

TOWN CENTER STUDY

RESTON, VA.

URBAN DESIGN STUDIO 1971-1972

GRADUATE STUDENT PARTICIPANTS

FISHER, MICHAEL E.

HEALD, RICHARD W.

RICHTER, WILLIAM C.

FACULTY PARTICIPANTS

EHRENTAL, FRANK F.

INTERMAGGIO, JOSEPH L.

SAUNDERS, GLENN W., JR.

VIRGINIA POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE AND STATE UNIVERSITY

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE

INTRODUCTION

I. DATA GATHERING

II. ANALYSIS

III. DATA DEVELOPMENT

A1. Choice

A2. Access

A3. Concepts

B. Service Zones

C. Service Population

D. Activities

Shopping

Health care

Recreation

Government

Education

Office

Housing

Transportation center

E. Spatial Needs - Conventional

F. Spatial Synthesis

G. Facilities Program

IV. SYNTHESIS: PLAN CONCEPTUALIZATION

V. PRELIMINARY PLANS

VI. PLAN EVALUATION

PREFACE

The core of the Graduate Urban Design Program's second year at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University is organized around a studio (lab) with a course in Urban Design Methodology, an Urban Design Seminar, a New Communities Planning Seminar and an independent study with the preparation of a major paper. Second year students have an option to study in the Washington, D.C. area, where the studio is involved with metropolitan, real-world projects, conducting studies under the direction of Mr. Ehrenthal.

This report summarizes the studies made for the planning of a Reston town center during the 1971-72 academic year in Reston. The objective of the studies has been the development of a program, and possibly of a scheme or more, that could serve the full development of a plan by professional design consultants.

The developer, Gulf-Reston, Inc., has provided financial support, for research assistantships and faculty travel expenses as well as studio facilities, through the Virginia Tech Education Foundation. The corporation's officers and other personnel readily responded to our calls for assistance with information in their possession. Virginia Tech's New Communities Study Center provided opportunities to participate in its periodic four day seminars dealing practically with the various facets of new community development and with the

problems of the residents, planners, developers and public authorities in such incipient urban communities as Reston, Virginia and Columbia, Maryland. We have benefited from the material to be found in various citizen group reports and less formal ones in the Reston Times and in the metropolitan press. We have benefited greatly from our association with Mss. Ida Cuthbertson, Jean March and Linda Stenberg, Virginia Tech graduate research assistants at Reston, and with other students at Reston, most of them involved members of the community. (Ms. March was a member of the Bergoffen Study Committee.) A number of other residents have visited our studio for informal discussion of special topics of mutual interest. In addition to furnishing, when available, their own reports and those of their consultants, the professionals of the numerous public planning agencies in the Capital, in Fairfax, Prince William and Loudoun Counties have personally assisted us by way of interviews. A visit with Mr. Homer Hoyt was very valuable and enjoyable. We wish to express our sincere appreciation for all the assistance received.

The participating students: Michael E. Fisher
Richard W. Heald
William C. Richter

The faculty: Frank F. Ehrental
Joseph L. Intermaggio
Glenn W. Saunders, Jr.

Messrs. Ehrental, Fisher, Heald and Richter take responsibility for the facts, opinions and conclusions here presented.

INTRODUCTION

Two significant events in the development of the Washington Metropolitan Region occurred in the year 1961: "A Policies Plan for the Year 2000--The Nation's Capital" was published jointly by the National Capital Planning Commission and the National Capital Regional Planning Council, and Mr. Robert E. Simon, Jr. acquired the land set aside for a new town in 1880 in northwest Fairfax County, Virginia, to build the United States' first comprehensively planned post World War II new community. It was the National Capital Planning Act of 1952 in which Congress authorized the N.C.R.P.C. to prepare, adopt and amend a general plan to "...serve as a general framework or guide of development within which each part of the region may be more precisely planned by the appropriate planning agency or agencies."

