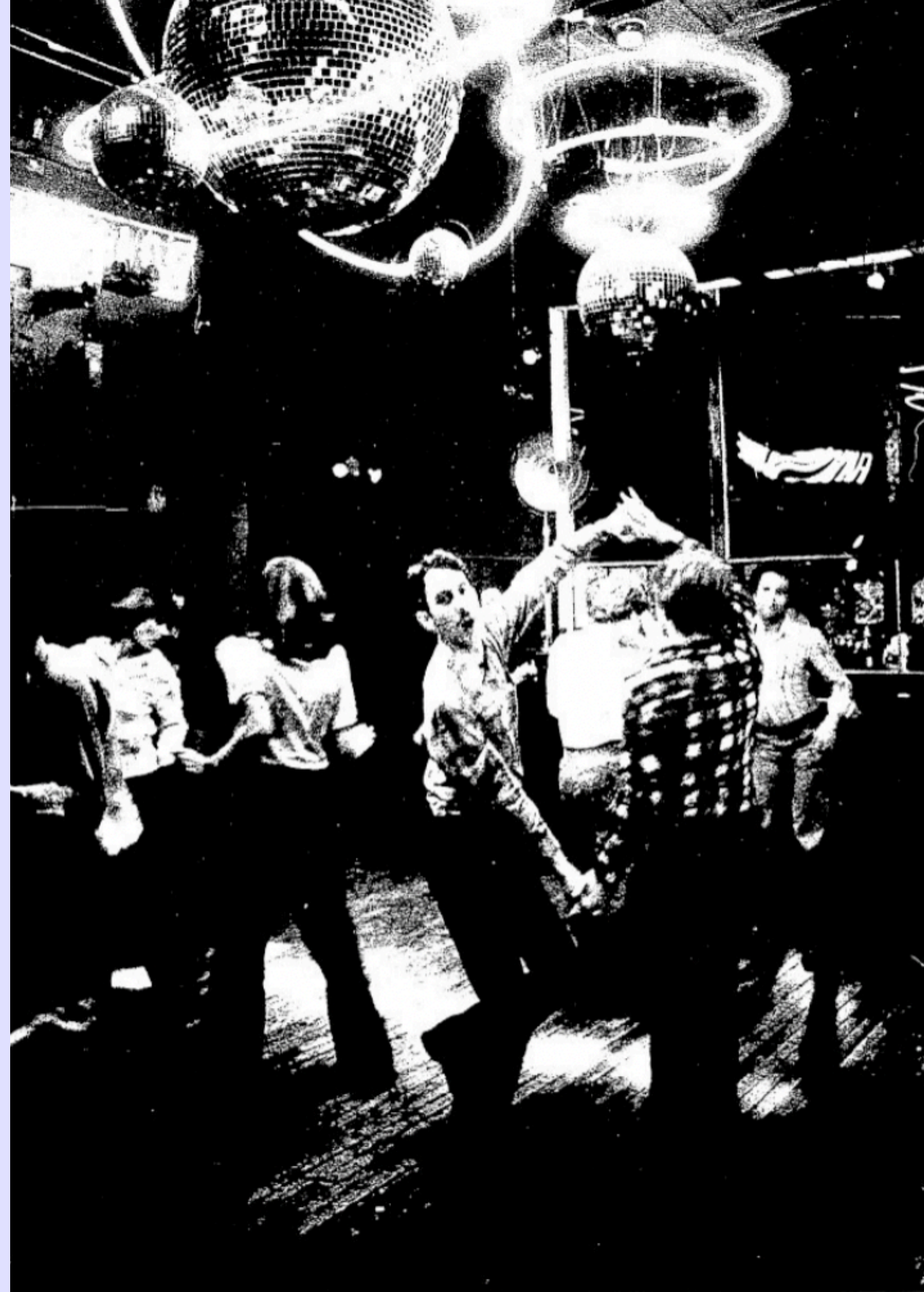


THE BEST LOCATION IN THE NATION?

