

NAYLORWELLMAN, LLC  
HISTORIC PRESERVATION CONSULTING  
RETAIN ✧ RESTORE ✧ REVIVE

**Buckeye Commercial Historic District  
National Register of Historic Places  
Cleveland, Ohio**

**February 7, 2024**

RETAIN ✧ RESTORE ✧ REVIVE

Historic Building Preservation ✧ Architectural History ✧ Historic Preservation Planning

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# Buckeye Commercial Historic District





# Buckeye Road National Register Resources

- ★ 1927 Weizer Building (NRHP #02001360)  
11801 Buckeye Road



- ★ 1927 Moreland Theater Building (NRHP #11000670)  
11810-24 Buckeye Road



Photo, 1940s





## Significance under Criterion A

### Ethnic Heritage, Settlement, Commerce

The historic district is centered on the commercial spine of the Upper Buckeye neighborhood representing ethnic Hungarian immigration to the United States in the early twentieth century and the establishment of “Little Budapest” by 1930.

The post-World War II and 1950-70s years changed the neighborhood population with an influx of African-American residents as part of the latter half of The Great Migration.

### Social History & Civil Rights

The result was a clash in white ethnic and black cultures with resistance to integration. In 1952, the Buckeye Woodhill Woodland Area Council (BWWAC), a neighborhood community organization, was formed and evolved into the Buckeye-Woodland Community Congress (BWCC) in 1974 to address growing urban problems.

The historic district represents the evolution and impact of community organizing and activism through the development of the Buckeye-Woodland Community Congress (BWCC) in 1974, established by the Catholic Diocese of Cleveland, bringing together the ethnic residents of the Buckeye and Woodland neighborhoods to address integration and urban problems. BWWAC employed neighborhood advocacy and grassroots political action to address problems of juvenile delinquency, traffic congestion, controversial multi-family and commercial rezoning, and white ethnic reaction to integration.

The BWCC was one of the first of its kind in the country formed for the purpose of promoting racial harmony and generating power for underserved and impoverished communities. It eventually grew to be comprised of over 200 organizations in the Buckeye Road Neighborhood ranging from street clubs to nationality clubs to parish groups.

## Buckeye Commercial Historic District



South side of Buckeye Road, west of E. 116<sup>th</sup> St., Photo, 1959, c.d. E

Source: Cleveland Memory.

# Buckeye Commercial Historic District

The **Period of Significance begins in 1900** with the construction of the 12020-22 Buckeye Road Building as the oldest building in the Historic District and **ends in 1974** with establishment of the BWCC in a renewed response to efforts to improve race relations through community organization.

## 84 Contributing Resources

### 6 Noncontributing Resources

(built outside the period of significance)



**12020-22 Buckeye Road Commercial and Apartment Building built in 1900, Photo 1985  
Oldest Building in the Historic District**

Source: City Hall Collection, Cleveland Public Library.



