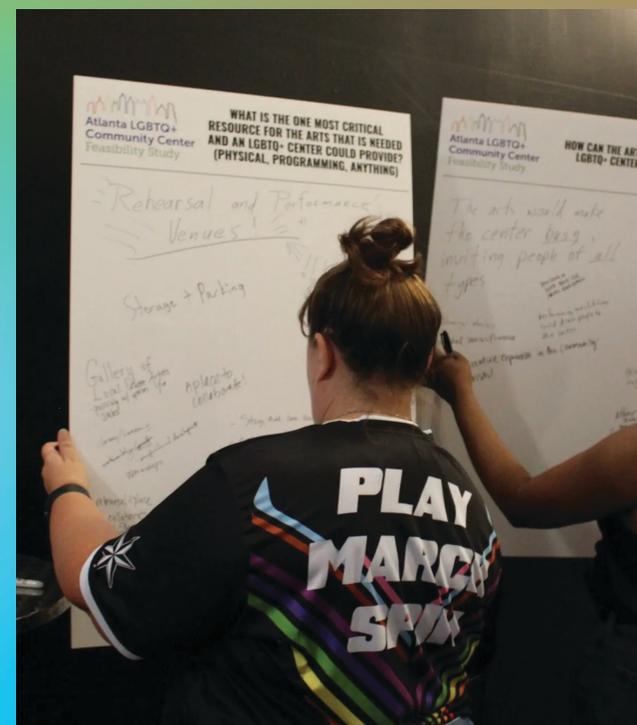


# ATLANTA LGBTQ+ COMMUNITY CENTER FEASIBILITY STUDY

PRIDE. POWER. POSSIBILITY.



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# com·mu·ni·ty

Noun · kə'myoʊnədē/

A **social group** of any size whose members reside in a specific **locality**, share government, and often have a common **cultural** and historical heritage.

A locality **inhabited** by such a group.

A group of people whose members cooperate together to **achieve** a common goal.

## Endorsed By

The proposal for the Atlanta LGBTQ+ Community Center has been endorsed by many trusted LGBTQ+ voices and organizations, including:





**Dear Community Champion:**

As Executive Director of the Atlanta Fulton County Recreation Authority, I am pleased to mark the completion of the LGBTQ+ Community Center Feasibility Study. This important year-long effort reflects the voices and vision of residents, advocates, and community partners who came together with purpose—sharing ideas, insights, and hopes for what a future LGBTQ+ Community Center could mean for Atlanta.

This process reinforces what we know to be true at AFCRA: When people have access to safe, inclusive, and inspiring spaces, communities thrive. Our role is to steward and activate those spaces—from iconic sports venues to neighborhood recreation sites—in ways that connect people, celebrate culture, and strengthen the social fabric of Atlanta and Fulton County, deepening our shared sense of belonging.

As the study is presented to Mayor Andre Dickens and the Atlanta City Council, AFCRA stands ready to continue its support while remaining focused on championing vibrant spaces and dynamic experiences that spark excitement, connect communities, and empower everyone.



*Kerry Stewart*

**Kerry Stewart**  
Executive Director  
Atlanta Fulton County Recreation Authority

## Neighbors,

I'm a proud son of Atlanta. No matter where I am in the world, it remains my favorite place on earth. We are home to one of the country's largest LGBTQ+ communities, the LGBTQ+ capital of the South, and the largest free Pride festival in America.

And yet, as LGBTQ+ people face relentless political attacks and escalating violence, there is still no centralized hub for our community. Dating back to the Stonewall Riots, LGBTQ+ community centers have been proven lifelines, places of safety, connection, and empowerment.

Imagine a young person who has nowhere else to turn finding belonging here. An elderly person rediscovering community. A person experiencing homelessness gaining access to job readiness resources, food, and clothing. Someone in recovery attending a meeting. A trans person finding affirming health care. And a place where all of us can access critical mental health and wellness services.

This center can also be a home for our culture, where our stories are preserved and celebrated, and where our creatives can showcase their gifts.

Above all, it will be a place where LGBTQ+ people and our allies can simply be, whether they come for essential resources, a cultural experience, or just to meet a friend for coffee.

From the beginning, this study has prioritized one thing above all: community. We have been clear that the voices of Atlanta's residents must shape this vision. With over 2,800 responses to our survey, and 97 percent calling for such a space, we have a moral obligation to answer that call.

Mayor Andre Dickens often says Atlanta is a group project, and our residents have given us an assignment. Together, with the support of our local government, philanthropy, the corporate sector, and every day ATLians, we can build a sustainable LGBTQ+ Community Center that not only meets this moment but will serve generations to come.



*Malik Brown*

**Malik Brown**

Feasibility Study Director, Atlanta Fulton County Recreation Authority (AFCRA)

**Atlanta,**

Over the past year, we have had the privilege of leading an extraordinary group of Atlantans. As activists, artists, elders, faith leaders, educators, and neighbors, we came together around one shared belief: our city deserves an LGBTQ+ Community Center worthy of its people.

This committee was not assembled to dream small. We were tasked with asking hard questions, surfacing honest feedback, and building consensus around a realistic vision that can stand the test of time. The result of that process is this Feasibility Study, a document that reflects thousands of community voices, months of rigorous research, countless hours of conversation, and a unified call for action.

Our charge was to understand whether Atlanta residents wanted an LGBTQ+ Community Center, and if so, how to bring it to life. The data and lived experiences made that answer clear. Our responsibility was to determine how to make it real, how to ensure it's sustainable, and how to do it in a way that reflects Atlanta's legacy of progress and resilience.

The recommendations before you represent the path forward. It is bold, achievable, and grounded in the same civic spirit that has always driven this city's transformation. The groundwork has been laid. The partnerships are in place. The community is ready.

Now, Atlanta must choose whether to lead once again, or to wait years for the stars to align for a moment like this. We know what this city is capable of when it invests in people, culture, and possibility. Let's rise to meet this moment.



*Alieizoria Redd*

**Dr. Alieizoria Redd**  
Co-Chair, Exploratory Committee



*Paul Conroy*

**Paul Conroy**  
Co-Chair, Exploratory Committee

# Executive Summary

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## ***A Defining Moment for Atlanta***

Nearly 2,800 people from more than 200 distinct zip codes participated in our multilingual Community Input Survey. This is the largest dataset dedicated exclusively to the needs, experiences, and priorities of LGBTQ+ Atlantans. With 97% of respondents calling for a community center, the message was clear, and it shaped the recommendations in this Feasibility Study.

The need is urgent. At a time when political attacks, inequity, and violence against LGBTQ+ people are intensifying, Atlanta lacks a centralized space for resources, connection, and culture. Although it is home to the ninth-largest LGBTQ+ population of any metro area in the country, it remains the largest U.S. metro without a dedicated LGBTQ+ community center.

LGBTQ+ community centers have rarely been built in times of comfort. They have been built in response to exclusion, crisis, and collective need. This Center, which is estimated to welcome more than 50,000 visitors each year, would stand as a visible commitment that progress in Atlanta will not pause under pressure.

## **I. A Clear Mandate**

In addition to near-universal support, the data revealed a critical gap in Atlanta's infrastructure: 62% of respondents cited a "lack of public LGBTQ+ spaces" as a primary barrier to their well-being. Respondents also pointed to limited social and networking opportunities, too few intergenerational spaces, financial barriers that make participation difficult, and persistent safety concerns.

No matter how the data is sliced across identity groups, five clear and consistent community needs rose to the top:

1. Mental Health & Counseling (Top Priority)
2. LGBTQ+ Youth Programs
3. History & Cultural Museum
4. Elder Programs & Activities
5. Event & Performance Space

## **II. A Sustainable, Multi-Pronged Business Model**

This Center is designed for long-term financial sustainability. Our operating model moves beyond a traditional nonprofit approach by building toward a diverse revenue strategy that supports stability, resilience, and the ability to keep the doors open for generations. Rather than relying primarily on government funding, the Center is intended to sustain itself through a balanced mix of earned income, leased tenancy, and philanthropy.

The estimated \$2.8 million annual operating budget could be supported through a robust revenue mix:

- **Earned Revenue:** Event rentals, coworking memberships, ticket sales, and mission-aligned fee-for-service offerings.
- **Leased Tenancy:** Market-rate and partnership leases for a coffee shop, healthcare provider, gym, and nonprofit office space.
- **Philanthropy:** Individual giving, institutional grants, corporate partnerships, sponsorships, and other nonprofit fundraising strategies.



### III. Capital Investment

To bring this vision to life, we need a \$38M Capital Campaign. This investment covers all hard and soft construction costs as well as the first full year of operations. This strategy ensures the Center opens "in the green"—debt-free and fully operational from day one.

Early market testing has already produced a \$4 million Letter of Interest from a prospective operator, signaling strong institutional confidence in the Center's viability. Additional discussions with subject-matter experts indicate that the project's revenue-generating spaces will be highly competitive within the Atlanta market.

### IV. The Facility: A Community Hub

To meet the needs identified through our Community Input Survey, we are proposing a 35,000 gross square foot (GSF) cultural and civic home for Atlanta's LGBTQ+ community. This hub dedicates 25,000 square feet to active community programming across four distinct zones:

- **Level 1: Possibility (Community & Commerce):** A high-traffic social floor featuring a public art atrium and two revenue-generating anchors: a mission-aligned coffee shop and a queer boutique gym.
- **Level 2: Power (Health & Wellness):** A comprehensive care floor. It combines a low-barrier Drop-In Resource Center (case managers, showers, laundry, clothing, food) with a Medical Suite operated by an experienced healthcare partner, including on-site mental health clinicians and therapy services.
- **Level 3: Convergence (Work & Innovation):** A flexible administrative hub featuring a "Queer Coworking" space to house and incubate LGBTQ+ nonprofits and entrepreneurs.
- **Level 4: Pride (Culture & Events):** The economic engine. A flexible Event Space and Cultural Exhibit Hall capable of hosting 600+ guests, supported by a commercial kitchen and rooftop terrace.



One safe space on a bad day could mean the world of difference for a kid that would have ripple effects into their future.

*Anonymous Survey Respondent*



## V. Economic & Social Impact

Beyond its social mission, the Center will serve as an economic catalyst for the city:

- **The "Third Place" Economy:** Unlike a traditional clinic or agency, this facility is designed as a "Third Place"—a daily destination for connection beyond home and work. By integrating fitness, coffee, coworking, and culture, we project foot traffic exceeding 50,000 visits per year.
- **Job Creation:** The project will generate ~220 temporary construction jobs. Upon opening, the hub will sustain ~50 permanent positions across the building, including administration, medical staff, retail operators, and tenant employees.
- **Tourism:** With its cultural exhibit hall and event space, the Atlanta LGBTQ+ Community Center can serve as both a cultural anchor and a de facto visitors center for queer Atlanta. It's expected to draw thousands of out-of-town guests annually—wedding parties, festivalgoers, researchers, and conference attendees alike.

According to a 2024 CenterLink report, LGBTQ+ community centers nationwide serve more than 3 million visitors annually and make nearly 14,800 partner referrals each week.

As Atlanta vies for global events like FIFA, the Super Bowl, and the Olympics, the Center offers a powerful platform to highlight the city's leadership at the intersection of LGBTQ+ identity, civil rights, and sport—while bolstering its appeal to pro-equality companies and convenings like World Pride, the Gay Games, and Out & Equal.

## VI. Unburdening Our Government Partners:

This Center can serve as a critical partner to the City of Atlanta, Fulton County, and the State of Georgia, helping relieve pressure on public infrastructure and service systems.

- **Relieving Public Systems:** By centralizing housing navigation, affirming and comprehensive healthcare, workforce development, youth engagement, senior services, food security, mental health crisis services, and more, the Center reduces reliance on overextended municipal resources, emergency rooms, shelters, courts, jails, and 911 systems.
- **Higher Efficacy:** As a trusted community anchor, the Center can deliver sensitive services—such as HIV prevention and youth homelessness intervention—with a cultural competence and agility that traditional government agencies cannot replicate.
- **Civic Engagement:** The Center can serve as a trusted, nonpartisan hub for civic participation by hosting voter education, voter registration, census outreach, and other public information efforts that expand access and strengthen community connection to civic life. In partnership with election officials and public agencies, the space could also be considered for future use as a polling location or other civic access site. Additionally, the Center can partner with academic institutions and research organizations to help address Atlanta-specific data gaps and support community-informed policy solutions that can be shared more broadly.

## Conclusion

Atlanta is ready. The community has spoken, the data is clear, and the financial model is sustainable. By building this Center, we do not just construct a building; we cement Atlanta's legacy as the capital of the LGBTQ+ South—a city that protects its people, celebrates its diversity, and leads the nation in civil and human rights.





As Fulton County District Attorney, I believe every resident deserves safety, dignity, and access to meaningful support. I am proud to support the proposed plans for an LGBTQ+ Community Center in Atlanta. By expanding victim services, diversion opportunities, and community-based resources, this Center can strengthen our city and Fulton County as a whole. Our office looks forward to supporting efforts that help people heal, prevent harm, and ensure every community is seen and protected.

**Fani T. Willis**  
District Attorney, Fulton County



# Understanding LGBTQ+ Community Centers in America

In our research, we identified approximately 200, brick-and-mortar LGBTQ+ Community Centers across the United States and its territories. These centers exist in nearly every major city—with some cities hosting as many as five—but notably, Atlanta currently lacks a dedicated, full-service LGBTQ+ community center, despite being home to one of the country's largest LGBTQ+ populations. In addition to urban hubs, we found thriving centers in smaller cities and rural regions, offering critical services to historically underserved communities.

LGBTQ+ Community Centers in the U.S. began emerging between the late 1960s and mid-1970s, with early examples in Los Angeles, New York, San Diego, and Philadelphia. These centers were born out of the momentum of the Stonewall uprising in 1969 and the broader gay liberation movement. By 1976, the model had spread internationally, with the establishment of one of the first LGBTQ+ centers outside the U.S. in the United Kingdom.

