate where *single* LGBT community members live, it does help spatialize same-sex households.

Immediately a trend emerges. Unmarried male-male partner households are significantly concentrated around the City of Atlanta itself and – more specifically – the Midtown area that is *also* a concentration of LGBT oriented businesses. By mapping both the 1998 LGBT oriented establishments and the concentrations of male-male households per census district, it is obvious that there a definite association in the location of both. Male-male partner households as a percentage of total households per census tract are most concentrated in those areas directly surrounding concentrations of LGBT oriented businesses. Those residential clusters are most

Percentages of Male-Male Households per Census Tract 2000

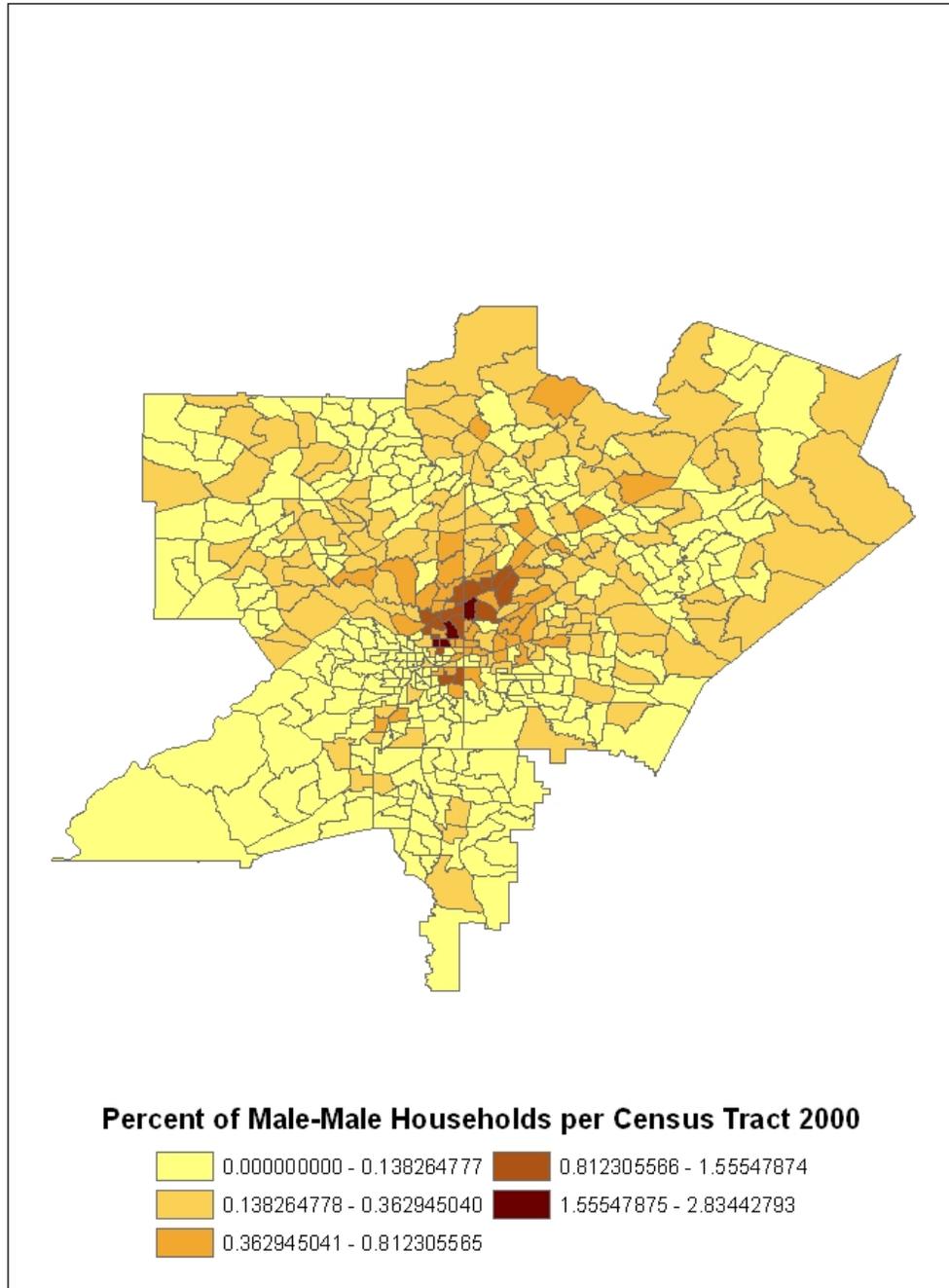


Figure 6

Percentages of Female-Female Households per Census Tract 2000

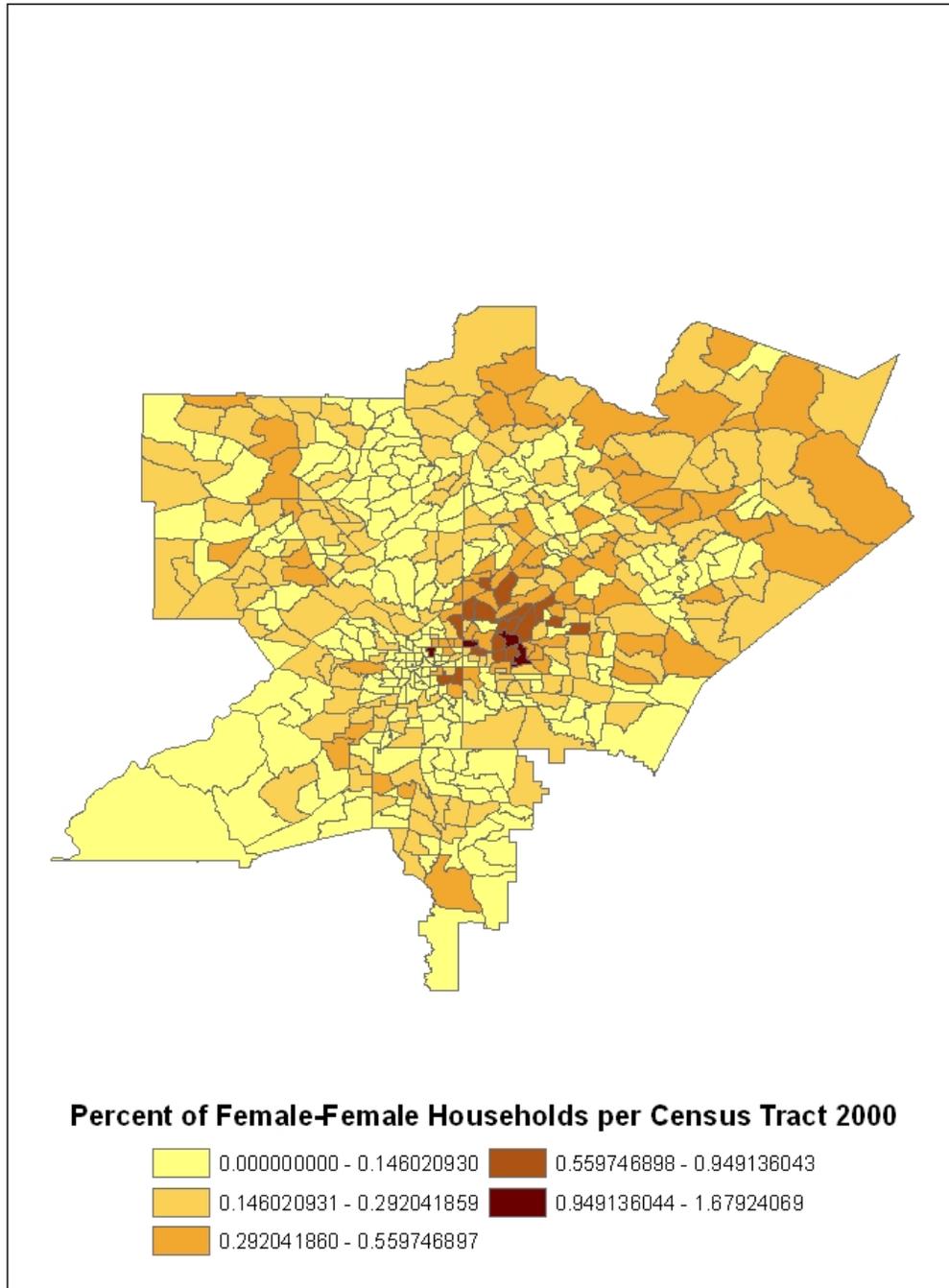


Figure 7

prominent surrounding the Ansley-Amsterdam, Midtown and Ponce de Leon subclusters of LGBT establishments.

In contrast, female-female households as a percentage of total households per census tract are *not* as heavily concentrated around these subclusters. The female-female residential concentrations are more pronounced just to the east of Atlanta and Fulton county – to the South of Decatur and spread throughout Dekalb county more generally. There is also a significant concentration in the East Atlanta neighborhood – again, just to the east of the male-male household concentrations. These female-female concentrations do *not* correlate to concentrations in LGBT oriented establishments and businesses. While some of the highest concentrations of female-female households in the 5-county area do exist in close proximity to the centrally located LGBT business subclusters, generally, the percentages of the total households within these census tracts that female-female households make up is *not* as high/significant as their male-male household counterparts (a comparison of roughly 1% of total households to 3%).

By using the 2005-2009 American Community Survey data, tracking a rough evolution of residential concentrations of LGBT community members between 2000 and 2009 is also possible. It is important to note – however – that American Community Survey data numbers rely on rolling estimates of population characteristics. By again mapping the residential concentrations as percentages of total households per census tract (this time using the 2005-2009 American Community Survey data) an accurate picture of residential concentrations emerges. As in the 2000 data, the maps show that male-male households are concentrated around the center of the City of Atlanta itself, whereas female-female households are dispersed more widely.