QUEER COMMUNITY IN 1970S DEINDUSTRIALIZING CLEVELAND

GRACE PRYOR

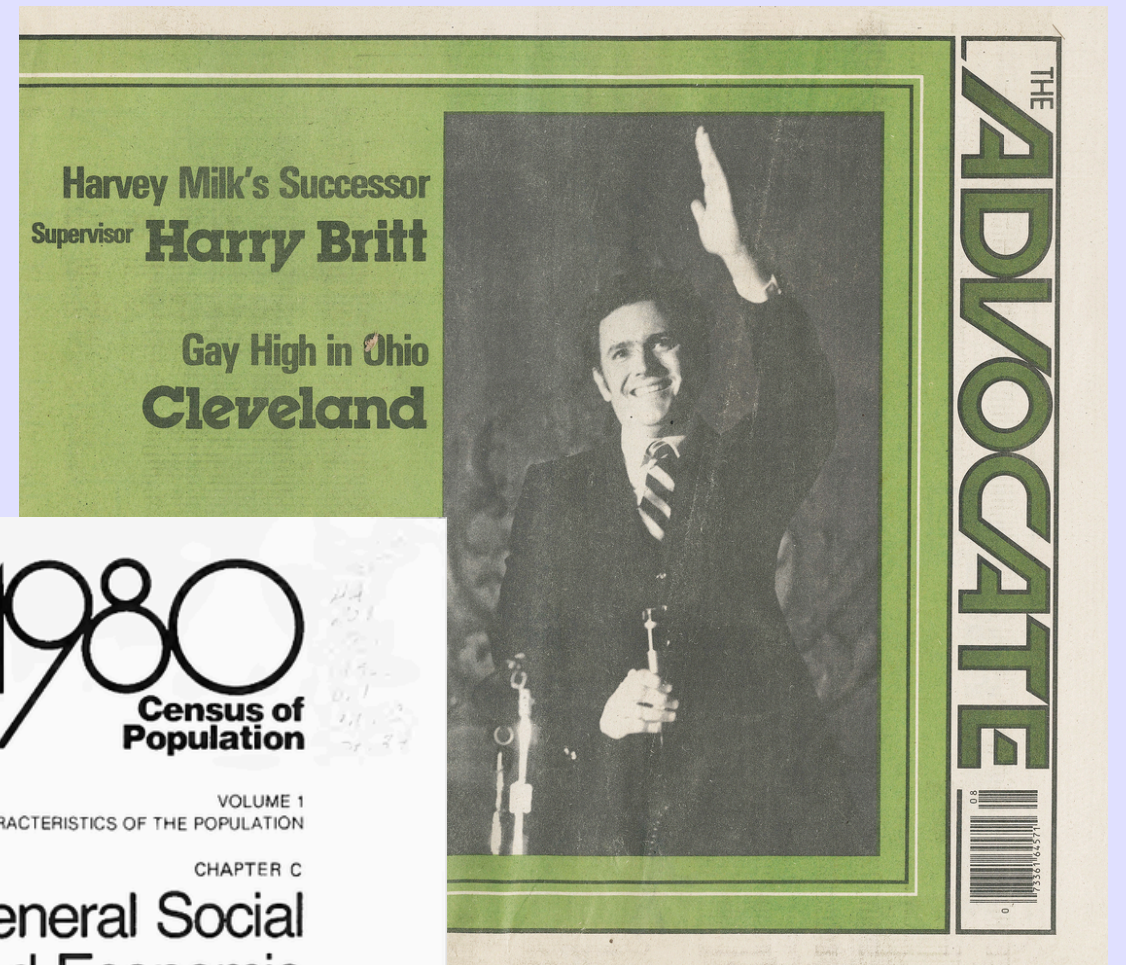
**WHAT DID IT
LOOK LIKE TO
BE QUEER IN
CLEVELAND
IN THE 1970S?**



HISTORICAL CONTEXT

- The post-Stonewall Uprising era featured a spate of gay bars opening and the flourishing of “gayborhoods” like the Castro across the country
- Meanwhile, Cleveland lost nearly $\frac{1}{4}$ of its population during the 1970s as residents and factories moved to the suburbs and manufacturing jobs disappeared
- How did queer Clevelanders navigate local deindustrialization and increased openness and activism among queer people nationally?





CLUB CLEVELAND 1448 West 32nd Street
the original Club Baths; private rooms
dormitory, steam, sauna. South rates.

POPULITAN COMMUNITY CHURCH 2600 Church Street
affiliated with the Universal Fellowship
of M.C., meeting at St. John's Episcopal
at the address above. Good for all people
interested in something other than the
bar and bath scene. Dances and shows
on a regular schedule.

CLUB BATHS CLEVELAND 1293 West 9th Street
wonderful decor, and terrific place for
exercise room, lounge, etc. on the upper
level. Great steam.