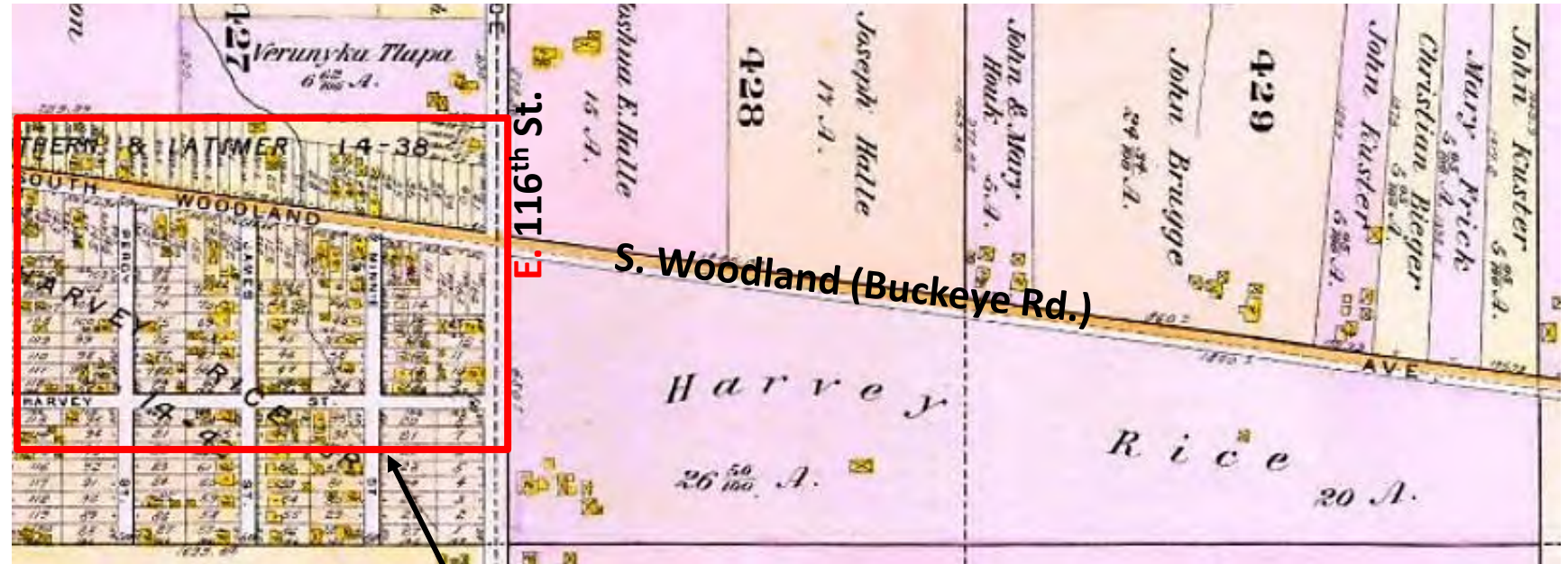
## City of Cleveland, Ohio Plat Map 1898 – Buckeye Road – E. 112<sup>th</sup> St. to E. 128<sup>th</sup> St.

### Earliest Development in Historic District Primarily Between E. 112<sup>th</sup> & 116<sup>th</sup> Streets

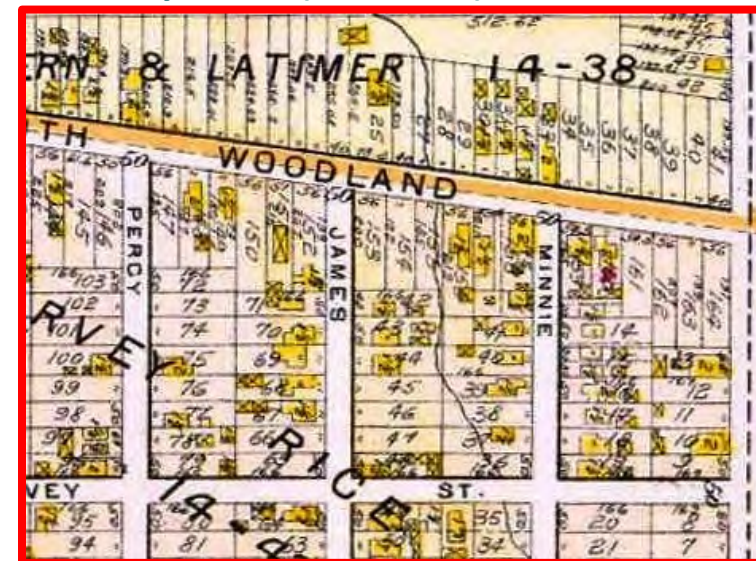
- Open land largely owned by Harvey Rice
- Earliest subdivision by Harvey Rice Jr.



Harvey Rice (1800-1891)  
Educational Leader & Historian  
Statue - Cleveland Museum of Art  
Fine Arts Garden Martin Luther King  
Jr. Drive



Harvey Rice Jr. (1847-1903) Subdivision



Source: City of Cleveland, Ohio  
Plat Map. Philadelphia: G.M.  
Hopkins, 1898, Cleveland Public  
Library Map Collection



## Hungarian Migration to Cleveland

Significant Hungarian immigration to the city of Cleveland began in the 1870s during the Industrial Age. Cleveland was the fifteenth largest city in the nation with the iron ore and steel industries with 42% of the city's 92,829 residents foreign-born. The city offered thousands of jobs, land, and proximity to fellow countrymen.

A distinct Hungarian settlement evolved in Cleveland during the mid-1880s, with the first immigrants taking up residence on streets close to the factories and shops where they were employed.

