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***Directions*:** Read the article below. Thoughtfully complete annotations focusing on the following: unfamiliar vocabulary, connections to former units (a simple “migration” is good enough, but push yourself to remember the vocab words and concepts!), and main ideas from each section (1-5). The majority of the annotations should focus on the main points from each section. The reading and annotations are due: ***Wednesday, March 4th.*** The main points should focus on Industry concepts, but inevitably, some will focus on other concepts.

On **Wednesday, March 4th**, you will be assigned one section from which to create a timeline. You will need to have the reading and annotations completed in order to participate in this assignment. The rubric is attached.

From Motor City to Motor Metropolis: How the Automobile Industry Reshaped Urban America

by [Thomas J. Sugrue](http://www.autolife.umd.umich.edu/Race/R_Overview/R_Overview1.htm#popsugrue)

**PART ONE:** *Becoming the Motor City: Immigrants, Migrants, and the Auto Industry*

Detroit rose and fell with the automobile industry. Before the invention of the auto car, Detroit was a second-tier industrial city with a diverse, largely regional manufacturing base. The thirteenth largest city in the United States in 1900 with 285,000 residents, Detroit was compact. Most of its population lived within a few mile radius of downtown. As in the case of most nineteenth-century industrial cities, its manufacturing clustered along the river, whose water provided power and easy transportation for incoming supplies and outgoing goods. No one industry dominated (in Detroit). Leading Detroit industries included stove manufacture, tobacco goods, drugs and chemicals, metal working, and food production. At the turn of the twentieth century, the manufacture of motor vehicles was among the city's growing--but still relatively small--industrial concerns. Over the next thirty years, the auto industry took off. By the onset of the Great Depression, car manufacturing completely dwarfed manufacturing concerns in Detroit. And so many more of the city's companies were somehow related to the auto industry, from machine tool manufacturers to auto supply companies to parts suppliers. The rise of the auto industry utterly transformed Detroit, attracting over a million new migrants to the city and, both through its [demographic](http://www.autolife.umd.umich.edu/Race/R_Overview/R_Overview1.htm#Demography) and its technological impact, reshaping the cityscape in enduring ways.

Detroit was ideally situated to be a center of the American automobile industry. Detroit was in the center of [America's industrial heartland](http://www.autolife.umd.umich.edu/Race/R_Overview/1935_NE_Map.htm)--a region that extended like a belt from lower New England down to Pennsylvania and across the Appalachians westward through Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois. All of the raw materials needed for automobile production were easily accessible to the city by the Great Lakes waterways and by rail. The coal regions of mountainous Pennsylvania and West Virginia were no more than a day away by rail. The great steel mills of Pittsburgh, Youngstown, Cleveland, Gary, and Chicago were all within a few hundred miles of the city. The iron and copper ore regions of northern Michigan and Minnesota were easily accessible by ship. At the confluence of east and Midwest, Detroit's central location gave its auto producers easy access to the capital and markets necessary for its phenomenal growth.

Detroit's first auto plants were [small operations](http://www.autolife.umd.umich.edu/Race/R_Overview/Piquette_Plant.htm), but as Ford pioneered the techniques of mass production at the new [Highland Park Plant](http://www.autolife.umd.umich.edu/Race/R_Overview/HighlandPark_Plant.htm), with its cutting-edge assembly line techniques, the scope and scale of auto production grew accordingly. By the 1920s, Dodge had built the enormous Main Plant in Hamtramck, just a short distance from Ford's pioneering Highland Park facility. But by far the most ambitious and landscape-altering plant was Ford's vast River Rouge complex. Finished in 1927, the [River Rouge plant](http://www.autolife.umd.umich.edu/Race/R_Overview/Rouge_Plant.htm) consisted of nineteen separate buildings in a vast industrial complex that sprawled over more than two square miles. The River Rouge plant was a wholly self-contained center of production. It included a man-made deep sea harbor, the world's largest steel foundry, ninety-four miles of railroad track, and stamping, glass making, and auto assembly buildings, among many others. At its peak, over 90,000 workers toiled at the Rouge. The looming plant became an international phenomenon, visited and photographed by thousands of international visitors, the subject of film reels celebrating American industrial might, and an important model for the industrialization of the Soviet Union.

