

## 6.0 Commerce

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### 6.1 Introduction

As with all other major populated areas across the country, Cuyahoga County experienced a completely new shopping experience during the mid-twentieth century. As population shifted from city cores into the suburbs, so too did commercial development, including stores, doctors' offices, professional offices, restaurants, and other outlets. These new developments arose in each area of major population expansion and the growing ownership of automobiles by families facilitated travel to these places through improved roads and highways.

### 6.2 Pre-1940 Commercialism in the US

Most commercial development across the country in the early twentieth century occurred in downtown areas, which were at this time, the hubs of the communities. Downtowns already included most work places and were easily accessible via public transportation from the surrounding area, therefore, department stores, other smaller retailers, and professional offices were also located here. In Cuyahoga County, Cleveland served as the major downtown hub.

Downtown department stores were usually ornate, multi-story buildings that featured elaborate window displays, lush furnishings, and dining areas to attract shoppers from the busy city streets into a more relaxing environment to spend time and money. To retain the feel of these places, companies hired employees for new positions, such as interior designers, display managers, window trimmers, stylists, and more sales representatives. Eventually, some of these positions transferred to mid-century shopping centers and mall shops (Smiley 2013:5).

### 6.3 Mid-Century Commercial Building History

#### 6.3.1 Commercial Retail

As residential movement away from city centers gained popularity, more large department stores began to experiment with branch stores in suburban areas. These stores were often stand-alone buildings not located within a shopping center or mall. Unlike the ornate buildings of downtown, suburban department stores were designed with limited exterior windows as companies no longer had to attract customers walking by and once inside, they would not be distracted by outside events. The box-like store designs also allowed for shipping/receiving and storage areas to be more camouflaged from the consumer. Also, the layout made it easier for trucks carrying inventory to load and unload as improved and widened streets accommodated heavier truck traffic. Interior spaces were also diminished from downtown "parent" stores. Temporary shelves and racks were installed, which could be easily rearranged for special events, new displays, and general remodeling. Department layouts were also more open for the same reasons, leading to a less intimate shopping experience (Smiley 2013:6).

Branch stores could be tailored for particular areas; for example, stores could focus on high-end goods in upper class neighborhoods. During the post-war period, branches were vital to the profitability of department stores. Between 1950 and 1960, approximately 400 branch stores were planned across the country (Longstreth 2010:139).

Ultimately, the majority of branch stores relocated to shopping centers or malls in order to attract the greatest numbers of customers. As more centers and malls were constructed, consumers did not want to travel to multiple

locations, and centers and malls provided the opportunity for one-stop shopping, which was especially welcomed for those reliant upon public transportation (Longstreth 2010:138).

Branch stores built in Cuyahoga County were not unlike those across the country. In August 1948, local department store company, Halle's Brothers, opened its first branch store in Shaker Square. The store remained in operation until 1982 and was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 2005 (NR 05000029). Branch store construction continued throughout Cuyahoga County into the 1950s before department stores began to open in shopping centers and malls. In November 1957, the May Company opened a branch store in University Heights, referred to as May's on-the-Heights. The store was designed by Victor Gruen Associates, who was responsible for the country's first enclosed mall, with Cleveland-local, Jack Alan Bialosky as associate architect. The store, located at the corner of the main thoroughfares of Cedar and Warrensville Center roads, was in the center of the block wide parcel and surrounded by parking lot space to accommodate automobile traffic. By the mid-1990s, other standalone stores were added to the parcel. In 2001-2002, the original May's store was demolished and replaced with additional stores and a large parking garage. Survey conducted as part of this report only identified one remaining branch store from this period in the county, a former Halle's Brothers Department Store, now a Burlington Coat Factory, in Middleburg Heights (CUY 1140715). Others have been razed or greatly altered that they no longer convey their ages and/or historic uses.



Figure 6-1. 1957 aerial of May's on-the-Heights, (Cleveland Press Collection, Michael Schwartz Library, Cleveland State University).