ADONIS THEATRE 1273 West 9th Street
located in the old Showboat Theater
building, first floor. Opening April 11.
Male gay films, with a bookstore to come.

UNIVERSITY CENTER (proposed)
In the area of the ADONIS theatre, but not
specific yet. Will provide medical and men-
tal health, and a youth program.

UNIVERSITY CENTER, CSU
weekly meeting, discussions, speakers, films
etc. 8, 45th & St. Clair

GODMOTHER'S II
* relatively new, mostly women. Varying
reports, but appears to be worth the trip.

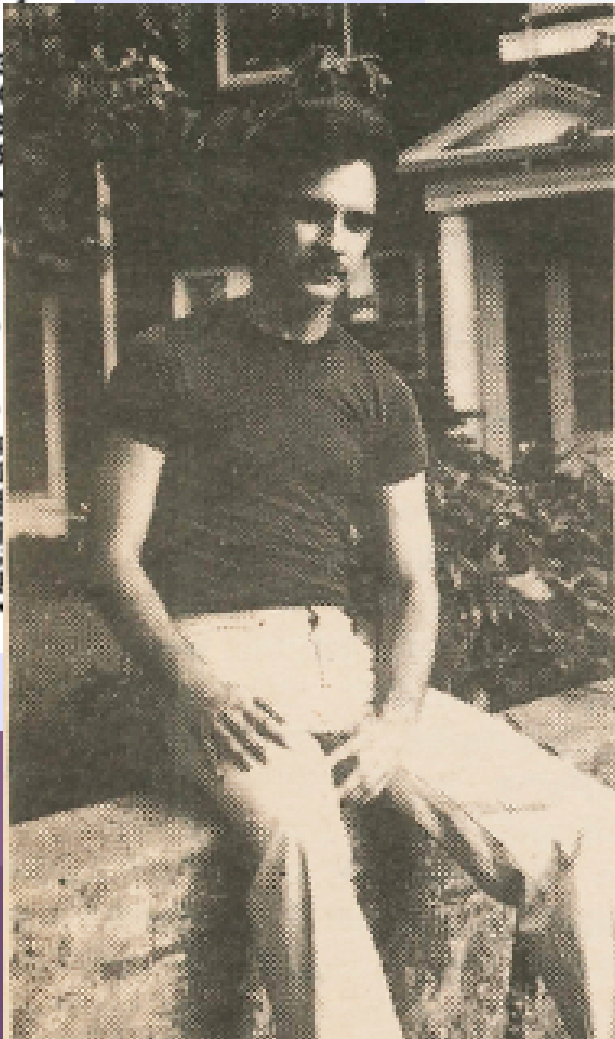
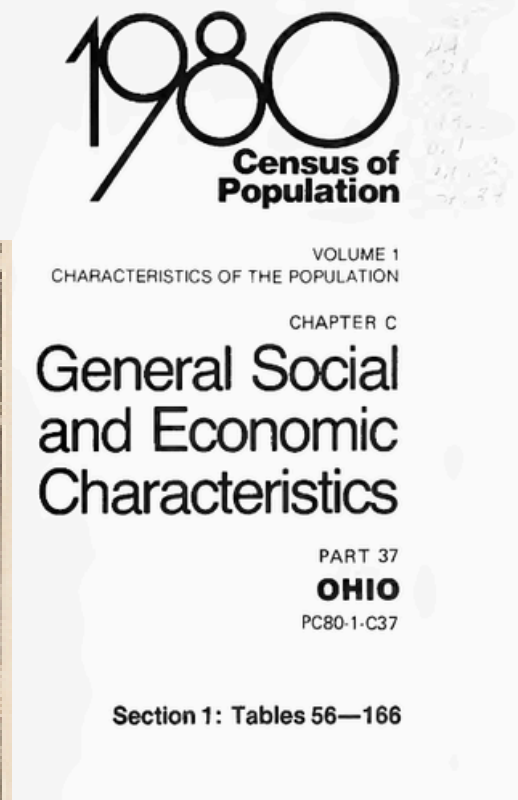
DIGNITY / CLEVELAND Hallinan Center, OSU
gay Catholic group (also for non-Catholics)
men and women, and growing. Good discus-
sion groups, dinners and parties on a regu-
lar basis.

THE SHAKER CLUB Shaker Square (on westmoreland)
*** fantastic inside, good music, open bar, lots
of people. But expensive drinks. Available
parking, but a little far out East.