Right from the outset, the automobile industry was labor-hungry. Aspiring auto workers flooded into the city from the rural hinterlands of the Midwest, which provided a ready supply of workers who had been displaced by the decline of the logging industry and the travails of small farming. One such newcomer was [James O'Connor](http://www.autolife.umd.umich.edu/Race/R_Overview/OConnor.htm). As soon as he finished grammar school in rural Emmett, Michigan, O'Connor headed south to Detroit, eventually taking a job at Ford in 1907, when he was only 19. Many new autoworkers hailed from Canada--which by 1910 had become the leading source of immigration to the Motor City. Increasingly, auto manufacturers cast their nets more widely. Ford led the way. His firm recruited skilled workers from the industrial cities of England and Scotland. Ever eager to find new sources of labor, Ford extended his firm's recruiting networks abroad, to places as far afield as Mexico and the Middle East.

Word of mouth was a powerful a recruiting tool. Stories of the seemingly bottomless economic opportunity in Detroit--particularly after [Ford announced that he would pay workers $5.00 per day](http://www.autolife.umd.umich.edu/Design/Gartman/D_Casestudy/five_dollar_day.htm) in 1914--[drew many thousands more workers](http://www.autolife.umd.umich.edu/Labor/L_Overview/L_Overview3.htm#para7) to the city. Mexican immigrants, many of whom had come to the United States as farmworkers, sought greater opportunities in what they called the "wonderful city of the magic motor." Many German metal and wood workers found a new use for their refined skills in the tool and die and machine shops that ringed the city. And many lesser skilled workers came from places as far flung as Warsaw, Dublin, Budapest, and Hamburg and countless villages and towns in central and eastern Europe with hopes of getting jobs that required little education or training on the new assembly lines. Many new immigrants, like [Tony Leszczynski](http://www.autolife.umd.umich.edu/Race/R_Overview/R_Overview1.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22popl) who immigrated from Poland, reached the United States and headed straight to Detroit to work in the auto industry.

World War I and the [immigration restriction acts of 1921 and 1924](http://www.autolife.umd.umich.edu/Race/R_Overview/R_Overview1.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22ImmigrationActs) dramatically reduced the supply of foreign-born workers to the United States just at a moment when the auto industry grew exponentially and demand for unskilled labor soared. Immigration from southern and eastern Europe came to a near halt. Beginning in World War I, in response to a decline in immigration and a labor shortage, Ford began to hire African American workers. In the 1910s and 1920s, the black migrants headed by the millions to the urban north, displaced by the South's agricultural depression and by the depredations of [Jim Crow](http://www.autolife.umd.umich.edu/Race/R_Overview/R_Overview1.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22jimCrow). Unlike many employers who shied away from hiring blacks, Ford built relationships with African American church leaders, using them to screen for the most qualified (often, because of the lack of good jobs, overqualified) workers. Black workers, however, tended to be concentrated in the most menial, difficult, and dangerous jobs, such as auto body painting, where workers breathed harmful paint fumes, the foundry, where temperatures were often unbearable and where molten steel led to gruesome industrial accidents.

**PART TWO:** *Living in the Motor City: Autoworkers, Race, and Urban Geography*

The city underwent its most rapid growth in the 1920s--not coincidentally, the same period when automobile production skyrocketed. By 1930, Detroit's population had expanded to almost 1.6 million, making it the fourth largest city in the United States. Although auto production and population growth slowed during the Great Depression, the city continued to be a magnet for newcomers until the early 1950s, when the city's population peaked at nearly two million. During the boom years of World War II and the late 1940, migration to the city took on a southern accent, as poor whites from the upper south joined a new wave of black migrants from the Deep South in making Detroit their home.

The flood of newcomers--immigrants and migrants alike-- wholly transformed the city's landscape. Although most immigrant groups lived scattered about the city, ethnic restaurants, shops, and churches tended to cluster together. Polish, German, and Italian immigrants pooled their resources and built grand churches, many of which were architecturally reminiscent of those in their home countries. One group of new city residents, however, stood apart. Blacks--who were closed out of nearly all white neighborhoods--lived together in close proximity, largely in older, deteriorating central neighborhoods that had fallen out of fashion among whites. Real estate agents refused to show houses in "white" neighborhoods to blacks (unless they were deemed "blighted" or "transitional" neighborhoods that were expected to lose white population). Blacks who attempted to cross the city's invisible racial boundaries regularly faced violence. The result was the creation of two separate cities, one black and one white.

