Driving Detroit: 
The Quest for Respect in the Motor City

George Galster
Hilberry Professor of Urban Affairs, Wayne State University, Detroit

Detroit is the international icon for a once-thriving industrial powerhouse transformed within half a century into a dysfunctional metropolis. George Galster’s Driving Detroit paints a stunning portrait of Metropolitan Detroit through an eclectic application of urban planning, economics, sociology, political science, geography, history, and psychology. But Driving Detroit is also partly a self portrait, wherein Detroiter paint their own stories through songs, poems, and oral histories. This remarkable mix of scholarly disciplines and media of communication make the book distinctively insightful, accessible, and memorable. Driving Detroit is uniquely powerful because its portrait not only helps the reader clearly see the subject but, more importantly, understand why Metropolitan Detroit’s social, cultural, political, institutional, commercial, and built landscape has been transformed. Though appropriate for graduate and undergraduate courses in urban studies, geography, planning, social sciences and history, the book should be of interest to the general public, both in the U.S. and elsewhere.

Driving Detroit contends that Metropolitan Detroit can be understood as two dimensions of tensions, capital vs. labor, blacks vs. whites. It documents the region’s geopolitical environment, evolving economic and population patterns, and longstanding inter-class and inter-racial struggles. It shows how geography, local government structure, and social forces created a regional housing development system that perpetually produces sprawl at the fringe and abandonment at the core. Driving Detroit breaks new ground in urban studies by drawing upon psychological principles of human fulfilment to diagnose the region’s ills. It argues that the region’s automotive economic base and housing development system have chronically frustrated the populations’ quest for “respect:” basic physical, social and psychological resources. These frustrations generated the extreme adaptations that distinguish the region: distrust, scapegoating, identity politics, segregation, unionization, and jurisdictional fragmentation. Unfortunately, these individually rational adaptations have proven collectively irrational, leaving Metropolitan Detroit in an uncompetitive, unsustainable position.

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Advance praise for:

**Driving Detroit:**
*The Quest for Respect in the Motor City*

"George Galster cares deeply about Detroit - as should we all. In this clever and highly readable book, he draws upon history, social science, music, poetry and art to build a compelling case that bitter, unresolved conflicts have trapped the region in a zero-sum game, undermining the well-being of its people and communities -- past, present, and future. Although Detroit is unique in many respects, the conflicts that bedevil it are not. There's a lot to learn here for anyone who cares about 21st century urban America." --Margery Austin Turner, *The Urban Institute*

"*Driving Detroit* is replete with interesting insights on the social history of one of America's most troubled cities. George Galster has done a remarkable job of revealing how powerful elements in the Detroit metropolitan area created over time intense race and class polarization and a pronounced city-suburban dichotomy. There are lessons to be learned from this compelling study of a dysfunctional metropolitan region. Indeed, Galster's illuminating analysis is a must-read." --William Julius Wilson, *Harvard University*

"Like a good documentary, *Driving Detroit* expertly guides us through a fascinating yet grim and sad urban reality while exposing the deeper historical impact of economic restructuring, enduring racism, and selfish politics. And yet the insights connected to this extreme case are not confined only to Detroit. The book should be compulsory reading for urbanists in the U.S. and beyond who are searching for adequate responses to the challenges of their own cities." --Sako Musterd, *University of Amsterdam*
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