

## II. ADVANTAGES OF INCORPORATION AS A TOWN

Incorporation of Reston as a town offers two major advantages. First, a town of Reston would give its citizens their own government, with a considerable measure of local control. This government would be smaller and closer than the county government. It should be more responsive to its citizens and better able to reflect their needs and desires. It could probably more effectively contribute to fulfillment of the "new town" concept on which Reston is based. Second, a town of Reston would have the ability to provide a higher quality of certain local government services, and perhaps some extension of the services now available.

### LOCAL CONTROL

Incorporation of Reston as a town would give the citizens of Reston greater control over their own destiny than they now have as residents of an undifferentiated part of Fairfax County. Many of the decisions that are now made in Fairfax, largely or entirely by people who do not live in Reston and who were not elected by Reston voters, would be made in Reston by people who live in Reston. The governing body of the town would be elected by the citizens of Reston from among themselves -- in sharp contrast to the present situation where Reston citizens have a voice in the election of only one of the eight district members of the Fairfax



County Board of Supervisors, and nothing more than a very minor influence on the county-wide election of the Chairman of the Board. Creation of a town of Reston would provide a level of home rule that does not now exist: Reston would have its own government, able -- within limits -- to do those things that Restonians wanted it to do, and to refrain from doing those things that Restonians did not want done.

Greater local control would be expected to have a number of consequences for Reston, as described more fully in the following paragraphs.

#### Increased Sense of Community Within Reston

A town of Reston could serve as a focal point to enhance the sense of community identity that many Reston residents already feel. Creation of a town of Reston as a legal entity would more clearly distinguish the Reston community from the balance of Fairfax County, and would thus tend to recognize its uniqueness and emphasize the advantages inherent in its planning. Identification with Reston as a home town might be increased by the fact that Reston would have a legal definition as well as a community name and an origin in a common plan.

#### Contribution to Fulfilling Original Purpose of Reston

Incorporation as a town could help Reston achieve its full potential as a planned new community.



Reston was very self-consciously designed as a "new town", with a number of very specific, and interrelated, objectives. It was intended to be a community that would avoid many of the defects associated with cities and towns that had "just grown". It was intended to be a complete community, able to provide for people of all incomes, age groups, family types, races, and life styles. It was also intended to be complete in the sense that it would provide substantial employment opportunities for the people residing within it. It was intended to be a desirable place to live, amply provided with open areas, green space, and recreational and cultural activities of all kinds. It was designed to avoid the worst of the adverse effects of the private automobile, and to reduce dependence on the private automobile to the extent possible. And it was designed to preserve the natural beauty of the Virginia countryside, and to fit the urban environment into the natural world as effectively as could be done.

Accomplishment of the objectives underlying the "new town" concept depends upon a strong sense of common interest and purpose. This sense is already firmly held by many individuals in Reston. Major community organizations have been created to promote the underlying objectives. But the corresponding governmental structure does not now exist.



Establishment of a town government should mean that local government would consistently support not only the sense of community but also the accomplishment of the goals and objectives which Restonians regard as important. If Restonians persevere in supporting the original purposes of the planned "new town" it is probable that accomplishment of those purposes would be more fully assured by the incorporation of a town of Reston.

#### Increased Pride in Local Government

A town of Reston would provide a governmental structure that the residents of Reston are much more likely to regard as their own agent, which they have established to accomplish tasks which require local government action. A town government is much more likely to be thought of as "we", whereas the county government is probably viewed as "they" by most Restonians. To some extent, it could be expected that the citizen of a town of Reston would feel more comfortable about local government, would feel a greater stake in the community, and would be more likely to contribute to governmental and community affairs.

#### Increased Citizen Participation

Establishment of a town government might increase citizen understanding of and participation in local government.



The opportunity for greater local control, greater pride in local government, and the smaller and more human scale of the governmental structure would all encourage this. Other factors encouraging citizen participation would include the importance of the town's services to the well-being of the community and the taxes residents would probably be required to pay.

More Reston citizens would take direct part in local government, as members of the town council and as members of other official bodies established under the town government, such as a planning commission. In addition, it is likely that increased numbers of Reston citizens would attend the meetings of the governing body, and the other official bodies, and speak before them in public hearings to present their points of view, their feelings of satisfaction, and their complaints. Also, the increased number of elective positions would provide greater opportunity to run for public office, in a smaller electorate where friends, neighbors, and acquaintances are relatively more numerous. Such an opportunity might attract to political life many capable people who are discouraged by the more awesome task of political campaigning in the immense electorate of the county.