President Kennedy recommended the Year 2000 Plan to the people of the National Capital Region:

From the days of L'Enfant, Americans have come to expect the best of their Nation's Capital. More than any other city--more than any other region, the Nation's Capital should represent the finest in a living environment which America can plan and build.

The actions that will be taken in the years ahead by the governmental jurisdictions of the area and by the federal departments and agencies will have a major effect on the welfare of the area's residents, and the status of Washington as the Nation's Capital.

The President followed with his ten point Memorandum of November 27, 1962

to the heads of Executive Departments and establishments and the Commissioners of the District of Columbia, and in it we find:

1. Planning for the region shall be based on the prospect that the regional population will approximate five million by the year 2000.
2. The corridor cities concept recommended by the Year 2000 Plan, prepared by the National Capital Planning Commission and the National Capital Regional Planning Council in 1961, shall be supported by agencies of the Executive Branch as the basic development scheme for the National Capital Region....
5. It shall be the policy of the Executive Branch that new facilities housing federal agencies outside metro-center shall, to the maximum extent possible, be planned, located and designed to promote the development of the suburban business districts which will be required to serve the new corridor cities....

The recommendation of the Radial Corridors Plan, known also as the Wedges and Corridors Plan, followed consideration of five rational growth plans, in addition to a no-growth plan and the conventional growth by sprawl plan.

The Year 2000 Plan was supported in 1961 by the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (C.O.G.) and its radial development feature was endorsed by resolution in 1964. The urban corridors and open-space wedges form of planning and development, well adapted to the Washington metropolitan region, has attracted world wide interest among competent urbanists and planners, as has the planning and development of Reston which offered instant demonstration and cause for hope.

*In 1965, the "Northern Virginia Regional Plan--Year 2000" was published. The plan detailed the policies set forth in the Year 2000 Plan for the

National Capital Region prepared by the N.C.P.C. and the N.C.R.P.C. Basically, the Year 2000 Plan provided for a series of radial development corridors with cluster cities in the corridors; the corridors were to be separated by open space wedges. When applied to Northern Virginia, the policies in the Year 2000 Plan were tested and adjusted slightly to existing local and practical future development patterns. All local planning commissions had approved the plan and six of the seven local governing bodies adopted the plan by September of 1965. To date (1971), Fairfax County has never officially adopted the plan.¹

It is not clear even today what "existing local and practical future development patterns" necessitated the not so slight adjustments by the Northern Virginia Regional Planning and Economic Development Commission in the original Year 2000 Plan, especially when Fairfax County would not adopt it even with the changes. In fact, "The Regional Development Guide 1966-2000," published by the N.C.R.P.C. in 1966, itself modified in view of developments since 1961, ignored these recommended changes for good reasons that should be obvious from an examination of its own more careful mapping.

*The N.C.R.P.C. 1966-2000 Guide projects a second circumferential beltway by the early 1980's and a third one by the year 2000, stating that "...on the basis of the Year 2000 Plan and of the policies listed [in

¹Northern Virginia Planning District Commission, "A Program for Regional Planning," October, 1971.

the guide] a combination of the ring and radial patterns seems most appropriate for transportation." Because of some later proposals² it bears repeating: for transportation but not for development in the wedges, since "...no interchange should be built on circumferential freeways connecting to local traffic except at planned corridor city cores. If this principle is ever violated the open-space wedges will be lost."

The guide map shows second (intermediate) beltway interchanges at Route 66, Dulles Access Freeway, Route 606 and at an extension of George Washington Parkway; it shows rail rapid transit stops at both Reston and Herndon. The rapid transit proposal was published in the 1962 N.C.T.A. Report, the Program in 1965, and the W.M.A.T.A. Regional Metro System Plan, with a line in the Dulles Access Corridor was adopted in 1968.

