

# **BRAVE NEW TOWN**

*Reprinted from*

**INDUSTRIAL DESIGN**

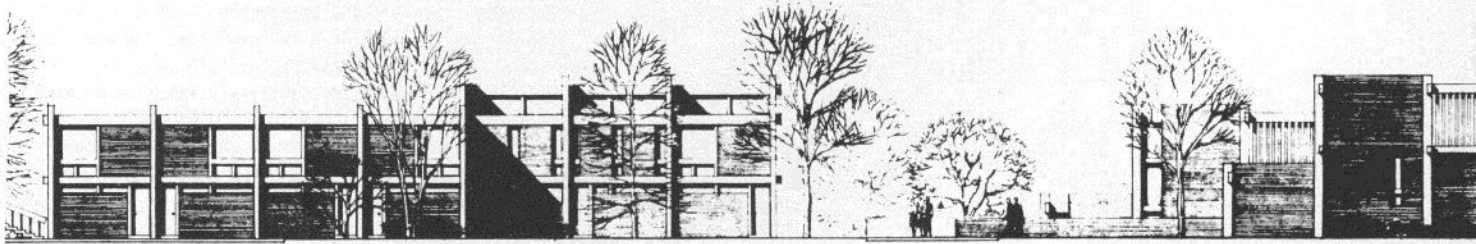
*March 1964 issue*

*Copyright 1964, Whitney Publications, Inc.*

## BRAVE NEW TOWN

*By sometime late this fall a town will have sprung full blown from the wooded, hilly countryside near Washington, D. C. What is surprising is that the countryside will still be there. And what is significant is that the entire town is being designed with a vengeance, as if one carefully thought out, attractive town might save the world.*

BY EDWARD CARPENTER



Where there are towns there are people, but traditionally people came first, then the towns. Now in departures radical in their confident expectations for success, entire new towns are being planned, and built, where people are not, but should be. One source says there are about 20 in the design or building stage throughout the U.S., and in at least one such planned community, Reston, Va., the promoters are trying to attract industry and residents in a way city planners have often talked about but seldom achieved: by good design.

