

WHAT BUYERS THINK OF RESTON



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## WHAT BUYERS THINK OF RESTON

by  
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"The people here are the most important factor."

**Editor's Note:** This article contains some of the reactions of residents of the "new town" of Reston, Va., obtained by the author during the current investigation of the marketing aspects of open space communities being made by him and Sanford Goodkin for the Joint NAHB-ULI Land Use Research Program. Some 30 such projects will be included in the complete study to be published this year as a ULI Technical Bulletin. Dr. Norcross was formerly executive vice president of the new town of Crofton, Md., and is now a marketing advisor on new communities.

As the most advanced of this country's new towns, Reston, Va., has had more favorable publicity than any development in recent years. But the test of a new community is not how writers and editors like it, but how people who live there like it.

To find out why families bought at Reston and how they like it, trained interviewers have just called on 71 Reston families living in town houses, apartments and single-family homes. The replies are probably the strongest testimonial for planned, open-space communities that can be found anywhere.

### Enthusiastic Buyers

Reston buyers are exuberantly enthusiastic. They love it. Reston, to some, is like a new religion. Of the 71-family sample, 68 said they would recommend it to their friends and most are actively doing so. One family is enjoying Reston so much it bought a second town house for a guest house.

Said the wife of a college professor: "Reston is beautifully planned, with walkways and trees. We're having a ball making use of all the facilities. It's proven terrific."

Another woman said: "It's the most delightful experience of our lives. We like the surroundings and all the facilities here."

A third said: "It's a wonderful adventure. Reston is something new and untried before. We're entirely happy here and I'd hate to have to move."

"Reston has everything I've always wanted," said one man. Another said, "Reston gets more interesting all the time. If they keep going the way they are, they'll have a dream town here."

One woman likes it because "Reston has an atmosphere of gaiety."

People who live there like Reston for a dozen different reasons. "It's a combination of many things," one man said, "that makes it so attractive."

**A town in the country:** "It's country living, with town-house convenience, and in very beautiful surroundings." "It has freedom and country-life features in a sort of city." "It has all the advantages of a large city without being one." "It's a nice place to live, quiet and relaxing. You get away from hustle and bustle."

**The lake and open space:** Almost everyone mentioned the lake. "We love having so much open space and the lake outside our back door is heaven." "We adore being right on the lake." "We like the beauty of the lake and all the places for children to play near it."

**Trees:** "We like everything, but especially that they didn't cut down the trees." "We'd recommend it because they paid attention to quality in the planning. They kept their word. But above all, they saved the trees."

**Facilities are close:** "You have everything at your finger tips." "I'm a working mother and when I'm away my





This is the Hickory Cluster at Lake Anne Village with townhouses by Charles M. Goodman Assoc.



"The cultural aspects are limitless."  
"You can get away from automobiles."

children have everything available here. They walk to the community center and shop for me, or get their hair cut, or take music lessons." "A mother doesn't have to put a chauffeur's cap on and take her children everywhere." "We wanted everything near and this is the answer to our prayers." "You can walk to the stores."

**Walking:** Reston may turn out to be the greatest walking town in the U.S. "I like the layout here. You can walk to everything. You can get away from automobiles." Almost everyone said they were walking more, that it was safer to walk there than where they lived before, and that having a chance to walk was a motivating force in buying at Reston. Many talked of walking through the woods.

**A good place for children:** "It's a good place to raise children. There's so much for them to enjoy." "Reston offers so much for children. Ours have made a lot of friends."

**Recreation:** "Where we lived before, there wasn't enough recreation. Now there is and the whole tone of our living has been changed." Parents said their children enjoyed swimming, sailing, tennis, playgrounds, horseback riding, walking, biking, dancing, ice skating, sledding, scouts, music lessons and golf. Adults said they enjoyed tennis, swimming, boating, golf, ice skating, horses, walking, biking.

**Pioneering:** Earliest Reston families are as proud as Pilgrims who came on the Mayflower. "We feel like a pioneer family. It's marvelous watching the growth." "We like the opportunity to grow with the community." "Reston has an exciting environment. You get a feeling of helping to develop the place."

**Privacy:** "You can have privacy without being isolated." "You get maximum privacy with a continuation of city life." "You can be alone, or you can join the activities."