The 1980s and 1990s saw a rapid expansion of community centers as the LGBTQ+ community faced the devastating impact of the HIV/AIDS crisis. In the absence of government action, these centers became lifelines—offering health clinics, support groups, and mobilization hubs for activism, including for groups like ACT UP. Many of today's established centers grew from these early acts of mutual aid and resistance.

By the 1990s and early 2000s, as LGBTQ+ visibility increased and legal protections began to expand in some parts of the country, community centers evolved as well—scaling up services, acquiring larger spaces, and adding youth programs, senior services, mental health care, and cultural initiatives.

The hundreds of centers across America do far more than provide services. They operate as cultural hubs where LGBTQ+ people find care, build community, organize for justice, and safeguard our history for the generations coming next.



## Services Offered

LGBTQ+ community centers are on the frontlines of safety, healing, and opportunity—tailored to meet the evolving needs of the people they serve. While each center reflects the priorities of its local community, national data offers a clear picture of how these centers function as dynamic service hubs across the country.

The table below summarizes findings from our review of LGBTQ+ centers in the United States. Percentages are rounded for simplicity and reflect the proportion of centers offering each category of service.

SERVICE	% OF CENTERS OFFERING
Meeting & Support Group Spaces	~100%
Educational Opportunities	~95%
LGBTQ+ Youth Programs	~86%
Legal Aid & Advocacy Support	~80%
LGBTQ+ Elder Programs	~41%
Recovery Resources	~36%
Community Food Pantry	~30%
Café, Lounge, or Library	~25%
Career & Job Readiness Programs	~25%
LGBTQ+ Arts Space	~23%
Housing	~20%
Gender-Affirming Healthcare Services	~18%
Office Space for LGBTQ+ Nonprofits	~15%
Gym & Wellness Services	~10%
Comprehensive Healthcare Services	~10%
LGBTQ+ History & Cultural Museum/Archive	~8%
Co-Working Rental Space	~5%



**It should immediately  
feel like a safe and  
affirming place to be  
exactly who you are**

*Anonymous Survey Respondent*

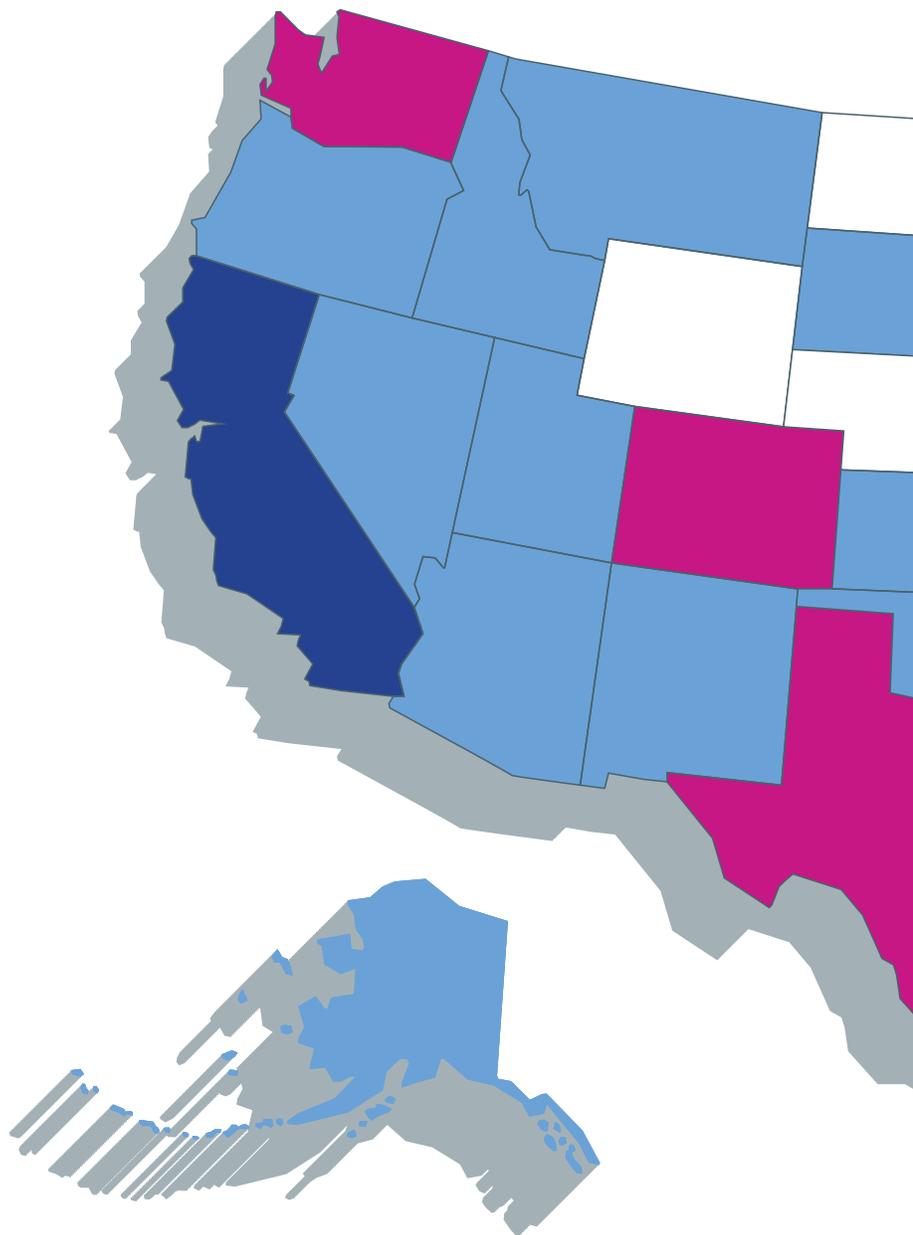


# LGBTQ+ Community Centers in America

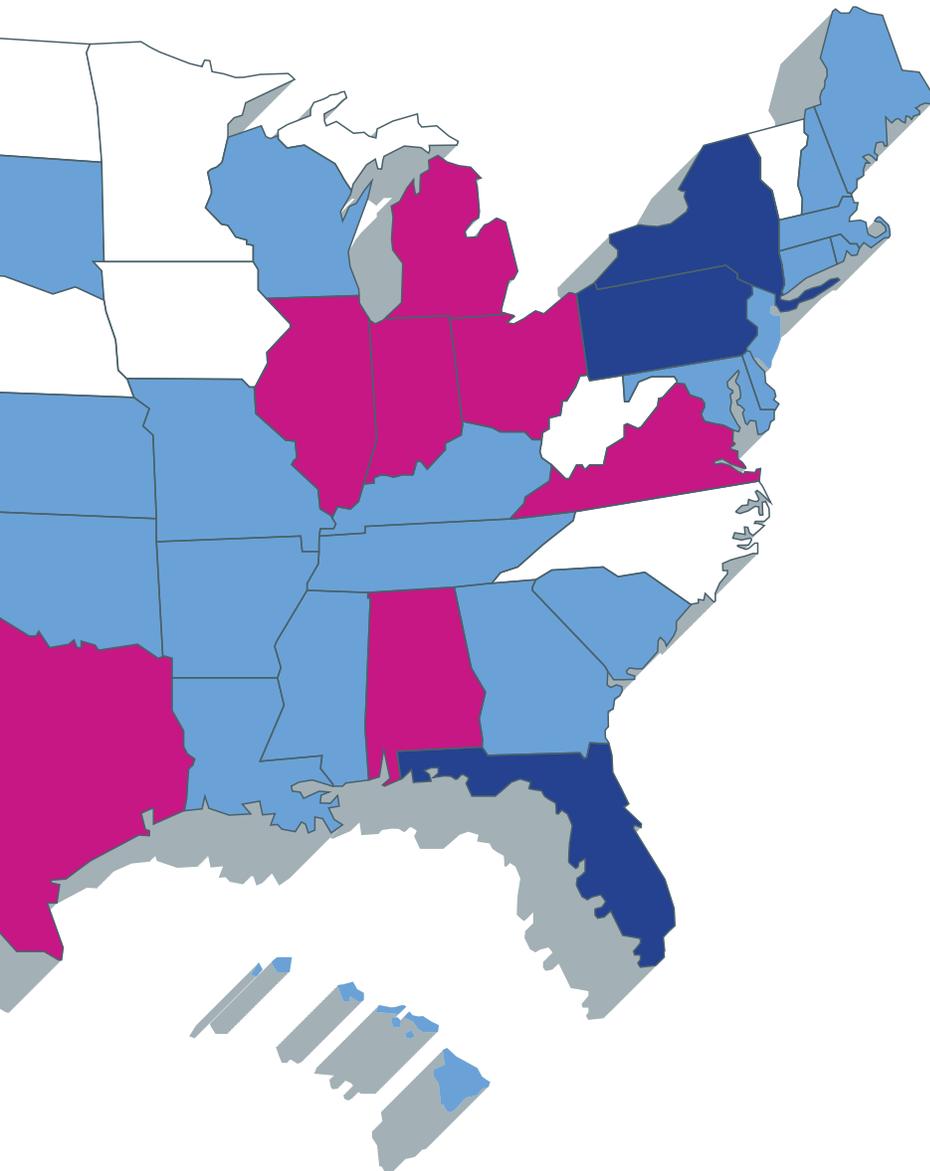
More than 200 centers operate nationwide, from major coastal hubs to small towns and rural regions. Our map shows how states of every size have invested in dedicated LGBTQ+ spaces.

It also surfaces a striking truth: while peer cities across the country support multiple centers, Georgia has just one, located hours from its capital and its largest concentration of LGBTQ+ residents. This national context makes clear the urgency, and the opportunity, before Atlanta.

<b>Alabama</b>	6
<b>Alaska</b>	1
<b>Arizona</b>	2
<b>Arkansas</b>	1
<b>California</b>	32
<b>Colorado</b>	5
<b>Connecticut</b>	2
<b>District of Columbia</b>	2
<b>Delaware</b>	1
<b>Florida</b>	11
<b>Georgia</b>	1
<b>Hawaii</b>	1
<b>Idaho</b>	1
<b>Illinois</b>	5
<b>Indiana</b>	7
<b>Kansas</b>	1
<b>Kentucky</b>	4
<b>Louisiana</b>	1
<b>Maine</b>	1



## LGBTQ+ Community Centers per State



<b>Maryland</b>	2
<b>Massachusetts</b>	3
<b>Michigan</b>	6
<b>Mississippi</b>	1
<b>Missouri</b>	2
<b>Montana</b>	1
<b>Nebraska</b>	1
<b>Nevada</b>	3
<b>New Hampshire</b>	1
<b>New Jersey</b>	5
<b>New Mexico</b>	1
<b>New York</b>	21
<b>Ohio</b>	6
<b>Oklahoma</b>	2
<b>Oregon</b>	2
<b>Pennsylvania</b>	11
<b>Rhode Island</b>	1
<b>South Carolina</b>	4
<b>South Dakota</b>	2
<b>Tennessee</b>	2
<b>Texas</b>	8
<b>Utah</b>	4
<b>Virginia</b>	5
<b>Washington</b>	5
<b>West Virginia</b>	1
<b>Wisconsin</b>	4





# INTRODUCTION



# Background

In November 2024, Mayor Andre Dickens and the Atlanta City Council commissioned a one-year Feasibility Study, funding the Atlanta Fulton County Recreation Authority (AFCRA) to define the vision, impact, potential, and sustainability of a dedicated LGBTQ+ Community Center in Atlanta.

City of Atlanta Resolution 24-R-4450 established the project’s core parameters:

- Total construction cost between \$30M–\$50M
- A three-part funding model: 1/3 Government, 1/3 Philanthropy, 1/3 Individual & Grassroots
- Opening by Summer 2030

To lead this initiative, AFCRA appointed long-time LGBTQ+ advocate and former Atlanta Director of LGBTQ Affairs, Malik Brown, to oversee the feasibility study’s daily operations. Working alongside a diverse Exploratory Committee, this study has engaged thousands of stakeholders, analyzed national best practices, and assessed community needs to develop a strategic framework for Atlanta’s proposed LGBTQ+ center.

# Introduction

Atlanta stands at a historic crossroads of legacy and opportunity. Long known as “the cradle of the Civil Rights Movement”, the Black queer mecca of the world, and the undisputed LGBTQ+ capital of the South—our city has led the charge for justice, inclusion, and cultural innovation.

We are home to one of the largest and most diverse LGBTQ+ communities in the nation. Our annual Pride festival draws hundreds of thousands, standing as the largest free Pride celebration in the country. Just last year, we hosted the first-ever Global Black Pride convening in the United States. For over a decade, Atlanta has earned a perfect score (plus bonus points) on the Human Rights Campaign’s Municipal Equality Index. And yet, despite this proud history and international influence, political attacks, inequity, and violence continue to intensify against LGBTQ+ people across the nation.

As we grapple with this reality, Atlanta remains the largest metro in America lacking a centralized, purpose-built LGBTQ+ community center—a space where our diverse community can come together, access resources, celebrate culture, and foster new generations of leaders.



**It could save lives.  
Literally.**

*Anonymous Survey Respondent*

# Exploratory Committee



**Dyllón Burnside**  
Emmy Award-Winning Artist, Founder and Executive Director, Burnside Artist Retreat

**Stephanie Cho**  
Director, Democracy Lab South, Asian Americans Advancing Justice Atlanta

**Tori Cooper**  
Director of Community Engagement, Trans Justice Initiative, Human Rights Campaign

**William Duffee-Braun**  
Managing Director and Founder, Valiant Marketing

**Dr. Arlene Edwards**  
Board of Directors, ZAMI NOBLA (National Organization of Black Lesbians on Aging)

**Jim Fielding**  
Author & Executive Coach

**Jonathan Foulk**  
Vice President, Board of Directors, Joining Hearts

**Morna Gerrard**  
Women's/Gender and Sexuality Collections Archivist, Georgia State University

**Jeff Graham**  
Executive Director, Georgia Equality

**Sam Greene**  
President, Midtown Neighbors Association

**Jonathan Gould**  
Lecturer of Architecture, Kennesaw State University

**Dr. Angelica Geter**  
Founder and Principal Consultant, Impactful Collaboration

**TJ Kaplan**  
Principal, J. L. Morgan Company, Inc.

**Andy Levine**  
Managing Director & Partner, Boston Consulting Group

**Chris McCain**  
Executive Director, Atlanta Pride





The Exploratory Committee brought together a diverse group of community leaders, advocates, service providers, and subject-matter experts to guide this study from start to finish. Their role was to ask hard questions, surface honest feedback, and ensure the vision for an Atlanta LGBTQ+ Community Center reflects the needs, priorities, and lived experiences of the people it's meant to serve.

