

OBSERVATION POINT

Suburbs' Business Boom Creates New Kind Of City

By Philip H. Power
Publisher

Ernst & Ernst, a prestigious old accounting firm, is moving its offices from Detroit to Southfield.

The Automobile Club of Michigan is moving to Dearborn. Pan American, Eastern, Swissair, Delta and United Airlines are all moving to the suburbs, mostly Southfield.

Every day comes news of another business pulling out of the central city and moving to the suburbs. It's even got to be a joke, so that no company president is safe from being ribbed at a party about moving his offices to Southfield.

But the exodus from Detroit has not only been to Southfield. Farmington, Livonia, Plymouth, Westland - all have experienced a boom in business construction, and there is no reason to think that it will stop in the foreseeable future.

THIS IS because the reasons firms have for moving to the suburbs are not the kind which can easily be ignored or changed.

High crime rate in Detroit is perhaps the biggest. Companies are afraid of their employees being mugged or molested while walking to and from parking lots. Theft of purses and business equipment from downtown offices are common. Under these conditions, employee morale suffers.

High crime rates breed high insurance costs, in some cases over 30% higher in Detroit than in the suburbs.

Although land in the suburbs is often more expensive than in Detroit, businesses have found that reduced costs in insurance and security systems and better employee morale more than make up for the difference.

Parking downtown is expensive, too, making it hard for companies to recruit workers, particularly when they are competing against suburb based companies with free parking lots.

Mass transit is also a factor. The Detroit area has notoriously poor mass transit facilities, and that makes it hard for customers and workers from outside the central city to get in and work or shop.

A CURIOSITY is that with the exodus from Detroit to the suburbs going on at a rapid rate, there are many multi-million dollar structures going up in the very central area of Detroit.

Michigan Bell is spending \$41 million for a new building. Burroughs is putting \$35 million into expansion, and Blue Cross-Blue Shield has \$34 million in a building. There will be a \$49.5

million addition to Harper Hospital, and \$2 million is being spent on Children's Hospital.

These structures, however, do not represent a wholesale building boom throughout Detroit. Although the number of new businesses opening up in Detroit each year is greater than the number leaving, the majority of these new establishments are very small.

In 1970, an estimated 2,000 businesses opened up in Detroit. But only 100 were worth more than \$10,000.

THE RUSH from Detroit has benefited the suburbs enormously. Southfield, in particular, has

reaped the harvest of development and tax base. But other suburbs in the northwest corridor have been helped, and it can be predicted that the boom will go on.

This trend means quite clearly that the old notion that the suburbs are nothing more than bedroom towns servicing the business and industry of Detroit is dead. The suburbs are coming into their own, with their own industry and business base, with employees and management staff living in the same or bordering suburban communities.

It's a very important trend, and one matched only by the curiosity of the new multi-million

dollar buildings going up in the heart of Detroit. It may be that eventually we will have a situation in which the suburbs and the heart of downtown Detroit are thriving, while the rest of the central city is caught in the vice of poverty and business depression.

If that happens, we might be able to get to downtown Detroit to pay our Michigan Bell bill at their new building, but we'd have to do so in an armored car.

Some rational policy for working out business development on a regional basis has to take place before that happens. The only problem is that it doesn't seem to be in anybody's interest to do it.

R.T. Thompson writes

Where Are Those Who Saw Car Run Down Girl?

It's unbelievable but true.

On June 1, more than a month ago, a high school senior was run down and killed in broad daylight; the driver sped away and hasn't been apprehended yet.

For four weeks the grieving parents have been mourning the loss of their oldest daughter... a member of the graduating class at Livonia Bentley High... and they can't understand why no one has come forward to help police catch the hit-runner.

There isn't anything worse in this whole wide world than a motorist killer who runs down and kills a pedestrian and then zips away, hoping that his identity will never be known.

It hardly ever works out that way. Eventually someone steps forward and gives the information

to the police that they have been seeking so long.

It probably will happen in this case but one wonders how anyone can be that hardened that he or she will keep ducking away, ducking away from the truth and still show his or her face in public just as if nothing has happened.

The hit-and-run death occurred around 4:30 in the afternoon on Henry Ruff Road in Livonia. That's in a subdivision where there isn't a direct through street to Schoolcraft for the driver to make a hurried exit. The person at the wheel either had to drive screeching through the neighborhood and gradually work out to Schoolcraft... or must be a resident of the area and raced down a street or two and then into the garage at his or her home.

IT WOULDN'T be a bit surprising to discover the driver lives within a block or perhaps two from the scene of the accident.

The one at the wheel could conceivably be a neighbor of the dead girl and her parents.

The Livonia police have been tracking down all leads and they had quite a few within a matter of days but thus far they all have been fruitless.

The police can't do it all themselves. They must have the help of witnesses and they are convinced that there are people who saw the accident, saw the car speed away, saw what kind of car it was and saw the driver, probably someone that they know.

It's high time that these persons stepped forward and revealed to the police what they

know. It's time the residents of the neighborhood stand up and get counted.

We wonder how these people would feel if it was their daughter who had been killed at what should have been the happiest moment for the victim and her parents... the first high school graduation.

HOW WOULD you feel if one of your children had been struck down and weeks passed with no knowledge of who did it? Then place yourself in the position of the parents, perhaps your neighbors, who have had this thing going on and on for more than four weeks.

