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## Dave Bing says there'll be incentives for Detroiters to move

By JEFF GERRITT  
FREE PRESS EDITORIAL WRITER

Detroit Mayor Dave Bing said this week that he will begin using incentives next year to concentrate city residents in at least seven to nine core areas that will serve as population centers for a newly configured city.

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In an interview with the Free Press, Bing stressed that no resident would be forced to move, but that those who remain in areas outside the population centers "need to understand that they're not going to get the kind of services they require."

"We're going to be encouraging them to move and put themselves in a better situation. ... They are much better off moving into a more dense area so that we can provide them with the services they need: that would be water, sewer, lighting, public safety -- all of that," Bing said. "We think that getting our city to be more dense with its population is the right route."

The neighborhoods targeted for investment, which the administration will identify by spring as part of the Detroit Works Project, are relatively stable with some vacant and foreclosed property. "We want to make sure that, before those neighborhoods deteriorate much more, we give them support," Bing said. "I don't want to go

public right now with where they are, because it's not final."

Bing also said Wednesday that he plans to run for a second term.

### Dave Bing's drive to reshape city is shaping his first term in office

Detroit Mayor Dave Bing's efforts to reshape the city have consumed much of his time in office, and the success of his first term will be judged largely by how much of that agenda he achieves.

City officials say they have identified at least seven to nine population centers that would encompass two-thirds of the city's 139 square miles. That would leave about 45 square miles, though some of that land is already public park space. The availability of strong schools, nonprofits, churches, parks, community development organizations and medical centers -- along with housing stock, income and many other indicators -- will continue to be considered in developing the neighborhood plan, officials say.

[Page 2 of 3]

Mayoral spokeswoman Karen Dumas said the city has not decided what economic incentives it

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would offer but said the opportunity for a better life in a neighborhood that provided improved city services should encourage people to move and, by itself, provide an incentive. Bing, too, suggested that residents should not expect the strapped city to provide big economic incentives.

"I don't want people to think that, if they hold out, there's going to be a pot full of money somewhere, because there's not," he said.

Creating more populated neighborhoods is essential to fixing the city's structural budget problems, Bing said, with revenue projected to continue dropping in 2011 and 2012. Even the most depleted neighborhoods now require police patrols, fire protection, bus service, garbage collection and other city services.

Karla Henderson, the city's group executive of planning and facilities, said the city will conduct 40 more community meetings and forums by spring on the Detroit Works Project. City officials will provide population and other data to residents but also seek "feedback on people's hopes and aspirations, as well as their ideas on core services and the future of the city," she said.

The Works plan adopted next year likely will amend the city's master plan, or could even become part of the charter revision, officials said.

In 2005, Youngstown, Ohio, a smaller city with similar problems, undertook an effort to consolidate neighborhoods and reduce its residential land by 30%.

Once a city of nearly 2 million, Detroit has lost more than half of its population since 1950 -- and continues to lose 10,000 people a year, or more. More than a third of the city -- perhaps 50 square miles -- lies vacant. On the near east side, for example, blighted blocks stand 80% empty. Even historically strong communities such as Palmer Woods, North Rosedale Park, East English Village, Boston-Edison and Grandmont Rosedale are showing signs of blight that can quickly erode a neighborhood.

Bing said the 2010 census would put Detroit's population at "800,000 to 850,000, max," but the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments estimates Detroit's population as already below 775,000. The city holds an estimated 78,000 vacant homes.

[Page 3 of 3]

John Mogk, a Wayne State University professor and urban planning expert, said improving and consolidating Detroit's neighborhoods is essential to retaining and attracting a middle-class tax base that the city needs. "If Detroit is to be rebuilt, it must improve city services and conditions in areas where there's hope," he said.

Mogk said neither cities nor utilities have the legal authority to terminate services to residents who refuse to relocate, but cities do have the authority to improve services in other neighborhoods.

The plan could become a political lightning rod for Bing, who also said Tuesday he will seek a second term.

"I can't fix the problems that the city has in one term," he said. "I've been here in this office almost 18 months, and we've fixed and improved a lot of areas, but there's so much more work to

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"I can only run one term at a time. The job I have right now, for the next three years, is to do the very best that I can in fixing some of our problems. Then it will be up to the people. Are they satisfied with what we've done? If so, they have the right to vote me back in -- or to reject. I'm just going to focus on getting as much done as I can in these next three years and leave it up to the voters."

The city seeks federal housing grants to rehabilitate homes that could attract some relocated residents. It will also rebuild homes to provide incentives for police, fire and other public safety officers to move back into the city, including lease-to-own programs, mortgage and financial assistance, grants and loans for rehabilitation, and free or reduced-priced homes. Now, more than half of Detroit's police officers and 60% of its firefighters live outside the city, Bing said.

The city has torn down 1,700 vacant and dangerous homes and plans to have 3,000 down by the end of the March.

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