



# Sustainability in the New Urban World: Lessons from Shrinking Cities

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# Shrinking Cities

- older industrial areas that have lost more than 25% of their population over the last 40 years, and that are characterized physically by abandoned properties, vacancies, and blight (Schilling and Logan 2008; Vey 2007)
- cities that have lost population in the period of 1980 to the present (Beauregard (2007)
- a densely populated urban area with at least 10,000 residents that has faced population losses in large parts for more than two years and is undergoing economic transformation with some symptoms of a structural crisis (Shrinking Cities International Research Network, 2012)
- United States
  - 37 cities that have lost at least 20% of their population, from a peak of over 100,000 in 1980

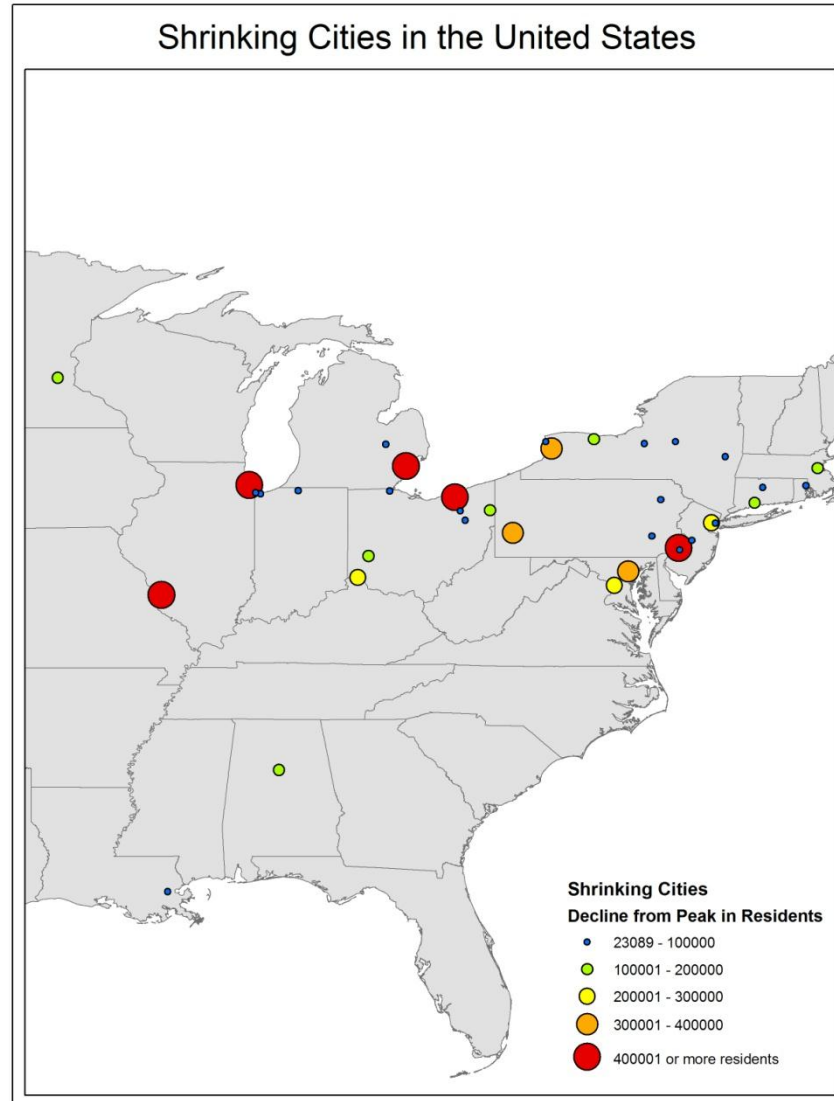


Detroit, Michigan

# US Shrinking Cities

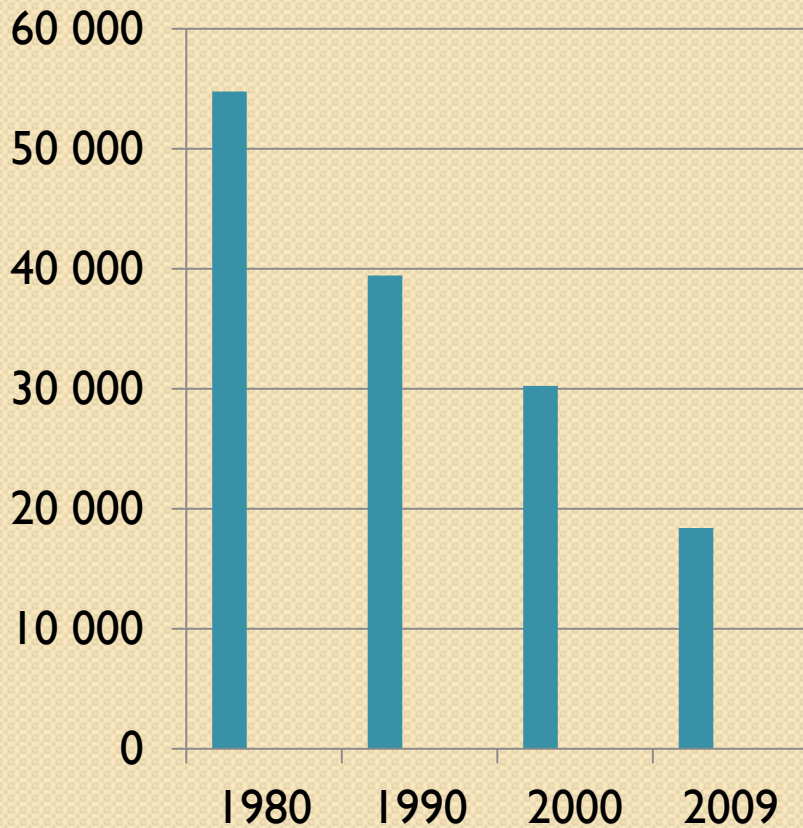
City	Peak Population	Peak Year	2010 Population	Change from Peak
Detroit, MI	1,849,568	1950	713,777	-61.4%
Youngstown, OH	168,330	1950	66,982	-60.2%
Cleveland, OH	914,808	1950	396,815	-56.6%
Buffalo, NY	580,132	1950	261,310	-55.0%
Pittsburgh, PA	676,806	1950	305,704	-54.8%
Flint, MI	196,940	1960	102,434	-48.0%
Cincinnati, OH	504,998	1950	296,943	-41.1%
Canton, OH	116,912	1950	73,007	-37.6%
Akron, OH	290,351	1960	199,110	-31.4%
Toledo, OH	383,818	1970	287,208	-25.2%