*Since the original planning of Reston and building of Lake Anne Village three large regional shopping centers have been built within a radius of thirteen miles from central Washington and seventeen miles from Reston: Landmark (Alexandria) in 1965, Montgomery Mall (Montgomery County, Md.) in 1968 and Tyson's Corner (Fairfax County) in 1968. The latter would offer a good case to study the effects in the public domain of tax-cash impulse public planning: development for inordinate private gain from public investment, reinforcing

²See Hayes, Seay, Mattern and Mattern, "Northern Virginia Major Throughfare Plan," 1969.

rather than diminishing public anomie and poverty with little concern for building community or fitting into the larger one.

A number of studies, other than those by N.C.P.C. and N.C.P.R.C., "have demonstrated the economic efficiency of the corridor-wedge pattern of regional development."³ Guided urban sprawl, or even planned one, is little better than unguided sprawl.

Since it would be most difficult, if perhaps not impossible, for Fairfax County to develop viable, alternative planning and implementation policies that would cohere with overall regional planning, it is not surprising that the County does not have such and that we could obtain only available District plans, but not an overall one for all of Fairfax County.

Should it happen that the region is unable to organize itself before it is too late for effective planning and development as recommended by the N.C.R.P.C.,⁴ it would behoove the constituent agencies of the region to devise coherent, effective policies to secure the preservation of 700,000 acres of open space, the approximate equivalent of the wedges, for ecological needs, recreational needs, historic preservation, aesthetic

³Fairfax County, Master Plan Division, "A Study of Suburban Clusters Versus Urban Sprawl," 1963; Maryland National Capital Park and Planning Commission, "On Wedges and Corridors--A General Plan for the Maryland-Washington Regional District"; Northern Virginia Regional Planning and Economic Development Commission, "Northern Virginia Regional Plan--Year 2000," February, 1965.

⁴H. F. Wise, "A Program for Comprehensive Planning and Development; A Design for Decision Making and Action," December 15, 1965.

preservation and agriculture.⁵ (Standard: 100 acres/1,000 population for local and 25 acres/1,000 for regional needs.)

As yet the wedges and corridors pattern of development is still possible. However, in another fifteen years, if present practices continue the entire metropolitan region will be one "urban corridor," according to a C.O.G. report.⁶ C.O.G. has taken over N.C.R.P.C.'s regional planning responsibility and is, at present, completing an analysis of four alternative development policies (plans) considered to be possible under present circumstances.

Plan I consists of policies to:

Improve public transit between corridor communities and the core area. (This would be achieved by the construction of the adopted METRO system and its future extensions along with complementary freeway system and feeder bus service.)

Concentrate future housing and employment in balanced corridor communities and the core area.

Limit water and sewer service areas to the urban corridors.

Preserve open spaces in radial wedge pattern.

Plan II requires the following:

Open up development along a few more highway corridors (for example, Routes 29, 5 and 4 in Maryland and Route 50 West in Virginia).

Improve public transit along the corridors as well as among corridor communities. (This can be done by constructing adopted METRO system and its extensions as well as introducing additional transit facilities such as express bus-on-freeway lanes or buses on exclusive rights-of-way, both radially and circumferentially.)

⁵Virginia Polytechnic Institute, Department of Agricultural Economics, "Farming in the National Capital Region," January, 1966.

⁶"Areawide Development Policies Alternatives for Testing--Preparing a Plan for Metropolitan Washington, Report Number 2," September, 1971.

Concentrate future housing and employment in balanced communities along the expanded corridors.

Limit water and sewer service areas to the expanded urban corridors.

Preserve open spaces in radial and linear pattern.

Plan III is made up of these policies:

Improve public transit within the existing urban area. (For example, construction of adopted METRO system and complementary freeway network along with needed feeder bus service.)

Introduce high-speed transportation connecting the METRO with cities outside the metropolitan area (such as Annapolis, Baltimore, Columbia and Frederick in Maryland and Warrenton and Fredericksburg in Virginia). This high-speed transportation could be in the form of fast commuter trains or innovative technology such as Tracked Air Cushion Vehicles (TACV).