Factories were in the vicinity of East 75th Street and Woodland (Buckeye) Avenue at the intersection of the Cleveland & Pittsburgh and "Nickel Plate" Railroads. A residential neighborhood evolved extending eastward from East 75th Street and Woodland (Buckeye) Avenue to the intersection of Buckeye and Woodhill Roads, becoming known as "Lower Buckeye."

As more Hungarians found employment in Cleveland and wrote to their relatives and friends at home, more Hungarians immigrated to Cleveland, creating the process of "chain migration." By 1900 there were 9,558 Hungarians in the city.

As more immigrants poured into the area in the early years of the twentieth century leading up to World War I, the Buckeye neighborhood expanded into new housing developments constructed "up the hill" east of Woodhill Road along side streets north and south of Buckeye Road. **This largely Hungarian community became known as "Upper Buckeye" and eventually extended from Woodhill Road on its west end to within several residential streets of the Shaker Heights corporation line on its east end at South Moreland. This "Upper Buckeye" area included the proposed Buckeye Commercial Historic District, the subject of this nomination.**



**1901 R. Suckle & J. Jezek House with Commercial Addition  
11132 Buckeye Rd.**

Source: City Hall Collection, Cleveland Public Library, Photo 1979.

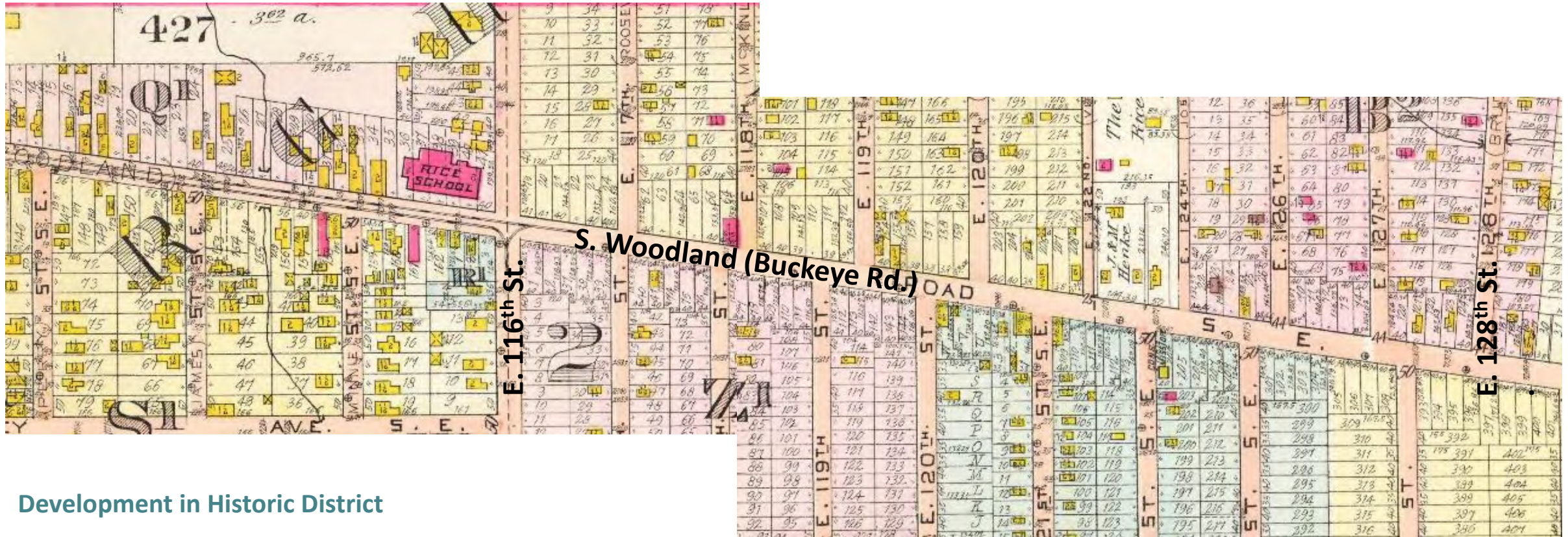


**1901 Kopsaz House with Commercial Addition  
11400-02 Buckeye Rd.**



# Buckeye Commercial Historic District

City of Cleveland, Ohio Plat Map 1912 – Buckeye Road – E. 112<sup>th</sup> Street to E. 128<sup>th</sup> St.