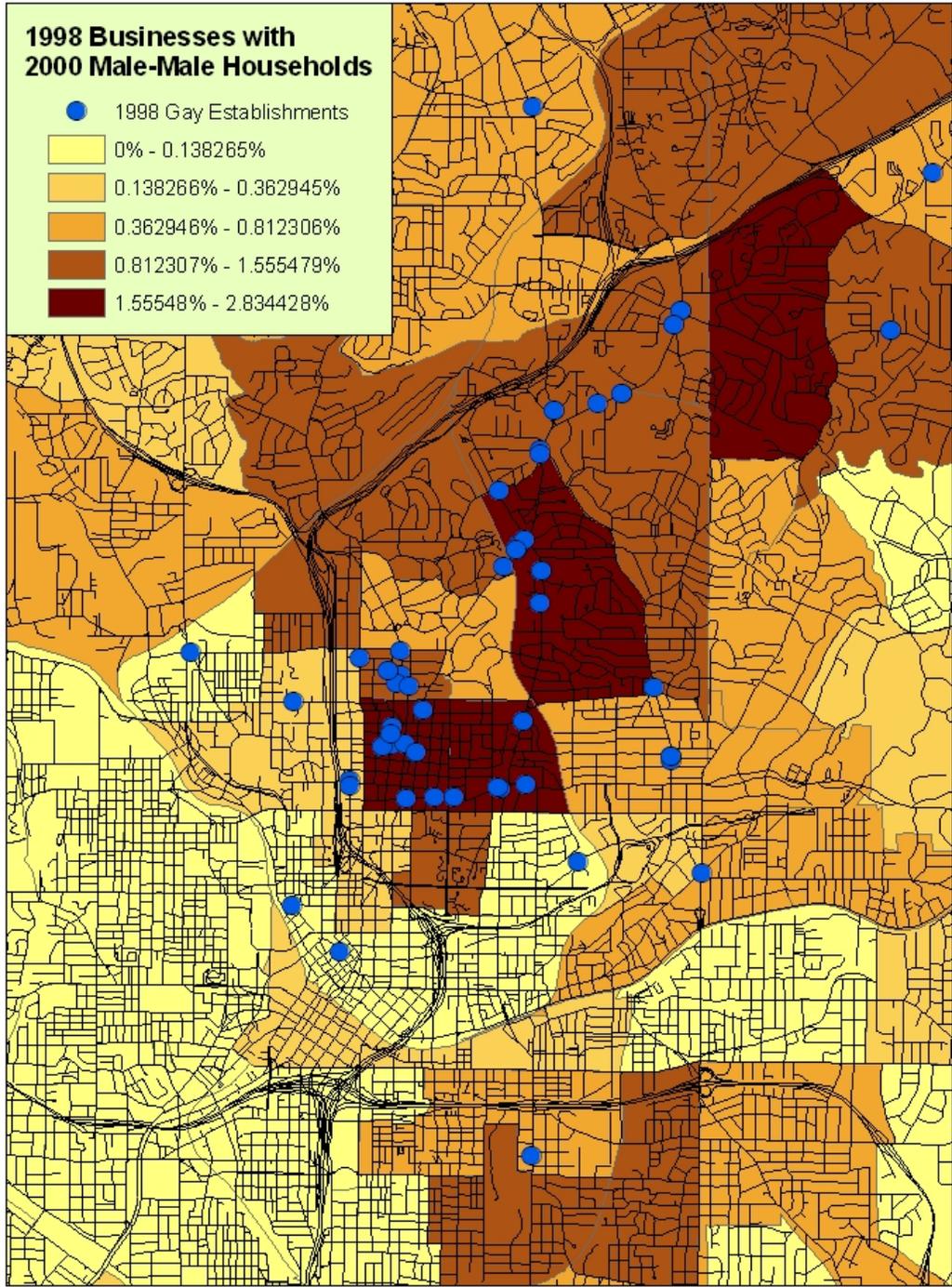


Figure 8

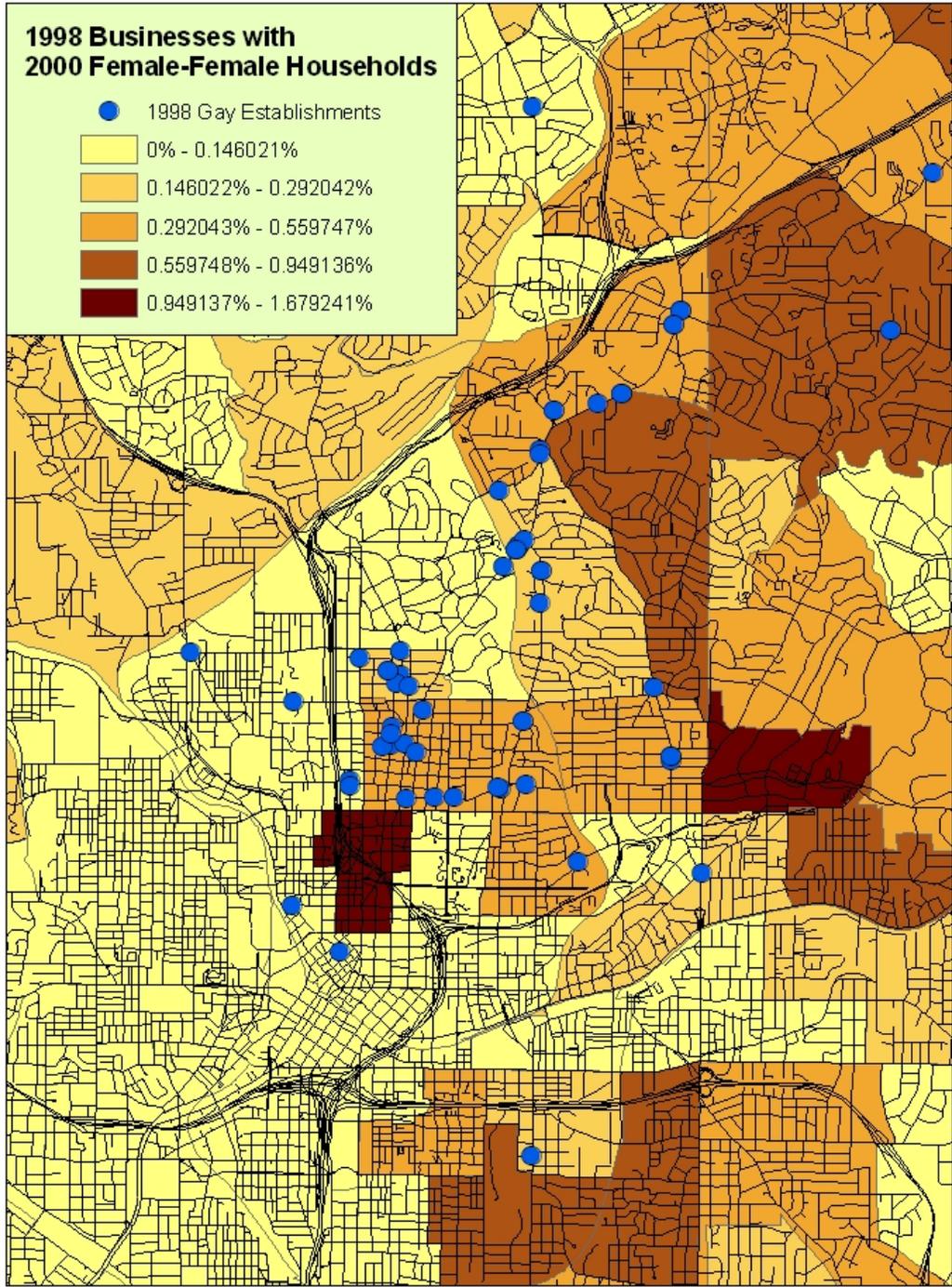


Figure 9

Percentages of Female-Female Households Per Census Tract, ACS 2005-2009

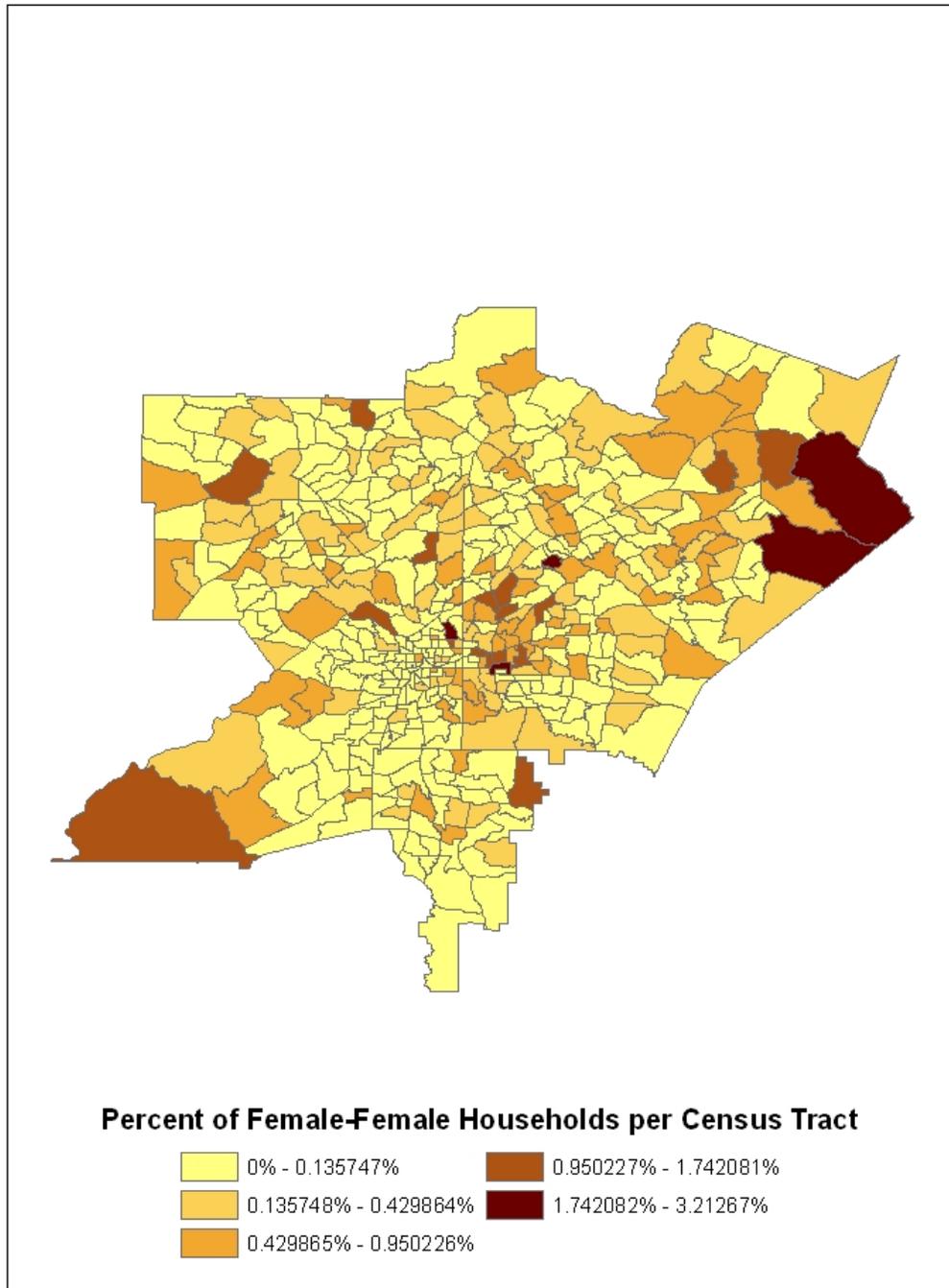


Figure 10

Percentages of Male-Male Households per Census Tract, ACS 2005-2009

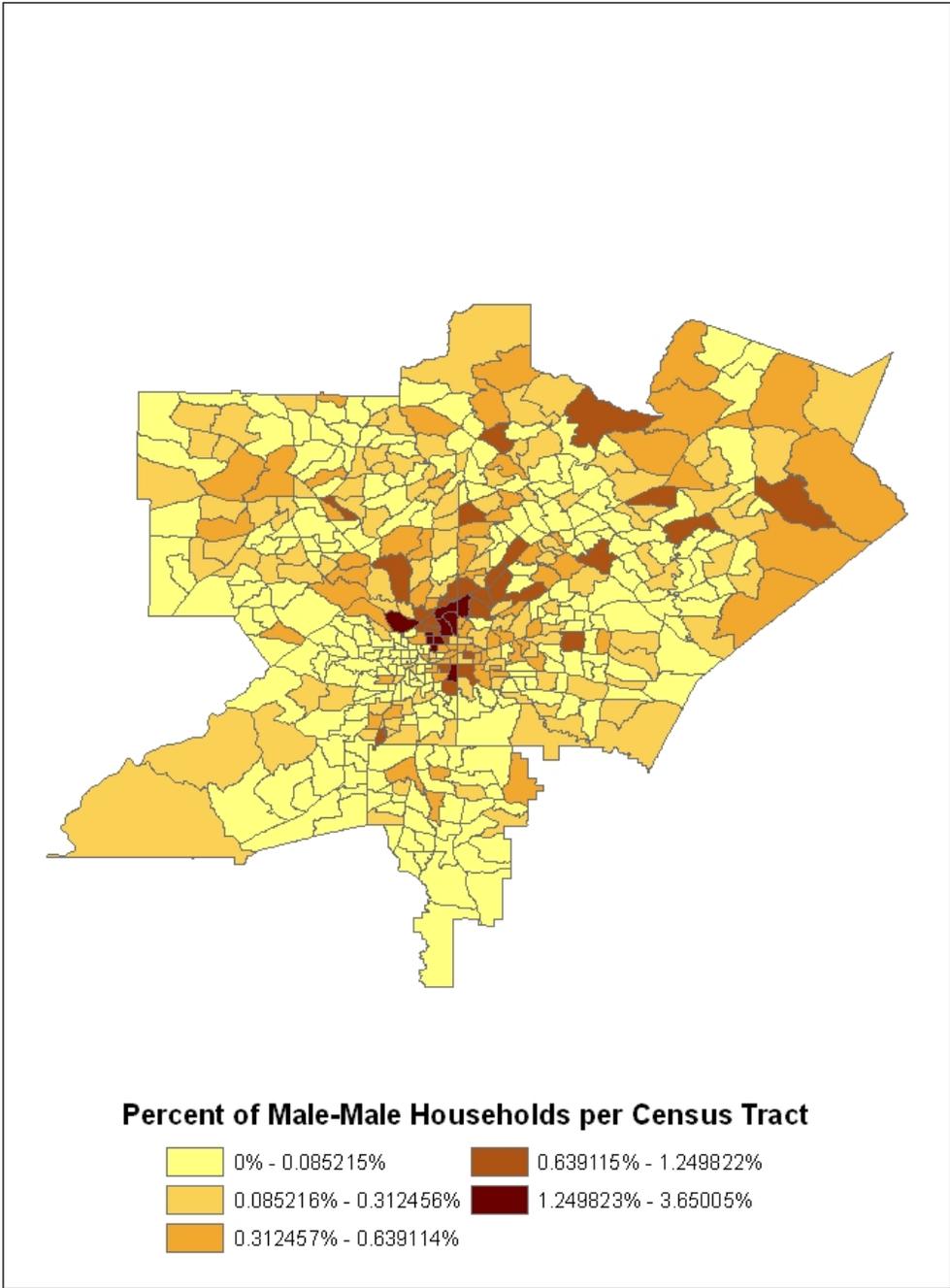


Figure 11

2011 LGBT-Businesses and Male-Male Households, ACS 2005-2009

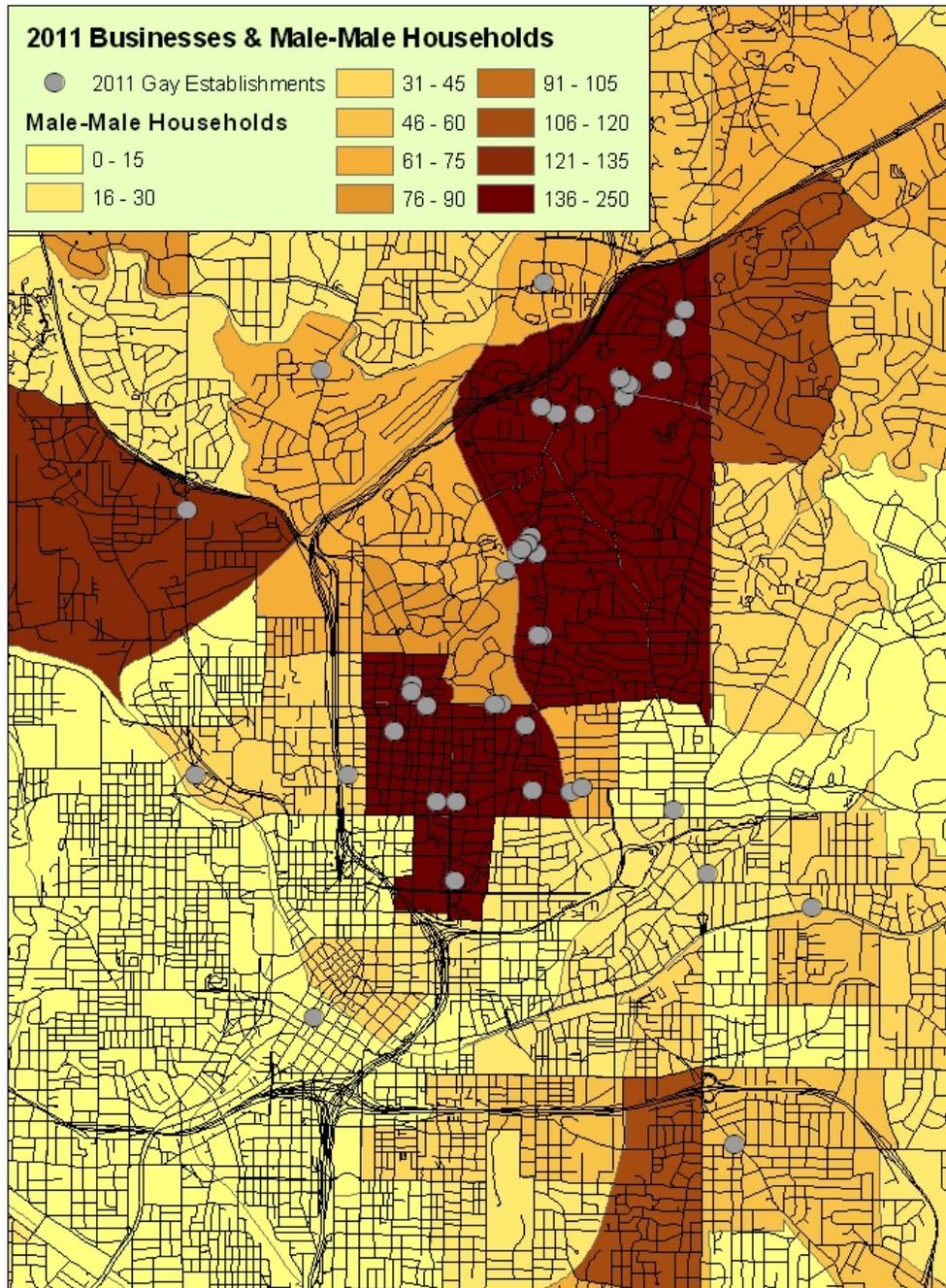


Figure 12

By mapping both the 2011 LGBT establishments and the 2005-2009 estimates, a definite trend emerges. Male-male households are again concentrated most heavily around LGBT establishments, with the highest numbers of male-male households focused around the Ansley-Amsterdam subcluster.

Conclusions

By examining both the “public” face of the LGBT community in Atlanta (businesses, organizations, establishments, etc.) as well as the “private” (same-sex households, private residences) an effective portrayal of the spatial distribution of the LGBT community throughout Atlanta is presented. This is significant for two reasons: 1) performing such an examination in a city like Atlanta helps to combat those trends in the field that would research large, bicoastal urban areas (San Francisco, New York, Los Angeles) and then apply those findings to wholly different cities (Atlanta) whose unique history, politics and society make such an extrapolation difficult; and 2) identifying both the “private” and “public” faces of the LGBT community bridges a gap between prior schools of thought that either focused entirely on “visible” aspects of the community (Castells and Murphy; Forsyth) or on “private” aspects of the community (Knopp).

