Columbus Neighborhoods

Today, Columbus is home to nearly 300 neighborhoods of various shapes, sizes, and ages. The Columbus Metropolitan Library's My History collection includes primary sources from all neighborhoods. The popular WOSU series Columbus Neighborhoods includes histories of many of the neighborhoods mentioned below.

Settlement-Civil War

Before Columbus was founded in 1812, Franklinton, now a Columbus neighborhood, was established in 1797. When Columbus became the capital of Ohio the population increased (1,450 in 1820) but the urban core of the city remained relatively small until after the Civil War.

After the Civil War land owners began to build additions outside of downtown Columbus and neighborhoods as we think of them now really began to take shape. Because most houses were razed in the downtown area for newer and larger buildings, the neighborhoods that are closest to downtown represent the oldest neighborhoods in the city. Franklinton, Victorian Village, German Village, and Olde Towne East contain some of the earliest homes were built outside of downtown. The Columbus and Ohio Map Collection shows the growth of these neighborhoods over time.

1880s-World War II

A second wave of population growth occurred in Columbus from the 1880s until the World War I era. The building of housing during this era roughly extended to The University District and parts of Clintonville to the North, Hungarian Village and Reeb-Hosack to the South, Franklin Park and parts of Bexley to the East, and West Franklinton and Parts of the Hilltop to the West. Because of this a second wave of migration to the city many neighborhoods in Columbus were built with a mixture of housing and were located just outside of the inner ring neighborhoods.

A third wave of population growth and building took place after World War I and before World War II. Most of these neighborhoods are within a 5 mile radius of downtown and often have post World War II housing mixed in with older housing. The boundaries for these additions are roughly Beechwold to the North, Stambaugh-Elwood and Marion Franklin to the South, Eastmoor and Berwick to the East, Hilltop and Briggsdale to the West. With this wave also came more building in Townships that were once farmland. Areas of Clinton Township, Marion Township, Truro Township, and Perry Township were all having additions built during this time period. Later these same areas become mostly suburban areas. Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps are good sources for understanding the layout of Columbus neighborhoods before World War II.

Post War Growth

The last wave of large population growth and the building of residential housing came after World War II when the city of Columbus was aggressively pursuing annexing land from neighboring townships to expand the boundaries of the city. Most of this expansion of the city boundaries and building new neighborhoods occurred during the time the city and state were investing in highways throughout the city. The highways and neighborhoods from this wave were built mostly during the 1950s and 1960s, with sometimes houses interspersed in these neighborhoods with old farm houses or the occasional 1970s house built on lots that were not built on in the initial build phase. These neighborhoods tend to be built around highways and are often around the 270 corridor in Columbus. Many suburbs saw huge population explosions during this time period as people began to flock to the suburbs because automobiles became the preferred way to commute. City and area plans for most neighborhoods are in the Columbus Metropolitan Library's collection.

Questions? Contact us at history@columbuslibrary.org or book a Reserve an Expert for a virtual meeting with a librarian.