Many newcomers to the city chose neighborhoods that were convenient to their workplaces. Little frame houses and bungalows crowded the streets around big plants, like the [Dodge Main](http://www.autolife.umd.umich.edu/Race/R_Overview/DodgeMain.htm) plant in Hamtramck, which employed over 30,000 workers at its peak. Many Ford employees could walk to the company's first plants on [Piquette Street](http://www.autolife.umd.umich.edu/Race/R_Overview/Piquette_Plant.htm%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank) or in [Highland Park](http://www.autolife.umd.umich.edu/Race/R_Overview/HighlandPark_Plant.htm). But with the advent of motorized transportation--cars, trolleys, and buses--auto workers no longer had to live in the shadow of the city's plants. Growing numbers chose to live in residential neighborhoods distant from the smoke, fumes, and noise of the huge auto factories. Over the course of the twentieth century, the city's blue-collar population decentralized.

The impact of the car on [Detroit's landscape](http://www.autolife.umd.umich.edu/Race/R_Overview/Detroit_Landscape.htm) was most visible from the air. Imagine yourself in a small plane or in a hot-air balloon flying over the city in 1940 or 1950. For miles in every direction, a low rise city sprawled outward. Houses were laid out in neat grids, spreading monotonously outward block by block in an endlessly repeating pattern. Also striking when viewed from above (at least on a spring or summer day when the air was not clogged with smoke and coal dust) was how green the city was, particularly in contrast to the large industrial cities of the east coast, which were much more densely built up. In New York, workers lived in cramped tenements and apartment buildings; in Philadelphia, they lived in tiny row houses, often on treeless streets overshadowed by red-brick factories and warehouses. In Detroit, by contrast, two-thirds of the structures were detached, single family homes and another fifth were two-family homes, nearly all of them with gardens and yards. Row houses, high rise apartments, and tenements were rarities in the Motor City.

By the mid-twentieth century, Detroit was a city of [blue-collar home owners](http://www.autolife.umd.umich.edu/Race/R_Overview/Home_Owners.htm). Already by the 1910s and 1920s, many factory workers used their earnings to build their own [homes](http://www.autolife.umd.umich.edu/Race/R_Overview/Sociological_Depart.htm) or to buy one of the small wood or brick bungalows that sprung up virtually overnight on the city's open land. Rates of homeownership skyrocketed, particularly after World War II. Union-negotiated wage and benefit packages made auto work more secure than ever and allowed auto workers to join the ranks of mortgage holders. And after the [New Deal](http://www.autolife.umd.umich.edu/Race/R_Overview/R_Overview2.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22NewDeal), white workers got access to federally-backed mortgages and loan guarantees through the Federal Housing Administration, the Home Owners' Loan Corporation, and, if they had served in the military, the Veterans Administration. With few exceptions, these loan programs excluded African Americans and residents of racially diverse neighborhoods: federal policy deemed those neighborhoods "risky" and seldom covered home loans there. As a result, far fewer blacks, even relatively well-paid black autoworkers, could own their own homes.

Not all auto workers wore blue collars. As the auto industry grew over the course of the twentieth century, it became increasingly bureaucratic. No industry offered a better case study of what mid-twentieth century social observers called the "organization man," corporate paper pushers who had made it into the middle-class through discipline and conformity. With its enormous, pyramid-shaped bureaucracies, the auto industry included tens of thousands of middle-rank managers, designers, and engineers, thousands of upper level managers and supervisors, and hundreds of top-level officials. Serving the corporate headquarters of the major automobile companies was a phalanx of attorneys, advertising executives, and even industrial physicians and psychologists. Flush with the wealth generated by auto production, these white collar workers began to buy homes and move into neighborhoods that were increasingly distant from the blue-collar workers beneath them in the corporate hierarchy. (By contrast, in nineteenth century industrial cities, workers and managers tended to live in closer proximity).