KIDIEE'S unknown

THE NANTUCKET W. 117th & Clifton
* quiet neighborhood bar, no dancing.

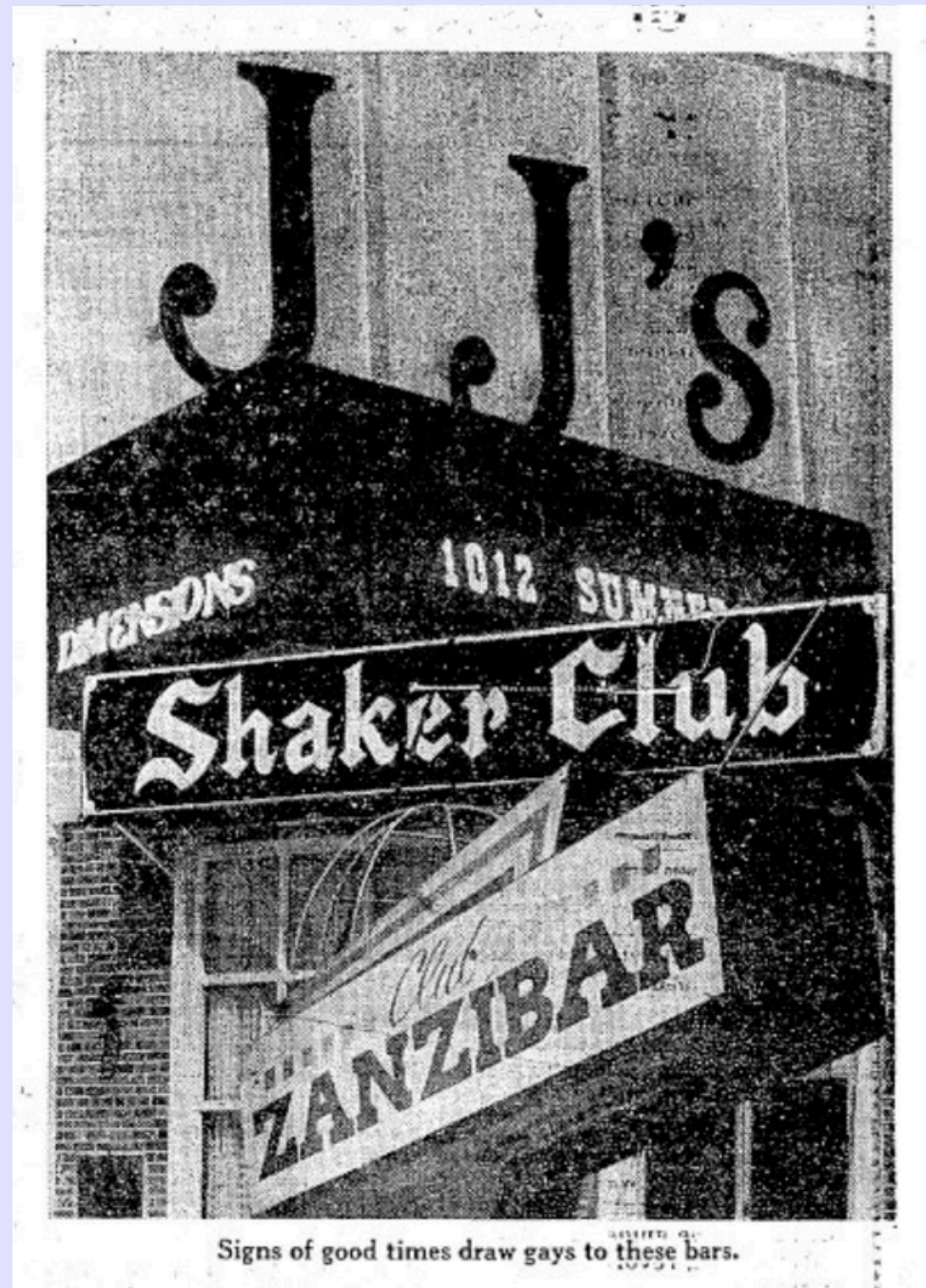
THE PICKWOOD LOUNGE W. 117th & Clifton
* quiet neighborhood bar, no dancing, piano.



