

# **Sprawl, Inequity, and Balkanization in Detroit: Toward Metropolitan System Balance**

An Analysis of Sprawl, Spatial Inequity and the Context of Reform in  
the Detroit Region

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## FOREWORD

This report was commissioned by the Archdiocese of Detroit to assist in its early response to metropolitan sprawl, spatial inequities, and related problems in the Detroit region.

The efforts of the Archdiocese come at a critical time. The Detroit area is one of the nation's most productive, yet is marked by suburban sprawl on a massive scale and increasing disparities between the region's people and places. These are serious and related problems that threaten the area's livability and future economic and environmental viability. More critically, unbalanced development is dividing groups of people across space with alarming efficiency. The consequences of this include dramatically unequal access to the goods and opportunities of metropolitan life. In the Detroit region, the victims of spatially structured inequities suffer from limited life chances and the diminution of citizenship. In the end, the region risks descent into a balkanized future where spatially arranged groups adopt increasingly hostile views towards each other as they fail to recognize the common interests and values that ground democratic discourse and mutual respect.

The Church's efforts to confront these dangers are critical. Racial, economic, political, social, and physical divisions that draw from unbalanced development encourage more of the same as the residents of the region continue to separate themselves from others across metropolitan space. The Church is one actor in the region that can transcend these destructive and reinforcing divisions.

Though the transcendent position and moral authority of the Church are critical, it may take more than these to heal the divisions and correct the imbalances that threaten the region. Because the effective pursuit of reform will require an understanding of what different people mean when they talk about metropolitan issues, this report introduces numerous perspectives on sprawl and inequity and associates policy preferences with them. This report also includes an ordered introduction to reform options and discusses the qualities of the region that must be considered when determining which reforms are most desirable or possible. This report concludes with some general policy recommendations.

# WHAT IS SPRAWL? THE ANSWER DEPENDS ON WHOM YOU ASK.

## **First Questions: What is Sprawl?**

### **The Conventional View.**

Metropolitan sprawl, at its most basic, is the rapid and poorly planned expansion of development into open spaces beyond the edge of a metropolitan area. Landscapes that result are aesthetically displeasing as individual components, such as strip malls and subdivisions, do not harmonize with each other. Sprawl results in the construction of more housing and other facilities than a metropolitan area's market can fully utilize. This surplus low-density development increases burdens on local and regional physical infrastructure. In sum, the understanding of sprawl that most begin with emphasizes the physical aspects of rapidly expanding and poorly planned development at the metropolitan edge.

Though the conventional view provides us with common reference points, it does not reflect the complexity of causes and implications that many are beginning to associate with sprawl.

### **Conceptualizing Sprawl: The Nature and Consequences of Sprawl are Matters of Perspective.**

There are many different understandings of sprawl and its consequences. How we view these issues, or whether we even acknowledge them, depends on what it is about metropolitan areas that matter to us most and on which of the many sides of the regional fence we stand. In simple terms, different people talk about different things when they talk about sprawl. Understanding where people are coming to this issue from, understanding the interests inherent in the range of views of sprawl and how those relate to policy priorities, is prerequisite to building an effective metropolitan reform coalition and agenda.

Following is a discussion of a range of perspectives on sprawl. Each perspective is related to a general policy agenda. As with any effort to order the perspectives of others, the narrative below must do some injustice to the views of many individuals, which are undoubtedly, more complex than the narratives suggest. This discussion should therefore be taken as a basic guide to the gamut of perspectives on this issue rather than a comprehensive catalogue.

### Sprawl from the Outside Looking In:

Many who seek to control sprawl are most concerned about the amount, pace, or manner of urban expansion into undeveloped areas. From an outside looking in view, open space and whatever it represents is under attack. Here, the metropolitan area as an expanding thing is the threat. As such, these

perspectives are more concerned with what may become of the fringes of a metropolitan region than with any impacts of sprawl in the interior.

Anti-sprawl advocates most concerned with land consumption view the issue in a variety of ways. However, in their basic definition of sprawl, they can find much common policy ground. Outside looking in concerns probably account for most of the popular discussions about sprawl today. As such, they represent a group whose concerns will have to be considered in any effort to build an effective reform coalition.

a) *Sprawl as a threat to the natural environment:*

Some view sprawl as a threat to the natural environment through pavement and pollution of watersheds, loss of wildlife habitat, the increased materials and energy consumption associated with greater dependence on the automobile, accelerated consumption of building materials, et cetera.

Environmental responses to sprawl usually emphasize land conservation. Land conservation policies seek to control or stop land consumption beyond the metropolitan area or within specific environmentally sensitive areas near the metropolitan edge. Conservationist policies include governmental purchase and management of tracts of land for nature preserves or open land set-asides and larger scale solutions such as metropolitan growth boundaries. Conservationists will also favor rigid environmental impact review processes for new development and other policies that may frustrate green field construction.

b) *Sprawl as a Threat to Agriculture:*

Those concerned with the preservation of farmland may favor similar policies. It is important to keep in mind, however, that environmental conservationist and farmland preservationist consistencies are not always identical. Agricultural and environmental interests sometimes clash over issues such as the use of agricultural chemicals and the farming of environmentally sensitive land. It is also important to note that just as farmers are not alone in the farmland preservationist ranks, many farmers cannot be included in this group. Contrary to romantic conceptions and the actual desires of a lot of farmers, many look forward to making substantial profits through the sale and subdivision of their property for development.

Unfortunately, market incentives to sell for some can become imperatives for others. In an environment of dramatically rising property values resulting from surrounding development, farmers may feel forced to sell their land as their assessed property values and taxes continue to rise while their farm income stagnates or declines.

Because farmland preservation is viewed as a market problem as much as a food security, open lands conservation, or cultural preservation issue,

many have proposed policies that create incentives to counter market forces and encourage farmers to maintain their land in agricultural use. These include transfer of development rights (TDR) programs and compact growth or cluster development zoning.

- c) *Sprawl as a Threat to the Suburban Human Environment:*  
Many of those who live at the edges of metropolitan areas define sprawl as over-development that threatens the rural character that made their towns attractive. While long-time residents of rural communities often hold these concerns, recent suburban residents also advance them. The desire to move to the metropolitan frontier, to enjoy the countryside while continuing to take advantage of urban resources, is frequently associated with an equally strong wish to prevent others from doing the same.

Those at the metropolitan edge trying to preserve their advantage may favor very large lot zoning or cluster development to keep housing densities low, to maintain open land, and to otherwise prevent less desirable residents from crowding in. Outer suburban residents may also support land preservation set-asides, conservation zones, and market incentives for farmers to preserve their properties in agricultural use. However, persons from this perspective will probably not favor metropolitan growth boundaries. This would be especially true if the boundary were to include their property within a zone planned for higher density development.

Unfortunately, many of the policies advocated by those interested in maintaining the rural flavor of the outer suburbs may only encourage movement farther outward as they force overall development densities lower. For those seeking to balance development in favor of environmental sustainability, economic and infrastructural efficiency, central urban reinvestment and equity, such policies are counter-productive.

- d) *Pressures of Rapid Development on the New Suburbs:*  
One final outside looking in perspective deserves note. Much of the discussion about sprawl today emphasizes the difficulties that outer-suburban municipalities are having coping with rapid development. Municipal services, school systems, public infrastructures, and land use authorities are stretched to their limits in many booming localities on the suburban frontier. While it may be hard for residents and officials of distressed central urban areas to feel much sympathy, the inability of outer suburbs to plan, pace, and accommodate development is a serious problem.

Many of these new suburban municipalities were mostly agricultural townships a generation ago and have either not developed or only recently acquired full land use planning and zoning infrastructures. Regional planning might have affected the spread of sprawl to these

communities so ill equipped to handle growth. As outer suburbs fail to manage development, the metropolitan edge becomes fixed in inefficient land use patterns. The negative consequences of this for those municipalities and their metropolitan regions will echo far into the future.

### Sprawl from the Inside Looking Out: Central Urban Perspectives:

Long associated with the rapid consumption of land, sprawl has more recently been related to many of the problems facing America's central cities. Associations between sprawl and central urban problems point the way to understanding metropolitan areas as interrelated systems rather than as aggregations of independent components.

The movement of people from urban neighborhoods into the suburbs has long been associated with push and pull factors. Residents with means frequently feel pushed out of cities by congestion, pollution, physical decay, and related problems. One of the most effective push factors has been concentrations of persons considered undesirable by more established residents. On the other hand, pull factors are the attractive qualities promised by suburbs as well as cheaper transportation, new technologies, and government subsidies that lessen the cost of moving to the suburbs.

Explaining metropolitan development through attractive and repulsive factors is consistent with the idea that central urban areas, and perhaps their residents, are in some sense deficient. For those concerned with the health of central cities and their residents, the policy emphasis has been to direct national and state funding and programs into distressed central urban areas in an effort to fix their problems. Massive mid and late twentieth century welfare policies and urban redevelopment efforts resulted in the construction of an unprecedented urban social welfare infrastructure and the clearance of great swaths of our central cities. The Federal Government transferred enormous amounts of money into the coffers of distressed central city governments through various grants and revenue sharing programs. In this same period, private charity and religious service groups built impressive inner city social service infrastructures.

Unfortunately, as literature on the inner-urban "underclass" points out, concentrated central city poverty populations have remained relatively stable despite these policies and despite economic expansion through most of the post-war period. The fiscal strength of central cities has also continued to decline. The entrenched nature of central urban problems has led to the realization that the removal of investment, services, and whole sectors of society from central urban communities to the suburbs has been a primary cause of inner city dysfunction. That is, while push and pull factors inherent to cities and suburbs may explain the initial stages of suburbanization, suburbanization, and now sprawl, has stripped central urban areas of human and economic resources and increased the central urban/suburban push and pull disparity.

In this understanding, where development at the suburban fringes translates into decline in the urban core, suburbanization creates conditions favorable to more of the same as the push and pull dichotomy between city and outer suburb is accentuated. Such a dynamic helps to explain why it is that urban problems seem only to deepen and spread despite so many efforts to address them. Central urban advocates who adopt this view may conclude that previous efforts did not succeed insofar as they only focused on ameliorating central urban distress and failed to address underlying metropolitan-wide imbalances.

William Julius Wilson illustrated the connection between community dysfunction and the removal of those with means to the suburbs in his work *The Truly Disadvantaged*. Here, Wilson argued that the disproportionately black central urban underclass has been perpetuated in part by the removal of successful African Americans from central urban neighborhoods. Concentration of an area's most vulnerable residents in central cities has, in this view, created communities of disadvantage that recreate themselves across generations. Inherent is the conclusion that social welfare programs alone may never be able to compensate for the negative effects of income segregation and the removal of skills, knowledge, and resources from central urban communities.

Wilson's analysis, showing that removal of the middle class to the suburbs causes central city dysfunction, marks a shift towards a greater awareness of place as a mechanism that structures communities, power, and opportunities. Place based understandings of inequity and dysfunction help explain why it is that so many efforts to address central urban problems appear to have been so futile.

Central urban advocates are among the newest comers to the anti-sprawl table. Their concerns include urban disinvestment, fiscal crisis, inequities between place placed groups, and inequities between the local governments and service delivery infrastructures responsible for the welfare of metropolitan residents. Those adopting an inside looking out perspective will continue to advocate traditional federal and state programs targeted towards central city populations in crisis but will also seek to contain sprawl and address the inequities caused by unbalanced development.

a) *Sprawl and Disinvestment:*

Many see sprawl as the removal of investment from central cities in favor of greener pastures at the metropolitan edge. To reverse this process, advocates will be interested in augmenting traditional urban reinvestment policies. They will also seek to make outer suburban pastures less green for development by removing incentives such as new highway exits and other infrastructural subsidies. They will further look to stop sprawl and slow suburbanization directly. Attractive policies here include cork in the bottle approaches such as urban growth boundaries. The logic of supporting such measures draws from the hope that if you stopper growth at the outside of the metropolitan area then development, with no place else to go, will back-flow into the city. Central urban advocates will not actively support land preservation policies that do not severely restrict

development in the outer suburbs, but merely channel it away from certain tracts of land.

b) *Sprawl and Inequity:*

American patterns of suburban development have resulted in the unprecedented segregation of opportunity across metropolitan space. This is the case because all metropolitan residents are not equally able to move wherever they want to. As new suburbs attract the most advantaged residents, less wealthy ones are left behind in successively less desirable municipalities. By moving to exclusive municipalities, wealthy residents insulate themselves from exposure to unpleasant contacts in central cities as they avoid paying for much of the area's problems. On the other hand, the region's least advantaged residents are forced to live in distressed municipalities with higher service needs, rickety infrastructures, and increasingly higher tax rates.

Armed with an appreciation of the negative impact of fragmenting metropolitan areas into independent localities that structure inequity, these advocates may advance tax-base sharing schemes whereby some property taxes are redistributed from wealthier municipalities to poorer ones. Such redistribution policies are initially attractive as direct responses to spatial inequity.

d) *Sprawl and Geographic Opportunity Structures:*

Some central urban advocates, concerned that the spatial location of poverty and disadvantage will continue to be a problem for some time, will advance policies that break down barriers to advantage. Such policies may include requiring suburbs to accept low-income housing and services.

Central urban advocates may also advance policies that enable inner-city residents to travel to suburban opportunities. These may include cross-district school choice or coordinated regional transit policies. Central urban advocates would value any of these policies most insofar as they reduce inequity by giving city residents access to suburban opportunities. One may also hope that such policies would slow sprawl by removing the ability of whites to segregate themselves by moving farther out.

Our understanding of how metropolitan development, geopolitical fragmentation, and sprawl impact our urban core has become increasingly sophisticated as those concerned with central city problems have sought to explain the entrenched nature of urban decline and dysfunction. By relating these problems with the pattern and pace of development at the urban fringe, a more complex understanding of metropolitan areas as systems, rather than as mere aggregations of people and activities, is emerging. System understandings may lead to more coherent, comprehensive, and effective reform agendas. The goal of system based solutions is to re-balance or fix the structures that keep causing problems that just don't seem to go away otherwise. Following is an introductory guide for understanding metropolitan areas as systems.

### Sprawl as a System Threat:

The most complex views of sprawl conceive of metropolitan areas as interconnected systems and sprawl as both a symptom and cause of system imbalance. Few have adopted explicit system understandings. Nevertheless, system approaches help us relate otherwise disparate problems and solutions. The concept of sustainable development requires viewing metropolitan areas as interconnected systems.

System understandings seem inspired by modern views of the natural world. A useful analogy is an ecosystem which, like the human body, can be thought of as both a collection of associated components and processes as well as an interconnected whole. From a systems perspective, sprawl is a cancer on the body metropolitan, a disruption of healthy relationships between the processes and parts that comprise the metropolitan whole. Also like a cancer, sprawl can disrupt the metropolitan system in ways that encourage more sprawl.

Because system approaches to sprawl are many, this section must be a synthesis that relays the most essential properties of such understandings by doing injustice to individual theories. This is justifiable as the purpose of this section is to introduce system perspectives rather than to compare and contrast the work of diverse scholars.

Because system approaches to understanding sprawl view the problem as multidimensional, they do not translate into silver bullet solutions. Rather, these understandings are associated with reform *agendas* comprised of components, each of which addresses some of the system imbalance causing sprawl, inequity, and related problems. Advancing one policy component first may not solve a system-wide imbalance, but it will help and more solutions can be added to that original effort until the cycle of system dysfunction is reversed into one of health and growth.

#### *a) Sprawl as Economic Inefficiency:*

Metropolitan areas can be thought of as economic wholes. The health of an economic system depends on efficient production and exchange. Sprawl, because it increases infrastructure and transportation costs up front and through the wasteful abandonment of otherwise useful facilities, adds enormously to the costs of producing goods and services in a region. These costs are paid for through higher total governmental expenditures and increased costs for transportation, goods, and services paid by everyone in countless ways. In other words, sprawl makes a metropolitan area less efficient and more expensive as a place in which to live and do business. In human terms, this translates into more difficult lives blessed with fewer opportunities.

Some try to insulate their portion of metropolitan wealth from increasing region-wide costs by moving to the region's most prosperous

municipalities, a process called cream skimming. In so doing, they contribute to sprawl and the inefficiency of segregation. The political structure of the metropolitan area, with fragmented government, service, and tax structures, encourages wealthy residents to move to exclusive municipalities and enjoy the region's richest resources as they avoid paying for many of the problems accumulating in the region's disadvantaged places. While metropolitan costs may be hidden from some, problems do not just go away. It is the ratio of total metropolitan costs to the quality of goods and services produced in the region that ultimately determines if the area as a whole succeeds or fails.

Segregation within a metropolitan area does more than camouflage the depths of the region's problems for some, it adds to the regional cost of doing business at least as much as does low density development and abandonment. This is the case in part because when prices are not balanced throughout the metropolitan system because access to information, resources, and goods is distributed unevenly, the total for all prices paid for all goods and services rendered in a region (the gross metropolitan cost of doing business) is higher.

More tragically, as opportunities are differentially dispersed, many that could be contributing to the region's success are unfairly prohibited from accessing opportunities that they need to succeed. What everyone must realize is that the ultimate economic cost of segregation is the generation of fewer opportunities all around as people and the resources they can become are stunted by artificial barriers to economic opportunity.

Real economic growth is not a zero-sum quantity where some for one means less for another. Rather, it is an elastic result of economic system inputs and efficiencies where the more fully and appropriately all of the components of the region's economic system (especially people) are integrated, the more efficiently and productively will the metropolitan area function to the advantage of all.

Some may assume otherwise, believing that economic growth of one part of an area must lead to economic decline in another. The same zero sum logic is too frequently applied to individuals and groups. Such misunderstandings are reinforced by the fact that metropolitan economies today have been perverted such that much of what passes for growth is nothing more than relocation, the impact of which will make real economic growth more difficult. Change in a metropolitan system can only be considered real development if it results in benefits for the entire region. When a development project does not pass this test because it is wasteful or because its benefits are artificially isolated in one portion of the metropolitan region, that project is counterproductive.

When they are ideally structured, economic systems channel behavior and encourage decisions in ways that maximize the efficient production and distribution of wealth. Sprawl, seen from this perspective, results from

and causes economic inefficiency or system imbalance. To address that imbalance, advocates of the kind of view outlined above will favor policies that promise to:

- *Balance development incentives:* Compact development and urban redevelopment are efficient for the metropolitan area as a whole. However, some argue that a system of perverse incentives subsidizes individual developers' projects in green field sites. These subsidies include the construction of new highways, schools, and other facilities in developing areas even as extent infrastructure in the region's core goes under-utilized. In a metropolitan context, unnecessary new facilities do not facilitate quality of life as much as they encourage its opposite in the form of sprawl. Such projects are often heavily financed by state and federal governments and force the general public to fund suburban sprawl. Advocates of efficient or smart growth will call for the elimination of all public subsidies for unnecessary green field development.

On the other hand, the cost of urban redevelopment is often disproportionately high. Urban redevelopment costs have included the assumption of environmental liability for existing pollution in brownfield sites, the cost of demolition and infrastructure repair and re-routing, and the time and money required to navigate complicated urban land use and development bureaucracies. These efforts include the frustrating tasks of assembling parcels and gaining clear title to them through less than transparent or efficient bureaucracies. To correct perverse development incentives, many advocate the following:

- Remove government incentives to develop green field site beyond regions planned to accommodate metropolitan expansion.
  - Remove all unnecessary information and bureaucratic costs associated with central urban redevelopment by streamlining urban land use planning and development bureaucracies.
  - Increase state and national funding for demolition and preparation of central urban land for redevelopment.
  - Continue and increase tax incentives through Renaissance Zones, and other programs to encourage private urban reinvestment.
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- *Represent the big picture in the metropolitan planning process:* In the present environment where municipalities are almost solely responsible for land use planning, the larger needs of the metropolitan area for livability, productivity, and efficiency are frequently ignored. Advocates of efficient metropolitan development would advance regional development planning and land-use management whereby municipal plans harmonize with those of their neighbors and the metropolitan area as a whole.
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- *Create more efficient metropolitan service delivery structures:* Leaders of the corporate world understand that consolidating operations often makes for more useful and efficient services. Those who understand the

metropolitan area as an integrated economic system will advocate inter-municipal service consolidation or cooperation wherever possible. Reducing the cost of government is an inarguable good. Service consolidation also promises to bring needed service improvements to the urban core and so encourages investment there. Consolidation may also reduce economic incentives to pay lower taxes for higher levels of services in exclusive suburbs as services are equalized across the region.

- *Unify the metropolitan tax base:* Tax-base sharing programs are consistent with economic system understandings of metropolitan areas because they promise to make the region's fiscal structure act more like a whole than an aggregation of independent pieces.
- *Help people transcend place wherever they live:* Spatial segregation and isolation from opportunity reduce metropolitan-wide productivity. An economic system understanding is consistent with policies such as a comprehensive regional transit system, cross-district school integration, and regional cooperative skills training and adult education institutes. Programs that allow residents to access metropolitan goods and services regardless of where they live are the most cost effective, rapid, and simple way to advance equity and productivity.
- Ultimately, an economic system understanding of metropolitan America is consistent with maximizing all forms of residential integration. This can be advanced with programs to disperse low-income housing and coordinated services into the suburbs, particularly to those municipalities with the fewest poor residents presently. At the other end, efforts to make central urban areas more attractive to middle-class residents are critical.

In sum, an economic system understanding of metropolitan areas calls for maximizing efficiency and productivity by balancing incentives towards compact growth and central urban reinvestment; making the planning, service delivery, and municipal fiscal structures efficient and reflective of metropolitan priorities; and helping people to transcend spatial barriers to opportunities of all kinds. The end, according to this view, is to boost regional productivity in ways that improve the life opportunities of all. Indeed, inclusive growth is the only really sustainable kind of growth.

- b) *Sprawl as Social and Cultural Breakdown:*  
Metropolitan areas can be thought of as systems of social and cultural relationships. The importance of these is illustrated in the work of William Julius Wilson and others who associate the concentration of poverty with neighborhood social dysfunction.

The immediate dysfunction of underclass neighborhoods is often followed by the decay of essential components of community infrastructure such as neighborhood organizations and churches. Because these places do not

contain the range of social components required for effective community coordination, they are not sustainable. Their failure as components of the metropolitan social structure translates into alienation as others intensify their avoidance of these places and their residents. Some argue that the effects of deprivation in these places include cultural destruction. While cultures have great intrinsic value, they are not independently sustainable. A healthy cultural environment, so vital to the success of any community and its residents, requires minimum material security and the healthy social conditions that follow.

While the social costs of sprawl are most frighteningly manifest in distressed urban neighborhoods, they are hardly limited to these places. Spatial segregation in metropolitan America occurs on the dimensions of race, class, family size and structure, income, and age as huge subdivisions are zoned and constructed to create great swaths of homogenous housing suitable for very narrow economic and demographic ranges of residents. The cubby-hole subdivisions, massive retirement condominium complexes, stripped ghettos, or golfing communities that comprise ever more of our urban areas are unlikely to develop the multidimensional communities that, as homes to some of all of us, are dynamic and supporting places.