By the 1920s, Detroit's rapidly-growing elite began moving to sections of the city remote from the factories, to outlying city neighborhoods like Rosedale Park, English Village, and Palmer Woods, and increasingly to new suburbs. On the curvilinear streets of [Birmingham, Bloomfield Hills](http://www.autolife.umd.umich.edu/Race/R_Overview/Map_Birmingham_Bloomfield.htm), and the Grosse Pointes, leading auto executives built mock French chateaux, southern-style plantation houses, Tudor manors, and staid New England colonials. Ford built his vast estate, [Fair Lane](http://www.autolife.umd.umich.edu/Race/R_Overview/Fairlane.htm), in suburban Dearborn, in an eclectic European style, replete with vaulted ceilings, carved paneling, and leaded glass. Middle managers spread out over the metropolitan area, particularly to new suburbs like [Southfield](http://www.autolife.umd.umich.edu/Race/R_Overview/Southfield.htm), Livonia, Farmington, and Sterling Heights. Suburban builders scrambled to meet their demand for modern, substantial houses architecturally and physically distant from the city. Oakland County, north of Detroit, with its gently rolling countryside and profusion of small lakes, became the community of choice for many auto executives. By the second half of the twentieth century it was one of the wealthiest counties in the United States, a place profoundly shaped by the concentration of auto industry derived wealth.

**PART THREE:** *Building the Motor Metropolis: Automobiles, Highways, and Sprawl*

[Auto workers--blue and white collar alike--reshaped Detroit's geography, but so too did the automobile itself.](http://www.autolife.umd.umich.edu/Environment/E_Casestudy/E_casestudy1.htm) Befitting its role as the headquarters of the American automobile industry, Detroit became a true automobile city, a place that by 1950 looked more like Los Angeles or Oakland than New York, Boston, or Philadelphia. Metropolitan Detroit was home to two of the earliest expressways in the United States. The [Davison Freeway](http://www.autolife.umd.umich.edu/Environment/E_Casestudy/Davison.htm), constructed in 1941-42, provided easy access to the auto plants in Highland Park and the East Side by directing traffic away from narrow, crowded surface streets. During World War II, federal defense spending subsidized a twenty-five mile long expressway (nicknamed "Bomber Road", later incorporated into Interstate 94) that connected the city with the huge [Willow Run](http://www.autolife.umd.umich.edu/Race/R_Overview/Willow_Run.htm) aircraft plant.

Increasingly public policy oriented itself toward car drivers. Funds for public transportation plummeted, leading to a decline in ridership and service cuts that accelerated overtime in a feedback loop. The city's public transit system declined, leading to service cuts that accelerated over time and declining public support for transit. It seemed somehow appropriate that the city that had given birth to the automobile industry had one of the nation's poorest and least accessible public transit systems by the end of the twentieth century.

As buses and trolleys languished, expressway construction boomed, particularly after the passage of the [Interstate Highway Act of 1956](http://www.autolife.umd.umich.edu/Environment/E_Casestudy/E_casestudy10.htm). In Detroit, as in the nation, federally-funded highway construction (and later expansion and maintenance projects) dwarfed public works projects of the past. Huge swaths of city were demolished to make way for expressways--and as was the case with so many urban redevelopment projects, black working-class neighborhoods were most heavily impacted. The Chrysler Freeway blasted through the heart of [Paradise Valley](http://www.autolife.umd.umich.edu/Environment/E_Casestudy/ChryslerFreeway.htm), replacing Hastings Street, one of black Detroit's main shopping and entertainment districts. The Lodge and Ford Freeways cut through the city's most established black west side neighborhoods. By the end of the 1960s, it was possible to pass through vast sections of the city at sixty or seventy miles per hour on submerged, limited access [highways](http://www.autolife.umd.umich.edu/Race/R_Overview/Map_1975_Transportation_MI.htm).

