

CITIES THAT WORK FOR MAN -- VICTORY AHEAD

An Address by James W. Rouse

At The Lions International/University of Puerto Rico
Symposium on "The City of The Future"

San Juan, Puerto Rico

October 18, 1967

Nearly one-half of all the people in the United States in the year 2000 will live in dwelling units that have not yet been started and on land that has not yet been broken (and the year 2000 is not so far away--as close in our future as the year 1934 in our past).

Every month in the United States we are adding roughly 300,000 people, a city the size of Toledo.

Every year we add a new Philadelphia.

In 20 years we will double the size of Los Angeles and the San Francisco Bay area. We will add 6,000,000 people to the New York region in the same period.

Since 1940 Baltimore has added to its population a city larger than Milwaukee. In the next 20 years it will add another city about the size of Miami. And in the same period of time Washington, 35 miles away, will be adding a city nearly as large as Baltimore.

Such are the dynamics of our urban growth. It has been said that in the remainder of this century we will build, new, in our cities, the equivalent of all that has been built since Plymouth Rock.

What opportunity this represents! Opportunity for business, for jobs, for the development of new and better institutions to serve our people. And opportunity to plan and develop this new one-half of our American cities free of the mistakes of the past; responsive to the needs of the future.

How are we handling this opportunity? How are we shaping the growth of our cities? Not very well.

Our cities grow by sheer chance--by accident, by whim of the private developer and public agencies. A farm is sold and begins raising houses instead of potatoes--then another farm. Forests are cut; valleys are filled; streams are buried in storm sewers. Kids overflow the schools--a new school is built. Churches come up out of the basements. Then more schools--more churches. Traffic grows; roads are widened--front yards cut back. Service stations, Tastee-Freez, hamburger stands pockmark the old highway. Traffic is strangled; an expressway is hacked through the landscape; then a clover-leaf--a regional shopping center--office buildings, high-rise apartments--and so it goes.

Thus, the bits and pieces of a city are splattered across the landscape. By this irrational process, non-communities are born--formless places without order, beauty or reason with no visible respect for people or the land. Thousands of small separate decisions made with little or no relationship to one another, nor to their composite impact, produce a major decision about the future of our cities and our civilization--a decision we have come to label suburban sprawl. What nonsense this is! What reckless, irresponsible dissipation of nature's endowment and of man's hope for dignity, beauty, growth!

Sprawl is inefficient. It stretches out the distances people must travel to work, to shop, to worship, to play. It fails to relate these activities in ways that strengthen each and, thus, it suppresses values that orderly relationships and concentration of uses would stimulate.

Sprawl is ugly, oppressive, massively dull. It squanders the resources of nature--forests, streams, hillsides--and produces vast, monotonous armies of housing and graceless, tasteless clutter.

But worst of all, sprawl is inhuman. It is anti-human. The vast formless spread of housing pierced by the unrelated spotting of schools, churches, stores, creates areas so huge and irrational that they are out of scale with people--beyond their grasp and comprehension--too big for people to feel a part of, responsible for, important in.

And we know how to do it so much better. We know the rough measurements of the future growth of every metropolitan area in the country. We know about how many people we must provide for--how many houses and apartments, how many schools, how many churches, how many stores we must build. We know that we must build the sewer lines, water lines, roads and highways to serve this growth. And we know how to relate houses, churches, schools, stores, employment centers to one another in healthy, human, rational communities that respect both man and nature--and in which business can prosper.

Yet it is fair to say that not one single metropolitan area in the United States has a comprehensive plan for its future growth and development that will accommodate the growth it knows will occur in communities that will provide what it knows ought to be. We improvise frantically and impulsively with each new thrust of growth as if it were a gigantic surprise--beyond our capacity to predict or to manage. Is there any other aspect of American life in which the gap is so wide between our knowledge and our performance as in the growth of the American city?

