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FOR DISCUSSION PURPOSES ONLY

SOME PROPOSALS FOR RESEARCH IN RESTON

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At present, three studies have been proposed for Reston: an already ongoing historical case study of the decision-making process, a study of the process of community evolution, and a study of the completed community. The research proposals I shall describe below fall into the second study, although in some ways, they cut across all three.\*

It seems to me that there are two questions of primary relevance both to Reston and to the planners and other policy-makers who may one day use Reston as a model

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\* I am not sure whether there can actually be a third study, because a community is never completed. The building program can and will be completed, but that is only one facet of the life of the community.

for future planning. One question is: How well does Reston "work"; that is, how well does it achieve the aims of the builder and of the residents, and in what respects does it fail to do so, and for what reasons?

The second question, which incorporates the first but restates it from a broader and longer-range perspective -- as well as a more theoretical one, is: What is the effect of a planned new town on the behavior and attitudes of its residents? Or, to put it even more broadly, what is the effect of a planned physical and social environment on the residents? Reston is particularly suitable for an investigation of this question, not only in order to evaluate Reston itself, but because the Reston plan incorporates so many of the best ideas and ideals of contemporary physical planning. It is thus a proper place to answer the question that has to be answered if physical planning is to have any future.

Both of these questions can be answered by the combination of research projects I shall discuss in more detail below: An observational study by one or more researchers living in Reston, and two interview studies of Reston residents. One of the latter, an intensive panel study would interview 100-300 residents before occupancy and again three or four years later, as well as a control group of 100 residents living in an ordinary new suburban subdivision of the same price level. The second, an extensive study would interview at least 1000 Reston residents with a shorter version of the after-occupancy interview schedule.

#### Detailed Description of the Research Proposals

The effect of a new community on its residents can be studied by seeing to what extent various kinds of behavior patterns and attitudes have changed after people have lived in the community for a number of years, and by



trying as carefully as possible to isolate the impact of the community from other sources and causes of change. This requires at least four approaches:

1. An interview with residents which measures behavior and attitude change as carefully as possible.
2. A pre-occupancy interview with these same residents to determine: (1) where and how they lived before the move and (2) to what extent the changes to be measured in 1. above were intended -- and thus existing as aspirations or expectations before occupancy, or were unintended -- and thus brought about after the move, and possibly by life in the new community.

By determining what has happened to these aspirations, it will be possible to see whether or not the community has implemented them. Effects arising out of intended changes are thus a combination of pre-occupancy aspirations and the community -- and both aspects of the combination must be taken into account for an evaluation of the new community's impact. Even so, it must be recognized that this type of effect rests partly on the pre-selection of residents, and is spawned as well as spurred by the existence of the aspirations.

Unintended changes are more likely to be the result of some feature of the new community, and will probably be felt by a larger number of people in the community, and more clearly as well. They constitute what are, from the residents' perspective, unanticipated consequences, and are thus more easily traced to their source in the new community.

3. Interviews with a control group which is as much like the people who move into the new community as possible. With reference to Reston, it is necessary to control not only the characteristics of the people, but also the fact of moving, and of moving into a new community so that the only thing with respect to which the Reston group and the control group differ is the distinctive nature of the Reston community. This is best achieved by selecting a control group moving into an ordinary new suburban sub-division of the same price level as Reston. A comparison of the Reston and the control group interviews will make it possible to see what changes are due to the move, to life in a new community, and most important, to the difference between the ordinary new suburb and Reston.
4. A thorough knowledge of how Reston and its facilities are used by its residents, what daily life is like



there -- in short, what the community, the impact of which is to be measured through interviews, is actually like. The nature of this community must therefore be described by a detached observer, preferably living in the community.

Each of these approaches will now be described in more detail.

#### The Panel Interview Study

A sample of prospective Reston residents should be interviewed after they have made their decision to move to Reston. This interview should contain the following sections:

1. Life in the pre-Reston residence, with major emphasis on those aspects of life which are of primary importance in Reston: Use of the physical environment; community facility use; transportation patterns; social relationships with neighbors and friends in the community; family life; organizational and community participation; attitudes toward the immediate neighborhood and the community, toward the neighbors and their

characteristics -- especially homogeneity and heterogeneity; attitudes toward the physical plan of the residence, etc.

2. The moving reasons, and the decision-making process involved.
3. Aspirations and expectations for life in Reston, with respect to the items mentioned in 1. above.
4. Background characteristics, including residential history.

