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Blogger: Kurt Metzger



Born and raised in Cincinnati, Ohio, Kurt moved permanently to the Detroit area in 1975 when he began full-time employment with the Census Bureau. Kurt spent 15 years with the U.S. Census Bureau in the Detroit Regional Office. During his last 10 years, he organized and directed the data services program in the 3-state region of Michigan, Ohio, and West Virginia. In 1990, he joined [Wayne State University's Center for Urban Studies](#) as a Senior Research Analyst with the Michigan Metropolitan Information Center (MIMIC) program. He became director of MIMIC in 1993, and then Center Research Director in 2000. In 2005, he went on to become Research Director for the [United Way for Southeastern Michigan](#) (UWSEM). In this capacity, he developed and conducted the primary and secondary research required to transition UWSEM to a community impact-driven United Way. Beginning in 2008, UWSEM redirected its funding emphasis to the areas of educational preparedness, financial stability, and basic needs.

After speaking for 30 years about the need for coordinated data collection and delivery in Southeast Michigan, in 2008 Kurt was selected by the Skillman and Kresge foundations to develop and direct a new foundation-funded regional data indicators system, the [Detroit Area Community Information System](#). In this capacity, he plans to reach out to data developers in the government, nonprofit and private sectors and explain to them the importance of making their data publicly

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available and to offer them a system that will facilitate the process. In addition, the vision for D-ACIS is to serve as a regional information resource – a one-stop hub where information from any and all sources around the region are housed, coordinated, and made publicly available.

Kurt's demographic research interests dovetail well with the essence of D-ACIS' charge – namely, developing a "centralized" data repository that will facilitate a variety of research, education and service programs designed to improve the understanding of population and housing patterns in metropolitan Detroit and urban America.

Kurt brings his demographic expertise to a number of state and local organizations, including the Michigan Land Use Leadership Council, the Governor's Lead Task Force, Michigan's Children, Michigan Kids Count, the Michigan Early Childhood Investment Council (ECIC), OneD, the New Economy Initiative, SEMCOG, the Michigan Suburbs Alliance, and many more. He also serves on the boards of Create Detroit, the Greening of Detroit, and the International Institute of Metropolitan Detroit. In addition, he is regularly sought out by local media and is asked by a variety of organizations throughout the region, state and country to speak on demographic trends.

KURT METZGER'S POSTS:

Post 4: The Census is Coming! The Census is Coming!

POSTED BY: KURT METZGER, 9/8/2009

"**Census**" means a count of the population. The first Census was conducted in 1790 and the final count for the country was just under 4 million residents. Cries of undercount were heard across the land. Surely there were at least 4 million people! Efforts have been made every 10 years hence to conduct an accurate count of every person¹ residing in the United States. All residents of the United States must be counted. This includes people of all ages, races, ethnic groups, citizens and non-citizens.

The U.S. Constitution (Article I, Section 2) mandates this headcount to determine each state's Congressional representation. While this was the only reason for its creation (the counts being used to determine the taxes each State would pay the new government), the Census has taken on a wide variety of uses since then. The numbers affect funding for states and local governments, determine governmental representation at all levels, influence business investment and help inform decision makers about how the community is changing - information that is crucial to many planning decisions, such as where to provide services for the elderly, where to build new roads and schools, or where to locate job training centers.

In the past, most households received a short-form questionnaire, while one household in six received a long form that contained additional questions and provided more detailed socioeconomic information about the population. The [2010 Census](#) will be a [short-form only](#) census and will count all residents living in the United States as well as ask for name, sex, age, date of birth, race, ethnicity, relationship and housing tenure – taking just minutes to complete. More detailed socioeconomic information is now collected through the American Community Survey (ACS), which provides current data every year, rather than once every 10 years².

Census data directly affect how more than \$400 billion per year in federal and state funding is allocated to communities for neighborhood improvements, public health, education, transportation and much more. That's more than \$4 trillion over a 10-year period.