[New expressways accelerated the process of suburbanization.](http://www.autolife.umd.umich.edu/Environment/E_Casestudy/E_casestudy9.htm) New housing developments for both blue and white collar workers sprung up virtually overnight in what had been rural areas on the outskirts of the metropolis. The largest blue-collar suburb (and soon the third largest municipality in the state) was [Warren](http://www.autolife.umd.umich.edu/Race/R_Overview/Warren.htm). A community of truck before World War II, by 1960, it was home to over 150,000 people who lived on streets lined with block after block of little ranch houses and Cape Cods. Warren and suburban Macomb County (of which it was a part) became a Mecca for blue-collar whites fleeing the city. White-collar workers also filled up new subdivisions as quickly as they could be built in the city's northern and western suburbs. Wetlands and farmlands alike became seas of green lawns, divided by ribbons of tarmac. By 1960, more whites in metropolitan Detroit lived in the suburbs than in the city (though very few blacks did--because real estate agents refused to sell to them and they faced intense hostility and often violence when they tried to cross suburban boundaries).

Over the course of the twentieth century, the Motor City had become the Motor Metropolis, going from twenty square miles to several thousand square miles. As the population spread outward, the whole urban landscape changed. The rapid development of suburban tract housing greatly strained municipal resources. The old, narrow, sometimes even unpaved roads in new suburbs could not accommodate the flood of cars that accompanied suburban development. Faced with massive traffic jams, suburban communities scrambled to raise funds to retrofit the old, narrow, sometimes even unpaved roads that had been built to serve sparsely populated, rural areas. Wider roads did not, however, reduce traffic--in fact traffic engineers discovered that "if you build it they will come." Although many suburbanites claimed that their new communities offered a haven from urban "congestion," suburban roads were often more clogged with traffic than their counterparts in the depopulating center city.

Detroiters--like their counterparts in most of the United States--spent more and more time in their cars. [The landscape of the metropolitan area reflected the new dependence on the car.](http://www.autolife.umd.umich.edu/Environment/E_Casestudy/E_casestudy11.htm) New auto plants, office parks, and shopping centers, were now surrounded by acres of parking lots to accommodate commuters from all corners of the metropolitan area and even sometimes from further afield. At major intersections and near expressway exit ramps, new commercial enterprises--gas stations, car dealerships and repair shops, fast food restaurants, drive-ins, shopping centers, and strip malls--sprung up to cater to automobile users. In suburban Detroit, as in large parts of late-twentieth century America, pedestrian life dwindled. Most suburban developments dispensed with sidewalks altogether; children were more likely to be driven or bused to school; church yards were dwarfed by parking lots. The car culture even transformed residential architecture. [The most prominent visual feature on most post-World War II homes was the garage.](http://www.autolife.umd.umich.edu/Environment/E_Casestudy/E_casestudy12.htm#3rdtolast)

The automobile was, by far, the most expensive consumer good (other than the house itself) that most Americans owned. But despite their expense, cars were not built to last forever. Each year, auto makers introduced new models, highlighted new features and designs, and celebrated new features. Many commentators described auto design as "planned obsolescence"--the design, the fashion, the very appearance of the car was meant to be fleeting, to be obsolete. So too did manufacturers treat the facilities that constructed automobiles. Many of the first auto plants were massive, architecturally impressive structures. [Albert Kahn](http://www.autolife.umd.umich.edu/Race/R_Overview/Albert_Kahn.htm), one of the leading architects of the early twentieth century, designed Ford's Highland Park plant and many of the city's leading factories. But by the 1950s, auto companies were beginning to jettison rather than to redesign or recycle old plants. One by one, they replaced the grand structures of Kahn and his imitators with new facilities. The auto plant proved to be just as much a victim of the mentality of planned obsolescence as its final product. "Obsolescence," wrote [Henry Ford II](http://www.autolife.umd.umich.edu/Labor/L_Casestudy/HenryFordII.htm) in response to critics of plant closings, "is the very hallmark of progress."

**PART FOUR:** *Moving Out: Decentralization and the Decline of Urban Factories*

By the mid-twentieth century, major changes in the American economy were underway, and the automobile industry was on the cutting edge. The "Big Three" auto producers, Ford, General Motors, and Chrysler, drove nearly every smaller competitor out of business. In one of the largest shutdowns, [Studebaker-Packard](http://www.autolife.umd.umich.edu/Race/R_Overview/Packard.htm), closed its massive Detroit plant in 1956, a prelude to the dissolution of the hobbled company several years later. [Hudson](http://www.autolife.umd.umich.edu/Race/R_Overview/R_Overview4.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22hudson) and [Kaiser-Frazer](http://www.autolife.umd.umich.edu/Race/R_Overview/R_Overview4.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22Kaiser), two other independent manufacturers, also closed down. And in a reorganization of the manufacturing process, the Big Three introduced new automated technologies that reduced the need for laborers and often drove capital-heavy suppliers out of business. For example, the 1950s witnessed the demise of Murray Auto Body and Motor Products, two independent firms that had long supplied bodies and parts to the auto industry.