From humanistic perspectives, this sort of suburbanization breaks down our communities and generates numerous social problems for at least two reasons. First, American metropolitan development patterns create highly differentiated space that segregates the components of society into inherently unhealthy groupings. Second, these development patterns encourage excessive mobility.

Because healthy and sustainable communities require a range of participants, the increasingly segregated groups within metropolitan areas fail to comprise full communities. This failure is associated with enormous social, cultural, and economic costs. These include the accelerated decline of extended family relationships and other forms of interdependence that develop in neighborhoods with a healthy range of residents. Indeed, such connections differentiate *neighborhoods* from *residential areas*. Interpersonal associations within neighborhoods are good for our mental and emotional health as they increase our security and ease some of our daily concerns over questions such as “who will watch the children?” Neighborhood connections replace alienation, insecurity, fear, and loneliness with feelings of belonging or meaningfulness. Mutual assistance and a sense of community grow in places that are conducive and cannot be replaced by social programs alone.

As patterns of metropolitan development have weakened place-based attachments and increased differentiation between poor and advantaged areas, we are ever more likely to see housing as an instrument of personal opportunity rather than an intrinsic component of a larger community. This instrumentalization of place frequently encourages us to pull up

stakes and move to greener pastures rather than commit to strengthening the community around us. The social or cultural effect of suburbanization and sprawl, therefore, is more of the same.

The end result of social stratification across space and community breakdown may go beyond individual unhappiness towards a national crisis where our sense of what we gain from and owe to each other is reduced to the most instrumental terms. In such an environment, structured more by individualism than by community associations, it will be increasingly difficult to define a common purpose or to advance policies that respond to the needs of our most vulnerable citizens.

Those who address sprawl as a threat to our social and cultural health will favor policies that:

- *Abate social crises:* Sociocultural system views are consistent with efforts to abate the central city social crisis, but require that such measures work to build community cohesion, skills, and power as they meet immediate needs. Here, programs should work closely with existing community groups in an effort to strengthen their capacity to lead and develop resources. As important as these efforts are, one who understands metropolitan areas as interconnected social and community systems will ultimately seek to move beyond localized efforts towards the re-integration of all metropolitan residents into mixed and healthy communities. The following policy agenda components follow:
- *Transcend opportunity barriers:* These efforts would include measures associated with an economic systems approach.
- *Create mixed communities:* Relevant policies include the following:
  - Require new development and redevelopment to encourage mixed use and socially integrated residential patterns.
  - Make central cities attractive to middle-class residents as suburbs open up to more of the poor.
- *Encourage a sense of place:* Relevant policies include designing residential and commercial space in such a way as to encourage diverse interpersonal contact.
- Stop the production of surplus housing and commercial development.

- c) *Sprawl as Political Fragmentation:*  
Until around the turn of the century there was little distinction between cities and metropolitan areas. By annexing land at their edge, cities grew as urban populations spread. Indeed, residents and property owners in developing suburbs often sought the extension of city gas, water, and sewerage lines, police and fire protection, and other services through annexation.

As central cities became less attractive to the growing middle class, however, and as material wealth and new technologies made independence from central infrastructures more possible, suburbanites replaced pleas for incorporation with demands for independence. Many states responded by allowing suburban areas to incorporate as independent municipalities. Municipalities proliferated and metropolitan areas to this day, particularly in the North, add municipalities as they grow while the boundaries of their central cities remain frozen.<sup>1</sup> The consequences of this are serious and can be summed up as the fragmentation and balkanization of urban America.

The radical division of local governance has been costly. Fragmented metropolitan administration, including education, utility and transportation infrastructures, and service delivery systems, is highly inefficient and encourages many of the counter-productive behaviors cited above. These include cream skimming.

The division of large urban areas into scores of municipalities has resulted in extraordinary levels of inter-municipal differentiation as residents and businesses select localities as they would choose any other commodity. The municipality as merchandise mentality translates into high levels of inter-municipal differentiation as municipalities sort residents by formulas that intersect the attractiveness of a locality to specific people with their ability to pay. It should be noted, however, that non-rational characteristics such as racial makeup might be among the factors that make a municipality desirable or exclude it as a likely selection. Specialization of municipalities and the segregation that results compound as location decisions accentuate the environment in which later decisions are made. The metropolitan market becomes even more segregated through the aggregation of these self-fulfilling prophecies. The movement of wealth to particular suburbs and the isolation of poverty in inner-city ghettos are only extremes on the new spectrum of metropolitan fragmentation.<sup>2</sup>

Perhaps the most serious consequence of political fragmentation is that local interests and perspectives replace the appreciation of metropolitan areas as wholes. The eclipse of metropolitan areas as political societies with common histories and universal interests by more narrow local concerns and attitudinal identifications is a deeply serious problem.<sup>3</sup>

This process can be called balkanization in so far as municipalities structure divisions that coordinate with diverse and opposing political views. Residents of secure middle-class suburbs and those of distressed inner-city neighborhoods, for example, perceive very different place-

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<sup>1</sup> See Todd Swanstrom and Dennis Judd's *City Politics*.

<sup>2</sup> This discussion draws from Gregory Weiher's theory of intermunicipal differentiation advanced in *The Fractured Metropolis*.

<sup>3</sup> This discussion is inspired by the work of Norton Long who advocated appreciating metropolitan areas as polities. See *The Unwalled City*.

based interests and frequently see the world in profoundly different ways. Severe political interest and attitudinal differentiation, applied across the metropolitan area, not only threatens efforts to confront sprawl and the inequities associated with it, they feed sprawl as the result of our efforts to escape from others and our obligations towards them.

Political balkanization in metropolitan America reduces our public discourse to multiple us versus them demands and counter claims. The essential prerequisites of democratic discourse and decision making are violated in an environment that segregates people and then imposes group opportunity inequities along spatial boundaries. Municipal governments have come to represent groups that see little in common with each other and view one's success as resulting from another's failure. Such zero sum views are encouraged by the fact that much of what passes for growth today is not much more than relocation. Relocation advances one place-based group at the expense of another. In this manner, tensions between groups segregated by divisions that determine our life chances can be especially destructive.

Like all system approaches, a rich understanding of sprawl in its political and governmental context shows that it is capable of re-creating itself. Metropolitan Americans are not only defined by their desire to get away from each other, they are notable for their success at doing so through the construction of intermunicipal barriers. Fragmented governance, ironically, accelerates our movement away from each other because municipalities allow homogenous development and the aggregation of location choices. In the long run, these factors limit our ability to choose integration. The segregation that results only accelerates our movement away from each other as it breeds suspicion and accentuates actual differences between places and the people who live in them.

A political system approach to sprawl would include most of the recommendations headed under the two other system understandings above with a special emphasis on creating planning, service, and governance structures that transcend strictly local concerns to represent regional interests.

Beyond its emphasis on broader governance, what most distinguishes this perspective from the other system approaches is its call for sensitivity to political realities in the pursuit of metropolitan reform. Political balkanization is a particularly difficult problem. Although unhealthy and dangerous, metropolitan balkanization gives individual place-based groups an apparent interest in preserving or even strengthening barriers.

For instance, in the Detroit area, many equate a perceived increase in the presence or influence of whites in the City's neighborhoods, government, and economy with "recolonization" whereas many suburbanites seem to blame much of Detroit's urban crisis on the residents of Detroit and their failure to demand efficient government. As they see Detroit as a failure,

many white suburbanites may view efforts to direct resources back into the City as at least wasteful and at worst an injustice against those who must pay to support such efforts. Here, the virulent white reactions against social welfare programs that were perceived to benefit undeserving and dysfunctional African Americans may be applied against the City of Detroit. Because such severe attitudinal divisions can override the objective interests that city and suburban residents have in common, strategies to confront sprawl and inequity must be sensitive to divisive issues such as race and redistribution.

The end of a political system view of metropolitan regions, regardless of specific strategies, is a unified political discourse within some representative system that can advance the interests of the metropolitan citizenry as a whole.

### Conclusion of Perspectives on Sprawl:

The above discussion illustrates how different understandings of sprawl translate into diverse policy agendas. Aside from the most basic physical description, different people have very different understandings of sprawl and what is best to do about it. Anyone wishing to advance an effective reform agenda must understand the major perspectives on sprawl and development in the area or risk any of a number of organizational and political pitfalls.

Implicit in this discussion is also the view that system understandings of metropolitan areas and sprawl are superior. System approaches to metropolitan areas look beyond the rapid and unplanned consumption of land to see sprawl as both a symptom and cause of deep imbalances affecting the entire area. As such, they transcend more limited understandings of metropolitan regions as mere aggregations of people, municipalities, neighborhoods, industrial and commercial activities, et cetera, in favor of the view that what happens in one portion or component of the area impacts the region as a whole.

The system views above emphasize different aspects of metropolitan areas but are not exclusive of each other. Indeed, one could understand them each as emphasizing a different aspect of the same problem. This is reflected in the shared logic of these approaches and in the fact that the general thrust of policies associated with them overlap.

There is other system perspectives. More sophisticated understandings of sprawl expressed by environmentalists and central urban advocates are included among them. If sprawl is a symptom and/or cause of system imbalance, then policy options must be judged, in part, by whether they address at least a portion of the system imbalance associated with sprawl, or whether they just mask its symptoms. Simply disguising sprawl's consequences will only allow the problem to continue to manifest itself and may even make matters worse.

## **What is Sprawl in Detroit?**

### Sprawl is a System Problem in Detroit:

Sprawl in the Detroit area is both a symptom and cause of severe metropolitan system imbalances. Though the region is wealthy and productive, inequities and inefficiencies threaten its image, livability, inter-group understanding, and competitiveness as they constrict the life chances of the region's most vulnerable residents.

It is not always easy for residents to see local activities and trends as effects and causes of phenomena occurring throughout the area. To gain an understanding of metropolitan issues as systemic, one must take account of basic conditions that define the area. These, because they structure our perspectives, are frequently overlooked by residents regardless of their severity. Below is a brief introduction to macro-level conditions in the Detroit area. A review of these suggests that they are connected with each other and with sprawl.

### Indicators of System Imbalance:

Land at the edge of the region is being consumed at an astonishing rate as residents and development spread out ever farther and faster from the area's center. Other physical conditions are telling. Abandonment and decay on a massive scale define the region's center, the heart of which is the City of Detroit. The City of Detroit suffers from the most sweeping and protracted urban crisis in the nation's history. Urban decline has not been contained by the boundary of the City, however. It is spreading into the region's inner-ring suburbs as their positions within the metropolitan market of places decline.

Government in the region is highly fragmented. There are 62 cities, villages, and townships in the Detroit Primary Metropolitan Statistical Area that had at least 10,000 residents as of 1990 according to the Census. The most urbanized portion of the region, that which contains the area's large central cities and developed suburbs, is fairly evenly divided among three large counties. There is not a single government body that represents the people of the region as such.

Intergovernmental divisions in Detroit are meaningful beyond the administrative complications and inefficiencies associated with them. What one is likely to see in the Detroit region is highly predicted by which municipality one happens to be standing in. Municipalities in the region are highly differentiated by demographic characteristics including race and income, by economic makeup and land use, and by fiscal well being.

The demographic conditions that characterize the region are remarkable. Racial segregation is a problem in most of America's urban regions. Not one of the nation's major metropolitan areas is more severely segregated than the Detroit

region however.<sup>4</sup> On several scales, the region's level of segregation tops the nation. Most disturbing is that segregation occurs quite neatly along municipal and county boundaries. The City of Detroit, a city in which 76 percent of its people were black persons according to the 1990 Census, borders places like Warren, whose population in 1990 was less than 1 percent black. (See figure 1 for a good illustration of racial segregation in the Detroit area.)<sup>5</sup>

Along with racial segregation, the residents of the region are divided by personal income and housing values.<sup>6</sup> Location within the Detroit region as such predicts economic class as well as race. Survey research shows that such place-based divisions between people in the region are associated with differences in political attitudes. Certainly, election returns for the Detroit region show that support for national political candidates, by party, is highly variable across municipalities.<sup>7</sup>

A snapshot of the region suggests that associations between municipalities and the economic and demographic characteristics, as well as the political attitudes, of residents are not coincidental. A closer look will show that the sprawl, fragmentation, and inequity that define the region are the result of long-term, deep, and dangerous system-wide processes. From 1960 and earlier to the present, Detroit area municipalities and townships have become increasingly differentiated by median house values and household income figures. The pattern of this differentiation is most disturbing.

#### Residential Dispersion:

Proportional intermunicipal median house values and household incomes (calculated as percentages of metropolitan regional figures to allow comparisons over time corrected for inflation) have drifted farther apart every decade. This has not occurred randomly. Most of the "richest" municipalities in 1960 became richer through to 1990 (the last year for which Census data are available) while the least advantaged municipalities in 1960 declined into deep crisis by 1990. (See Figures 3 and 4.) We can surmise that this growing differentiation means that residents are segregating themselves in municipalities by income and wealth. Wealthy residents are seeking advantaged municipalities while the poorest are trapped in the region's central city neighborhoods. Others are being sorted out in stages in the region's middling suburbs.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Douglas Massey and Nancy Denton in *American Apartheid* quantify racial residential segregation along five dimensions and find that the Detroit area tops the nation in two of them and ranks very near the top in the other three. See page 76.

<sup>5</sup> This map and those to follow were produced at the Wayne State University Department of Geography and Urban Planning using the U. S. Housing and Urban Development Department's Community 2020 geographic information system package. All maps use 1990 data from the Bureau of the Census.

<sup>6</sup> Massey and Denton find that the Detroit region ranks high in income segregation. See *American Apartheid*, page 86. See also figures 2 and 4).

<sup>7</sup> See my paper, "The Politics of Metropolitan Fragmentation."

<sup>8</sup> Some of the growing differentiation between municipal household incomes may be associated with the fact that the gulf between rich and poor in the United States has been growing.

This segregation is suggested further by decade to decade changes that show that the most advantaged municipalities are those that are located successively farther from the region's center while the opposite can be said for the least advantaged. If these changes were animated with time tracked maps, we would see that the ranks of most advantaged municipalities would change somewhat from decade to decade and advance outward like a shock wave, leaving successive municipalities in slow but accelerating decline in their wake. (See Figure 5 for a schematic representation of the sprawl wave.) Aside from the Gross Pointes, most of the "richest" municipalities in 1960 were near what was then the metropolitan region's development edge. Now, even more advantaged municipalities have appeared beyond these.

When we consider all of these dimensions, we see a system of accelerating sprawl in the region that has progressed for decades. We know that people are moving out farther, that house values continue to spike successively farther from the area's center, that the region's core municipalities are composed of disproportionate numbers of poor and black persons, and that the opposite can be said for the region's outer suburbs. We know that the range of these distinctions is followed by political attitudinal and voting behavior differences, and we know that intermunicipal differentiation and the separation of place based groups are getting worse. We also know that many other factors, such as municipal fiscal health, highway congestion and land consumption, pollution, inequitable schools, and inequities in access to other life chances are associated with these patterns.

- *Economic Imbalance:* Why is all of this happening? From an economic system view, intermunicipal fragmentation and the lack of regional planning encourage residents and others to ride the wave of rising property values at the region's edge. While almost all of the region's municipalities are enjoying rising property values, the figures that count are relative. Local property values relative to those for neighboring places and the region determine what sorts of participants are buying in which municipalities and so shape the future of the region.

For those who are concerned about relative market position, the critical question is not how much one's property value has changed so much as how much it has changed in relation to others'. Though there is some evidence that the City of Detroit has stabilized by this measure, we are likely to see the magnitude of differentiation between municipalities' relative market positions continue to grow. As it does, incentives to ride the property market wave will intensify.

Riding the wave is an effort that seems rational to the individual but in the big picture is advancing sprawl, intermunicipal differentiation, and all of the problems and inequities that result. There are not only positive economic incentives to move farther out, there are also negative ones. Residents often move in an effort to flee the wave's wake, to escape the collapse of property values nearer to the region's center. Either way, resident's location decisions must be made in the context of the accumulated effects of the actions of others. Property values may be the single most important economic determinant for an

individual but they also indicate a municipality's economic health and demographic makeup now and in the future.

- *Social and Cultural Breakdown:* From a social/cultural perspective, many Detroiters seem to have lost much of their sense of community in place and have come to see houses as instruments more than as homes. This is associated with greater mobility. Further, many Detroiters continue fleeing the danger and discomfort of contact with the social dysfunction they associate with the inner city, a dysfunction they may fear will sweep across their neighborhood before they can get farther away.
- *Fragmentation and Balkanization:* From a political perspective, division of the region into scores of municipalities has enabled a process of balkanization. It could be said that we simply do not want to live next to each other and we do not want to engage or contend with each other in the political arena. So we isolate ourselves in group enclaves. But we call our enclaves suburban municipalities or maybe gated communities. This segregation begets more of the inter-group alienation and distrust that feed sprawl.

## **What Sprawl is Not.**

Some bristle at the term sprawl and argue that suburbanization is the natural expression of economic growth and free market forces working to produce a productive and happy future.<sup>9</sup> Here, cities are in decline because new technologies have made them inefficient. Their physical disadvantages, in this view, are compounded by the fact that their complex governments no longer serve the needs of today's productive citizens and businesses. As their decline indicates obsolescence, so the growth of suburbs validates the superiority of suburban lifestyles, government structures, and land use patterns. Cities, on the other hand, are caught up in serving the demands of the region's least successful and productive residents. From a naturalistic perspective, cities fail in part because their governments waste resources responding to the demands of non-productive residents when they should be making more profitable investments.

Such positions view what others call sprawl as a Darwinian succession towards a more efficient metropolitan form. From this perspective, the best thing to do about the spread of suburbia and central urban decline is nothing. If urban distress is natural, then cities in their present form should be condemned to extinction because expenditures on them are investments in failure.

System views of sprawl employ naturalistic understandings of metropolitan areas. They are not, however, consistent with the idea that sprawl is a natural process. Metropolitan growth and the evolution of land use patterns may in some cases be thought of as natural. Sprawl is not metropolitan growth and is

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<sup>9</sup> See Samuel R Staley's "'Urban Sprawl' and the Michigan Landscape: A Market Oriented Approach." Staley's report is a good example of the free market philosophy's naturalistic perspective on sprawl.

not natural; it is artificial, the product of fragmented governance, inter-group political alienation, perverse policy incentives, racial animosities, inadequate or counterproductive metropolitan planning and development structures, et cetera. All of these badly distort development in destructive ways and all of them are products of our will; none are ordained by natural or divine law.

The above aside, we know that sprawl could not be a natural process because the property market violates many of the assumptions of the radical free market theory upon which such arguments are made. This is in large part because the land market does not deal with widgets. Land is transformed by each of its users in lasting ways, its value is determined by the use of property around it, it cannot be picked up and taken away and its value cannot be reduced to money alone. A basic review of state and national policies including tax, development, and transportation policies, and governmental and service delivery structures shows that they have favored suburbanization. We also know that sprawl and attendant abandonment is not efficient *prima facie*. Further, when we compare American cities to more compact, efficient, and productive cities in Europe or Canada, we see that sprawl is hardly preordained. When we compare American metropolitan areas to each other, we see that their development differs substantially based on state and local policy structures and other choices.

To contend that rapid unplanned suburbanization is a natural market phenomenon is to claim that the decisions that add up to form the area are individually determined, necessarily rational, and aggregate to the benefit of all. As such this position is a call not to fool with Mother Nature. But we are already doing a lot to shape our metropolitan land markets in lasting ways with profound social, political, and economic implications. System understandings of sprawl view the actions that compound (not just aggregate) to form an urban area as essentially interrelated and structured by policy environments. Sprawl is a system problem, we have to do something about it or it will lead to more dysfunction, not greater efficiency and happiness.

# CONFRONTING SPRAWL

## Introduction:

As states, regions, and localities have come to respond to sprawl, they have developed a variety of solutions. Because there are so many approaches to sprawl, bringing order to this policy arena is difficult and may be accomplished along a number of different dimensions. For purposes of efficient discussion, policies are ordered here as comprehensive growth control policies and agenda, policy components, strategies ordered by the perspectives that inform them, and policies that appear to respond to uncontrolled growth but do not really confront sprawl and related imbalances.

## Comprehensive Growth Control Policies:

### Enhanced Local Planning and Land Use Approval Powers:

- *Policy:* Because metropolitan regions are so fragmented, any one municipality's land-use policies could not reverse regional sprawl. Further, the abilities of most municipalities to manage and enforce local land use policies are limited. Strengthening *specific and carefully selected* municipal land use authorities may have a system-wide impact as numbers of localities manage growth in similar ways.

Vermont gives local governments a great deal of authority to stop development that threatens historically significant areas. These powers are exercised broadly and have been used to target strip-malls and big box stores especially. One result is that Vermont does not contain any Wal-Mart stores despite several court challenges from that retailer.

- *Requirements:* Because local governments are the legal creatures of states, new local authority over land use must be granted by states. This may be more or less difficult given a state's constitution and legal tradition defining the rights of private property owners.
- *Analysis:* Vermont's policy has been a success; it has helped to preserve the state as a beautifully rural and historic place. Vermont's policy fits with the state's conservative approach to development and other state policies such as a complete ban on billboard advertising. The aesthetic and life style that have been preserved at once enhance Vermonters' quality of life and make the state attractive as a tourist destination and as a place to invest in vacation and retirement homes. Vermont's policy requires little governmental infrastructure.

Unfortunately many suburban municipalities across the nation use what land use authority they have to exclude compact development and lower

income or mixed housing. Granting greater land use authority without direction could worsen regional sprawl and inequity.

Directed enhancement of local land use authority may alleviate some of the worst manifestations of uncontrolled growth in the suburbs. Unfortunately, such policies alone cannot guarantee urban reinvestment, integration, and the alleviation of metropolitan inequities. Support for such policies may be difficult to garner as they weaken individual and corporate property rights.

### Two Tiered Planning Structure:

- *Policy:* Most schemes to correct imbalance in metropolitan land use require some inter-municipal cooperation through regional planning bodies. Such structures determine and perhaps implement regional land use policies. These second tier bodies range from organizations that draw up a regional plan to guide local policies, to those that determine growth boundaries outside of which states will not fund infrastructure improvements to serve new development (smart growth), to agencies with some authority to direct infrastructure investments and compel compliance with regional policies.

Two tier planning structures are often crafted in the context of statewide growth management programs and are most effective when coordinated with state agencies whose activities are relevant to area development and land use management. These include departments of transportation, housing, environmental conservation, et cetera.