We can plan to visit the moon; develop new technology to carry out the plan; advance the technology to the reality of flight in space. And soon we will put man on the moon. Yet, so far, we have been unable or unwilling to put to effective use the knowledge that is commonplace among us, to shape the orderly growth of our cities into communities that are in scale with people; responsive to their needs and yearnings and sensitive to the landscape we invade. Why is this so? Why do we, as a nation with such proven capacity for systematically organizing a production task, persist in this disorderly, unsystematic, inefficient building of cities? There are several reasons, and they must be understood if the city of the future is to provide a better life for its people than the city of the past.

1. There is the state of mind about the American city. We have lived so long with grim, congested, worn-out inner cities and sprawling, cluttered outer cities that we have come, subconsciously, to accept them as inevitable and unavoidable. Deep down in our national heart is a lack of conviction that cities can be beautiful, humane and truly responsive to the needs and yearnings of our people.

Sprawl is thought to be better than slum because it is greener, cleaner and less crowded. We accept the deficits of non-community; the scatteration of facilities, the frantic, fractured living, the loneliness amidst busyness, the rising delinquency among middle-class children, increasing neurosis, alcoholism, divorce; the destruction of nature and the dull monotonous man-made replacement. We accept it all as if it were a pre-ordained way of life beyond our capacity to significantly influence, shape or control. Lacking images of urban growth in communities that are in human scale and sensitive to both man and nature, we take what the developer gives us and we think we have to like it.

2. We lack the organized capacity in America, at the present time, to produce good new communities. Although the city-building business is the largest single industry in the United States, we have grown no General Motors, no IBM, in city building. We build our cities--enterprises, no one of which has the capacity to undertake, out of its own resources, the research and development investment required to produce new communities that will match our knowledge and our needs.

City building has been largely an ad hoc enterprise-- the purchase of a small tract of land, building and marketing a piece of a city. Whereas there is a handful of automobile manufactures and perhaps a few dozen office equipment producers who spend hundreds of millions of dollars in scientific research to produce better automobiles and typewriters, the building of our cities is divided among thousands of small enterprises and there is almost no research and little private planning for the most important product we produce--the American city.

Responsibility for city building has not only been divided among thousands of small under-equipped businesses, it has also been shared uncertainly with local government. We have assigned to the counties, townships and cities the basic responsibility for urban planning, but we have failed to demand that these local governments carry out their plans, and we have failed to give them the authority to do so.

Metropolitan planning throughout America proceeds in an atmosphere of unreality, fancy, disbelief. Except for highways and public utilities, urban planning seldom carries with it the reality of programs to be executed. The result is loose-jointed, broad-brush planning of land uses which easily gives way to the pressure of piecemeal development economics or to local politics.

3. The steps that might be taken to produce well-conceived new communities and establish new images to stimulate larger corporate enterprise and more effective local government action are restrained by popular myths which hold that it is not possible to do what needs to be done. These myths say:

1. "Our system of private property rights and chopped-up ownership of land makes it impossible to assemble under single ownership the land required for comprehensive community planning and development."
2. "Even if it were possible to buy the land, it would be impossible to find financing for its acquisition and development. This would take millions of dollars. No one is willing to put that kind of dough."
3. "Even if you could buy the land and raise the money to pay for it and develop it, you could never get the zoning. Local people and politicians will clobber you when you try."
4. And if you are lucky enough to get the land, the financing, and the zoning, you will go broke trying to build a really fine community. The arithmetic won't work. The cost of providing a good community will eat you up. People won't pay for it.

This, then, is the mood with which we face the building of a new America over the next three decades. Right now we are compounding the mistakes of the past as we build large parts of our nation into an infinite Los Angeles: Along the East Coast, in the North Central region, on the West Coast, and in parts of the South and Southwest, cities sprawl out towards one another in formless, cluttered growth that has been labeled megalopolis. This ominous word carries with it threatening overtones that people, families, and all hope for rational and humane community will be lost in massive, monotonous sprawl.