Even more momentous was the decentralization of automobile production. Already by the 1920s, Detroit's auto industry began to decentralize, locating new plants in outlying areas. But the pace of industrial flight picked up rapidly in the 1940s and 1950s, again reshaping the geography of Detroit and indeed of industrial America. Between 1945 and 1957, the Big Three auto companies built twenty-five new plants in metropolitan Detroit, all of them outside the city. Ford opened new plants in such places suburban Plymouth and Madison Heights, and in remote [Wixom](http://www.autolife.umd.umich.edu/Race/R_Overview/Wixom_Plant.htm), thirty-five miles northwest of downtown. General Motors plants sprung up virtually overnight at sites in Livonia, Warren, and Romulus, all suburbs of the city. Even Chrysler, which did not have as much capital to build new plants, constructed several new suburban facilities. The new "greenfield" plants (so named because they were usually built on old farmland, woods, or marshes) were strikingly different in their layout and architecture from the old, brick-clad, multistory plants like Highland Park, Dodge Main, or [River Rouge](http://www.autolife.umd.umich.edu/Race/R_Overview/Rouge_Plant.htm). Sprawling single story complexes, they were often elaborately landscaped and surrounded by vast parking lots.

Along with the auto plants, many smaller parts suppliers, machine shops, and tool-and-die firms relocated outside the city. Increasingly, such small shops were scattered around the small towns of the upper Midwest, particularly in northern Indiana and Ohio. The spread of industrial jobs outside of central cities was not peculiar to the auto industry, to be sure. The mill towns of New England were gutted in the 1920s when textile manufacturers relocated to the low-wage markets of Virginia, North Carolina, and Georgia. Trenton, Philadelphia, and Camden witnessed a slow, steady hemorrhage of jobs outward. Garment shops that had once been in New York reappeared in small towns far from the Big Apple. But the impact of the auto industry's restructuring was particularly profound. In 1950, one-sixth of the nation's jobs were somehow related to the automobile industry. As the old adage went, when Detroit sneezed, the rest of the Midwest got a cold.

The most gigantic of Detroit plants, Ford's vast River Rouge complex, was one of the first to decentralize. [After Ford workers voted overwhelmingly to join the fledging United Automobile Workers union in 1941](http://www.autolife.umd.umich.edu/Labor/L_Casestudy/L_casestudy3.htm#para2), Ford officials soon realized that their flagship production facility was particularly vulnerable to [labor unrest](http://www.autolife.umd.umich.edu/Race/R_Overview/Labor_unrest.htm). Rouge workers were among the industry's most well-organized, racially and ethnically diverse, and militant. When Rouge workers walked out on strike, the company's entire manufacturing operations crashed to a halt. To diffuse union power, to avail itself of new technologies, and to reach new markets, Ford relocated key operations outside of the Rouge plant, often setting up parallel production (two or more factories producing the same goods) to minimize the effect of [wildcat strikes](http://www.autolife.umd.umich.edu/Race/R_Overview/R_Overview4.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22wildcat) and walkouts. By 1960, only 30,000 worked at the Rouge. By 1990, its workforce had plummeted to just a little over 6,000. What had been done at the Rouge was now done in bits and pieces throughout the country in places as far-flung as [Brook Park](http://www.autolife.umd.umich.edu/Labor/L_Casestudy/L_casestudy1.htm)Village and [Lima, Ohio](http://www.autolife.umd.umich.edu/Race/R_Overview/Lima_Plant.htm), Buffalo, New York, and [Richmond, California](http://www.autolife.umd.umich.edu/Race/R_Overview/Richmond_Plant.htm).