With the state and local news dominated by stories of DEFICIT and RECEIVERSHIP, we cannot afford to sit idly by and hope that the Census Bureau, through its employees and media buys, will provide Michigan and all its local governments with an accurate count. As is the case with elections...

IF YOU DON'T PARTICIPATE IN THE PROCESS, YOU HAVE NO RIGHT TO COMPLAIN ABOUT THE RESULTS!

We are now a week into September, but only seven months away from Census Day - April 1, 2010. There is a great deal to do to get the word out throughout our state and time is passing. We are the only state to have experienced population loss each of the last three years, and all indicators point to 2008-09 adding a fourth year. The Detroit region has also suffered losses this decade and the City of Detroit has continued, although at a much lower rate, its 50+ year out-migration flow.

We (collectively), above all, must be ready and willing to do everything we can to make sure everyone is counted. We must reach out to the disenfranchised - numbers that have grown exponentially due to unemployment, foreclosures, etc. - and let them know that their participation may result in increased funding for their

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support³. We must help new immigrants understand that completing a census form will not harm them in any way.

The Census Bureau has created a variety of programs and materials for getting the word out. On the government side, the Bureau encourages and supports the creation of Complete Count Committees. The Census Education Project (my favorite) creates curriculum materials for students and teachers across the K-12 spectrum. Promotional materials have been produced in a wide variety of languages for use in ethnic communities across the country.

The staff at the [Detroit Area Community Information System](#) (D-ACIS) is ready to assist in any way we can. We recognize the importance of complete and accurate data and want to make sure that Detroit, the region, and all of Michigan do everything they can to make that happen. We are an official partner with the Census Bureau, are providing technical support to the City of Detroit, serve on the advisory committee for the [Michigan Nonprofit Association's 2010 Census Project](#), and "talk census" wherever and whenever we can.

Jack Lessenberry was kind enough to include his take on the Census in a June 24, 2009 *Metro Times* column. Allow me to pull some quotes from that article (please excuse the fact that I am including his comments about me):

"It is crucially important — for a bunch of reasons — that everybody gets counted when it comes time for the U.S. Census. For one thing, scads of federal and state dollars depend on it, not to mention representation in Lansing and Washington. This is especially vital — and also hardest to achieve — in Detroit, where much of the population is immigrant, constantly moving, or a little leery of cooperating with anybody who looks like the law.

The man I know who understands this best is Detroit's Great Demographer, Kurt Metzger, who is now director of the Detroit Area Community Information System. (He previously spent years doing population studies for the U.S. Census, Wayne State University and the United Way.)

He is a trifle concerned that the city isn't moving quickly enough to gear up for Count Day, which is April 1, 2010. Metzger noted that while the Census Bureau is already starting outreach activities to get people informed and ready, the city needs to get going too. "An inaccurate census will only hurt the city and the region's ability to go forward. There are no do-overs, and whining about an undercount will not change the results," he said, adding that the best way to avoid this is to make sure people get what's at stake.

To take liberties with a tag line for Detroit Public Schools, 'I get it....do you?'

¹ The history of the census shows that though every person was to be "counted," not everyone always counted equally.

² Results from the 2008 American Community Survey will be released on September 22. This release will cover all states, as well as counties and communities with populations of 65,000 or more.

³ The Michigan Nonprofit Association has launched a targeted effort to bring nonprofits to the table to understand the critical role they play in reaching their clients and constituents.

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Post 3: Social Equity Must Be Our Goal! How Do We Develop Neighborhoods of Opportunity?

POSTED BY: KURT METZGER, 9/8/2009

In January 2009, the [Michigan Roundtable for Diversity and Inclusion](#) sponsored a conference entitled Opportunity for All: Inequity, Linked Fate and Social Justice in Michigan. The keynote speaker was John A. Powell (no CAPS), a Detroit native who now directs the [Kirwan Institute](#) at Ohio State¹. Rather than begin the dialogue about race with a picture of racial/ethnic trends, racial gaps and segregation measures, John's approach is to lay out "opportunity" in a geographic context and, once clear distinctions as to geographic inequities across regional neighborhoods have been described and internalized, introduce race to understand how opportunity and race interact.

