

CITY FACES

'The past and the future are bumping into each other with great force. We're at the tail-end of consumer/durable goods and at the begining of telecommunications. It shifts the advantages to other areas (of the country).'

— Dr. Corrine Gilb, chief of Detroit Planning Dept.



Dr. Gilb walks with lunchtime crowd to her offices in the Cadillac Towers in downtown Detroit.

Dr. Corrine Gilb has been head of Detroit's Planning Department since August 1979, with the job of developing Detroit's second master plan — a summation of the city's past and a prescription for the future.

The first master plan was presented in 1951, a few years before the population peaked in the city. Now, unemployment is at near-record levels, the population has dropped by one third, and Mayor Coleman Young has declared a state of emergency for the hungry in the city.

The new three-volume plan, "covering the whole spectrum of life in the city," with 26 volumes of background information is now on the mayor's desk, but revisions continue.

"We've come up with a long list of things that can be done," Gilb says. She refuses to comment on specifics until her boss does.

"We're charged with taking the long-range view. Other departments operate day-to-day. We must see what they're missing."

The planning department does studies on land use, energy, transportation, social and economic planning for the city, monitors state and federal legislation, collects and analyzes demographic data, participates in environmental impact studies and administers the city's block grant program.

Dr. Gilb, 57, came to Detroit in 1968 to teach at Wayne State University. "I felt there were some extremely profound things happening here. The ancient peoples used to think there was a spot where the gods of the underworld and the sky met.

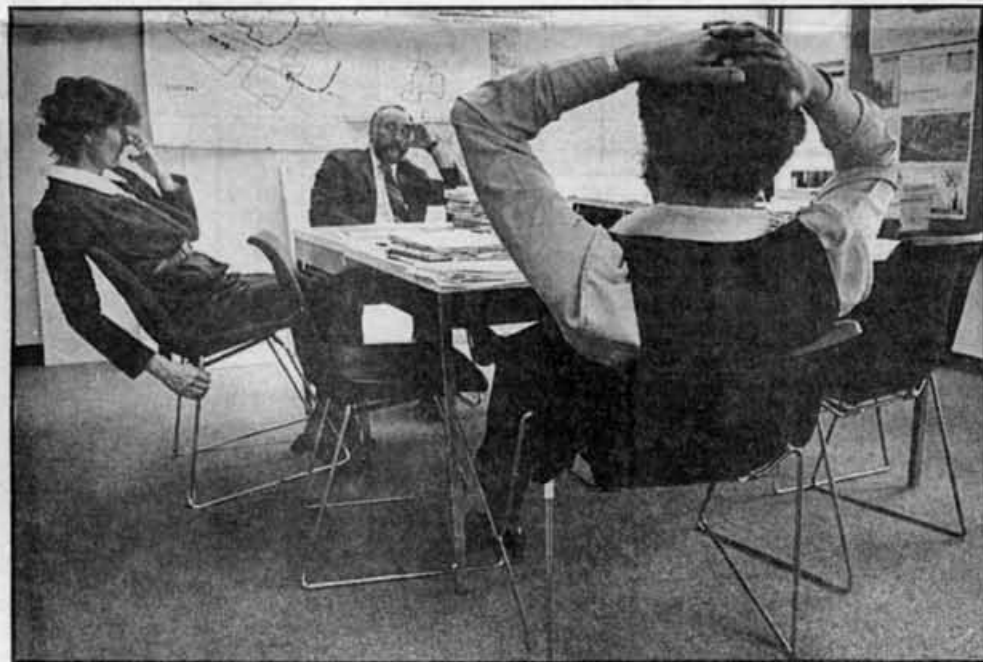
"In a sense Detroit is one of those spots. I mean that metaphorically. It's a crossroads of time. The past and the future are bumping into each other with great force. We're at the tail-end of consumer/durable goods and at the begining of telecommunications. It shifts the advantages to other areas (of the country)."

So Detroit is suffering, Gilb says, from the "double whammy of the natural downturn in the economy and the sudden reversal of federal policies. The trouble with the whole defense-spending thing is that it benefits other places. That's governmental intervention that has enormous local consequences."

"People should probably get mad as hell at those people in Washington who are refusing to recognize what is happening — and respond."



After checking in with her secretary, Kathryn Turner, (above) Dr. Gilb hosts a staff meeting to set priorities with assistants Robert Hoffman and Harold Smith of the Planning Department.



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BY GEORGE WALDMAN