## Development in Historic District

- S. Woodland renamed Buckeye Road by 1906
- Area annexed by the City of Cleveland in 1913
- Woodland Ave Streetcar & Sewer lines extended to 116<sup>th</sup> Street by 1912 and 130<sup>th</sup> Street by 1915 attracting commercial development
- Subdivisions abounded

**Source:** City of Cleveland, Ohio  
Plat Map. Philadelphia: G.M.  
Hopkins, 1912, Cleveland Public  
Library Map Collection.



# Buckeye Commercial Historic District 1913-1920



1913-15 Two-Part Commercial Toth Building, 11719-21 Buckeye Rd. chamfered corner, second-floor residential living.



ca. 1915 Two-Part Commercial Gabled Ell 11220 Buckeye Rd. with second-floor residential living.



1918-1920 First Hungarian Presbyterian Church  
12600-04 Buckeye Rd.

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1916 Ceska-Spolsin Hall- Bohemian Society Hall – Polish Hall, 11306 Buckeye Rd. constructed to house a gymnasium, school and social gathering hall by the Bohemian National School.



Ca. 1918 Two-Part Commercial Parobek Building, 12417-19 Buckeye Rd., chamfered corner and second-floor residential living.



## Establishment of “Little Budapest” 1920-1930

The largest wave of immigration to the United States from Hungary was at the termination of World War I and the signing of the Treaty of Trianon in 1920. **The Buckeye-Woodland “Little Budapest” neighborhood experienced a large influx of population growing from 1,500 people in 1900, to 40,000 in 1940.**

The Buckeye Road area between East 112<sup>th</sup> and E. 128<sup>th</sup> within the Historic District was ideally situated as a commercial shopping district located at the end of a major streetcar line serving the everyday needs of the growing and surrounding residential working, middle-class Hungarian enclave.

Hungarian real estate brokers encouraged their fellow countrymen to buy homes in this area. In particular, the owners and operators of the South Woodland and Rice Avenue Allotment Company including John Weizer were instrumental in moving Hungarians into the Buckeye Road area. Weizer alone sold more than 2,000 building lots to Hungarians. In Hungary, home and land ownership was a symbol of status and this attitude was reflected by the Hungarian immigrants in America. Once it was established that their stay was permanent, home ownership became a top priority and pride was taken in keeping the house and property in good order.

**The American “Little Budapest” was established with Buckeye Road as the central downtown commercial corridor between 1920 and 1930.** Brick One-Part and Two-Part Commercial buildings, some with second-floor residential, began to fill the remaining lots.