Somewhere in Livonia there is a killer. Somewhere in the neighborhood are persons who

know how the accident happened and know who was driving the car. The police need your help, the parents need your help, the community needs your help... they need it right now, not tomorrow but today.

We have a strong belief that somewhere in the community are parents who believe they are protecting a son or daughter who was at the wheel of the death vehicle. If not parents, then there is a family protecting a father or mother who was driving the car.

Let your conscience be your guide, but we hope that a conscience-stricken person will come forward to ease his or her mind. Also, it will take a big load off two parents who are still in a state of shock and will be until they know who killed their daughter.

Guest Editorial

Collegian Speaks Up

By LINDA ZAVITZ
Eastern Michigan University

Why is our educational system failing? Why is there an ever increasing amount of drop-outs? The answer to both of these questions is, our grading system and the chronological method of dividing students into class levels.

Grades don't prove the intellectual ability of a student because of the fact, all teachers grade differently. Teachers all present specific standards that they expect their students to

meet, and if they don't they receive poor grades.

GRADES ARE NOT a learning device for children, they are only a hindrance to the learning process. With grades, learning becomes no longer an enjoyable experience, but instead, it becomes a process of merely memorizing information and regurgitating it.

What our educational system fails to recognize is that every student is an individual, with different needs, and interests and most important different intellectual capacities. Why downgrade a student because he is a slow learner?

The present system of classifying students according to age puts a great deal of pressure on the slow learners. They become discouraged because they know that, no matter how hard they try they still will only get average, or failing grades.

These are the students who drop out of school and join the list of unemployed young people.

Also, what happens to the quick learners? Why should they be forced to remain in a classroom where the educational material is elementary to them.

All I am saying is, give all students an equal opportunity for an education. How? By classifying students according to their achievement ability and by eliminating our present grading system, and instead grade according to the progress a student achieves as an individual.

Jackie Klein writes

Agreement Ends Long Fights

The recently resolved dispute over the height of the proposed 12-story Raleigh House Hotel in Southfield will carve an ample niche in the city's history. It could also be an example to other Observerland communities.

The agreement marks "finis" to year long skirmishes and negotiations between some 800 homeowners who live between Lahser and Telegraph, 10 Mile and 10 1/2 Mile, and Sammy Lieberman, executive vice president of Raleigh House Caterers, acting on behalf of developers of the proposed hotel on Telegraph near 10 Mile.

RESIDENTS JOINED forces against the hotel's originally proposed 14 stories. A strong coalition of five homeowner groups used city hall facilities for sessions with developers.

The agreement sets a classic example of resident-petitioner-city hall cooperation minus court intervention and plus the potential strength of logical thinking homeowner groups.

It points up what can be accomplished through cool, rational give and take, leaving accusations out of debates, and enlisting the invaluable support of city officials who don't take kindly to emotional name calling.

On the face of it, the Raleigh House agreement with its

compromise reduction of two stories doesn't appear to make major waves. But as the homeowners' attorney Jeffrey Leib puts it, the long list of fringe benefits which are part of the hotel site plan make the agreement a hefty compromise package.

IT'S A MATTER of a bird in the hand being worth more than chasing one around the bush, because homeowners most likely would not have gotten all those concessions had they gone to court. And lawsuits are not famous for cementing good neighbor relations.

It's far better to have men like Southfield City Administrator Peter Cristiano sitting on both sides of the negotiating table, lending a stabilizing influence, than a court judge who might humiliate the homeowners' appeals.

And there's much to be said for the expertise of City Planner Don Gross and Traffic Engineer Roger Smith and the dignity of Basil Natoci, president of one of the homeowner associations, who truly represented his people. And young attorney Lieb didn't rush headlong into a lengthy court suit which would have hit his clients hard in their pockets.

Not to be ignored is the added cost to developers. Conditions of

the agreement, signed by Lieberman, cannot be called "peanuts" even when added to the price of the \$7 million hotel.

Erecting a six foot high, 50-foot-long berm along Berg and landscaping it with year round vegetation perpetually sprinkled and maintained, isn't cheap.

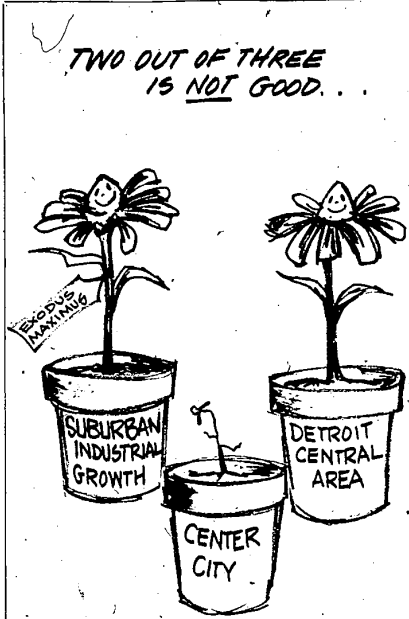
Neither is using brick on the hotel's east facade similar to that of the catering house or conforming to some of the agreement's architectural requirements.

THE AGREEMENT calls for a lot of other protections like low intensity lighting, lighted marquees related to Telegraph, no roof signs and no access to Berg.

In exchange, residents agreed to support the site plan along with a few variances developers will request of the city's zoning appeal board.

All in all, what transpired around the bargaining table at numerous sessions paid off substantially in tangible benefits, good relations, and possible future victories for other concerned, co-operative property owner groups.

It proves you can fight the establishment and win if you keep your cool and persevere.



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