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**A Column of Comment and Opinion Concerning
Major Issues Affecting the Future of Reston.**

NEW TOWN: BLACK MAN'S HOPE

By EDWARD G. SHARP

A new town is special to a black man. There are no exclusive neighborhoods, no substandard housing, no inequitable rents, no unequal schools, no communities deprived of recreational facilities. A new town, like Reston, is fresh and innocent. Men can build a tenable, stable environment without first having to tear down pillars of old urban systems.

Reston was conceived to offer each individual convenient facilities for working, shopping, cultural activities, education, recreation and pleasant living. The "old" cities and suburbs have both failed to satisfy these needs except for the privileged few. Black men seek relief from the burdens of the caste system embedded in American cities. The poor and the black have been at the bottom and see the sickness. The affluent and the white are not personally involved and only wonder why city and suburb become less and less livable. Reston is special to black men because it is young and healthy. If daring and foresight in equal measure with the profit motive guide Reston's growth, this town can survive and be special to all.

The Urban Disaster

Many American cities are decaying, largely because they have been unable or unwilling to come to grips with the presence of poor people and black people. The old urban systems have generally embraced a policy of containment. With this approach the poor and the black are accommodated primarily in certain sections of the city. Their impact on political decision-making is minimized and it is assured that they will function only as recipients of whatever the city decides they deserve rather than as participants in the decision-making process. City governments have attempted to keep their affluent and their white populations by maintaining and improving services and facilities in their sections of the city. Because of limited city budgets these actions resulted in sacrifice of services or facilities for the poor and the black. Individual decisions were "justified" by the necessity to attract the white and affluent and thereby maintain the economic and racial mix required for the city's survival. It soon became clear that areas where there are poor people or black people are much less desirable than areas where there are primarily affluent people or white people. Further evidence and personal experiences soon "proved" that any area where poor or black people live is or soon will be undesirable.

When white people exercised their options to move from the city to homogeneous bedroom suburbs, black people moved into more sections of the city. The urban systems assured that sections of the city where poor or black people lived would be undesirable, thus effectively blocking the movement of whites into the city. Faced with decreasing numbers of white residents, city leaders intensified their support of affluent and white areas at the sacrifice of the poor and the black neighborhoods.

When these approaches failed to work on a small scale they were implemented on a larger scale. Federal funds were applied in renewal projects but more of the same brought few positive results. Some realtors, bankers and merchants prospered but large portions of the cities continued to deteriorate. Leaders in many cities are now working to reverse this vicious cycle. Attempts are being made to bring the poor and the black, so long silenced or ignored, into active roles in decision-making. But years of expedient decision-making and sub-optimization have left very little in the way of physical, economic or social resources upon which to build.

Reston's Challenge

In Reston we still have the opportunity to establish physical, social and operational frameworks which don't condemn us to constant flight in search of a suitable environment. Reston, the new town, must utilize the talents and labors of black and white, poor and affluent. If we are to avoid the decay of the old cities, Reston must provide an environment in which poor and black people can live, not just serve. The challenge which faces us is building a viable town — not just building houses, apartments, stores, streets, schools and swimming pools.

Developing a successful, racially diverse community requires more than just selling housing on an open occupancy basis. Indeed, the conceptualization, planning and implementation of Reston must break with current American norms. An integrated, vital community cannot exist unless the basic humanness and intrinsic worth of each individual in the community is implicit in all the community's institutions. Black families in comfortable

(Continued on Page 6)

The Town Crier

(Continued from Page 1)

housing are not enough if:

- * The community accepts only black individuals who have "white" attitudes, tastes and values
- * Construction projects use black men only for certain kinds of jobs
- * The advertising and sales promotion accent plantation living
- * The schools and libraries present only "white" history, music, art and literature
- * Low and moderate income blacks don't fit into the scheme of things.

The opportunities for overcoming this challenge are based on the concept of Reston as a community where adults as well as children can grow and flourish. The responsibilities for exploiting this opportunity rest with both the developer and the citizens of Reston.

The Developer's Role

The developer, Gulf Reston, must not surrender this new town to failure by ignoring the full significance of racial and economic diversity. All planning and building must be accomplished from the point of view of a multi-racial, multi-income community. Care must be taken to avoid simply placing multi-income housing within the structure of Reston. Rather, the structure of Reston must be founded on the inclusion of poor and black people as well as affluent and white people in all physical, economic and social institutions.

The process of planning and building is most critical. If placement and interrelationship of housing for various income levels follows the example of old urban systems, our new town will not survive as a vital, desirable community. The developer's role does not stop with building houses and basic facilities. Gulf Reston must also assure that the people who inhabit these houses can and have incentive to function as groups in pursuit of common objectives. The prime responsibilities for physical, economic and social growth rest with the developer, but Gulf Reston must share with the citizens both its plans for Reston's development and the primary goals and constraints which have shaped these plans. Only in this way can the citizens have a basis for the types of meaningful interactions with the developer which are essential to Reston's success.

Gulf Reston is and will continue to be a significant factor in the local economy. This leverage must be used to achieve human as well as economic goals. A vital, open community cannot be founded on passive acceptance of discriminatory practices in the building trades.

The developer in large measure sets the tone of the community through advertising and sales promotion. If Reston is to be a diverse community, care must be taken to build a positive image which stresses the advantages of our town. The connotations of exclusion and artificial barriers, which are associated with the country club image, must be avoided. The concept of a contemporary American city should be the cornerstone of all advertising.

