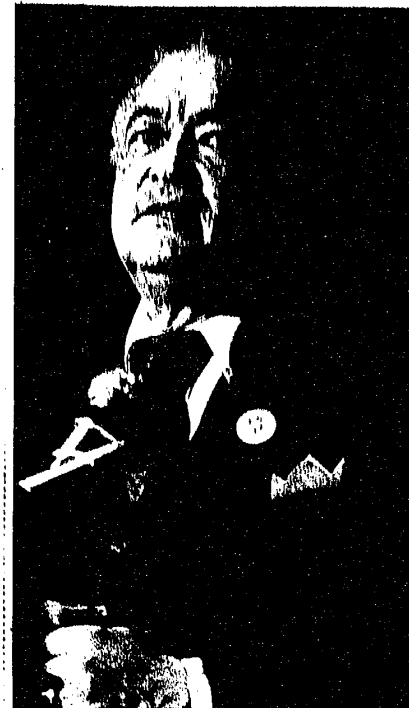




Detroit Mayor Coleman Young visited Birmingham this week as part of mayor's exchange day. Young said the two cities share some common problems, including a declining population and aging housing. (Staff photo by Stephen Smitrell)

Hand-in-hand

Young: Detroit and suburbs should step together

By BARBARA CRONIN

Detroit Mayor Coleman Young called on Birmingham this week, the city's eighth visit.

Before he left Birmingham Monday during mayor's exchange day of Mid-June Week, Young said, "I promise to be back and I want you all to come down and look me over."

A smiling Young had found the city before launching at the Community House with many of Birmingham's problems and present city officials.

He began his visit by saying to some "most impressed with the similarities between Detroit and Birmingham than with the differences."

After citing some of the similarities and common problems of the two, which create "mutual needs," Young said, "The basis for unity between us is very real, and the need for that unity is even more real."

BIRMINGHAM AND Detroit have some similar problems, Young said, with the difference one of proportion.

"I don't think you have the same discrepancies in terms of income or the rich diversity of ethnicity," he said. Young said he had visited older areas of Birmingham and observed the attempts being made to preserve them.

"Perhaps you learned a lesson from us," he said. Detroit made some mistakes in its early attempts at urban renewal, he said. "The bulldozers cut a wide swath, taking the good with the bad. They took more good than bad. We learned from that experience, and now we are trying to protect the sound buildings."

He noted the contrast between the Renaissance Center and the next-door neighbor, Mariners Church.

"IT IS NOT incongruous that the church should sit there. There is room for the old to be right beside the new."

Young discussed the most recent population projections for southeastern

Michigan developed by DEKOR (Birmingham) Michigan Council of Government.

"For the first time, they went beyond Detroit in projecting declines in population," he said. "There is a new thing around Detroit that includes Birmingham, Dearborn, Troy and Livonia, projecting a steadily declining population as the whole area expands."

"Eventually, we will reach the point where we run out of farmland and have to build everything up. We are building everything up duplicate, cutting out over 100,000 acres and adding on children with great debt."

"We are meeting with the council now, paying over natural areas even that in balance the ecological system," Young said.

MR. SAID he wanted to challenge BIRMINGHAM for "continually finding new areas when we have healthy cities that are deteriorating, cities that are now being restored with public better than anything we could build today."

Young had high praise for the 50-year-old Community House, saying, "Where can you go today to a building as striking as this?"

He indicated the "real fireplace, wooden floors, beamed ceiling, plaster walls."

"Only in America do we build and 30 years later tear down and build something else."

A city like Birmingham is "an important center for the area surrounding it, it serves a function," Young said.

"HISTORY RECORDS that no land has lived long after the deterioration of its cities. If we have learned anything from history, it is that cities are vital, all cities are inter-related."

Young said that his efforts to bring the 1982 Super Bowl to the Pontiac Silverdome he knew "what is good for Pontiac is also good for Detroit. The inter-relationship there is pretty clear."

The biggest change taking place in America today is rapid growth, Young said. He cited the shifting of people, industry and business from the midwest and midwest sections of the country to the south and southwest.

"Birmingham, Detroit and Livonia might be coming together to see how they can actually strengthen each other to restore health to this region," he said.

"We better be aware that we are not making other mistakes that Detroit came from beyond this area. We need to pull up forces that is the last place I am here today."



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