

What kind of help does the city of Detroit need?



STEVEN SIVAK

The realm of the architect extends much further than just buildings. Looking at the condition and situation of Detroit I am sure that most architects in the metropolitan area have comments, and theories about how to save the city and what its problems are. I would like to offer my two cents on the situation. My hope is that this article might be read by those whose jobs it is to solve these problems.

I approach the issues and

problems of Detroit having both grown up in Southfield and having spent 15 years in a variety of other cities including Berkeley, Calif., Milwaukee, Princeton, N.J., Boston/Cambridge, New York City and Seattle. Most are extremely livable and are places that people want to live in. They are places that people live in and enjoy themselves in.

They offer variety, they grow and prosper and in so doing they create neighborhoods that create differing places to be. Seattle and Boston are great examples of this. Even the more humble areas are still proud and polished. Seattle, for example, has lots of free activities, a great parks system, good restaurants and a solid and successful indus-

try to keep the cash flowing. This, however, is Detroit. Let's compare it to another Rust Belt city, Cleveland, which, I understand, has done a remarkable job of renovating itself.

I find the recent wave of large-scale projects in Detroit to be funny choices for a city so in need of so much. The fundamental need is jobs that pay middle-income wages so that stable family structures can be reformed into the city.

With these kinds of jobs, an economy can be created that takes such wages and buys goods and services, which then trickle down and create prosperity through an entire city. Salaries buy clothing, which then creates income for those employees who

buy any number of goods and services from other vendors. Those jobs will create cash flow, which will enable residents of the city to renovate their houses and neighborhoods. Real jobs form the very basic level of prosperity for a city and region.

The misguided thinking began in the '70s with the construction of the Renaissance Center. Basically a walled-off introspective high-rise, which stole a majority of its tenants from other buildings in the city.

Although much more beneficial to the city, the dual stadiums are similar in their negative effects to the city. How so? They are merely entertainment, and the users of the stadiums merely drive in on the freeways, buy a

few dogs, pay for parking and then get in their cars and go home. No neighborhoods have been created; the jobs that are available are low paying service jobs, and did the streets get any safer for this huge undertaking? I doubt it.

Sure, stadiums in a prosperous city are great and form part of the aura and youth vision behind any large city in America. Imagine New York without Yankee stadium - it just does not seem to be American. I am sure the stadium will make all kinds of money for the state and certainly for its investors, but the drive from Woodward from Jefferson will be as depressing, scary and downright pathetic as ever. Following this line of thought

would make one wonder about the logic of Engle's proposed car-racing venue for the State Fairgrounds - again entertainment and nothing more.

The casino issue is as bad, but I agree with the Mayor Archer; that it is better to have the cash remain in Detroit than wind up in Windsor.

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