**Reese McCranie**  
 Director, Strategic  
 Communications  
 McKinsey & Company

**Tracee McDaniel**  
 Co-Founder, Trans  
 Housing Atlanta  
 Program

**Selima Morrow**  
 Program Director, COR

**Joshua R. Newton**  
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 Alumni Engagement,  
 Emory University

**Dan Preister**  
 Managing Director,  
 Coxé Curry and  
 Associates

**Quinton Rasberry**  
 Health Equity & Access  
 Advocate

**Richard Ramey**  
 Owner, Atlanta Eagle

**Adam Rimes**  
 Chief Financial Officer,  
 Aprío

**Clark Seydel**  
 Founder & CEO,  
 Housing NOW

**Dr. Jason Schnieder**  
 Physician, Grady Health  
 Systems

**Courtney Smith**  
 Chair, NPU E

**Brian Tolleson**  
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**Tony Uceda**  
 Senior Director,  
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**Neal VanMarter**  
 Regional Outreach  
 Coordinator & Military  
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 Senator Jon Ossoff

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 Independent Narrative  
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**Tim'm West**  
 Executive Director,  
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 & Human Rights

**Andrea Wiggins**  
 Northwest Outreach  
 Director, Office of  
 U.S. Senator Raphael  
 Warnock

**Doug Young**  
 Director  
 Office of Design  
 City of Atlanta  
 Department of City  
 Planning





# METHODOLOGY

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## Our Approach

The feasibility study for the proposed Atlanta LGBTQ+ Community Center was conducted by AFCRA using a comprehensive, multi-pronged methodology that combined a multilingual grassroots survey, quantitative data analysis, benchmarking of peer centers, stakeholder engagement, and established industry best practices.

The process began with one foundational question: Do Atlanta residents want a dedicated LGBTQ+ community center? Only after establishing a clear community desire did the study evaluate the need, viability, and long-term sustainability of such a center. This approach allowed AFCRA to test interest, gather community guidance, and assess operational and financial feasibility without assuming a predetermined outcome.

The result is a data-driven evaluation rooted in the voices of residents, stakeholders, and subject-matter experts who will shape and sustain the proposed center.

# Research Components

## 1. COMMUNITY & STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Since day one, the development of this feasibility study has been deeply community-driven, ensuring that the future center is designed by and for Atlanta’s residents. Over the past year, engagement has spanned thousands of touchpoints with community members, leaders, and decision-makers.

Engagement efforts included:

- Hundreds of hours of 1:1 meetings with LGBTQ+ residents, nonprofit leaders, and service providers to understand lived experiences, align programming with existing efforts, and prevent redundancy.
- Small group discussions and identity- or interest-based roundtables (LGBTQ+ elders, veterans, trans and non-binary residents, AAPI people, Black leaders, etc.) to ensure diverse perspectives guided the study.
- A multilingual Community Input Survey, nearing 2,800 responses, providing the largest dataset ever exclusively collected on Atlanta’s LGBTQ+ community.
- A 100+ person Ambassador Network, mobilizing trusted messengers—artists,

entrepreneurs, activists, educators, faith leaders—to extend the reach of the survey and center conversations into neighborhoods and networks across the city.

- Community events and presence at festivals, Pride gatherings, and cultural convenings to connect with residents in joyful, affirming spaces and encourage participation.
- Interviews with city officials, corporate leaders, and potential funders to gauge investment interest and assess opportunities for public-private partnerships.
- Consultations with urban planners, architects, and construction experts to ensure potential sites can accommodate the proposed development and is financially and physically feasible.

These engagement efforts informed every aspect of the study—including space allocation, security planning, revenue generation strategies, and fundraising feasibility—and ensured the project reflects the priorities, needs, and aspirations of Atlanta’s LGBTQ+ community.

## 2. DEMOGRAPHIC & NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Understanding the size, diversity, and needs of Atlanta’s LGBTQ+ population was essential to ensuring that the center’s services reflect real community demand. Our team drew on both quantitative data and direct community feedback to ground this project in evidence and lived experience.

We benefited from extensive secondary research, generously provided pro bono by Boston Consulting Group (BCG), Emory University’s Rollins School of Public Health, and UCLA’s Williams Institute. This included demographic benchmarks and needs assessments



At Out On Film, we know that storytelling thrives when communities are supported, visible, and connected. Building an LGBTQ+ Community Center in Atlanta is a powerful and overdue investment in our city’s people — one that will expand access, amplify voices, and anchor our shared future. I wholeheartedly endorse this effort and the possibilities it will unlock.

**Justice Obiaya**  
Executive Director, Out On Film



from the U.S. Census Bureau, Gallup, and LGBTQ+ policy researchers.

To identify gaps and opportunities, we:

- Reviewed local and national data to estimate the size and composition of the LGBTQ+ population in Atlanta.
- Analyzed the limitations of existing LGBTQ+ services in areas such as healthcare, housing, economic mobility, and mental health.
- Examined health disparities, homelessness rates, and employment barriers affecting LGBTQ+ residents—particularly trans, BIPOC, elder, and youth communities. Mapped service providers to explore opportunities for co-location, collaboration, and reducing duplication.

This analysis confirmed the urgent need for a centralized, next-generation LGBTQ+ Community Center—one that consolidates vital services while creating space for connection, healing, and empowerment.

### 3. BENCHMARKING OF LGBTQ+ COMMUNITY CENTERS & SIMILAR FACILITIES

To develop an effective space allocation plan, cost structure, and programming model, we conducted extensive benchmarking of LGBTQ+ community centers across the world. This process combined site visits, interviews, and data analysis to capture best practices and lessons learned.

Benchmarking efforts included:

- Site visits to leading North American centers in cities such as Los Angeles, Philadelphia, Chicago, and Toronto, paired with direct consultation with executive teams and frontline staff to better understand operations, programming mix, and community engagement strategies.
- Participation in the 2025 CenterLink Leadership Summit, connecting with leaders of peer centers across the country and gathering best practices in governance,

programming, fundraising, and community engagement.

- Tours of local, non-LGBTQ+ community-focused facilities in Atlanta—including the @Promise Centers, YMCA, Open Hand Atlanta and the Auburn Avenue Research Library—to learn from established models of youth engagement, multi-use programming, and cultural/educational integration.
- Assessing spatial distribution trends in existing facilities, including how square footage is allocated for community services, health and wellness, cultural programming, and administrative functions.
- Comparing revenue models to identify best practices in earned income generation
- Analyzing construction and operational costs across diverse urban markets to create a realistic financial model for Atlanta.

With an estimated 182,000 to 207,000 LGBTQ+ adults, the Atlanta metro is home to one of the ten largest LGBTQ+ populations in the United States, according to analysis by the Williams Institute at UCLA School of Law. Our benchmarking not only provided quantitative data but also qualitative insights—from governance models to community trust-building—that directly informed our recommendations.



**Atlanta deserves  
a space where our  
stories are told  
and our futures  
imagined, side by  
side**

*Anonymous Survey Respondent*



The Trevor Project's research consistently shows that LGBTQ+ young people who have access to LGBTQ+-affirming spaces report significantly lower rates of attempting suicide compared to those who do not. Given that 38% of LGBTQ+ youth in Georgia seriously considered attempting suicide in the past year, it's clear that support is needed. The Atlanta LGBTQ+ Community Center has the potential to become a life-saving source of connection and community for thousands of Georgia's LGBTQ+ youth today, and for generations to come.

**Jaymes Black**  
CEO, The Trevor Project

# Overview: Community Input Survey

From March 24, 2025 to October 17, 2025, we conducted a grassroots community input survey that was available in seven of the top languages spoken in Atlanta. During this time, we gathered nearly 2,800 responses from residents across Atlanta and the broader metro region, with respondents spanning all races, age brackets, zip codes, and more. We asked whether they believe an LGBTQ+ center is needed, what services and resources it should offer, where it could be located, and how they want to engage in shaping its future.

Respondents expressed overwhelming and nearly universal support for an Atlanta LGBTQ+ Community Center. 97% of participants said a center is important for Atlanta, with 87% calling it “extremely important.” Only 2% said a center is “not so important” or “not at all important,” often citing reasons ranging from anti-LGBTQ+ rhetoric to general skepticism about public funding.

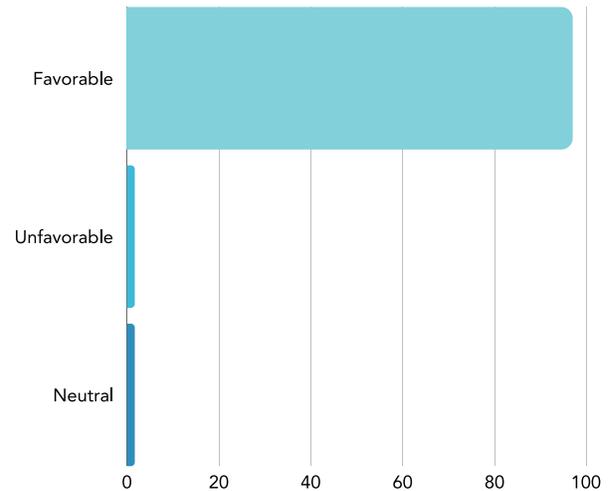
Almost unanimously, responses reflect broad enthusiasm from LGBTQ+ people and allies; virtually the entire community sees this as a once-in-a-generation opportunity to fill long-standing needs.

## Clear Top Priorities

Respondents identified the services they most want. Mental health and counseling services topped the list with 62% selecting it. LGBTQ+ youth programs followed with 54%, and an LGBTQ+ history and cultural museum with 47%. Other highly requested services and amenities include:

- **39%** elder programs and activities
- **35%** event and performance space
- **33%** legal aid and nonpartisan advocacy support
- **30%** gender-affirming healthcare
- **29%** café, social lounge, or bookstore/library

## How Important Is An LGBTQ+ Community Center?



Respondents repeatedly described an urgent need for a safe, unified hub. One wrote: “Safe space that brings community together. There is nothing for that now.” Another emphasized youth needs: “Safe space for youths, especially Black youths, to speak freely about LGBT-related issues.”

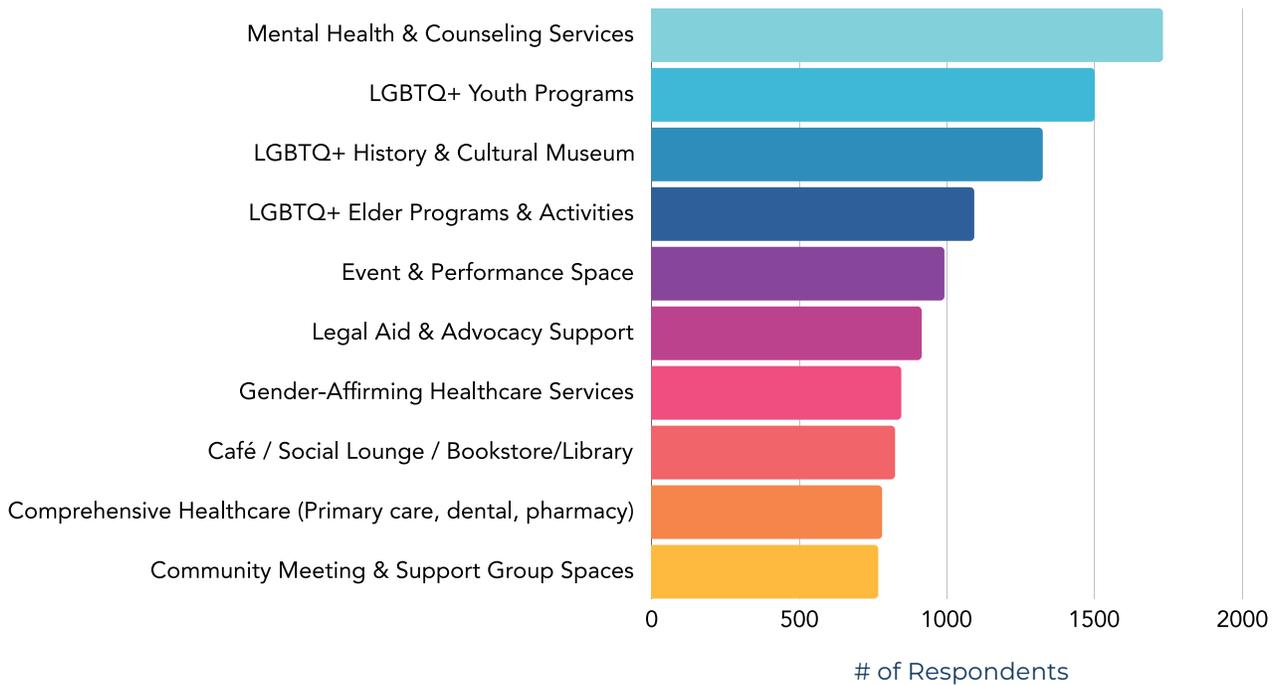


**Having an LGBTQ+ community center would bolster ATL's reputation as center for civil and human rights and communicate that ATL makes a place for all kinds of folks.**

*Anonymous Survey Respondent*



## Top 10 Most Requested Services



- Mental Health & Counseling Services**  
 Highest demand; includes therapy, crisis support and queer-affirming counseling.
- LGBTQ+ Youth Programs**  
 After-school programs, mentorship, safe hang-outs for teens.
- LGBTQ+ History & Cultural Museum**  
 Exhibits, archives, and preservation of Atlanta’s queer history.
- LGBTQ+ Elder Programs & Activities**  
 Senior social events, support groups, intergenerational programming.
- Event & Performance Space**  
 Demand for accessible venues for queer arts, drag shows, theatre, and events.
- Legal Aid & Advocacy Support**  
 Free legal clinics, name-change help, policy advocacy.
- Gender-Affirming Healthcare Services**  
 Primary care, hormone therapy, mental health support, and referrals to trusted specialty providers based on individual needs.
- Café / Social Lounge / Bookstore/Library**  
 A safe, sober place to gather, read, host book clubs, etc.
- Comprehensive Healthcare (Primary care, dental, pharmacy)**  
 A “one-stop shop” for general health services with queer-competent providers.
- Community Meeting & Support Group Spaces**  
 Rooms for support groups, community gatherings, and mutual aid.

