

# Detroit Resource Guide

## Historical Overview

Detroit was founded in July 1701 by Antoine de la Mothe Cadillac and a group of French fur traders. The narrow strait, which they called d’Etoit, suited their fur trading needs. They built Fort Pontchartrain, named after Comte de Pontchartrain, King Louis XIV’s minister of state. A village settlement soon developed nearby, and Detroit was born. By 1760, Detroit was under control by the British. They built Fort Lernoult, which became the British central command of power for the western frontier. The United States took control of the city on July 11, 1796, but the area was recaptured by the British during the War of 1812. The United States regained power in 1813.

A town in 1802 and a city in 1815, Detroit became the capital of the Michigan territory in 1805. Later that year, on June 11, a fire ravaged the town. Fortunately, all residents survived, but 200 of the town’s buildings were totally destroyed. Father Gabriel Richard, a local Catholic leader, commented, “Speramus meliora; resurget cineribus.” This statement, meaning “We hope for better things; it will arise from the ashes,” became the city’s motto. Citizens who lost their homes were given land to rebuild. A new plan for the town, selected by area judge Augustus Woodward, was put into place. The hexagon/hub-and-spoke design was created for Washington, DC by French-born American urban planner Pierre Charles L’Enfant. Eventually, however, the plan was abandoned, and a grid pattern overlaid the hexagon pattern. More changes were on the horizon. Over fears that Detroit was vulnerable to foreign invasion, Lansing became the new capital of Michigan in 1847.

Slavery was a part of Detroit since the early 18<sup>th</sup> century. By 1760, there were both Native American, from Pawnee, Osage, and Choctaw tribes, and African American slaves in the city. Thirty-two slaves were listed in the 1830 Michigan census, but all remaining slaves had been freed by 1836. In 1837, the Detroit Anti-Slavery Society was organized, and helped establish Detroit as a stop on the Underground Railroad. Another organization, the Liberty Association, was started by ex-slave Henry Bibb. Its purpose was to encourage the election of anti-slavery candidates.

Religious institutions have played a significant role in Detroit since it was founded. On July 26, 1701, just two days after Antoine de la Mothe Cadillac landed, construction began on Ste. Anne de Detroit Catholic Church. While the church was destroyed several times from fire and political destruction, it contains one of the largest collections of church records in US history. One of Ste. Anne’s pastors, Father Gabriel Richard, co-founded the University of Michigan and published Michigan’s first newspaper, *The Observer*. In 1907, the state’s first Orthodox Church – Sts. Peter and Paul Orthodox cathedral – was created.

Currently, Detroit features temples, churches, and religious centers for Jewish, Buddhist, Muslim, Hindu, Jain, Baha'i, Christian, Sikh, and Native Peoples.

Another great force has been seen in Detroit since the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century – sports. The Detroit Tigers, which got its name from a Free Press headline writer, began playing in 1857. Detroit also featured one of the first teams of the National Negro Baseball League, the Detroit Stars. While the NNBL died out in 1950, Detroit did not integrate their baseball teams until 1958.

From the beginning, Detroit teams have proved to be very successful. In 1935, three major teams returned home as Champions. The Detroit Tigers won the World Series, the Detroit Red Wings won the Stanley Cup for the 1935-36 season, and the Detroit Lions won the NFL Championship on December 15, 1935, only a year after moving to Detroit, (they were formerly the Portsmouth Spartans). To date, the Tigers have won four World Series titles, the Red Wings have won ten Stanley Cups, and the Lions have won four NFL championships, (pre-Superbowl).

The Erie Canal, Detroit's location on the Great Lakes, and its skilled labor force helped Detroit's early economic development. Flour and lumber mills flourished, and rail transport increased in the area. During the Civil War, Detroit provided supplies to the Union cause, and began to emerge as a major manufacturing area. Significant for industrial development in the United States, the city was a major center for copper smelting, lumber processing, iron making, shipbuilding, and carriage and railroad car manufacturing. But it was in 1896 that Detroit's destiny was shaped. Charles Brady King, a Detroit resident and automotive pioneer, drove the first car on the streets of Detroit. The automotive industry soon boomed, bringing thousands of immigrants to Detroit in the 1920s. Not all stayed well. In 1933, approximately 1/3 of the industry's workforce became unemployed from problems associated with the Great Depression.

Changes were seen for the auto industry over the next decade. The United Automobile Workers, aided by Federal legislature, won collective bargaining rights for GM, Chrysler, and Ford. One of the first major unions to help organize African-American workers, the UAW currently has approximately 640,000 active members and over 500,000 retired members. The UAW's work has improved the quality of life for workers across the country, leading the way with the first health insurance plan for industrial workers, the first cost-of-living allowances, and pioneering job/income security provisions. During WWII, energies were turned toward the war, and auto factories began making bombs and tanks. This gained Detroit a new nickname – “the arsenal of democracy.”

