

# 'Greedy developers' didn't start sprawl: EMEAC panel

By Tim RICHARD  
STAFF WRITER

People spend hours commuting to work, pave meadows for parking lots and abandon older cities because they want it that way, a panel of experts said.

It was shocking news to members of East Michigan Environmental Action Council, to whom warring fossil fuel and sprawling development are fighting words.

"We're making some terrible, terrible decisions," said Edward Hustoles, deputy director of the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments. "Some drivers who spend three hours on the road say it's the best quality time of life."

"We'll cheat our wives and families of quality time for that God-giv-

en right to drive a car," said Gloria Jeff, the Michigan Department of Transportation's deputy director of planning.

The panelists, speaking at EMEAC's day-long symposium on land use recently in Troy, agreed that "greedy developers" weren't the prime cause of urban sprawl — the tendency to eat up land for faster than warranted by population growth.

Detroit and suburban governments merely reflected community values, they said.

"My first answer (to the forces behind urban sprawl) was greedy developers," said John Gallagher, real estate columnist for the Detroit Free Press. "Then I sat down and read the codes. They're planned."

They're the very best product of professional planners in America."

"No one thought the freeways would empty out Detroit," said SEMCOG's Hustoles. "We thought that the Depression was an aberration (with two kids per family instead of six). We were planning for growth to eight million (in southeastern Michigan). Detroit zoned commercial land for 11 million people."

"The individual decisions were very logical. But it's when you put them together that they become illogical on a broad basis," Hustoles said. (The region's population is about 4.4 million; Detroit's, barely one million.)

"I came from New York 40 years ago and was with the Detroit Plan-

ning Commission when the (freeway) system was planned," said Charles Leman, president of Villi can Leman & Associates, which has worked for 200 area governments.

"The pressure wasn't from the suburbs. It was from Detroit and the suburbs to relieve congestion on Detroit streets."

Defending the role of planning professionals, Leman said, "We were listening to the people."

Lenders, with "money to burn" in the '80s, got some blame from Mary Kramer, editor of Crain's Detroit Business. She noted that Comerica

paid for an Auburn Hills study that resulted in the use of a downtown development authority in a greenfield for a business development.

EMEAC members and MDOT's top planner disagreed on the forthcoming Haggerty Road connector, a lower-scale substitute for the scrapped M-275 freeway from I-96 in Novi to I-76 in Davisburg.

To environmentalists, the Haggerty connector will attract growth. "We don't need it, and it shouldn't be built," said the Free Press' Gallagher to much applause.

Replied MDOT's Jeff: "We didn't

build it (M-275), and they came anyway. It (Haggerty connector) is a response to the people who are there. We will not build M-275. But it's unfair to characterize" the Haggerty connector as spawning growth.

SEMCOG's Hustoles summed it up: "Decisions always have gray areas. There were safety questions, and there was a demand for it. It's always glamorous to build a thing the first time and cut the ribbon. It's not glamorous to repair an old sewer. But we have to do both — build the new and repair the old."

## New fee to fund children's trust

For the first time since it was started a decade ago, the state children's trust fund will have its own source of funds.

The state Senate last week approved two bills to place a \$4 charge on the issuance of birth certificates. Sen. Robert Geake, R-Northville, sponsor of the bills, said it would produce an estimated \$612,000 annually for state grants to combat

child abuse.

So far the children's trust fund has been paid for only by voluntary checkoffs on state personal income tax returns.

An aide to Geake said donations reached \$1.3 million in 1987 but tapered off to \$1.1 million last year.

The state was running recession deficits when the fund was begun in 1982, so the Legislature adopted the

voluntary contribution system.

The state fee would be levied on top of whatever charge a local clerk made for a birth certificate.

Senate Bill 208, to impose the fee, was passed 31-4 with support from all area senators. SB 209, allocating the money to the children's trust fund, won 32-0 approval. Six senators were absent.

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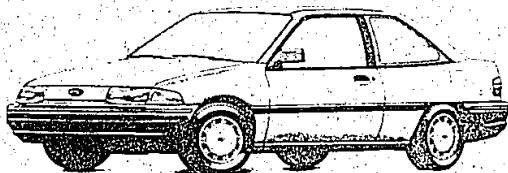
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