**PART FIVE: *Downsizing: Depopulation, Disinvestment, and the Fate of the City***

The spread of the auto industry outward in the 1950s was but a first stage in the mass migration of industry to low-wage regions of the United States and, increasingly, the world. Many manufacturing concerns related to the auto industry moved further afield to the South and to [**Mexico**](http://www.autolife.umd.umich.edu/Race/R_Overview/Mexico_Plant.htm) and [**Canada**](http://www.autolife.umd.umich.edu/Race/R_Overview/Canada_Plants.htm), particularly in the 1970s and 1980s. And one by one, major auto plants in Detroit shut their doors.

The decentralization of industry had profound effects on the urban geography and on the working-class population of the city. The movement of jobs out of the city accelerated the process of suburbanization, as autoworkers who could move followed their jobs. Hardest hit by the loss of jobs in the central city were black workers, who could seldom find housing in the segregated suburbs or the mostly white small towns that attracted many firms. In the 1960s, social scientists began to observe what they called a "spatial mismatch," between working-class minorities and jobs. Most jobs were being created in outlying communities that excluded minorities. Getting from the central city to an outlying plant was time-consuming and costly. Those who hung onto their jobs often had to commute long distances. But given the lack of good public transportation connecting the city and new suburban job sites, workers needed reliable cars. Yet inner city residents were far less likely than their white, suburban counterparts to own their own cars. In a vicious circle, those who lived in places abandoned by the auto and related industries and who were frozen out of suburban housing markets had to rely on the most expensive form of private transportation (because of public transit cuts) to get to jobs.

[The downsizing and shutdown of central city factories devastated urban neighborhoods.](http://www.autolife.umd.umich.edu/Environment/E_Casestudy/E_casestudy4.htm#para4) The small shops, bars and restaurants that catered to workers during their lunch breaks or at shift change shut their doors. Neighborhoods near closed plants lost population. Without convenient jobs--and with the hulks of old plants looming over them--they became less desirable places to live. Cities like Detroit struggled to recoup the tax revenues that they lost when companies closed their doors. The loss of property taxes, wage taxes, and population was devastating, particularly as urban governments faced the costs of providing education and social services to an increasingly impoverished population. The environmental impact of factory shutdowns was also grave. Redeveloping brownfields, as disused factory sites were called, became difficult because of the residue of decades of industrial waste left behind.

A trip through the streets of the city by the mid-1960s revealed the wrenching impact of auto mobility. What had been some of the densest sections of the city were now a[veritable wasteland](http://www.autolife.umd.umich.edu/Race/R_Overview/VeritableWasteland.htm), pockmarked by empty storefronts, rubble-strewn vacant lots, and boarded up houses. The neighborhoods hardest hit--most emptied out--were the city's oldest and those neighborhoods that abutted now [closed-down factories](http://www.autolife.umd.umich.edu/Race/R_Overview/Closed_Factories.htm). Highland Park and Hamtramck, which relied heavily on Chrysler, lost half their population after 1960. Large parts of Detroit's east side, home to generations of German, Polish, and Slavic autoworkers saw massive depopulation and abandonment. The Delray neighborhood, home to many of the city's most prominent Hungarian churches, lost nearly ninety percent of its population, as many of the area's auto, steel, and chemical plants downsized their workforces or shut their doors altogether.

The flight of industry outward was ultimately made possible by the car itself. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries American cities grew up along rivers and canals, which linked them to markets well beyond their boundaries. From the mid-nineteenth to the mid-twentieth centuries, railroads became the threads that connected cities, their industries and suppliers, and their people. But from the 1920s onward, highways became the lifeblood of the metropolis and, increasingly, cars and trucks carried goods and people from place to place. Detroit recapitulated that history: it came to life as a river city, grew as an industrial colossus in the era of the railroad (auto plants were almost always constructed along railroads, which brought raw materials in and finished vehicles out). And by the 1950s, the city's economy traveled outward as highways--and after 1956, federally-subsidized interstate freeways--made it possible for industry to move away from rivers and railroads.

In the 1970s and the 1980s, the auto industry fell on even harder times, as it struggled to overcome economic woes that grew combination of oil shortages, rising fuel prices, and intense international competition, particularly with auto manufacturers in Japan and Germany. In the late 1970s, Chrysler nearly went bankrupt (only to be bailed out by the federal government), and Ford and General Motors suffered record losses. The auto industry's woes exacerbated the effects of nearly a quarter century of deindustrialization and job loss.