- *Requirements:* The powers and structure of local governments are granted by their respective states. Any changes in municipal land use authority, especially the creation of regional planning organizations with any authority, must be made at the state level.
- *Analysis:* Fragmented planning and development structures are out of step with complex and interdependent metropolitan areas. If governments work best when they reflect human realities, the absence of regional planning and land use management authorities is remarkable. It is unreasonable to expect residents, local authorities, and commercial interests to act in accord with efficient growth and equitable development when there is no infrastructure to define and guide such activity.

Two tiered planning and, perhaps, land use management can transcend intermunicipal divisions that favor speculation in one part of a region at the expense of another. Unfortunately, administrative or political structures, useful or not, create environments that seem comfortable to many. People tend to be conservative when it comes to restructuring government and change will always be viewed by some as a threat. Fragmented regional governance advances parochial interests at the

expense of metropolitan vision, especially in the minds of those who believe they are winning in the status quo.

Beyond regional political considerations, the fact that regional planning and development structures must be approved through state legislation or, in some cases, through state constitutional amendments, means that a statewide constituency is needed to pass such reforms. This is difficult in states with large rural constituencies who are jealous of their property rights and would not favor the expansion of government powers even if such were to occur far away from them.

Nevertheless, some regional planning seems essential to confronting sprawl. Depending on how they are constructed, two tier planning and land use management programs may stop wasteful construction in the outer suburbs and encourage integrated suburban development and central urban reinvestment. Two tier planning structures will be more or less successful depending on the structure, priorities, and power of the regional planning agency and its coordination with other municipalities, departments, and agencies.

#### Metropolitan Growth Boundaries:

- *Policy:* Most state sponsored approaches to managing metropolitan development require some definition of a region's future growth perimeters to direct infrastructure investments et cetera. Metropolitan growth boundaries implemented in Oregon go beyond this. In Oregon, state law establishes regional agencies to define boundaries outside of which development is prohibited. Inside the boundaries a strong two-tiered planning infrastructure is established to manage growth through regional planning and service coordination. Oregon's policy results in higher residential densities than traditional suburban patterns, more mixed-use development, and more carefully planned coordination between development and services. The Portland area's planning priorities include regional multi-modal surface transportation, more mixed higher density suburban developments, and central urban preservation and redevelopment.
- *Requirements:* Oregon's growth control policy, which affects all of the state's larger metropolitan areas, requires state oversight of regional planning and service coordination. The policy involves high levels of inter-municipal cooperation and local compliance with regional development policies as well as the coordination of state infrastructure investment with regional priorities.
- *Analysis:* Oregon's policies have been successful as Portland has become a highly functional and attractive metropolitan area. Portland has an excellent regional transit system that complements other regional services. The City of Portland has enjoyed redevelopment and growth

while its suburbs are highly integrated into the metropolitan area. In many ways, Portland stands as a model of an American metropolitan area that works.

Oregon initiated this policy in 1973 before low-density sprawl had become an accomplished fact and before Portland's urban core suffered critical decline. As such, this policy had the chance to prevent the worst of the political fragmentation, segregation, and sprawl that plague so many areas. It is questionable whether such a policy could work as effectively in regions such as Detroit where sprawl is an accomplished fact.

Oregon's approach would be a difficult sell in many areas. The policy severely limits property rights as well as the perceived "rights" of municipalities,<sup>10</sup> and increases the complexity of government.

Oregon's approach shows that well considered, comprehensive and aggressive regional development planning can mitigate sprawl and much of the fragmentation, inter-group segregation, and inter-municipal inequities that go with it. While Portland still has poor and rich neighborhoods, inequities are not as daunting there as in most other American metropolitan areas.

#### Smart Growth:

- *Policy:* Smart growth is at once a general term that means the balancing of government incentives to favor more efficient growth and a specific policy recently enacted in Maryland. Like Oregon, Maryland, in cooperation with regional planning agencies, has designated zones around metropolitan areas for future development. Unlike Oregon, Maryland does not prohibit development beyond those boundaries nor has the state established coercive land use management and service coordination authorities. Maryland has simply removed all state funding for schools, highways, and other development that occurs beyond designated growth boundaries. If a developer or individual builds beyond the growth boundary they do so knowing that state subsidized services will not follow. Funds that in the past would have been used to meet the needs of people and businesses moving into green fields are now directed towards the redevelopment of aging public infrastructures and the construction of new infrastructure within designated areas.
- *Requirements:* Maryland's policy is a market-oriented approach that does not require large additions to state or local bureaucracies. It is, in essence, not much more than a new set of criteria for state agencies to follow when making decisions that will impact area development.

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<sup>10</sup> Municipalities, of course, have no rights beyond those granted by their respective states.

- *Analysis:* The policy may not eliminate sprawl, but it severely discourages it and has other advantages as it makes land at the fringes of metropolitan areas less vulnerable to speculation. Maryland's policy recognizes the fact that sprawl is an accomplished fact there. Maryland's approach has the advantage of not requiring large new state regional planning and development bureaucracies. Indeed, one of the policy's intents is to make government more efficient as fewer services are extended to sprawling suburbs. While market approaches such as this may not satisfy advocates of a strong public role in managing development, Maryland's will almost certainly have an impact and was crafted in a policy context much less amenable to big government solutions than that which prevailed in Oregon in 1973.

The above approaches seek to balance metropolitan development through land use planning and/or management. They begin with the most visible manifestation of sprawl, which is haphazard suburban development. Of these, Oregon's, because it is complemented by an array of state and regional development policies, is the most comprehensive and seeks to control both sprawl and an array of problems associated with it. The other approaches have benefits beyond controlling suburban growth to varying degrees. However, they do not begin with opportunity segregation, intermunicipal inequity, or urban decline. Rather than start with uncontrolled growth, the following approaches start with intermunicipal inequities. Just as the approaches above may help to resolve other metropolitan imbalances but begin with sprawl, the policies below may slow sprawl, but begin with metropolitan inequity.

#### Tax Base Sharing:

- *Policy:* Tax base sharing is a program implemented in the Minneapolis/St. Paul area to confront growing inter-municipal fiscal disparities. Here, a portion of municipal revenues generated from increased taxable property values is collected and redistributed to localities suffering tax base decline. This policy allows prosperous municipalities to benefit some from growing property values yet limits their advantage and ameliorates the fiscal distress of disadvantaged municipalities. The purpose of this annual redistribution is to limit the growth of inter-municipal fiscal disparities that can translate into severe inequities as tax rates rise and services fall in localities suffering disinvestment.
- *Requirements:* Tax base sharing requires the definition of a metropolitan area in which the policy will be implemented, the equalization of formula by which municipalities assess property values, and an administrative infrastructure designed to collect and redistribute municipal property tax revenues. As such, this policy requires state legislation and perhaps constitutional amendments.

- *Analysis:* For those most concerned with inter-municipal fiscal inequities, tax base sharing is attractive as it promises to take money from the municipal haves and distribute it to the have-nots. In the short run, it can ameliorate fiscal crises in urban municipalities suffering tax base decline. This is important because such revenue losses occur as urban infrastructures crumble and proportionately poorer resident populations require more services.

If we view metropolitan areas as economic systems, this policy makes sense in so far as it helps to unify regional fiscal structures and reduces artificial disparities. Fragmented fiscal structures and attendant and revenue disparities are destructive as widening cost-benefits (tax rate-services) differentials between municipalities encourage personal and corporate investment decisions that aggregate in harmful ways.

Increasingly, older suburbs have an interest in fiscal redistribution. Once leafy middle-class refuges, these inner-ring suburbs have declined as their infrastructure has aged, their housing stock has become less desirable, and their middle-class residents have been replaced by those with more modest means. As such, older suburbs are now facing the same vice of rising expenses and declining revenues that has crushed many of our central urban areas.

While tax base sharing can ameliorate suffering, what declining municipalities need most is sustainable investment. It is arguable that tax base sharing will lead to this as distressed municipalities use disbursements to repair infrastructure, lower tax rates, and attract investment. However, there is no guarantee that this will be the case. Tax base sharing programs should complement regional development policies, not substitute for them.

The greatest challenge to tax base sharing is the policy context that prevails in many areas. Intermunicipal inequities give many an apparent interest in preserving the fiscal and administrative divisions that perpetuate their apparent advantage. On the other hand, because the number of distressed and threatened municipalities has grown, some believe that a broader coalition in support of tax base sharing can be formed. This would ally central cities and inner-ring suburbs against outer-ring suburbs. Such a coalition would most likely succeed if the only constituents that mattered were city managers who are primarily concerned with balancing revenues and services.

However, statewide policy majorities are required to pass tax base sharing reforms. Further, in highly balkanized metropolitan areas, citizens' concerns will extend beyond fiscal matters to include less rational divisions between place based groups. Many inner-ring suburbanites may identify more with outer-suburbia than with central cities and their residents. Racial segregation and animosity contribute to this problem. The predominantly white working-class residents of inner-suburbia may

well view central cities in the same light as many view “welfare queens”, as wasteful and undeserving of assistance, as responsible for their own problems, and not comparable to their suburbs. Great care should therefore be taken to craft a context of shared understanding if such a policy is to be advanced with any success.

### Burden Sharing:

- *Policy:* Like tax base sharing, burden sharing has been proposed to ameliorate inequities between municipalities. Burden sharing programs require municipalities to allow fair levels of low income housing, senior facilities, group homes, and other accommodations for a region’s disadvantaged and include penalties for those that fail to do so.
- *Requirements:* Such a policy requires the state to define a metropolitan region and create a formula to determine obligations. Provisions must be made to determine and enforce municipal compliance.
- *Analysis:* Municipalities have used zoning to prohibit lower income housing and other “undesirable” development by making construction for these purposes prohibitively expensive. Exclusionary zoning laws may require unusually expensive construction techniques, square footage minimums, large setbacks and similar measures. The exclusion of shopping facilities and other services can also make a municipality less functional for those who need to have services close by. Exclusionary zoning has contributed to various forms of segregation and the concentration of poverty in central cities.

Burden sharing is a form of intermunicipal redistribution that requires localities to accept an equitable share of responsibility for serving the region’s most vulnerable residents. These programs promise to advance equity as they produce real benefits for poor persons by deconcentrating poverty and extending access to suburban benefits.

Burden sharing, like tax base sharing, gives inner-ring municipalities a material interest in the policy as these municipalities generally carry their share of regional housing and service burdens already. Indeed, by requiring outer suburbs to pick up more of the slack, inner suburbs may be saved from being over-run with low income housing et cetera. Ideally, such policies will end the advance of urban decline that bifurcates metropolitan areas and replace it with more stable metropolitan land use patterns. Unfortunately, the material or objective interests that most residents of a metropolitan area would have in such a policy are not all that counts. Burden sharing may be just as tough to sell in highly Balkanized areas as is tax base sharing as emotionally divisive perspectives predominate.

## Discrete Policies and Agenda Components:

- **Suburban Growth Control**

### Government Purchase of Land or Development Rights:

- *Policy:* The most blunt means by which a state or local government can prohibit the development of a particular parcel of land is by purchasing it. Governments may also buy the property's development rights from a landowner in much the same way an energy company buys extractive rights. In either case, a state, county, or local government simply buys land or development rights at market rates.
- *Requirements:* Purchase of land or development rights is the one means of open land preservation that every state and most every local government already has at its disposal. When land purchases are made in the private market, the sales are voluntary and so there is little need for the legislation and bureaucracies required for acquisition through condemnation or other complicated strategies.
- *Analysis:* Acquisition of land or development rights through purchase is the most immediate and effective means by which a government can preserve a specific piece of land assuming its owners are willing to sell. The immediate downside of such a policy is that it can be expensive. Further, once land is purchased, the government becomes liable for its security and maintenance.

Since these policies are funded by tax revenues, they require property owners and tax payers to pay up-front for the removal of other land from the tax roles. From a strictly fiscal view, this can be a losing proposition if applied on a very large scale. Any municipality using such a policy as the primary means of controlling growth might feel pinched by rising costs of land acquisition and the decreasing ability to pay.

Land purchase is a convenient and efficient means of protecting a limited number of parcels. As such, it may be employed to preserve tracts of undeveloped space in the suburbs as suburban "parks" or aesthetic buffers. Such policies are unlikely to really control sprawl and they will not re-orient development back to the urban core. In the end, such policies are efforts to stave off property markets rather than coordinated programs to manage and redirect market forces.

### Transfer of Development Rights:

- *Policy:* Transfer of development rights or TDR policies seek to manage growth and maintain large contiguous tracts of open land near metropolitan areas as they encourage farmers whose land is threatened by encroaching development to maintain their land in agricultural use.

TDR programs zone undeveloped areas at the edge of a metropolitan region for open land preservation. These swaths are thought of as barriers that will stop suburban growth at their boundaries and, owing to their size, will prevent leapfrog development beyond them. Other areas, closer to the region's suburbs, are zoned for potentially denser development. Farmers in the protected zone are assigned certificates of development rights. Farmers can then sell any number these at any time for negotiated prices to developers. Developers cash in these certificates for variances that allow them to develop land closer to the metropolitan center at higher densities than would otherwise be allowed. In the end, the program encourages more compact and efficient development. Once a farmer's development rights have been transferred, the property may not be developed no matter who owns it.

- *Requirements:* TDR policies require different things depending on a state and metropolitan area's legal environment. In Montgomery County, Maryland and Boulder County, Colorado TDR programs have been established at the county level. For a program to be established on the metropolitan level, it may require a metropolitan planning board with the authority to designate a preservation zone and grant certificates of development rights.
- *Analysis:* The attraction of TDR policies lies in their promise to preserve open land and effect more efficient development without resorting to expensive government land or development rights purchase or coercive land use management. TDR policies do not necessarily prohibit farmers from developing their land, but they do make keeping land in agriculture use much more lucrative. TDR policies will not directly ameliorate inter-municipal inequities or other problems commonly associated with sprawl but they may help to redirect investment towards the urban core over time.

- **Central Urban Reinvestment.**

Urban Redevelopment Zones:

- *Policy:* These programs, including Enterprise and Renaissance Zones, define portions of distressed cities where redevelopment is critical to broader recovery. Numerous incentives, including corporate and resident tax breaks, marketing, streamlined development approval, enhanced city services, infrastructure improvements, and subsidized loans, are targeted to these zones in the hope that businesses and residents will reverse the cycle of disinvestment.
- *Requirements:* Urban reinvestment zones must be enacted at state or federal levels and implemented by appropriate municipal agencies. The broad parameters of a zone are established in enabling legislation but the

exact boundaries are determined with local input. Zones may involve the participation of numerous local government agencies, development corporations, and not-for-profit groups.

- *Analysis:* Urban redevelopment zones seek to balance some of the perverse incentive structures driving disinvestment by compensating investors for higher costs of doing business in distressed urban areas. Some of these costs are material, such as expenses associated with assembling properties and clearing titles, demolition and infrastructure re-routing, accommodating parking, et cetera. Other costs, however, cannot be quantified but nevertheless disadvantage distressed areas. These are image costs. Businesses are often concerned about location within distressed cities as this can make employee recruitment harder and damage customer base.

Public spending on development zones can be thought of as targeted investment whereby government concentrates resources in ways that are expected to produce long-term payoffs. By the logic of such policies, cities are entities that must make a profit yet have very limited resources. In this context, urban development zones assemble resources and invest them in ways that are supposed to maximize future profits. Targeted investment policies differ from needs based funding in ways that can result in resistance from advocates of a city's neediest communities.

Because such investment targeting amounts to picking winners and losers, these programs can be very controversial. However, to the extent that funding comes from state and federal governments, these policies represent a net benefit for cities and their residents. As they direct investment, they may slow sprawl and ameliorate inequity. Such programs may be implemented to the greater or lesser benefit of community groups and agencies within redevelopment zones.

### Reforming Central City Land Use Planning and Development Infrastructures:

It is ironic that while some suburban governments are scrambling to acquire land or development rights in order to preserve open spaces, most central city (or urban county) governments find themselves in possession of far too much land. Cities acquire properties in lieu of back taxes when owners cannot or will not pay taxes. The reasons owners refuse to pay property taxes are generally reducible to the fact that the property is no longer worth owning and can't be profitably sold.

While city ownership of abandoned property is a day to day burden on public resources, location of this land and so many very marginally utilized properties within cities in quantity should be viewed as developable land and so, as a resource. Cities should make the movement of land into the hands of private developers for rapid redevelopment within the structure of the city's plan a high priority.

Cities can reform their land use bureaucracies in ways that facilitate movement of land back into productive use. Part of such a strategy would be to assemble and make readily available information on properties within the city. Cities can also streamline their development approval processes, assemble and aggressively market large parcels of land, et cetera. Regardless of the specific mechanics, cities must take the initiative to facilitate the redevelopment of abandoned and marginal properties by all reasonable means. States should help cities with legislation allowing the efficient clearance of titles.<sup>11</sup>

### Central Urban Demolition and Site Clean-Up:

Many developers do not feel they can make a profit building in distressed central cities because of the physical barriers that make development there so expensive. Governments at all levels could re-balance the structure of metropolitan investment decision making through programs to fund and administer derelict demolition and site cleanup -- including the removal of obsolete infrastructure and any necessary site decontamination. State environmental bond funds have been used for this purpose. More money is required as today, sadly, demolition may be as critical a component of urban development as construction once was. These policies include brownfield industrial redevelopment.

Derelict demolition and site clean up are expensive. Most cities can afford to renew only a fraction of the land within their boundaries that requires it. Federal and State governments should consider demolition, site clearance, and infrastructure removal funding as critical to sustainable metropolitan development. The need for such policies is not limited to the "rust belt" and will accelerate in "new" cities in the South and West. If we wish to balance private development decisions, then public development expenditures should also be balanced. From an economic system perspective, there is no reason why derelict demolition and infrastructure redevelopment should not be a regional, state, and federal priority at least as important as new infrastructure construction.

### Eliminating Hidden Development Costs:

If development costs in cities are unreasonably high, they are artificially low in the suburban frontier owing to hidden subsidies to developers and the externalization of costs by developers. Hidden subsidies include the funding of expressway ramps and access roads, new school construction, and other physical investments that Federal and state governments often

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<sup>11</sup> For a thorough policy analysis in this area see "A Comprehensive Housing Policy for the City of Detroit" prepared by graduate students at the Wayne State University Department of Geography and Urban Planning.

make to meet the needs of suburban expansion. Such subsidies are the target the smart growth policies discussed above.

Hidden subsidies for homeowners and businesses are also written into various tax codes including generous corporate depreciation allowances for abandoned facilities and mortgage interest payment deductibility. Perhaps more serious is the fact that developers and corporations can externalize much of the long-term costs of development. These include increased traffic and other burdens on public infrastructures and the environment. They also include the eventual abandonment of land and facilities.

If we assume that a metropolitan region is a market system, to maximize efficiency ways should be found to require those who develop greenfield sites to pay full freight for that development. One way would be to require such developers to pay an amount proportional to the scale of the particular development into public accounts reserved for the marketing, clearance, or adaptive reuse of abandoned properties. Abandonment is really just another form of dumping that leaves land scarred and expensive to redevelop and is a huge externalization of costs that municipalities and their residents should not have to pay.

The question is not whether governments will continue to affect and subsidize development decisions, it is whether they will do so in ways that encourage efficient and sustainable development decisions.

### Community Development Corporations:

Community development corporations (CDCs) acquire funding and function in dynamic ways to bring affordable housing, business incubators, small business loans, retail services, adult education and vocational training services, public services and infrastructure improvements, et cetera to distressed central city neighborhoods. CDCs may or may not have roots in the church but they usually work together with churches and other community-level groups to accomplish community ends. CDCs also work with corporations and governments to forge community investment deals.

CDCs have transformed large portions of New York's South Bronx from scenes reminiscent of post war Dresden into rows of modest owner-occupied town houses surrounded by trees, lawns, and gardens. Creative ways must be considered to foster and facilitate CDCs in distressed central cities because of their ability to respond to a wide range of problems, their cost-effectiveness, and because they build community infrastructures as they build housing, jobs, and services.

- **Regional Cooperation.**

### Regional Transit Authorities:

- *Policy:* Regional transit authorities (RTAs) are public authorities that assess regional transit needs and build and operate bus services, commuter rail, subway or trolley systems, specialized ambulatory services such as senior citizen shuttles and point to point transportation for handicapped persons, other programs. RTAs may regulate taxicab and private commuter transportation services. The range of RTA activities depends on their mandate. RTAs are governed by boards that represent the interests of participating municipalities and counties. RTA policy makers are representative of the service region and are generally included in state, local, and regional transportation planning processes.
- *Requirements:* RTAs must be incorporated by their state and may require complementary enabling legislation. However, as they are independent authorities, they require little additional government infrastructure.
- *Analysis:* Regional transit authorities can be central components of broader efforts to maximize the efficiency and functionality of a metropolitan area. RTAs can reduce traffic congestion and make getting around a metropolitan region easier for everyone. Most importantly, they help residents transcend boundaries to opportunities and so alleviate much of the inequity caused by residential segregation. RTAs make cities more competitive as they alleviate congestion. Because they benefit from economies of scale, they promise superior transit services at reduced costs. RTAs are critical to confronting inequities, segregation and inefficiencies in metropolitan America. They can also be considered first steps towards building meaningful inter-municipal cooperation.

### Regional Cooperation and Shared Services:

RTAs may be the form of intermunicipal cooperation most critical to resolving metropolitan inequities and other problems caused by sprawl, but they are not alone. Regional leaders should consider the gamut of local government services and identify those that might benefit from regionalization. Service cooperation reduces government costs and disparities between municipalities. In so doing, they increase the efficiency and competitiveness of a region as they decrease the intermunicipal disparities that drive sprawl and inequity. Unfortunately, because such policies can be looked upon as redistributive, they may encounter stiff opposition. They may also be opposed by unions and others vested in the present fragmented service structure. As Lyke Thompson at Wayne State University suggests, metropolitan reformers may best begin with efforts towards non-redistributive intermunicipal

cooperation.<sup>12</sup> At the very least, service cooperation can help build the trust between local officials that is prerequisite to coordinated regional development. State and Federal governments can encourage regional cooperation and consolidation through a range of incentives.

## **Building a Context for Cooperation and Reform:**

### Building Metropolitan Identity in Place:

Metropolitan regions are most accurately thought of as interconnected societies with shared histories. Unfortunately, the metropolitan perspective has weakened relative to perceived inter-municipal and inter-group differences. This has happened as groups of people have become divided geographically. The waning of the metropolitan perspective in favor of more parochial views represents the beginnings of political balkanization.

It is critical for regions to build metropolitan identities. One way to contribute to this is to invest in the preservation and restoration of the symbols that bind a region together. This may mean downtown revitalization and historic preservation.

The re-vitalization of long-neglected urban centers can rekindle regional identity if downtowns are made attractive as regular meeting places and hosts to events of metropolitan significance. A shared identity, though frequently overlooked, is a critical component of the metropolitan policy context. Only pride in a regional identity can begin to soften perspectives that would perceive reforms as efforts to help one group at another's expense. Metropolitan identities are not just the product of a healthy regional environment, they are essential to it and should be pursued as goals in themselves.

