

RESTON AND THE URBAN DILEMMA

Less money is being spent today on basic urban research in the U.S. than on improving the soybean crop. The entire six-year "model cities" program recently enacted by Congress will cost less than we spend in Vietnam in one month. This is a measure of our devotion to the solution of the urban crisis. But the problem is much more serious than the lack of funds.

Even if we were to finance a huge program for "model cities," what would we use as the model? What constitutes a civilized urban environment? What are the ingredients? The success or failure of the various concepts Reston is experimenting with will help provide answers to these questions.

To help solve the problem of the extermination of nature by our rapid urban expansion, Reston is experimenting with new ways to conserve open space for functional use. To help solve the multitude of urban problems caused by the automobile - traffic congestion, parking problems, car accidents, exhaust pollution - Reston is experimenting with ways to reduce our dependence on the automobile. To help solve the problems caused by overcrowding, Reston is experimenting with new planning and

zoning techniques.

Reston is substituting mixed land use for single purpose land use; Reston is creating a picturesque urban environment in place of the ugly surroundings so common to our cities; Reston is demonstrating how to use land for human needs instead of wasting it on the status symbol of the single lot, and Reston is studying the design and production of high-quality, low-cost, factory-produced housing to meet the requirements of millions of urban Americans who desperately need such housing.

Reston is experimenting with the use of sculptures and fountains, with architectural design, with educational concepts. Reston is trying everything from central air conditioning plants to serve entire communities to separate walkway systems to prevent children from being hit by cars. And almost all of these experiments which are so important to the future of urban America, are being financed by the developers of Reston.

But how much can a private real estate developer in our free enterprise, profit-oriented system be expected to do? Should he be expected to carry out any experiments at all, much less experiments that carry with them no promise of profit? In addition to providing the physical facilities - houses and roads, recreational areas and artwork, can he

be expected to pay for social planning and institutions - day care centers, nature centers, health care and cultural enrichment programs? If the developer cannot be expected to provide these institutions and the local, state, and federal governments have no programs to assist such projects, should we simply forget about making these experiments?

The Reston Foundation believes it is essential to the future of urban America that the answer to this question be "No!" For the importance of these projects can hardly be understated. When we speak of a Reston Children's Center, we are not simply talking about day care for youngsters. We are talking about freeing young American women from 24-hour child rearing so that they may further their education, follow a career or otherwise enrich their lives.

When we talk about a Reston Nature Center, we are talking about more than providing facilities for nature study. We are talking about reducing the growing gap between Man and Nature - a schism which has resulted in the exploitation and poisoning of our natural resources and the pollution of the air we breathe.

When we talk about health programs for Reston residents, we are talking about more than providing medical care for a few thousand people. We are talking about developing a health care program that can serve as a prototype for communities all over the nation - a program which could influence federal government policy on the subject. Like--