Other notable mentions include housing assistance (530 responses), career & job readiness programs (426), community food pantry (318), gym & wellness services (249) and office or co-working space for LGBTQ+ nonprofits (273). A few write-in responses highlighted specific needs (e.g., gender-affirming clothing swaps, resources for disabled people).

## A Shared Vision

In open-ended comments, Atlantans imagine the center as a vibrant, welcoming home for the community. They envision “friendly staff, coffee bar, welcoming atmosphere,” with artwork celebrating local LGBTQ+ history and identity. One participant called for “a centralized, accessible location for community events and affairs.” Others described it as a “catalyst” or “connector,” unifying what is now a “segmented community.” The vision is a visible landmark of hope and pride tailored for Atlanta.

## How Respondents Want To Engage With The Center

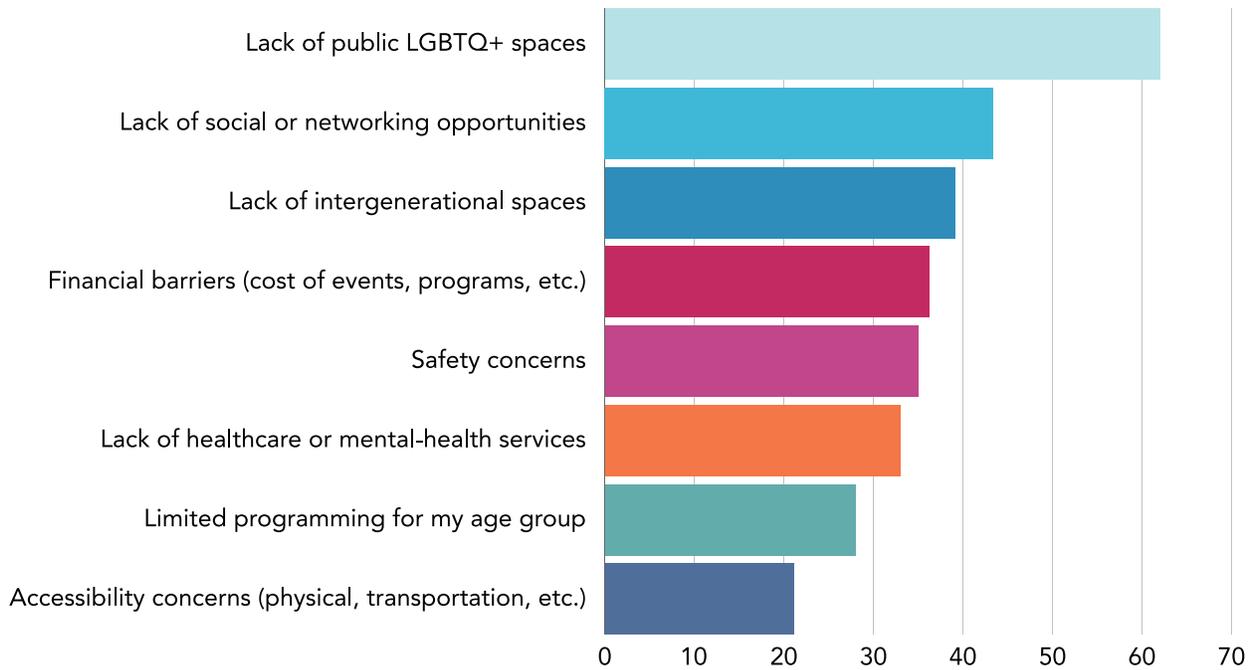


**Show the world that it's a priority. Help the community feel safe and loved. Encourage inclusive groups and gatherings.**

*Anonymous Survey Respondent*



## Challenges That Respondents Face In Accessing LGBTQ+ Spaces & Services



### Community Snapshot

Unsurprisingly, most respondents identified as LGBTQ+. But what stands out is the 15% who identified as allies — roughly 1 in 7 respondents. That level of ally participation signals broad appeal and a desire for a center that serves the whole city, not just those who identify within the community.

Respondents also reflect a wide geographic spread: 56% live within the City of Atlanta limits, 37% live in Metro Atlanta outside the city, and 3% live elsewhere in Georgia. This blend shows both deeply rooted local engagement and strong regional investment in Atlanta as a hub for LGBTQ+ life.

### Atlanta Residents Have Given Us A Clear Mandate

Atlanta overwhelmingly supports building a dedicated center.

This is a once-in-a-generation moment that the Mayor and city leaders can harness as a key tactic to achieving the Moving Atlanta Forward agenda.



HRC is proud to support the Atlanta LGBTQ+ Community Center initiative. Across America we see the impact community hubs like this make by providing connection, culture, and care for LGBTQ+ citizens and their neighbors.

**Bentley Hudgins**

Georgia State Director, Human Rights Campaign





# SECTION ONE

Our Vision

## At A Glance

- 35,000 sq ft Total | 25,000 sq ft Programmable & 10,000 sq ft Support Space
- \$38 Million Total Project Cost
  - \$25M Hard Costs (construction, labor, site work)
  - \$10M Soft Costs (permits, architecture, FF&E, consulting)
  - \$3M First-Year Operations (staffing, programming, launch reserves)
- \$12.5M Requested City Investment

## Our Vision

A future-forward LGBTQ+ Community Center for the city of Atlanta, designed for and embraced by people across the metro, the state, and the region.

A bold, inclusive hub that serves as the connective heart of Atlanta's LGBTQ+ ecosystem — linking our community to essential resources and services, world-class cultural experiences, and meaningful opportunities for connection and growth.

More than a building, the Atlanta LGBTQ+ Community Center will be a lifeline, a place that celebrates our **Pride**, builds collective **Power**, and unlocks **Possibility** for every person who walks through its doors.

**The next chapter of our future begins here.**

## First Floor: Possibility | Community, Culture & Gathering (6,500 sq ft)

The first floor is designed to serve as the Center's vibrant social hub, offering a welcoming atmosphere that blends art, conversation, wellness, and daily activity. Spaces are intentionally crafted for flexibility, comfort, and connection, with a focus on maximizing daily use and long-term sustainability.

## I. Lobby & Atrium

A boutique hotel-style lobby that sets the tone for the entire Center—a warm, art-filled, community-centered entryway.

- **Welcome Desk:** Central point for orientation, interactive digital kiosk, and check-in for Center activities.
- **Art Gallery Walls:** Rotating exhibits showcasing LGBTQ+ artists.
- **Informal Nooks:** Soft seating clusters for small gatherings, coffee meetups, or pre-event mingling.
- **Spillover Space:** Designed to integrate seamlessly with the café during busy hours or special events, expanding seating capacity without sacrificing openness.
- **Queer Little Library:** A curated bookshelf or wall installation offering queer-themed books donated by community members. This community-driven, low-maintenance feature could follow a simple take-a-book, leave-a-book model—no checkout system, no staff required.
- **Partner Organization Mailboxes:** A wall of sleek, mail slots or cubbies assigned to partner organizations, providing them with a visible footprint inside the Center.

## II. Coffee Shop & Performance Space

A flexible café and cultural space designed for everyday use and intimate performances, activating the first floor throughout the day and evening.

- **Seating:** 30–40 seats with a mix of communal tables, high-tops, and booth-style cabanas for private conversations or small meetings.
- **Small Stage Area:** Flexible performance zone for readings, acoustic sets, drag brunches, panels, and open mic nights.
- **Atrium Integration:** Café intentionally designed to spill into the lobby for high-traffic moments or special programs, maximizing flow and capacity.
- **Queer Bookstore Element:** As part of the lease agreement, the café operator could be expected to incorporate a small-scale

queer bookstore element within the café footprint. This would include a curated selection of LGBTQ+ books, zines, or related merchandise available for purchase

### III. Fitness & Wellness Studio – Queer Boutique Gym

A boutique fitness space, offering both open training and structured class formats. Operated as a leased space, it provides a steady revenue stream while delivering affirming, high-quality wellness options for the community, especially LGBTQ+ senior citizens.

- **Reception:** Check-in area for seamless access control and member experience.
- **Cardio & Strength Equipment:** Includes treadmill, bike, rower, and multi-use rigs for versatile workouts.
- **Functional Training Zone:** Open floor space for small group sessions, stretching, and mobility training.
- **Free Weights Area:** Dumbbell rack, kettlebells, and benches with safe clearance for lifting.

## Second Floor: Power | Comprehensive Healthcare & Resource Center (5,800 sq ft)

The second floor is envisioned as a haven for support and healing, combining a Daytime Drop-In Resource Center with immediate resources—showers, laundry, clothing, and on-site navigators—with a comprehensive medical suite operated by an LGBTQ+ affirming provider. Trauma-informed and gender-affirming care is offered under one roof, ensuring dignity, safety, and access to essential health services.

The entire second floor could be leased to one highly qualified vendor to deliver comprehensive, culturally competent physical health, sexual health, behavioral/mental health, and case management services under one roof.

### I. Daytime Drop-In Resource Center

A safe and welcoming, low-barrier space where individuals in need can access essential services, find immediate support, and take steps toward stability in a dignified, trauma-informed environment.

- **Reception & Waiting:** Welcoming check-in area with soft seating, charging stations,



water, and light refreshments—designed to feel calming and non-institutional.

- **Private Consult Rooms:** Two confidential spaces for one-on-one support with case managers, peer navigators, or visiting nonprofit partners.
- **Restrooms & Showers:** 2–3 individual, all-gender, ADA-compliant stalls with private showers and changing benches for hygiene and dignity.
- **Laundry Access:** Small but essential space with stacked washer/dryers and folding counter for personal laundry needs.
- **Clothing Closet:** Organized racks and shelves for donated clothing, shoes, and essentials, managed with care and privacy for visitors.
- **Community Pantry:** Provides free access to food, toiletries, and essential supplies to support community well-being.

## II. Medical Suite

Comprehensive physical, sexual, and mental health services under one roof. This model ensures professional management, insurance billing capacity, and high-quality care, while generating consistent revenue for the Center.

- **Reception & Admin:** Centralized check-in, patient intake, and medical record management for all services offered in the suite.
- **Five Clinical Rooms:** Flexible rooms designed for multiple uses, including primary care visits, counseling sessions, and mental health consultations. Rooms are standardized to allow various providers to rotate throughout the week.
- **Pharmacy:** Compact, secure area for dispensing medications, PrEP, hormone therapies, and other prescriptions, operated in partnership with the tenant.
- **On-Site Crisis Counseling:** Immediate access to a licensed clinician who can provide crisis intervention, stabilization, and short-term therapeutic support, complementing the suite's broader mental and physical health services.

## Third Floor: Convergence | Administrative & Coworking Hub (6,500 sq ft)

The third floor is designed as a flexible, reservation-based workspace that maximizes efficiency while fostering connection. Center staff, nonprofit partners, and community members share a professional environment. The result is a “Queer Coworking” experience—welcoming, collaborative, and adaptable to the changing needs of Atlanta's LGBTQ+ organizations and entrepreneurs.

### I. Center Staff Zone

In alignment with modern workplace standards and to maximize space efficiency, only the CEO maintains a permanent office. All other staff use a mix of reservable private offices and hot desks through an internal booking system, supporting hybrid work while maintaining confidentiality and flexibility.

- **CEO Office:** A private office for executive leadership.
- **Reservable Offices (4 rooms):** Soundproof, tech-enabled spaces for case management, donor meetings, or confidential calls.
- **Hot Desk Area:** 8 reservable workstations for staff on rotating schedules, equipped with monitors and docking stations.
- **Small Team Meeting Room:** Dedicated room for internal staff huddles or planning sessions, separate from shared conference spaces.
- **Printer & Storage Nook:** Printer and supply station for staff only.

### II. Partner Zone

Offers four flexible tenant suites with a permanent office, shared hot desks, storage, and full access to building amenities. Hotel-style reservations maximize space, support collaboration, and preserve organizational autonomy.

- **Partner Offices (4 rooms):** Each tenant organization is provided one dedicated private office. This model balances



continuity for partners with efficient use of limited square footage.

- **Hot Desk Area:** 8 reservable workstations for staff on rotating schedules, equipped with monitors and docking stations.
- **Small Team Meeting Room:** Dedicated room for internal staff huddles or planning sessions, separate from shared conference spaces.
- **Dedicated Printer & Supply Station:** Separate from Center staff's, allowing independent operations.

### III. Coworking Space Rentals & Community Meeting Space

A welcoming, queer-affirming coworking space for entrepreneurs, freelancers, and community members seeking a flexible, identity-safe place to work and connect. Designed to balance focus and collaboration, it features adaptable workstations, lounge areas for informal networking, and access to shared amenities.

- **Open Workspace:** 12–16 hot desks, cabanas, and soft-seating nooks designed for flexible work throughout the day.
- **Micro-Offices (2–3 rooms):** Short-term reservable private offices for calls, client meetings, or solo focus time.
- **Hospitality Hub:** Complimentary beverage and snack station for members, featuring an island with an undercounter fridge, self-serve coffee and tea, microwave, and a small prep counter. Supports quick refreshments during the day and transitions seamlessly into an inviting spot for after-hours member socials and networking events.
- **Content Studio:** Small, soundproofed podcast, music, and video rental recording space available for members or community creators.
- **Phone/Zoom Booths (3–4 booths):** Quick, private call spaces spread throughout this zone.
- **Mini Business Center Nook:** Hotel-style business center for member use.