Battered by challenging economic conditions, a national housing crisis and the continued decline of the once-robust manufacturing sector, the Detroit region, and the state as a whole, must find innovative ways to capitalize on the assets and redirect its course to be competitive in the 21st century. A significant impediment to this re-invigoration is the widespread and systemic inequity plaguing marginalized

populations and communities. Communities of color, particularly African American communities, are more and more isolated from the essential opportunity structures needed to succeed and thrive in the 21st century global society. Such isolation, caused by factors such as disinvestment, job sprawl, and far less-than-adequate public transit systems, have resulted in a 28.9 percent unemployment rate in Detroit² and increasing socio-economic gaps.

A significant source of Michigan's inequity is rooted in housing disparity and racial segregation into distressed (or "low opportunity") communities. Geography, race, and poverty are intertwined in the Detroit region: poverty and place work together in a systematic way, fueling racial disparities and isolating communities of color from opportunity. Geographic, social, and racial disparities are more than just indicators of isolation for marginalized populations. These disparities (and resulting inequality) play a significant role in undermining the future for all residents of the Detroit region and the state of Michigan. Acknowledging and addressing these inequities is a critical step to assure a functioning democratic society and prepare the region for its future.

Housing provides more than just shelter. Housing, depending on its location, can be either a conduit or an impediment to opportunity. Housing is the primary conduit to accessing opportunity and building wealth and economic stability in the U.S. Housing location is the critical leverage point to determining access to education, employment, childcare, and health care or in determining the likelihood of developing assets/wealth through home equity.

Take a moment and think about neighborhood conditions throughout the city of Detroit and the tri-county area (if you have not traveled extensively around the metro area, you should take the opportunity). Think about the housing, the presence or absence of services, and realize that the case can be easily made - where you live often determines how long you live. Fifty years of social science research has demonstrated that racially isolated and economically poor neighborhoods restrict employment options for young people, contribute to poor health, expose children to extremely high rates of crime and violence, and house some of the least-performing schools. Neighborhoods powerfully shape residents' access to social, political, and economic opportunities and resources.

One of my key themes, when offered the opportunity to speak of the demographic trends that shaped our region, is the effect of federal actions post-World War II on the city and its populations of color. Federal subsidies for suburban housing and transportation made it economical for middle-class families to leave the city. Because early housing policy often prohibited integrated neighborhoods through lending restrictions and racially restrictive covenants, it was mostly Whites who left and built equity in new neighborhoods. As central cities lost significant population, jobs followed. The loss of tax revenue resulted in increased tax rates for municipal services for those who were least able to shoulder them. Funds for maintenance and repair of existing infrastructure waned³ as money went to subsidizing further suburban and exurban development. This is not a sustainable model for a region whose population in 2008 was 200,000 less than it was 38 years before.

The Detroit region suffers some of the worst racial segregation in its housing and schools in the nation. Analysis of trends in segregation during recent decades indicates that these trends have improved slightly, but generally the region has remained extremely segregated by race in its neighborhoods and its classrooms. As persons of color, particularly African Americans, have increased their presence in the suburbs substantially since the early 1990s, leading to increasing representation in suburban school districts⁴, segregation in school systems, particularly at the individual school level, appears to be increasing.

The Kirwan Institute analyzed the characteristics of communities across the region by conducting an "opportunity mapping" analysis. This opportunity mapping analysis looked at a number of indicators of opportunity and community conditions for neighborhoods throughout the Detroit region. This technique of measuring educational opportunities, economic opportunities, and other neighborhood and housing challenges (like concentrated neighborhood poverty, vacant property, or crime), resulted in a comprehensive evaluation of the region's best and most challenged neighborhoods. The findings:

- The African American community is highly concentrated in low opportunity areas.
- While only 36% of the total population lived in the region's low opportunity neighborhoods (which represent two-fifths of the neighborhoods in the region), 90% of the African American population (or nine of ten African Americans) were found in low opportunity neighborhoods.
- Only 19% of Whites lived in low opportunity communities.
- While more than 43% of the region's total population lived in high opportunity neighborhoods, less than 4% of the African American population lived in these communities.
- More than half of the Latino population is concentrated in low opportunity communities.