Town government would probably attract many people who have not been motivated to participate in such non-governmental activities as the Reston Community Association or the



Reston Home Owners Association, because the town government can make decisions and put them into effect, whereas RCA and RHOA (other than the RHOA Board, which is controlled by the developer) are generally only in the position of recommending or lobbying.

Reston is filled with enormously capable people having an unusually wide variety of background, training, and experience, who have not participated either in local government or in its various citizen organizations. If they were drawn into governmental and community activities by the existence of a town government, the level of local government and community life could be tremendously enhanced.

#### Responsiveness

The government of a town of Reston could be more responsive to the wishes, needs, and concerns of the residents of Reston than is the county government. The smaller size of the town and its government, the probable greater citizen participation in its affairs, and the fact that all the elected officials of the town and the members of the various appointed official bodies would live in Reston would be likely to bring about this result.

#### Better Representation of Reston

A town government would provide a more effective instrument for representing the interests of Reston in dealings



with other governments and governmental bodies -- county, state, metropolitan and federal. At present, those elected officials who represent Reston do not represent only Reston and must be responsive to the interests and concerns of others as well. On the surface, the Reston Community Center Governing Board appears to be an exception to this statement, since its members are chosen through a preference poll of the residents of Small District 5. Actually, the Reston Community Center Governing Board is appointed by the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors, although that Board has indicated its intention of abiding by the results of the preference poll. The Reston Community Association Board of Directors, who are elected entirely by the Reston community, do not have the status before governmental bodies accorded to elected officials, such as mayors or councilmen, or to senior staff personnel, such as town managers, even though the latter may come from much smaller communities. Nor do they have the financial or staff support generally available to town officials. In its support of Reston's interests, RCA must depend on volunteers with serious time constraints and on funds raised from such undependable sources as festivals and dues.



### HIGHER QUALITY OF SERVICES

One of the most significant advantages of incorporation is the opportunity it presents for raising the quality of local government service provided to Restonians. To the extent that its citizens wished to do so, and to the extent to which they were willing to pay any necessary taxes, the town could provide greater resources than are made available by the county (or the state, if street maintenance is involved). Funds needed to raise the quality of service could thus be made available for those functions for which the town had assumed responsibility. Similarly, the town could provide additional services. Also, the town's expected capacity to respond more directly and quickly to citizen concerns about such matters as street lights or snow plowing should decrease citizen frustration and improve service delivery.

Specific improvements in services cannot be detailed here. The details would depend on (1) the services or functions specified in the town charter and (2) budgetary decisions that accompany planning for the new town or its early phases of operation. However, a general idea of possible improvements in services may be drawn from an examination of the services provided by the towns of Herndon and Vienna. Some of the most likely areas for improvement suggested by this examination are discussed in the following paragraphs.



### Street Maintenance and Related Functions

If the town assumed the function of street maintenance, it should be able to take better care of existing streets. It should patch potholes more promptly and provide for street resurfacing on a more frequent time schedule. It should do a better job of snow removal, be more responsive to the need for traffic lights, and install street lights where needed. It should make the decision as to speed limits with more attention to the wishes of the people most affected. Most of the construction of new streets and roads within Reston, however, would be unaffected by incorporation of the town, because the new streets and roads must be built and paid for by the developer. Only a limited amount of road construction, such as the reconstruction of the remainder of Reston Avenue, would be the town's responsibility. Here the town should be more responsive to community needs than the Virginia Department of Highways and Transportation. However, its ability to act would be limited because most of the funds for this construction must come from the state, under formulas which most Northern Virginia jurisdictions believe to be unfair and inadequate.

### Trash Removal

A town of Reston could, and probably should be expected to, undertake the regular collection of trash. The primary



advantage of having the town provide this service is the reduction in cost to the individual. Town-wide trash removal would be paid for through taxation rather than individual payments to private trash companies. Per capita expenditures budgeted for trash removal in fiscal 1977-1978 in Herndon and Vienna were \$11.85 and \$14.03, respectively (see p. 39). Most Restonians pay significantly more than that for trash removal.

