SMALL, GRACEFUL HILLS crinkle the landscape of Fairfax County, the way gentle ripples break the surface of a calm sea.

It is beautiful country, and Virginians always have admired it. Here colonial aristocrats established sprawling estates, and here men like Lord Fairfax galloped over tree-studded knolls in pursuit of deer.
But Fairfax County has moved into the urban age, and its pastoral life is virtually a thing of the past. Subdivisions, shopping centers and apartment developments, looking exactly like the subdivisions shopping centers and apartment developments of any other metropolitan area, dot the countryside. Superhighways, great slithering ribbons of concrete and asphalt, slice through the knolls that used to echo with the baying of hounds and the clattering of the racing hooves of horses.

Still, Fairfax retains much of its basic rustic charm, and it is an appropriate setting for an ambitious experiment designed to prove that urbanization does not necessarily have to despoil the countryside of its beauty nor life of its grace. Simply stated, the experiments are attempting to combine the pleasures of country living with the comforts and conveniences of the city.

Their experiment involves the creation of a new city. And they will control and guide its growth from the turning of the first sod to the hammering of the last nail. Nothing will be left to chance or the whims of man.

Called Reston, this new city has begun to rise from a 7,000-acre site only 18 miles from Washington and six miles from Dulles Airport. More than 700 persons already have moved into Reston, which, by 1980, will have a population of 75,000 or more.

It will not be a typical suburban community, with subdivisions made up of row after dreary row of uniform houses on treeless lots.

Reston's developers say they are trying to create a lively community of warmth and diversity. No bulldozers rumbled wildly over the site of the new city, scarring its earth and felling its trees. Rather, the builders are following, whenever possible, the natural contours of the land and are preserving as many of the large native trees as they can.

In fact, the first man assigned to the Reston project was a forester whose task it was to help preserve wooded areas. Next came a topographical engineer to choose sites for parks, golf courses and other recreational areas.

As a result of their efforts, patches of woods and open spaces have been interspersed throughout Reston. Nearly every resident of the city can look out from his picture window and see, not his car or his neighbor's car parked at the curb, but a cluster of trees or a small, unli tered park. The woods and parks are tiny oases of wilderness in the midst of a teeming community—wildernesses that reflect, unspoiled, the white beauty of a winter snow or that offer a green and leafy haven from the wilting heat of a summer sun.

In such a setting, Reston's developers are building distinctive homes, not according to mail-order blue prints available to any builder, but according to original plans prepared by noted architects. Washington architects Charles M. Goodman and Chloethiel Smith, and the New York architectural firm of Whittlesey and Conklin, are designing homes and buildings of charm and beauty.

There is, for example, a row of pastel-walled townhouses with huge windows and balconies overlooking a lake. In another section, townhouses are topped with open decks that overlook the wooded countryside. They are ideal for entertaining or—and this is possible in Reston—for quiet contemplation.

Eventually, Reston will consist of seven separate villages, each with a "village center" that will include shopping facilities and serve as a focal point for community life.

Residents of each village will live in clustered townhouses, in walk-up apartments over the stores and shops in the village center, in a high-rise apartment building, or in individually built detached homes. As a resident's housing needs change, he can move from an apartment, to a house and back to an apartment again without ever leaving.
his village. This will give the village a stability not always found in modern urban neighborhoods.

All residential units will be within walking distance of the village center, and Reston's developers are determined to make walking attractive. They are providing for complete separation of automobile and pedestrian traffic. Instead of following the traditional grid pattern, Reston's streets will curve along the periphery of the residential areas. Cars will be banned from the shopping plazas.

Paths will lead from residential sections through wooded areas to the shopping center and to the schools, and a Reston resident can walk, cycle or ride his horse to the store without meeting a single car.

And horses there will be. Reston will have a riding stable and seven miles of bridle paths. It also will have two 18-hole golf courses, four nine-hole courses, several swimming pools, tennis courts and playgrounds.

Reston's developers even included church sites on the city's precise plan. The Council of Churches of Greater Washington helped Reston predict the religious characteristics of its population, and helped it designate sites for 35 churches.

Ultimately all seven of Reston's villages will be grouped around a "town center" that will be comparable to the downtown area of a typical city. Here will be Reston's major stores and community facilities.