Against this background, may I report to you on an experience in city building that is exploding some of the myths that have trapped our state of mind about the city. It is the story of Columbia--a new city midway between Baltimore and Washington.

Our business is mortgage banking and real estate development. Across the United States our company finances apartments, shopping centers, office and industrial buildings built by hundreds of real estate developers. Also, as developer, we build, own and manage such properties for our own account. Thus, we have been elaborately involved in the "bit and pieces" approach to city building. Perceiving from this platform the damage and deficits of disordered growth and observing also the important gains in convenience, community life and economic value that occur when the pieces of city are arranged in constructive relationship to one another, we began to ask ourselves questions such as:

"Why not build a whole new city?" "Couldn't houses and apartments, schools and churches, business and industry, be so arranged in relationship to one another that each would give strength and value to the other?"

"Couldn't all of this be fit on the land, to dignify and ennoble it, instead of to destroy it? "Couldn't hills and forests and stream valleys be respected and used to give shape, separation, and identity to communities within the city?"

"Couldn't such a city be not only more beautiful and more human but also more profitable to build?"

Prodded by the answers to our own questions, we built a hypothetical model of a complete small city. We found that it made sense. So we focused on the area midway between Washington and Baltimore to see if it could be made real.

Our target was a city of 100,000. It would take 14,000 acres of land--probable land cost \$20-25 million. This was far beyond our available resources and probably too much for any developer in America. Thus, we appealed to a great financial institution which we had represented for 20 years as mortgage loan correspondent--The Connecticut General Life Insurance Company.

We believed then and now that there was a special compatibility between public purpose and private profit in producing a well-planned new city. But never, to our knowledge, had a major life insurance company entered the city-building process at this early stage and on the scale and in the manner this required. We asked Connecticut General to provide the funds to acquire the land and to participate with us in the venture as a co-owner of the project. We agreed to supply the funds for planning and pre-development administration. In a remarkable, perhaps historic, act of financial statesmanship, Connecticut General joined us in the venture. They committed what proved to be \$25 million for the purchase and early carrying charges on 15,600 acres of land.

In February, 1963, we commenced our acquisition program. By October, 1963, we had completed the purchase of 14,000 acres and appeared before the County Commissioners of Howard County to disclose our acquisition and our purpose to build a city.

We commenced planning in the fall of 1963 amidst great skepticism and anxiety among our neighbors in the County. Our only reassurance to them could be that we were at their mercy. Unless we produced a plan which they found better than the prospect of scattered, sprawling growth, protected by half-acre zoning, they would reject our proposal and deny us zoning. Thus, it was up to us to prove that we could plan a city that would constitute, in fact, a better alternative to sprawl.

-We set four main objectives in our planning:

- I. To build a real city--not just a better suburb, but a complete new city. There will be business and industry to establish a sound economic base, roughly 30,000 jobs and houses and apartments at rents and prices to match the income of all who work there, from company janitor to company executive. Provision has been made for schools and churches, for libraries, college, hospital, concert halls, theatres, restaurants, hotels, offices, and department stores.

Like any real city of 100,000, Columbia will be economically diverse, polycultural, multi-faith, and interracial.

2. To respect the land. On sets of transparent overlays we recorded the topography, the stream valleys, the forests, the historic buildings, the special vistas, the quiet tree-lined lanes. We invited the land to impose itself as a discipline on the form of the community.

Columbia will provide 3,200 acres of open spaces, parks, recreation areas, five small new lakes. The three major stream valleys will be preserved, along with 3,000 acres of forests. These green acres will interlace the entire community separating and connecting the nine villages and leading into the heart of downtown, which will have a 50 acre forest on one side and a lake on another.

