

NOV 20 1967

November 14, 1967

To: Board of Trustees
The Reston Virginia Foundation for Community Programs, Inc.

Re: HUD Low-Cost Housing Research Project

The discussion on the above at the general meeting of the Board of Trustees of The Reston Foundation on Sunday, November 12, 1967, was somewhat inconclusive except for the following:

- 1) All admired the ingenuity and originality of the model shown, which seemed to offer a solution to the problem as far as cost per square foot is concerned.
- 2) There was some thought that we should arrange for a quick overall appraisal of the progress thus far, by the architectural department of V.P.I.
- 3) The Chairman of the Executive Committee was requested to talk to the Research Staff, and look at the project in some detail, presumably with the idea of recommending a course of action best designed to fulfill the original commission from HUD.

Note: It is probably pertinent here to state that the Executive Committee Chairman is a registered professional engineer, with many years experience in the development of new products and methods, as an administrator as well as a designer. Much of the following is a frank sublimation of this experience.

At this juncture, it is well to point out certain principles which in this writer's opinion apply to all research and development:

- (a) In proportion to the degree to which the particular project is aimed at a really new and novel objective, just so much more risk is involved in possible field problems after the project takes tangible form. This statement is not intended to frighten the people responsible; rather it is to emphasize the point that if the primary objective is freedom from minor troubles, rather than a real purpose to contribute significantly to progress, then it is almost axiomatic that little or no progress results. Whether we like it or not, risk is one of the penalties of progress.

- (b) At any point in a project aimed at something really new, any outside consultant can underscore these risks to a point where the administrators will consider a fresh start imperative. As a matter of fact, the people actually working on the project can do the same thing, and perhaps do it even more decisively.
- (c) In the case of the subject project, such details as attractiveness in general shape and form, color, and other matters of taste, can never find a unanimous audience. Each step in historical architectural development probably had more adverse critics initially than supporters for the given design.

If these principles are accepted as generally factual, let us look at the "woods", rather than the "trees", and see what we have, in the light of the commission from HUD.

1) We have an overall design which makes use of the manufacturing processes of the best producers of mobile homes. We have factory-produced components of the final structure in the largest elements that can be moved over the highways, designed to keep field labor and materials to a minimum. This satisfies the basic objective of the project - to put the maximum number of hours in the plant (high efficiency - low cost), leaving a minimum for the field (low efficiency - high cost).

2) We have a reasonable expectation of overall building cost that is very substantially below any known techniques and designs for a structure like that contemplated.

Now, considering all of the above, what is the apparent best course of action?

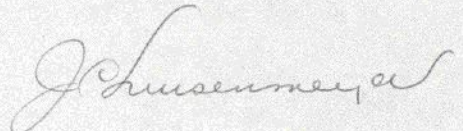
It is this writer's opinion that we should recommend to HUD that the final structural and architectural drawings be started on the basis of the general designs now ready. It is certainly probable that the satisfactory completion of these working drawings will require some modification of the existing general design.

It is further recommended that the administration of the project be transferred from Reston Va., Inc. (now inoperative) to Gulf Reston, Inc., at once. This recommendation is made with full appreciation of the high quality of the architectural staff of V.P.I.; the same recommendation would be made if such a course were proposed for the best architectural talent in the United States or Europe.

Further, it is recommended that the suggested outside appraisal of the entire project be deferred (as originally planned) until the working architectural and structural drawings are complete.

If the governmental authority (HUD) involved does not already recognize that the actual cost of the initial venture will exceed the estimates made for the second and third generation units, when the technique has been "debugged"; if they do not accept the fact that on a radically new method of construction there will surely be unforeseen details that must be corrected before occupancy; in short, if they do not accept the actual structure that will result from this project as the experimental prototype of a new design and construction technique - then certainly HUD should be so informed at this time.

If any member of the Board of Trustees has serious objection to the recommendations above, will they inform the Executive Secretary at once. In the absence of serious objection, a meeting of the Executive Committee will be called to implement proper action.



J. C. Linsenmeyer
Chairman
Executive Committee
The Reston Foundation

JCL/cm