Regional identities can be strengthened through education and public discourse also. Regardless of how it is pursued, the strengthening of metropolitan identity will require leadership by respected and important figures in the metropolitan area including mayors, county executives, church leaders, business executives, and other authorities.

### Substantive Understandings of Land Use Planning and Development:

Policy makers who plan, regulate, or build in ways that impact land use must be sensitive to the effects of their decisions on communities and quality of life. It is not adequate to take "the engineering approach" to what are, in fact, human problems. Housing and transportation, for

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<sup>12</sup> See Lyke Thompson's "The Interlaced Metropolis in Layered Networks and Confederations in the Detroit Urbanized Area."

example, are essentially human instruments that, if not constructed with sensitivity to human needs, can have disastrous consequences.

The technocratic approach to transportation planning is one example. Traditionally, transportation planners would assess regional transportation needs by observing transportation use patterns. When traffic congestion was identified on a highway, the solution was to enhance the road's capacity or build an additional road to handle the flow. Planners and others have since noticed that the result of new roads in the suburbs is usually the need for more of them ad infinitum. In a highly destructive and very expensive example of the principle of "if you build it they will come" new roads generate traffic as they attract ever more people to the suburbs.

If the end of our society was to universalize suburban living and dependence on automobiles, endless highway construction would seem more rational. However, such is neither desirable, sustainable, nor the intent of most past transportation planning.

Transportation planners failed in so far as they neglected substantive understandings of metropolitan economic, social, and community structures. When a broader range of information is taken considered, framed by a complex understanding of transportation's place in metropolitan systems, the answer to congested roads might be commuter trains, safe, clean, and convenient urban mass transit, suburban bus and train park and ride terminals, urban road repair, inner ring suburban redevelopment, along with the occasional new or expanded suburban road.

Transportation is only one area of policy making that should be should be informed by a richer conception of metropolitan needs. Other policy areas that must be sensitive to substantive relationships include housing policies, infrastructure and service investments, all forms of land use planning, et cetera.

Making our planning decisions reflect human needs will require a stronger discourse on sustainability and the relationships between planning, prosperity, and substantive quality of life; on an ongoing discourse among policy makers of all levels of government and structures such as regional planning authorities that can embody regional interests.

State mandates and planning coordination can be critical to ensuring that policies affecting land use are considered as investments in sustainable development. Many of the policies above, particularly those that involve regional planning structures, involve these sorts of statewide planning and development mandates. States where agencies are required to be sensitive to metropolitan development when planning new investments include New Jersey, Maryland, and Oregon. New federal policies increase funds for urban mass transit and require more extensive community

input and impact reviews for all types of federally funded transportation projects. The department of Housing and Urban Development's program legislation and administrative emphasis have also changed to include greater sensitivity to community needs as the understanding of housing as a social and community issue has grown.

### **Reforming Federal Policies:**

While sprawl and related problems at first appear to be local issues, they are national problems in that America's economic well being, cultural and intellectual development, and political process are increasingly structured in the major metropolitan areas that are now home to most of us.

Because local governments are the exclusive creatures of the states, the Federal Government lacks authority to impose local land-use decisions. However, the national government may find ways to encourage regionalization of government and services through funding incentives as well as educational efforts. Beyond this, federal policies must be structured such that expenditures and tax policies favor efficient, equitable metropolitan and sustainable development. The new Federal transportation and housing policy agendas discussed above are good starts.

Efficient and integrated metropolitan areas are the engines of national prosperity, healthy cultural development, and political health. As such they should be considered throughout the national policy agenda. That metropolitan areas have not been included as such at once has generated the sprawl and inequity that we face today as it reflects the weakness of metropolitan identities. The voice of metropolitan America should be heard in Washington but it will not be until metropolitan regions begin to build their own identities and agendas.

### **Counterproductive Responses to Sprawl:**

The options presented above are among the most actively discussed today. There are additional approaches to sprawl and inequity that could complement them, and so open discussions of metropolitan reform should continue. There are, however, some policies that may preserve the rural aesthetic of the suburban frontier but do not really control sprawl. Indeed, some would force development densities lower as they spread development thinly or leapfrog it across space. These policies include large lot zoning, open space or cluster zoning, and the interspersing of small nature preserves or farmland set-asides between suburban developments.

Very large lot zoning preserves open space between houses in the outer suburbs and so helps to maintain a rural feel in what are in fact suburbs. Aside from the negative impacts that such development undoubtedly has on community, large

lot zoning does nothing to resolve inequities and decreases the environmental and economic efficiencies of metropolitan areas.

In cluster zoning, developers compress the number of residential properties that would normally fill a tract of land into some portion of that space. Private lots are made smaller and houses are positioned close together leaving large portions of the development tract empty. Such development does reduce the cost of extending certain services to residences somewhat and preserves open land between tracts of houses.<sup>13</sup> While these may result in small environmental and aesthetic benefits, the metropolitan region as a whole is not made more compact. Most of the costs to economic efficiency and the environment that are associated with traditional zoning practices are also associated with cluster zoning. Cluster zoning does nothing to balance metropolitan inequities or ameliorate the various dimensions of residential segregation that are balkanizing our metropolitan regions.

Municipalities may set aside dispersed tracts of open land for environmental preserves or farmland by purchasing land or development rights. These policies do nothing to balance structural forces that are creating inefficient sprawl, segregation, and metropolitan inequities.

These policies will appeal to those whose concerns with sprawl end with their desire to preserve the rural feel of the suburban frontier. They may preserve the property value and quality of life advantages enjoyed in these areas but they will not have metropolitan-wide benefits.

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<sup>13</sup> See SEMCOG's "Fiscal Impacts of Alternative Land Development Patterns in Michigan."

## THE CONTEXT OF REFORM IN THE DETROIT REGION

Before a reform agenda can be determined, the context within which it must be pursued and implemented has been considered. In the Detroit region, the policy environment is complex.

### **The Material and Economic Policy Context of Detroit Area Metropolitan Reform:**

Physical and economic conditions of the Detroit area reflect imbalances driving sprawl and inequity and limit the potential effectiveness or feasibility of regional policy options. Following is an introduction to the material and economic contexts of metropolitan reform.

#### Sprawl is an Accomplished Fact in the Region:

Long ago, the Detroit region missed the opportunity to ensure a compact and efficient future through managed development such as that which has been so successful in Oregon. Much of the region is locked in inefficient low-density land use patterns.

Suburban development beyond Detroit began in earnest following World War II as the City filled and development spilled over its borders. The development of suburban land to serve a growing population and prosperous economy was soon joined by sprawl. The exodus of people from the urban core that began as a trickle in the 1950s turned into a flood in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s. Since the 1950s, the City has lost nearly half of its population, which approached two million. As a result, much of the region's land consumption stems from decentralization of the region's population.

According to the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments, SEMCOG, low-density land consumption is projected to continue through to the year 2020. Currently, 33 percent of the region's 2,949,100 acres is developed. If the additional 243,000 acres of land that SEMCOG predicts will be consumed between 1995 and 2020 are developed, 41 percent of the region's land will be developed by that year.<sup>14</sup>

Such figures may underrepresent the magnitude of consumption in so far as they count open spaces that have been leapfrogged by construction as undeveloped. Anyone who tries to drive to the country in the Detroit region will find that it takes many miles to reach extensive tracts of land unblemished by development.

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<sup>14</sup> See SEMCOG's "Land Use and Development in Southeast Michigan."

SEMCOG projects that 43 percent of the land likely to be consumed by development between 1995 and 2020 will go to accommodating population growth. However, the continued shrinkage of average household size will consume another 29 percent of the projected 234,000 acres. Businesses will consume 14 percent of this land.

To say that so many hundreds of thousands of acres will likely be developed to hold the region's growing number of households is not to say that this must be the case. SEMCOG assumes that present development patterns will continue. These patterns are wasteful.

Much of the land consumption in the Detroit region may be attributable to surplus construction. SEMCOG projects that while the area population will increase about one-half of one percent each year, the number of housing units constructed annually will add roughly one percent to the region's stock. This adds up to a massive waste of land. While the region's population will increase in this period by about 15 percent, developed acreage will increase by over 30 percent. This will occur within a context of extensive abandonment in the Region's core.

The over-production of housing is a continuing process the results of which are striking:

| <b>Authorized New Housing Units and Demolitions</b> |                         |                 |                  |                 |
|---|-------------------------|-----------------|------------------|-----------------|
| Jurisdiction  | New Single Family Units | Total New Units | Units Demolished | Net Total Units |
| <b>1997</b>   |                         |                 |                  |                 |
| Oakland   | 5,541                   | 6,934           | 378              | 6,556           |
| Macomb  | 4,116                   | 5,194           | 156              | 5,038           |
| Out-Wayne   | 2,695                   | 3,807           | 419              | 3,338           |
| Detroit   | 68                      | 95              | 4,838            | -4,734          |
| <b>1996</b>   |                         |                 |                  |                 |
| Oakland   | 5,951                   | 7,176           | 424              | 6,752           |
| Macomb  | 4,155                   | 5,496           | 156              | 5,340           |
| Out-Wayne   | 2,734                   | 4,052           | 366              | 3,686           |
| Detroit   | 35                      | 86              | 8,432            | -8,346          |

Source: SEMCOG's "Residential Construction in Southeast Michigan 1997."

These trends continued in 1998 when new residential construction permit issues reached a twenty-year high with permits for 25,870 units issued for all SEMCOG counties. While the number of permits issued in Detroit rose to 316, these did not compensate for the nearly 4,500 units that were demolished there last year.<sup>15</sup>

These are only the latest of a decades long trend. What is happening in the fringes of the region today began in what are now the inner suburbs in the fifties. The wake of sprawl is advancing on those same older suburbs as the relative value of their housing declines and their populations begin to fall. (See Figure 3.)

SEMCOG shows permitting activity by county subdivision. The ring of townships and cities at the suburban frontier account for the lion's share of new housing construction.<sup>16</sup> Figure 6 is a xerographic copy of SEMCOG maps showing permitting activity by locality.<sup>17</sup> Municipalities enjoying high levels of growth and those that Myron Orfield has identified as among the region's favored are frequently the same.<sup>18</sup>

When sprawl is understood for what occurs behind it, we can see that decay at the region's center is the wake of the sprawl wave. (See again Figure 5 for a graphic representation of this wave.) Growth of the distressed urban core across space should not be viewed as the expansion of poverty and decay into otherwise solid neighborhoods causing their

<sup>15</sup> From a SEMCOG news release dated May 14, 1999.

<sup>16</sup> See SEMCOG's "Residential Construction in Southeast Michigan 1997."

<sup>17</sup> This map is *not* reproduced with the permission of SEMCOG and is included here for the convenience of the Archdiocese only. See "Residential Construction in Southeast Michigan 1997."

<sup>18</sup> See Myron Orfield's "Detroit Metropolitcs: A Regional Agenda for Community Stability."

demise, but rather as the removal of resources and people from those areas inexorably towards the fringes. Decline is not pushing out, it is being pulled.

The physical reality of sprawl in the Detroit region is striking and must be considered when weighing reform options. Unfortunately, the region has already become severely distended as the tentacles of sprawl continue to clutch and grope, relentlessly expanding the suburban frontier. Though it would be difficult to define a growth boundary a la Portland under such circumstances, there is much room for creative policy making. Ways must be considered to make future development more efficient and to make what has already been constructed more functional for all of the region's residents. Another fact that will have to be considered is the abandonment and under-utilization of land and facilities at the urban core. Central urban redevelopment will be essential to increasing the efficiency and equity of metropolitan land-use patterns.

#### The Region's Transportation Infrastructure is Inequitable, Inefficient, and Dysfunctional:

Inefficient development is encouraged by, and has serious consequences for, the area's transportation infrastructure. Highways constitute the bulk of the region's transportation system and were constructed to serve low-density development. Since, the region has become almost completely dependent upon automobile transportation over a massive expressway web that cuts great gashes through the City and older suburbs. Supplementing this system are Herculean boulevards that radiate from the City.

But the system, as massive as it is, is groaning under the strain of ever increasing automobile usage over wider ranges of space. As the system becomes more congested and inefficient, it acts as a drain on personal and metropolitan productivity. Simply put, time and money spent creeping along expressways in cars is not spent doing more productive or rewarding things. The inadequacy of the region's transportation system takes its toll on motorists who are frustrated by lengthy, dangerous, noxious, and slow commutes. Drivers, fed up with the daily theft of their time, safety, and peace of mind, have broken down into murderous fits of road rage. Road rage short of this is not uncommon in the region and signifies the dysfunction of the transportation system and its affect on the mental health of its victims.

Road rage should be taken as a symptom of the inhumanity of the region's transportation system the answer to which must be more than a call for responsible behavior or stiffer policing and penalties. The transportation system itself must be held responsible.

The region failed to build a commuter rail system that could have served compact and integrated development and provided efficient rapid transportation of huge numbers of people. These systems, enjoyed in many areas, increase the productivity and livability of a region enormously as they reduce pressure on highways.

More pathetic still, the Detroit region stands out among America's major metropolitan areas for its lack of a regional transit system. Lack of comprehensive public transit services delivered by a regional transit authority (RTA) means that as people, services, and wealth move farther out, those left behind in the central urban portions of the region are isolated from diverse contacts and material opportunities. Detroit's failure here has attracted national attention.<sup>19</sup>

Many in the suburbs suffer too. The young, the elderly, the handicapped, and others who cannot drive a car do not live independently in the suburbs. As many grow older, they live in fear of losing their cars and, with them, the freedoms that give their life pleasure, convenience, and dignity. In the suburbs, life without a car is life without the fullest rights of metropolitan citizenship. Citizenship is visibly reduced when seniors and others are removed from regular housing to special needs housing (such as senior apartment complexes) simply because access to basic services and resources in the auto dependent suburbs is denied them. More traditional urban neighborhoods that include a variety of housing types, proximity to services, and access to numerous transportation options are healthier places to live in part because they allow all of their residents a greater range of support, independence, and dignity.

The region's transportation system drives sprawl. Because the only regionally viable means of personal transportation is by private car, residents and businesses have an interest in attempting to escape congestion and maintain their access to services by moving ever farther out. Here, the mode of transportation we use favors low density development patterns not just because it makes them possible, but because it makes high density development so problematic. Automobiles require a lot of space. If we refuse other options, we make the low-density dispersion of housing, employment, and services seem like the most functional development and we make denser urban centers obsolete. Anyone who has tried to drive to Greek Town on a busy Saturday night understands the incompatibility of high-density development and automobiles.

Detroit's expressways became enormous pumps that drained jobs, services, residents, and opportunities from the urban core. While many of the region's residents might like occupied downtowns, vibrant street life, and historic neighborhoods that invite you to take a stroll, safer and

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<sup>19</sup> See Robyn Meredith's "Jobs Out of Reach for Detroiters Without Wheels."

functional urban areas, and easy commutes, these things require access to more transportation choices than the Detroit area allows.

Bringing diversity and efficiency to the region's transportation infrastructure is critical to long-term competitiveness, to transcending place-based inequities, and to making higher density development closer to the center of the metropolitan region more feasible. Unfortunately, like other structural problems, the region's transit system gives many an apparent interest in it as it distributes the goods of metropolitan life unequally.

The failure of the Detroit region to build an effective transit system, or even to coordinate its weak sub-systems, is a political failure. The region's "Big Four" leaders have repeatedly failed to reach an agreement on a regional transit system. While it is difficult to say for sure why this is the case, their inability to initiate effective cooperation seems to reflect political divisions fragmenting the region. Many of Detroit's white suburbanites may see a regional transit system as a subsidy for the City of Detroit and its residents as they would comprise a majority of the system's ridership. America's anti-urban bias is expressed when transit subsidies are looked upon as handouts but roads are seen as rights.

Worse is the desire many in the suburbs may feel to preserve the de facto segregation that the region's transit "system" structures. While the City enjoys excellent bus service, riders who wish to travel to the suburbs by bus frequently must get off City busses and walk significant distances to start their long wait for a SMART (Southeastern Michigan Transportation Authority) bus. The SMART system is neither comprehensive nor convenient and its failure to meet Detroit's DDOT (Detroit Department of Transportation) busses on a regular schedule at shared stops is probably not coincidental. The minutes and hours that the disjunction between these systems add to commutes from city to suburb have their effect in reduced visits to those suburbs by Detroit's residents.

Many suburban residents and business owners may not want Detroit's bus riders, who are disproportionately black and have lower incomes, to have easy access to their suburbs. On the other side of the region, some may see an interest in preserving the City's bus system and its employees' independence from a larger regional structure. But, change is imperative.

### Individual Interest in Fragmentation and Sprawl:

Systemic sprawl works in part because it allows or recreates conditions favorable to it. Economic decisions determine a region's development and are conceived as rational. Economic rationality can be defined at the individual and group levels however. From the group level, here the perspective of the region as a whole, the most rational development would be compact, integrated, and efficient. Though in the long run,

everyone benefits when area development decisions are made according to system imperatives, the economic rationality that predominates in the Detroit region is that of the parochial and the individual.

As discussed above, large metropolitan regions, particularly in the North, became divided into scores of municipalities as suburban residents sought protection from central city annexation. As a consequence, the political structure most conducive to the metropolitan perspective, a city government comprehensive of the region, was lost. Since the fragmentation of metropolitan regions into so many municipalities, the interests of local government have become, by definition, parochial. Municipalities in a fragmented region are likely to view their interests as either unrelated to those of others or, worse, as in opposition or competition with them. This is manifest when municipalities bid against each other for zero-sum prizes such as a company's headquarters. However, examples of destructive parochialism can be more mundane, such as directing development in ways that garner most of its advantages within the municipality while directing most of the costs, such as increased traffic, through neighboring localities.

Descent of the area into parochial governance gives persons an interest in using municipalities as means of selecting a place to live or invest in. As these decisions aggregate, the region becomes highly differentiated by locality with some municipalities known as wealthy suburbs, some as distressed cities, others as threatened working class suburbs, et cetera. Continued differentiation divides municipalities and residents into groups of winners and losers.<sup>20</sup>

While class, wealth, race, sex and other factors have long been associated with opportunity in American society, now place structures opportunities. All personal factors being equal, a child born in Highland Park is far less likely to succeed as fully as a child born in Rochester Hills. Classes are not just separated by place; *place now determines opportunities normally associated with class*. Individuals lucky enough to be on the winning side of the fence will not relinquish their apparent advantage readily. They see far too much to lose.

Intermunicipal fragmentation does more than structure inequity, it generates sprawl. Residents and other investors have an interest in locating where property values are expected to rise and where business is expected to be good and getting better. The call of accelerated profits and fat property value appreciation itself drives the wave of suburban sprawl. Those who can are chasing that wave and so constantly pushing the suburban frontier farther and faster across successive municipalities. Municipalities that were developed by the wave in the seventies are yesterday's news and those that were developed in the fifties are places to get out of fast. Figures 3 and 4 show decade to decade changes in

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<sup>20</sup> See again, Weiher's *Fractured Metropolis*.

property values and incomes indicating the wave effect illustrated in Figure 5.

Riding the wave (which only sustains it), fleeing its wake, and the interest advantaged persons have in spatial inequity are serious challenges to reform. Overcoming these will require policies that reduce or remove the perverse incentives driving sprawl and inequity. New policies that cause the metropolitan view to be represented and considered when individual, corporate, and public development decisions are being made are also required. Citizens must be educated about the wave of development and its destructive nature. Reformers must understand, however, that many perceive a deep interest in inequity.

### Equity Imbalance and Interest Polarization:

One might hope to win redistributive reforms by forging a coalition between the region's central cities and its moderate-income inner-ring suburbs that are increasingly on the losing end of the sprawl wave. Such a coalition might comprise a majority capable of effecting tax revenue redistribution or some other inter-municipal equity program against the narrowly defined interests of the advantaged municipalities.

While cooperation between Detroit and its neighbors will be essential, an us-versus-them urban/inner-suburban alliance for redistribution would likely fail. This is partly for material reasons. While it is true that the region includes municipalities that represent the range of economic health, the region's localities are divided by a deep chasm that separates highly distressed central cities from the others. Most of Detroit's inner-ring suburbs and their residents are much better off than the City and its distressed sisters. There are municipalities in transition whose conditions range between the very distressed central cities and the inner-ring working class suburbs of the region, but they do not have large populations.

The imbalance is illustrated in Figure 7. The best Census measure of a municipality's residents' income is median household income. I have recalculated 1989 median household incomes reported by the Bureau for Detroit area municipalities. I show these figures as percentages of the metropolitan region's 1989 median household income. I call this indicator a municipality's *proportional household income*. Graph A in figure 7 shows the distribution of municipalities by ten percentage point increments of proportional household income. The 20 percent range, for instance, includes all municipalities (here only Highland Park) that have a median household incomes of at least 20% of the metropolitan figure but less than 30%.

Graph A shows a normal distribution of municipalities by proportional household income. Here, most municipalities enjoy median household

incomes that are in the ballpark of the area's median household income (100 on this graph). If municipalities were the only constituents that mattered, one could imagine an effective coalition between all of the municipalities with proportional household incomes of less than, say, 120. Such a group would represent a majority interest that could effectively support intermunicipal redistribution against the wealthier suburbs.

Municipalities and their leaders are not the most important constituents however, residents are. Graph B on the same figure shows total numbers of residents living in the respective municipalities arranged in graph A. Comparison between the two graphs shows that while municipalities are arranged normally by income, persons in the area are not distributed normally among those municipalities. There is a significant cluster of residents living in municipalities with distressed household incomes (mostly residents of Detroit), another cluster living in municipalities with average incomes, and a well spread distribution of persons across the region's higher income municipalities. The residents of the City and its distressed companions comprise a significant portion of the region's population and are living in much poorer places than are the next group of the region's residents, those living in municipalities where most of the residents earn average incomes.

Figure 8 lists all of the region's municipalities included in these figures by population, median household income, and proportional (percent) metropolitan household income. This table shows the income chasm between the region's distressed places and its inner-ring suburbs. The problem is further illustrated in Figure 9. This map shows area municipalities color scaled by median household income. Each municipality is marked by a dot indicating its population. We can see that the distribution of income and population militates against a majority interest association with Detroit.

Property values are also distributed inequitably. The Census collects a number of residential property value indicators. The one that best reflects overall residential housing prices within a municipality is the median specified owner occupied property value. The developing, buying, selling, and abandoning that result from perceived and expected property market conditions and trends are part of the sprawl wave that advances through time and space. A municipality and its residents do not want to be on the wrong side of the present and future property value balance. Figure 14 illustrates the geographic dispersion of residential property values in the region, showing the concentration of low values in the region's center and progressively rising values towards the suburban frontier.