Shopping center construction began in the 1940s. Most centers followed the same layout with one-story, sprawling buildings set far back from the road to accommodate large, open parking lots for automobiles. Storefronts typically had large glass storefront windows for optimal viewing and large signage above that were visible from the street to advertise store locations. Stores were accessible from the exterior, but a roof overhang, awning, or some other coverage provided shelter to customers traveling among the shops. Shopping centers were built as a cohesive unit; although, additions were sometime constructed later depending on the success of the venture. These centers attracted consumers because they offered plenty of parking, multiple shops in one location, and all stores were visible from the parking lot, making it easy to find particular shops. The centers were built in suburban areas where the required large tracts of land were available at low costs, similar to the development of residential areas. Most often, shopping centers were built along main roads that were convenient for those with automobiles and along bus routes for those without. A study for each shopping center was first conducted to determine the retail needs of consumers in the area so that the center provided enough variety of shops without duplicating already established types (Longstreth 2010:170–171).

Shopping centers sought anchor stores that would attract an established clientele, who would then patronize other, smaller shops in the center. Many times, grocery stores become the anchors of new centers. In other cases, drug stores or smaller versions of department stores, sometimes referred to as junior stores, were the anchors (Longstreth 2010:172).

Shopping centers of the mid-twentieth century can be divided into three categories based upon size and number of stores. "Neighborhood" centers were the smallest, containing less than 20 stores with one grocery or drug store anchor. "Community" centers were mid-level with 20 – 40 stores with a variety store and/or junior department store and a grocery store anchoring the center. These types of centers were typically designed for areas that would serve up to 100,000 residents. The largest were "Regional" centers that had at least 40 stores with several anchors that were designed to serve at least 100,000 residents. The large shopping centers were designated as enclosed shopping malls by the mid-1950s (Longstreth 2010:174).



Figure 6-2. 1960 aerial of Parma Shoppes, then known as Parmatown (Cleveland Press Collection, Michael Schwartz Library, Cleveland State University)

Cuyahoga County retains a number of shopping centers of various sizes from the mid-century period. In order to remain relevant and up-to-date, however, these centers have

experienced numerous renovations, including additions, exterior alterations, and changes to the types and number of stores included.

The first fully enclosed shopping mall, called Southdale Center, in the United States was designed in 1956 by Victor Gruen in Edina, Minnesota, a suburb of Minneapolis. The idea of a condensed shopping area was not new, but one that was sheltered from the elements, and therefore, comfortable year-round was warmly welcomed throughout the country. Other benefits to shopping at malls included ample parking in lots or garages that surround the building meaning short walking distances between cars and stores, especially helpful when leaving with large purchases and a larger variety and quantity of stores meant more consumers' needs were met within one location. Malls were typically constructed in suburban areas that were slated for continual growth to maintain a dedicated consumer base. Areas that were not fully developed provided mall investors with opportunities to purchase large tracts of undeveloped land at lower prices than in areas closer to city cores where land costs were higher, and developers would likely need to raze existing buildings in order to prepare the site, thus adding more to the construction costs. Developers sought a minimum of 50 acres to accommodate the mall building, surrounding parking lots/garages, and potential future expansion of the mall and/or for new buildings along the periphery. As with shopping centers, malls were often located along main thoroughfares that were often within easy access to highways and interstates as well as along bus routes to attract the largest number of customers (Longstreth 2010:190–192).

Developers sought at least two established department stores in each mall. While these stores were in competition, having more than one in the mall attracted more consumers as they could visit both in one location. Competing department stores were placed at opposite ends of the mall to provide literal and figurative space between them. Other secondary stores were a mix of established chains and local

specialty stores. Mall investors and insurance agents preferred regionally and nationally established stores as these were seen as low risk and more likely to remain in business (Longstreth 2010: 193).

Malls ultimately became de-facto community centers in these areas. The interior spaces were walkable and included fountains, sculptures, benches, etc. that permitted visitors to spend leisure time with others beyond shopping and spending money. Open spaces were also used for special events, like various holiday displays. Later operating hours also meant families could go to the mall after the typical workday. By the late 1950s, about 60 percent of shopping at malls was done between 6:00 and 9:00 PM (Longstreth 2010:196–198).