# America's Shrinking Cities

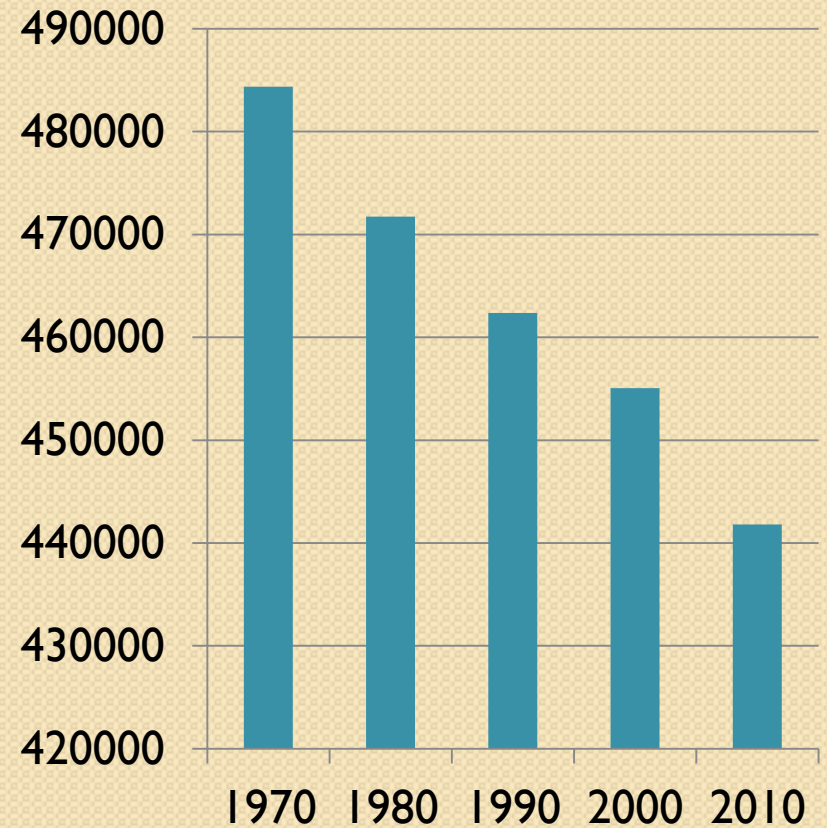


Lost at least 20% of their population from a peak of over 100,000

## Population Decline



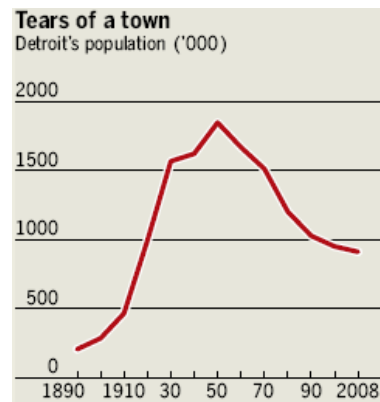
## Manufacturing Decline



# Toledo, Ohio: A Shrinking City

# Detroit

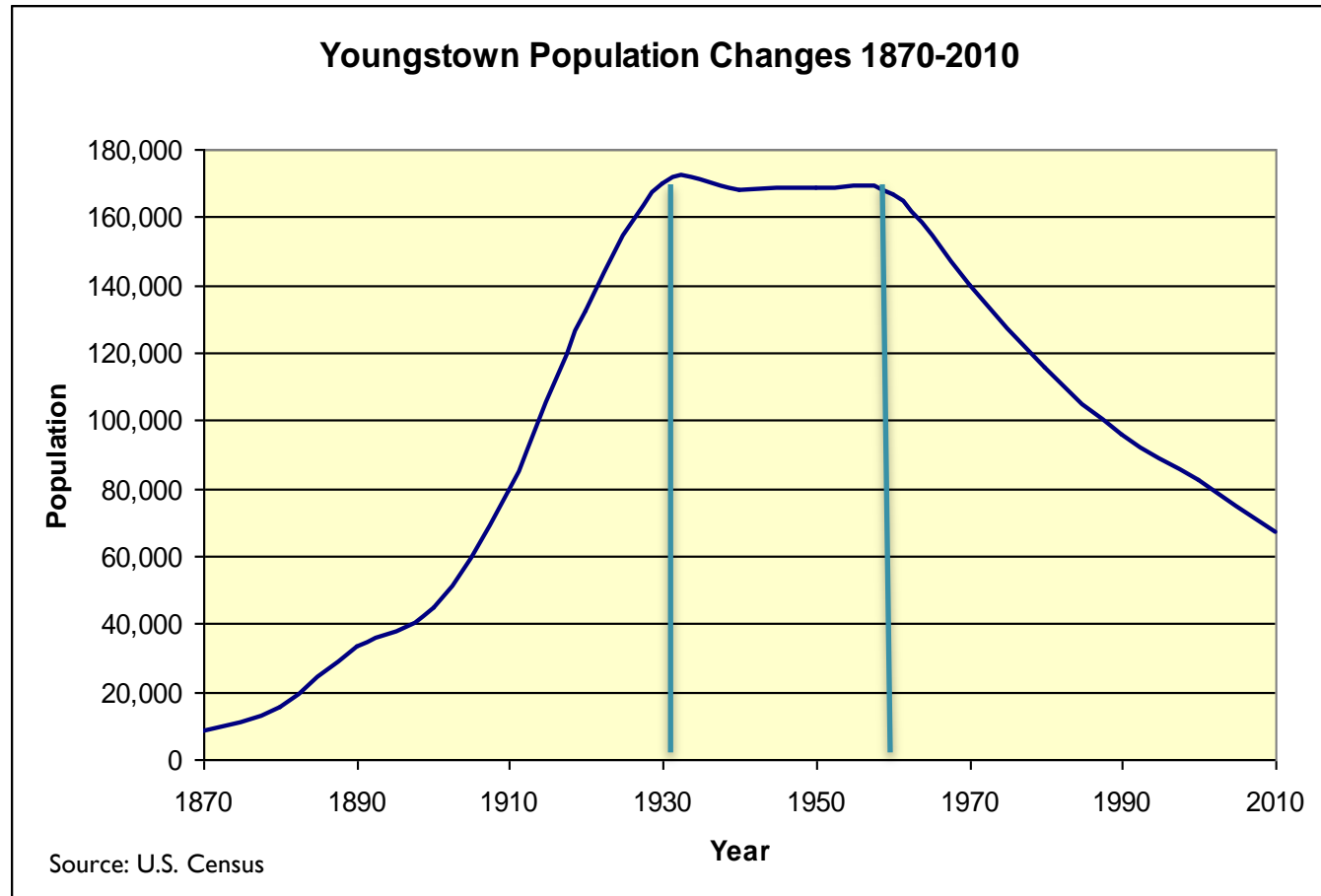
- “The city of Detroit was once one of the greatest industrial cities in the history of the world, but today it is a rotting, decaying, post-apocalyptic hellhole. Nearly half the men are unemployed, nearly half the population is functionally illiterate, more than half of the children are living in poverty and the city government is drowning in debt. As economic conditions have gotten worse, crime has absolutely exploded. Every single night in Detroit there are frightening confrontations between desperate criminals and exasperated homeowners” (economiccollapseblog.com).