Figure 10 compares municipalities by 1990 property values. Here, median specified owner occupied house values are calculated as percentages of the metropolitan figure. I call this indicator a municipality's *relative market position*. The distribution of municipalities by relative market position illustrated in graph A, unlike their distribution by income, is not normal.

There is a strong cluster of municipalities with property values ranging from 70 to about 110 or 120 percent of the metropolitan figure.

If municipalities were constituents, we might imagine a strong interest coalition between all of the localities with property values at or below 110 percent. Again, however, voters are the most critical constituents and when we look at the distribution of residents by the market positions of their municipalities, we see a large number of residents living in municipalities with very low property values. This is where Detroit is. Above that, the residents of the region are distributed widely across a range of municipal market positions.

It is hard to see how the residents of the region's middling suburbs will find much common ground with the residents of Detroit. Indeed, if one looks at either of these sets of graphs as indicating the balance of need versus resources in the region, it is difficult to see how residents of more advantaged municipalities could be convinced that metropolitan resources are sufficient to resurrect Detroit without severely taxing the suburbs. While a majority of municipalities may back tax-base sharing or some other inter-municipal redistribution, a majority of residents probably won't.

- *Comparing Detroit to Other Regions.*

Material interest divisions in the region should be appreciated in a comparative light. Minneapolis - St. Paul enjoys an effective tax-base sharing program. However, there are important distinctions between that region and the Detroit area. The Detroit region's 1989 median household income at \$34,612 was the seventh highest for any of the 17 largest metropolitan areas in the North. It was bested by the Minneapolis - St. Paul area, which enjoyed a 1989 median household income of \$36,365. Detroit's household income was third from the lowest for any central city of the sample however. Cleveland, with a median household income of \$17,833, beat Buffalo and Detroit's \$18,742 for that miserable distinction. Minneapolis - St. Paul combined, on the other hand, enjoyed a central city household income at \$27,354, so high that it beat the Pittsburgh *region's* figure.

The distribution of income in the Detroit area is highly inequitable. Disparity between the City's median household income and the region's is massive. Figure 11 compares central city and metropolitan median household incomes for the Northeast and Midwest's 17 largest metropolitan areas. The comparison shows that the City of Detroit's household income represents only 54 percent of the regional figure. The city to regional income ratio for Detroit is nearly the worst of this sample. Hartford Connecticut beats Detroit with slightly greater disparity. The

Minneapolis - St. Paul region enjoys a much healthier ratio of 74.8. This puts the Twin Cities region near the top in terms of income distribution.<sup>21</sup>

Detroit's position vis a vis its region appears even more sharply disadvantaged when we look at property values. The 1990 median specified owner occupied house value for the City of Detroit was \$25,600. With a metropolitan value of \$68,300, house values in the City represented only 37.5 percent of those for the region as a whole. This puts the Detroit region in last place in a comparison of city / metropolitan house value ratios for the 17 largest metropolitan areas of the North. Pittsburgh's city to metropolitan house value ratio, the next worst at 49 percent, beat Detroit's by more than ten points. Minneapolis - St. Paul enjoyed a far healthier ratio of 84.3 percent, which indicates it enjoys one of the most equitable distributions of property values in the North. (See Figure 12.)

The inequitable distribution of wealth across Detroit space is part of the system imbalance plaguing the region. This imbalance reflects a long process of residential dispersion across space that has concentrated poverty in the central cities, wealth in specific outer suburbs, and spread working and middle class residents across middling suburbs that are more or less unstable and in danger of slipping into the wake of sprawl. This dispersion over time and space, illustrated in the sprawl wave schematic in figure 5, is further quantified in figures 3 and 4 discussed above.

The magnitude and acceleration of regional inequities must be confronted. Unfortunately, the severity of these conditions militates against their own solution as they polarize interests into those of the haves and have-nots. Though strong arguments for inter-municipal redistribution, regional inequities work against the political marketability of such programs. As a consequence, a broader range of policies will have to be considered in the Detroit area.

### Booming Regional Economy:

The region's economy is booming. This is reflected in the 20 year high in housing starts cited above. As a consequence, the region is enjoying its lowest unemployment rates in 30 years.<sup>22</sup> Economic health is also reflected in increased assessed property values across the region.<sup>23</sup> The prosperity, however, is not equitably distributed. The City of Detroit suffers unemployment rates higher than those for the rest of the region do and the city continues to lose jobs, residents, and housing. The city's higher unemployment rates are partly due to lower average levels of

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<sup>21</sup> New York City's very high central city to metropolitan median household income ration should be understood in light of the fact that the City of New York comprises almost all of the New York Primary Metropolitan Statistical Area as defined by the Bureau of the Census.

<sup>22</sup>See Jeff Gerritt's "City Trails Suburbs in Finding Work."

<sup>23</sup> "See Community by Community Assessments" in the Detroit Free Press, January 29, 1999.

education and job training / work place readiness among Detroit's residents, but they are also likely due to the inequitable distribution of jobs in the region. Jobs, like people, are pushing towards the suburban frontier.<sup>24</sup>

It is ironic that while prosperity puts the region in a good position to confront inequities, urban problems, and sprawl, it masks the severity of these imbalances and their cost. Insofar as the present boom causes surplus construction on the suburban frontier, it will exacerbate these problems. Getting the region's residents to care about land consumption might be possible now; getting them to care about inequity in the face of so much prosperity may be more difficult.

In sum: The region suffers barriers to efficient and equitable development that reinforces parochial and individual level decisions against the interests of the region as a whole.

### **Fragmentation and Racial Division in Detroit: The Political Context of Metropolitan Reform:**

The inequitable distribution of goods within the region gives individuals and municipalities apparent interests in division and disparity. These interests are essentially political. However, political actions are affected by more than material interests. Following is a discussion of the region's political structure beyond material interest structuring relevant to reform.

#### The Political Context of Reform:

- *Statewide policy context:* Any effective approach to balancing the region towards efficient and equitable development will require state legislation. The fact that real reform requires a statewide policy majority must give reformers pause. Although the region comprises a large portion of the state, a majority of legislative representatives must be convinced of and given an interest in metropolitan reform. Reform also cannot afford a governor's opposition and would benefit greatly from active executive support. These factors may limit the range of viable options. They will certainly require the inclusion of a broad range of interests and help determine strategy.
- *Political Parochialism:* Just as there are parochial economic perspectives that must be overcome, so are there limited political interests. The division of metropolitan governance into so many municipalities distributes the goods of our political society inequitably. Those goods range from public services, to education, protection, representation, and

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<sup>24</sup> See again Gerrit's "City Trails Suburbs."

justice itself. The process of fragmentation was driven in part by the desire of advantaged groups to maintain their independence. Unfortunately, just as many perceive economic interests in division, many see their municipalities as forums in which they can effectively compete for advantage or are otherwise protected by a favorable local majority.

Perhaps the most critical component of any political competition is defining the field of contest. Those who feel that the voice they have in their own municipality would be drowned in a regional policy arena will oppose measures such as regional planning agencies and, perhaps, service delivery authorities such as RTAs. Some regional political structure must be established, however, if metropolitan interests are to become a regular component of the decisions that affect balance and efficiency in development.

- *City/Suburban Political Division:* Area politics are not just fragmented into scores of local concerns. The region's political structure is also defined by a city versus suburb dichotomy that pits Detroit and its distressed satellites against the region's residential suburbs.

Although there are political differences between the region's suburbs, they never seem to add up to those between the City of Detroit and its residential suburbs. Political polarization threatens to interpret reform in a City versus suburb light. When political issues are reduced as such, Detroit loses. Metropolitan reformers will have to avoid such divisive issue definition.

We know that a rather deep political chasm exists between the City of Detroit and its residential suburbs by reports in the region's newspapers that chronicle years of competition and hostility between regional leaders. Division is further manifest in instances where suburban leaders attempt to distance their municipalities from the City. Perhaps the most crass example of this in recent years was the renaming of East Detroit to East Pointe.

Lyke Thompson, a political scientist at Wayne State University, conducted an exhaustive study that identifies every inter-municipal cooperative agreement, by type and level of government, throughout the region.<sup>25</sup> The results are striking. The region is covered by an interlaced web of intermunicipal cooperative agreements of all kinds. These networks, essential to reducing costs while increasing the efficiency, effectiveness, and surety of local services, are shared among cliques of suburban municipalities that also happen to share social, economic, and demographic characteristics.

Intermunicipal service networks in the region begin with contacts between municipal leaders and often lead to further agreements. Sub-

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<sup>25</sup> See again Thompson's "The Interlaced Metropolis."

regional networks take on political meaning as participants discover common interests. Thompson finds, however, that Detroit, bordered by far more municipalities than any other city in the region, has almost no service arrangements with its neighbors. A major exception is the water system that the City operates on a fee for service basis.

Thompson shows that associations between political leaders are essential but leave the City out. Thompson recommends that Detroit's leaders seek ways to build non-redistributive arrangements with the City's neighbors.<sup>26</sup> Any serious reform will require relationships between the area's political leaders and other elites towards a broader vision of the region and its interests.

- *Popular City/Suburban Animosity:* Elites are not the only ones who must appreciate the need for reform; the public must also be convinced. This may be difficult as many suburban residents likely view the City's problems as the result of governmental incompetence compounded by the apathy of residents who should demand better. Suburban confidence in Detroit and its ability to manage basic municipal functions is low. The image of municipal failure is associated with scenes of a City that cannot plow its streets, that allows corrupt police officers to strip stolen and abandoned cars, that permits City pothole fillers to spend their days drinking liquor and urinating in people's yards, et cetera. News stories that graphically depict such events are not helpful to the cause of metropolitan cooperation and may not be proportional or responsible, but they are a real part of the suburban hostility towards Detroit.

For those interested in building an effective reform agenda, the fairness of suburban animosity towards the City or the true causes of Detroit's image are not nearly as important as the status of these as facts. As unpleasant or even offensive as these opinions and images may be, they are components of the policy context and will have to be confronted.

### Racial Division:

Confronting the divisions outlined above will be especially difficult given that they are informed by race. Detroit is one of the most racially divided areas in the nation. Douglas Massey and Nancy Denton have found that on five scales of black-white segregation, Detroit tops the nation's major metropolitan areas in two and ranks very high in the other three.<sup>27</sup> This division continues a pattern of segregation and marginalization that has defined the area for decades. Thomas Sugrue, in *The Origins of the Urban Crisis*, documents the maintenance of the color line in the City and the concentration of African Americans behind it for decades. According to

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<sup>26</sup>An exception to the lack of cooperation between Detroit and its suburbs may be Detroit's involvement in the management and redevelopment of Eight Mile Road, which it shares with numerous neighbors in two counties.

<sup>27</sup>See again Massey and Denton's *American Apartheid*, Page 77.

Sugrue, it was long term frustration with segregation and economic marginalization that resulted in the City's riots of 1967.

Unfortunately, the color line is still evident. In some ways, it is more deadly today as the region's racial boundaries are often coordinate with municipal lines. This is illustrated in Figure 1. Here, each dot represents 500 black residents. The dots are so densely packed in the City of Detroit and so infrequent in many of the City's bordering suburbs that their concentration effectively outlines much of the City. The boundary between Detroit and Warren is especially striking.

As Massey and Denton note, while there is nothing intrinsically wrong with African American cities, residential segregation by municipality opens residents to forms of private and public policy discrimination against cities that concentrate negative affects on residents and communities.<sup>28</sup> There are many examples of this kind of discrimination in Detroit, each of which makes life more expensive and difficult for Detroit's residents.<sup>29</sup>

Such inequities have cumulative affects that are devastating. Like other system imbalances, racial injustice across space in the Detroit region creates conditions favorable to more of the same. As places where most of the region's African Americans live are seen as distressed, negative place images are associated with residents and so counterproductive understandings of racial differences and the perceived interest in maintaining barriers are reinforced. Figure 13 illustrates how concentrations of black persons in the region coordinate with severe intermunicipal household income disparities, helping to associate African Americans with negative place.

Attitudinal surveys in the region evidence the racial divide. A few years ago, pollster Stanley Greenberg tested the political attitudes of Macomb County voters and found intense hostility towards Detroit, its African American residents, and policies perceived to serve them at the expense of white working-class citizens.<sup>30</sup> Greenberg confirms that at least some Detroit area suburban residents refract the political world through a lens that interprets domestic policies as benefiting or costing one racial group versus the other. Here, programs designed to assist distressed central cities and their residents are, essentially, benefits for undeserving blacks. Such racial hostility at once reinforces division and is caused by it.

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<sup>28</sup> See again Massey and Denton's *American Apartheid*.

<sup>29</sup> For a discussion of this sort of discrimination and other serious geographic inequities suffered by central urban residents, see the Wayne State University Department of Geography and Urban Planning's report titled *Impediments to Fair Housing* presented to the Detroit Department of Planning and Development. The Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN) documented severe discrimination against residents of the City of Detroit by the homeowners insurance industry in its 1992 report "A Policy of Discrimination?"

<sup>30</sup> See Stanley Greenberg's *Middle Class Dreams: The Politics and Power of the New American Majority*.

Lee Sigelman, Timothy Bledsoe, and Susan Welch recently conducted an extensive analysis of survey data for the Detroit region and found that racial segregation played a critical role in determining the quantity and quality of residents' cross-racial relationships and attitudes.<sup>31</sup> The authors find that the extensive childhood interracial associations that come from growing up in integrated neighborhoods are essential foundations for quality interracial relationships among adults. Unfortunately, relatively few Detroit area children grow up in highly integrated neighborhoods. As a consequence, substantial interracial friendships in the region are the exception.

These findings have critical significance to any analysis of the long-term sociopolitical impact of segregation. Racial separation has consequences that are more substantive than material inequity or the maldistribution of social goods. Racial segregation results in fewer possibilities for the cross-group associations that a fully democratic society requires. Integration, then, is critical to ensuring the cross connections that prevent deep and dangerous schisms in the American polity.

#### Distinct Constituencies:

Whether we look at race, income, property values, or social and political attitudes and choices, the Detroit area constitutes less a coherent sociopolitical system than it does an aggregation of distinct constituencies fragmented by place. The extent of the region's political fragmentation is indicated in election results for the state and geopolitical components of the area.

A look at national election returns for the region's municipalities over time shows that residents have become deeply divided politically across space. Since at least the 1960s to the present, central city voters have increasingly favored Democratic presidential candidates while the voters of localities that have become today's middle-class suburbs ever more strongly support Republican presidential candidates. Inner-ring suburban voters have switched their party voting wildly between Democratic and Republican presidential candidates from election to election. Central city voters, who supported Bill Clinton at a rate greater than 90 percent in the last presidential election, are extremely eccentric vis a vis the State and region as a whole.<sup>32</sup>

Eccentrically Democratic support is also reflected in the recent Gubernatorial race that elected John Engler to a third term as Governor in utter opposition to the wishes of Detroit voters. If we make the safe and simple assumption that differences between municipal returns for national

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<sup>31</sup> See Lee Sigelman, Timothy Bledsoe, and Susan Welch's "Making Contact? Black-White Social Interaction in an Urban Setting."

<sup>32</sup> See Rich Sauerzopf's "The Politics of Metropolitan Fragmentation: A Place Based Understanding of Electoral Structure in Metropolitan Detroit."

and state-wide candidates within a metropolitan region indicate different policy preferences and other more substantive political divisions, then the City of Detroit's voting residents must have very different political concerns from their neighbors in the region's middle class and inner-ring suburbs.

The fact that the City-suburban sociopolitical dichotomy defining the region is very deep and has serious racial undertones will be an enormous challenge to building an effective reform coalition. As Thomas Sugrue shows, suburbs such as Warren were peopled largely by whites fleeing black movement into their central city neighborhoods. Whites abandoned the City of Detroit in droves but drew lines in many suburbs that have held to this day. They may not easily give up divisions that they see as components of the race line. And, certainly, there is more than enough interracial animosity and distrust to go around. Suburban whites are not the only ones trapped by such limiting perspectives.

### Policy Structure:

Sprawl and inequity in the Detroit area are in part the harvest of a failed policy structure. There is no regional planning agency capable of exerting authority over local land use management and the State lacks a comprehensive development policy. Further, Michigan gives very little direction to localities for managing development. Considered as a whole, State policy grants broad rights and gives little direction to individuals and their land use decisions.

Though where metropolitan development is concerned, non-policy predominates in Michigan, there are a number of active policies that are relevant or could be directed to effect greater regional balance. Below is a brief introduction to some of the more salient of these:

### Land Use Management Policies:

- *Subdivision Control:* The state of Michigan does not plan or manage land use or provide for regional planning and development agencies with any authority in these areas. Further, the State gives municipalities only limited authority to stop the consumption of open land.

While local governments in Michigan have minimal powers to direct development, they have had the authority to control the subdivision of open land. When properties in Michigan are split into smaller parcels, such as for the construction of suburban housing on farmland, the subdivision must be subject to platting procedures where localities review the impact of the development on local roads and services before the subdivision is approved. The state's subdivision control policies have always allowed property owners to periodically sell limited numbers of parcels without subjecting them to the platting process however.

Subdivision control is one area where municipalities, and perhaps a regional land use planning and management authority, could have a significant impact on sprawl. This is especially the case if such authority were to be exercised in a coordinated fashion. Unfortunately, the State of Michigan recently weakened local land use management powers as it weakened the subdivision control act, allowing property owners greater freedom to circumvent the platting process as they can now parcel their property into greater numbers of subdivisions exempt from platting over time than they could before.

- *Farmland Preservation:* The State of Michigan has offered tax credits since 1974 to farmers and other rural land owners who commit to keeping their land undeveloped or in agricultural use through the Farmland and Open Space Program. Unfortunately, only a relatively small percentage of the open lands located in suburban Detroit counties that are eligible for the program are enrolled. On the other hand, high percentages of eligible properties located in the counties least threatened by development are enrolled. The policy, then, could be interpreted as a better rural subsidy program than development management tool. As Samuel Staley points out, disproportionate enrollments in the program indicate that farmers and other rural property owners located near metropolitan expansion have an interest in reaping profits through development.<sup>33</sup> Staley is probably correct in this analysis. However, the answer to the apparent failure of the Farmland and Open Space Program need not be the cessation of state efforts to preserve rural places.

Counties in Michigan are experimenting with policies to purchase open land and the development rights of farmland. Unfortunately, unless the county in question wholly contains a small metropolitan area, county purchase of land and development rights cannot in themselves balance metropolitan development. This is almost certainly the case in the Detroit region. Here, far too much land or development rights of properties would need to be purchased across several counties for such policies to have any significant metropolitan-wide affect on land consumption. Counties would run out of tax base to pay for these purchases before enough properties could be bought to significantly control sprawl. Even if sufficient quantities of land and property rights could be acquired, this would not translate into urban redevelopment without additional regional cooperation and redevelopment measures. A cork in the bottle approach in the Detroit area can only deflect or restrict growth, it cannot redirect it back into the urban and inner-suburban core.

#### Urban Reinvestment Policies:

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<sup>33</sup>See again Staley's "'Urban Sprawl' and the Michigan Landscape. The Michigan Department of Natural Resources, Real Estate Division tracks acreage enrollment.

- *Environmental Bond Issue:* Late last year, Michigan voters approved a \$675 million environmental bond issue. Funds borrowed by the State under this program will be used for environmental preservation as were efforts financed by the State's 1988 environmental bond sale with the exception that half of the funds borrowed under the current measure will be earmarked for brownfield clean up. While one may argue the relative merits and justice of floating bonds for these purposes as opposed to other funding mechanisms such as pay as you go, the policy priorities of last year's environmental referendum are essential. Industrial site clean up and redevelopment in Detroit's urban core is critical to balancing investment and opportunities in the region and to improving the environment for metropolitan residents.

- *Enterprise Zones and Renaissance Zones:* Michigan's most direct urban redevelopment policy is currently the Renaissance Zone program. Under this policy, tax credits, enhanced development marketing, and aggressive concentration of state and municipal services are targeted to designated zones in the Detroit region's urban core. Like, and coordinated with, brownfield cleanup, this policy promises to target some state resources in the urban core in an effort to spark substantial private reinvestment. While some may criticize such targeted investment in so far as needs based community development is not the first goal, these programs will probably result in net benefits for the region's distressed central areas.

Like other policies discussed here, Enterprise or Renaissance Zones should be implemented within a broader framework of regional policy making aimed at balancing growth towards more efficient and equitable patterns. Renaissance Zones alone may benefit central cities, but they are not likely to be sufficient to effect long term restructuring.

#### Equity Policies:

- *School Funding Equalization:* While social welfare programs, head start and public housing, social security, and other traditional poverty relief programs benefit many of society's most vulnerable persons individually, State and Federal policies are generally not geared to effect equity between municipalities. One exception to this is Michigan's reformed school funding policy approved in 1994's Proposal A ballot issue.

Proposal A was revolutionary in that it shifted much of the funding for school districts from local property taxes to funds raised by state taxes and dispersed to schools by more equitable state formulae. As most states continue to fund schools almost exclusively through local property taxes, Michigan enjoys one of the most equitable funding structures in the nation. Although some argue the effective magnitude or equity of this redistribution, Michigan's policy will play a long-term role in balancing opportunity across space. Proposal A indicates that the state can confront some forms of spatial inequity.

### Policy Infrastructure Assets:

- *SEMCOG*: The Southeast Michigan Council of Governments is perhaps the most important institutional asset for metropolitan reform. As a representative and cooperative regional planning policy agency, *SEMCOG* expresses regional interests and is a model for an area development planning and land use management authority. *SEMCOG* will play a role in future reform efforts.

Because urban areas are complex systems, they are affected by the gamut of Federal, State, and local policies that direct public and private investments. This analysis, therefore, can only begin to explore extent policies that speak most directly to intermunicipal metropolitan balance. There are other policies that are important. State and Federal housing policies, transportation programs, fair housing and other antidiscrimination statutes and court rulings, environmental statutes, et cetera impact metropolitan development and could be directed to better balance regional growth and distribution. The synoptic view is clear, however. Michigan and the Detroit region suffer from a lack of policies structured and coordinated to balance regional development towards sustainability, efficiency, productivity, and equity. While reformers should consider present policy structures, new ones will have to be built to effect equity and save the region's future from economic and environmental disaster and sociopolitical balkanization.

### Improvements in the Detroit Area Policy Environment:

The above discussion should give prospective reformers pause. Balanced development in Michigan will not be achieved easily. However, the stakes are high and the time is critical. Along with challenges outlined above, however, are reasons for optimism that should be considered by regional reformers and policymakers:

- *Accelerating Dialogue*: Without extensive survey research, public support for reform cannot be accurately gauged. However, there are signs that the times may be changing. Although Washtenaw voters recently rejected a proposal for the county to purchase land and development rights as a means of preserving the county's rural flavor, it is difficult to interpret what it was exactly that voters were opposed to. Certainly, the dialogue of sprawl and expressions of concern over the issue seems to be accelerating in the region and throughout the nation. While some of this draws from the efforts of the Vice President, there seems to be an overall increase in public concern reflected in expanded news coverage of the issue as well as the large numbers of proposed and implemented state and local growth management policies nationwide.