#### Recreation and Parks

As discussed above, the role of a town of Reston with respect to recreation and parks remains to be explored. These are functions which are normally the responsibility of a local government. For purposes of this report, however, since RHOA and Small District 5 are already providing these facilities and services, no budget for these functions is included in the cost estimates and no change in services is contemplated.

#### Police Protection

A town of Reston, with its own police, would be expected to provide a somewhat larger police force than is now assigned to Reston by the county. Police patrolling should be somewhat more frequent, and response to calls for police assistance somewhat more prompt than is now possible. The



cost estimates for the police department for 1977-78 appearing in Section IV of this report, which are based on experience in Vienna, would provide for 23 patrolmen, plus the necessary detective, communication, administrative and supervisory personnel. In this same fiscal year, the patrol force maintained by Fairfax County in Reston is 18 officers, plus the support staff.

#### Planning and Zoning

Planning and zoning are at the heart of the concept on which the new town of Reston is based. Planning and zoning have been a primary concern of the residents of Reston, and therefore of the Reston Community Association, from the very beginning.

A town of Reston presumably would have the responsibility for planning and zoning. Under these circumstances, the community should be in a better position to control its development than at present and to ensure that planning and zoning decisions reflect the wishes and interests of its citizens. Assuming that the residents see fit, Restonians should be better able than they now are to assure the carrying out of the "new town" concept.

#### Other Services

A town government would have the ability to provide services of other types as well. From time to time in the



past, community needs have arisen in Reston that required the intervention of a broad-based community organization with sources of financing. In the absence of a local government with the legal authority to tax and to incur debt, it has sometimes been difficult to meet these needs. Even where they have been met, long delays have sometimes been encountered. One example is provided by the problem of internal transportation, another by the Reston Community Center. Where similar unanticipated community needs arose, a town government would be able to step in readily and quickly where its assistance was deemed essential and desirable.

#### More Convenient Location of Local Government Offices

In a town of Reston, much of the business which citizens have with local government would be done within the boundaries of Reston, not in Fairfax, or at the proposed new seat of the county administrative offices, or at some regional government center. Meetings of the town council, the planning commission, and any other official town bodies would be held in Reston. For county matters, citizens would still need to go to Fairfax or some new -- and equally distant -- county administrative seat. This advantage would be somewhat reduced if the county should build the regional government center promised for the Reston Town Center, but the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors, and generally the



other boards and commissions, would continue to meet in Fairfax or at some other seat of the county government.



### III. DISADVANTAGES OF INCORPORATION AS A TOWN

The incorporation of Reston as a town would add another layer of government -- and probably another set of taxes -- to the current governmental structure and tax burden. Residents of Reston already have to contend with clusters, RHOA, Fairfax County, the State of Virginia and the United States Government. Incorporation as a town might only make getting things done more confusing and more costly.

Any appraisal of the disadvantages of the incorporation of Reston as a town must also take into account two general considerations. First, a town of Reston would still be a part of Fairfax County and of the Washington Metropolitan Area. The town of Reston would continue to be directly dependent upon Fairfax County for a number of local government services. Any adverse consequences that the incorporation of Reston might have on Fairfax County could directly affect the quality and cost of the services provided to Reston itself.

As a part of the metropolitan area, the residents of Reston look to the city of Washington and to other parts of the region for many jobs, services, and recreational and cultural activities. Although Reston is relatively remote from the center of the region, Restonians are affected to one degree or another by the level of economic activity in



the region, the quality of its transportation facilities and services, the regional level of education, the regional air quality, the volume of crime, etc. Again, if incorporation of Reston as a town should have adverse effects on the metropolitan area as a whole, it also would adversely affect Reston.

Second, the incorporation of Reston, even if by special act of the General Assembly, would certainly set a precedent that might be used to justify further incorporations within Fairfax County. Although Reston is a sufficiently small part of the whole that the direct effects of its incorporation might not be great, any adverse effects that the incorporation of Reston might have on Fairfax County or on the metropolitan area as a whole, would be multiplied by additional incorporations.