### IV. Third Floor Amenities

#### • Conference Rooms & Community Classrooms

Two bookable rooms accessible to Center staff, non-profit partners, co-working space members, and community partners through a reservation system. Designed with operable partitions to adjust size as needed for trainings, board meetings, or workshops, etc.

In addition to community use, the Center may offer LGBTQ+ cultural competency trainings, workshops, and seminars to schools, healthcare systems, government agencies, and private employers. These sessions can serve as a mission-aligned revenue generator.

### Fourth Floor: Pride | Cultural Exhibit Hall and Ballroom with Rooftop Terrace (6,000 sq ft)

The Center's premier gathering space combines two distinct functions within a single flexible footprint: a Cultural Exhibit Hall that showcases Atlanta's LGBTQ+ history and a large-scale Ballroom designed for events, performances, and celebrations.

Retractable and operable walls allow the floor to be subdivided for concurrent programs or right-sized for smaller gatherings. All Cultural Exhibit Hall display elements — including glass cases, wall niches, digital screens, and interpretive panels — are intentionally designed to be modular, movable, or able to be switched off. Exhibits can be rearranged, covered, or fully removed when the space is booked for a private event, ensuring full adaptability without compromising the integrity of the collection.

A pre-function lounge and rooftop terrace enhance the guest experience, while a commercial kitchen supports events, culinary training, and enterprise opportunities.



### **I. Cultural Exhibit Hall:**

Led by a full-time Director of Cultural Heritage and supported by key partners, volunteers, and community stakeholders, this will be the first permanent space dedicated to telling Atlanta's LGBTQ+ history. Its signature installation will be an evolving exhibit focused on the community's legacy of civil disobedience and collective action — from the Lonesome Cowboys raid, to the Olympics Out of Cobb campaign, to the Atlanta Eagle police raid and the resulting federal lawsuit (Calhoun v. Pennington). Complementary rotating exhibits will highlight additional themes, movements, icons, hidden figures, and cultural milestones, creating a living, continually updated narrative of LGBTQ+ Atlanta.

### **II. Ballroom:**

As a primary revenue driver for the Center, this large, flexible event hall is designed to accommodate a wide range of programs and gatherings. The space comfortably hosts up to 600 guests standing, approximately 500 in theater-style seating, or around 300 for seated galas. From receptions and galas to film screenings, musical performances, weddings, town halls, and boutique conferences, the Ballroom is intentionally crafted to welcome events of every scale. Its adaptable layout, professional-grade infrastructure, and connection to the rooftop terrace make it a signature destination for both community celebrations and high-profile civic and corporate events.

### **III. Commercial Kitchen:**

A dedicated commercial-grade kitchen designed to support large-scale event catering, facilitate diverse culinary training programs, and enable potential catering enterprise activities. This space would include zones for prep, cooking, baking, dishwashing, and storage (including cold and dry storage).

### **IV. Rooftop Event Terrace (Outdoor Space - Size as per design, supported by indoor areas):**

A spacious, open-air rooftop terrace with city views, seamlessly integrated into the event space.

### **V. Event Support Spaces**

**Pre-function / Cocktail Room:** An area adjacent to the main event space and providing access to the rooftop terrace, suitable for receptions, registration, or overflow. Could work in conjunction with the kitchen for servicing.

**Event Furniture Storage:** A dedicated and highly organized storage room for tables, chairs, staging elements, and museum display components. Vertical and mobile storage solutions should be prioritized.



For decades, Georgia Equality has fought in Atlanta and across Georgia for a state where LGBTQ+ people can live, work, and thrive freely. The creation of the Atlanta LGBTQ+ Community Center represents a critical piece of our next chapter, a place where advocacy, resources, and culture meet under one roof.

**Jeff Graham**

Executive Director, Georgia Equality



## Pathway to Realization

Our vision for the Atlanta LGBTQ+ Community Center is data-driven, community-informed, bold, and—most importantly—achievable. It reflects a lean, intentional program shaped by hundreds of hours of analysis, technical review, and community engagement. Several early ideas were intentionally deferred for a possible future expansion to keep this first phase focused, cost-effective, and ready for long-term sustainability.

Grounded in Mayor Dickens’ “group project” approach, this plan brings together the City, philanthropy, the corporate sector, and community partners to deliver a center built to serve generations.

- \$38M Capital Campaign
  - \$25M Hard Costs (construction, materials, building systems)
  - \$10M Soft Costs (architecture, engineering, permits, insurance, project management)
  - \$3M First Year of Operations (launch staffing, programming, utilities, and start-up expenses)

City of Atlanta Requested Investment: **\$12.5M**

**Target Opening:** October 2029 (Atlanta Pride)

## Cost-Saving Opportunities (\$8M–\$12M Potential Reduction)

Following the full vision and cost summary, the Study identified a range of potential strategies that could be used to reduce total capital need without compromising any mission-critical functions. These options represent levers that can be pulled selectively, depending on fundraising progress, partner interest, and timing.

Through a mix of innovation, strategic phasing, and strong public-private partnerships — anchored by the leadership of the Mayor’s Office — the Atlanta LGBTQ+ Community Center could reduce overall construction costs by \$8–\$12 million. These savings would result from thoughtful sequencing, design efficiencies, and partnership models that can be activated as needed to support long-term sustainability.

Item/Strategy	Description	Approx. Savings	Implementation Notes
At-Cost Construction Model	Minimal visual impact with major cost relief	\$3.0 – \$5.0 M	Requires City partnership & trusted contractor
Second Floor – Shell Only	Defer full build-out of 5,800 sf Drop-In + Medical Suite; lease operator completes interior later	\$1.6 – \$1.8 M	Still frame, plumb, and fire-proof for future use
Coffee Shop – Tenant Build-Out	Deliver warm shell; operator funds interior + equipment	\$1.0 – \$1.4 M	5–10 yr lease with rent-free period as TI offset
Rooftop Terrace – Prep Only	Engineer for occupancy, waterproof now, finish later	\$500 – \$850 K	Excellent donor or naming opportunity in Phase 2

Gym – Shell or Leasee Build-Out	Defer or have fitness partner build out 3,300 sf studio	\$500K	Maintain structure & MEP capacity
Commercial Kitchen – Shell Only	Rough-in utilities, defer equipment & finishes	\$400K	Build when catering / workforce partner secured
Material / Finish Simplification	Standardize finishes, lighting, flooring	\$300 – \$500 K	Implement across all program areas
Systems Optimization (HVAC, plumbing)	Combine zones, defer rooftop units, share restrooms	\$250 – \$500 K	Coordinate early with MEP engineer
Shared / Flexible Spaces	Merge meeting + classroom, shared reception/support	\$150 – \$250 K	Saves future staffing & maintenance costs
Furniture, Fixtures, and Equipment (FF&E) Phasing & Partnerships	Lease or donate furnishings, phase over time	\$150 – \$300 K	Engage corporate partners for in-kind gifts
Envelope & Structural Simplifications	Reduce glazing, standardize façade, column grid	\$200 – \$400 K	Minimal visual impact with major cost relief





# SECTION TWO

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Built Environment

## Recommendations At A Glance

- Identify a centrally located site around 0.5 miles of MARTA rail, on a bus line, with strong foot traffic and sufficient parking or room to expand it.
- Assess parking and access needs, explore construction or expansion options, and strengthen multimodal connections through MARTA, rideshare partnerships, and secure bike storage.
- Prioritize flexible, multi-purpose spaces that can adapt to community needs, generate revenue, and ensure long-term sustainability.
- Commit to sustainability, aiming for LEED Gold certification.
- Implement inclusive, state-of-the-art security measures.

### I: Location & Site Analysis

#### **RECOMMENDATION 1: IDENTIFY A CENTRALLY LOCATED SITE AROUND 0.5 MILES OF MARTA RAIL, ON A BUS LINE, WITH STRONG FOOT TRAFFIC AND SUFFICIENT PARKING OR ROOM TO EXPAND IT.**

Identify a site within the City of Atlanta that meets core accessibility and community impact standards. The ideal location should be within approximately half a mile of a MARTA rail station, situated on a bus line, and offer ample parking or clear potential for expanded parking. High foot traffic and strong neighborhood visibility should also be central considerations, ensuring the Center is both welcoming and easy to reach for residents across the metro.

#### **RECOMMENDATION 2: ASSESS PARKING AND ACCESS NEEDS, EXPLORE CONSTRUCTION OR EXPANSION OPTIONS, AND STRENGTHEN MULTIMODAL CONNECTIONS THROUGH MARTA, RIDESHARE PARTNERSHIPS, AND SECURE BIKE STORAGE.**

Once a location is chosen, conduct a full parking and access assessment that considers on-site capacity, opportunities for construction or expansion, and potential updates to existing infrastructure. In parallel, develop partnerships with MARTA, nearby parking facilities, and rideshare companies to support multimodal access. The center should also include secure bike racks or storage to encourage alternative commuting.

### II: Space Allocation & Design

#### **RECOMMENDATION 3: PRIORITIZE FLEXIBLE, MULTI-PURPOSE SPACES THAT CAN ADAPT TO COMMUNITY NEEDS, GENERATE REVENUE, AND ENSURE LONG-TERM SUSTAINABILITY.**

The Center is intentionally designed to evolve. Almost every space serves multiple purposes, maximizing the impact of the building's square footage and reducing long-term operating costs. This flexible approach ensures the Center can grow and adapt as community needs change. By balancing a few dedicated areas with a majority of reconfigurable spaces, we're building a hub that can meet the moment—today and for decades to come.

### III: Sustainability & Green Building Standards

#### **RECOMMENDATION 4: COMMIT TO LEED GOLD CERTIFICATION**

The Center should pursue LEED Gold certification as a core design commitment. Green building design will reduce long-term operating costs, strengthen environmental and financial sustainability, and align with both community expectations and the City's climate and resilience goals. We recommend prioritizing energy efficiency, water conservation, and healthy materials through strategies such as on-site solar energy generation, high-performance mechanical systems, rainwater capture for irrigation, low-flow plumbing, recycled or reclaimed materials where feasible, and low-VOC or toxin-free finishes paired with enhanced air filtration.

### RECOMMENDATION 5: EXPLORE FINANCIAL INCENTIVES FOR SUSTAINABLE CONSTRUCTION

The project team should identify incentives that support renewable energy, high-efficiency building systems, and green materials. Corporate partnerships, renewable energy credits, and targeted grants can help offset costs for solar, HVAC upgrades, lighting, and other sustainability features, making higher certification levels more attainable.

### RECOMMENDATION 6: PRIORITIZE INCLUSIVE AND ACCESSIBLE DESIGN

The facility should move beyond baseline ADA compliance and create an environment where people with visible and invisible disabilities can participate fully and comfortably.

This includes:

- Fully wheelchair-accessible spaces, ramps, wide corridors, and elevators
- All-gender restrooms with private stalls, accessible layouts, and clear signage
- Assistive listening systems, braille and tactile signage, high-contrast wayfinding, and visual alarms



**It could bridge generations, provide healing and opportunity, and be a space where everyone feels seen, valued, and supported.**

*Anonymous Survey Respondent*

- A variety of seating and furnishing options that support different body types, mobility needs, and sensory preferences
- Sensory-friendly spaces and quiet zones for individuals who benefit from reduced noise, dimmer lighting, and calming environments
- Adjustable lighting, acoustic treatments, and flexible programming spaces that accommodate neurodivergent guests
- Clear communication practices, including accessible digital materials, plain-language signage, and information offered in multiple formats

## IV: Security Infrastructure

### RECOMMENDATION 7: DESIGN TAILORED SECURITY MEASURES

With recent FBI data showing an increase in anti-LGBTQ+ hate crimes nationwide, security planning should be treated as a core priority to protect the people the center serves and to ensure the facility's safety, resilience, and long-term viability.

Once a site is selected, the project team should work with the Mayor's Office of Emergency Preparedness and other relevant agencies to develop a security strategy rooted in best practices.

This plan should include controlled entry points, strategic placement of front-desk and security personnel, electronic access controls for staff-only areas, robust camera coverage, strong exterior lighting, and reinforced materials that reduce vulnerability without compromising design.

The center should also incorporate discreet emergency exits, pedestrian safety considerations, and unobtrusive perimeter protections as needed. The security strategy should also extend to the construction phase, safeguarding workers, contractors, and the site itself throughout development.



## V: Timeline

### RECOMMENDATION 8: ESTABLISH A PHASED CONSTRUCTION TIMELINE WITH TARGETED COMPLETION BY OCTOBER 2029

With site selection still pending, the project should adopt a phased timeline that allows for due diligence, design development, permitting, and construction. We recommend the following structure:

- **2026 (first 6 months)**

Site selection and acquisition

- Complete evaluation of potential sites, negotiate terms, and initiate due-diligence reviews.

- **2026–2027 (6–12 months)**

Design, community engagement, and permitting

- Advance architectural design, sustainability planning, and program integration while progressing through City of Atlanta permitting and approvals.

- **Spring 2028: Break ground**

- Commence construction once permits, financing, and design documents are finalized.

- **2028–2029 (18–20 months)**

Construction and interior build-out

- Phase 1: Site preparation and structural construction
- Phase 2: Mechanical, electrical, and plumbing installation
- Phase 3: Interior build-out, finishes, systems testing, and staff onboarding

- **October 2029: Grand Opening**

- Target alignment with Atlanta Pride Festival to maximize visibility and community engagement.





