

# LGBTQ Neighborhood Guide

Metro Detroit has several unique neighborhoods with great dining, nightlife, attractions, LGBTQ resources and local culture.

## NEIGHBORHOOD GUIDE

### FEATURES

Art & Culture, Food & Drink, Nightlife

### DESTINATIONS

Downtown Detroit, Dearborn/Wayne, Oakland

1

**FERNDALE**



Ferndale is well-known as the most LGBTQ-friendly neighborhood in metro Detroit, with many LGBTQ organizations, businesses and residents. Ferndale is home to Affirmations community center, Matrix MAC Health (formerly the Michigan AIDS Coalition) and numerous other LGBTQ and progressive nonprofit groups. Located just north of Detroit, between 8 and 10 Mile roads along the Woodward corridor, Ferndale is easily accessible from major highways.

According to the latest census, Ferndale is second only to tiny neighbor Pleasant Ridge for percentage of households with same-sex couples. (In fact, Pleasant Ridge ranks among the top 10 nationally.) Ferndale's current mayor, David Coulter, and former mayor, Craig Covey, are openly gay men. The city has numerous LGBT-owned shops, restaurants, bars and theaters, and many more LGBTQ-friendly establishments.

"In the beginning of the '80s, Ferndale was a blank slate," said former mayor Covey. "The downtown was empty. You could roll a bowling ball down the middle of 9 Mile and not hit anything."

Home values were declining; the storefronts downtown were almost entirely empty except for a few adult bookstores, nail salons, wig shops and a strip club.

The Ringwald Theatre on Woodward Avenue is the Detroit area's LGBTQ-



identified theater troop. Restaurants such as [Rosie O'Grady's](#), [Assaggi Bistro](#), [The Emory](#) and [Woodward Avenue Brewers](#), [Ferndale Project](#) and others often host fundraisers and events for LGBTQ groups. [Soho bar](#) is a great place for LGBTQ people to relax and meet for a drink.

Ferndale's downtown area is charmingly walkable, and you are sure to run into friendly local residents on their way to dinner, a shop or a show. Note the many rainbow flags flying in front of homes and businesses through the town.

The local government worked hard to attract forward-thinking people to stimulate the economy in this historically blue-collar town. It worked. Ferndale is flourishing and new people and ideas are welcomed.

### [Ferndale Resources](#)



2

ROYAL OAK



The suburban city of Royal Oak has long been friendly to the LGBTQ community. It has a youthful, exciting vibe with more than 85 boutiques, salons and retail shops; 750 outdoor seats at more than 70 restaurants; several live and movie theaters, a comedy club and more.

**Pronto!** on Washington Street is the epicenter of LGBTQ life in Royal Oak. The restaurant offers upscale deli fare in a comfortable, social environment, and the bar is one of the most popular LGBTQ bars in metro Detroit. Their complex is also now hosting the Drag Queen Bingo produced by [Five 15 Media Mojo & More](#). Up the street from Pronto! is LGBTQ-owned [Café Muse](#), an elegant restaurant and bar that offers gourmet delicacies in a cozy, romantic atmosphere.



There is a wide array of entertainment options all within blocks of each other in downtown Royal Oak, including [Royal Oak Music Theatre](#) on Fourth Street, a Live Nation venue that brings in national acts, and [Mark Ridley's Comedy Castle](#) with local and nationally known comedians. Stagecrafters at the [Stagecrafters at Baldwin Theatre](#) is considered the best community theater troop in the state. Movie buffs will love the avant-garde lineup at the [Main Art Theatre](#), and right behind that site is the [Imagine Royal Oak](#) complex that shows all the blockbuster films.

Dozens of restaurants, bars, coffee shops, dessert bars, shops, boutiques and trendy clothing stores are all within easy walking distance. Downtown Royal Oak is a fun and entertaining area to walk around during the day or after dark to enjoy the active evening nightlife.

[Royal Oak Resources](#)



3

## PALMER PARK



The Palmer Park district of Detroit, located on the northern edge of the city, is north of 7 Mile Road and about a mile on either side of Woodward Avenue. Named for the 296-acre public park at the heart of the district, the Palmer Park area was the epicenter of gay life in Detroit in the '70s and '80s, with many bars, restaurants, a bookstore and offices for any number of LGBTQ groups. The beautiful apartment district and stately mansions built by the original auto industry titans were home to many LGBTQ people who called Detroit home.

As Detroit experienced decades of decline, so did the Palmer Park district. Many of the LGBTQ residents and businesses moved north to avoid rising crime and urban decay. Today, however, Palmer Park is joining in the resurgence that the entire Detroit area is experiencing. Many of the apartment complexes on the west side of Woodward – beautiful buildings built in the '20s, '30s and '40s – have been completely renovated and are attracting a young, progressive residential base. Some of the original LGBTQ bars and businesses that remain there – [Menjos](#), [Club Gold Coast](#) – are still there serving the LGBTQ community. The park itself is the location for Hotter Than July, Detroit's black LGBTQ celebration that attracts thousands of people from all over the Midwest every summer.