It is important to note that concerns with sprawl and related issues are coming from all sides of the political and geographical spectrum. This indicates that the time may be right for building a policy majority on this issue. It also indicates, however, that reformers should consider building

cross-constituency contacts and inclusive policy proposals in order to forge and take advantage of a policy majority. It should be noted that the process of building a diverse and inclusive constituency itself is more than instrumental to legislative support. Such a process begins to heal the metropolitan division that is so a much part of the region's problems.

- **New Federal Agenda:** Federal policies can be blamed for encouraging sprawl and segregation throughout the postwar era. The Federal policy structure is changing in some ways, however, towards greater sensitivity to equity and sustainability in metropolitan development.

Federal low-income housing policies have become much more sensitive to locational and physical issues. The Department of Housing and Urban Development now encourages the deconcentration of public housing and the integration of tenants across metropolitan areas. HUD has also taken a stronger interest in the quality of local housing authority administration and the provision of broader services to tenants. These reforms may benefit low-income residents as they improve services, housing, and integrate tenants into a range of communities. HUD's reforms are only one aspect of changing federal policy emphasis towards increased integration and greater sensitivity to community. Unfortunately, these changes have occurred at a time when federal funding for low-income housing has plummeted.

The emphasis of Federal transportation policy has also changed. Recent rounds of legislation provide greater funds for urban transit and may encourage more balanced development. Federal transportation policy now requires more substantial environmental and community impact analysis, along with public review, before funding for specific projects can be approved.

- *Detroit urban Reinvestment and Image Improvement:* Urban reinvestment programs such as Renaissance Zones and brownfield clean up along with a new City administration's emphasis on economic development are changing the appearance and reality of Detroit. Numerous and exciting downtown redevelopment projects are sparking greater interest and pride in the City of Detroit and may help to re-establish it as the region's center of culture and commerce. As discussed above, positive identifications with the City are essential to urban redevelopment and to building the positive metropolitan identity prerequisite to more substantial reforms. While downtown development is not sufficient to meet the needs of the City's disadvantaged residents, it must be part of broader changes in the region.

- *Demographic Trends:* Long term demographic trends in North America may militate against sprawl and spur urban reinvestment. The Region's population is aging and households are getting smaller. Though SEMCOG's land use projections discussed above are based on the wasteful development patterns of the past continuing into the future, growing

numbers of senior citizens, single persons, and smaller households in the region may turn the market against large new house construction.<sup>34</sup>

Small households and single residents are the most likely to favor smaller housing units closer to urban centers. As these demographic changes suggest increasing demand for more mixed, compact, and so more equitable, development, they promise an important opportunity to balance the distribution of growth throughout the region. Just as it was not the free market alone that provided post war families with endless suburban subdivisions, so providing for the needs of smaller families in the future will require governmental action on all levels. The opportunity to build policy structures that can manage development in ways that accommodate the region's new demographic realities in equitable and productive ways is now.

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<sup>34</sup>SEMCOG's "The Past and Future Growth of Southeast Michigan: Population, Households, Jobs and Land Use 1965-2025" projects an aging population comprising smaller households though the region's near future.

## BUILDING AN AGENDA FOR METROPOLITAN REFORM

The sprawl and inequities that define the region are related in complex ways. Compounding these dangers is a policy environment that at once contributes to them and militates against their solution. While there are reasons for optimism, and a great need for reform, conditions in the region will make effecting change difficult. Reformers will have to devise strategies that both address the need for new policies and create a more amenable context for them.

### What Should Reform Look Like?

An Effective Response to Imbalance will be a Multidimensional Agenda, not a Silver Bullet Solution:

The basic realities of inequity and sprawl in the region point to complex and protracted system dysfunction. The multidimensionality of imbalance indicates that simple solutions will not resolve the problem. Indeed, while some of these, such as public purchase of development rights and open spaces, may address immediate concerns of local constituents, they can exacerbate regional inefficiencies. On the other hand, a policy directed solely towards bringing investment into the region's center without addressing surplus construction at the metropolitan edge, and other imbalances, will at best ameliorate some of the effects of sprawl. In the absence of system reforms, efforts to save the region's center from decline will have to be intensified continuously with decreasing effect.

The region's problems will not be addressed by a one-dimensional solution. Rather, reformers will have to build a broader agenda that coordinates a number of policy responses, each of which should address components of the region's problems in orchestrated fashion. While in comparison to a single policy the agenda approach may seem more difficult, it is necessary given regional conditions. It also has a number of advantages. These are reducible to the fact that an agenda can be developed and pursued piecemeal. As long as components are carefully selected, their implementation will contribute to the day when a comprehensive and coordinated policy package is in effect.

An agenda comprised of coordinated policy components has practical and political advantages. From a practical standpoint, it is easier to deal with one problem at a time. In political terms, incremental formulation, pursuit, and implementation of an agenda allow reformers to acquire and invest political capital as they go. Reformers should judge each stage of the process in terms of its likely effectiveness against the most pressing needs of the region, ease of passage, and value in preparing the region for the next campaign.

A multidimensional approach has a further advantage. Because an agenda is comprised of coordinated parts, it responds to a complex political climate. Different components of an agenda can be marketed to a variety of groups,

giving everyone an interest in reform and helping to include regional factions in a dialogue of trust is critical to healing political division.

#### A Successful Agenda Will Not Be Deeply Divisive:

While controversies are inevitable, successful reforms will not be deeply divisive. Some in the region may see controlling sprawl as preserving the aesthetic and material advantages of the region's wealthy or frontier suburbs from overdevelopment. From the view of sprawl as the spread of undesirable residents and construction into the suburbs, attractive controls promise to "keep them and their business away from us." Perhaps just as divisive is the perspective of those who, recognizing that surplus expansion into new territory is associated with disinvestment, may pursue policies that promise simply to stop suburban growth. The hope here would be that by stopping development in the suburbs, it will backflow into the urban core.

If either of these views were translated into policy in the Detroit region the immediate result might be some short-term satisfaction for one side against the distress of another, but the long-term effect would probably be slower economic development and other problems. Us versus them views are limited perspectives forged in a deeply divided metropolitan context. As such, they are part of the problem and should be examined critically.

Effective reformers must seek to avoid one-sided solutions. Unbalanced responses to dysfunction can hardly be expected to balance regional development patterns. Further, the region is so geopolitically fractured that one-sided solutions will end in a failed battle that will degrade the regional reform environment further.

Some policies that could effect real balance may be too divisive to win in the area's highly polarized policy environment. Chief among these are blunt redistributive instruments that will be perceived in an us versus them light and so resurrect the gamut of negative parochialism including racial animosity and historical fears and distrust. Tax base sharing proposals are perhaps the most obvious example of policies that, while attractive to many and not without real merit, come with too high a political price. The region's policy environment is deeply hostile to tax base sharing. Such a proposal would almost certainly fail and if pursued vigorously, may salt the ground of future options. For tax base sharing or other direct redistribution policies to work, a suitable policy environment will have to be created.

Successful reformers will not be seen as central urban advocates or as preservationists of suburban advantage, but rather as fighters for regional social, political, environmental, and economic success.

#### Reformers Must Help Change the Regional Policy Context:

Reformers will not be able to avoid controversy and will disturb some of the region's older animosities. While reformers should seek to avoid this, they

should not look upon the regional policy environment as hopelessly fixed. The attitudes and identifications of the region's people and leaders, as well as those of state policymakers, are not carved in granite. As time has passed, many of the bad memories that divide the minds of residents may have become less visceral. Furthermore, the conventional wisdom is not fixed. A positive region-wide dialogue on sprawl and inequity can begin to change minds.

Changing the policy context through education and discourse will be essential to winning reform. Beyond instrumental purposes, however, such a project should be seen for its intrinsic value as part of the metropolitan healing process.

#### Reformers Must Build a Policy Constituency at Several Levels:

Because of the extent of legislation and other changes that will be required to balance regional development, reformers will have to build majorities in the State Legislature and work with the Governor. Reformers must build relationships with the region's policy leaders including many who may not seem immediately amenable to reform. Reformers will also have to work with important interest groups, leading community institutions, and residents to build multi-level working groups. Before a platform is adopted, the local and statewide dialogue can begin as part of the process of increasing awareness, considering policy options, and determining where the most significant challenges to effective change are.

#### Successful Reform Will Be Inclusive of Most Concerns with Sprawl:

Because the region is so prone to dividing issues in a city versus suburban dichotomy in which everyone loses, the diverse concerns of residents throughout the region will have to be included in any reform agenda. They should be more than included, however; they should be related. This is the case in so far as diverse concerns reflect the dimensions of real system imbalance. Confronting the widest possible array of concerns will help to assure that real balance is effected by reform.

## The Dimensions of Successful Reform:

It is too early to define a metropolitan agenda with great specificity. That will be the job of the dialogue to come. However, an effective reform package should include components that can address the following:

---

### *Confront Inequity:*

- Bring investment and middle class residents back to the urban core.
- Help residents transcend barriers to opportunities and services no matter where they live.
- Break down residential barriers.
- Integrate the region's communities by race, age, family size, and income.

### *Address uncontrolled growth:*

- Plan suburban development in a coordinated fashion.
- Make developers pay the full cost of development.

### *Encourage cooperation and confront regional fragmentation:*

- Build cooperative service structures.
- Build a regional (two tiered) planning and development authority.

### *Create a new understanding of government's role:*

- Make all relevant local and state policies and administrative activities sensitive to environmental, economic, and community well being.

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• *Regional (Two Tiered) Planning Infrastructure:* Since fragmentation and lack of cooperation are at the center of the region's problems, a representative regional planning organization with the ability to identify and advance metropolitan interests, coordinate local development and area infrastructural investments, and direct regional land use planning will be essential to bringing balance to area development. Though a second tier planning structure will be difficult to achieve, it will be essential to making other reforms work in concert towards regional ends. Because it is the lynch pin of regional balance, such an organization should be looked forward to by reformers as the ultimate instrumental achievement.

• *Starting with an RTA:* While I will not define a specific agenda beyond these components, I would argue that the most effective means of advancing equity in the region proportional to the costs of winning and implementing policy is probably a regional transit authority. An RTA would be an excellent first step reform as it would solve some equity imbalance and regional economic

inefficiencies immediately and would begin to build regional inter-governmental cooperation and service planning infrastructures.

Make place matter less and make it matter more:

Regardless of policy specifics, a new metropolitan reform agenda should make place matter less as a determinant of opportunities but more as a component of healthy regional communities.

Achieving these ends will require more than a proposal and campaign. Substantial change will require a *process of reform* that will occur in stages and require an energetic and well-funded institution dedicated to working with the region's people and leaders, and with state policymakers, to formulate and pursue a dynamic agenda over a number of years.

A process of reform should be more than an instrument of regional balance, it should be considered an intrinsic part of that balance as those engaged in the process begin the regional dialogue of trust and cooperation so needed in the Detroit region.

## A NOTE ON THE ROLE OF THE ARCHDIOCESE

As an organization whose presence is felt throughout the area, the Archdiocese bridges regional political, economic, and racial divisions. As it does so and as it stands for Transcendence, the Church is in a unique position to advocate and pursue metropolitan reform. The Church is also in a position to advance the right kinds of reform. The Church should pursue a vision of the region as an efficient, prosperous and productive metropolitan area pursuing sustainable development as it heals deep and compounding divisions. While reform efforts will result in controversy, the Church should avoid an agenda that pits the urban core against the suburbs. This will not heal the region but, rather, rend fresh old and deep wounds that have caused so much pain and counterproductive decisionmaking.

### What Should the Archdiocese do Now?

#### Education and Dialogue:

The Archdiocese needs to determine what its role will be in future efforts to bring balance to the region. If the Church wishes to remain simply an advocate for reform, then its present efforts towards education and dialogue can be profitably continued. Participating in the regional policy arena as such would not require the Church to advance an explicit agenda and so would be less risky for the Archdiocese in the short run. However, it is doubtful that the Church's general advocacy for change can be sufficient to bring unity and balance to the region.

#### Leading the Process of Reform:

If, on the other hand, the Archdiocese is interested in pursuing the enactment of a metropolitan reform agenda, then the Church must initiate and lead the *process of reform* and begin to build the *infrastructure* that will be required to achieve meaningful change. This is the case because the kinds of efforts that can bring about worthwhile change will be more than a proposal and campaign. Metropolitan reforms will require more work than the Church may be able to sustain using "off the shelf" staff and resources. Reform will require full time efforts and support. Developing and achieving reforms will also require input and support from a coherent range of regional and state leaders and interests. These necessities can be provided for with the establishment of a metropolitan reform commission initiated and led, to the extent desired, by the church.

A metropolitan reform commission would develop policy expertise; build contacts with other interested groups across the state, with legislators, the Governor's office, the public and local policymakers; coordinate public education efforts and local and state level dialogue; identify an agenda; and begin to pursue it.

A reform commission and its members should begin with a dialogue and not with a set policy agenda. A dynamic agenda will be developed and continuously refined throughout the reform process as no highly specific and complete agenda can predict the success of various parts and changes in the region's policy environment.

If the Church wishes to pursue the enactment of a policy agenda, then it should:

- Continue with a public education campaign that expresses the ends of metropolitan reform but does not advance specific instruments as *the* policy solutions;
- Initiate internal dialogues to determine candidates for partnership in a reform commission including groups and interests that arguably represent, or are primarily interested in, the region's success;
- Develop a press packet on sprawl for area media ready reference purposes and as part of the Archdiocese's general educational efforts;
- Develop an educational/informational web site that is easily accessible and linked to other regional sites;
- Consider and pursue other ways of getting the word out and keeping the dialogue going;
- Begin a series of dialogues (lunches, presentations, mini conferences, et cetera) with area business and political leaders from across the region's geographical, economic, racial, political and social interest, and commercial spectrum.
- Having laid the groundwork for a commission, the Archdiocese should invite selected organizations and leaders to join and fund the commission's work.
- A metropolitan reform commission may then continue the education and dialogue functions as it builds policy expertise while working with other regional and statewide groups towards the proposal and support of legislative packages.
- Again, I would recommend that the reform process begin with a regional transit system because it can ameliorate the most inequities the most quickly for the least amount of effort. Even as such, it will be difficult.

A more substantial long-term role of the Church may be called given the unique position of the Archdiocese and the nature of the region's failure. The Church can pursue a variety of paths to reform within or outside of the above framework as long as the region's and State's policy context is taken seriously.

Whatever role the Archdiocese ultimately plays, its greatest political strength will be as a healer of the divided perspectives that reflect and enable the region's dysfunction.

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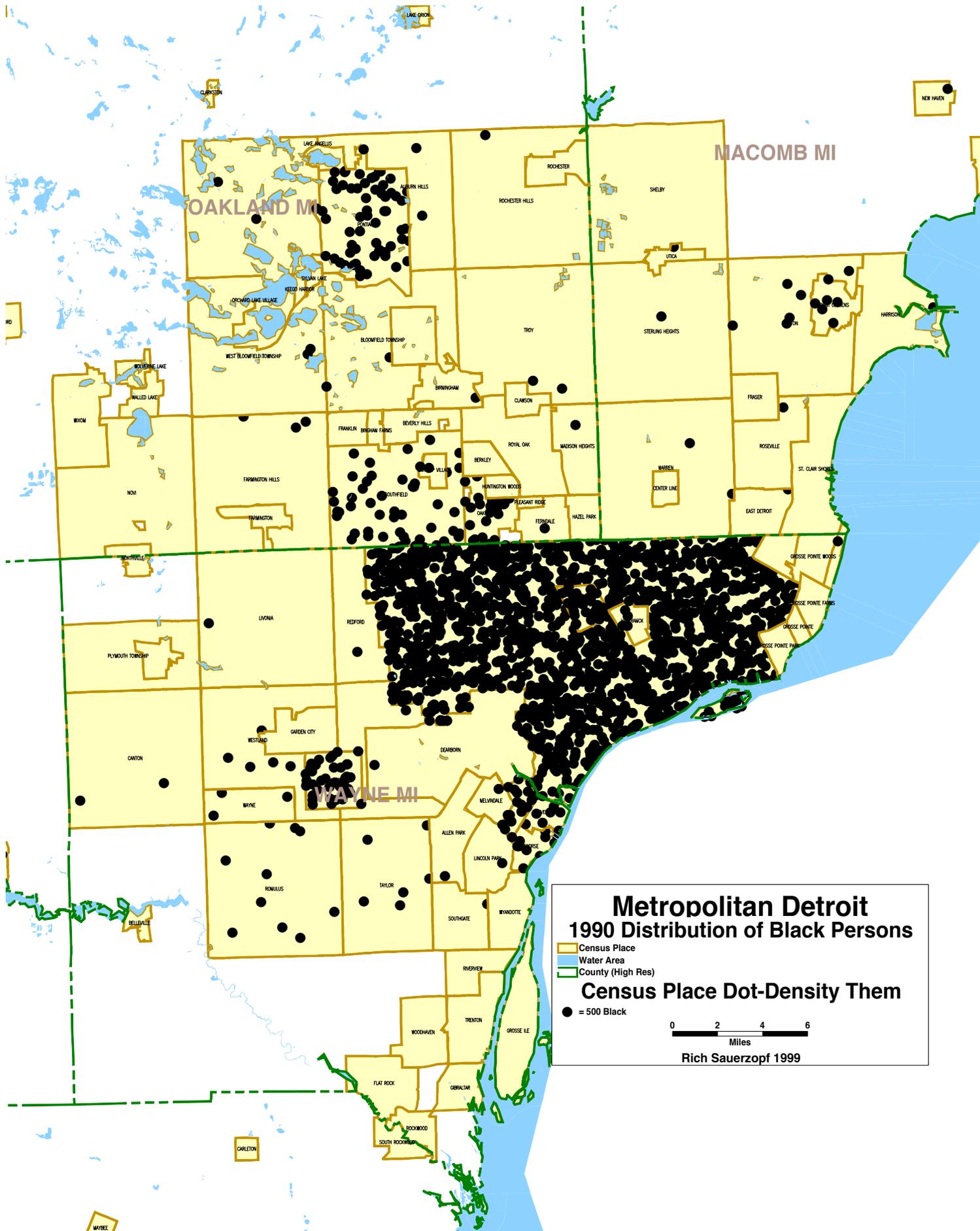
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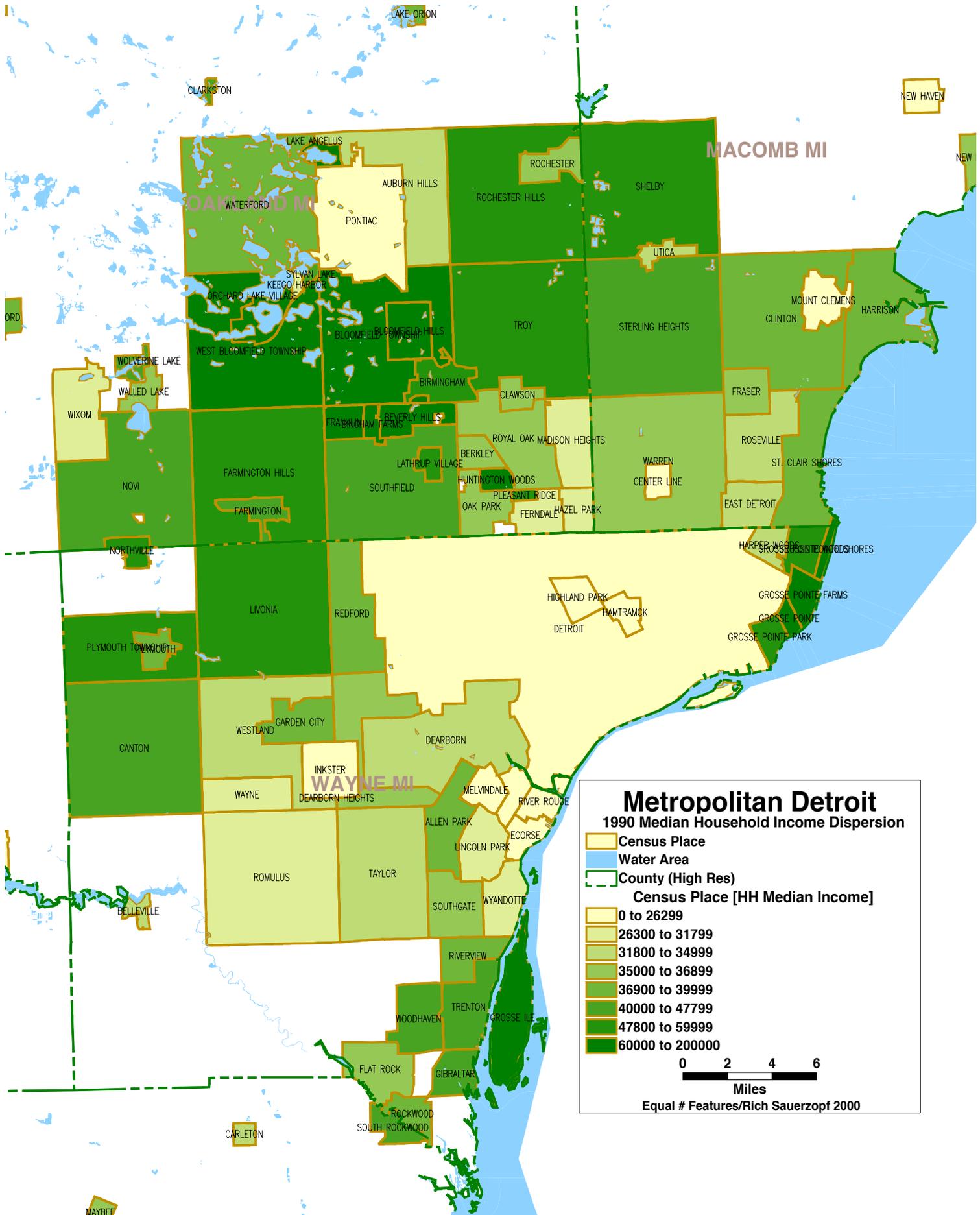
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**Figure 1 Distribution of Black Persons in the Detroit Region by Place**