Furthermore, the process of mapping the evolution of the spatial distribution of Atlanta’s LGBT population from 1990 to 2011 – both in its residential and commercial manifestations – has revealed a number of more basic findings and trends. One of the more significant conclusions reached after analyzing the maps of LGBT distributions is the continuous expansion of the community outward (following suburban development patters, away from the city center) over

time. This suburban shift is significant for a number of reasons, the most significant of which is that it represents the dramatic shift of homosexual concentrations away from the “urban” as it is strictly understood. As Aldrich states, “since the time of the Biblical Sodom and Gomorrah and classical Athens, homosexuality has been associated with *the city*” (Aldrich, 2004). The traditional understanding of the homosexual in western culture is of an urban individual – “homosexuality as ‘a form of existence’ is ‘essentially social’, ‘essentially urban’...Bech adds that ‘homosexual existence is a phenomenon *of* the city and not just something occurring *in* the city” (Aldrich, 2004). However, as the expansion of the LGBT community in the Atlanta area into suburban areas shows, “first, place and the city have importance for culture and politics; and second, place is created and altered through our interactions in and with it” (Kenney, 2001). This reinforces the notion that, while the urban aspects of the LGBT community may be important, it is the community that makes the space (and not the other way around).

There are two general schools of thought regarding LGBT concentrations within suburban/rural environments. The more established of the two theories is championed by such scholars as Knopp who “argued that suburban areas presupposed ‘heterosexual domestic arrangements as the societal norm’ with spatial ‘arrangements [that] were completely inappropriate for childless full-time male wage-earners living together and without women” (Kirkey & Forsyth, 2001). In other words, the preeminent ideology involving LGBT persons within the suburban/rural fringe focuses on the fact that most scholars feel the lifestyles they live are incompatible with the societal, heteronormative viewpoints of what constitutes “normal” behavior, and will inevitably be driven back into the urban center.

The second school of thought regarding LGBT suburban concentrations takes a different route. For example, in his 1987 study of suburban/rural gay men in California, Lynch found that “jobs/careers/income, a middle-class suburban home or condominium, a lover, and ‘the suburban good life’ were the primary goals” of most rural, gay men (Kirkey & Forsyth, 2001). Furthermore, “in terms of both words and deeds, the vast majority of those formally interviewed placed values of career and home ownership above their sexual and social lives” (Kirkey & Forsyth, 2001).