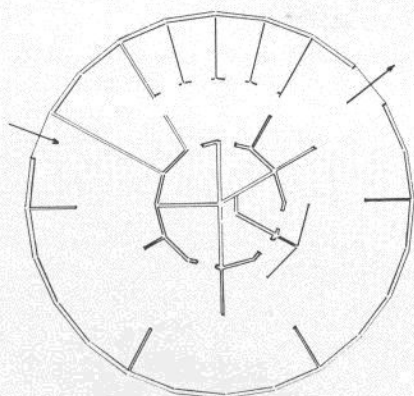
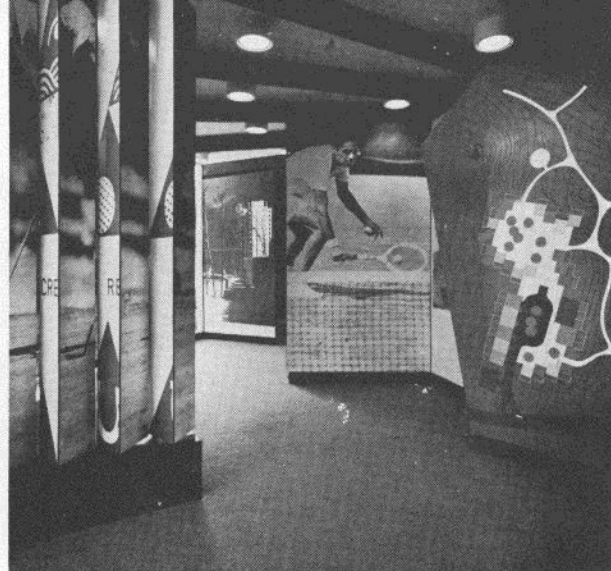
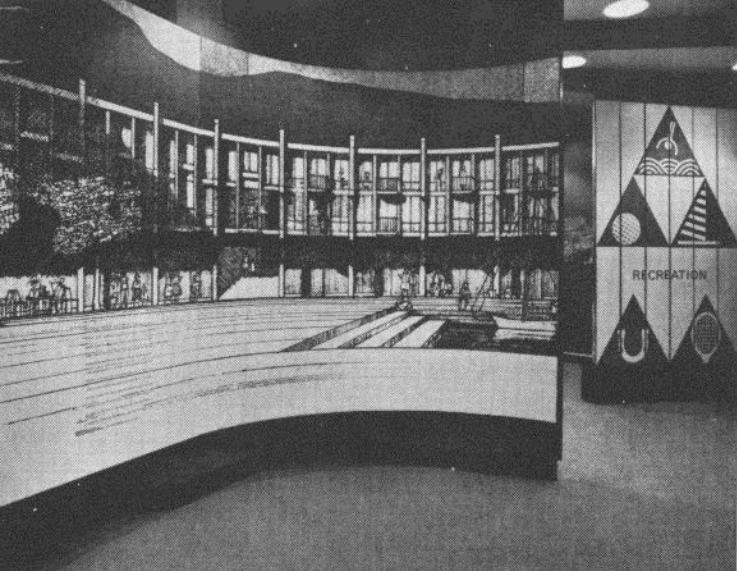
Reston is not exactly new in concept. Its placement of dwellings in clusters, saving open space around and between them as parks, was used in Europe as long ago as 1900 and in the U.S. in such communities as Radburn, New Jersey. Yet it is new in the way this concept is carried out. For one thing its housing is varied: high rise apartments stand in the same cluster with town houses and walk-up apartments; and integrated with each cluster will be a community center and a shopping area; some lots will be available on which purchasers may build their own houses, using architects of their own choice, with plans being checked by Whittlesey & Conklin, New York architectural and city planning firm in charge of the town's layout. For another thing Reston's pop-

ulation will not be concentrated at the center of the town, then diminished gradually as distance from the center increases. Rather it will wind in sinews through Reston's hills and valleys so that areas of high population density and areas of low or medium density are constantly juxtaposed. Such a use of space leaves a maximum amount of land for recreation—or for the beauty of lawns, trees, and woods—or for both.

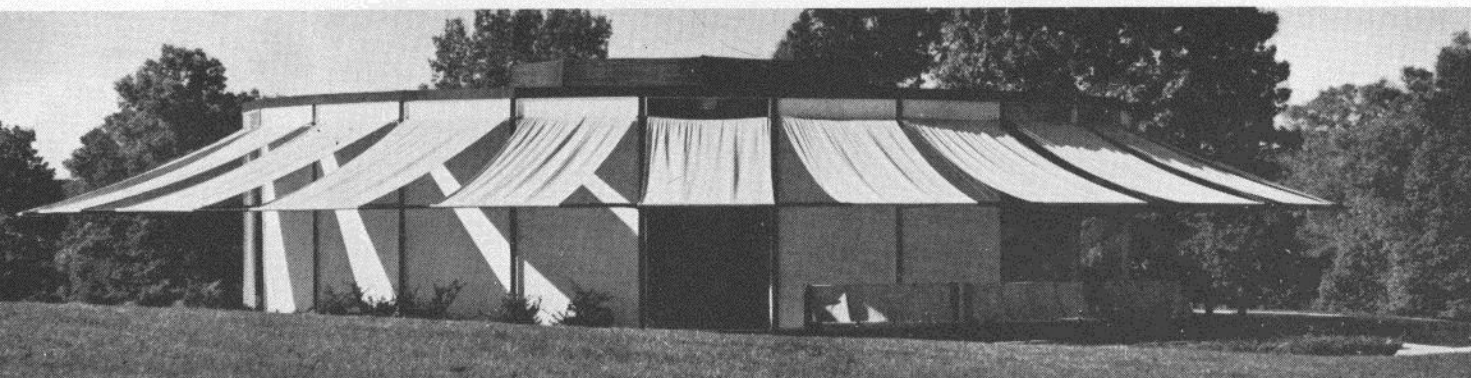
Recreation is a major concern at Reston and the people who eventually settle there will be the type who find relaxation in something other than a 21 inch picture tube. Reston will have two 18 hole golf courses (one is already completed), three 9 hole courses, two large lakes (100 acres), stables and riding rings, bridle paths, swimming clubs (one to be completed this summer), tennis clubs, camping sites, and playgrounds.