The Citizens Role

The citizens of Reston also have a major role to play if this community is to be more than just a part of east coast suburbia. We must encourage the developer to introduce bold innovations from current practices. When low-income housing, commonly owned parks, transportation facilities or community service businesses are established we must work to assure that they become positive factors in the community. Our forefathers labored diligently in order to build the industrial and commercial base for our current prosperity. We must labor with equal diligence to structure viable urban environment if our heirs are to have the opportunity to live in a free and democratic society. Each Restonian has a personal stake in developing this community. We cannot wait for "the other guy" to do our part for us.

To meaningfully interact in the development and operation of the business and social institutions needed for an economically and racially diverse town, all Restonians must increase their sensitivities and awareness of the subtle forces which have structured our society. The melting pot theory must be exposed as an unrealistic approach which has never been successfully practiced. Restonians should strive for a framework within which there can be interaction, and mutual respect between diverse groups of people. We must realize that America has been built on systematic, comprehensive oppression and the denial of the human worth of black people. Only with this awareness can Restonians evolve a stable social structure for a racially and economically diverse community.

The Black Man's Role

White people cannot fulfill these responsibilities alone. Our society has conspired to blind white men. Many really believe that freedom, dignity, justice and opportunity have been generally available to all Americans. White people often assume that the observable condition of black men is testimony to some intrinsic characteristic. The history textbooks have censored the record of the contributions of black men to America's growth and replaced them with myths of servitude and virility. Black men, like their forefathers, know that freedom, dignity, justice and opportunity have been, and many times still are, empty words.

If we are to build in Reston a new, contemporary city which accommodates black and white, poor and affluent, black people and poor people must participate in guiding Reston's development. Black people have seen and experienced the worst of urban environments. We have seldom participated in the decision-making but have often lived in and with the results of laissez-faire and "standard operating procedures." From these experiences black people have developed keen sensitivities to the potential ramifications of certain types of expedient and "sound business" decisions. We know that "exclusive neighborhoods" can be an effective way for developers and real estate brokers to exploit people, that "sound business judgment," and "limited budgets" can lead to vast inequities in recreational and school facilities, and that planning by the "responsible members of the

(Continued on Page 7)

The Town Crier

(Continued from Page 6)

community" can fail to consider or simply ignore the needs and problems of large groups of citizens. These sensitivities must be used in examining and, if necessary, proposing alternatives to the policies and practices of Reston developers and other groups active in the community.

About the Guest Town Crier

As a highly publicized "open town, in spirit and in fact," Reston has attracted as home owners and renters people who are interested in living happily in a multi-racial, multi-income community.

In inviting Ed Sharpe to take on the assignment as Guest Town Crier, we suggested as a title "Reston and Racism" in order to emphasize the importance of complete coverage of the subject from the standpoint of all Restonians. Ed changed the title, but we think you will agree that the coverage is complete and also that he presents a thoughtful, restrained and powerful analysis of what we all accept as a major issue throughout the nation as well as in Reston.

Ed Sharpe was born and raised in Washington, D. C. He attended Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute and later George Washington University, specializing in engineering and applied mathematics. At present he is employed by Leasco Systems and Research Corp. as Manager of the Product Time-Sharing Group.

Ed's favorite pastime is tennis. He is active in a number of Reston organizations, principally as a member of the Hunters Woods Village Committee (RCA), the Environmental Management Committee, and the Reston Black Focus.

In the next issue, the topic will be "Reston's Industries and their Relationship to Reston." Our Guest Town Crier will be Bob Snyder.

— J. F. Grady

Reston has made a good start. Both the developer and the citizens are attempting to face and solve the challenges of racial and economic diversity. Notable examples of steps which have been taken include:

- * Opening available housing to all, regardless of race
- * Citizen sponsored seminars which attempt to explore racism in Reston
- * The construction of initial low and moderate income housing units
- * The inclusion of supplementary materials on the black American heritage into certain social studies classes at Lake Ann Elementary School.

Present Needs

However, much remains to be done. With projected growth rates of four thousand people per year it is imperative that certain barriers to the successful development of a new town be overcome at once. In particular:

- * Gulf Reston cannot succeed in developing a racially diverse town without black influence in the inner sanctums of the corporation as well as black people in sales, operational and property management positions
- * The customary color barriers in the construction trades cannot be allowed to prevail in Reston
- * Educational and cultural programs must be broadened to accurately represent the black as well as the white basis of our American heritage
- * moderate priced housing must precede large government installations so that black men will not be forced to be commuters
- * The public image of Reston must not be white Southern suburban
- * Fresh approaches to housing, transportation, community facilities must be backed up with continuing operational commitments
- * Restonians must realize that the enduring success of our town is dependent on our abilities to change and grow and our abilities to structure a community which can change and grow.

Reston's Future

Can Gulf Oil Corporation, experienced in efficiently transforming human, financial, and material resources into goods and services, understand and effectively fulfill through Gulf Reston the role of a new town developer in planning for social and economic as well as physical structures? Can the citizens of Reston increase their awareness of the forces in our society which have ruined the old urban environments and act as concerned groups to assure that neither short-sighted interests nor expedient decision-making dominate in Reston? Can the peculiar sensitivities of black men influence both overall planning and day to day development?

Reston's success depends upon affirmative answers to these questions. If Reston succeeds, Gulf Reston and its parent company Gulf Oil will lead the way in demonstrating the role that private enterprise can play in developing urban environments structured for human values. The citizens of Reston will enjoy an open urban community in which participatory democracy is a reality.

Reston can succeed and this is why it is special — to black and white, poor and affluent.