The Detroit region must be a place where everyone - regardless of age, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, etc. - must have the opportunity to thrive. This is not only a moral imperative but an economic imperative as well. Regional success occurs where diversity of opportunity exists. We must all pay attention to these troubling indicators of inequality and opportunity isolation which plague the city, region, and state.

There are a number of organizations and initiatives in the region working toward the same goal⁵. [D-ACIS](#) is working with many of those groups around issues of social equity and funders are recognizing the need to apply a 'social equity lens' in their grantmaking activities. D-ACIS will be working with John Powell and others at Kirwan, along with many local partners, to develop the "neighborhoods of opportunity" methodology for updating the data and measuring our progress.

It is only by addressing these challenges directly can we build a society that is sustainable, equitable, and allows all residents access to the levers of opportunity critical to succeeding in our 21st century society.

¹ John will be teaching a class this fall on structural racism through the Wayne State Law School.

² This is the "official" unemployment rate and does not account for those who are no longer looking for a job. In addition, employment is counted as any paid work during the week in survey. As a result, a 40-50% unemployment (and underemployment) for African Americans in the city is more likely the case.

³ SEMCOG has recently released a report identifying regional infrastructure needs over the next 25 years that dwarf anticipated resources. We will need to make regional choices as to where we concentrate our funds.

⁴ Open enrollment across county boundaries has also facilitated this growth.

⁵ OneD has begun to document these efforts on its website through its issue area of Race Relations.

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Post 2: Collaboration and Rapid Response Are Possible in Detroit

POSTED BY: KURT METZGER, 9/4/2009

The City of Detroit and the Detroit region have been set back on their heels by the recession that has been in place since 2001. Business closings, unemployment, poverty and service needs, and out-migration have been increasing throughout the decade. These problems were exacerbated when the housing bubble burst and the foreclosure crisis took hold.

The State of Michigan and Detroit region were early "leaders" in foreclosure. While the numbers remain high, and the seriousness of the local problem has not lessened, other areas of the country - particularly Florida, Nevada, Arizona, and California - have moved into the lead of late.

The City of Detroit and the local foundation community were quick to identify foreclosures as an issue that had to be addressed before it consumed the city. Working in tandem with the [Detroit Economic Growth Association](#), [Social Compact](#) and others, local and national funders came together to create the Detroit Office of Foreclosure Prevention and Response (FPR). In addition, they funded the creation and beta testing of a unique data/mapping platform, created by Social Compact and Universal Mind, that would incorporate a variety of unique housing finance-related data (as well as a host of other variables) that would allow detailed analysis of foreclosures, market sales and real-estate owned properties.

While I will let them tell their own story through their new [website](#), allow me to say that staff hit the ground running from the outset and have been working tirelessly to stem the tide of foreclosures, while working with federal agencies and financial institutions to help residents remain in their homes and bring investment dollars into the city.

The Neighborhood Stabilization Program funding from HUD to the City of Detroit has resulted in new collaborations among organizations dedicated to the "rebirth" of Detroit. The need to look at the current status of Detroit across its 139 square miles - housing (both occupied and vacant), vacant land, ownership, assessment, and more - has brought together the [City of Detroit Department of Planning and Development](#); the [Next Detroit Neighborhood Initiative](#); DEGA; [Community Legal Resources](#) (CLR) and their Vacant Property Campaign; [LISC](#); the Office of Foreclosure; the [Michigan State Housing Development Authority](#) (MSHDA), and the [Detroit Area Community Information System](#) (D-ACIS) [sorry if I forgot anyone] to plan cooperatively across a broad range of issues.