The **Ruth Ellis Center** (REC) in Palmer Park provides direct services and housing for LGBTQ youth. REC also has a full-service health clinic, staffed and operated by doctors and medical staff from the Henry Ford Health System. REC's two shelters for homeless LGBTQ youth is a model that is being emulated across the country, and the drop-in center has been visited by numerous LGBTQ celebrities and supporters, including Wanda Sykes, Lily Tomlin, Sandra Bernhard, Bruce Vilanch and Whoopi Goldberg. The drop-in center is open to the public, so anyone can visit this amazing resource for LGBTQ youth – and donations are always appreciated.

Palmer Park is still an area in transition, but driving through the beautiful residential streets will give you a glimpse into Detroit's past when the auto industry was king. It will also give you the chance to see what a commitment of economic and human resources can do to bring back an area that many thought was lost forever.

[Palmer Park Resources](#)

4

MIDTOWN



Located just north of the downtown sports and entertainment district and bisected by Woodward Avenue, Midtown is the cultural, artistic and intellectual center of downtown Detroit. The area is anchored by some of the city's largest institutions, including [Wayne State University](#), [Detroit Medical Center](#), [Detroit Institute of Arts](#), [Detroit Historical Museum](#), [Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History](#), [Museum of Contemporary Art Detroit \(MOCAD\)](#) and just to the west the [Henry Ford Health System](#).

Dozens of restaurants, theaters, coffee shops, bars, hotels and inns, stores and event spaces have opened in the last few years. [Shinola](#) opened its flagship store on Canfield Street, and other specialty national retailers have popped up such as [Third Man Records](#), [Carhartt](#) and [John Varvatos](#), which is located just south of Midtown.



What helps make Midtown special? It's the local merchants who committed early to the area, which is now booming. LGBTQ-founded businesses such as [Hugh](#) on Cass Street, [The Peacock Room](#) and [Frida](#) on Kirby and [Avalon International Breads](#) on Willis Street, along with galleries like the Detroit Artist Market, [Artloft](#) and the [Detroit Gallery of Contemporary Crafts](#) fuel the area's trendy, youthful energy. Restaurants such as [La Feria Spanish Tapas](#), [Cuisine](#), [Cass Café](#), [Seva](#), [Union Street Detroit](#), [Traffic Jam & Snug](#), [Wasabi Korean & Japanese Cuisine](#), [Midtown Shangri-La](#) and [The Whitney](#) all have been regular spots for LGBTQ diners for decades.

Detroit is also home to more live professional theater seats than any other American city except New York. The [Fisher Theatre](#) and [Olympia Entertainment](#) both bring in Broadway touring groups. The [Detroit Repertory Theatre](#), WSU's [Hilberry Theatre](#) and [Bonstelle Theatre](#), [Fox Theatre](#), [Planet Ant](#) and the [Detroit Film Theatre](#) are only a few of the exceptional entertainment venues either in or within easy driving distance of Midtown. Check out [encoremichigan.com](http://encoremichigan.com) for complete listings and reviews of live professional theater in and around the city.

See a show, have a meal, shop, enjoy a museum, relax in a comfortable room at the [Inn on Ferry Street](#). Midtown is a wonderfully exciting area to explore and enjoy.

[Midtown Resources](#)



5

## INDIAN VILLAGE & WEST VILLAGE



If you are an architecture buff, don't miss visiting Indian Village. It is a historic neighborhood located on Detroit's east side, bound to the north and south by Mack Avenue and East Jefferson Avenue along the streets of Burns, Iroquois and Seminole. The district was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1972.

The district has a number of architecturally significant homes built in the early 20th century. A number of the houses have been substantially restored, and many others well kept. Bordering Indian Village to the west is West Village, with additional historic homes, townhouses and apartments.

Many of the homes in this area were built by prominent architects, such as Albert Kahn, Louis Kamper and William Stratton, for some of the area's most prominent citizens, including Edsel Ford. Many have a carriage house, with some of those being larger than an average suburban home. Some of the houses also have large amounts of [Pewabic Pottery](#) tiles.

The neighborhood hosts an annual home and garden tour the first Saturday of June, neighborhood yard sales in September, a holiday home tour in December, and many other community events.

Indian Village has long been home to many affluent LGBTQ professionals who have renovated, maintained and nurtured their residences and neighborhoods. The 20-block West Village area adjacent to Indian Village has hundreds of smaller homes and attractive apartments that have brought many younger people, and the businesses that cater to them. [Detroit Vegan Soul](#) is an LGBTQ-owned restaurant and gathering place on Agnes Street that has become an informal community center for LGBTQ people to meet and learn what's going on in the immediate area. It's a lovely area to walk around, with many shops and interesting galleries to browse.

[Indian Village Resources](#)

[Historic West Village Resources](#)

6

## CORKTOWN & WOODBRIDGE



A historic district located just west of downtown Detroit, the Corktown/Woodbridge area is the oldest extant neighborhood in the city. Recently, Corktown has attracted a younger, more adventurous population including a vibrant LGBTQ community. The revitalized park and residential area near the old Tigers Stadium site hosts many new restaurants and bars.

The new [Corktown Health Center](#) for LGBTQ health recently opened, located in the same building as the Health Emergency Lifeline Program, one of the oldest HIV/AIDS service agencies in Detroit.

[Corktown Resources](#)

