

Despite Massive Investment, Detroit's Midtown Neighborhood Lost Population — A Healthier Michigan

<http://www.ahealthiermichigan.org/2011/04/19/despite-massive-investments-detroit%25e2%2580%2599s-midtown-neighborhood-lost-population/>

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The Midtown area of Detroit is often cited as perhaps the city's best example of an up-and-coming, dynamic urban neighborhood, a model for revitalization efforts and one of few enclaves of the city that's actually growing.

Except that by one key measure, it's not.

Newly compiled 2010 Census figures from [Data Driven Detroit](#) show that the total population of Midtown, defined as the neighborhood bordered by the Lodge Freeway and Interstates 94 and 75, declined 13.8 percent from 2000 to 2010. The area now has some 2,300 fewer people than it did a decade ago.

Yet diminished population is hardly the best barometer of the health of the neighborhood, argues Sue Mosey, president of the [University Cultural Center Association](#), a neighborhood development consortium that has tracked more than \$2 billion in investment over the same period.

"The area we're interested in is the area we're driving investment in, and three of those four areas gained population," she

said.

Population gains were strong in the neighborhoods near the [Detroit Institute of Arts](#), Wayne State University and along North Cass Avenue, but dropped near the mostly medical district surrounding the Detroit Medical Center's main campus, Mosey said.

An example of a large residential dwelling abandoned in recent years.



In Midtown's southern end, where the UCCA hasn't invested, the closure of two large public housing projects, combined with investors who have bought up properties and displaced low-income residents, drove overall losses, Mosey added. Midtown saw its share of vacant housing units grow a whopping 46 percent over the decade, while the total number of housing units declined by about 3 percent,



according to the D3 analysis.

“The loss occurred between Woodward and 75,” Kurt Metzger, director of Data Driven Detroit and a longtime Southeast Michigan demographer, said via email. “It is the area closer to I-75 that is very different than what we think of as Midtown and has experienced housing and (population) loss in the low income development. This will be changing over the next 3-5 years however.”



The Ellington, a mixed-use loft building, opened a few years ago and today houses a Starbucks cafe and a FedEx Office outlet.

The growth in the white population is most striking, Metzger added. It’s the “trend you see in (Washington) DC and other cities that begin to develop as young whites lead the move back.”

Both non-Hispanic whites (356 more residents, or 11.4 percent) and non-Hispanic residents of two or more races (116, 36.4 percent) saw population gains. The losses were steepest among non-Hispanic blacks, whose numbers fell 22.1 percent, or 2,591 people.

So what does this all mean for the neighborhood where new small businesses have sprouted and [Whole Foods is mulling a location](#)? It could feed into the narrative of a neighborhood slowly being revitalized.

Mosey sees good things ahead, not least a [planned \\$500 million investment](#) by new DMC owner Vanguard Health Systems Inc., adding to the \$2 billion already invested.

“You’re going to see a much bigger number in the next 10 years,” she said.

Photos by [ifmuth](#), [GeoShore](#) and [Girl.in.the.D.](#)

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