3. To provide the best possible environment for the growth of people. Here is the heart of the planning process--to plan out from the needs and yearnings of people to the kind of community that will best serve and nourish their growth. But how to do it? If you want to know about the needs of people--about what seems to work well for people, or badly--where do you go? Whom do you ask? Architects, engineers, planners, bankers, and developers are not the people who work intimately with people. Why not go to teachers and ministers and doctors, to psychiatrists, psychologists and social scientists to plan a city? We are an extensively examined society. There is enormous knowledge about our growth and development as people, of our success and failure, our hopes and fears; and yet it is knowledge that is almost never brought to bear in the process of community planning. There is no dialogue between the people engaged in urban design and development and the behavioral sciences. Why not? Why not bring together a group of people who would know about people from a variety of backgrounds and experiences to view the prospect of a new city and shed light on how it might be made to work best for the people who would like there?

Thus, we convened a "work group" of fourteen men and women for that purpose: an eminent social scientist; a psychiatrist from the Department of Public Health at Johns Hopkins; a sociologist who worked for two years in Levittown, New Jersey; a psychologist from the University of Michigan with a rich awareness of the art of communication and its roadblocks; a city manager; a commissioner of recreation; a sociologist in consumer behavior research from the General Electric Company; a woman concerned with the status of women; a political scientist; an economist; an educator and others. We met together--this work group and our architects and planners--every two weeks for two days and a night, for six months. We weren't seeking a blueprint for a Utopian society. We didn't want a report, a recommendation, or even agreement. We wanted conversation in depth about man, his family and his institutions. We wanted to allow these insights about people to influence the physical plan and to guide us in stimulating within the community the kinds of programs in school, church, health, culture, recreation, and work that would support the growth of people.

We said to our work group and ourselves: "Let's examine the optimum. What would be the best possible school system in a city of 100,000--the best health system? How might religion be made most effective in the growth of people? With shorter work weeks and increasing wages,

what opportunities can be made available for better use of leisure time? How can music, art, theatre, adult education, physical recreation be made available most usefully to the people in the city? Can the relationship of home, school, church, and community be such that there is some alternative to loneliness, relief from fear, and growth from hate? In what size neighborhoods do people feel most comfortable? In what kind of community the most effectively challenged? The most creative? What about homogeneity and heterogeneity? What would all these questions and these answers say about the plan for a new city? Don't worry for the moment about feasibility. It will compromise use soon enough. Let's look at what might be and be invigorated by it."

It was a thrilling and productive process. All of us who are working on Columbia feel enriched and strengthened by it. By seeking out the best we could conceive for people and by opening our minds to those possibilities, we leaped over many roadblocks which "coventional wisdom" had declared to be unmovable.

4. To make a profit. This was no residual goal--not something just to be hoped for as a possibility. It was and is a prime objective. The profit purpose was alive and creative throughout the planning process. It was using the market place to cast votes for what people really want and care about enough to pay for. It recognized the dynamics of the market system as being fundamental to the democratic process, for it is through the market place that a free people can best make the complex judgments of how, where and when they wish to spend their earnings. A continuing examination of profitability is simply a responsible attempt to perceive the market place votes and respond to them. It resists the pull toward sentimentality, sophistication, and arrogance. It hauls dreams into focus with reality and leads to bone and muscle solution. It gives integrity to the ultimate plan.

Columbia, by producing an outstanding profit, we speak loud and clear to the city-building industry. It will induce attention to a good environment as the right product in city building. It will warn against the unmarketability of sprawl. It will lift attention to genuine respect for nature and the family. Failure, or even moderate success, would be a blow to better hopes for urban growth. It would support the myth that it is not economic to produce a good environment.

By the fall of 1964 the plan was completed and presented to the people and the County government of Howard County. A sketch of Columbia would show a small city consisting of nine villages or small towns with 10,000 to 15,000 people each, around a downtown core. This system of villages that we call a city stretches nine miles east and west, and roughly five miles north and south along U.S. 29, which bisects the land area. The villages are separated by stream valleys, parks and bridle paths that lace through the city. They are served by Columbia's bus system which will run on its own right-of-way, connecting the village centers, the major employment centers and downtown. Forty percent of the families will live within a few minutes walk of the bus line.