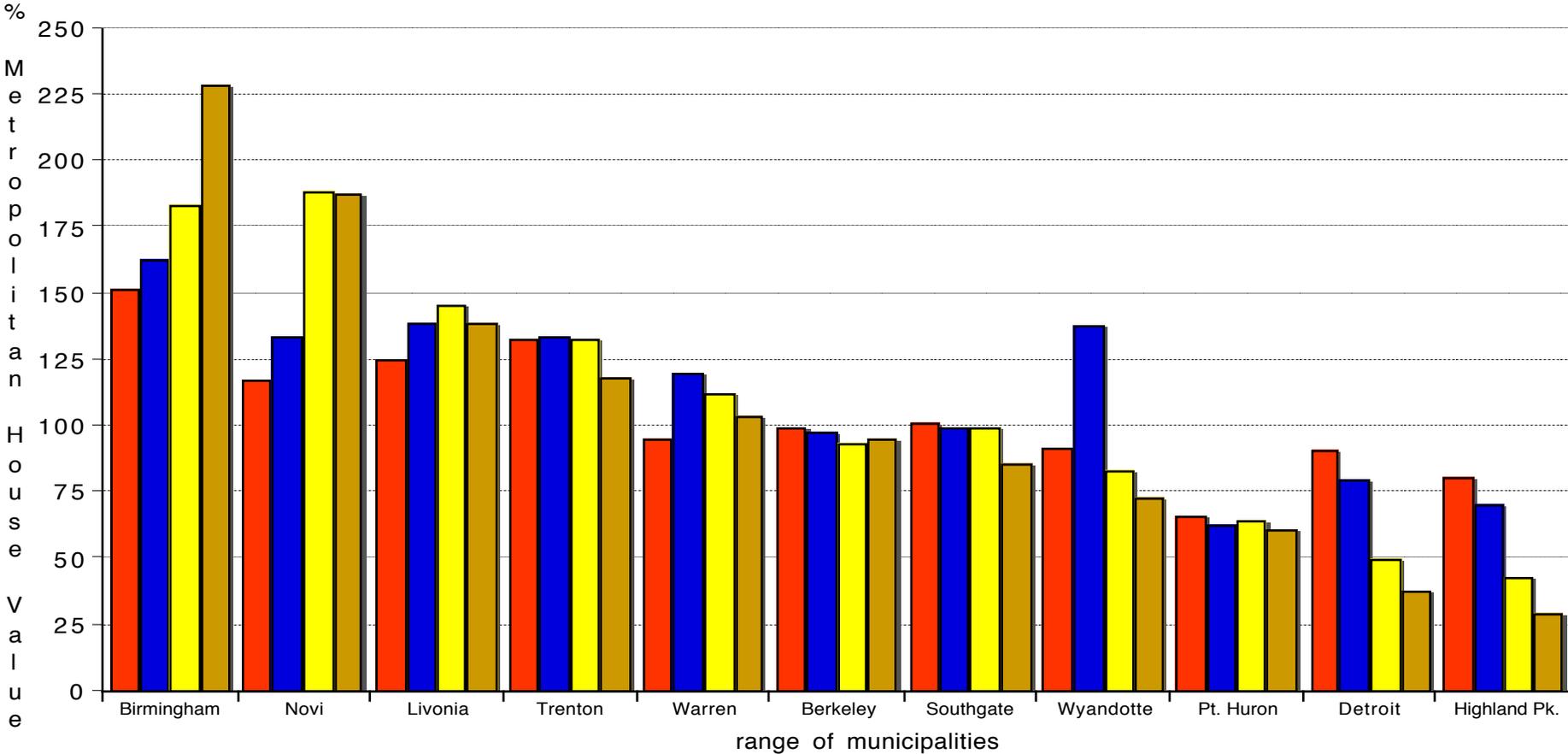


**Figure 2 Dispersion of Income across Selected Detroit Area Places**



# FIGURE 3: DECADE TO DECADE CHANGES IN THE RELATIVE MARKET POSITION OF DETROIT AREA PLACES

Municipalities are selected randomly and ordered by their 1990 Census median specified owner occupied house values as percentages of the metropolitan figure (relative market position).



# FIGURE 4: DECADE TO DECADE CHANGES IN PROPORTIONAL HOUSEHOLD INCOME FOR METROPOLITAN DETROIT COMMUNITIES

Municipalities are selected randomly and ordered by their 1989 median household incomes as percentages of the metropolitan figure (proportional household income).

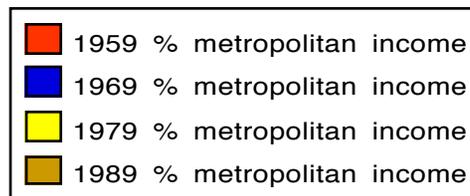
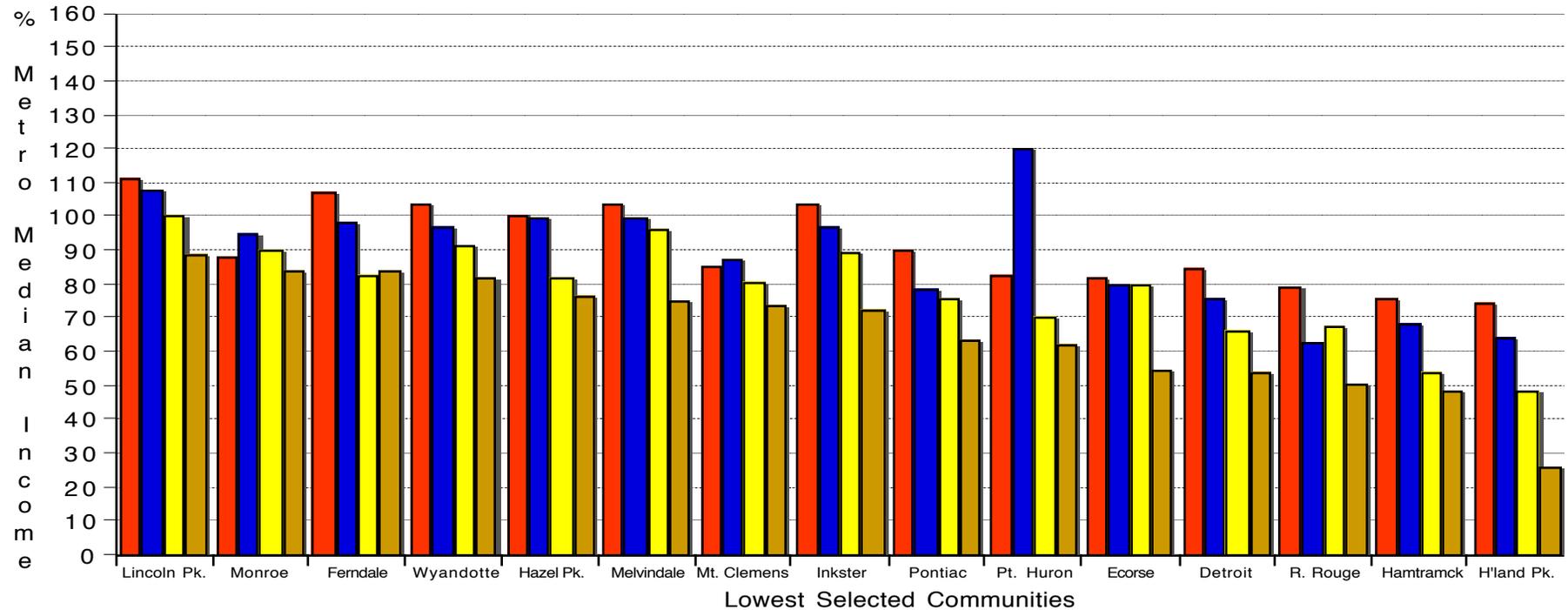
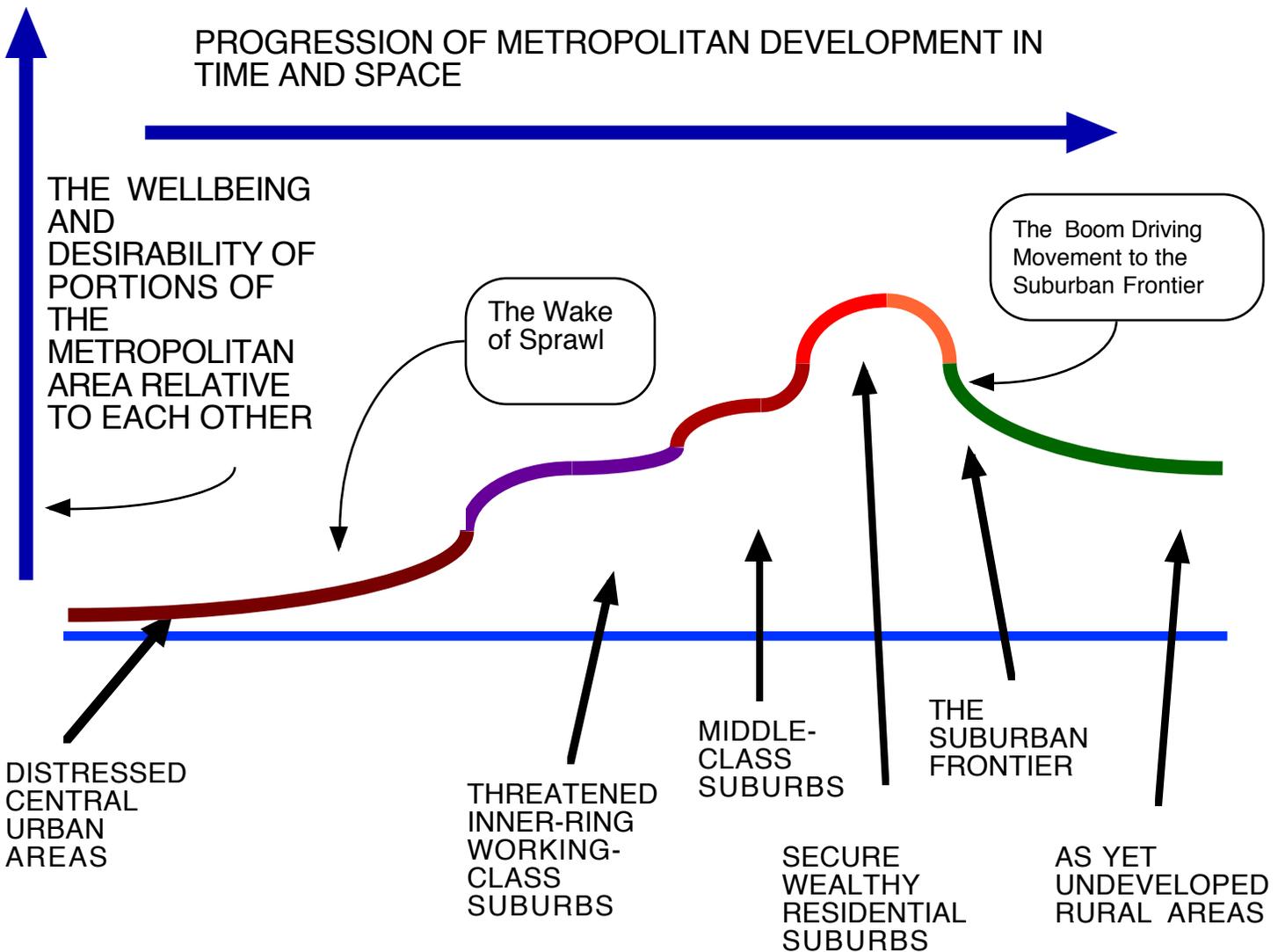


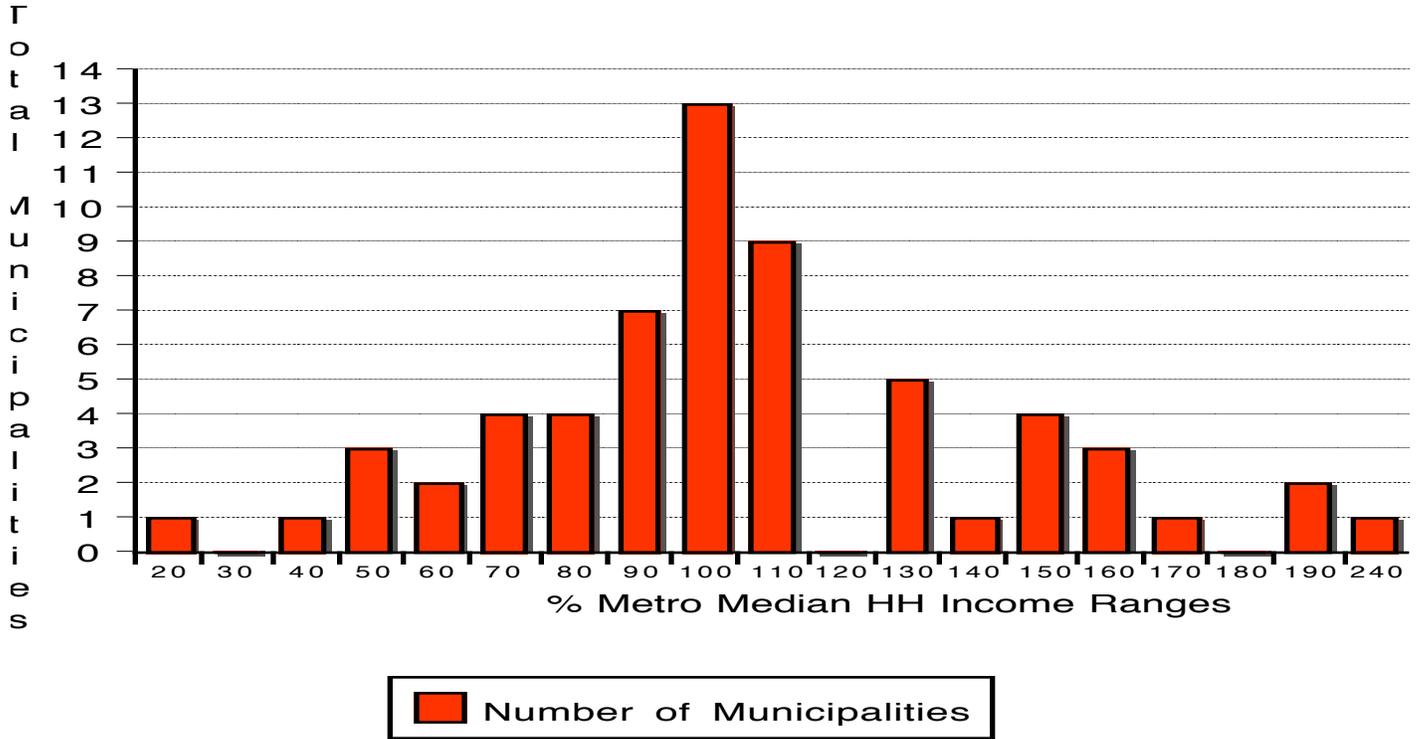
FIGURE 5: THE AMERICAN METROPOLITAN SPRAWL AND INEQUITY WAVE



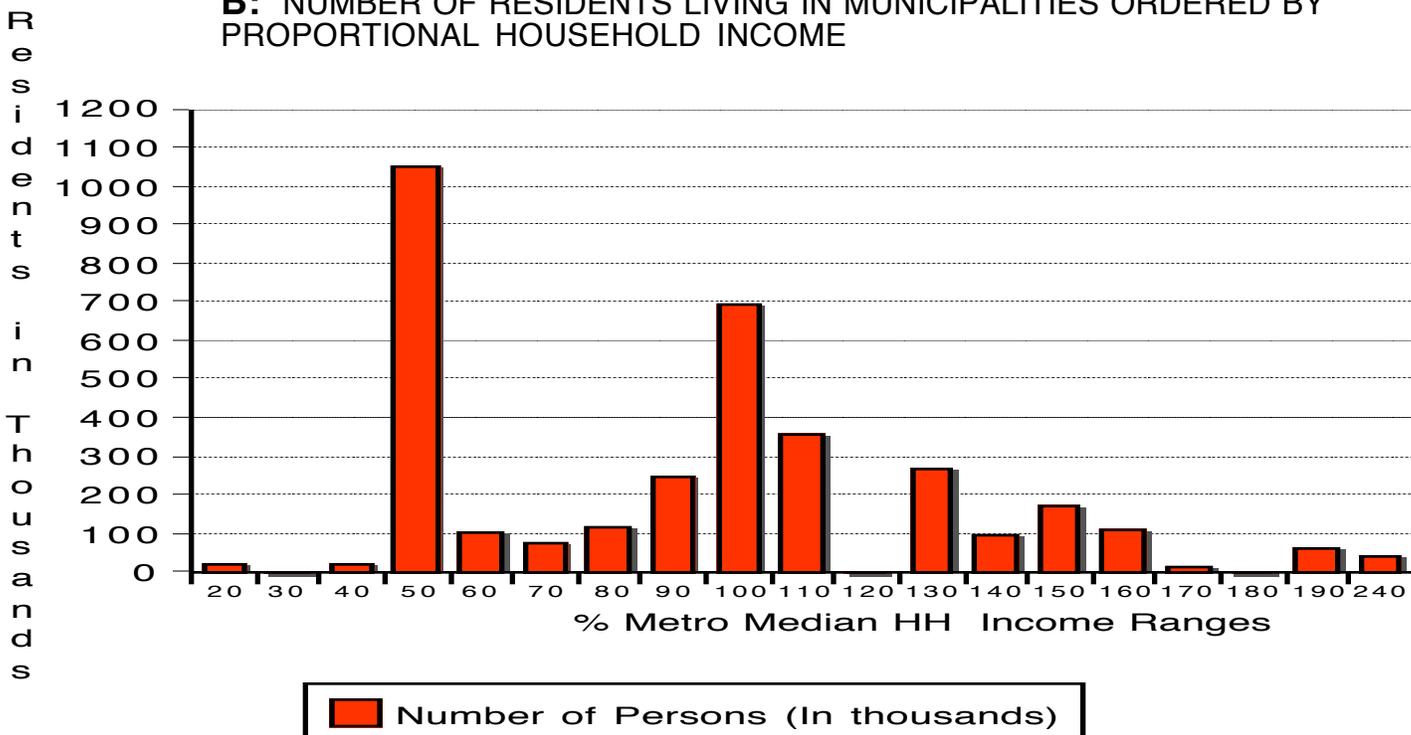
# FIGURE 7: DISPERSION OF HOUSEHOLD INCOME ACROSS THE DETROIT METROPOLITAN AREA:

DETROIT AREA MUNICIPALITIES AND THEIR RESIDENTS ARRANGED BY 1989 MUNICIPAL MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME AS A PERCENTAGE OF METROPOLITAN MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME (PROPORTIONAL HOUSEHOLD INCOME)

**A:** DISTRIBUTION OF DETROIT AREA MUNICIPALITIES BY THEIR 1989 PROPORTIONAL HOUSEHOLD INCOME



**B:** NUMBER OF RESIDENTS LIVING IN MUNICIPALITIES ORDERED BY PROPORTIONAL HOUSEHOLD INCOME

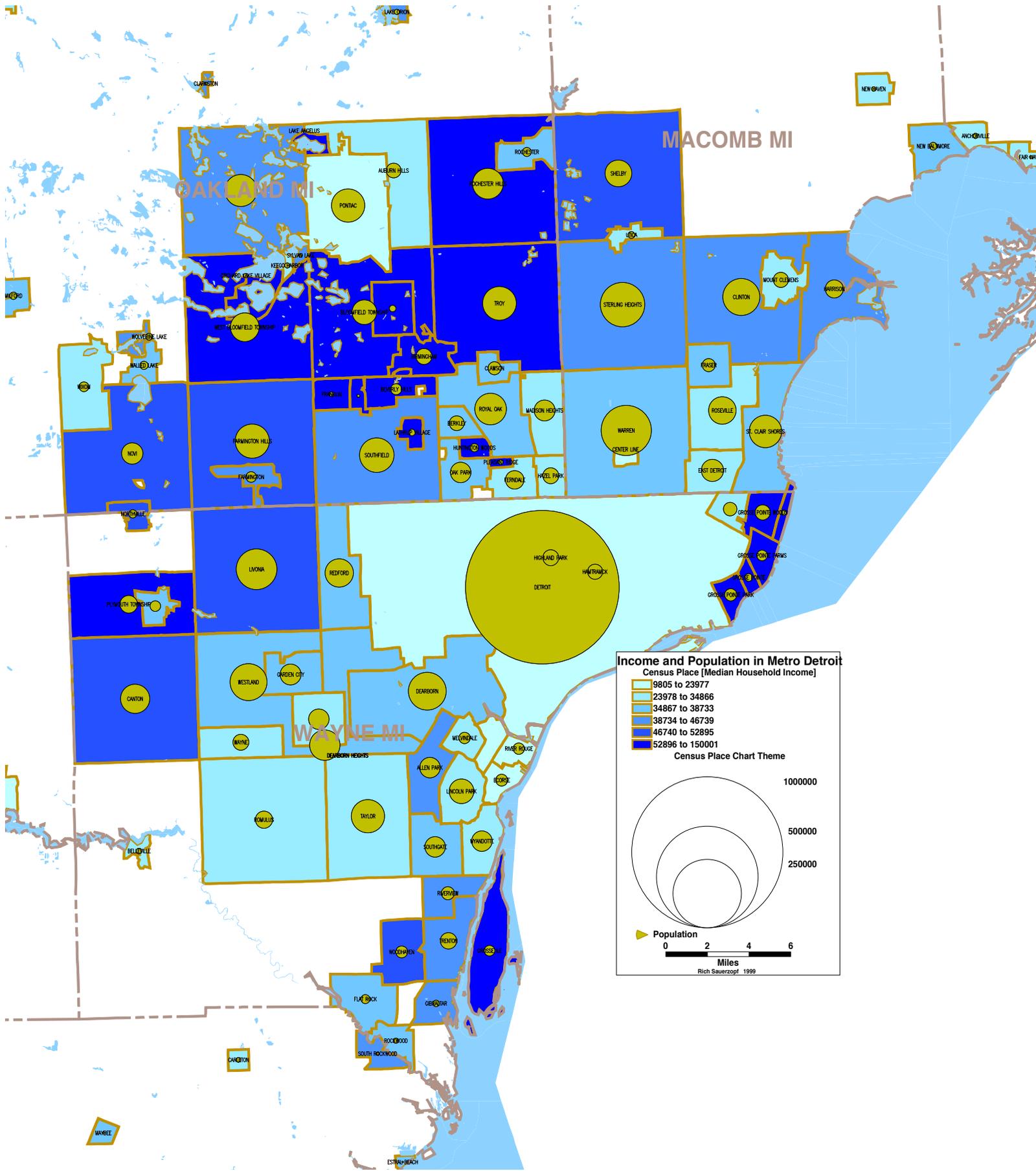


Proportional Household Income calculated using information from 1990 Census of Population and Housing. Rich Sauerzopf 1999