# SECTION THREE

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Programming, Offerings, and Experiences

## Recommendations At A Glance:

- Develop a modern queer hub for care, culture, and connection.
- Co-locate key partners within the center to create a centralized LGBTQ+ service hub, enhancing collaboration and accessibility.
- Strengthen government and civic partnerships by working with local health agencies, law enforcement LGBTQ+ liaisons, Atlanta Public Schools, and area universities to expand program offerings.
- Foster a welcoming and culturally competent environment through ongoing LGBTQ+ cultural competency training for all staff, volunteers, and security personnel.
- Implement a dynamic community feedback system—including surveys, town halls, and advisory boards—to continuously assess and refine programming based on evolving community needs.

## I: Comprehensive Services & Programs

### **RECOMMENDATION 1: DEVELOP A COMPREHENSIVE, PARTNER-DRIVEN SERVICE MODEL THAT INTEGRATES AFFIRMING HEALTHCARE, ESSENTIAL RESOURCES, COMMUNITY PROGRAMS, CULTURAL EXPERIENCES, ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES, AND SUSTAINABLE REVENUE-GENERATING SPACES TO CREATE A FUTURE-FORWARD HUB THAT MEETS THE DIVERSE NEEDS OF ATLANTA'S LGBTQ+ COMMUNITY.**

Develop a comprehensive, integrated service model that brings together affirming mental and physical healthcare, essential resources, robust programming, cultural experiences,

opportunities for connection, and sustainable revenue generation. Many of these offerings will be delivered in collaboration with existing partners across Atlanta's LGBTQ+ ecosystem, ensuring the Center strengthens—not duplicates—the work already happening in the community.

As a future-forward community hub, the Center will include:

- A wellness hub providing comprehensive mental, general, and sexual healthcare through an LGBTQ-affirming operator.
- A daytime drop-in resource center with case management, housing navigation, trade skills development, clothing closet, showers, laundry, hygiene support, and a community food pantry.
- Robust programs focused on economic empowerment, job readiness, digital literacy, leadership development, entrepreneurship, creative arts, and cultural celebrations, including support groups for youth, seniors, and trans and nonbinary communities.
- Revenue-generating leased spaces for mission-aligned tenants such as healthcare providers, coffee shop operators, a local market, or a boutique gym.
- A welcoming lobby designed as a social gathering space featuring rotating art exhibits and a small performance area for readings, acoustic sets, drag programming, and community events.
- Office rentals and secure storage for mission-aligned organizations and LGBTQ+ entrepreneurs.
- Queer coworking space for entrepreneurs, professionals, and content creators, offering flexible work areas, reservable offices, and built-in networking opportunities that foster collaboration and community.
- A state-of-the-art event and community meeting space, supported by a commercial kitchen capable of hosting trainings, pop-ups, and culinary enterprise programs.
- A cultural exhibit hall with a signature evolving installation documenting LGBTQ+



Atlanta's history of civil disobedience, alongside rotating exhibits on relevant community topics.

- A rooftop terrace offering additional social, cultural, and rental opportunities.
- Staff trained to help visitors navigate Atlanta's large and diverse LGBTQ+ ecosystem and connect with external resources.

### **RECOMMENDATION 2: HOST SIGNATURE COMMUNITY EVENTS & FESTIVALS**

Establish a robust calendar of annual events, including LGBTQ+ youth and senior proms, observances such as Transgender Day of Remembrance and World AIDS Day, Pride Month programming, and cultural celebrations like drag performances, queer open-mics, and ballroom competitions to foster community engagement and visibility.

### **RECOMMENDATION 3: STRENGTHEN GOVERNMENT & CIVIC PARTNERSHIPS**

Establish strong partnerships with government agencies, public safety officials, housing programs, and local universities to expand services, enhance public health initiatives, and create opportunities for research, training, and community engagement.

### **RECOMMENDATION 4: ENSURE A WELCOMING & CULTURALLY COMPETENT ENVIRONMENT**

All staff and volunteers should receive LGBTQ+ cultural competency training, with a focus on:

- Using correct pronouns and inclusive language
- Creating a warm, affirming atmosphere
- Balancing security needs with a non-intimidating presence
- Baseline de-escalation skills to safely support individuals experiencing conflict or a mental-health crisis before specialized staff intervene

### **RECOMMENDATION 5: REGULARLY EVALUATE & ADAPT PROGRAMMING BASED ON COMMUNITY NEEDS**

The center should:

- Conduct periodic surveys and feedback sessions to assess program effectiveness
- Hold community forums to gather input and address evolving needs





Every day, Rainbow Railroad helps LGBTQ+ people escape violence and persecution around the world — but safety doesn't end at arrival. True refuge requires community. The Atlanta LGBTQ+ Community Center could be exactly that: a space where queer refugees and asylum seekers can not only find support, but rebuild their lives with dignity and pride.

**Bruce Koff**  
Chair of the Board of Directors, Rainbow Railroad



# SECTION FOUR

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Operations + Sustainability

## Recommendations At A Glance

- Establish a public-private partnership with AFCRA owning the facility and the nonprofit serving as a long-term lessee.
- Create a new 501(c)(3) to lead all operations, fundraising, programming, and staffing.
- Form a strong, diverse Board of Directors, including one City-appointed seat confirmed by Council.
- Implement a lean, phased staffing model, beginning with essential leadership roles and scaling up based on program demand.
- Adopt a diversified revenue model balancing earned income, traditional fundraising, and limited government support.
- Anticipate an initial annual budget of \$2.7M, with realistic pathways to growing as revenues mature.
- Include at least one full year of operating expenses in the capital campaign.
- Establish an initial \$100,000 reserve and grow to 2–3 months of operating costs by Year 3.
- Create and grow a \$5M endowment over time to stabilize long-term operations.
- Maintain strict financial oversight: annual audits, quarterly reporting, a Finance & Audit Committee, and public disclosures.

These recommendations are designed to ensure the Center launches with a stable governance structure, a lean and scalable staffing model, and a diversified revenue strategy that supports long-term sustainability.

At the conclusion of the first three years, the Center should complete a formal strategic planning process to evaluate staffing, revenue performance, and community needs.

## I: Governance & Organizational Structure

### RECOMMENDATION 1: ESTABLISH A PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP MODEL FOR OWNERSHIP

Like State Farm Arena, Zoo Atlanta, and the John A. White Golf Course, ownership of the facility should reside with the Atlanta Fulton County Recreation Authority (AFCRA), with the Atlanta LGBTQ+ Community Center operating as a long-term lessee. This model ensures both organizational sustainability and a long-term public investment in the Center.

- Day-to-day operations and all programmatic decision-making should be managed by a newly established 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. This structure enables independent fundraising, community-centered oversight, and the development of specialized LGBTQ+ programs. The nonprofit will hold responsibility for programming, staffing, operations, and philanthropic revenue generation, while AFCRA retains authority over capital maintenance, facility standards, and strategic alignment with public objectives.
- A formal lease agreement and Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) should clearly outline the responsibilities, financial commitments, and decision-making authority of both AFCRA and the nonprofit operator to ensure transparency, accountability, and long-term stability. The lease is anticipated to be structured as a long-term, no- or nominal-cost public-benefit lease, with a term of no less than 50 years and renewal options to ensure the Center's operational continuity, fundraising feasibility, and sustained partnership with the City of Atlanta.

### RECOMMENDATION 2: ESTABLISH A STRONG, DIVERSE BOARD OF DIRECTORS WITH GOVERNMENT REPRESENTATION



The nonprofit's Board of Directors should include LGBTQ+ leaders, corporate partners, philanthropic allies, and subject-matter experts.

The Board of Directors will oversee the CEO's leadership and performance, provide financial and governance oversight, and guide the organization's strategic direction to ensure the Atlanta LGBTQ+ Community Center continues to reflect and serve community needs.

- **Ongoing City of Atlanta Representation on the Board of Directors**

To maintain a strong and collaborative relationship with the City of Atlanta while protecting the Center's independence as a nonprofit organization, the Mayor of Atlanta shall appoint one member to the Board of Directors, to be confirmed by the Atlanta City Council.

Appointees must demonstrate a clear commitment to the Center's mission, values, independence, and governance standards, and be free from conflicts of interest or dual loyalties that could compromise the Center's integrity, operations, or public trust.

## II: Phased Staffing Approach

The Atlanta LGBTQ+ Community Center will begin with a lean staffing model that prioritizes essential full-time leadership roles, supported by part-time staff, contractors, and volunteers as needed. This approach ensures financial responsibility during pre-opening years while still building the organizational capacity, programming, and operations required for a successful launch. As the Center grows, staffing will scale in alignment with program demand and available resources.

### RECOMMENDATION 3: IDENTIFY & ADOPT ORGANIZATIONAL VALUES

The Center should establish a clear set of organizational values to guide decision-making, partnerships, culture, and public accountability. These values should be grounded in

community input and reflect the principles the Center intends to uphold across its programs, operations, and leadership.

### RECOMMENDATION 4: IMPLEMENT A PHASED HIRING PLAN TO ALIGN WITH GROWTH

#### *Phase Zero FTE: Pre-Opening (2026): Foundation & Infrastructure*

- **Chief Executive Officer:** Leads organizational development, fundraising strategy, stakeholder engagement, and overall execution of the Center's vision.
- **Director of Development:** Drives the capital campaign, cultivates major donors, strengthens philanthropic partnerships, and positions the Center for long-term financial sustainability

#### *Phase One FTE (2028): Program Build-Out & Pre-Launch Operations*

- **Director of Cultural Heritage & Education:** Works with Atlanta's existing LGBTQ+ archival and cultural institutions to design the Center's signature exhibitions, rotating displays, and history programming.
- **Programs Manager:** Develops core programs, workshops, partnerships, and community offerings reflecting the needs and diversity of Atlanta's LGBTQ+ residents.
- **Facilities & Building Manager:** Oversees the facility's pre-opening operational systems, manages vendor coordination, scheduling, inspections, onboarding of security and custodial partners, and ensures the building is fully prepared for opening day.
- **Events Rentals Manager:** Begins securing event rentals for late 2029 and early 2030 using hard-hat tours, virtual walkthroughs, and early-booking incentives to establish a strong launch-year revenue pipeline.
- **Executive Assistant & Office Manager:** Provides administrative support to staff—particularly the Executive Director—and manages essential office operations, scheduling, and coordination.

### III: Revenue Generation & Financial Sustainability



#### RECOMMENDATION 5: DEVELOP A DIVERSE REVENUE MODEL

Adopt a fiscally responsible revenue model that avoids overreliance on any single source and prioritizes long-term financial sustainability. This approach balances diversified earned revenue with traditional nonprofit fundraising, while intentionally limiting dependence on government funding. The model reflects

**It would help build coalitions and enhancing Atlanta as a destination for LGBTQ+ folks across the south and beyond**

*Anonymous Survey Respondent*

#### Phase Two: (First Three Years of Center Operations)

Role	Type	Estimate Low	Estimate High
Chief Executive Officer	Salary	\$150,000	\$180,000
Director of Development	Salary	\$120,000	\$140,000
Director of Cultural Heritage	Salary	\$85,000	\$100,000
Director of Education & Partnerships	Salary	\$85,000	\$100,000
Facilities Manager	Salary	\$72,000	\$78,000
Executive Assistant & Office Manager	Salary	\$60,000	\$75,000
Events & Rentals Manager	Salary	\$60,000	\$70,000
Programs Manager	Salary	\$60,000	\$75,000
Volunteer & Internship Coordinator	Salary	\$54,000	\$70,000
Front Desk Associate	Salary	\$54,700	\$54,700
Front Desk Associate	Part-Time	\$27,350	\$27,350
<b>Projected Salaries</b>		\$829,050	\$970,050
<b>Projected FTE Benefits</b>		\$265,000	\$310,416
Event Support Staff (3-6)	Hourly	\$60,000	\$80,000
Summer Interns	Hourly		\$36,000
Communications Manager	Contract	\$62,000	\$75,000
Finance / Bookkeeper Contact	Contract	\$30,000	\$50,000
HR Contract	Contract	\$25,000	\$40,000
Grants Manager	Contract	\$25,000	\$45,000
Data & Impact Specialist	Contract	\$60,000	\$85,000
Art Curator	Contract	\$12,000	\$20,000
IT & A/V Coordinator	Contract	\$15,000	\$20,000
Janitorial & Maintenance Crew	Contract	\$81,000	\$108,000
Private Security (2 Daytime + 1 Overnight)	Contract	\$240,000	\$300,000
<b>Projected Annual Contracts</b>		\$550,000	\$743,000
<b>Projected Total Annual Staffing Costs</b>		\$1,644,050	\$2,012,606



national best practices for LGBTQ+ centers and cultural institutions that operate in politically dynamic environments.

Based on current projections, the Center is expected to launch with an annual operating budget of approximately \$2.8 million. As programming, rentals, and earned revenue streams mature, the budget has a clear and achievable pathway to grow over time, allowing

the Center to expand services, deepen impact, and strengthen long-term sustainability.

