

# City's New Housing Fails to Meet Need

61,232 Units Built in 3 Years  
Negro Situation Is Most Acute

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When this war began, the 1,000 men who build houses in Detroit had been building them at the rate of 20,000 a year in an effort to catch up after the depression. Since Dec. 7, 1941, the private builders have constructed 40,300 individual homes, and the Federal Public Housing Agency has furnished 20,932 dwelling units. That's 61,232 units in three years.

Yet, there is an acute housing shortage.

A June, 1944, census showed 736,395 dwelling units in the Detroit-Willow Run war production area, of which 99.2 per cent were occupied, a very high percentage of occupancy. It means that people who want to marry often can't find places to settle, families with new babies can't find bigger homes, newcomers must leave their families back home—sometimes for months at a time—because there are no houses here to buy or rent.

The situation with respect to Negroes is even more acute.

The census showed 56,815 of the 736,395 dwelling units were for Negroes, and 99.6 per cent were occupied. The situation in fact was—and still is—tighter than that. The War Housing Center of Detroit received 14,000 applications for Negro housing in a year and it cannot begin to fill the requests.

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Another way to say it is that there are 4.5 Negroes for each Negro dwelling unit and 3.1 whites for each white dwelling unit.

The census shows that the Detroit-Willow Run area had 2,429,000 white inhabitants in 1944, of whom 209,000 had come in since 1940. They occupied 679,580 dwelling units.

To meet the housing shortage in this group, 47,189 dwelling units have been provided up to now.

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**THE AREA** had 259,490 Negroes, of whom 43,010 had come in since 1940. They occupied 56,815 dwelling units.

To meet the housing shortage in this group, 19,123 dwelling units have been provided up to now.

Here is the resulting picture:

There are not nearly enough



Haswell

houses for Negroes, there are barely enough houses for whites. The demand for better housing from all groups is entirely unsatisfied, and it is likely to remain unsatisfied until after the war.

This summary may surprise some of the people who have been thinking and talking about housing, because it was gathered from a number of sources. It surprised some of the persons who furnished the figures.

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**HERE IS** the way Negro accommodations were expanded. Fifteen thousand houses were purchased from white occupants; 5,000 places were converted to housing—stores, commercial buildings, etc., unsatisfactory housing, public housing agencies provided 5,873, and private agencies provided the rest.

In addition, there are now 2,910 more Negro dwelling units planned. The process of converting private dwellings from white to Negro occupancy is likely to go on.

The FHA has plans for 3,500 new homes for white occupancy to be constructed this year.

The summary is unsatisfactory in one respect. It does not account for the number of dwelling units created for white occupancy by converting other types of buildings, such as stores and warehouses.

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**JOHN WEBB**, in a report to the President's Committee for Congested Production Areas, observes:

"The dilemma of a community in a congested wartime production area is obvious. On the one hand, the resident population is proud that its industries are able to expand production in a national emergency. On the other hand, it is disturbed when it sees incoming manpower piling up like sand poured from a bucket, and spreading out into areas of the community that would normally not require an extension of community services for years.

"It is one thing to increase the capacity of factories in an area, or to build new ones where none existed before; it is an entirely different thing to increase the capacity of a community to serve the multiform needs of the manpower without which these factories are inefficient."

In the long run, it is the capacity of the community to expand which really limits the capacity of industry located there.

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