1918 A. Vargo Building (left) 11914-16 Buckeye Rd.; 1920 Sopko Building (right) 11910-12 Buckeye Rd.



1922 Ruth Building 12001-11 Buckeye Rd.



# Buckeye Commercial Historic District

## 1920 - 1930



1922 Horvath Building 12514-16 Buckeye Rd.



1924 Epstein Building 12801-03 Buckeye Rd.



1924 Csazar-James Co. Building 12504-06 Buckeye Rd.



1924 Simko Building 12401-03 Buckeye Rd.



1925 Krejic Building 12510-12 Buckeye Rd.



1929 12410-14 Buckeye Road Building





1920 P.J. Veres Building 12522-24 Buckeye Rd.

## Buckeye Commercial Historic District 1920 – 1930 One-Part Commercial



1923 S. Varga Building 11917-19 Buckeye Rd.



1920 Burr Building 11806-08 Buckeye Rd.



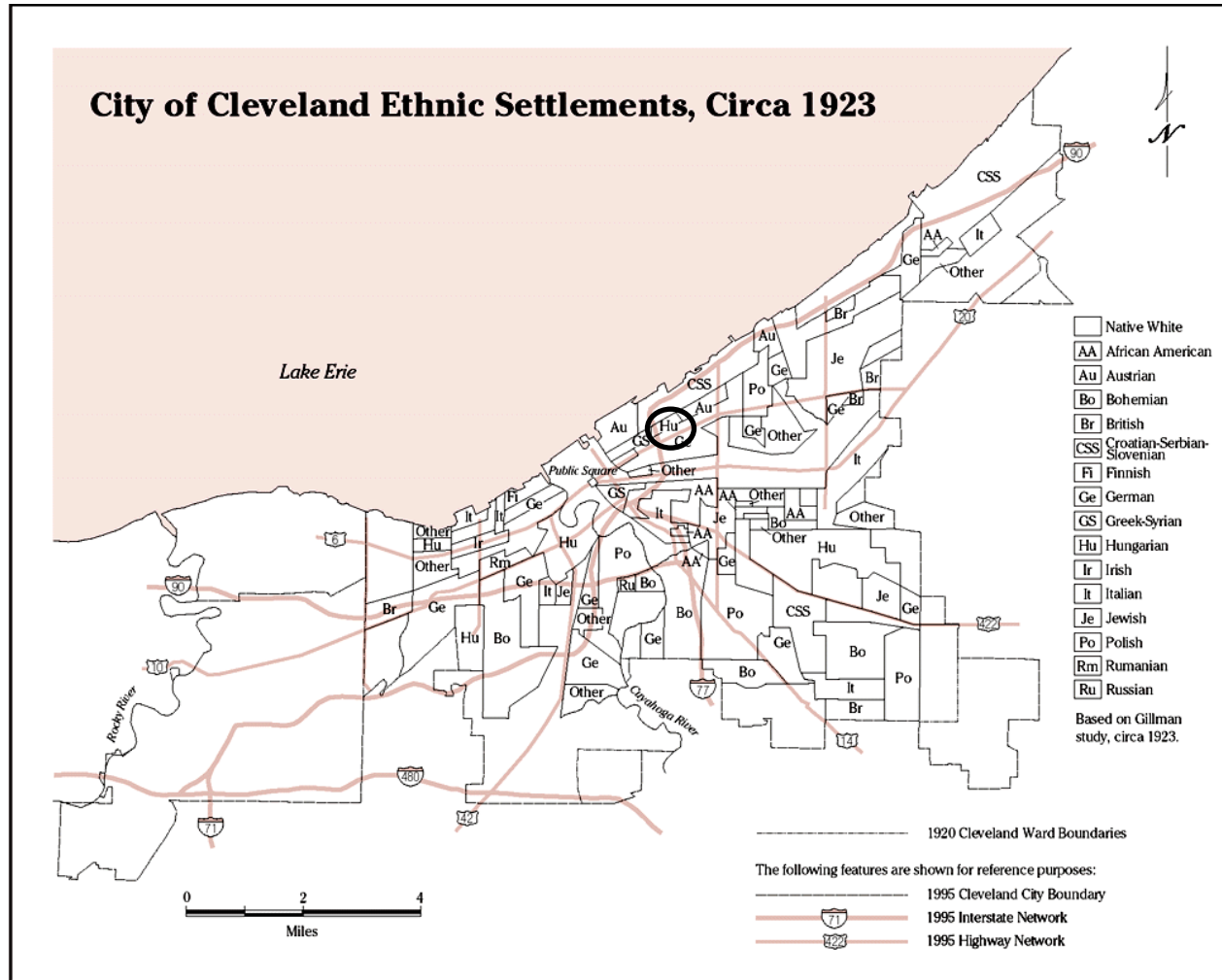
1922 Marsik Building 12521-236 Buckeye Rd.



1927 Rado Building 11908 Buckeye Rd.



## Buckeye Road Businesses by Address, 1929



Source: Van Tassel, David R. and Grabowski, John J. eds. *"The Encyclopedia of Cleveland History."* Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996. Also available at <https://case.edu/ech/>.

