

# Get Out of Oakland | Lawrenceville

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If you're sick of chain retail, Chipotle and cheap drinks, get out of Oakland and visit some other Pittsburgh neighborhoods. It's time to act like a real Pittsburgher and not some slow-walking suburban transplant and have an adventure. Take a 20-minute ride on the 93 bus to Lawrenceville, the neighborhood equivalent of a flannel shirt and a turmeric superjuice.

Sarcasm aside, Lawrenceville is a fun, walkable neighborhood with an abundance of cocktail bars, locally owned and often locally sourced restaurants, coffee shops and kitschy-themed hangouts. It's the ideal place to spend a whole Saturday. You can start the morning with a boozy brunch, do a little vintage and thrift shopping, grab lunch or coffee, spend the afternoon pinballing or candle-making and end the day at a cocktail bar or hot dog shop.



Image via Wikimedia Commons

Butler Street in Upper Lawrenceville on Jan. 13, 2012.

## Things To Do:

### Mix Candle Co.

Mix Candle Co., formerly the Candle Lab, blends DIY craftiness with sweet-smelling essential oils in hand-poured soy candles. Mix's instagrammable store has more than 120 distinct scents, which you can mix and match until you create a custom scent. Customers pay for the jars, not the custom oils, so you can pour a smaller single wick candle or a three wick candle that will burn for more than 100 hours. When you go into the store, you can browse a fancy-smelling wall until you find the scents you like best, and then you choose three to mix into your custom candle. Mixing the candles takes around 30 minutes, and they set for 90 minutes — which is an ideal amount of time to wander Lawrenceville, bowl a game at Arsenal or grab dinner.

There is a step up into the storefront, and the counters and barstools are not wheelchair height.

### Kickback Pinball Cafe

Kickback Pinball Cafe is, perfectly and unsurprisingly, a cafe full of pinball machines. The cafe is an ideal blend of arcade nostalgia, milkshakes and melts. The drink menu includes classic caffeinated options like cold brew, cappuccino and espresso, plus shaken iced teas, shakes, root beer floats and affogato. The food menu has bagels, avocado toast and loaded melts.

There is a step up into the storefront.

### Redfishbowl Studios

Redfishbowl Studios is a grassroots artist collective that curates events and showcases local artists. They also host studio tours, exhibitions and open-to-the-public events. If you're looking for a creative night out, attend the studio's Drink and Draw Thursdays. A weekly event hosted by rotating artists, Drink and Draw is an opportunity to paint, draw and be creative.

If you're looking for a more structured evening of drawing practice, attend their Wednesday Figure Drawing Class, with live nude models and instructions and tips from the artist host. The Thursday night events are free and open to the public, and the Wednesday class is a \$10, pre-registered event. The studio is holding a ticketed Halloween masquerade party on Oct. 29 to celebrate their three-year anniversary, with live music. If you want to look cultured on a first date, call Redfishbowl and book a private studio tour. Bonus points if you wear a fancy scarf or vaguely French hat.

The studio is on the second floor and is not wheelchair accessible.

## **Row House Cinema**

With its penchant for pickle popcorn and old movies, Row House Cinema is definitely in the top five independent theaters in Pittsburgh, which would be true even if there were more than five independent theaters in Pittsburgh. This month, the theater is running its Row House of Horrors lineup, which includes classics like “Halloween,” “The Shining,” Dario Argento’s “Deep Red” and surprise spooky picks like “The Witches” and “Hocus Pocus.”

If you’re over 21, you can grab a craft beer, cider or hard seltzer from the attached Bierport, a bottleshop and taproom. Next month, you’ll be able to cross the street and grab a donut from Oliver’s Donuts, which is co-owned by one of the founders of Row House. Attendees must provide either proof of vaccination or of a negative COVID-19 test within 72 hours, so make sure to take your vax card and ID.

The theater is wheelchair accessible and offers closed captioning devices for certain screenings.

## **Places to Eat and Drink:**

### **Belvedere’s Ultradive**

Belvedere’s is both a place to drink and to do things because really our favorite places are the ones where we can drink and do things. The drinks are cheap, the bartenders are cool and the themed nights are perfect if your biggest problem with Pittsburgh clubs is the lack of ABBA or emo music. Tuesday nights are karaoke, Wednesday nights are stand-up comedy and the rest of the week is full of throwback dance parties, the aptly named “Sadderday” emo nights and themed disco events. Like Row House, Belvedere’s requires proof of vaccination or a negative COVID-19 test, so you can sing and dance and sweat with a relative sense of safety.

There is a step up into the bar, and the bar and tables are hightops.

### **Bar Botanico**

Bar Botanico’s craft cocktails and small plates are ideal for a first date or a happy hour with friends. The Scratch & Co Kitchen inside Bar Botanico has possibly the best appetizer game in Pittsburgh — the pierogi of the week is always good, or try the veggie sliders or butternut coconut curry. While the bar has a good selection of wine and beer, the cocktails are unique and well-crafted and are really the best part of the drinks menu. Bar Botanico’s bartender feature this month is the Beetle Juice, a brightly colored mix of green chartreuse, midori, lemon and absinthe. The Cool Hand Cuke, Gillyweed Gimlet and espresso martini are exceptionally good and highlight the skill of the bartenders. If nothing on the drinks menu feels exactly right, the bartenders will mix a custom drink for you based on the flavors you like.

Bar Botanico is wheelchair accessible and has both bar and table seating.

### **Franktuary**

Franktuary is a locally owned, locally sourced restaurant that serves grown-up hot dogs, beer and boozy floats in a store that feels more like your favorite food truck — not surprising, considering that’s how it started. The all-hot dog menu might feel gimmicky, but the loaded hot dogs, pierogies and poutine are so good that you forget the humble hot dog underneath the piles of coleslaw, pineapple or chili. Two favorites are the Oahu, an all-beef frank topped with grilled pineapple, bacon and teriyaki and the Chicago Imposter, a skinless frank with a pickle wedge, tomatoes, onions, banana peppers, relish, mustard, celery salt and poppy seed.

Franktuary is wheelchair accessible and has both table and booth seating.

### **Geppetto**

With savory and sweet crepes and waffles, La Prima espresso and Turkish coffee,

Geppetto cafe is easily one of the best brunches in the City — the abundance of sweet and savory crepes, waffles, french toast and paninis is perfect for a big brunch with friends. The tiramisu and banoffee sweet crepes are especially rich and indulgent, and the ham and gruyere panini with honey aioli is a fancy, filling, grown-up grilled cheese. The cafe also has an extensive tea and milkshake menu.

The cafe is wheelchair accessible and has free-standing tables.