

Detroit foreshadows wealth distribution and socialism

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by Randy Bright



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Three years ago I read an article about Detroit, the once vibrant city that has now been in decline for many years. The article (on www.structurehub.com) expressed great optimism for the city's future, in part because of its decommissioning of much of the city's residential areas.

The author wrote, "Over the years, hundreds of companies – of all kinds, not just manufacturers – fled to outlying suburbs (where employees had long since moved) or worse, overseas (where employees could not compete)" and "if ever there was a place where citizens need visionary leadership, courageous creativity, and determined optimism, it is Detroit, where "the estimated functional illiteracy rate in the city limits hovers near 50 percent. The unsolved murder rate is about 70 percent, and unemployment is around an astonishing 29 percent."

Detroit had done numerous downtown projects including two new stadiums, theaters, parks and re-used skyscrapers, but in 2010 its downtown was still "home to hundreds of under-used, abandoned, or dilapidated buildings." Out of Detroit's city limit area of 140 square miles, downtown occupied 10 square miles, and 50 square miles of its outlying urban neighborhoods were vacant or abandoned properties.

To reduce crime and city maintenance costs, Detroit began bulldozing homes, placing them into "land banks" to be held until the economy improves, or renovated, paid for by a \$233 million grant from the federal government made possible by us, the US taxpayers.

About a month after that article was written, the Detroit News reported that "the mayor is forming plans to relocate residents from empty neighborhoods to more populated areas to reflect the city's decline in population to about 900,000 from 1.8 million in 1950," and that the city was hiring a renowned urban planner to help plan the downsizing of the city. That downsizing was to include the cessation of city services (water, police, fire, etc.) in some neighborhoods.

In an interview later that year in www.architectmagazine.com, the planner was asked, “Won’t some people, in fact, have to move, if the city can no longer provide fire, sanitation, police, and other services to their present locations?” The reply: “The city is not looking at a forced relocation strategy. The team is sensitive to the scars left by federal urban renewal programs in the mid-to-late 60s, which in fact did uproot people. So we’re talking about giving people choices (my emphasis) to live in neighborhoods that can best provide the services they need.” To a similar question, the reply was, “...Remember, people have been voluntarily choosing to relocate, depopulating sections of the city. So now we have to figure out, what does a more efficient, more sustainable city look like?”

In 2011, despite its economic problems, Detroit voted to borrow \$125 million in transportation funds, of which \$73 million was to be spent on light rail and the remainder for new buses and other capital improvement projects.

In May of 2011, Steve Lafleur wrote an article for www.newgeography.com entitled “Can the Winnipeg Model Save Detroit?,” in which he wrote that Detroit “lost 25 percent of its population between 2000-2010, and over half its population since 1950. Over 90,000 homes stand empty, and many neighborhoods have been completely abandoned... current Mayor Dave Bing...has pledged to knock down a staggering 10,000 structures during his first term.”

In June of 2011, Rick Harrison, also authoring an article for newgeography.com wrote about the fact that Detroit planners had recognized that the extreme mixed use makeup of Detroit’s buildings had been detrimental, and that it would be beneficial to rezone it into “districts confined to one type of use, such as residential, industrial, and the like.” Harrison wrote, “This suggests that the ‘Smart Growth’ goals of mixed uses and mixed incomes may not be so ‘smart’.

None of the articles I researched even mentioned the influence of Islam in Detroit, though one did mention that Lebanese people were doing well there. One source traced Islam’s beginnings in Detroit to (draw your own conclusion) the 1950’s.

Recently the big news is that people are leaving California and New York to go to low taxation states and that wealthy Americans are giving up their citizenship to move to other low taxation countries. The housing bubble has already displaced thousands of families.

The significance of Detroit is that it is a model of what America can expect if it continues down the economic path of socialism and wealth redistribution. Without prosperity, decay occurs rapidly, and when freedom is destroyed, so is prosperity.

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Randy W. Bright, AIA, NCARB, is an architect who specializes in church and church-related projects. You may contact him at 918-582-3972, rwbrightchurcharch@sbcglobal.net or www.churcharchitect.net.