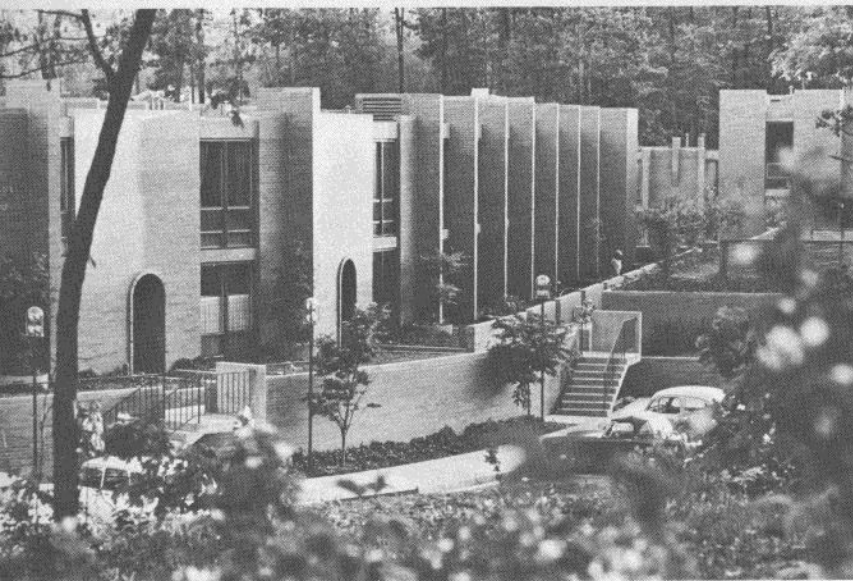
**Culture:** "The cultural aspects are limitless." "It has many conveniences not found in most subdivisions: cultural activities, the community center, the outdoors." "The cultural activities here are better—we didn't expect these things." "We like the extra features, like the outdoor sculpture, and the imaginative designs being carried out." "I didn't realize there would be so many cultural things for us to do."

**People:** "The people here are the most important factor." "People here are so friendly. The social life is more active than we expected." "We like the smallness and closeness of the group in these apartment units." "The people are an artistic group." "The people are nicer than we expected."

**Easy maintenance:** Town house families enjoy *not* having to take care of lawns and plantings. One woman spoke for her neighbors when she said, "We've had it with lawns." Another said, "It's easy to leave our town house when we want to travel, as we don't worry about maintenance." When asked if they enjoyed working in the garden most town house people said they found other more interesting things to do.

#### How to Sell a New Housing Market

For land developers the most significant lesson at Reston is not that buyers like it but that when they first saw it, they found it so attractive that two-thirds never seriously considered buying elsewhere. Many had not been looking for a new place to live. They read or heard about Reston, went out to see it and, as several said, "fell in love with it." They are typical of hundreds of thousands of families everywhere who will buy a new house when they see it in an exciting, new and better community.



**"Reston is beautifully planned with walkways and trees."**



**"Reston offers so much for children."**



When Reston buyers were asked if the house or the community was most important in their decision to buy, only 7 percent said the house alone was the important factor. Forty percent said the community was most important, and the other 53 percent said the house and community were equally important. Here is more evidence that people don't buy just a house. They buy a house plus a community.

In explaining why they moved, most buyers did not give the usual reasons of "new job" or "we needed more space" or "less congestion" but said they moved because they found Reston "an exciting place to live" or "we got carried away with Reston—we liked the community and the idea," or "close to things for the children." In other words, Reston and its benefits pulled them out of their old house or apartment.

#### **Who Buys at Reston?**

Buyers range in age from 23 to 63, with an average age for men of 39. Of the first 102 families who bought town houses, 63 percent had children: 42 younger couples of age 44 or less, and 22 older couples age 45 or more. There were 14 younger couples and 14 older couples without children. Ten single persons bought a town house, of whom four were women.

Town house buyers are exceptionally well educated, which indicates that the planned community has an intellectual appeal. In one group of 29 men, three were high school graduates, 16 were college graduates and ten had a graduate degree. Their wives were not far behind. Of the 29, seven had not finished high school, nine were high school graduates, nine were college graduates, and four held a graduate degree. Twelve of the 29 wives had a job.

"Robert Simon is a genius," one of his buyers exclaimed. That and the other warm praise from people who are living his dream should bring satisfaction to the man who has fought a one-man battle for Reston since March, 1961.