

SEARCH
DETNEWS.COM

GO

Click here to find an apartment
Choose a state **Go** **apartments.com™**

Monday, January 28, 2002

[Return to Metro](#)

The Detroit News [E-mail this story](#)

[Comment on this story](#)

[Previous story](#) [Next story](#)



The Cost of Segregation || Part III: Where We're Headed

SITE INDEX

- Homepage
- Search
- CyberSurveys
- ▶ News Talk
- ▶ Autos Talk
- ▶ Sports Talk
- ▶ Lions Talk
- ▶ Pistons Talk
- ▶ Wings Talk
- ▶ Tiger Talk
- ▶ Tech Talk
- Horoscope
- Hot Sites
- Lottery
- Recommendations
- Weather
- Staff

"In every neighborhood of the city ... you tell me where there are not people who happen to be white living there."
Dennis Archer
Former mayor of Detroit



"It's not viewed in a negative way, official unofficially, in the county."
John Hertel
Macomb County leader

Metro area leaders: Segregation not an issue

By Ron French / The Detroit News

L. Brooks Patterson says segregation doesn't matter in Oakland County. Ed McNamara has never addressed integration in Wayne County's public policies. And former Detroit Mayor Dennis Archer doesn't believe segregation exists anymore.

- [Comment on this story](#)
- [Send this story to a friend](#)
- [Get Home Delivery](#)

Little is being done in Detroit and its suburbs to stem neighborhood segregation is a political minefield, in which the only safe move is no move at all.

"There's nothing really done to help people feel comfortable with it," said Dan Krichbaum, executive director of the Metro Detroit chapter of the National Conference for Community and Justice. "We're not making any efforts within the communities to maintain meaningful pluralism."

Suburbs around Cleveland and Chicago have started intensive public-policy initiatives to try to keep whites from fleeing as blacks move in. In Portland and Atlanta, sweeping land-development programs are decreasing segregation.

But an analysis of the 2000 census by The Detroit News revealing that Detroit the highest segregation level in the nation was met with silence by local officials

In fact, before leaving office after eight years as Detroit mayor, Archer told The News that he didn't believe segregation exists in Detroit.

Archer said Detroit and its suburbs are not segregated because there are no law prohibiting people from living where they want. The former Michigan Supreme justice chooses to define segregation only in its legal sense. Most dictionaries define segregation as a separation of races, whether it be enforced or voluntary.

Archer insists there are white residents throughout Detroit. "In every neighborhood of the city ... you tell me where there are not people who happen to be white living there."

Of Detroit's 329 census tracts, only 28 -- fewer than 9 percent -- remotely reser

NEWS

- Autos
- ▶ Insider
- ▶ Auto Show
- ▶ Consumer
- ▶ Joyrides
- Business
- Careers
- Census
- Columnists
- Commuting
- Detroit History
- Editorials
- Health
- Metro / State
- ▶ Livingston
- ▶ Macomb
- ▶ Oakland
- ▶ Wayne
- ▶ On Detroit
- Nation / World
- Obituaries
- ▶ Death Notices
- Politics / Govt.
- Real Estate
- Religion
- Schools
- Special Reports
- Technology

SPORTS

- Sports Home
- ▶ Lions/NFL
- ▶ Red Wings/NHL
- ▶ Pistons/NBA
- ▶ Shock/WNBA
- ▶ Tigers/Baseball
- ▶ MSU
- ▶ U-M
- More Columns

[more colleges](#)
[Golf Guide](#)
[High Schools](#)
[Motor Sports](#)
[Outdoors](#)
[More Sports](#)
[Scoreboards](#)

ENTERTAINMENT

[Entertainment](#)
[▶Casino Guide](#)
[▶Movie Finder](#)
[▶TV Listings](#)
[Crossword](#)

HOMESTYLE

[Homestyle home](#)
[▶Decorating](#)
[▶Food](#)
[▶Gardening](#)
[▶Home Improvement](#)
[▶Home Life](#)
[▶Home Tech](#)
[▶Wine Report](#)

PHOTOS

[Sports](#)
[Red Wings](#)
[Lions](#)
[Autos](#)
[Joyrides](#)
[News](#)
[History](#)

Copyright 2002
 The Detroit News.