Perhaps even more important to relaxation than its recreation facilities is the frame of mind the community creates. "We are selling a way of life," says Robert E. Simon, who conceived Reston (Reston is an acrostic of his name) and whose firm, Simon Enterprises, is bringing it into the world. He wants Reston to be a community that will hold individuals for a lifetime, and part of this way of life is





Promotion and sales office (below) designed by Robert Gersin Associates stands on hilltop at Reston, Virginia, overlooking countryside. Exhibit inside explains philosophy of planned cluster living and shows photos and plans of recreational facilities. Using photomurals and occasional slide and sound picture show, circular exhibit channels visitors through building where they are never far from full length glass window walls. Exhibit rendering (above, left) shows horseshoe shaped village center cluster designed by architects Whittlesey and Conklin. Shops are on first floor, apartments above. Triangular posts (above, right) rotate, changing scene and giving exhibit motion. Drawing (left) shows layout of sales office. All utilities and Reston Post Office are in central core, sales offices in block at back.

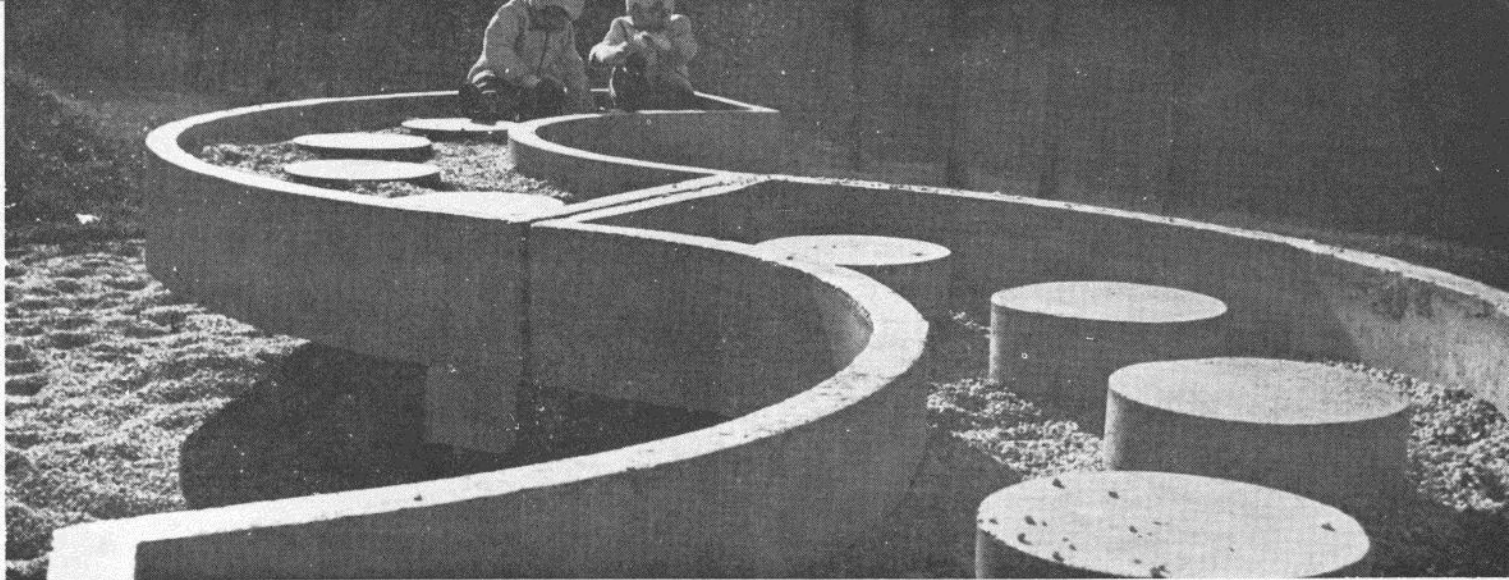


created psychologically by the beauty of the setting and the individuality of its dwellings. When Whittlesey & Conklin started work on Reston, in March, 1961, the firm's planners went there, and walking over the land, picked the sights best suited physically to contain village center clusters. One hilltop site will be topped with a high rise apartment; another site follows the contours of a curving valley; and still another, where the first cluster, now under construction, is being built, caps the tip of a 30 acre man-made lake. Such planned use of topography may seem obvious, but it contrasts refreshingly with the practice of builders who move through an area leveling land and trees and putting up rows of look-alike housing. Wherever possible throughout Reston trees will be spared, and Whittlesey & Conklin have speci-