The Atlanta example seems to more closely follow the latter of the two schools of thought. While an overwhelming majority of LGBT establishments still exist within the traditional “urban core” of the Atlanta area in 2011, a growing minority had begun to shift to the suburbs – following the job and societal opportunities created by their heterosexual peers – an example of Atlanta LGBT community members subjugating spatial convenience in their “sexual and social lives” for increased convenience in their “careers and home ownership” (Kirkey & Forsyth, 2001).

A second conclusion that emerged upon mapping the spatial characteristics of Atlanta’s LGBT-oriented businesses was the relative decline in importance of Atlanta’s oldest and most widely recognized center of visible LGBT activity: Midtown. In this case, “decline in importance” refers more to the fact that Midtown was home to a smaller and smaller proportion of all Atlanta-area LGBT-oriented businesses from 1998 to 2011, rather than any notion that Midtown may be taking on a diminished status as an “LGBT area” in the minds of Atlantans – in fact the opposite is probably true (Doan & Higgins, 2011). In 1990 and 1998, 18 LGBT-oriented businesses were

located in Midtown. By 2011 that number had declined to seven. While “typical turnover of gay and lesbian bars is part of the normal growth and evolution of gay neighborhoods”, the fact that the number of businesses remained steady from 1990 to 1998, and then declined so significantly by 2011 suggests other forces are at work.