Questions about life in the pre-Reston residence should be detailed and, as often as possible, framed in quantitative terms, so that changes can be measured fairly accurately when people are reinterviewed in Reston. Thus, the interview should ask: How many close friends do you have in the immediate neighborhood? How often do you walk around the block in spring? How often do you use nearby parks? etc.

The analysis of moving reasons should try to determine not only why people moved to Reston, but what



feature of Reston was most important in the moving decision:

The house, the site plan, the recreational facilities, the employment opportunity or what? The moving reasons themselves represent a major form of, or at least index to, pre-occupancy aspirations. These reasons can be better understood if a separate sub-study is made of a sample of families, perhaps 100, who considered Reston, or at least looked at it seriously, but decided not to move there.

The aspiration questions should be asked twice:

First in an open-ended fashion to find out to what extent people have really thought seriously about their life in Reston; and second on a forced-answer basis. For example -- "Do you expect to be more active in community affairs in Reston, less active, or about as active as now?" or, "Do you expect to do a significantly greater amount of boating in Reston, and if so, why?" It is possible that many people



will not have thought much about how they will live in Reston. Thus, the forced answer questions will provide some ideas of how people feel regarding the innovations at Reston and of how seriously they are interested in them before they have experienced them.

The aspiration questions should precede those about life in the present residence, so that they are not "contaminated" by answers to questions about the existing patterns of living.

Aside from standard background data, the interview should also get data on cultural background, both in the ethnic and taste sense, as well as on whether people were raised in urban, suburban or other surroundings, and on patterns of social mobility. These data may explain the adaptation to Reston and are important for that reason.

People who are culturally or socially in a minority in the

community are likely to find life there either most challenging or most difficult, and they may be more interested in community affairs than others.

### The Reinterview

The second interview should contain questions on the following:

1. Life in Reston, using the same questions, wherever possible, as on life in prior residence.
2. Achievement or non-achievement of aspirations mentioned prominently in the first interview.
3. Behavior and attitude change with respect to items not mentioned in 1. or 2. above.
4. Specific questions on facility use, relation to local government, attitude on issues in the community, and on whatever other topics are relevant to an analysis of how well Reston "works."

Most of the information on behavior and attitude change should come out of an analysis of the questions about life in Reston and about aspirations, but there should also be some questions which ask people directly how they think



their life has changed in Reston; that is, how they feel it has changed. These data should be gathered both through open-ended and forced-answer questions, the latter on specific topics of most importance in evaluating Reston's impact.

The timing of the second interview depends on a number of factors. I have found in Levittown that many changes in life take place at once, and that people develop a new living routine within the first three months of living in the house. Other changes, especially those concerning social adaptation, organizational activity, and facility-use, may take a bit longer to develop. Most of these behavior patterns will take place during the spring and summer months, although organizational activity is heaviest from October to March or April. All things considered, the best time for the reinterview is four years after occupancy, so

that people will have spent at least three full "outdoor" and "organizational" seasons in Reston. By that time, some of the initial enthusiasm and facility-use based on novelty will have worn off, and a more realistic attitude toward the community will have developed. If data on the period of novelty is desired, some of the panel members can be interviewed during or after the first year in Reston, but I think that the most important questions will be answered best after four years. However, if a four year wait is too long for the study -- as it might be for administrative reasons, or if turnover should be high -- the panel can be re-interviewed after three years, or after two full "seasons" in Reston.

In addition, it would be highly desirable to make plans to reinterview the panel again after 10 years of residence in Reston, and the possibility of a long-range study



should be considered from the start. And it would be especially interesting to follow up the children who grew up in Reston, and compare them to a sample of children who grew up in an ordinary suburb.

#### The Size of the Sample

Effect studies are difficult to do, and reliable evidence on effects is hard to obtain. Also, many factors must be taken into account in this study because of the diversity of Reston. Every village will be different, and within each there will be several house types. Moreover, many people will not report much change, and the same "objective" environment will lead to different changes in behavior and attitude in different people. Also, a number of background factors must be held constant. Thus, the sample should be quite large.

Perhaps the most effective procedure would be to run two studies, an intensive panel study with 100-300 residents, preferably from more than one village (although this is not absolutely necessary) and an extensive study with a single, after-occupancy schedule based on an abridgement of the intensive interview schedule, and focussing on the most important topics and the major hypotheses unearthed in the intensive study (See Analysis of the Data, pp. 9-10). This extensive sample should consist of 1000-1500 people, perhaps from three villages, so as to permit a more reliable quantitative analysis than could emerge from the intensive study.

Given the high cost of interviewing in a distant suburb, the final sample size will have to be determined on the basis of the most important aims of the research project. Moreover, since one must expect that for most people the house will be the most important aspect of life in