CSU CENTER FOR PUBLIC HISTORY + DIGITAL HUMANITIES

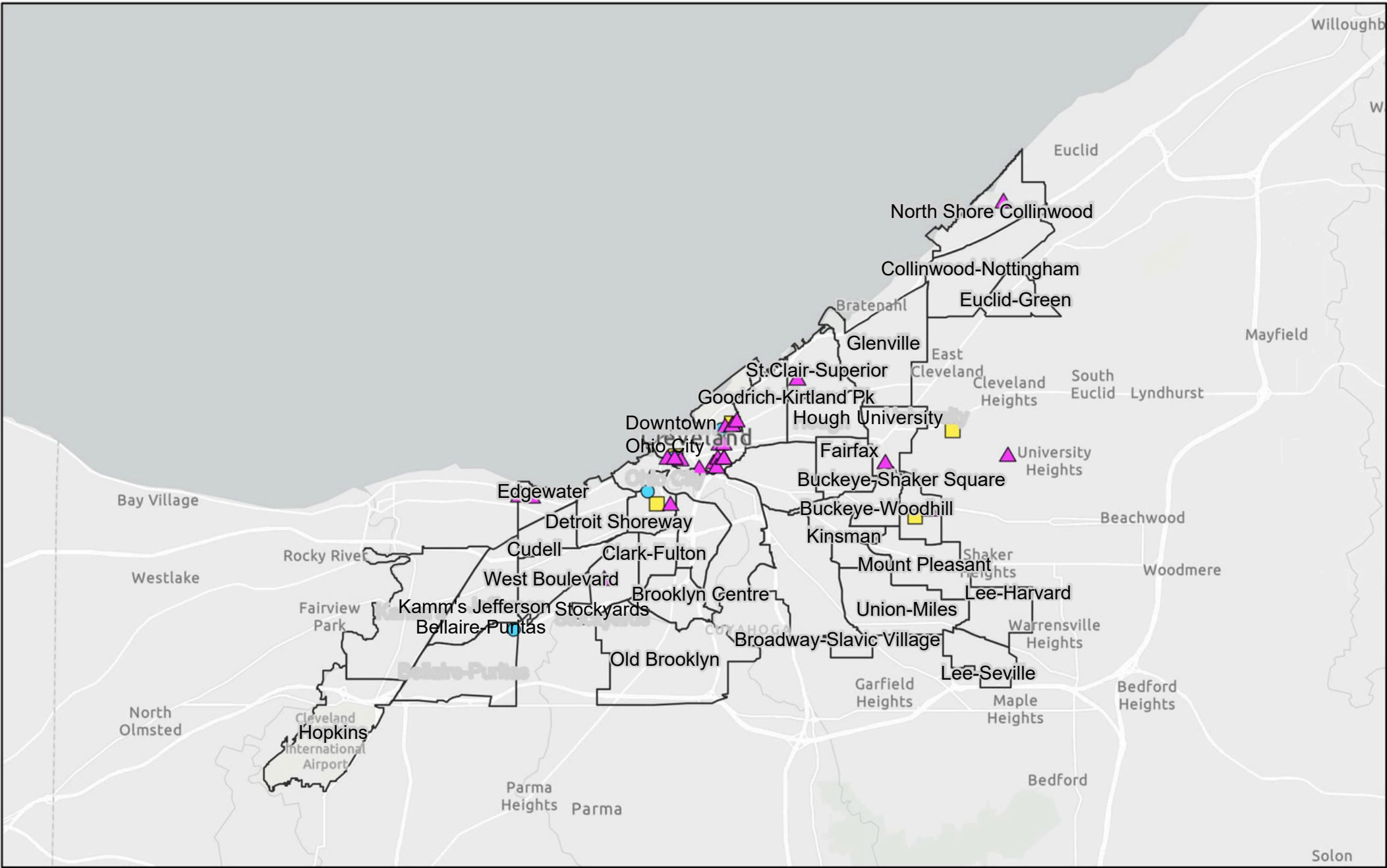
Queer Cleveland

GAY BARS



30+ gay bars and nightclubs operated in Cleveland during the 1970s, most of which opened between 1975–1977

Gay Spaces in Cleveland, 1970-79



3/29/2026

- ▲ Gay Bars
- Miscellaneous
- Bathhouses
- Neighborhood Borders



Sources: Esri, TomTom, Garmin, (c) OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS User Community, Cleveland City Planning, Cleveland Community