By the early 1960s, fully enclosed malls were preferred by developers, investors, and consumers, and therefore, more of these were constructed over shopping centers and standalone stores (Longstreth 2010:216). In Cuyahoga County, the first fully enclosed mall, Severance Center, was built in the early 1960s in Cleveland Heights on the former 125-acre Longwood Estate of John Severance. The site, just beyond the eastern city limits of Cleveland, was chosen because of the openness of the estate (not many buildings or structures would need to be razed) and because the estate had passed to Severance's nephew, Severance Millikin, who wanted to develop the land. Plans for the Severance Mall began in 1954, and was the first mall constructed in Ohio. The mall officially opened in 1963 with local department stores, Halle's and Higbee's as the anchor shops. Other malls followed throughout Cuyahoga County into the late 1970s.



Figure 6-3. 1963 aerial of Severance Town Center, showing its original configuration (Cleveland Press Collection, Michael Schwartz Library, Cleveland State University).



Figure 6-4. 1963 interior view of Severance Town Center (Cleveland Press Collection, Michael Schwartz Library, Cleveland State University).

### 6.3.2 Professional Office Buildings

As suburban development pushed beyond the city limits, retail and other business concerns followed this path. “Garden-type” suburban office buildings began to replace city offices in the 1950s. These new office types attracted businesses to relocate outside the city where customer parking was plentiful to accommodate the rise in automobile ownership and was immediately surrounding the property, negating extra time to find parking, potentially long walks to the building, and fees to pay for garage or metered parking spaces.

The buildings offered the latest comforts and amenities to workers and customers, like air-conditioning and office space that could be built to suit and/or flexible in layout. Workers were also attracted to these buildings for the same reasons as above, plus commute times could be shortened as traveling outside the city on interstates and other improved roadways allowed for many of these buildings to be constructed conveniently close to highway exits (Smiley 2013:178).

These buildings in Cuyahoga County include high-rise offices and medical arts buildings often located near interstate exits or along major thoroughfares. Some buildings continue as their original purpose, but others have been altered to accommodate new needs.

## 6.4 Commercial Resources Identified During Survey

For purposes of this discussion, commercial-related resources include shopping centers, shopping malls, standalone retail buildings, and office/professional buildings. Several of each type were identified throughout the county during the survey. A breakdown of numbers of each type is in the following section.

### 6.4.1 Shopping Centers

The surveyed shopping centers are typically one-story sprawling complexes with numerous retailers that have entries leading directly to and

from the outside. The exterior walkways surrounding the centers are usually covered to provide some shelter for customers during inclement weather events, but are even more relevant in Cuyahoga County where winter weather is historically brutal. The centers are usually L- or V-shaped to condense the shopping areas, and therefore, reduce walking distances between the ends of the center stores. Large parking lots are located in front of the storefronts to supply ample close parking options to patrons. Smaller shopping centers, like the Southgate Shopping Center in Maple Heights (CUY 1134724), have smaller parking areas, but remain directly in front of the storefronts to provide convenient access to the stores.

The surveyed shopping centers often had been altered physically to keep them from appearing out-of-date and to accommodate changing retailers. Even though the retailers are different from the date of original construction, the locations of the anchor and subsequent supporting stores are typically still identifiable. The anchor spaces usually have larger or more storefront windows and may have more prominent signage space above the storefront.

The secondary store spaces are usually repetitive storefront configurations with at least one large window and entry. None of the surveyed shopping centers retain all original materials, but typically retain main materials like brick veneers and storefront windows and doors. The configuration is evident in the Puritas Plaza Shopping Center (CUY 1146208) in Puritas-Longmead as the original A&P Supermarket anchor store was located in the section of the shopping center with the taller signage space above the large number of storefront windows and the secondary stores are located in the areas with shorter signage spaces and single entries. This shopping center, while featuring replacement store signage and covered walkway materials, retains the original brick veneer walls and signage for the shopping center itself.



Plate 2. Puritas Plaza Shopping Center (CUY 1146208), constructed in 1959, 14025 Puritas Ave., Puritas-Longmead. The Family Dollar store on the right originally housed an A&P supermarket. Grocery stores were commonly found in shopping centers during the modern period.