Use of this site indicates your agreement to the [Terms of Service](#) (updated 08/09/2001).

the racial makeup of the region as a whole. Meanwhile, there are 33 census tracts in the 2000 census with populations that are less than one-tenth of 1 percent white.

"The facts are what they are," Archer said. "And I don't think it is something profoundly negative, as much as it is something that gives us more opportunities

"Communities grow up and take their own identity. For a host of reasons, Detroit has become a predominantly black city. "

*L. Brooks Patterson
 Oakland County executive*



"Blacks are just like whites. They become affluent and they look for better housing. They find it in Detroit, and head to Southfield..."

*Ed McNamara
 Wayne County executive*

Macomb County's top elected leader, John Hertel, said his area's largely white makeup "is not viewed in a negative way, officially or unofficially, in the county." Hertel, who chairs the board of commissioners, cited Mt. Clemens and New Haven as examples of integrated communities that are healthy economically. "While the Afro-American population in Macomb County is not high," he said, "where they live ... is fine" in terms of safety and adequate housing.

Wayne County Executive McNamara sees little wrong with segregated housing which he calls "a way of life" in Metro Detroit.

"People are more comfortable being with people like themselves," he said.

Before becoming Wayne County's chief executive in 1986, McNamara was mayor of Livonia, a city that in the 2000 census was the whitest city of over 100,000 in Michigan.

"Blacks are just like whites," McNamara said. "They become affluent and they look for better housing. They can't find it in Detroit, and they head to Southfield, where lots of their families and friends are."

McNamara says he has seen this with his own African-American employees.

"I had a driver who moved to the suburbs," McNamara said. "He found a home in Redford for \$112,000 that probably would have cost him \$160,000 in Livonia. Why should an individual pay \$50,000 or \$60,000 more to live in a community that is ethnically different than they are, and maybe not feel as comfortable?"

McNamara says it is not the function of government to try to influence where people live.

Patterson, the veteran chief executive of Oakland County, said he believes segregation today "doesn't mean anything in a negative way."

"Communities grow up and take their own identity," Patterson said. "For a host of reasons, Detroit has become a predominantly black city. People tend to live together for a variety of reasons."

Patterson said Oakland officials "haven't changed a program or a policy" to address segregation.

Those responses stand in stark contrast to the attitude of public officials in past decades, who led the fight for -- and against -- integration.

Race and the inequities caused by segregation were favorite topics for Detroit's longtime mayor Coleman Young. "I will not cease to make noise about racism, whether anyone likes it or not," Young said.

Longtime Dearborn Mayor Orville Hubbard led a campaign to keep blacks out of his community, using the slogan "Keep Our City Clean" as a not-so-subtle reference

to race.

"I think this guy (Hubbard) would spin in his grave if he knew how many non-Caucasians have moved into his city," McNamara said.

But there is a different political climate today. Politicians can lose no matter what they say about race, said Lyke Thompson, political science professor at Wayne State University.

"Most politicians in this area have been elected from a segregated constituency," Thompson said. "From those elected from either an Anglo-American or African-American constituency, they have to be willing to challenge that constituency's beliefs if they're going to promote residential integration. That takes a lot of courage. In years of following Detroit politics, I have not seen politicians in segregated cities promoting residential integration."

N. Charles Anderson, president of the Detroit Urban League, doesn't see many Metro Detroit politicians pay much attention to segregated housing. "Are they concerned about it? I'm certain they are. But it is not something that has been high on their list."

The result of ignoring it is the continuation of segregation through another generation, Anderson said.

"It's good that we're beginning to be able to live anywhere we want to live," Anderson said. "But there's still a challenge when people move depending on what their neighbors are. I think some people choose to live where they believe they're going to be more comfortable."

And because they're more comfortable living apart, the blacks and whites are kept "only with the stereotypes of the unknown."

[▶ Comment on this story](#)

[▶ Previous story](#) [▶ Back to index](#) [▶ Next story](#)