The Central West End (CWE) is considered St. Louis’s original gayborhood. From the 1960s into the 1990s, the area featured many LGBTQIA+ businesses and bars. Many lesbians and gays assisted with the neighborhood’s restoration efforts - returning many of the stately old homes to their original splendor. Through the 1990s, the CWE, and the adjacent Forest Park, was the location of the region’s annual Pride events. The following inventory of CWE-based organizations and businesses further documents this history:

- **City Cousin Restaurant**: (4111 Lindell Blvd.): Popular lesbian owned restaurant that had several incarnations at different CWE addresses over the years. A 1979 robbery at the Lindell restaurant would result in the death of restaurant employee and one of the robbers. Building demolished.

- **Chase Park Plaza**: (212 N. Kingshighway Blvd.): St. Louis’ Chase Park Plaza has been an internationally known upscale hotel and entertainment destination since the 1930s. The venue has hosted countless LGBTQIA+ community fundraisers and events. The complex was home for many years to St. Louis’s “gay hairdresser to the stars” Buddy Walton’s salon.

- **Doorways**: (4385 Maryland Ave.): Housing and supportive care for members of the St. Louis community suffering from AIDS was a scarcity in the late 1980s. To help deal with the crisis, an interfaith coalition of area faith-based organizations and social service agencies came together to create Doorways Housing in the Central West End - to provide a place for people with HIV/AIDS to receive care and services.

- **Forest Park**: St. Louis’s annual pride festival was held here from 1980 through the late 1990s. At the 1993 festival, Mayor *Freeman Bosley Jr.* (St. Louis’s first black mayor) addressed the crowd—the first of the city’s mayors to do so—and later announced that he had chosen lesbian activist *Laura Ann Moore* (1945-2015) to serve on the municipal Civil Rights Commission. Moore’s appointment was an important milestone for the city’s lesbian and gay movement. The “cannon” (northeast corner of Park) was a favorite community gathering spot for gay men in the 1970s.

- **Gay News-Telegraph Offices**: (10. South Euclid Ave.): The *Gay News-Telegraph* of St. Louis was founded in the fall of 1981 by Jim Thomas, a local gay activist, and several other members of the LGBTQIA+ community. Within a year TGN-T distributed "no less than 10,000 copies within the greater St. Louis area and throughout Missouri, southern Illinois and central Indiana." Covering local politics, sports, and events as they related to the gay community, the newspaper filled a unique niche in the region. Remaining in publication until 2000, its ownership was transferred to *Vital Voice* LGBT magazine.

- **Heffalumps**: (387 N. Euclid Ave.): Popular variety store in the 1980s featuring greeting cards, posters, novelty items, buttons, t-shirts, etc. Featured LGBTQIA+ themed items.
• **Left Bank Books** (399 N. Euclid Ave.): Since 1969, this independent, LGBTQIA+-owned bookshop has sold LGBTQIA+ and feminist literature and served as a community gathering place. In the 1970s, it was one of the distribution sites of *Moonstorm*, a St. Louis-based lesbian-feminist magazine.

• **Maryland Plaza** (Maryland Ave. and N. Euclid Ave.): Herbies’, a disco and restaurant noteworthy as one of the first local gay spaces with large, street-level windows, was open at the northwest corner of this intersection for several years in the 1970s. In 1980, what is generally regarded as St. Louis’s first lesbian and gay pride march began in Maryland Plaza before continuing down Lindell Boulevard to Washington University. The plaza has also long been at the heart of the Central West End’s raucous Halloween street party, a favorite annual event for many LGBTQIA+ St. Louisans.

• **LGBTQIA+ Bars**: The CWE’s inventory of former LGBTQIA+ bars is extensive. It includes **Bijou**, **Bottom of the Pot**, **Brandy’s**, **The Earl**, **Herbies’**, **Loading Zone**, **Mustang Sally’s**, **Potpourri**, **Silly Goose**, and others.

• **LGBTQIA+ Friendly Restaurants**: Several former CWE restaurants were very LGBTQIA+ friendly offering both employment and dining opportunities for the LGBTQIA+ community. These included **Balaban’s** (405 N. Euclid Ave.), **Chez Leon** (4580 Laclede Ave.), **Duff’s** (392 N. Euclid Ave.), **Hershel’s Deli** (4910 W. Pine Blvd.), **Kopperman’s Deli** (386 N. Euclid Ave.), **The Majestic** (4900 Laclede Ave.), **The Red Brick** (101 N. Euclid Ave.), and **Wild Flower** (4590 Laclede Ave.) among others.