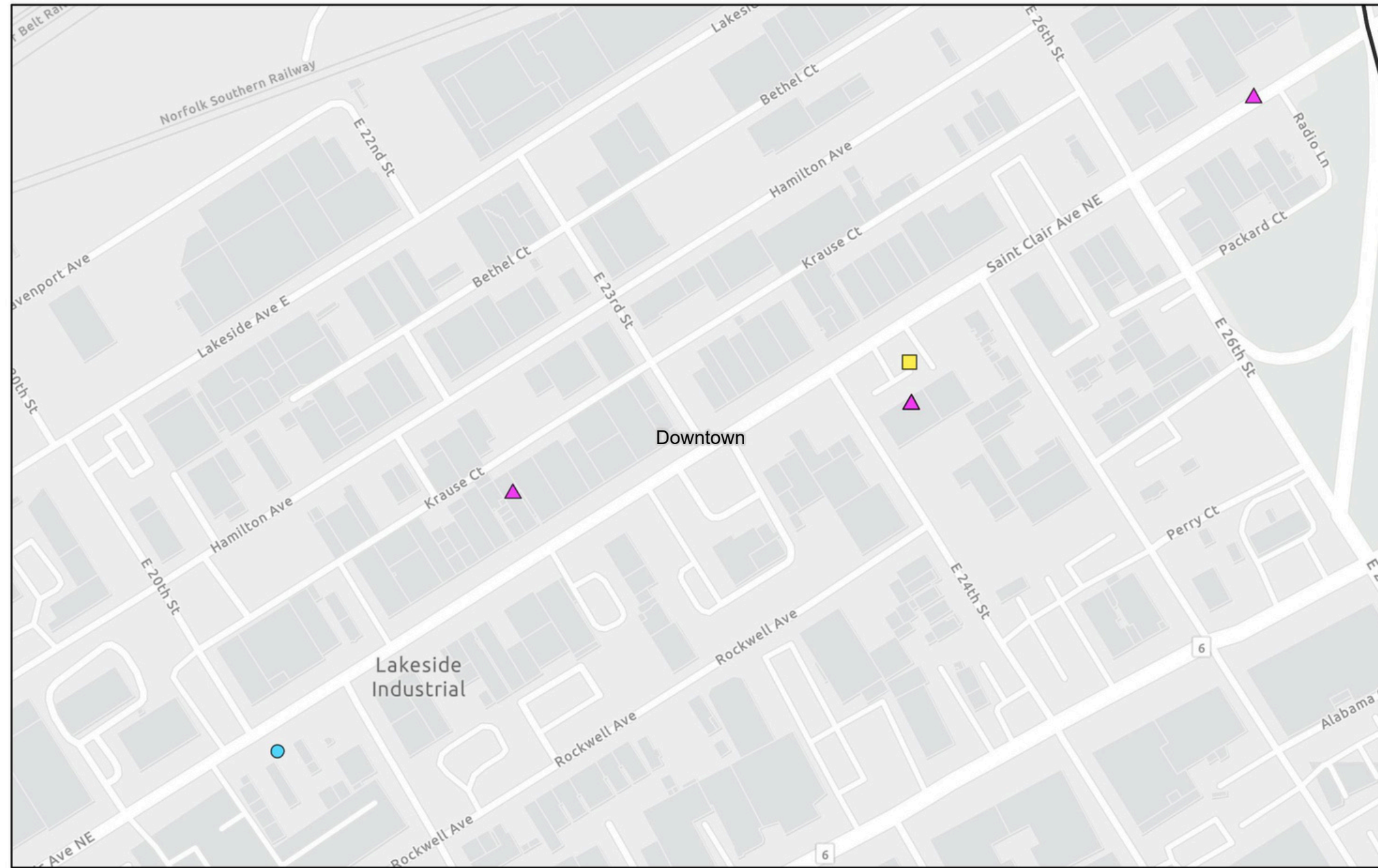
Gay bars concentrated in the downtown

“We thought there was nobody in downtown Cleveland after six o'clock but gay bars, gay people, lesbians, prostitutes, and drug dealers. We had the run of the city and oftentimes... me and a friend would walk from Traxx on West Ninth over to [New] Dimensions on East Ninth. You didn't worry about it because there was nobody downtown. You didn't have to worry about people spotting you or outing you. There was nobody downtown. It was ours, we had the run of the place. It was amazing.”