ADVERSE EFFECTS OF INCORPORATION ON THE  
REGION AND THE COUNTY

Increased Difficulty in Solving Regional Problems

An increase in the number of separate government bodies in the county would complicate relations within the metropolitan area. Increased parochialism could develop within Reston, thus decreasing Restonians' concern for a regional approach to solving crucial problems. Such matters as regional taxation, land use, transportation, and water resources



could be increasingly difficult to deal with, and plans for necessary but unpopular facilities could be delayed. In particular, planning and zoning conducted from the standpoint of the smaller area might not take adequately into account considerations of the broader region of which Reston is a part.

#### Decrease in the County's Efficiency

Incorporation might hinder the county's ability to function efficiently. A multiplicity of jurisdictions with overlapping responsibilities could be less efficient than a single governmental body. Economies resulting from a single layer of government could be decreased. For example, Herndon and Vienna each has its own police force to handle most police matters within town boundaries; however, the county police must be available should extraordinary needs arise. In addition, the county police must drive through these towns in order to serve residents in areas surrounding the towns. An increased number of towns would increase these existing inefficiencies, adversely affecting Restonians and other county taxpayers.

The possibility of further incorporations within the county could complicate the county's long range land planning and financial planning efforts. For instance, the county might have difficulty deciding where to locate police



stations if future incorporations might remove the need for police service in certain areas.

Financial Weakening of Fairfax County

Perhaps the most significant disadvantage of Reston's incorporation as a town is the possible financial weakening of Fairfax County. In Virginia, a town can preempt county authority over certain taxes, such as motor vehicle license fees and business, professional and occupational license taxes, as well as various other fees, licenses, and permits (see Section IV). Thus the county loses revenue when a town is incorporated. Of course, the town then takes over the cost of delivery of certain services. It is possible, however, for the loss of revenue to the county to exceed the savings in the cost of delivery of services. (Fairfax County officials have stated that this is the case with respect to Herndon and Vienna). In any event, the county would still need to provide a broad range of services to the town.

Towns are also permitted to borrow money -- an action which is regarded by investors in municipal bonds as adding to the underlying debt of the county, thus endangering the county's favorable bond rating. To some extent, this may be as unfounded concern since most town indebtedness is incurred for revenue producing facilities such as water and sewer.



If the incorporation of Reston should encourage further incorporation, the financial implications to the county might be serious. For example, in fiscal year 1976, pre-empted revenues to Vienna and Herndon amounted to about \$2,000,000 -- not a large sum compared to total county revenues, but the figure could be increased significantly were more areas to incorporate.

#### DISADVANTAGES WITHIN RESTON

##### Possible Deterioration in Relations Between Reston and Fairfax County

Some measure of tension and animosity already exists between Fairfax County and Reston. This could be increased if Reston were to incorporate. Many county services would still be required, and greater difficulty could be encountered in obtaining them. In the foreseeable future, because of the provisions of Chapter 403 of the 1977 Acts of Assembly (initially designated as H.B. 34), Reston would not have the leverage of threatening to become a city -- a legal possibility for Herndon and Vienna which has been useful to those towns in obtaining county services. Incorporation could also jeopardize county plans for construction of the regional county offices slated to be a major facility in Reston's proposed town center.



Possible Adverse Effects on Relations With the Developer

Incorporation could be accompanied by the developer's possible domination of town affairs -- economically, politically, and psychologically. Many Restonians are employed by or in one way or another are affected by the presence of the developer. This could lead to the developer's having a disproportionate influence upon the town government. Alternatively, the developer might see town incorporation as an opportunity to discontinue its development of Reston or to renege on some of its obligations under Fairfax County's RPC zoning ordinance.

Problems in Service Delivery: Lack of Experience

Reston is already a community of some 30,000 people. Providing town service for a community of this size and sophistication would require a level of experience that might not be readily available in a newly established government. No traditions and no pattern of municipal behavior would exist. The towns of Herndon and Vienna were incorporated when they were quite small and required limited services. Thus, these town governments had time to develop expertise. Reston, on the other hand, could suffer from a period of an amateurish approach to problems.



Difficulty in Attracting and Maintaining Adequate Professional Staffs

Police. With a far smaller total police force than the county's, the same specialization of assignments would not be possible and the same degree of special training might be difficult -- or impossible -- to accomplish. The town might also find it difficult to attract, and pay for, top police administrators of the same degree of professionalism, training, and ability as the county can presumably command.

Planning and Zoning. A town would almost certainly not be able to hire a professional planning staff of the same size and level of professional attainment as the county's staff.