Lake Anne, the first of Reston's villages, opened last December and offers a preview of things to come. Its village center, built on the banks of a lake, is a J-shaped complex that includes shopping facilities, an auditorium, an art gallery, a lounge for teen-agers, a nursery, a bank, several shops and stores.

A 15-story, 61-unit apartment building towers over the center, offering its occupants a dazzling view of the 30-acre lake. Clusters of townhouses stand in wooded areas and around the lake.

Over the stores and shops of the village center are walk-up apartments that offer convenience and charm. Free of traffic, the plaza below is quiet and safe, and children can be sent down to run errands or to play. For the residents of this section of Reston, a trip to the store involves simply a run downstairs. Indeed, it's possible that a housewife too tired to make the climb could merely go onto her balcony and yell orders to the shopkeepers below. But Reston certainly will be too dignified for this.

Among the aesthetic features of the plaza are a splashing waterfall and some modernistic sculpture by Uruguayan artist Gonzalo Fonseca. The sculpture is useful as well as attractive. Children can climb around, over and through it—and are encouraged to do so.

Even the commercial signs and symbols in the plaza have been designed with artistic care. The pharmacy, for example, is not identified by a sign saying "Drugs" but by a design featuring oversize pills and razor blades.

The emphasis on aesthetics is indicative of the taste and motivation of Reston's developer, Robert E. Simon Jr.

A New York real estate man (whose initials form the first three letters of Reston), Simon bought the Reston site from the A. Smith Bowman family, owners of the famed bourbon distillery.

Instead of covering the site with as many houses as the Fairfax zoning code would allow, he decided to develop a community that would incorporate features he believed Americans yearned for in urban living. An outdoor enthusiast and music buff, Simon believes Americans would like to unite the rural amenities with the advantages of the city. They want, he believes, stable neighborhoods in which they can, if they choose, spend their entire lives.

"They are tired of rootlessness," he once said.

In developing Reston, Simon borrowed the "new town" concept from England and Scandinavia, where such satellite communities have been built to relieve the population pressure on old cities.

The new town concept reflects the beliefs of many planners who say that
the modern city is growing too big and incomprehensible. Often its residents fail to become a part of community life or develop community pride. Instead, they retreat into a lonely shell, isolated and aloof from the city around them.

But a new town, like Reston and about 75 similar communities being planned in this country, can offer the serenity of a small town and the sophistication of a city. A resident can participate in community affairs, develop a small-town pride in his "village," or withdraw into the anonymity of city living.

Reston will appeal to a variety of people, not just to one economic group. Houses sell from $20,000 to almost $50,000, and apartments now rent from $125 per month. A family with an income of $10,000 may live next door to one with an annual income of $50,000.

In its industrial efforts, Reston is seeking quiet "think factories," firms that specialize in research, not manufacturing. "We want no smokestacks," one Reston spokesman said.

According to present plans, Reston will be a city in size and characteristics, but not legally. Technically, it will remain a part of Fairfax County.

Reaction to Reston has been cautious and mixed.

Those who have moved into the townhouses and apartments of the Lake Anne village like the community.

Said one woman, who had lived abroad: "We have been very much pleased here. To me, it is like Finland—trees, the lake, the peace and quiet."

The trees. Everybody seems to be fascinated by the trees.

"I love the view of the lake and the trees," said another Reston housewife. "The big oak in front of our house had been scarred by a bulldozer. It began to turn brown. I called the Reston nursery. The nurseryman came over, told me how to take care of it and the tree is getting healthy again."

"It's the most fascinating place I ever lived in," a Reston woman who used to live in Houston said. "I love the trees."

But there are complaints. A curious sightseer—and the curious flock to Reston, especially on Sundays—grumbled that he didn't like "so much planning."

Reston's developers counter that they're planning "land, not lives," and they insist that urbanization could be disastrous without planning.

Now, Reston is so new and so different it shocks many who are accustomed to conventional neighborhoods. But as subdivisions, shopping centers and super-highways continue to gobble up woods and fields, man may come to regard Reston as more than the far-out project of a dreamy builder. He may accept it as the only sensible way to cope with urbanization.

In short, the day probably will come when those who criticize Reston for featuring too much planning will be unwilling to settle for a community that offers less.