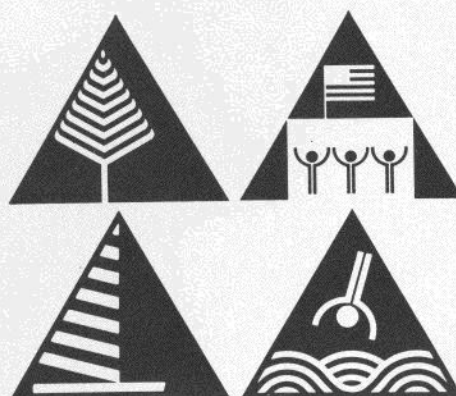
fied the best house location on each individual lot. Sixty percent of each house built by an owner's own architect must be within a pre-designated circle. And in certain areas of each lot no tree larger than four inches in diameter may be taken down. The best view from each lot is also determined, and the layout of houses and outbuildings on adjacent lots planned to maintain this view. So far, Simon has used six architectural firms and five design firms for various parts of the project, and he plans to continue using this talent and to bring in more. "I think the best attribute I brought to this project was my inexperience in town planning," he says in explaining his concern with design. "As a result I questioned concepts that had become solidified without good reason."

Reston is part of the Year 2000 plan of the





Serpent shaped concrete table (above) is part of a promotional playground located not so far from the sales office (below) at Reston, Virginia. Designed by David Aaron, play table is filled with sand and, occasionally, kids. Near play table is an Aaron aluminum play sculpture and a dead tree with a swing hanging from it. Like other parts of Reston, play areas will try to use natural surroundings. And Aaron is designing play areas throughout Reston, using natural materials—wood, earth, rocks—wherever possible. Triangular signs (right) are part of promotional design done by Robert Gersin Associates. Signs now show Reston visitors what recreational or housing facilities will appear on portions of Reston's 6,800 acres. Shown here are four of thirteen signs, standing for: park, school, yacht club, and swimming pool.



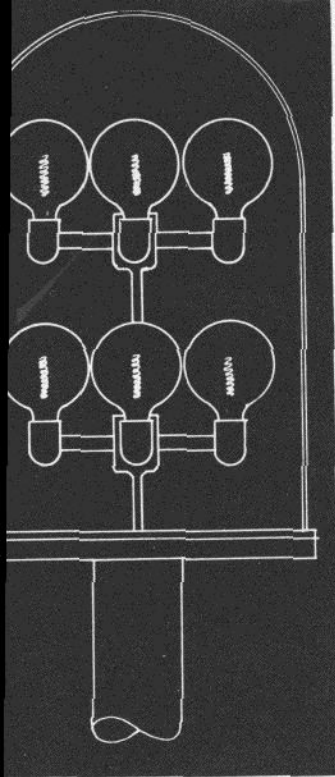
National Capital Planning Commission and the National Capital Regional Planning Council, which hopes to channel the expansion of Washington, D.C.'s population (expected to be 5,000,000 by the year 2000) into planned communities nearby.