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 11202 – Louis T. Takas, drugs                 | 12001-11 – Great A&P Tea Co., groceries     |
| 11306 – Bohemian Society Ceska Hall           | 12020-22 – Henry Elefant, hardware          |
| 11510-11512 – Charles Moraveo, baker          | Roth Merchandise Co, dry goods              |
| Rose Karabec, music teacher                   | 12306-08 – Feher & Keleman, meats           |
| Hubert Wall Paper Co.                         | 12401-03 – Benjamin Schaffer, furniture     |
| 11520 – Martin Orban, florist                 | Elias Kammer, hardware                      |
| 11522 – Ernest Reich & Son, real estate       | 12405-07 – Joseph Komyaty, shoes            |
| 11528 – Joseph Lezsak, real estate            | Stephen Boros, confectioner                 |
| 11606-12 – C&S Shoe Repair Co.                | 12410-14 – Michael Horvath, baker           |
| Adolph Wachsberger, shoes                     | Hyman Lupeson, physician                    |
| Emory Szatmary, tailor                        | Baskind Drug Co.                            |
| 11616-18 – Benjamin Rosenbluth, tailor        | 12417-19 – George Parobek, confectionery    |
| Louis Weider, men's furnishings               | Kroger Grocery & Baking Co.                 |
| 11620-24 – Ladislaus Kacso, physician         | 12504-06 – Mrs. Ella Winkler, beauty parlor |
| Michael Makahusz, dentist                     | Samuel Grasgreen, restaurant                |
| F.R. Szabo, druggist                          | 12510-12 – Paul Krajcsir, tailor            |
| 11700-04 – J.J. Petro, furniture and hardware | Laub Bros., meats                           |
| Liszt Conservatory of Music                   | 12514-16 – Bernat Weiss, dry goods          |
| 11706 – Leo Katz, dry goods                   | 12521-23 – A. Berger, tailor                |
| 11708-12 – Benedict Spiegel, jeweler          | John Gura, confectionery                    |
| Kralick Realty Co.                            | 12522-24 – Emery Miller, grocery and meats  |
| Matilda Kosarko, restaurant                   | Ansel Meyer, shoes                          |
| 11713 – S.A. Jakab & Sons, undertakers        | 12526-28 – Louis Greenfield, creamery       |
| 11717 – J.S. Dvorcsak, barber                 | M.E. Abrams, hardware                       |
| Carl Smet, restaurant                         | 12530-32 – Samuel Jacob, fruits             |
| 11719-21 – John Maxim, delicatessen           | Fabian Sokola, baker                        |
| E.J. Nemeth, chiropractor                     | Frank Szende, music teacher                 |
| 11806-08 – Theo Burr, tailor                  | 12622 – John Olajnyik, grocery              |
| Samuel Schwartz, meats                        | 12700 – Louis Brull, shoes                  |
| 11901-03 – ABC Chain Shoe Store               | 12801-03 – Adelbert Doctor, dry goods       |
| 11902-06 – Julius G. Hoffman Drugs            | 12812-14 – Great A & P Tea Co., grocery     |
| Joseph Goldonfeld, tailor                     |   |
| H.A. Landau, clothier                         |   |
| 11909 – Nemeth & Co., furniture               |   |
| 11908 – F. J. Pekoc Jr., hardware             |   |
| 11910-12 – Steven Torma, creamery             |   |
| Julia Lang, dry goods                         |   |
| 11914-16 – Samuel Schwartz, meats             |   |
| Maurice Straszno, fruits                      |   |
| John Balintfy, confectionery                  |   |
| 11917-19 – George Kotoma, billiards           |   |
| Steven Varga, trucking                        |   |
| 11918-20 – Joseph Szabo, dry goods            |   |
| Fisher Brothers Co., groceries                |   |

Source: Cleveland City Directory, 1929,  
Cleveland Public Library

## Great Depression 1930s - 1940s

More modest growth occurred during the Depression years up to World War II with a predominance of the One-Part Commercial type building at the east end of the district after E. 123<sup>rd</sup> Street.



**1933 Gurss Building, 11800-04 Buckeye Road – One Part Commercial**  
Source: City Hall Photograph Collection, Cleveland Public Library, 1961



**1937 Knusli Building 12525 Buckeye Rd Building – Two Part Commercial - Art Moderne**



**1938 Lukacs - Son Funeral Home, 12014 Buckeye Rd. – International style**



**1940 12727 Buckeye Road Office Building – Art Moderne, Art Deco**



## Post World War II

### “Little Hungary” and the African American Great Migration

The Hungarian population in America was bolstered by the Hungarian Revolution in 1956. This 12-day Hungarian Uprising was an attempted revolution against the Hungarian People’s Republic due to policies caused by the government’s subordination to the Soviet Union. Soviet tanks and troops crushed the uprising with thousands wounded and nearly 250,000 people fleeing Hungary. Many came to the United States.