• **LGBTQIA+ Owned Businesses**: Many CWE businesses, including hair salons, antique stores, art galleries, gift shops, and more had LGBTQIA+ proprietors.

• **Masonic Prince Hall Grand Lodge** (4525 Olive Street): The Masonic Prince Hall Grand Lodge was the location of the infamous Miss Fannie’s Drag Balls held annually on Halloween from the 1960s into the 1970s. Winners of Miss Fannie’s Ball have included local drag legends including Bette Davis and Lady Shirelle

• **Masters and Johnson Institute** (4910 Forest Park Ave.): Both lovers and intellectual collaborators, **William Masters** (1915-2001) and **Virginia Johnson** (1925-2013) revolutionized the scientific study of sex and pioneered sex therapy at their offices here. Concerned with both opposite-sex and same-sex couples, the pair published their findings on the latter in *Homosexuality in Perspective* (1979). Some physicians and scientists objected to the book, however, because in it Masters claimed that he had developed effective therapeutic techniques for converting homosexuals into heterosexuals. Building demolished.

• **Metropolitan Community Church of Greater St. Louis** (5108 Waterman Blvd.): The MCC first emerged in St. Louis in 1973 under the leadership of the **Rev. Carol Cureton**. Originally meeting at the Berea Presbyterian Church in Midtown, the MCC relocated to this old home in the Central West End in December 1974, becoming the first homosexual group in Missouri to own its own facilities. In 1977, lesbian and gay St. Louisans mobilized against **Anita Bryant’s** ultimately successful campaign to repeal a gay rights ordinance in Dade County, Fla., and held a rally here.
• **St. Louis’s First Gay Community Center** (4746A and 4940 McPherson Ave.): From 1975 to 1978, the **Metropolitan Life Services Corporation** (MLSC)—a secular offshoot of St. Louis’s MCC—operated “the Center” The center first worked above a storefront at 4746 McPherson Ave. Within a year, the center raised funds to buy a building of its own at 4940 McPherson Ave., as a space for queer people to socialize outside of bars. The Center featured a library and snack bar, hosted discussion sessions and concerts, and offered VD tests and a counseling service. The MLSC also published a magazine called *Gay St. Louis* and ran a telephone hotline.

• **Sunshine Inn** (8 ½ South Euclid Ave.): This popular vegan restaurant was co-owned by Rudy Nickens and had a large LGBTQIA+ following. Opened from 1972-1998, the National Coalition of Black Lesbians and Gays hosted a national meeting here in 1987.

• **Tennessee Williams Apartment** (4633 Westminster Place): Tennessee Williams was born in Mississippi in 1911, but as a child he moved with his family to St. Louis, where his father worked for the Brown Shoe Company. For several years they lived in an apartment in this building. Both because it was dark and cramped and because of his difficult family life, Williams had mostly bad memories of this place. This apartment inspired the setting of Williams’s breakout work, *The Glass Menagerie* (1944).

• **Trinity Episcopal Church** (600 N. Euclid Ave.): A racially integrated and self-consciously urban congregation since the mid-1950s, Trinity was one of the first churches in St. Louis to welcome openly gay members and to support them in their struggle for civic equality. The **Mandrake Society** and the **Gay Liberation Front**, the city’s earliest lesbian and gay political organizations, both met in Trinity’s parish hall in the early 1970s. In 1993, the first-ever forum for St. Louis mayoral candidates on lesbian and gay concerns was held here.

• **Washington University Medical Center**: Many advancements in HIV/AIDS care and research have taken place in the hospitals, clinics, labs, and physicians’ offices associated with Washington University in St. Louis. The medical center would also be a pioneer in gender affirming surgeries in the 1970s.

• **William S. Burroughs Home** (4664 Pershing Place): Gay Beat Generation novelist William S. Burroughs (1914-1997) lived in this home as a boy before moving with his family to Ladue, a ritzy St. Louis suburb. Youthful exploration of St. Louis’s downtown Skid Row helped spark Burroughs’s lifelong fascination with deviant elements of American society.
Bibliography:

Figure 1 - Central West End - St. Louis’s Gayborhood.
Figure 2 - Gay Community Center photograph, courtesy of Steven Louis Brawley.
Figure 3 - Cannon in Forest Park photograph, courtesy Steven Louis Brawley.
Figure 4 - MCC Church photograph, courtesy Steven Louis Brawley.
Figure 5 - Tennessee Williams Apartment Building photograph, courtesy Steven Louis Browley.
Figure 6 - Left Bank Books photograph, courtesy Steven Louis Brawley.