When completed Reston will comprise a series of seven villages located on 6,800 acres of verdant Virginia countryside along the Dulles highway, 18 miles from Washington, D.C. and five miles from the recently opened Dulles International Airport (see ID May, 1963). Each village will house approximately 12,000 persons, giving Reston a projected population of near 75,000. About 900 of its acres are set aside for light industry (such as publishing and research) and government offices. Besides bringing in the type of persons a well-designed community like

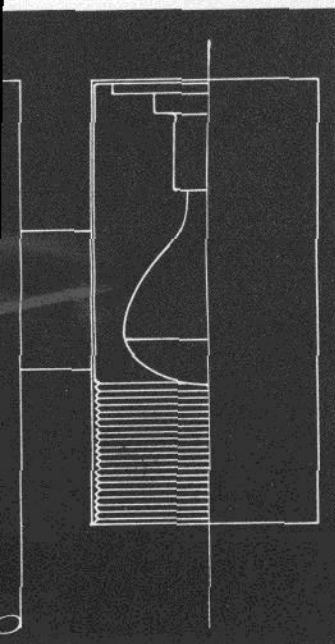
Reston should appeal to, these industries will provide the community leaders and workers who will make Reston a self-sufficient, economically integrated community.

Obviously Simon, who is supervising everything about Reston, is just as interested in the smallest detail as he is in the grand concept. And hopefully what will emerge from this advanced planning is a community that gets its individuality from careful attention to aesthetic detail. An example of this aesthetic detail is the lighting. Lighting consultant Seymour Evans is planning the lighting for the entire town, much as he would in a more usual project for an entire building. "We are lighting for people," says Evans, who holds this thought like a torch. And what he is striving for is a subdued quality of light which emphasises natural surroundings