Limit future housing and employment primarily to balanced new communities.

Expand future water and sewer service areas only within new communities.

Preserve open space to form greenbelts around the existing urban area and around new communities.

Plan IV requires that we:

Introduce high frequency transit system complementary to adopted METRO system. (This may be in the form of additional bus service at very close intervals or adopting new technology such as people movers or no-wait transit.)

Limit future housing and employment to high density development within the existing urban area.

Preserve open space and rural landscape around existing urban area.

*In accordance with state statutes in Virginia a settlement of 1,000 or more population may incorporate as a town. When it reaches a minimum population of 5,000 it may, if its people wish it, petition the circuit court having jurisdiction over the matter to become a city of the second

class, and when it reaches a minimum population of 10,000 to become a city of the first class.

Cities are not part of counties and county taxes are not levied in them; they levy and collect their own taxes and cities of the first class are fully self-governing. However, cities of the second class have the same circuit judge, clerk of court, attorney for the commonwealth, and sheriff as the county. Towns remain part of the county and their inhabitants are responsible to both county and town. Those in unincorporated settlements are responsible and subject to county government only.

By amendment, in 1966 the concept and classification of "urban county" has been introduced and Fairfax County was classified as such. In an urban county no new incorporation may occur and already incorporated areas may not annex parts of the county.

Yet a comprehensively planned new urban community's fate, its prospect for good urban development can be very problematic in an urban county that lacks a comprehensive concept and a suitable set of policies for its urban development as a constituent, organic part of a region. The consequences of such a situation in the metropolitan region of the national capital can be disastrous.

Be it suburban development (satellite town) or urban core development and redevelopment or renewal (new town-in-town, renewed neighborhood or district in the big city) the comprehensive, integrative and frugal nature of new community planning offers a most workable and instructive

approach and technique to planning development in the metropolitan region. A new community as an isolated suburban development under present circumstances may not help appreciably to solve the urban crisis, but it does at least demonstrate the solution to the social and physical dissolution produced by sprawl.

*Herndon is an incorporated town in Fairfax County, northeast of Dulles International Airport, having an area of 2,273 acres. Its population in 1960 was 1,960 and in 1970 it was 4,397. Projected population (in terms of sewer equivalent): 50,000. When it reaches the required numbers of population, it may petition for city status.

Judging from the initial planning, at its inception Reston was seen as a comprehensively planned and in our cultural terms innovative satellite urban community of 75,000 population with a market potential of 280,000. To plan and develop it as such was more than enough for its developer, as it would have been for any private entrepreneur. The momentary glimpse of a greater opportunity was set aside. Even Herndon was ignored.

Yet, from the beginning, due to its location in the northwest corridor of metropolitan development, to its proximity to Dulles and to its comprehensive and high quality planning, Reston was destined to have a larger role in the Washington metropolitan region.

In terms of surface movement the southwest thrust of the Eastern

megalopolis is deflected in a southern direction at Washington and Reston's location northwest of the city is marginal to it. It is however, together with Herndon, close to Dulles International Airport. This and the interest generated by the United States' first post World War II planned new community give it an outreach that is now, and potentially even more megalopolitan, national and international.

The upper half of Reston's western boundary adjoins Herndon's eastern boundary. The designated Reston town center site is between this joint boundary and Route 602 (Reston Avenue), 2,900 ft. to 5,800 ft. apart. Neither community can well plan for itself in isolation. Proximity and the complementary nature of assets each possesses bind their destiny and create the need for coordinated planning. Such would be in the interests of both communities as well as in that of the larger community.

"Who knows how a city plan may affect a way of life, a civilization. Just think what might happen to investors if they saw mothers pushing baby carriages down a Wall Street. Business might become less abstract, investments more involved in human issues Who knows?" (William Conklin, as quoted in Progressive Architecture, June, 1965.)