#### 6.4.2 Shopping Malls

All of the surveyed shopping malls are two-story, fully-enclosed edifices with limited doorways that are located at anchor stores, which are found at either end of the mall building and sometimes in the center. Each mall is surrounded by large parking lots and/or garages that provide ample options for visitors. Each mall included various levels of surrounding commercial buildings, which were constructed after the malls opened to take advantage of the large number of customers visiting the area.

The three malls surveyed as part of this report all have experienced some level of alteration and change of use. The Euclid Square Mall in Euclid (CUY 1104522) no longer functions as

a shopping mall, but most recently included about a dozen small churches that used former store spaces for services with other areas being vacant. A few standalone stores were constructed around the perimeter of the mall, but are currently vacant as commercial traffic has ended. In Richmond Heights, the Richmond Mall (CUY 1123922) and the Severance Mall in Cleveland Heights (CUY 1127922) each have post-1976 additions, but continue to function as shopping malls even as some store units are currently vacant. Although each have been altered, the locations of the anchor stores are still recognizable by their prominent locations at the ends or center of the complex and through the use of materials that differ from the main portion of the mall. Identification of anchor stores is illustrated at the east end of the Euclid Square Mall, which originally housed a

Higbee's department store. This section features blue tile and tulip columns at its three entrances, which are found nowhere else on the building. The Richmond Mall also features a Sears store at its northwest end that features smooth brick veneer walls and concrete columns that are not found in other areas of the mall. Sears retained its own architect, Cleveland-based Dalton &

Dalton, to design the store independent from the main mall architect, Los Angeles-based and noted shopping center/mall designer, Lathrop Douglass & Associates.



Plate 3. Euclid Square Mall (CUY 1104522), constructed in 1976, Euclid. Currently mostly vacant with no remaining retail stores; however, this former anchor store end retains its original entry columns.

### 6.4.3 Standalone Stores

Standalone retail stores include large, department stores and small, specialty entities like restaurants, banks, and independent stores. Like the aforementioned centers and malls, standalone stores are commonly located along major thoroughfares for the convenience of automobile traffic. These stores typically do not house their original tenants, but exhibit more architectural features common in the modern-era than shopping centers and malls. These stores also feature smaller parking lots, appropriate to the size of the building. One

former department store was identified during survey. The Former Halle's Brothers Department Store branch (CUY 1140715), Middleburg Heights now houses a Burlington Coat Factory Store. No others were identified during survey since many of this type were demolished or incorporated into larger shopping centers, and therefore, are no longer recognizable as such. The aforementioned May's on-the-Heights is a good example of the evolution of the standalone department store that attracted other commercial development, but was ultimately razed to accommodate a new commercial layout. Further research and survey may find other existing examples.



Plate 4. Former Halle's Brothers Department Store branch (CUY 1140715), constructed in 1956, Middleburg Heights. This was the only former branch store identified during survey.

#### 6.4.4 Professional/Office Buildings

Professional and office buildings include large, multi-story buildings designed to house numerous office suites as well as smaller, one-to two-story buildings designed to house offices relevant to the immediate area. Large office buildings typically feature surrounding parking lots and entrances on the main and rear sides of the buildings to accommodate employees and patrons. Smaller types usually have a single central entryway and parking lots reflective of the size of the building.

Several examples of both types were identified throughout the county during survey. In all cases, the buildings were located among other commercial development and along main thoroughfares so that the buildings were easily accessible via vehicles or from public transportation routes. In the case of the Brainard Place large professional building in Lyndhurst (CUY 1103122), the building was constructed at the interchange of I-271 and Cedar Road to attract commuters, who would

rather travel on the interstate away from the congestion of the city, to a new building with the latest amenities. Other large buildings were located near already established shopping centers or malls, and therefore, within heavily trafficked areas. Smaller professional buildings were identified along main roads and within established shopping complexes. Oftentimes, many of these types were located in close proximity since these areas are specifically zoned for this type of use.