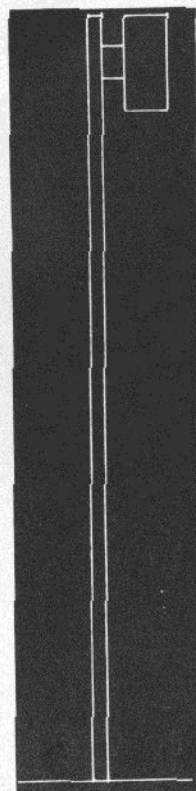
1



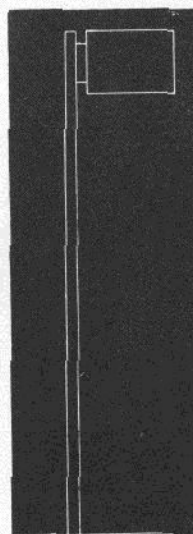
2



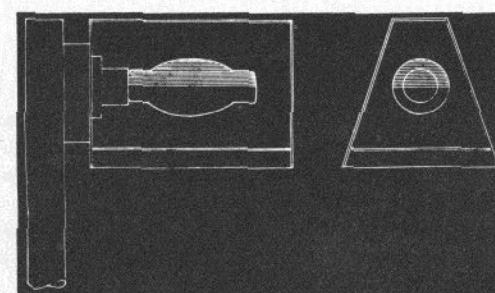
3



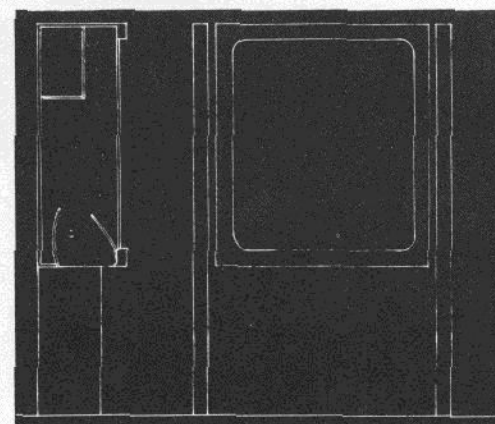
4



5



6



7

Lighting fixtures at Reston are being designed by Seymour Evans, who is working directly for Whittlesey & Conklin, the architectural firm which is Reston's overall planner. Evans wants to make town as attractive as possible to inhabitants and has avoided harsh, glaring lights. Fixture (1) will stand near houses and in village centers on ten foot pole. It has six lamps covered by clear buterate globe. Each lamp has a diode that cuts power reaching lamps so that they give soft yellow-orange glow much like candle light. Fixture (2, 4) looks a little like a bulb in a can, which it is essentially. It will be used on walkways around parking lots, offering concealed-source lighting eight feet off the ground to light shrubs and walks, silhouetting cars. Perched at top of 15 foot pole, fixture (3, 5, 6) will light Reston's woods and the walks running through them. Its corrected-color mercury lamp has life expectancy of about 9,500 hours. Suggested road sign (7) would be four feet off ground, have road name lighted from behind.

and complements the architecture. In Evans' plan buildings become lighting fixtures. ("The building and its interiors should appear to be giving light rather than merely be lighted.") Where there is clear glass next to a solid wall, the wall will be lit, bouncing light onto the surrounding walks, lawns, or trees. In the parking lots, which adjoin housing clusters (roads and living areas in Reston will be kept as segregated as possible) the walkways leading to them will be lighted and behind the lots a wall of light may be bounced off surrounding trees, silhouetting cars. "Lighting should dramatize structure," says Evans. "It should include shadows and surprise." Evans has designed lighting fixtures that will give these effects and has arranged with Virginia Electric Power Co. to have them installed and serviced.

Evans is working directly for Whittlesey & Conklin and so is Chermayeff and Geismar Associates, who will design street signs, road signs, house numbers, public identification signs, store fronts (where possible), bridle path identification, and even golf course flags.

Even though much of Reston's design is still in the planning stage, its acreage already has several manifestations of what design will do for the community. Probably the most obvious is the striking, circular sales and promotion office designed by Robert Gersin Associates and located, with a sweeping view of the countryside, on one of Reston's hills. The office, 25 feet in diameter, houses an exhibit, showing in pictures what life in Reston will include. Just beyond the pictures a good part of what it will include is visible through the building's





Variety of housing clusters around lake in model of Reston, Va.

glass walls: the grass, hills, sky, and trees of Virginia. "We wanted to explain the philosophy of Reston and the advantages of cluster living," says Gersin, "not just show hardware—toilets and ovens—like the typical developer." The building has almost 2,000 square feet of space, and including hardware, plumbing, heating and landscaping cost about  $12\frac{1}{2}$  dollars per square foot. Prospective Restonites come in at one side, circle through the exhibit, never far from the glass walls, and end near the sales office.

Also promotional is a small (35 by 14 feet) playground, designed by David Aaron, and located near the sales office. Eventually Aaron will design a host of play areas throughout Reston all scaled to children and contained enough to discourage rough-house activities like cops and robbers, making these areas safe for very

small children. Like other Reston designers and architects, Aaron plans to make optimum use of the countryside. A path that winds through Reston will have, for example, large abstract structures every so often where weary mothers and energetic kids can pause for a moment. These structures will be made from natural materials, (tree trunks, boulders), and Aaron hopes to have areas, perhaps near schools, where children can put up their own structures from supplies of water, bricks, and planks.

Given this amount of professional design help, Reston should be successful for both inhabitants and promoters, but more than to achieve temporary success, Robert Simon hopes to set a standard, to make his town a model other developers will follow. Already it looks as if he will do just that.