Together, the two trends identified via the spatialization of Atlanta’s LGBT community represent a “hollowing out” of the community’s historic urban form. As far back as 1971 (Figure 1), LGBT businesses in Atlanta were centrally located, segregated by gender, and adjoining (or within close proximity of) LGBT residential concentrations (Doan & Higgins, 2011). By 2011, while residential LGBT concentrations are still significant, LGBT oriented businesses significantly more dispersed geographically than in 1990 and 1998.

It is true that definite similarities in location of LGBT residential and commercial areas still exists in 2011; however, evidence would seem to suggest that the degree to which this is true fails to meet the same levels as in previous decades – especially within the community’s historic core (Midtown). To the extent that the loss of LGBT-oriented businesses in Midtown represents a loss of cultural identity for the group as some have suggested (Lee, 2007), then it may be possible to use planning tools and concepts to ensure continued cultural significance.

Why Planners Should Care – The Midtown Case Study

It is important to consider the implications that the growth in number and spatial distribution of LGBT establishments has on the planning practice within the Atlanta area. Traditionally, five areas within the planning profession have most frequently intersected with the LGBT

community: “residential enclaves and neighborhoods, zoning and housing, business development including tourism, historic preservation, and public space” (Forsyth, 2001).

While trends in other cities may suggest that planners are becoming more aware of the effects (both positive and negative) that planning can have on “non-conformist groups” such as members of the LGBT community, such a recognition has not taken hold as firmly in the Atlanta area – with planning’s culpability in the “hollowing out” of the city’s traditional gay core of Midtown serving as proof (Doan & Higgins, 2011). The Midtown example also represents a great example of how the LGBT community does indeed intersect with the planning profession most often within the five previously mentioned subgroups.

The decline in LGBT-oriented businesses within the Midtown neighborhood from 1998 to 2011 is staggering – plummeting from 18 establishments to just seven. Historically, LGBT-oriented businesses have always been closely tied (both socially and spatially) to LGBT residential concentrations (Castells & Murphy, 1982; Forsyth, 1997). Therefore, a “natural” decline in the prevalence of LGBT-oriented businesses would be linked to a similar decline in nearby LGBT residential concentrations. However, mapping the city’s LGBT residential concentrations for 2000 and 2009 reveals no such decline in concentrations in and around the Midtown neighborhood. Planning policies, rather than natural market forces, are the actual cause of the decline in LGBT-oriented businesses in Midtown.

Some of the actions taken by planning organizations such as Midtown Alliance and the City of Atlanta often trumpet development at the expense of Midtown’s historic LGBT concentrations.

For example, the Midtown Alliance implemented a series of planning guidelines and policies entitled the “Midtown Blueprint” in 1997. The creation of the Midtown Improvement District (MID) in 2000 stems from the Blueprint and is used “to levy additional taxes on businesses to fund millions of dollars of increased security, improved streetscapes, and other projects *selected by the Alliance*” (Doan & Higgins, 2011). In addition, the Blueprint facilitated the creation of two “Special Public Interest” (SPI) zoning districts within Midtown. The SPI’s almost immediately “introduced an expedited administrative approval process using a Special Administrative Permit (SAP)” that effectively removed all formal public-input into the development process by largely excluding the local, citizen-led Neighborhood Planning Unit from any development discussions (Doan & Higgins, 2011). By 2008, 11 years after the Blueprint was implemented, the “Midtown Alliance reported that new buildings had been completed with 8.3 million square feet of new office space, 2.3 million square feet of retail space, and 10,729 new multifamily residential units” (Midtown Alliance, 2009).

To some, at least, the large-scale development of office buildings, big-box chain stores and high-rise apartment buildings at the expense of LGBT-oriented small businesses represents a “recloseting of the LGBT population” (Doan & Higgins, 2011). Within Midtown, gay bars have faced particular pressure from outside forces – planner and developer alike. For example,

Existing gay bars and nightclubs along Peachtree Street were perceived to be not in keeping with the cosmopolitan image developers wished to project, and considerable pressure was put on them to close, including Backstreets, the Armory, and the Metro Video Bar. (ibid)

Backstreets, the Armory and the Metro Video Bar are three of the eleven LGBT-businesses that closed between 1998 and 2011. Of the seven LGBT establishments remaining in Midtown in 2011, only three are bars/nightclubs (Blake's, Bulldogs and Flexx).

There are a number of things planners *not* affiliated with the Midtown Alliance can do to help save some sense of Midtown's history as the city's gay core. One of the tools that will figure most prominently into any strategy will be historic preservation initiatives. Historic preservation is a subject that Atlanta area planners struggle with in general, let alone as it relates to LGBT historic sites. As it stands now, those LGBT-oriented businesses and sites of socialization remaining in Midtown (Blake's, Bulldogs, Einstein's, Flexx, Gilbert's, Joe's on Juniper, Outwrite Bookstore and Piedmont Park) remain at varying degrees of risk of future closure due to varying characteristics (located within an SPI; similar establishments targeted for closure in the past, etc. – Table 3). As the LGBT community within the Atlanta area continues to age, the issue of preserving the community's shared history will become increasingly important – and is an issue that planners should make sure to respect and keep in mind.