Detroit's population peaked in 1950 at 1.8 million. After WWII, the population shrank as residents moved to the nearby suburbs. In 1960, a member of the Detroit Planning Commission stated that the loss in residents would only be temporary. “The gloss of the suburbs,” he noted, “will wear off.” The 2000 census, however, showed that Detroit's population has continued to decline, with less than 1 million people in the city. The city's Latino population, however,

nearly doubled from the 1990 to the 2000 census. The nearly 48,000 Latinos make up 5% of Detroit's population.

In 1970, Detroit Renaissance, a group of business leaders, was formed. A year later, the group announced plans for construction of the Renaissance Center. Advertised as a symbol of the new Detroit, the Renaissance Center was the world's largest privately funded project. The Center was purchased by General Motors in 1996 for their new headquarters.

### Governmental Leaders

**Mayor:** Kwame M. Kilpatrick

**City Council:** Kenneth V. Cockrel Jr. (Council President), Monica Conyers, JoAnn Watson, Sheila Cockrel, Barabara-Rose Collins, Kwame Kenyatta, Alberta Tinsley-Talabi, Martha Reeves, Brenda Jones

**City Clerk:** Janice M. Winfrey

**Federal Legislators:** Senator Carl Levin, Senator Deborah Ann Stabenow, U.S. Representative John Conyers, U.S. Representative Carolyn C. Kilpatrick

### Detroit Statistics

#### Land Area

City: 138.7 square miles (218.5 square kilometers)

Metropolitan: 2,026.1 square miles (3,241.7 square kilometers)

**Population Per Square Mile, 1990 and 2000**  
Detroit Residents

Area	1990	2000
City Wide <sup>1</sup>	7,426	6,872
CRS 1	6,407	5,807
CRS 2	9,984	10,022
CRS 3	7,482	6,576
CRS 4	4,925	4,440
CRS 5	5,969	5,882
CRS 6	9,885	8,543
CRS 7	7,200	6,729
CRS 8	7,205	5,373
CRS 9	9,910	7,430
CRS 10	7,558	5,623



#### Population

951,270 (9.57 percent of the State)

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## Race

“While 1 in 7 Michiganians are African American, 8 of 10 Detroiters are, making southeast Michigan one of the most racially segregated regions in the country. More than half of the state’s black population resides within the city limits.

**Population, 2000**  
Detroit Residents  
By Age Group, Sex, Race, and Hispanic Origin

Age Group	Black Non-Hispanic			White Non-Hispanic			Hispanic			All Races <sup>1</sup>		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
<b>All Ages</b>	355,822	416,144	771,966	50,767	49,154	99,921	25,628	21,539	47,167	448,319	502,951	951,270
under 1	6,034	5,728	11,762	509	432	941	669	655	1,324	7,627	7,173	14,800
1 to 4	25,525	24,883	50,408	1,842	1,755	3,597	2,182	2,233	4,415	31,088	30,344	61,432
5 to 9	40,744	39,621	80,365	2,511	2,333	4,844	2,569	2,377	4,946	47,720	46,162	93,882
10 to 14	36,285	35,418	71,703	2,380	2,166	4,546	2,021	1,954	3,975	42,275	41,086	83,361
15 to 19	28,583	28,620	57,203	2,525	2,234	4,759	2,434	1,772	4,206	34,848	33,859	68,707
20 to 24	23,974	27,259	51,233	3,285	3,092	6,377	3,261	2,163	5,424	31,840	33,814	65,654
25 to 29	26,293	32,608	58,901	3,810	3,385	7,195	2,986	2,287	5,273	34,566	39,657	74,223
30 to 34	24,851	31,389	56,240	3,935	3,169	7,104	2,416	1,838	4,254	32,535	37,565	70,100
35 to 39	24,026	30,648	54,674	4,198	3,128	7,326	1,898	1,476	3,374	31,268	36,279	67,547
40 to 44	25,449	31,407	56,856	4,490	3,504	7,994	1,402	1,096	2,498	32,247	36,901	69,148
45 to 49	22,604	28,709	51,313	4,388	3,517	7,905	1,100	941	2,041	28,901	34,054	62,955
50 to 54	19,071	23,766	42,837	3,856	3,442	7,298	772	714	1,486	24,336	28,680	53,016
55 to 59	13,455	16,870	30,325	2,810	2,825	5,635	567	501	1,068	17,305	20,740	38,045
60 to 64	9,783	13,407	23,190	2,177	2,255	4,432	411	436	847	12,773	16,571	29,344
65 to 69	8,841	12,797	21,638	1,877	2,177	4,054	326	372	698	11,335	15,719	27,054
70 to 74	8,142	11,782	19,924	2,095	2,653	4,748	286	319	605	10,734	15,075	25,809
75 to 79	6,392	9,620	16,012	1,921	2,813	4,734	175	204	379	8,670	12,890	21,560
80 to 84	3,498	6,082	9,580	1,341	2,280	3,621	85	102	187	5,024	8,629	13,653
85 & over	2,272	5,530	7,802	817	1,994	2,811	68	99	167	3,227	7,753	10,980
<b>Under 18</b>	137,171	134,270	271,441	9,767	8,920	18,687	9,875	8,991	18,866	163,558	158,624	322,182
<b>65 &amp; Over</b>	29,145	45,811	74,956	8,051	11,917	19,968	940	1,096	2,036	38,990	60,066	99,056
<b>MedianAge</b>	27.7	31.7	29.9	40.0	44.1	41.7	24.0	23.7	23.8	28.7	32.1	30.5
<b>Dependency ratio<sup>2</sup></b>			81.4			63.1			79.6			78.8