A village will consist of four to six neighborhoods of 500 to 700 families each. At the center of each neighborhood is an elementary school, a community room, child care center, playground, swimming pool and a small store that is a cross between a neighborhood drug store and a country grocery store. A path system separated from the roads will make the neighborhood center easily accessible as a neighborhood meeting place for teachers, parents, kids and their friends. Even little kids will be able to walk to school without fighting the automobile.

The neighborhoods cluster around a village center where there is brought together in a single place the facilities that, typically today, are splattered across the landscape. High school, middle school, library, auditorium, churches, medical clinic; together with supermarket, service stores and gasoline service station are grouped around a village green to provide a lively center for the 10,000 to 15,000 people in the village. Thus, teachers, parents and kids, ministers, merchants, doctors and patients--all the people of a village--engage one another in the daily course of life. The opportunity is created to meet and know one another; to share problems; to communicate yearnings.

The path system feeds into the village center by underpasses that allow kids to ride bikes; older people to walk; mothers to push baby carriages into the heart of the village life. The physical plan emancipates men, women and children to a wider range of choices and a richer variety of life.

How many kids in the massive sprawl around our big cities can walk or ride a bike to school, to a library, to a concert or music lesson, to a stream to fish, to a lake to sail, to a store to shop, to the movies, the theatre? The choices will be available in Columbia by foot, bike or bus. And it takes no miracle or subsidy to do it--simply thoughtful planning over a large enough land area to account for the things that people want and need to live a full and enriching life.

At the heart of Columbia, serving all its people, will be the town center with department stores and specialty shops, restaurants, movies, theatre, concert hall, offices, hotels, a college, a hospital, the main library, a town center park and lake. It will be a beautiful, lively, efficient downtown.

You can see that a number of myths have already been exploded. The land was assembled. The financing was arranged. The zoning was obtained. A new economic model is completed each quarter projecting the cost and the income of developing Columbia to completion. The economics have not yet been proven, but the progress is encouraging and there is sound reason to believe that we will be able to prove it is more profitable to build a good environment than a bad one.

It is the size and scale of Columbia and the comprehensiveness of the planning that has exploded these myths. The planning showed the people of Howard County that stream valleys and forests could be preserved; that a wide range of recreational, cultural, and educational facilities could be provided; that places to work and shop could be brought conveniently close at hand; and, perhaps most important, that a balanced growth of business along with housing would provide a sounder base for taxes to support the cost of government. Thus, in a county that was fighting mad about the ravages of urban sprawl

and aroused by tumultuous zoning battles, Columbia offered a better alternative. At the crucial hearing on Columbia's original zoning proposal not a single resident of the County appeared in opposition.

The prospect of a new city-the opportunity to build from scratch in a new environment-has stimulated a wonderfully creative response in the schools, the churches, in health and culture.

1. County School Boards, facing random, surging growth, are largely committed to big, consolidated schools because they have no other choice. They must locate schools where they will be accessible to the developments as they pop up--unplanned and unscheduled. The kids are bused in. But in Columbia we have been able to lay out for the next 15 years the school sites for this part of Howard County. The School Board has accepted the concept of neighborhood and village schools. The elimination of school busses alone is estimated to save over a million dollars per year, at current busing costs, by 1980.

Stimulated by the prospect of new possibilities in education, a special study has been made for the Howard County School Board by Drs. Anderson of Harvard and Alexander of Florida. This report focuses attention on the importance of developing the child as an individual. It proposes ungraded schools, team teaching, and other programs intended to strengthen and update the educational effort in Howard County. The Ford Foundation has grants to the Howard County School Board to design new elementary and middle schools that will be responsive to the new curriculum proposals. The first of these is now under construction in Columbia's first neighborhood. The Howard County School Board has announced that the Howard County community college will be located in the heart of downtown Columbia. This institution is expected to offer a wide range of adult education and vocational training programs to the community, as well as the first two years of college to high school graduates.