**The Center’s revenue strategy includes three core pillars:**

**I. Earned Revenue Through Leased Space and In-House Services**

The Center will generate significant recurring revenue through commercial partnerships, leased program space, shared nonprofit offices,

**Projected Annual Revenue Scenarios for First Three Years of Center Operations**

Revenue Source	Conservative	Realistic	Aspirational
<b>Earned Revenue</b>			
Coffee Shop Lease	\$36,000	\$60,000	\$96,000
Coffee Shop Profit Share	\$15,000	\$30,000	\$50,000
Gym Lease	\$45,000	\$60,000	\$75,000
Gym Profit Share	\$7,500	\$15,000	\$25,000
Office Leases For Partner Non-Profits	\$120,000	\$120,000	\$120,000
Storage Space For Partner Non-Profits	\$20,000	\$20,000	\$20,000
Second Floor Wellness (Medical) Space Lease	\$145,000	\$174,000	\$203,000
Medical Profit Share	\$20,000	\$40,000	\$60,000
Event Space Rentals	\$75,000	\$180,000	\$300,000
Meeting Space Rentals	\$25,000	\$56,000	\$100,000
Coworking Space Income	\$190,500	\$244,200	\$286,500
Cultural Exhibit Hall Tickets	\$200,000	\$300,000	\$500,000
Center Merch & Gift Shop	\$40,000	\$50,000	\$75,000
Storage Space For Additional Partners	\$9,000	\$12,000	\$18,000
Annual Signature Fundraising Events x2	\$150,000	\$300,000	\$600,000
Education & Trainings	\$175,000	\$175,000	\$500,000
Kitchen & Culinary Program	\$50,000	\$75,000	\$1.0M
<b>Estimate Totals:</b>	<b>\$1,323,000</b>	<b>\$1,986,200</b>	<b>\$3,128,500</b>
<b>Donations</b>			
Monthly / Annual Donors	\$400,000	\$500,000	\$600,000
One Time Gifts	\$17,000	\$40,000	\$80,000
City of Atlanta Annual Grant	\$100,000	\$100,000	\$100,000
Grants	\$225,000	\$575,000	\$1,200,000
Corporate Sponsorships	\$150,000	\$400,000	\$1,125,000
<b>Estimate Totals:</b>	<b>\$892,000</b>	<b>\$1,615,000</b>	<b>\$3,105,000</b>
<b>Total Annual Revenue Estimates:</b>	<b>\$2,215,000</b>	<b>\$3,601,200</b>	<b>\$6,233,500</b>

### Expense Projections (First Three Years of Center Operations)

Type	Low	Realistic	High
<b>Building Expenses</b>			
Utilities	\$125,000		\$200,000
Property Insurance & Liability Coverage	\$35,000		\$60,000
Technology, IT Infrastructure & Software	\$30,000		\$40,000
Building Maintenance & Repairs	\$50,000		\$75,000
<b>Organizationwide Expenses</b>			
Operating Reserve			\$100,000
Professional Development			\$20,000
Board of Directors			\$10,000
Marketing & Outreach			\$25,000
Discretionary Funds	\$50,000		\$50,000
<b>Department Operations</b>			
Fundraising & Development Operations			\$25,000
Signature Fundraising Event Costs	\$45,000	\$90,000	\$180,000
Education & Partnerships Department Budget:			\$50,000
Cultural Heritage Department Budget			\$50,000
Programming Department Budget			\$25,000
Kitchen Operations			\$50,000
Volunteer Budget			\$5,000

wellness and medical providers, and rentals of the event spaces, coworking areas, and meeting rooms. These sources create predictable income streams that grow as the Center expands, while reducing vulnerability to fluctuations in philanthropy or public funding.

#### II. Traditional Fundraising That Reflects Atlanta’s Philanthropic Landscape

A broad-based fundraising program—including monthly and annual donors, corporate sponsorships, grants, foundations, and signature fundraising events—will form the backbone of the Center’s contributed revenue. This mix strengthens donor engagement over time and allows the Center to weather shifts in the philanthropic market without jeopardizing essential services.

#### III. Limited and Strategic Government Funding

While the Center may receive an annual grant from the City of Atlanta, the financial model intentionally avoids dependence on government funding for ongoing operations. This protects the Center’s independence and shields it from political volatility, ensuring that essential programs and services remain stable regardless of changes in administration.

#### RECOMMENDATION 6: IMPLEMENT A COMPREHENSIVE FINANCIAL STABILITY FRAMEWORK

To ensure long-term sustainability, the Atlanta LGBTQ+ Community Center should adopt a multi-pronged financial stability strategy that includes:

- **Startup Operating Reserve**

The capital campaign should include funding for at least one year of startup operating expenses to ensure the Center opens with stability. An initial \$100,000 rapid-response reserve should be maintained and expanded over time to reach 2–3 months of operating costs within the first three years.

- **Endowment Development**

Over time, the Center should establish and grow a \$5M endowment to provide investment income supporting core programming and operational needs. Early seed funding may come from the capital campaign, with long-term growth through major gifts and legacy giving.

- **Ongoing Financial Oversight**

The Center should maintain strict financial governance practices, including annual independent audits, quarterly financial reporting to the Board, a Finance & Audit Committee, and public financial disclosures.

In its first three years, to support long-term sustainability, the Center will budget for four major categories of non-personnel costs: building expenses, organizationwide expenses, department operations, and annual fundraising activities. Each category includes conservative, realistic, and high-end estimates to allow for responsible planning as revenue scales.



**This can be a safe space for us all to win, together.**

*Anonymous Survey Respondent*





AID Atlanta is excited to be a proud supporter of plans to create an Atlanta LGBTQ+ Community Center. To provide a space where members of the LGBTQ community and their allies can come and feel welcomed, supported, and empowered is long overdue. We are excited for all the possibilities and opportunities it can create in this great city where inclusion and love for all is prioritized.

**Nicole Roebuck**  
Executive Director, AID Atlanta



# SECTION FIVE

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Fundraising Strategy & Public Relations

## Recommendations At A Glance

- Launch a Multi-Year, Multi-Channel \$38M Capital Campaign
- Establish a Strong Local Fundraising Structure With National Reach
- Strengthen Public Relations, Community Visibility, and Public Trust
- Develop An Ethical Naming Rights Strategy
- Build a Long-Term Fundraising Model That Sustains the Center Beyond Opening Day

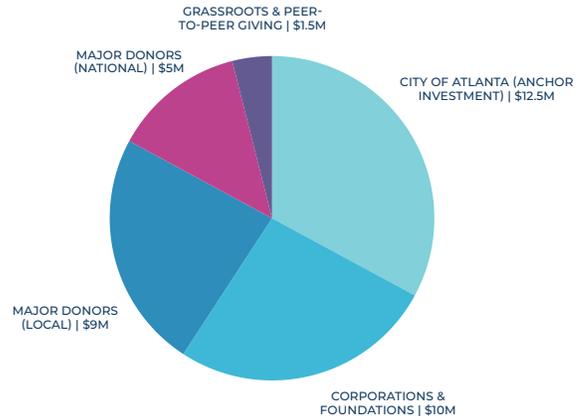
Together, the following strategies create a comprehensive fundraising and public relations approach that balances ambition with responsibility, ensures broad community involvement, and positions the Atlanta LGBTQ+ Community Center as a lasting civic institution.

### RECOMMENDATION 1: LAUNCH A MULTI-YEAR, MULTI-CHANNEL \$38M CAPITAL CAMPAIGN

Leveraging the City of Atlanta's \$12.5 million anchor investment, the Center should launch a multi-year, multi-channel capital campaign to raise the remaining \$25.5 million of the \$38 million total project cost. The City's commitment covers approximately one-third of the overall investment and sends a strong signal to philanthropic partners that this project is viable, urgent, and ready for community-wide support.

The campaign should combine leadership gifts, corporate partnerships, philanthropic foundations, and grassroots peer-to-peer fundraising, while allowing donors the flexibility to pledge and give over time, building a broad, sustainable base of support across Atlanta and the nation.

## Proposed Campaign Breakdown



## Potential Federal Funding Opportunities via Congressional Directed Spending

- Through Georgia Senators Rev. Raphael Warnock and Jon Ossoff
- Estimated Range: \$2M–\$3M (Not Included in Campaign Total)

*(Given the evolving federal landscape and the Center's intentional strategy to avoid overreliance on government funding, potential CDS support is not included in the campaign total but should be actively explored.)*

### RECOMMENDATION 2: ESTABLISH A STRONG LOCAL FUNDRAISING STRUCTURE WITH NATIONAL REACH

To achieve the capital campaign goal, the Center will need a coordinated fundraising structure that combines professional expertise, strong leadership, and the support of community and national partners. This model ensures credibility with Atlanta's philanthropic community while expanding the campaign's reach to national LGBTQ+ donors and foundations.

The CEO and Director of Development will lead the campaign, supported by two coordinated fundraising consultants: a local firm with a proven track record in major civic projects in Atlanta, and a national consultant specializing in LGBTQ+ philanthropy and donor networks. The local consultant will guide strategy, prospecting, and campaign structure within

Atlanta's philanthropic landscape, while the national consultant will expand the campaign's reach to LGBTQ+ foundations, major national donors, and allied philanthropic institutions across the country.

A Capital Campaign Committee composed of influential Atlantans, corporate partners, and community champions should be established to help open doors, mobilize networks, and elevate the Center's visibility. In parallel, a National Advisory Council made up of a handful of LGBTQ+ philanthropic leaders and fundraising professionals should be convened to advise on national donor cultivation and national foundation relationships.

The Steering Committee and future Board of Directors will also support fundraising efforts through ambassador roles, strategic oversight, and ongoing engagement with donors and institutional partners. Together, these bodies create the structure necessary for a successful multi-year campaign while reinforcing transparency, community ownership, and broad-based support.

### **RECOMMENDATION 3: STRENGTHEN PUBLIC RELATIONS, COMMUNITY VISIBILITY, AND PUBLIC TRUST**

The success of the capital campaign will depend not only on fundraising, but on the ability to build and maintain public trust. The Center should take a deliberate, transparent approach to communications that keeps the community informed, engaged, and confident in the project's progress. Throughout the campaign, the organization should host regular opportunities for dialogue—such as town halls, community briefings, stakeholder roundtables, and preview events—to ensure Atlantans feel connected to the

Center's development and see themselves reflected in its future.

A strong visibility strategy will also elevate the Center's profile locally and nationally. This includes partnering with LGBTQ+ and allied public figures who have ties to Atlanta or a demonstrated commitment to LGBTQ+ communities. Such supporters, and others, could help broaden the campaign's reach, provided these partnerships are built thoughtfully and in alignment with the Center's mission.

To support this work, the Center should retain an experienced public relations firm to guide messaging, coordinate media outreach, and shape a cohesive narrative for the campaign. This includes managing press announcements, developing digital storytelling and social media content, highlighting donor and partner milestones, and ensuring consistent, community-facing communication throughout the campaign.

### **RECOMMENDATION 4: DEVELOP AN ETHICAL NAMING RIGHTS STRATEGY**

Naming opportunities are a critical fundraising tool for major civic projects, but they must



As the national association of LGBTQ+ community centers, CenterLink knows the transformative impact these spaces have. LGBTQ+ community centers anchor local movements, expand access to care, and strengthen democracy through connection. Atlanta's proposed LGBTQ+ Community Center would address a significant void in our national network—delivering essential resources, enhanced visibility, and long-term stability to one of America's most dynamic regions.

**Denise Spivak**  
CEO, CenterLink - The Association of LGBTQ  
Community Centers



be designed with intention—balancing the financial needs of the campaign with respect for the individuals, movements, and community members whose stories shaped Atlanta. An effective strategy should identify a range of donor-recognition opportunities at various levels, from lead gifts supporting the creation or long-term sustainability of the Center to named spaces throughout the building. At the same time, the Center should reserve dedicated public spaces—such as memorial areas, historical exhibits, donor walls, or artistic installations—to honor LGBTQ+ Atlantans who may not have the resources to fund large gifts but whose impact is essential to the city’s story.

This dual approach ensures the Center can raise the dollars required for construction and sustainability without excluding community members and ancestors from recognition.

#### **RECOMMENDATION 5: ESTABLISH A SUSTAINABLE DONOR ENGAGEMENT AND STEWARDSHIP STRATEGY**

To ensure the Atlanta LGBTQ+ Community Center remains strong and stable for generations, the organization should establish a long-term fundraising strategy that extends well beyond construction. This strategy should cultivate a broad base of support, deepen donor relationships over time, and create revenue streams that are resilient through political shifts and economic cycles.

The Center should develop a year-round fundraising program anchored by monthly and annual donors who provide predictable, mission-driven support. These “everyday investors” not only stabilize the budget, but also help build a sense of shared ownership and community pride. Signature fundraising events can grow into major revenue sources over time while strengthening the Center’s public profile.

The Center should prioritize strong donor stewardship practices to ensure long-term retention and meaningful relationships with donors of all levels.

In parallel, the Center should invest in building a legacy giving program to encourage long-term commitments such as bequests, estate gifts, and planned giving. Many LGBTQ+ people and allies wish to leave a lasting impact, and legacy donors often become some of the most loyal stewards of community institutions. Over time, these gifts can help expand the Center’s endowment, create new programs, and protect the Center from future uncertainty.

As the Center matures, fundraising should become a shared responsibility—driven by staff, supported by the Board of Directors, and championed by volunteers and community partners. A stable long-term fundraising model ensures that the Center is not only built well, but sustained with integrity, transparency, and community trust for decades to come.

#### **RECOMMENDATION 6: DEVELOP A GIFT ACCEPTANCE POLICY**

The Center should thoughtfully develop and adopt a formal Gift Acceptance Policy to guide how donations, sponsorships, and in-kind contributions are reviewed and accepted. This policy should help ensure that funding aligns with the Center’s mission, values, legal obligations, and long-term reputation. Establishing clear standards early will support consistency, transparency, and sound decision-making as new funding opportunities emerge.



**Enable a network of doers and thinkers to convene and provide continuous planning, support and community.**

*Anonymous Survey Respondent*



# SECTION SIX

Risk Assessment & Mitigation Strategies

## Recommendations At A Glance

Establish a Two-Phase Risk Oversight Structure:

**Phase One: Project Risk Subcommittee**  
(Pre-Opening)

**Phase Two: Board-Level Risk Committee**  
(Post-Opening)

To ensure responsible governance from project approval through long-term operations, the Center should adopt a two-phase approach to risk management.

### PHASE ONE: PROJECT RISK SUBCOMMITTEE (PRE-OPENING)

Following the City's greenlight, AFCRA and the Steering Committee should establish a Risk Subcommittee to monitor the major risks associated with design, construction, financing, technology, and community relations. This group should include Steering Committee members, AFCRA leadership, City partners, and subject-matter experts.

Existing consultants — including the construction manager, financial advisors, The City of Atlanta's AIM Department (for technology and cybersecurity), and the project's PR firm — should support this work as part of their scopes rather than through additional consulting contracts.

This subcommittee will oversee a single formal risk assessment once design is finalized, ensuring preparedness without unnecessary spending.