In both cases, the buildings typically do not retain their original tenants and sometimes do not retain their original function. The former Southgate Medical Arts Buildings in Maple Heights (CUY 1134824) is one such example in that it was constructed to house doctors' offices and other medical facilities, but it currently features a school and an auto title bureau as its main tenants. Smaller buildings typically remain in use as office or other professional spaces; although through review of newspaper archives, they have experienced a number of tenant changes.





Plate 5. Small retail store (CUY 1134624), constructed in 1964, 20508 Southgate Park Blvd., Maple Heights. The building retains most original materials.



Plate 6. Severance Medical Arts Building (CUY 1134022), constructed in 1966, 5 Severance Cir., Cleveland Heights. The building was constructed shortly after the Severance Center Mall on the same large parcel.



Plate 7. MJ Building (CUY 1145417), constructed in 1956, 6020 State Rd., Parma. The building was advertised as ideal for small medical offices, and currently houses law and accountant offices.

**6.4.5 Other Retail Buildings**

Other commercial-type resources include restaurants, banks, and any other standalone building constructed for retail purposes. Several of each type were surveyed throughout Cuyahoga County, mostly in areas outside of the Cleveland city limits.

These buildings are also located along main thoroughfares that are easily accessible to automobiles, and in some cases, are along public transportation routes. Some of the buildings are surrounded by other commercial concerns, indicating the area is zoned for this purpose.

Like with other commercial resources discussed above, many of these types do not retain their original uses or tenants. In many cases, the

buildings were constructed as a branch of a restaurant chain or banking facility, and the parent company is no longer in business, has downsized, or moved to new facilities to update their brands, thus leaving the mid-century buildings open for new uses. Other standalone retail buildings were constructed with layout flexibility to house different commercial concerns in order to provide the greatest number of rental opportunities for the property owners. Research in newspaper archives shows these buildings had numerous tenants since their construction.

Some of the standalone retail resources surveyed were vacant during fieldwork, with some appearing to have been empty for a significant amount of time due to unkempt landscaping, cracked walkway and parking lot materials, and interior (when visible) and exterior building damage.



Plate 8. Former Park View Federal Savings & Loan Association building (CUY 1133824), constructed in 1960, 25350 Rockside Rd., Bedford Heights. The building was a bank into the 1990s; drive-thru windows are extant on the opposite wall.



Plate 9. Former Golden Point Drive-In franchise restaurant, now retail store, (CUY 1141717), constructed ca. 1960, 7467 Memphis Ave., Brooklyn. The building's small footprint and unusual, A-frame design suggested it was originally constructed for another use.



Plate 10. Former location of Jolly Roger Donuts, and most recently a seafood restaurant, but currently vacant (CUY 1130124), constructed in 1958, 5145 Northfield Road, Bedford Heights.



Plate 11. Commercial building (CUY 1120611), constructed in 1950, 512-514 E. 185<sup>th</sup> Street, Cleveland. This building is split into two storefront areas and has housed a pet store and laundromat. The left half is currently a bakery and the right half is vacant.

## 6.5 Commerce Conclusion and Survey Results

Commercial resources have experienced the most physical changes since their original dates of construction, and therefore, some no longer obviously convey their original uses. Beginning in the late 1990s and continuing at present, malls have experienced a great decline with many locations downsizing, changing uses, or closing all together. This change can at least be partially attributed to the rise in internet shopping options, which allow consumers to search for products at the lowest costs from the convenience of their homes. Survey of the county inventoried three extant malls, but each of these were in various states of decline. Two malls, Parmatown Mall and the North Randall malls were not surveyed because they were each in the process of demolition. Shopping centers have fared slightly better since they are physically smaller with fewer storefronts; however, two of the centers surveyed featured some vacant storefronts, indicating the building was not fully occupied.

The surveyed multi-story and smaller professional and office buildings all appeared to have at least some occupancy through external inventory (ie, presence of business signage, vehicles in parking lots, lights on in lobbies and other interior spaces); although, a detailed inspection was not possible during fieldwork. These buildings, whatever their present occupancy rates, exhibited few physical changes, and easily convey their original uses.