2. Twelve major Protestant denominations have joined together in a program without precedent in America. They have formed a Religious Facilities Corporation which will own all the church buildings in Columbia, thus eliminating competition for church status and permitting large-scale economies through multiple use of facilities. They plan joint centers of religious instruction and joint mission efforts on both a local and a world basis. The ministers will belong to a "Cooperative Ministry" sharing staff and joining forces in programs of counseling and service to the community. Cardinal Shehan has announced the interest of the Catholic Archdiocese in joining the Protestants in the Religious Facilities Corporation so that Catholic and Protestant churches will jointly own and share facilities.

Catholics, Protestants and Jews have formed the Columbia Interfaith Housing Corporation to build and rent housing to low-income families.

3. The Johns Hopkins Medical School and Hospital has announced its interest in establishing a comprehensive health care system for Columbia residents. A study to determine economic feasibility is now under way. If the announced hopes of the study are fulfilled, this great medical institution will provide on a monthly payment basis to Columbia residents a comprehensive system of health care from home nursing service to medical clinics to hospitalization, with extensive provision for community-wide health education. One of the prime purposes of this health system would be to test out the belief that a comprehensive system of health education, early diagnosis, preventive medicine, can be financially supported by the dollars saved from hospitalization and crisis medical care. In other words, Columbia medicine will be working on the possibility that it costs no more to build a healthy community than to treat a sick one. This could be an important advance in medical and health systems in America.
4. Washington's National Symphony has signed a 30 year contract to provide a minimum of 20 concerts a season in the Merriweather Post Pavilion of Music in the heart of downtown Columbia. This in turn has triggered a chain reaction of hopes and prospects in the field of music, theatre and art which hold out every prospect of a rich, cultural life in this new city.
5. Other studies and negotiations are under way with respect to the library system, communications, banking, transportation and retailing which can result in important new steps in the services made available to the people of Columbia.

Each of these important and stimulating new hopes for Columbia is born out of what we have come to call "The Columbia Process." It is a process that begins with an honest attempt to learn what might work best for the people who will live there and then to discover by physical planning and by study and negotiation with leaders in the schools and churches, in the health, cultural and recreation institutions how these hopes might best be achieved.

This process is fundamental to good planning and effective development whether it be for the accommodation of outlying growth or for the renewal of the old work-out inner city. The task is to produce community--community in which a man, his wife, and children are important; come first--ahead of buildings, streets, and automobiles--community which, in physical form, they can identify; find boundaries to; feel responsible for; be proud of--community which in human terms cares about them; suffers with them; prays for them.

The search for this kind of community will lead to questions; produce answers; generate plans that will work for people--different plans in different circumstances, but always plans to nourish and support the growth and dignity of the individual human being and his family. This is the only legitimate purpose for our cities or our civilization--to grow better people--more concerned, inspired, fulfilled--more loving people.

We are living in the midst of what history may find to have been the most important revolution in the history of man. It is the upheaval which has lifted to new heights man's respect for the dignity and importance of his fellow man. Institutions which degrade man and barriers which separate men

from one another are under relentless assault. Thus, the cold, grim oppressiveness of the scaleless, inhuman cities is under attack on many fronts. The individual skirmishes flare up in terms of bad housing, unemployment, crime, dope, delinquency, even riots. But these are only symptoms of a battle raging at much deeper levels that will be won by the building of new cities and, even more dramatically, by the rebuilding and restructuring of our older cities. The key will be "restructuring" in such manner that the city will support growth instead of working erosion in human personality. This new city will look different because it will be broken up by parks, open spaces, schools, playgrounds, transportation systems, etc., into definable communities in which people are important. Together these communities will make up a new kind of city--dynamic and humane.

This revolution is barely under way. The tools for carrying ~~it~~ out have been forged over the past several decades. We are now developing the will to pick up the tools and put them to work. Over the next ten years, we will see an urban revolution that will lead all men--rich and poor, black and white--to take possession of their cities and make them work for the people who live there.