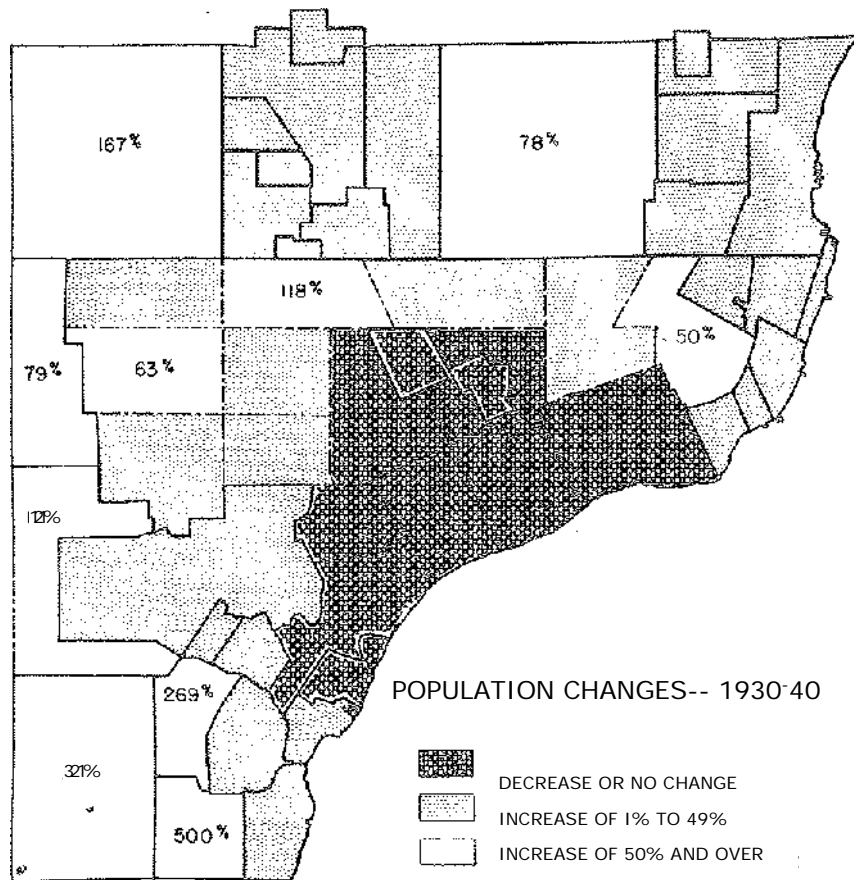


ABOUT DETROIT'S FUTURE -



A striking - actually alarming - trend is indicated by the above map of population changes in the eastern part of Wayne County since 1930. Very clearly, the pattern of population movement has been away from the center of Detroit and toward the outer sections of the City and the suburban municipalities. Being on a percentage basis, the map emphasizes the rate of change, rather than the number of people affected. However, it is the trend which is significant.

In the older sections of Detroit and the down-river communities, some areas have lost as much as 11.4% of their population in the last 10 years. The loss or stagnation is no longer confined "within the boulevard", but extends roughly to the area bounded by Livernois, McNichols and Conners Avenues plus the south-west area.

Surrounding these declining areas are sections which gained population by as much as 50% during the decade. For the most part these areas were annexed to Detroit during the 1920's. Beyond these areas, the suburban areas (generally shown in white) had population gains in excess of 50% - ranging up to 500%.

What are the causes of this movement and what are the implications?

- Is the natural deterioration and obsolescence of older residential properties (20 or more years old) responsible?

(OVER)

Continued on the Other Side

(OVER)

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- To what extent may the movement be attributed to increased prosperity and the desire of the people for more modern living accommodations?
- To what extent have the policies of the F.H.A. and other federal agencies been responsible for the moving to new areas?
- Has the automobile contributed to "flight from the city", and have one-way thoroughfares, wider highways, better synchronization of traffic lights, and improved methods of handling traffic aided and abetted by this "flight"?
- To what extent are the policies of the City government responsible for the outward growth of population, particularly policies related to high taxes, assessing practices, and a strict building code?
- As assessments must by law follow land utilization, what will be the effect on the total amount of taxes available from real property, and in turn what will this mean to City budgets and City services? Can Detroit continue to furnish present municipal services in the face of this population movement and consequent narrowing of the tax base?
- If, as is predicted by some, present rent ceilings and other economic controls are but forerunners of permanent governmental regulation of our social and economic life, what will be the effect on future assessments and in turn on the government of Detroit?
- As income producing property loses ability to produce profit, and is used for such purposes as parking lots, does this introduce a cycle of lessening the population which supports retail and similar types of business, which in turn produces further blight?
- Are there other solutions than to leave the entire matter to the federal government, through federal directed slum clearance projects and federal supervised low income home mortgages, giving a central governmental authority more and more control over local affairs.
- What is the cost to the City of this movement of population in terms of police protection, fire protection, school buildings (some partially filled, others overflowing), health services and hospitalization, garbage and rubbish collection and disposal, street and alley maintenance and cleaning costs, transportation, and similar activities?
- Will zoning in any way neutralize or aid in reversing the present trends?
- Is it true that some of our basic concepts of private property rights are the real impediments to a solution of this problem? Could the handling of tax delinquent property be improved?
- What is the economic cost of the present trends to taxpayers and property owners, and what would be the cost of a plan to modify them over a term of years?

Questions may never answer problems – these are suggestive only and are but a partial list of wonderings about the trend of population during the 1930's and the effect upon local government. The war and the rubber shortage will undoubtedly modify and deter some of these trends for a short time, but only temporarily.

Professor Charles E. Merriam of the University of Chicago, recently asked a further question in connection with the fact that "the city has been splintered to pieces by the trek toward the suburbs". He says: "I do not know the answer to this problem, the greatest that confronts the student of municipal finances. Before me on my desk lie a series of proposed solutions, some of which seem plausible and others hardly worth serious consideration – but we cannot remain inactive in a rapidly changing situation...there must be careful and patient research, there must be cold and courageous invention, there must be sound and practical judgment....shall we drift or plan?"