**FIGURE 8: DETROIT AREA MUNICIPALITIES ARRANGED BY RELATIVE MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME**

| CITY                    | Median Household Income | % Metro Median HH Income | Population              | Range | Population Totals: |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|-------|--------------------|
| Highland Park city      | 9805                    | 26.2                     | 20121                   |       |                    |
|                         |                         |                          | <b>20 Range Total:</b>  |       | <b>20120</b>       |
| Hamtramck city          | 16751                   | 48.4                     | 18372                   |       |                    |
|                         |                         |                          | <b>30 Range Total:</b>  |       | <b>18372</b>       |
| River Rouge city        | 17500                   | 50.6                     | 11314                   |       |                    |
| Detroit City            | 18742                   | 54.1                     | 1027974                 |       |                    |
| Ecorse city             | 18956                   | 54.8                     | 12180                   |       |                    |
|                         |                         |                          | <b>50 Range Total:</b>  |       | <b>1051468</b>     |
| Port Huron city         | 21522                   | 62.2                     | 33694                   |       |                    |
| Pontiac city            | 21962                   | 63.5                     | 71166                   |       |                    |
|                         |                         |                          | <b>60 Range Total:</b>  |       | <b>104860</b>      |
| Inkster city            | 25198                   | 72.8                     | 30772                   |       |                    |
| Mount Clemens city      | 25716                   | 74.3                     | 18405                   |       |                    |
| Melvindale city         | 26179                   | 75.6                     | 11216                   |       |                    |
| Hazel Park city         | 26615                   | 76.9                     | 20051                   |       |                    |
|                         |                         |                          | <b>70 Range Total:</b>  |       | <b>80444</b>       |
| Wyandotte city          | 28312                   | 81.8                     | 30938                   |       |                    |
| Ferndale city           | 28964                   | 83.7                     | 25048                   |       |                    |
| Monroe city             | 29088                   | 84                       | 22902                   |       |                    |
| Lincoln Park city       | 30638                   | 88.5                     | 41832                   |       |                    |
|                         |                         |                          | <b>80 Range Total:</b>  |       | <b>120720</b>      |
| Wayne city              | 31250                   | 90.3                     | 19899                   |       |                    |
| Romulus city            | 31723                   | 91.7                     | 22897                   |       |                    |
| Madison Heights city    | 31757                   | 91.8                     | 32196                   |       |                    |
| Roseville city          | 32337                   | 93.4                     | 51412                   |       |                    |
| Taylor city             | 32659                   | 94.4                     | 70811                   |       |                    |
| Harper Woods city       | 33098                   | 95.6                     | 14903                   |       |                    |
| East Detroit city       | 34069                   | 98.4                     | 35382                   |       |                    |
|                         |                         |                          | <b>90 Range Total:</b>  |       | <b>247500</b>      |
| Auburn Hills city       | 34825                   | 100.6                    | 17076                   |       |                    |
| Dearborn city           | 34909                   | 100.9                    | 89286                   |       |                    |
| Westland city           | 34995                   | 101.1                    | 84724                   |       |                    |
| Warren city             | 35980                   | 104                      | 144864                  |       |                    |
| Oak Park city           | 36090                   | 104.3                    | 30462                   |       |                    |
| Southgate city          | 36526                   | 105.5                    | 30771                   |       |                    |
| Clawson city            | 36532                   | 105.5                    | 13874                   |       |                    |
| Fraser city             | 36644                   | 105.9                    | 13899                   |       |                    |
| Berkeley city           | 36693                   | 106                      | 16960                   |       |                    |
| Dearborn Heights city   | 36771                   | 106.2                    | 60838                   |       |                    |
| Royal Oak city          | 36835                   | 106.4                    | 65410                   |       |                    |
| St. Clair Shores city   | 36929                   | 106.7                    | 68107                   |       |                    |
| Redford CDP             | 37162                   | 107.3                    | 54387                   |       |                    |
|                         |                         |                          | <b>100 Range Total:</b> |       | <b>690658</b>      |
| Garden City city        | 38717                   | 111.9                    | 31846                   |       |                    |
| Harrison (township) CDP | 39210                   | 113.3                    | 24685                   |       |                    |
| Clinton (township) CDP  | 39215                   | 113.3                    | 85866                   |       |                    |

**Figure 9 INCOME AND POPULATION IN THE DETROIT AREA**



**Income and Population in Metro Detroit**  
 Census Place [Median Household Income]

- 9805 to 23977
- 23978 to 34866
- 34867 to 38733
- 38734 to 46739
- 46740 to 52895
- 52896 to 150001

Census Place Chart Theme

Population

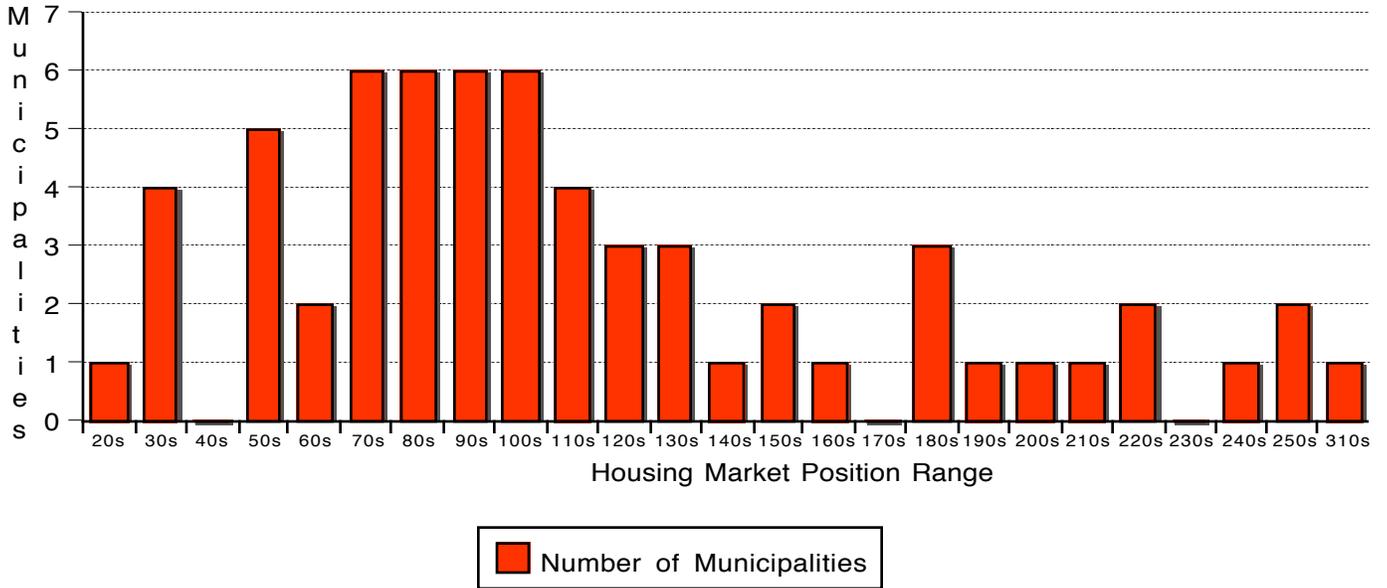
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Miles

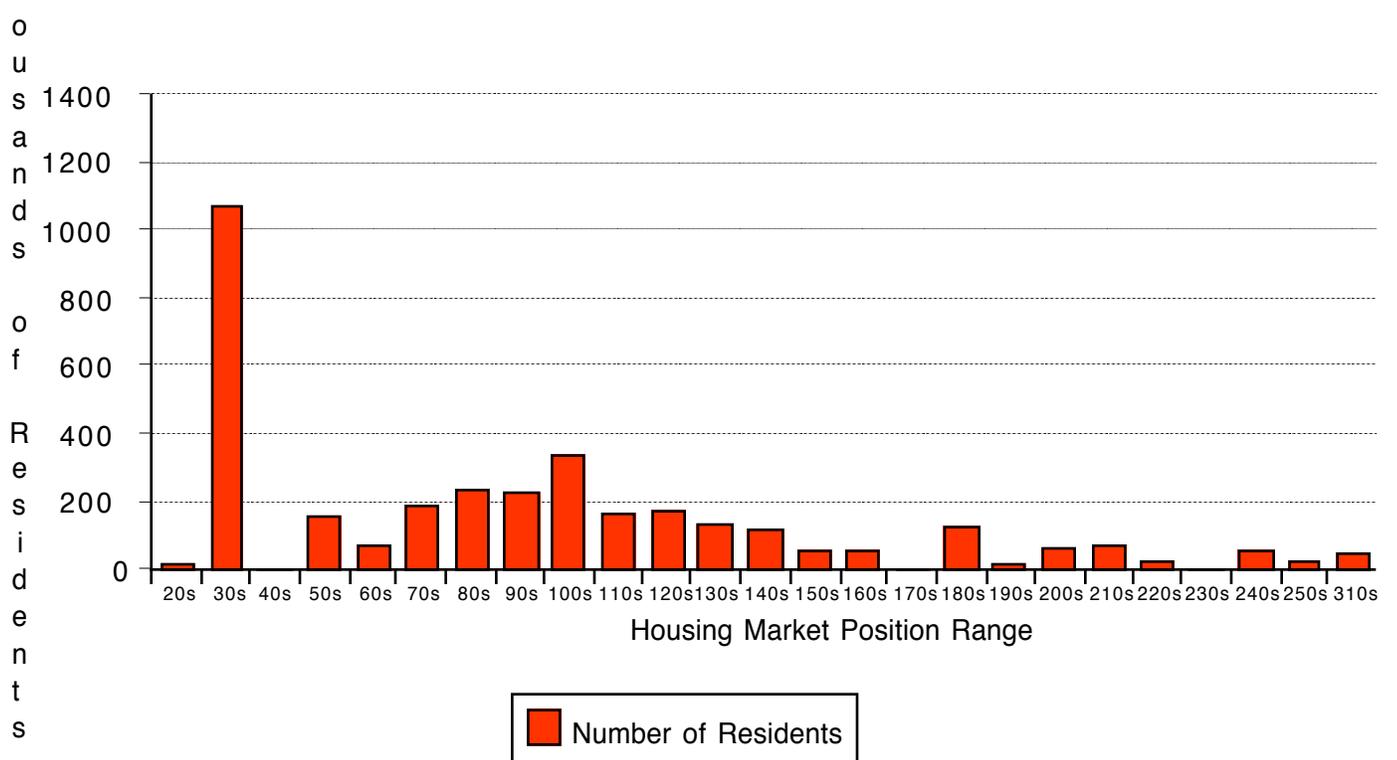
Rich Sauerzopf, 1999

**FIGURE 10: DISPERSION OF RESIDENTIAL PROPERTY VALUES ACROSS THE DETROIT METROPOLITAN AREA:**  
 DETROIT AREA MUNICIPALITIES AND THEIR RESIDENTS ARRANGED BY 1990 MEDIAN SPECIFIED OWNER OCCUPIED HOUSE VALUE AS A PERCENTAGE OF THE METROPOLITAN VALUE (RELATIVE PROPERTY MARKET POSITION)

**A: DISTRIBUTION OF DETROIT AREA MUNICIPALITIES BY THEIR 1990 RELATIVE PROPERTY MARKET POSITION**



**B: NUMBER OF RESIDENTS LIVING IN MUNICIPALITIES ORDERED BY RELATIVE PROPERTY MARKET POSITION**



# FIGURE 11: CITY/SUBURBAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME DISTRIBUTIONS FOR NORTHEASTERN AND MIDWESTERN MAJOR METROPOLITAN AREAS

| MAJOR METROPOLITAN STATISTICAL AREAS (MSAs) | MSA 1989 MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME | CENTRAL CITY 1989 MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME | CENTRAL CITY % MSA MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME |
|---|----------------------------------|---|--|
| <b>Hartford PMSA</b>                        | \$ 42 324                        | \$ 22 140                                 | <b>52.3</b>                                |
| <b>Detroit PMSA</b>                         | \$ 34 612                        | \$ 18 742                                 | <b>54.1</b>                                |
| <b>Cleveland PMSA</b>                       | \$ 30 590                        | \$ 17 822                                 | <b>58.3</b>                                |
| <b>St. Louis MSA</b>                        | \$ 31 774                        | \$ 19 485                                 | <b>61.3</b>                                |
| <b>Buffalo PMSA</b>                         | \$ 28 697                        | \$ 18 482                                 | <b>64.4</b>                                |
| <b>Baltimore MSA</b>                        | \$ 36 550                        | \$ 24 045                                 | <b>65.8</b>                                |
| <b>Rochester MSA</b>                        | \$ 34 234                        | \$ 22 785                                 | <b>66.6</b>                                |
| <b>Cincinnati PMSA</b>                      | \$ 30 691                        | \$ 21 006                                 | <b>68.4</b>                                |
| <b>Phila. PMSA</b>                          | \$ 35 437                        | \$ 24 603                                 | <b>69.4</b>                                |
| <b>Boston PMSA</b>                          | \$ 40 491                        | \$ 29 180                                 | <b>72.1</b>                                |
| <b>Milwaukee PMSA</b>                       | \$ 32 316                        | \$ 23 627                                 | <b>73.1</b>                                |
| <b>Minn-St. P. MSA</b>                      | \$ 36 565                        | \$ 27 354                                 | <b>74.8</b>                                |
| <b>Chicago PMSA</b>                         | \$ 35 265                        | \$ 26 301                                 | <b>75.4</b>                                |
| <b>Pittsburgh PMSA</b>                      | \$ 26 700                        | \$ 20 747                                 | <b>77.7</b>                                |
| <b>Columbus MSA</b>                         | \$ 30 668                        | \$ 26 651                                 | <b>86.9</b>                                |
| <b>Indianapolis MSA</b>                     | \$ 31 655                        | \$ 29 006                                 | <b>91.6</b>                                |
| <b>New York PMSA</b>                        | \$ 31 659                        | \$ 29 832                                 | <b>94.2</b>                                |

Figures from the 1990 Census of Population and Housing

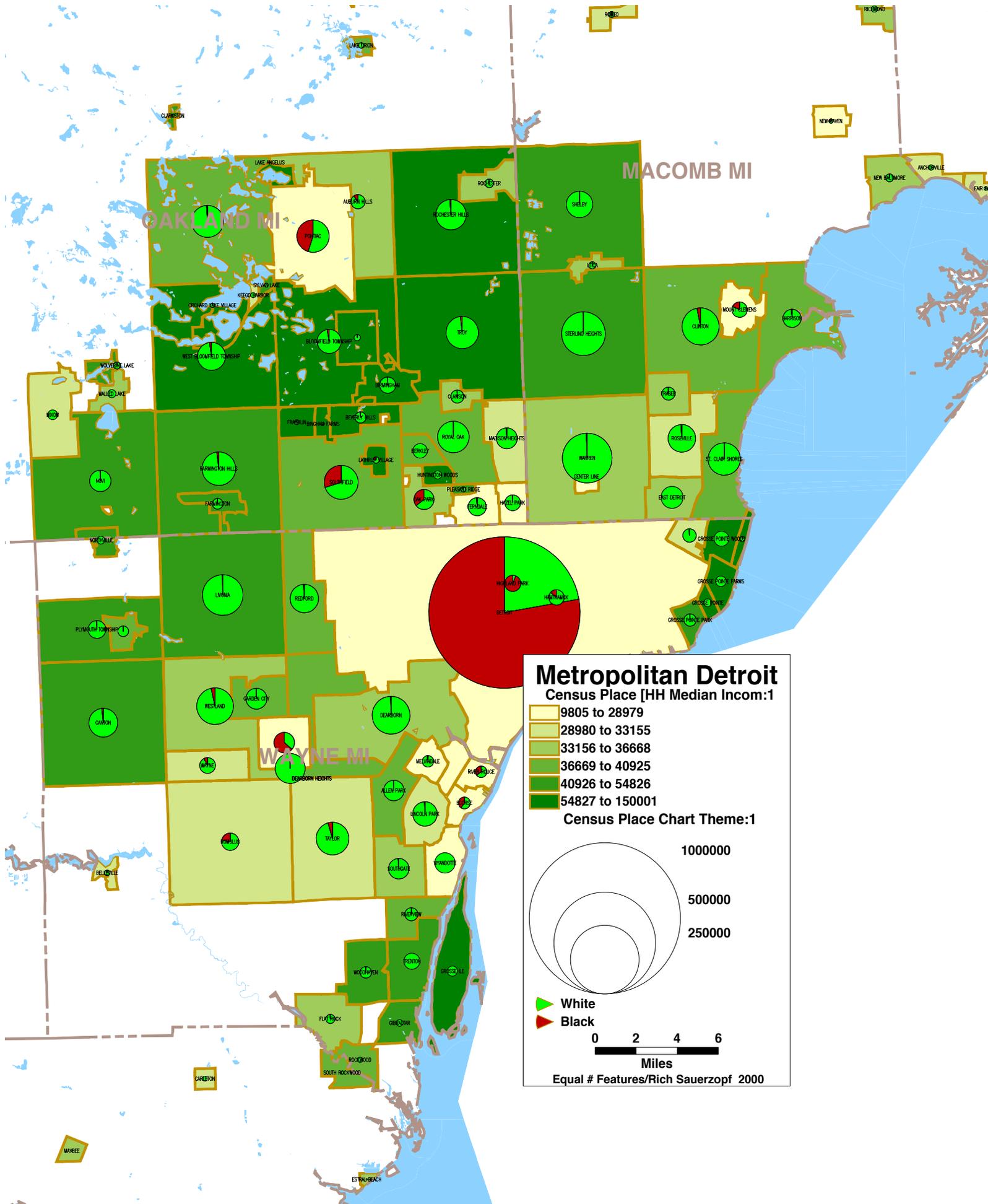
# FIGURE 12: CITY/SUBURBAN COMPARISON OF MEDIAN SPECIFIED OWNER OCCUPIED HOUSE VALUES

| MAJOR METROPOLITAN STATISTICAL AREAS (MSAs) | MSA 1990 MEDIAN SPECIFIED OWNER OCCUPIED HOUSE VALUE | CENTRAL CITY 1990 MEDIAN SPECIFIED OWNER OCCUPIED HOUSE VALUE<br>CC median house value | CENTRAL CITY % 1990 MSA HOUSE VALUE<br>CC% msa med hs value |
|---|--|--|---|
| <b>Detroit PMSA</b>                         | \$ 68 300  | \$ 25 600  | <b>37.5</b>   |
| <b>Phila. PMSA</b>                          | \$ 100 800   | \$ 49 400  | <b>49</b>   |
| <b>Baltimore MSA</b>                        | \$ 101 200   | \$ 54 700  | <b>54.1</b>   |
| <b>Cleveland PMSA</b>                       | \$ 74 100  | \$ 40 900  | <b>55.2</b>   |
| <b>Buffalo PMSA</b>                         | \$ 74 000  | \$ 46 700  | <b>63.1</b>   |
| <b>Milwaukee PMSA</b>                       | \$ 76 900  | \$ 53 500  | <b>69.6</b>   |
| <b>Chicago PMSA</b>                         | \$ 111 200   | \$ 78 700  | <b>70.8</b>   |
| <b>St. Louis MSA</b>                        | \$ 70 000  | \$ 50 700  | <b>72.4</b>   |
| <b>Pittsburgh PMSA</b>                      | \$ 55 600  | \$ 41 200  | <b>74.1</b>   |
| <b>Rochester MSA</b>                        | \$ 86 600  | \$ 65 200  | <b>75.3</b>   |
| <b>Hartford PMSA</b>                        | \$ 170 900   | \$ 133 800   | <b>78.5</b>   |
| <b>Minn-St. P. MSA</b>                      | \$ 88 700  | \$ 74 800  | <b>84.3</b>   |
| <b>Boston PMSA</b>                          | \$ 186 100   | \$ 161 400   | <b>86.7</b>   |
| <b>Cincinnati PMSA</b>                      | \$ 71 100  | \$ 61 900  | <b>87.1</b>   |
| <b>New York PMSA</b>                        | \$ 209 000   | \$ 189 600   | <b>90.7</b>   |
| <b>Indianapolis MSA</b>                     | \$ 66 800  | \$ 60 800  | <b>91</b>   |
| <b>Columbus MSA</b>                         | \$ 72 200  | \$ 66 000  | <b>91.4</b>   |

Figures from the 1990 Census of Population and Housing

| <b>CITY</b>               | <b>Median Household Income</b> | <b>% Metro Median HH Income</b> | <b>Population</b>       | <b>Range</b> | <b>Population Totals:</b> |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------|--------------|---------------------------|
| Waterford township (CDP)  | 39463                          | 114                             | 66692                   |              |                           |
| Riverview city            | 39735                          | 114.8                           | 13894                   |              |                           |
| Allen Park city           | 39925                          | 115.4                           | 31092                   |              |                           |
| Southfield city           | 40579                          | 117.2                           | 75728                   |              |                           |
| Farmington city           | 41040                          | 118.6                           | 10132                   |              |                           |
| Trenton city              | 41129                          | 118.8                           | 20586                   |              |                           |
|                           |                                |                                 | <b>110 Range Total:</b> |              | <b>360521</b>             |
| Sterling Heights city     | 46470                          | 134.3                           | 117810                  |              |                           |
| Canton Township (CDP)     | 47009                          | 135.8                           | 57047                   |              |                           |
| Woodhaven city            | 47513                          | 137.3                           | 11631                   |              |                           |
| Novi city                 | 47518                          | 137.3                           | 32998                   |              |                           |
| Shelby (township) CDP     | 47930                          | 138.5                           | 48655                   |              |                           |
|                           |                                |                                 | <b>130 Range Total:</b> |              | <b>268141</b>             |
| Livonia city              | 48645                          | 140.5                           | 100850                  |              |                           |
|                           |                                |                                 | <b>140 Range Total:</b> |              | <b>100850</b>             |
| Farmington Hills city     | 51986                          | 150.2                           | 74652                   |              |                           |
| Plymouth Township CDP     | 53806                          | 155.5                           | 23646                   |              |                           |
| Grosse Pointe Park city   | 54586                          | 157.7                           | 12857                   |              |                           |
| Rochester Hills city      | 54996                          | 158.9                           | 61766                   |              |                           |
|                           |                                |                                 | <b>150 Range Total:</b> |              | <b>172921</b>             |
| Troy city                 | 55407                          | 160.1                           | 72884                   |              |                           |
| Grosse Pointe Woods city  | 55657                          | 160.8                           | 17715                   |              |                           |
| Birmingham city           | 57573                          | 166.3                           | 19997                   |              |                           |
|                           |                                |                                 | <b>160 Range Total:</b> |              | <b>110596</b>             |
| Beverly Hills village     | 61941                          | 179                             | 10610                   |              |                           |
|                           |                                |                                 | <b>170 Range Total:</b> |              | <b>10610</b>              |
| Grosse Pointe Farms city  | 66844                          | 193.1                           | 10092                   |              |                           |
| W. Bloomfield Township CI | 68661                          | 198.4                           | 54843                   |              |                           |
|                           |                                |                                 | <b>190 Range Total:</b> |              | <b>64935</b>              |
| Bloomfield township CDP   | 84494                          | 244.1                           | 42137                   |              |                           |
|                           |                                |                                 | <b>240 Range Total:</b> |              | <b>42137</b>              |

**Figure 13 Distribution of Persons by Race, Place, and Income**



**Figure 14 Dispersion of House Values across Selected Detroit Area Places**