Sources: US Census Bureau; Bureau of Labor Statistics; Michigan Department of Energy and Labour



# Youngstown, Ohio



# Youngstown's response

- Youngstown, Ohio
  - We're not the Youngstown we used to be;
  - We won't be that Youngstown ever again;
  - We need to shrink to survive.
    - "Shrinking is un-American in a way"  
Hunter Morrison, YSU
  - Youngstown 2010 Plan
    - provides for a City that is smaller, greener, cleaner, makes efficient use of its available resources, and capitalizes on its many cultural amenities and business advantages



Youngstown, Ohio



# Boston, Massachusetts

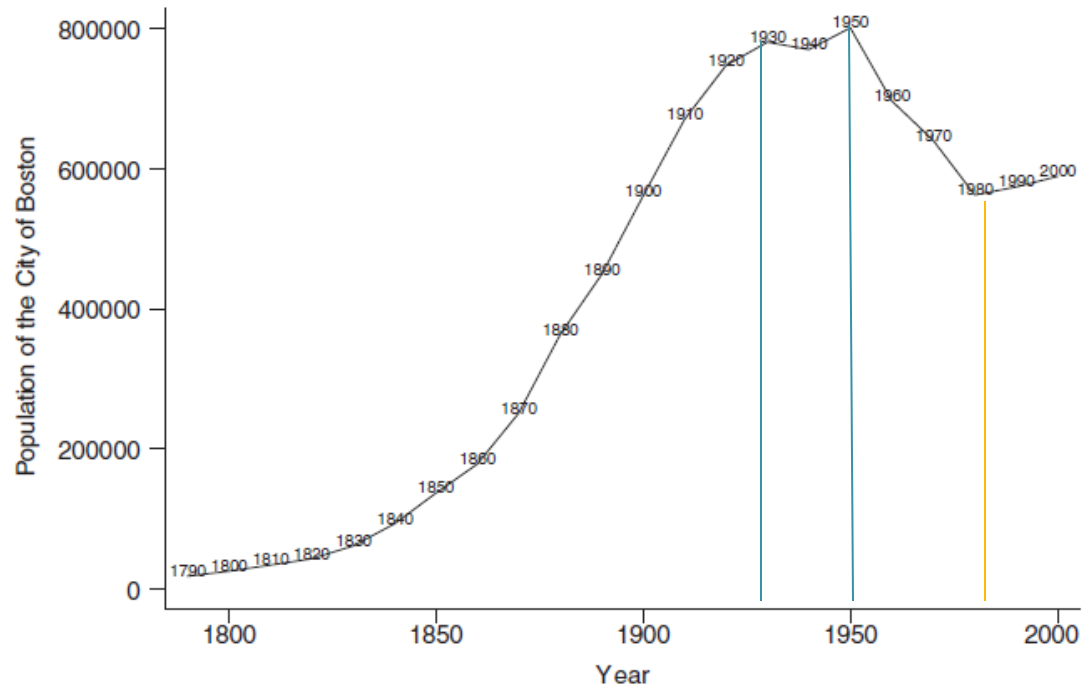


Figure 1. Boston's population 1790–2000.

Source: US Census.

Glaser, E. Reinventing Boston: 1630-2003, 2005. *Journal of Economic Geography*, 5: 119-153.

# Boston's decline

- Reasons for post-1950 population decline
  - Climate
    - Air conditioning
    - Public health improvements
  - Manufacturing focus
  - Automobile
  - High taxes and heavy regulation