However, younger Hungarian-Americans, pressured to Americanize, began to exit the Buckeye neighborhood for the suburbs, leaving behind an aging Hungarian population.

At the same time, the latter half of The Great Migration of African Americans occurred during World War II and in the years immediately after with thousands of African Americans moving to Cleveland. Many moved into the Buckeye Road neighborhood.



1948 12402 Buckeye Road Building



1953 Hartman Funeral Home, 11410 Buckeye Road  
operated by Charles P. Hartman (1930-2015) for over 60 years.



ca. 1950 2871 E. 116<sup>th</sup> Street Building



1954 Baskind's Drug Store, 12500 Buckeye Rd.

## Race Relations & Community Organizing



1965 State Savings Bank, 11623 Buckeye Rd., Photo 1991



1965 State Savings Bank, 11623 Buckeye Rd., Photo 2023

Source: City Hall Photograph Collection, Cleveland Public Library, 1991 (upper photo)

In Post World War II 1945, Cleveland City Council created a Community Relations Board for the purpose of improving race relations supported by the Welfare Federation of Cleveland and NAACP.

These efforts resulted in Cleveland gaining a national reputation in the 1950s for enlighten race relations, receiving the national community relations award from the National Conference of Christians and Jews in 1952 for “outstanding improvement in relations among its religious and racial groups.”

Against this backdrop, white ethnic residents of the Buckeye neighborhood formed the Buckeye Woodhill Woodland Area Council (BWWAC) in April 1952 to address the issues of integration and related social problems.

The decade of the 1960s is distinguished by political assassinations, the Vietnam War, civil rights protests, and the racial unrest in America’s cities which often erupted into riots. Cleveland experienced race riots in the Hough and Glenville neighborhoods. While no race riots occurred in the Buckeye Road neighborhood, tension over race issues manifested itself in the politics of the city.

African Americans began to publicly complain that Ward 16 Councilman Jake P. Russell was neglecting their interests. African American, Lodis Harris, challenged Russell for the Ward seat by running against him in 1961, 1963, and 1965. The campaign was ugly with each side freely tossing racial epithets at one another. Russell was victorious and ward boundaries were subsequently redrawn removing several precincts with large African American populations.

In 1965, the BWWAC was replaced by the Buckeye Neighborhood Nationalities Civic Association (BNNCA). The BNNCA aggressively encouraged white ethnics to remain in Buckeye to protect Hungarian and Slovak cultures. BNNCA also addressed the problem of a dramatic increase in major crime.

By 1970, more than 16,000 African Americans resided in the Buckeye Road neighborhood out of a total neighborhood population of approximately 40,000 people. While the BNNCA continued to exist, a new organization came into existence composed primarily of the Roman Catholics from the remaining five major white ethnic parishes of Buckeye. This new organization responded to urban problems on Buckeye Road. The Buckeye Woodland Catholic Community Council (BWCCC) was an association of six parishes in the Buckeye Road neighborhood that had been organized in 1971 for “the establishment of programs and activities to promote stable, safe and unified community, and to make sure that area institutions provide quality services to all people, especially the elderly, the youth, the ill and the poor.”



The BWCC purpose was to “assist the community in organizing itself to constructively resolve community problems, to manage rather than suppress conflict, and to encourage diverse people to live and grow harmoniously together.”

The actions taken by the BWCC in the decade of the 1970s reflected not only new national perceptions of race and inter-race relations in America and Cleveland but also responded to the urban problems confronting the Buckeye Road neighborhood, such as mortgage lender and insurer redlining.

BWCC used Saul Alinsky-style community activist strategies and tactics. American community activist and political theorist, Saul Alinsky’s work was pivotal to the success of the BWCC and other community activist organizations. Salinsky’s work through the Chicago-based Industrial Areas Foundation helping poor communities organize to press demands upon landlords, politicians, and business leaders won him national recognition and notoriety. For some, his tactics crossed the line of civility. For example, CEOs, politicians, and businesspeople were pursued both professionally and personally. It was commonplace to protest at someone’s home, church, or social gathering. BWCC shut down the East Ohio Gas building, crashed an energy company board meeting, and disrupted a luncheon and foxhunt at the Chagrin Valley Hunt Club in Gates Mills with 600 protestors arriving by bus. These efforts were sought to get the attention of corporate executives of major utility companies to reduce heating costs for seniors and get accurate meters for residents’ homes.

