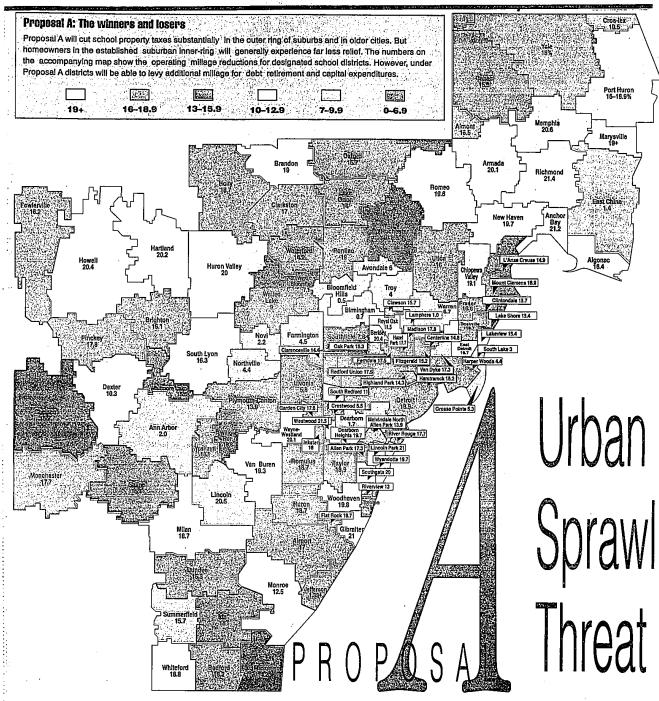
SUBURBAN LIFE

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By Tim Richard

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any suburban residents will

see little or no property tax reschool finance reform plan on
the June 2 ballot.

They live in districts that form a lopsided "\" on a map of southeastern
Michigan (see color map). They tend to
have good business tax bases.

One arm of the "\" starts in the Warren Woods district of Macomb County,
then meanders west across the Rochester,
Troy. Bloomfield Hills, Birmingham,
Southfield, Farmington and Novi districts.

The second arm starts in western
Wayne County at Dearborn and extends
northwest through the Crestwood, Livonis and Northville districts.

The two arms join at Ann Arbor, the
base of the "\"."

According to a state Senate Fiscal
Agency analysis, those districts get zero
to B mills of property tax relief.

Meanwhile, districts in northern Macomb, northern and western Oakland,
southwestern Wayne and much of Washtenaw County get cuts of 14 to 21 mills.

A lure to industry

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"It will help us attract industry," said

Proposal A supporter Michael Duggan, deputy Wayne County oxecutive.

Under current tax rates, Duggan socs Troy, for example, as luring the industry that he wants to recruit for Detroit, Taylor, Romulus and southwestern Wayne County.

Most public officials won't talk about it, but Proposal A raises the specter of "urban sprawl"—a stable population that pares over more farmland, meadows and wetlands for development.

Proposal A's pattern of property tax cuts appears, from this newspaper's maps, to contain an incentive for industry and commerce to move to the suburban frings greenbelt if they need large tracts of land.

Detroit and the inner belt of suburba

land.

Detroit and the inner belt of suburbs
also would see attractive property tax
cuts, but they have other built-in disadvantages: high city taxes, little available
land, abandoned industrial sites that
may noed to be cleaned up and, in some
cases, high crime.

'Sprawl' blasted

"Urban sprawi" has been studied for three years and condemned by the South-east Michigan Council of Governments, a seven-county planning agency. SEMCOG spokesman Don Shelton

said leaders would decline to comment on this newspaper's study of Proposal A's potential impact on rural greenfields. SEMCOG's pra-1993 Regional Development Initiative study said: "Continuing the pattern of 'urban sprawl' is unacceptable. It will continue to diminish the quality of life in southeast Michigan—both lie expensive suburban frings development and its parallel disinvestment and sbandomment of older communities."

In 1990 SEMCOG projected that by 2010 the region's population would grownly of percent, but sprawling development will eat up 40 percent more land. It would be due not to growth but to "an intra-regional shuffling of population, households and commercial/industrial development."

nation of some wetlands and stress on others, and loss of open space."

SEMCOG saw the federal government as subsidizing growth through aid to local governments for sewers, water lines, highways and schools. The feds aided veterans with housing while "walking away" from older areas' social problems.

"Public subsidies have fueled sprawl at the suburban fringe, but have generally not been as available to older communities for fighting the ravages of disinvestment and abandonment," the RDI report said.

ment and abandonment, 'the RDI report and 'such areas are generally found in the northern and western portions of Oakland and Macomb counties, the western part of Wayne County and in the urbanizing areas of the four perimeter counties: Livingston, Monroo, St. Clair and Washtensw."

The "fings" areas are precisely the ones that would benefit most from Proposal A.

SEMCOG's writers scoffed at the idea that parawl is just "pure market forces at work" because "Those market forces at work" because "Those market forces have been solidly underwritten by a variety of local, state and federal subaidy programs."

Opposite view

State Sen. David Honigman, R-West

Bloomfield, a staunch supporter of Proposal A, argued it will hinder, not aid, uran sprawl. By holding down frings area properly taxes, Proposal A will decrease the pressure on owners of vacant property to sell to a developer, Honigman said.

In the State Capitol, Proposal A was born as a plan to cut school operating property taxes from a statewide average of 34-plus mills to 18 mills and assure every school district at least 44,800 per pupil in revenue, either from local taxes or state aid.

But there was a hitch: an 18-mill levy would have hurt many schools in the tricounty area that were spending far more than 34,800. Proposal A allows them to continue levying millage rates up to 27 mills that will raise \$5,000, \$5,000, \$5,000, \$3,000 or whatever they had been spending. That's why the suburban districts in the lopsided "Y" get such low property tax cuts.

Lawmakers designed Proposal A during the last weekend in March and pushed it through both chambers in two days. Lawmakers never raised the "urban spraw!" issue. Two University of Michigan economists who specialize in state tax policy and last week they had not analyzed the impact of Proposal A on urban spraw! aptewl.