Reston, the most urban of our new towns, attracting first many young, imaginative, highly skilled, creative, idealistic, involved individuals and families and now seeking to generate a more dynamic, more truly urban mix (with more varied choice in housing architecture, more moderate income housing) offers a chance to observe by comparison in the suburban

belt the superior opportunities for quality life in an environment more rationally, accommodatingly and aesthetically, more fully yet frugally, and more hospitably, in short more comprehensively, more humanly organized.

The Reston Master Plan was prepared for Robert E. Simon, Jr. by Whittlesey and Conklin in 1961-62, leading to the adoption of R.P.C. zoning by Fairfax County in June, 1962. The plan has since been amended, but the integrity of the original has been preserved, a sure indication of the validity and strength of the original plan concept. With a substantial loan from Gulf Oil Corporation construction of the first village, Lake Anne Village, began in 1963 and Reston was officially dedicated on May 21, 1966.

"We must propose an incredible experiment: the revival of city life, the survival of social man." (Theo Crosby, Architecture-City Sense, Reinhold, New York, 1965).

How many of those who plan and build cities do understand the city's mission, the urban way of life, the meaning of an urban center? To hunting and gathering man, on the move, the environment could be of interest only as long as the means of livelihood could be readily plucked from it. Having discovered the ways of planting and taming and thus the possibility of settling, a new relationship between man and his environment, human and non-human, was born. Yet this relationship was not entirely new. The periodic celebration of community, connected with a sacred assembly place was already part of Paleolithic man's way of life.

Neolithic life brought with it the possibility of that extraordinarily far-reaching settlement pattern of the permanently or lastingly occupied family home along the public communications corridor with a closeness to others, a feeling of neighborliness and the beginning of that open, persistent yet discreet socializer--street life. And at its pivot we find the sacral center of community. Later, in the polis, the urbs, the civitas, the city, they reach their highest level of development for the ways of life of the polite, the urbanite, the civil, the citizen. The civilizing process is a unifying one, rooted in ever more broadly shared human aspirations, values and goals. These are central to social life and the city as the locus of the civilizing process must reflect, physically and symbolically, that centrality.

In the headlong rush on the frontiers of a continent to be conquered much of the conqueror's attitudes and ways reverted to essentially Paleolithic form, but even the periodic celebration of community being rare and its place profane or even on another continent....

The search for community in a society whose heterogeneity is continually being renewed is not an easy one. Nor is it easy in an outwardly fast urbanizing society such as ours has been for the past hundred years, but where the city is "only a working place, a machine or tool for earning a living and making money." Indeed, an environment thus characterized, one without a centering on community, is not a true city. The efforts, early in this century, to instill civic pride by building monumental civic centers were meaningless. Huge wind-blown open spaces, surrounded by

government buildings with formal facades, housing large numbers of bureaucrats and politicians inaccessible to most, remained forever empty of human socializing activity. The one environment with street life, limited as its scope and variety was, could be found in the downtown shopping district. But if the flavor of downtown shopping district street life was not very rich, our next experience was to be poorer.

Post World War II metropolitan America has segregated the poor from the affluent, concentrating the first in the private car infected core and dispersing the latter to infest the core's surrounding open space, to endlessly expand the urban shadow. The core has lost even its limited range street life and center, while large scale shopping was now organized at the wide open interchanges of the new suburban highway and freeway systems to serve as shopping and one dimensional surrogate streetlife centers for the affluent isolated in the suburban sprawl.

If this seems a degenerating process, at least the end of it may be in sight, for the next phase in consumer culture evolution is clearly an involutionary one---the development with public assistance of "shopping towns," towns justified with, necessitated by and planned for the commercial aspirations of isolated shopping centers.

Evolutionary degeneration, at least in the natural world, makes room for evolutionary development elsewhere. Not without a fight, however, in government politics.