### PHASE TWO: BOARD-LEVEL RISK COMMITTEE (POST-OPENING)

Once the nonprofit Board of Directors is established, the Center should create a standing Risk Committee to provide ongoing organizational oversight. This committee will review financial stability, insurance and liability coverage, technology and cybersecurity protections, compliance requirements, and crisis preparedness.

Maintaining a permanent Board-level Risk Committee demonstrates strong governance, builds funder confidence, and helps sustain the Center's long-term stability.



## PRELIMINARY RISK AND MITIGATION MATRIX

This matrix outlines the primary risks identified during the feasibility study, along with realistic assessments of likelihood, potential impact, and recommended mitigation strategies. It is intended as an early-stage planning tool to guide decision-making, highlight areas requiring deeper analysis once the project is greenlit, and ensure that the Center begins with a clear, proactive approach to risk management.

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigation Strategies
Funding Shortfalls (e.g., grants not materializing, donor fatigue)	Medium	High	Diversify revenue across philanthropy, earned income, and corporate support. Implement a major gifts and long-term donor cultivation strategy. Build a 6–12 month reserve fund. Scale programs and staffing in phases tied to revenue milestones.
Construction Delays & Cost Overruns	Medium	Medium	Use phased construction to allow partial early openings. Budget a 5–10% contingency. Engage experienced project managers and contractors. Maintain rigorous oversight through an executive-level project steering committee.
Political Changes (e.g., federal/state policy shifts affecting LGBTQ+ funding or protections)	Medium	High	Cultivate relationships with bipartisan allies. Reduce reliance on government funding through strong private philanthropy. Stay adaptable in program focus (e.g., economic empowerment, public health). Leverage national networks like CenterLink for coordinated advocacy.
Community Opposition (e.g., local "NIMBY" resistance, protests, misinformation)	Low-Medium	Medium	Conduct proactive outreach and education with neighbors. Address concerns through responsive design and transparent operations. Engage local business and civic leaders as champions. Maintain open communication channels for ongoing community feedback.
Security Threats (e.g., vandalism, targeted attacks, harassment)	Medium	High	Employ on-site security during peak hours and events. Install access control, surveillance, and emergency protocols. Provide staff training in safety and de-escalation. Maintain strong relationships with local law enforcement and LGBTQ+ safety organizations.
Economic Downturns (reducing donor contributions and corporate sponsorships)	Medium	Medium	Diversify funding so no single source exceeds 30–40%. Strengthen reserves and endowment. Use flexible staffing models. Invest in revenue-generating programs. Expand grant-seeking capacity for recession-resistant funding streams.



Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigation Strategies
Operational Capacity & Staffing Challenges	Medium	Medium	Offer competitive salaries and benefits. Use phased hiring to prevent overload. Provide professional development and strong onboarding. Build a volunteer and intern pipeline. Establish succession planning for key roles.
Partnership Instability (e.g., nonprofit tenants or medical provider exits)	Low - Medium	Medium - High	Maintain diversified tenant partners. Develop clear MOUs with exit clauses. Identify backup providers. Build revenue contingencies into the financial model. Conduct regular partner check-ins.
Reputational Harm & Crisis Communications Risks	Medium	High	Develop a crisis communications plan. Use reputational screenings for major donors and partners. Maintain transparent public updates. Adopt a strong code of conduct for staff, volunteers, and tenants. Retain PR support for incident response.
Legal & Compliance	Medium	High	Engage ongoing legal counsel. Conduct annual compliance reviews. Ensure medical tenants meet healthcare regulations. Maintain ADA compliance and updated policy manuals. Document governance and operational procedures thoroughly.
Program Effectiveness & Evaluation Risks	Low-Medium	Medium	Establish outcome metrics early. Conduct regular program evaluations. Gather continuous community feedback. Adjust programs based on data and emerging needs.



**I was a volunteer with the original Gay Center in Atlanta in the 1980s. I still remember taking calls from young ones who were on the street and desperate for a place to stay as a deep freeze was forecast. I also took calls from people who were cut off because of AIDS and had no one to listen them. We need a place where old farts like me can help the young ones navigate a hostile world and share our history with them.**

*Anonymous Survey Respondent*

# Estimated Timeline



## FROM FEASIBILITY STUDY TO OPENING

(Completion by October 2029)

Starting from the feasibility study completion in December 2025, the plan outlines roughly 4 years to opening – a feasible but discipline schedule.

This schedule achieves a grand opening by late 2029, ahead of the city’s 2030 expectation, while June 2030 is set as the fallback latest opening date. Each step is designed to keep momentum and overlap tasks. With strong project management, community support, and coordination with the City of Atlanta, completing the Atlanta LGBTQ+ Community Center by October 2029 is an ambitious yet realistic goal.

Throughout the process, the project team should provide regular public updates through community events, stakeholder briefings, social media, and a dedicated newsletter.



**Having an LGBTQ+ community center would bolster ATL's reputation as center for civil and human rights and communicate that ATL makes a place for all kinds of folks.**

*Anonymous Survey Respondent*

**December 2025**  
Feasibility Study Delivered

**January 2026**  
Project Greenlight

**Early 2026**  
Staff Expansion  
Capital Campaign Prep  
Steering Committee Formation

**Q1 2026**  
Design Team Selection

**Mid 2026**  
Conceptual Design & Site Acquisition  
Capital Campaign Launch: Quiet Phase

**Late 2026**  
Schematic Design Complete

**Q1 2027**  
Permitting and Approvals

**Mid 2027**  
Groundbreaking and Construction Kickoff  
Capital Campaign Launch: Public Phase

**Late 2027**  
Foundation and Structural Work

**2028** – Construction Full Steam

**Late 2028** – Exterior and Park Improvements

**Early 2029** – Interior Finishes & Inspections

**Mid 2029** – Operational Setup

**October 2029** – Grand Opening  
(Target Date)

**Q4 2029 to Q2 2030** – Contingency and Full Launch



Pride is more than a weekend — it's a commitment to fostering a city where every LGBTQ+ person can live freely and authentically. The Atlanta LGBTQ+ Community Center will bring that commitment to life day after day. Atlanta Pride proudly supports this effort to create a lasting home for equity, celebration, and belonging.

**Chris McCain**  
Executive Director, Atlanta Pride

# Acknowledgments

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The creation of this Feasibility Study for the Atlanta LGBTQ+ Community Center would not have been possible without the passion, dedication, and expertise of many individuals and organizations.

## **Atlanta Fulton County Recreation Authority**

We extend our deepest gratitude to the staff and Board of Directors of the Atlanta Fulton County Recreation Authority (AFCRA) for their leadership and commitment to ensuring a thriving future for Atlanta's LGBTQ+ community. Your vision and support have laid the foundation for this transformative initiative.

## **Feasibility Study Leadership**

### **Kerry Stewart**

Executive Director, Atlanta Fulton County Recreation Authority

### **Malik Brown**

Feasibility Study Director

### **Dr. Alie Redd & Paul Conroy**

Exploratory Committee Co-Chairs

### **Vivienne Kerr**

Executive Assistant to the Executive Director & Budget Oversight for the Study

## **Community & Stakeholder Contributors**

This study was informed by the voices of Atlanta's LGBTQ+ community, allies, and stakeholders. We thank the many individuals, nonprofit organizations, business leaders, and community members who participated in town halls, surveys, and discussions. Your insights and lived experiences have been invaluable.

## **Government & Institutional Partners**

We recognize the City of Atlanta and Fulton County officials who have supported this initiative and the broader effort to advance equity and inclusion. Special thanks to Mayor Andre Dickens, the Atlanta City Council, City staff, and community leaders who continue to champion LGBTQ+ spaces.

## **Corporate & Philanthropic Supporters**

We extend our gratitude to corporate partners, foundations, and philanthropic leaders who have expressed interest in supporting this project. Your investment in Atlanta's LGBTQ+ future will leave a lasting impact.

## **Pro-Bono Supporters**

We are deeply grateful to the partners who generously contributed pro-bono services, funding, complimentary space, and more to help us develop a feasibility study we are proud of — and that LGBTQ+ Atlantans so richly deserve.

Special thanks to our friends at, Aprio Advisory Group, Arnall Golden Gregory LLP, and Boston Consulting Group, and Pro Bono Partnership of Atlanta for their invaluable support.

Additionally, we thank AvitaCare Atlanta, My Sister's Room, No Mas! Cantina, Out Front Theatre Company, and Truth Midtown for their generosity.



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**Research Student**

Lane Miller

### The LGBTQ+ Community of Atlanta

Above all, this project is for you. To every activist, elder, youth, artist, entrepreneur, and community member who has fought for a space where we can gather, heal, and thrive—this center is a testament to your resilience.



**Atlanta deserves a space where our stories are told and our futures imagined, side by side.**

*Anonymous Survey Respondent*



### **Exploratory Committee Members**

We are deeply appreciative of the Exploratory Committee, whose guidance, expertise, and unwavering advocacy have shaped this study. Their collective wisdom has ensured that the recommendations reflect the needs and aspirations of our diverse community.

### **Subcommittee Members**

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to the subcommittee members, whose dedicated insights, specialized knowledge, and thoughtful collaboration enriched every aspect of this study.

### **Exploratory Committee Members**

Dr. Alieizoria Redd	Jonathan Foulk	Reese McCranie	Clark Seydel
Paul Conroy	Morna Gerard	Tracee McDaniel	Courtney Smith
Dyllón Burnside	Dr. Angelica Geter	Selima Morrow	Brian Tolleson
Stephanie Cho	Jon Gould	Josh Newton	Tony Uceda
Tori Cooper	Jeff Graham	Dan Preister	Neal VanMarter
William Duffee-Braun	Samuel Greene	Richard Ramey	Carlo Velayo
Dr. Arlene Edwards	TJ Kaplan	Quinton Rasberry	Tim'm West
Jim Fielding	Andy Levine	Adam Rimes	Andrea Wiggins
	Chris McCain	Dr. Jason Schneider	Doug Young

### **Subcommittee Members**

Bishop OC Allen	Thomas Dempsey	R. Darlene Hudson	Troy Parker
Jenny Barlow	Maria Helena Dolan	Steven Igarashi-Ball	Rev. Paul M. Turner
Tim Bresnahan	Mercedes Flowers	Anthony Knight	Katie Ward
Susan Coleman	Lorraine Fontana	Elizabeth Krakovski	Russ Youngblood
Kate Daly	John Graves	Matthew Morgan	
Charles Davis	Gaby Hale	Joshua O'Neal	
Rommel Davis	Dave Bryant Hayward	Wes Nimmo	

**Together, we are building a home that will serve generations to come.**

For detailed survey data and additional supporting materials, please see the full appendix, available at [ATLGBTQCENTER.COM/APPENDIX](https://atlgbtqcenter.com/appendix).

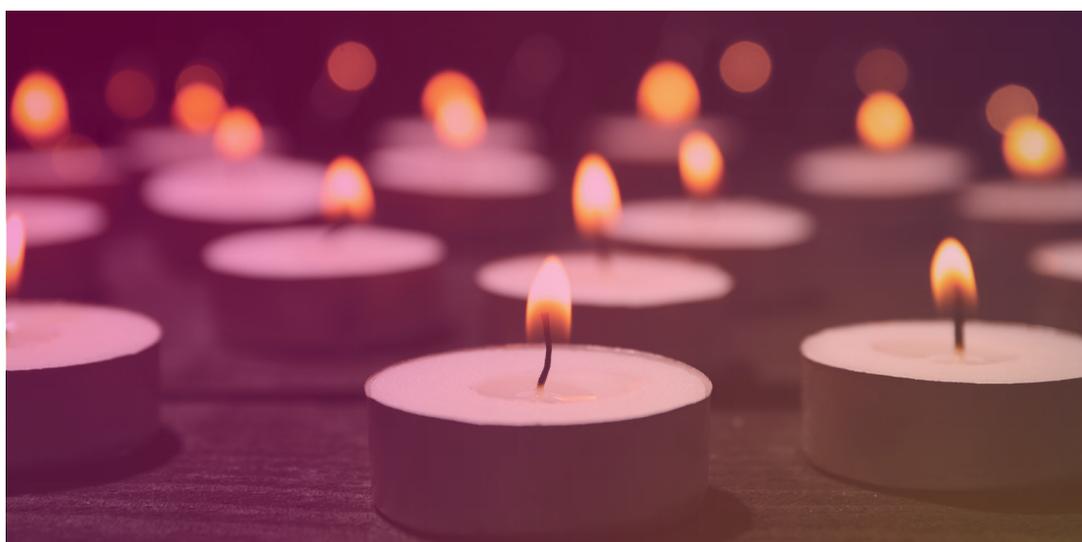
# In Memoriam

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Our work stands on the shoulders of the LGBTQ+ ancestors whose courage, labor, and lives shaped the path to this moment.

We honor the leaders we can name, the hidden figures whose impact went unrecognized, and the countless others whose names may not appear here but whose contributions made this work possible. This Feasibility Study is dedicated to all of them.

Bianca “Muffin” Bankz	Joan P. Garner	Dr. Jesse Peel
Bonaire “Bonnie” Black	Harry H. Harkins, Jr.	Dr. Alvan Quamina
Berl Boykin	Dave Hayward	Rebecca Ranson
Mr. Charlie Brown	Righteous Torrence “TK” Hill	Jimmie Scott Robinson
Ashley Burton	John Howell	Phillip Rush
Cheryl Courtney-Evans	Katie Janness	Scout Schultz
Koko Da Doll	Ray Kluka	Lateasha Shante Shuntel
TeeTee Dangerfield	Diamond Lil	Bill Smith
Tony Daniels	Marisol Payero	Sophie Vásquez





# AFCRA

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RECREATION AUTHORITY

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Suite Level  
Atlanta, GA 30303

A NIGHT at the SWEET GUM HEAD  
Drag, Drugs, Disco, and Atlanta's Gay Revolution  
MARTIN PADGETT

Don't Grow Up Invisible

Don't Grow Up Invisible

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