

Industrial diversification is easier said than done

Second in a series

By TOM LONERGAN

With the auto industry still reeling from the second major economic slump since 1974, development of a diversified job-base in southeast Michigan has taken on a greater urgency.

The total number of jobs in the seven counties of southeast Michigan increased between 1970 and 1977. But the number of manufacturing jobs declined, according to the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments (SEMCOG).

SEMCOG, a government-funded regional planning agency, recently drew a summary profile of the region.

The manufacturing decline has meant increased unemployment and a shift to more non-manufacturing, lower-paying service sector jobs.

"THERE'S BEEN a switch from a great reliance on manufacturing jobs to that of the service sector," said Michael Glusac, SEMCOG executive director.

In 1970, manufacturing provided about 51 percent of the region's jobs, reports SEMCOG. By 1977, manufacturing jobs dipped to 46 percent of jobs regionally. During the same period, non-manufacturing jobs increased from 29 to 33 percent of the region's job base.

While there's no question the auto industry remains the region's largest job provider for the foreseeable future, it's not expected to return to pre-recession employment levels.

Two new automated plants are planned for early 1980s production in Oakland County and central Detroit, but they will be replacing old, out-moded facilities.

"We see (manufacturing jobs) as being a declining portion," said Daniel Luria, of the UAW's Research Department. But the union hasn't made any estimates of the loss, he added.

A RECENT study co-sponsored by the Greater Detroit Chamber of Commerce identified six industries "that have the best shot at surviving other than the auto industry," according to

Arthur Saltzman, the chamber's vice president for economic development.

The study was conducted by two Wayne State University economics professors. Their criteria included average wages paid, the type of skilled workforce needed, capital investment required and product demand.

The industries given the best chance at survival include:

- Meat packing.
- Manufacture of plastics materials and resins.
- Industrial and organic chemicals.
- Farm machinery and equipment.
- Electronics and computer equipment.

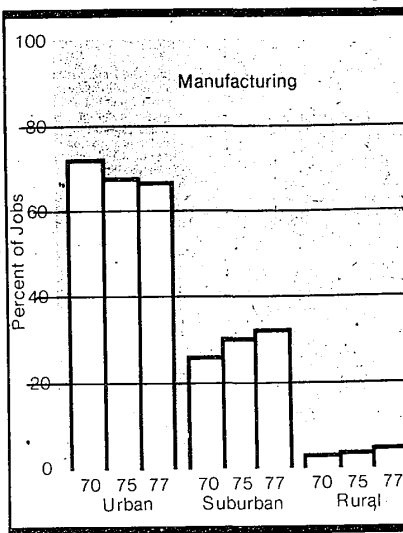
The study will be used by the chamber, Saltzman said, to encourage similar industries here to expand and to recruit.

"None of these industries is particularly labor intensive," said Saltzman. "You've got to be in the service industry for that. These are mostly capital intensive industries."

DIVERSIFICATION of the region's industrial base is "absolutely essential," says SEMCOG's Glusac, "so we don't live or die on the auto industry." Achieving a mix will be difficult.

First, there's competition with other urban areas of the country, he said.

(Continued on Page 15A)



Manufacturing jobs have declined as a whole in southeast Michigan, and there has been a slight shift to the suburbs.

Real estate seminar set for buyers

Overflow response has prompted the Western Wayne Oakland County Board of REALTORS to schedule a second public seminar on home buying. It is a repeat of an October session that was booked to capacity nearly two weeks in advance.

The new seminar in the 300-seat auditorium of Livonia's City Hall will start at 7:30 p.m. on Tuesday, Nov. 25.

While the presentation is open to the public without charge, reservations are again requested by calling the Board of Realtors at 478-1700.

John J. Halser, WWOBCB president, said, "While some attendees display a great deal of knowledge about the real estate market, most are potential first-time buyers."

"Obviously, they hope to learn as much about the market and the buying process as they can before making a move. This coincides with our goals for these educational sessions. It is actually a two-way learning process made possible by the question-and-answer period included in each session."

The seminar features a panel of experts who provide short talks on the roles of real estate agents and attorneys, affordability, financing, loan qualification, the buying process and related subjects.

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