While a number of articles have been written about the volume of vacant land and vacant buildings in the City (with estimates ranging up to a third of our land), and surveys have been conducted in certain neighborhoods, no current citywide analysis has ever been conducted at the parcel layer. This gap was identified by the Office of Foreclosure and discussions began with FPR, CLR, and D-ACIS to see what we could do.

Within a matter of weeks, we had a project design and proposal for Living Cities to conduct a survey of every residential parcel (approximately 350,000) in the City of Detroit, and complete it within a 2-month period. Enlisting the University of Michigan, through its [Ginsberg Center](#) and [Urban and Regional Planning Program](#), we were able to recruit and train 40 surveyors – both students from several disciplines and Detroit residents – who would drive the streets of Detroit in 3-person teams to record the data. D-ACIS produced over 550 parcel maps and accompanying survey data entry sheets for the teams. We launched the effort in late August and anticipate data collection completed by late September, with data entry completed soon thereafter.

Plans call for release of the data to our host of partners sometime in late October, with at least six community meetings being held in October and November. We want the information to be available to all – the true concept of data sharing/democratizing data that informs everything that D-ACIS is about.

Collaboration in Detroit is indeed POSSIBLE. We are living it every day and we truly believe that we are changing the dynamics of Detroit and the region. Collaboration – across all areas - is the ONLY WAY that we in the Detroit region will achieve success.

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Post 1 - Immigrants: Their Importance to the Region's Past, Present, and Future

POSTED BY: KURT METZGER, 9/3/2009

A brief History of Immigration in Southeast Michigan

Southeast Michigan (defined as the three-county region of Macomb, Oakland and Wayne) contained just 187,521 persons in 1870, with more than 4 in 10 living within the limits of the City of Detroit¹. The foreign born population constituted 32 percent of the total. The Detroit area followed the national trend of newly arrived immigrants starting out in the central city, achieving financial success and then moving to the suburbs. This is demonstrated by the fact that immigrants constituted a greater share of Detroit's population, and Detroit accounted for 59 percent of the region's foreign-born population, but only 42 percent of total population. (Table 1)

Table 1. Foreign-Born Population in Southeast Michigan, 1870 - 2000

Year	Tri County Total Pop.	Foreign Born Pop.	% Foreign Born	Detroit Total Pop.	Foreign Born	% Foreign Born	Detroit Total	Detroit Share of Share of Foreign Born
1870	187,521	59,983	32.0%	79,577	35,381	44.5%	42.4%	59.0%
1880	239,608	74,702	31.2	116,340	45,645	39.2	48.6	61.1
1890	330,172	110,474	33.5	205,876	81,709	39.7	62.4	74.0
1900	426,829	125,313	29.4	285,704	96,503	33.8	66.9	77.0
1910	613,773	184,069	30.0	465,766	157,534	33.8	75.9	85.6
1920	1,305,798	363,229	27.8	993,678	290,884	29.3	76.1	80.1
1930	2,177,343	521,582	24.0	1,568,662	405,882	25.9	72.0	77.8
1940	2,377,329	436,086	18.3	1,623,452	322,688	19.9	68.3	74.0
1950	3,016,197	400,823	13.3	1,846,660	278,260	15.1	61.2	69.4
1960	3,762,360	364,575	9.7	1,670,144	201,713	12.1	44.4	55.3
1990	3,912,679	227,602	5.8	1,027,974	34,490	3.4	26.3	15.2
2000	4,043,467	325,994	8.1	951,270	45,541	4.8	23.5	14.0

The Arsenal of Democracy

The immigrant population was a great driver of the economic engine that was

Detroit in the late 1800s and early 1900s. The "Arsenal of Democracy" that was Detroit, coupled with the growing auto industry, made jobs plentiful and brought migrants from overseas and across the United States. By 1930, the foreign born population numbered more than half a million and accounted for almost one of every four area residents. The City of Detroit was growing as the center of this region, now accounting for 72 percent of all residents and 78 percent of foreign-born residents.