Counteracting decades of industrial flight proved to be difficult and costly. In the 1980s, city officials used the power of eminent domain to demolish the [Poletown](http://www.autolife.umd.umich.edu/Race/R_Overview/Poletown.htm%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank) neighborhood (which adjoined the site of the once mighty Dodge Main plant, which had closed in 1980) for the construction of a suburban-style Cadillac plant. In the 1990s--again with massive government subsidies--Chrysler built a new plant on the city's East Side. But the dense urban fabric that surrounded older plants was gone. For example, the new Poletown plant employed fewer than 2,000 workers, too small a number to sustain the bars, stores, and restaurants that surrounded many older, larger facilities. Most Poletown workers drove to work and quickly left the neighborhood on the two expressways that passed nearby.

By the end of the twentieth century, the auto industry remained Detroit's dominant employer and, indeed, one of the leading sectors of the national economy. But auto industry employees were less and less a part of the picture of the sprawling metropolis of the late twentieth century. The absolute number of auto industry employees fell between 1950 and 1990. At mid-century, 214,000 Detroit men worked in blue-collar manufacturing jobs; by 1990, the figure had fallen to only 104,000. The color of auto industry employees also got whiter over the last half of the twentieth century, as manufacturing jobs disappeared and as the auto industry became more bureaucratic in its organization. In 1950, the auto industry employed 26 white collar workers for every 100 blue-collar workers; in 1990, it employed 63 white-collar workers for every 100 blue-collar workers. While assembly line workers did not disappear, "shop rats" (as they often called themselves) became less and less common. The trend shows little signs of abating. As American auto manufacturers scrambled to keep up with their European and Asian competitors and began to hold their ground in the 1990s,[they introduced new labor-saving technologies that further reduced assembly-line jobs](http://www.autolife.umd.umich.edu/Labor/L_Overview/L_Overview9.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22para2%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank). As a result auto industry productivity rose rapidly in the 1990s, even as auto industry employment continued to fall. Replaced by machines or by workers in other parts of the country or other parts of the world, many blue-collar Detroiters moved into service-sector jobs that were less-well paying and secure than the auto industry. At century's end, the Motor City remains the headquarters of three of the world's most gigantic firms, but fewer and fewer working-class Detroiters depend on auto-industry wages for their livelihood.

Over the course of the twentieth century, the auto industry remade modern America--and indeed the world. From humble origins in the late nineteenth century, the auto industry grew explosively in the early and mid-twentieth centuries, scattered and decentralized, and reconstituted its work force. The impact on everyday life--from where people live to what kind of work they do--cannot be underestimated. Those changes were especially visible in Detroit, the capitol of the auto industry. Over the course of a century, the Motor City had become the Motor Metropolis, going from a few square miles to a few thousand square miles in under a century. It was made, remade, and unmade by its dominant industry. Its human geography--of race, class, and power--is the unique product of the automobile age. And its built and natural environments are also the product and by-product of the car itself. At the dawn of a new century, amidst celebrations of the advent of the new, revolutionary technology of the computer and the internet (dubbed the electronic superhighway), we are still a nation of cars, of highways, of sprawl, of industrial decentralization. We still live in the automobile nation.

**Rubric:**

\_\_\_\_\_ / **20 points (homework grade) Reading and Annotations**

* Grade level annotations show that you have given deeper and more complex meaning to the text by showing appropriate connections to former and current units. Unfamiliar vocabulary is identified and defined. Main ideas from each section are identified and enumerated (or in some way easily recognizable). Please see the annotation power point on the website with any questions about grade level annotating.

\_\_\_\_\_ / **30 points (in-class activity grade) Followed all guidelines, used class time effectively, and gave full effort**

* Effectively use at least 5 pictures to depict main ideas, identified the most significant events and/or ideas from your section on task, showed major concepts from our industry unit as well as past units, asked clarifying questions (after first discussing with your group), worked to potential, followed all written and verbal directions, worked cooperatively in small groups.

\_\_\_\_\_ / **10 points (project grade), Completed Timeline**

* Completed on time, neat, legible, easy to follow and understand, no spelling/grammar/syntax errors