

Slump

Housing starts dip 23% in 1979

Residential building permits issued last year in the seven-county southeast Michigan area dropped nearly 23 percent from 1978.

A recently issued Southeast Michigan Council of Governments (SEMCOG) report shows that among the larger growing cities and townships of the late 1970s, only Farmington Hills issued more single and multi-

ple family building permits last year (1,622) than in 1978 (1,552).

"It wasn't a great year for new housing starts," said SEMCOG representative James Thomas.

HOUSING GROWTH slowed considerably last year in Canton Township, according to SEMCOG. Canton led the region in 1978 with 1,813 sin-

gle and multi-family permits issued. Last year, the western Wayne County township authorized 721 residential units, a decline of 60 percent.

Avon Township and Troy also showed sharp declines in housing growth last year. Avon issued 840 single and multiple dwelling permits in 1979, down from 940 from 1978. Troy approved nearly 700 housing units last year, down some 360 from 1978.

According to SEMCOG, new single family housing in Farmington Hills and Avon Township last year accounted for 11 percent of the total regional single family permits.

Farmington Hills, Detroit and Clinton and Shelby townships in Macomb County accounted for 37.5 percent of the total new multiple family housing in the region. Farmington Hills approved 890 multi-family housing starts, Detroit, 775.

THOMAS SAID the regional residential construction report, issued annually by SEMCOG, is a further indication that the metropolitan Detroit region can expect only moderate growth in the years ahead.

Thomas said "1980 is extremely down," due to the lingering economic recession.

All of the region's seven counties except Monroe showed building permit reductions in 1979, according to the SEMCOG report. Oakland showed the largest numeric drop, from 12,279 in 1978 to 8,374 last year.

Permits issued last year by Wayne County communities other than Detroit were down 23 percent.

Detroit issued 162 more permits last year than in 1978. Demolition permits issued by Detroit decreased nearly 28 percent last year from 6,153 in 1978 to 4,438.

FOR THE tri-county (Oakland, Wayne, Macomb) area, building permits were down 21 percent last year.

Nearly 15,400 new single, two-family and multi-family housing starts were approved in the three counties in 1978. That figure dropped to just over 12,000 last year.

The peak housing year during the past 20 years was 1971, when more than 32,000 permits were issued in the three counties.

Three years later, with the advent of the 1974-75 economic recession, housing permits issued in the three counties plummeted to 9,649.

SEMCOG is a voluntary association of governmental units in Livingston, Macomb, Monroe, Oakland, St. Clair, Washtenaw and Wayne counties.

It proposes regional policies in housing and community development, transportation, land use, water and air quality and other environmental areas.

Its plans are subject to approval of local elected officials from member communities.

Michigan trails in retail trade

In what may come as no surprise to Michigan residents, the state ranks first in new car registrations per capita — and most of those cars are American-made.

But while residents may buy a lot of new cars, the overall gain in retail trade lags behind the rest of the nation, according to David I. Verway, a research professor in the Graduate School of Business Administration at Michigan State University.

Statistics compiled by the Census of Retail Trade show that the state's retail trade grew by 5.5 percent between 1972 and 1977, lagging behind the national average of 58 percent. That puts Michigan 12th from the bottom if the states are ranked from the biggest increases to the least increases.

According to Verway, grocery store sales in the state increased by 39 percent during that five-year period, much below the national average of 58 percent, and that's the main reason overall sales lagged behind the national average.

Smaller families, particularly those without children who eat out in restaurants, and fewer people stocking provisions at their summer cottages has hurt grocery store sales in the state, said Verway.

Places to eat are more common than any other type of retail establishment, both in Michigan and nationwide, according to Verway. In 1977, eating establishments in the state employed 142,000 people, or 27 percent of all retail employees; but because they are so labor intensive, they accounted for only 7 percent of the retail sales in the state.

The number of gasoline service stations in the state dropped from 8,919 in 1972 to 6,572 in 1977, but because of the increase in the price of a gallon of gas,

sales increased from \$1.4 billion to \$2.5 billion.

Michigan's interest in buying American-made cars is seen in several other statistics, said Verway. For one, the state ranked 42nd in registrations for new imported cars. In addition, the Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that vehicle purchases accounted for 8.9 percent of a Detroit Household's total expenditures, compared with 7.4 percent for urban households in the nation as a whole.

And sales of used cars in the state were depressed compared with sales in other states. High salaries and lower new car prices are the reason, Verway said.

Within the state, retail sales in the central business districts in Muskegon, East Lansing, Ann Arbor and Battle Creek, showed increases in sales between 1972 and 1977. Figures were not available for 1972 in Pontiac and Kalamazoo.

Grand Rapids and Bay City grew little during those five years, while those in Lansing and Jackson declined somewhat.

And those in Flint and Detroit declined sharply.

Help out these kids!

Family Foster Care is a temporary placement in Wayne County for children whose physical or emotional needs cannot be met by their parents.

Catholic Social Services is looking for families to care for these children. An orientation meeting will be held for anyone interested in the program at 7:30 p.m. Wednesday, July 2.

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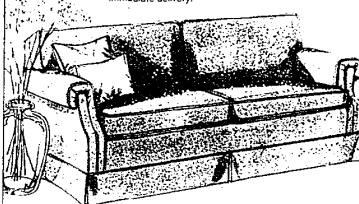
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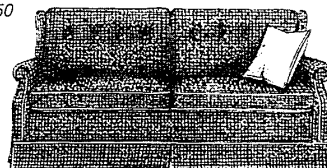
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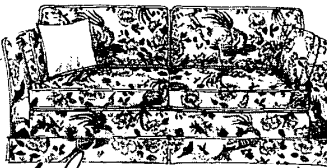


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