## Saul Alinsky’s Rules for Radicals

**RULE 1: “Power is not only what you have, but what the enemy thinks you have.”** Power is derived from 2 main sources – money and people. “Have-Nots” must build power from flesh and blood.

**RULE 2: “Never go outside the expertise of your people.”** It results in confusion, fear, and retreat. Feeling secure adds to the backbone of anyone.

**RULE 3: “Whenever possible, go outside the expertise of the enemy.”** Look for ways to increase insecurity, anxiety, and uncertainty.

**RULE 4: “Make the enemy live up to its own book of rules.”** If the rule is that every letter gets a reply, send 30,000 letters. You can kill them with this because no one can possibly obey all of their own rules.

**RULE 5: “Ridicule is man’s most potent weapon.”** There is no defense. It’s irrational. It’s infuriating. It also works as a key pressure point to force the enemy into concessions.

**RULE 6: “A good tactic is one your people enjoy.”** They’ll keep doing it without urging and come back to do more. They’re doing their thing, and will even suggest better ones.

**RULE 7: “A tactic that drags on too long becomes a drag.”** Don’t become old news.

**RULE 8: “Keep the pressure on. Never let up.”** Keep trying new things to keep the opposition off balance. As the opposition masters one approach, hit them from the flank with something new.

**RULE 9: “The threat is usually more terrifying than the thing itself.”** Imagination and ego can dream up many more consequences than any activist.

**RULE 10: “If you push a negative hard enough, it will push through and become a positive.”** Violence from the other side can win the public to your side because the public sympathizes with the underdog.

**RULE 11: “The price of a successful attack is a constructive alternative.”** Never let the enemy score points because you’re caught without a solution to the problem.

**RULE 12: “Pick the target, freeze it, personalize it, and polarize it.”** Cut off the support network and isolate the target from sympathy. Go after people and not institutions; people hurt faster than institutions.

**Source:** Alinsky, Saul. *Rules for Radicals*. A Pragmatic Primer for Realistic Radicals. Sliwa Insights, 22 April 2018.





In 1990 the Community Development Organization of Burten, Bell, Carr, Inc. (BBC) was formed and today continues to advocate for the Buckeye Road neighborhood. BBC is named for three civic leaders who made a profound impact on the community including Cleveland city councilman and community activist Lonnie L. Burten, Jr., James Bell, and 30-year city councilman Charles V. Carr.

The mission of Burten, Bell, Carr Development, Inc. has been empowering residents and revitalizing blighted and underserved communities in Cleveland's Central and Kinsman neighborhoods. BBC extended its service area to include the Buckeye-Shaker Square and Buckeye-Woodhill neighborhoods. BBC has initiated preparation of this Buckeye Commercial Historic District National Register Nomination to document its important history as well as to incentivize investment in the Buckeye Road area.



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# National Register Process & Timeline

- ✓ National Register Questionnaire submitted to Ohio State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) – March 20, 2023
- ✓ SHPO Site Visit – April 21, 2023
- ✓ Public Presentation by Naylor Wellman – BBC Community Meeting – June 10, 2023
- ✓ Public Presentation by Naylor Wellman – BBC Merchant Meeting – July 20, 2023
- ✓ Draft Nomination submitted to SHPO – October 11, 2023
- ✓ Revised Draft Nomination submitted to SHPO – December 18, 2023
- ✓ SHPO Public Meeting – February 7, 2024
- ❖ Objections to National Register listing must be filed before the OHSPAB meeting by letter submitted to SHPO. Proposed Historic District will not be listed if more than 50% of owners of property within the district file objections.
- ❖ **OHSPAB Meeting – Friday, March 15, 2024 - Registration for Virtual Meeting:**  
<https://www.ohiohistory.org/preserving-ohio/national-register-of-historic-places/state-historic-site-preservation-advisory-board/>
- ❖ Submitted to NPS for review – up to 4-5 months for listing





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Years Combined  
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**OHIO**  
**WBE**



NATIONAL REGISTER

**50**  
*Individual  
Nominations*



NATIONAL REGISTER

**24**  
*District  
Nominations*



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