-GIL KUDRIN

Gay Spaces on the "Strip," 1970-79



3/29/2026

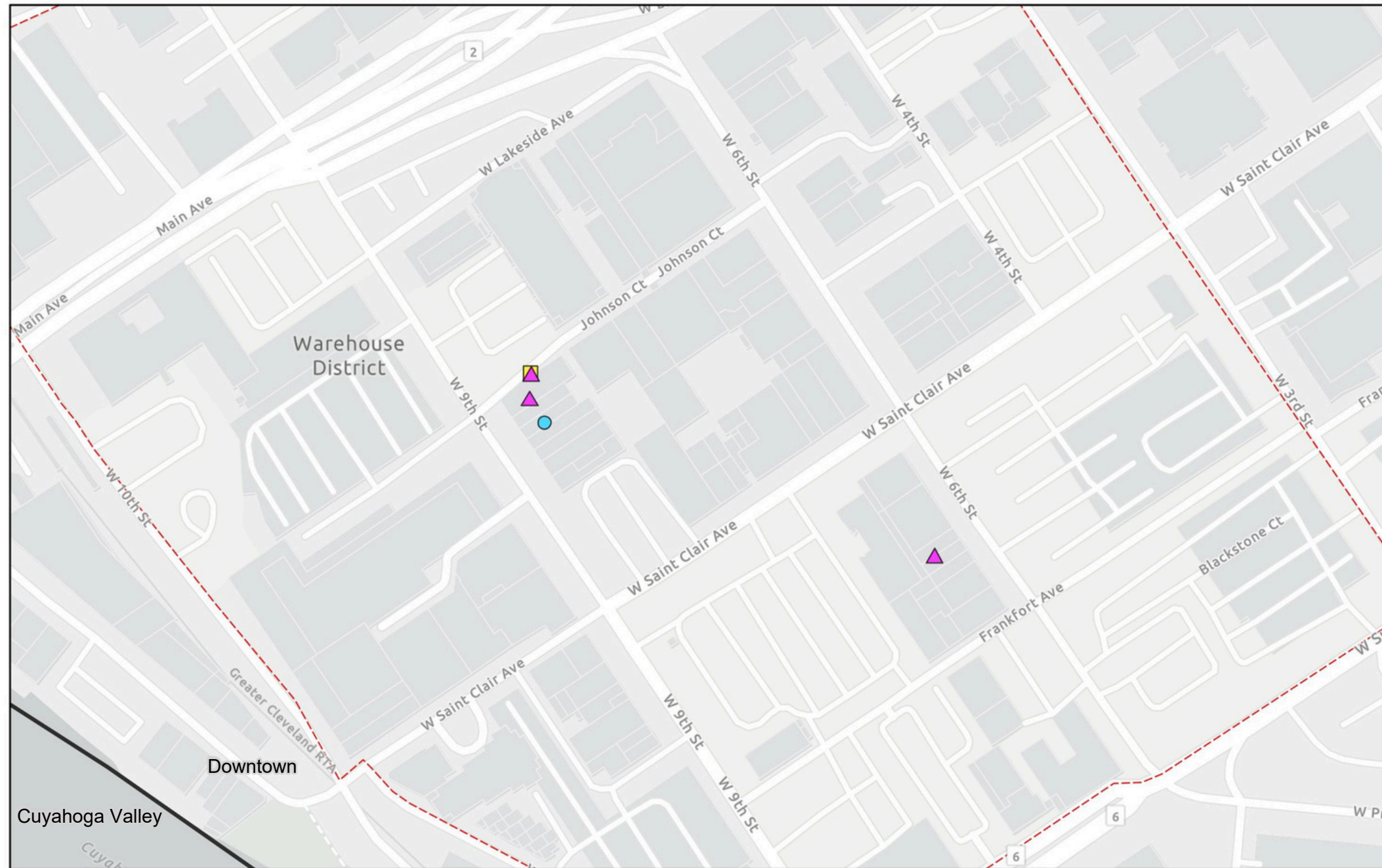
- ▲ Gay Bars
- Bathhouses
- Miscellaneous
- Neighborhood Borders



Sources: Esri, TomTom, Garmin, (c) OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS User Community, Cleveland City Planning, Cleveland Community

“Rapidly becoming the gayest street in Ohio”

Gay Spaces in the Warehouse District, 1970-79



3/29/2026

- Warehouse District Boundary
- Miscellaneous
- Gay Bars
- Bathhouses
- Neighborhood Borders