Historically, the recognition and documentation of LGBT neighborhoods is the most prevalent example of planners actively working with gays, lesbians and other nonconformist populations in mind (Castells, 1983; Adler & Brenner, 1992; Forsyth, 1997). When gay and lesbian communities/neighborhoods first became truly “visible” to the wider population, “an early model used to analyze this group was the quasi-ethnic community model, where gay enclaves were compared with immigrant ones in terms of residential and commercial structure” – such was the

Establishment Name	Risk Level	Pros	Cons
Blake's on the Park	Moderate	Proximity to other notable institutions (Outwrite, Piedmont Park) - concentration	Similar nightclubs have been targeted for closure in the past
Bulldogs	High	-	Isolation from other LGBT businesses; Similar nightclubs have been targeted for closure in the past; highly visible (on Peachtree); in SPI
Einstein's	Moderate	Restaurant	Isolation from other LGBT businesses; Located in SPI
Flexx	High	Low visibility	Bathhouse; all similar establishments closed; isolation from other LGBT businesses; similar establishments targeted for closure; located in SPI
Gilbert's	Low	Restaurant	Proximity to other LGBT establishments
Joe's on Juniper	Low	Restaurant	In SPI;
Outwrite	Low	Bookstore;	Proximity to other LGBT establishments
Piedmont Park	None	n/a	n/a

Table 3

level of removal that planners felt gays and lesbians occupied away from traditional “native” sentiments regarding sexuality (Forsyth, 2001). While this particular early example of how planners chose to conceptualize the notion of “gay communities” fails to take into account culture and the heterogeneous nature of the gay community, it at least began the process of legitimization within the eyes of some planners. Furthermore, the “gay community as ethnic enclave” school of thought still persists in some U.S. cities today – most notably, Chicago (Forsyth, 2001).

However, Atlanta is notable in its complete lack of participation in any type of formal recognition of the LGBT community within the field of planning. A review of Atlanta planning

documents “reveals that there is not a single mention of this population” anywhere (Doan & Higgins, 2011). Of special note is that fact that,

despite substantial concentrations of gay residents and businesses in Midtown, discussion of this population and its pioneering role in the redevelopment of Midtown is omitted from all of the Midtown Alliance Blueprint documents. (ibid)

The invisibility of the LGBT community to planning is important in that it will make any attempts at changing development patterns that may be harmful to LGBT interests especially difficult.

Finally, when it comes to issues of regulating and protecting public and private space as it relates to the LGBT community in the Atlanta area, planners may still have much work to do. As recent news stories suggest – specifically the example of an openly gay Pastor and his partner being physically assaulted after holding hands during a picnic – public displays of same-sex affection are examples of risky behavior even in the heart of what is considered “gay territory” – Piedmont Park (Cook, 2010). Furthermore, the raid of “The Eagle” – a leather bar with a history of over 25 years of continuous operation within Atlanta – by the City of Atlanta Police Department represents an egregious breach of trust between the Atlanta area’s LGBT community and those entrusted with planning for both the city and the region. On September 10th, 2009, the APD conducted a raid on the bar under the auspices of “searching for drugs” (Boone, 2009). During the raid, all patrons and staff were forced to the ground and handcuffed indiscriminantly while enduring repeated searches (Boone, 2009). After being pressed, the APD admitted that the raid was a result of complaints regarding “acts of illicit sex” within the club (Boone, 2009). The homophobic overtones of the entire are shocking – especially when one considers that bar raids

were a common characteristic of the 1960s in other parts of the country – but apparently continue to be used as a weapon of intimidation by the APD in the Atlanta area.

Despite the relative success with which planners have been able to operate in regards to the Atlanta area's LGBT community when it comes to topics such as residential enclaves; zoning, housing and NIMBY-ism; business development and tourism; and historic preservation – much progress can still be made regarding the important issue of regulating public spaces and securing private spaces. An inherent sense of safety is important for the continued prosperity, health and viability of any community. Planners must work to ensure that this sense of safety is extended to all aspects of the LGBT community within the Atlanta area.

Each of the ways in which the planning profession intersects with the LGBT community of the Atlanta area can benefit from the mapping of the community's spatial distribution over time. Recognizing trends in development and settlement will prepare those areas of the region that may not be familiar with how to plan for gays, lesbians and other nonconformist populations for the change that is on its way. Furthermore, it will reinforce the importance of planning for such populations to those who may continue to plan for sites of LGBT concentration.

Areas of further study (where holes can be filled in)

There are a number of areas that – had the time been available – would have allowed for a more in depth and extensive examination of the spatial distribution of the LGBT community (as well as its defined areas of socialization). The most significant of these would have been community interviews. The importance of interviews cannot be stressed enough – as certain LGBT

establishments continue to “fly under the radar” or operate in relative anonymity for fear of community reprisals (bathhouses are perhaps the most significant example). In fact, while examining LGBT magazines published over the course of 21 years, only one self-described “bathhouse” (Flexx) was found in the Atlanta area – a fact that certainly proves the continued anonymity of such organizations more than their lack of presence.

In addition, interviews with persons who belong to certain marginalized subgroups within the LGBT community (gays and lesbians of color; lesbians in general) would help to compensate for the inherent inequalities that are bound to occur simply by using those locations recorded for posterity within LGBT publications (truly marginalized populations rarely have the capital to found community magazines, newspapers, etc.). Furthermore, specifically for LGBT-persons of color, anti-homosexual stigmas continue to persist and may limit the likelihood that the sites of “gay socialization” specific to members of these populations would be recorded for history’s sake (or simply for the sake of wider public knowledge).

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ⁱ Gates utilizes Census and American Community Survey data on the number of same-sex couples to generate estimates of total population of the LGBT community. Using analysis from the National Survey of Family Growth showing that “4.1 percent of men and women aged 18-45 identify as gay, lesbian or bisexual”, Gates extrapolates this to generate a national estimate of 8.8 million gay, lesbian or bisexual adults living in the U.S. in 2005 (Gates, 2006). Finally, “assuming that the proportion of all same-sex couples who live in a given state or locality is the same as the proportion of all [LGBT] individuals living in that area, then...the size of the [LGBT] population can be estimated by multiplying the estimate of 8.8 million [LGBT] adults by the percentage of all same-sex couples residing in a given” area (ibid).