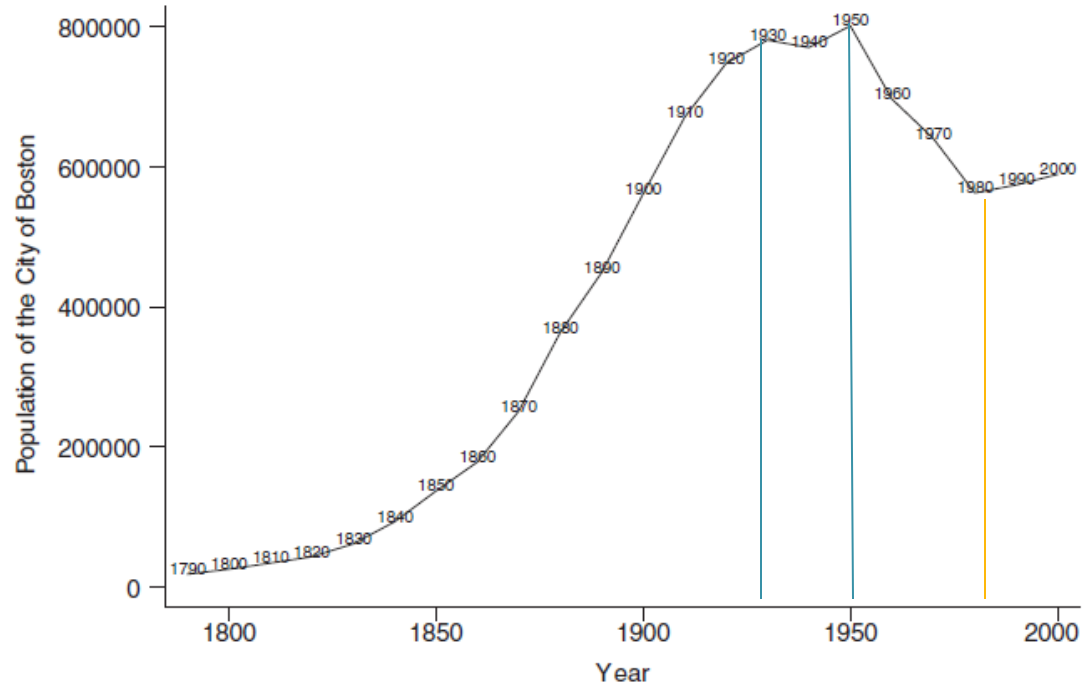


- “An urban observer looking at Boston in 1980 would have every reason to believe that it would go the way of Detroit and Syracuse and continue along its sad path towards urban irrelevance” (Glaeser, 143)

- “In the 1980-2000 period, Boston turned out to look more like San Jose than like Detroit” (Glaeser, 151)



# Boston, Massachusetts



**Figure 1.** Boston's population 1790–2000.

*Source:* US Census.

# Boston's resurgence (post-1980)

- Successfully responded to challenges
  - Long run urban success does not  $\neq$  perpetual growth.
  - Long run success means = successfully responding to challenges
  - Reorientation is the key to a city's survival
  - “When manufacturing declined Boston was able to redefine itself as a high technology city, while Detroit did not” (Glaeser, 121)

# Boston's resurgence

- Attractive to residents not just firms
  - A productive center but also a place that people wanted to live: a consumer city”
  - During times of economic trouble residents innovated and stayed
  - “In the coal towns of central Pennsylvania exodus, not innovation, was a more common response” (Glaeser, 122)

# Boston's Resurgence

- The “correct” human capital
  - Education critical
    - Out of 209 MSAs with over 200,000 people in 2000 Boston had the 6<sup>th</sup> highest level of college graduates
  - Human capital is most valuable to a city during periods of transition
    - Skilled workers are innovators and entrepreneurs
    - Firms invest in places with skilled workers
  - Boston is dominated by 4 industries
    - Professional services (computer-related and scientific research)
    - Education (higher education)
    - Financial services
    - Health care
  - The booming information economy relied on skilled workers and Boston's long history had left the city with a surfeit of universities. As a result Boston was ideally poised to take advantage of the rise in returns to skill that so marked the last quarter of the twentieth century” (Glaeser, 151)

# Innovation Index

Factor	Boston MSA	Detroit MSA
<b>Innovation Index</b>	<b>111.9</b>	<b>86.8</b>
Human Capital (30%)	136.0	98
Economic Dynamics (30%)	114.6	78.3
Productivity and Employment (30%)	87.5	82.7
Economic Well-being (10%)	104.9	89.3

Source: Innovation in American Regions Project

# Conclusions

- Education



- Livability



- Economic Diversity



- Good government





# Sustainability: A Wicked Problem

- Rittel, H.W.J. and Webber, M.J. 1973. Dilemmas in a general theory of planning. *Policy Sciences*, 4, 155-169.
  - Different stakeholders see the problem differently
  - There is no definitive, agreed upon, solution
  - every solution offered exposes new aspects of the problem
  - Every wicked problem is unique and is the symptom of another problem
  - Determination of the solution is unique; no right or wrong, just better or worse
  - Solutions have unintended consequences
  - There may be no solutions to a wicked problem or it may be possible to devise a range of solutions



$$y=mx+b$$