Standalone commercial buildings, including retail businesses, banks, and restaurants exhibited the most changes, physical and usage. Some of the buildings were constructed as a branch of a business or franchise, and when the business closed or downsized, these companies sold properties to new owners, usually for new purposes. For example, the survey included inventory of a few former restaurants that no longer serve their original purpose or company; however, distinctive

architectural features alluded to a previous use. The dry cleaners at 865 E. 152<sup>nd</sup> Street in Collinwood (CUY 1120011) features elements commonly found on barns, such as a gambrel roof and cupolas, which do not directly correspond to a dry-cleaning business. A search of the address in the *Cleveland Plain Dealer* newspaper archives found advertisements that listed the building as the Red Barn Restaurant, one of several throughout Cuyahoga County. Bank branch buildings are another building type identified during survey that sometimes no longer served as banks, but the building details offered clues to their original uses. Two buildings (CUY 1105322 and 1133824) retained night deposit boxes or drive-thru windows, which do not pertain to their current uses of auto parts store and medical offices, respectively. Research of newspaper archives found advertisements for each address that noted they were constructed as banks. Another former bank building (CUY 1124510) retained ghosting on the front of the building that when closely examined, noted it was once a bank.

Overall, while some of the commercial resources are no longer serving their original purposes, new uses make the properties viable, and therefore, the buildings remain extant. Some of the vacant and underutilized surveyed commercial resources are under threat of neglect and demolition if new owners or uses cannot be found. This possibility is especially viable for the shopping malls as two were already under demolition during survey in late 2016, one (CUY 1104522) no longer included retail space, and two others (CUY 1123922 and 1127922) featured several vacant areas.

The survey recorded 94 commercial type resources within the categories of malls, shopping centers, office/professional buildings, department stores, banks, restaurants, and other standalone commercial buildings (Table 1). The numbers were tallied based upon their original, not current, uses. Other commercial-type resources, including car dealerships and

gas stations, are included in the Transportation resource count.

Table 1. Surveyed Commercial Buildings

Building Type	Number Surveyed
Shopping Malls	3
Shopping Centers	5
Banks	7
Restaurants	11
Office/Professional Buildings	22
Department Stores	1
Other Commercial Buildings	45

Many of these buildings were constructed during the mid-twentieth century to serve the outlying and expanding suburban areas of Cuyahoga County, following new residential developments to serve the local inhabitants. For example, when under construction in the mid-1960s, the Richmond Mall (CUY 1123922) in Richmond Heights was to be accessible to approximately 300,000 people within a three-mile radius. By the early 1950s, Richmond Heights include sparse residential development with houses along main thoroughfares and open tracts of land setback from these streets. A decade later, much of the open land was infilled with dense housing developments. Residents of this area wanted access to retail businesses close to home rather than traveling about ten miles to downtown Cleveland where historically these businesses were located.

This pattern is present in other towns, villages, and townships of Cuyahoga County. Many of these areas became self-sufficient from a commercial basis in that grocery stores, retail outlets, banks, restaurants, doctors' offices, etc. were located within a few miles from suburban homes. Oftentimes, residents did not need to travel on interstates to reach these places as

improved local state and US highways provided easy access. Generally, this layout remains within the areas beyond the city limits; however, as shopping trends change, fewer "brick-and-mortar" stores are needed and as seen during survey, some of the extant mid-twentieth century commercial buildings are in danger of being lost.

Further survey is recommended of each type of commercial resource since many are threatened by neglect and demolition. While examples of each type were identified during fieldwork, only one example of a standalone department store was found. Additional research as to where these were located throughout the county would be useful as the buildings may no longer be recognizable due to alterations and additions. Survey and research of commercial buildings discovered many former branch and franchise entities remain extant, even if they no longer serve their original purposes. More of these types of buildings likely exist in Cuyahoga County, and research into the history of these places may serve the needs of future projects.

As with all other major populated areas across the country, Cleveland and its surrounding suburbs experienced a completely new shopping experience during the mid-twentieth century. As population shifted from city cores into the suburbs, so too did commercial development, including stores, doctors' offices, professional offices, and restaurants. These new developments arose in each area of major population expansion and the growing ownership of automobiles by families facilitated travel to these places by improved roads and new highways and interstates.