RESTON, VIRGINIA: ITS SOCIAL IMPACT ON FAIRFAX COUNTY

A DECADE OF IMPROVING
THE QUALITY OF LIFE IN URBAN AMERICA
RESTON, VIRGINIA: ITS SOCIAL IMPACT ON FAIRFAX COUNTY

A DECADE OF IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF LIFE IN URBAN AMERICA

OPENING STATEMENT

The international Management Consultant firm of Booz Allen in a final report dated April 2, 1973, entitled THE ECONOMIC IMPACT OF RESTON ON FAIRFAX COUNTY GOVERNMENT, concluded that "Revenues generated by the Reston community exceeded expenditures for services received from the Fairfax County Government by an estimated $1.5 million in FY 1972 and will increase year-by-year up to an estimated $16.7 million (per year) in FY 1982 at the completion of Reston." This means that the 11 year total will be approximately $88 million surplus to the County.

Here was conclusive evidence that Reston, by the end of its first decade, was a major benefactor to one of the fastest growing counties in the United States: And, if allowed to be completed in accordance with the approved Master Plan, will be even more beneficial in the future.

Reston, Virginia is now ten years old - older than any other American new town. This is the halfway point. There are probably another ten years before Reston will be completely finished. Reston, Virginia has a history now. It is a mature concept which demands evaluation. Has it worked? Have the original Master Plan goals and objectives really been achieved?

The Booz Allen Report objectively and historically has documented Reston's unquestionable financial benefits.
What are the human factor ramifications of Reston's ten-year history? What social impact has Reston, Virginia bestowed on Fairfax County, and the rest of the Nation?

It is the intent of this Study - designed as a companion piece to the Booz. Allen Report - to identify and document Reston's social impact on improving the quality of life of Fairfax County, Virginia and the rest of urban America as well.

It is now abundantly clear that Reston's bold innovations have had an undeniable effect on city planning philosophy and implementation in this Nation for the past ten years.
RESTON, VIRGINIA: A DECADE OF IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF LIFE IN URBAN AMERICA

BACKGROUND

A BRIEF HISTORY OF RESTON, VIRGINIA which accompanies this social impact study details how and why Reston came into being.

Toward the conclusion of the 1971 Chapter in the BRIEF HISTORY, there is mention of the unprecedented changes in society brought about by the turbulent sixties. It is against such a backdrop that this study must be positioned. It was during this gathering storm that Reston was conceived and planned.

The early sixties were highlighted by the increasing ingress of rural populations into the cities, the continuing egress of the middle class from the central cities to the suburbs and the growing alarm over urban decay.

Architects, city planners and suburban county governments throughout the Nation began to be alarmed by the effects of regional non-planning and proliferating, cookie-cutter subdivisions of the fifties. The trade and consumer press began picking up warning signs of environmental pollution. The U.S. public awakened to the fact that 75% of the population was living on 2%
of the land mass, and that enough new homes were being built each year to completely roof-over the entire State of Rhode Island every 12 months. Ecology became a household word.

School children no longer spoke about the metropolis: the word was megalopolis. From all facets of society, there was a growing concern for the environment. The Establishment was generally equated with the outdated and inadequate. Change seemed to be the only constant.

Reston was a product of these times. The Residential Planned Community (RPC) zoning ordinance put before the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors in the Summer of 1962 was a revolutionary document. It offered this County (destined to double its 1962 population of 252,000 in less than a decade) and eventually an entire Nation, a viable alternative: an alternative to uncontrolled, unguided sprawl, scatterization of services, strip shopping, overhead wires, boring, look-alike, costly (to the County) subdivisions and wholesale destruction of the natural environment.

Reston offered revolutionary change to a society searching for innovation.

Reston offered a master plan (a blueprint) for: better land use, mixed housing; orderly growth, better environmental/conservation planning, new oppor-
tunity for industry and commerce; a community that could pay its own way, job opportunities, recreational facilities, an accurate measure for population forecasts and related County service forecast needs, citizen involvement and participation, a better quality of life.

The Board of Supervisors of Fairfax County adopted into law Residential Planned Community zoning, in July, 1962, to permit the Reston "blueprint" solution - the first such formal adoption of new town planning by a local government in this country.

As earlier stated, it is the sole intent of this Study to explore, identify and articulate the impact of that single decision on Fairfax County and the rest of urban America.
RESTON, VIRGINIA: A DECADE OF IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF LIFE IN URBAN AMERICA

THE NATIONAL SCENE

What social impact Reston has had on Fairfax County can best be understood by first identifying the effect of Reston on the new town movement in urban America.