Migration streams changed after 1930 and, while the area continued to grow rather rapidly, the immigrant population began to decrease both numerically and as a share of the total. Detroit still contained the majority of immigrants, though that position was changing rapidly as well.

Population dynamics continued to work against the immigrant population, as their numbers decreased. The 1960 Census revealed that, for the first time, foreign-born residents were less than 10 percent of the total. This was a pivotal time for the City of Detroit as well, with 1950 marking the pinnacle of population, and post-World War II housing and transportation policies driving suburban growth. Due to restrictive covenants, the African-American population of Detroit was not able to relocate, so whites dominated out-migration – many foreign-born. These trends continued until 1990, with the city's population dropping and the foreign-born population of the region decreasing to a number that had not been seen since the period between 1910 and 1920, and representing just 5.8% of the region's total.

The immigration trends that the nation experienced during the 1990s had a large impact on Southeast Michigan as well. At no time since the beginning of the previous century did immigration play such an important role in the region's demographic structure². The 2000 Census enumerated a growth in the foreign-born population of almost 100,000 persons, which, by the way, represented almost the entirety of total population growth during the decade. For the first time since 1910 the share of the region's population that was foreign-born actually increased – up to 8.1 percent. This was true for the City of Detroit as well.

The decade of the 1990s represented the period of entry for 44 percent of the region's total foreign-born and 57 percent of Detroit's. Leading the list of countries of origin for the region were – India, China, Iraq, Egypt, Thailand, Albania, Mexico, Puerto Rico, and others. The Asian subcontinent, the Middle East, Mexico, Central and South American, and Eastern Europe provided the major streams.

Immigration – Present and Future – What it Means to Metro Detroit

While the country has wrestled with immigration, particularly since 9/11, southeast Michigan has continued to see large numbers identifying the area as their intended place of residence. An analysis of immigration data from the Office of Homeland Security shows that the region has received an average of 13,421 immigrants per year between 2001 and 2006.

The primary countries of origin reflect the base populations that already call the Detroit area home – Iraq, India, Albania, Yemen, Lebanon, Bangladesh, Mexico, China, Philippines, and Romania. While this only measures direct immigration, we know that an even larger number of foreign-born residents come to us in secondary streams from other parts of the country. These continuing streams are extremely important for a region that has witnessed an ever growing increase in the outmigration of our native-born population.

In addition to the rich diversity that immigrants bring to the region – a diversity of culture, foods, religion, etc. – their economic contributions are even more critical to our continued strength. Immigrants bring with them an entrepreneurial spirit that is driving the redevelopment of neighborhoods such as southwest Detroit, East Dearborn, Hamtramck and much more. Not only is this entrepreneurship marked by new restaurants, grocery stores and other independent retail and service businesses, but it is also estimated that immigrants account for one-third of all new technology company startups in southeast Michigan.

While immigrants to the region tend to vary a great deal in their level of education, their overall level of college attainment well surpasses that of our general population. This is extremely important to a region and state that recognizes the need to grow our educated workforce in order to compete with regions and states for business attraction and development.

Recent studies have attempted to document the regional contributions of Arabs, Chaldeans and Hispanics/Latinos as a way of letting the general public know how integral they are to our future. The region is home to large concentrations of immigrants from many of the strongest economies in the world. In addition, our universities attract the best and brightest from throughout the world. Acknowledging the links we have and using them to attract population and business development is critical.

National discussions on immigration reform have shown a great divergence of

opinion on how to address the current state of undocumented residents and whether immigration limits need to be instituted. Politicians and individual citizens throughout Michigan need to stay on top of the issues, and work to make Detroit and our region an immigrant magnet once again.

¹ The City of Detroit did not encompass its current boundaries, and size of 139 square miles, until 1926.

² The City of Hamtramck provides a perfect example of this shift. Developed as a Polish community, Hamtramck had been experiencing population decline from 1940 to 1990. Between 1990 and 2000 the trend was reversed and Hamtramck's population grew by 25 percent. Rather Yemeni, Bosnians, Serbs, Bangladeshi and more did not drive by Poles but this growth.

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