<sup>1</sup>All races includes persons of race/ethnicity other than Black Non-Hispanic, White Non-Hispanic, or Hispanic Origin.

<sup>2</sup>The number of person under 18 and 65 and over per 100 persons 18-64 years old.

3.

give southeast Michigan the country’s worst case of economic segregation.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

In Michigan, 10.5% of the population lives below the poverty level. In Detroit, that number more than doubles to 26.1%.

27.92% of the city’s 295,709 children are impoverished; 32.22% of the State’s impoverished children live in Detroit.

## Reverse Commuting:

In 1990, 150,000 whites who lived in the suburbs commuted to jobs in Detroit, while 91,000 blacks left the city every day for jobs in the suburbs. Suburban white women are much less likely than white men to commute to Detroit. According to the Detroit Free Press, the number of retail shops in Detroit fell from 9,768 to 2,253 between 1972 and 1997, and manufacturing firms from 2,398 to 825.

## Vacant Buildings

One in every ten housing units in the city of Detroit is vacant. One in every 20 is simply abandoned. In a recent survey of city residents conducted by EPIC/MRA for the Detroit Free Press, 61 percent said they have a vacant building within

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walking distance in their neighborhood.

Abandoned buildings ranked as the No. 2 neighborhood problem in that same survey, behind crime. It's also a regular on the city ombudsman's Top 10 complaint list."

### **Employment by Industry**

Agriculture, mining & natural resources	20,236
Manufacturing	419,871
Transportation, communication & utility	121,683
Wholesale trade	131,303
Retail trade	392,604
Finance, insurance & real estate	182,873
Services	915,743
Public administration	78,715
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,262,758</b>

### Critical Issues

Racial tensions have plagued the area since 1863, when a race riot occurred. A more violent one erupted in 1943 – 35 people were killed and more than 1,000 were injured. In July 1967, a riot began after a raid of an after-hours drinking club. By the riot's end, 43 people had died, 467 injured, 7,500 arrested, and 2,000 buildings burned down. From here, New Detroit, an organization aiming to resolve concerns surrounding race, education, employment, housing, and economic development, emerged.

In 2005, Detroit was named America's poorest city. While the title is now held by Cleveland, Detroit still faces a great deal of poverty. Additionally, the city is losing residents. Between 1980 and 2000, approximately 1/5 of the population had moved out of the city. Growth, both in employment and residents, is happening far from the city's center. Most of Detroit's children live in single-parent households; only 1/8 of the city's households are married couples with children.

### City Assets

- Twenty-seven colleges, universities, and technical centers, including Wayne State University, University of Detroit Mercy, and Marygrove College
- Coleman A. Young International Airport
- Newspapers: Detroit News, Detroit Free Press and Metro Times
- Fine Art Museums: Detroit Institute of Art and the Contemporary Museum of Modern Art/Detroit

- Science and Nature Centers: Detroit Science Center and Detroit Zoo
- History and Cultural Centers: Henry Ford Museum, Greenfield Village, Detroit Historical Museum, Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History, Motor Sports Hall of Fame, Holocaust Memorial Center, Edsel and Eleanor Ford House, The Masonic Temple Theater, Detroit Opera House, Plowshare Theater, Detroit Repertory Theatre, Fox Theatre, Music Hall
- Casinos: MGM Grand Detroit, Motor City Casino, and Greektown Casino
- Over 100 hospitals and clinics

## Resources

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