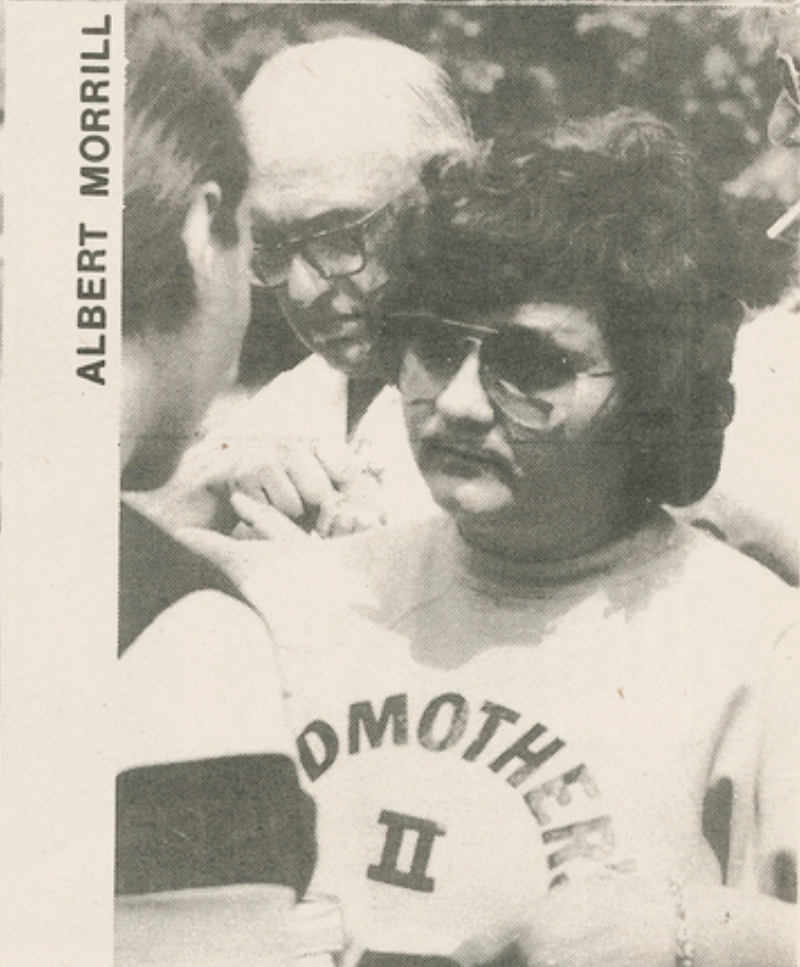
Sources: Esri, TomTom, Garmin, (c) OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS User Community, Cleveland City Planning, Cleveland Community

“Cleveland’s gay extravaganza”



West 9th Street in the Warehouse District in 1981 and August 2025

ALTERNATIVE SPACES



ALBERT MORRILL

- Gay bathhouses
- Gay baseball league, sponsored by bars
- Art and culture
- Dinner parties
- Lesbian feminist cultural & political activism
- Gay religious organizations

QUEER RESIDENTIAL ENCLAVES

- Small, predominantly white queer residential communities (vs. a traditional “gayborhood”)
- Typically in outskirts of city/inner-ring suburbs
 - Shaker Square
 - Ohio City
 - University Circle
 - Lakewood’s Gold Coast
 - Cleveland Heights



Ohio City Pride flag

“Gay pioneers moved to Cleveland and the Ohio City area in the early '70s. [...] And again, we were the urban pioneers that came into this neighborhood... it was just still not a desirable place to live. But there was some great property available and cheap. And, you know... we gay people, most of us don't have to worry about kids. So we could come into Cleveland and not have to worry about the school system and all that kind of stuff. And so that's when it began. [...] A lot of the historic landmarks were saved by the gay men, and a few lesbians, but mostly gay men.”



-BUCK HARRIS

CONCLUSIONS

- **Queer people in Cleveland found community in spaces vacated by deindustrialization and brought attention and economic growth to the city**
- **Follow-up research is needed on employment, politics, and Black queer spaces**



A faint, light blue background map of a city grid. The map shows a network of streets with various names and numbers. Visible street names include 'LAKESIDE', 'HAMILTON', 'ST. CLAIR', 'RUSSELL', 'SUPERIOR', 'PAYNE', 'CHESTER', 'E. 7', 'E. 14', 'EUCLID', 'PROSPECT', 'HURON', 'BOLIVAR', and 'DETROIT'. Numbers '9', '10', '11', '12', '13', '14', '15', '17', and '18' are scattered across the grid, likely representing block numbers or street identifiers. The overall aesthetic is clean and minimalist, with the map serving as a subtle backdrop for the central text.

**THANK
YOU!**