The fundamental question should be asked, "Would there be a new town movement in this Country without Reston?"

Reston's impact on the world of urban planning, in general, and new towns, in particular, must be measured in terms of what has happened to the new town movement in the past ten years. To what degree Reston has been responsible for new town progress, naturally, can never be precisely measured. However, it is imperative to consider Reston's impact and involvement in the following:

- At least one new town has proven that it can be profitable for the surrounding community. The land use concept of mixing residential with commercial and industrial has proven to be a boon to land values not only within the project, but also to adjacent properties.

- New towns have proven themselves to be an effective and essential alternative to suburban sprawl: they have effectively met the environmental and ecological challenges of the early sixties.
New towns have successfully demonstrated that GOOD ENVIRONMENT IS GOOD BUSINESS. New Town residential sales programs have found a higher market acceptability because of conscientious planning, good design, plus a wide variety of housing opportunities. The proof of any good development is found when sales are brisk in a soft market.

New towns have been able to please a more sophisticated buyer today. The general public, since the early sixties, has become more aware and is environmentally sensitive.

New town planning has also proved that parks, open space, preservation of the natural environment, recreational amenities and innovative architectural design are all important for not only attracting a more demanding homebuyer, but commerce and industry as well.

New towns have not only offered a wide choice of housing, but they have also succeeded in cutting through ethnic lines, transcending century-old racial boundaries.

The new town movement of the sixties had a major effect not only on major federal housing legislation and the acceptance of Planned Unit Development (PUD) zoning, but challenged the very nature of the 19th Century zoning laws still governing most municipalities.
The benefits and lessons gleaned from Reston's development, in particular, played a major role in drafting the 1968 Housing Act, the 1970 Title VII Legislation, and the formation of the New Communities Division of the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Reston and new town planning concepts have had further National impact in changing the whole concept of land development over the past decade. Today, there is: greater emphasis placed on environmental and ecological planning strategies at the earliest stages; greater attempts to provide housing diversification; an increased interest in clustered housing; a heightened demand for planning and architectural innovation; greater concern for better conservation practices and the preservation of natural resources; a new willingness to spend more "out front" for recreational amenities, totlots, walkways, specially designed street lighting and furniture and sophisticated graphics for internal sign systems.

Reston and other new towns helped spark the dawning of a new social consciousness among city planners, city and county administrators and even large public and private corporations. Corporate giants with large land holdings, private utility companies and owners of large watershed properties are discovering new ways to put their land to profitable use. With in-
centives of new markets, liquidity and diversification, public and private corporations with urban hardware and systems are finding intercorporate opportunities for providing solutions to the urban crisis. They too have discovered that good environment is good business.

Long concerned with the provision of environmental problem-solving, B. R. Dorsey, then (1971) President of the Gulf Oil Company, said before the National Association of Accountants, "Today, maximum financial gain, the historical number one objectives, is forced into second place whenever it conflicts with the well-being of society. We now must examine the proposition that the first responsibility of business is to operate for the well-being of society..." Reston and the new town movement owe their existence to this kind of vision.
RESTON, VIRGINIA: A DECADE OF IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF LIFE IN URBAN AMERICA

THE LOCAL SCENE

If the Reston experience was studied, emulated, copied and implemented in urban America, it was by no means a prophet without honor in its own County. Fairfax County has experienced a decade of benefit as a result of its decision in passing the landmark Residential Planned Community (RPC) zoning ordinance in 1962.

Aside from enjoying a $1.5 million surplus from Reston revenues in 1972, Fairfax County has felt Reston's impact in the following ways:

- Reston has helped the County improve its standards of planning, implementation, construction and development activities.
- The County has benefited from Reston's international reputation for innovative pioneering. Reston's international publicity has attracted the first U.S. headquarters offices of at least three common market country industries.
- The Reston Master Plan directly influenced the Fairfax County Land Use Administration to adopt Planned Unit Development (PUD) zoning in 1969. Based on Reston's success, several developments in the County have been designed in PUD format and many more are pending Board approval. Patterned
after RPC zoning, PUD planning offers housing diversification and mixed land use - a better alternative for a County grappling with the horrendous problems of unprecedented growth.

- The Reston plan has had a noticeable effect over the past ten years on the Federal Housing Administration, on a local and national level: due to Reston demands, the local FHA office has approved a much expanded list of improved amenities which before were impossible to justify.

- Throughout the Country (and all of Northern Virginia), developers, realizing Reston's profitability because of conscientious "people" and community planning, have drawn their plans with clustered densities, parks and open space, walkways and amenities.

- Reston has offered the County planners and Board a model for guiding orderly growth and projecting school populations for future budgeting on school plants and facilities.
An improved quality of life, regardless of location, is never free, and most often is the result of hard work, vision, and sacrifice. Reston is what it is today because Gulf Reston, Inc. (GRI), Reston's Developer, has been willing to exert an extra effort (far in excess of Fairfax County's expenditures in the Reston community) to subsidize and contribute to worthy projects without which there would not be that "special" quality of life.

(1) Approximately 330 acres of land valued at $16,600,000 have or will be provided the County for schools, fire stations, etc.

(2) Adequate fire protection is all too often overlooked when considering the more "glamorous" facets of quality of life in a new town. Adequate fire protection in a new town is not always easy to obtain. Reston did not get its own fire station and crew until 1972 when the population mark was nearing 20,000. Up until that time, emergency service had to come from stations outside Reston. Reston's station came only because Gulf Reston donated the site and advanced funds to the Fairfax County Government under a lease-purchase arrangement.

(3) Gulf Reston's willingness to work with the County Board for the provision of a mix of low and moderate income housing has resulted in the subsidization to date
of land costs in excess of $1,000,000 for making low and moderate income housing possible in Reston.

(4) Gulf Reston has already donated recreational facilities and open space, valued in excess of $1,000,000, to the Reston Homeowners Association. These facilities, amenities, and parklands are operated and maintained by the residents of Reston at no cost to the County. Costs for the maintenance and operation of such facilities will exceed $746,000 - or nearly three-quarters of a million dollars - in 1973 alone.

(5) Cash contributions and subsidies made by GRI to encourage the development of facilities and programs for Reston residents had already exceeded $855,500 by the end of 1972. These facilities and programs included a community center; The Nature Center; The Northern Virginia Music Center; community pre-schools and day care centers; community health programs; and public libraries in Reston.

(6) In 1970, GRI contributed $250,000 for construction of access ramps to and from Dulles International Airport. Early in 1973, Gulf Reston made another commitment to a better quality of life. A certified check for $281,000 was given to the Virginia Department of Highways for the construction of connecting ramps at the eastern Reston interchange to the Dulles Expressway for the use of commuter bus traffic to and from Washington, D.C. This move will take some 1,200 cars daily off the roads to and from Washington.
(7) In order to obtain housing for all ages and incomes, Gulf Reston subsidized provision of housing for elderly and lower income people by selling land for apartment construction at $1,047,000 under market value. This subsidization covered seven separate parcels of land.
This chart graphically relates the dramatic increase in Reston job opportunities over the next three years. More importantly, it makes a strong visual statement of a strategic position of this social study: that Reston is clearly more than a nicely-designed suburb and a decided asset to the economic base of Fairfax County.
Reston's rapidly expanding job inventory is a direct solution-response to three specific County needs.

First, the great majority of all working Fairfax County residents leave the County each day for employment elsewhere. The County has traditionally grown as a bedroom community for Federal employees in the District. County commerce and industry expansion have not been able to match the rapidly accelerating residential growth.

Reston's current inventory of 2,600 jobs in 172 business firms and associations, plus the potential before the end of 1973 for an additional 4,400 more positions, has added great economic strength to the County's tax base and job pool.

Second, of the new Fairfax County jobs created in the sixties, 40% went to out-of-County residents whose tax dollars supported local governments elsewhere. Part of the problem rests with the fact that the average Fairfax County home value exceeds $40,000. The custodial and blue collar labor force supporting the County must commute from other areas because it cannot afford to live here.

The creation of jobs within Reston, together with Gulf Reston's keen interest in providing well-integrated low and moderate income housing, means
that a work force of all income levels can live and work in Reston and/or in the County.

Third, commuters clogging inadequate transportation routes and polluting industries contribute to the complexities of the County's environmental problems.

Reston's solution-response centers on its strict deeds and covenants which restrict Reston to clean, smokeless, light industry. This, coupled with the Master Plan objectives of building Reston as an opportunity to once again live and work in the same community, offers to the County Economic Development Authority the setting for a better quality of life and better business opportunity.

The chart at the first part of this chapter supports all this. It indicates that presently there is one job for every eight residents of Reston. By 1976, it is projected that Reston employers will be providing approximately 11,500 jobs against a projected population of 37,000 - or an average of one job for every three Reston residents.

The chart documents other significant Developer initiatives. It shows that commercial and industrial Reston has grown in the past ten years so that as of December 31, 1971, 693,000 square feet of commercial and industrial space