

PLANNED CITIES

HOME

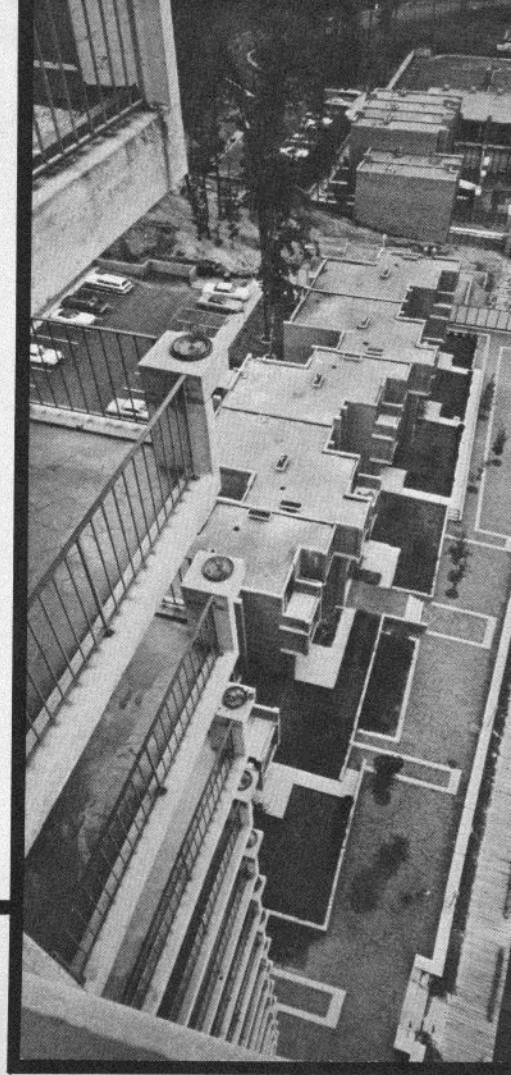
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MISSIONS



PLANNED CITIES:

Who's Shaping the Future?



by Dallas M. Lee

Utopia does not lie downstream, someone great once must have axiomatized.

However, man's major vehicle for progress—technology—has tumbled downstream through history rather mindlessly, void of the human control that might have added purpose and direction to its uncharted impact on people.

Cities have sprawled outward and upward haphazardly,

squeezed and pushed and shaped by an infinite range of forces, from the narrow interests of the individual developer to the rigid defensive posture of the small local government threatened by the birth of metropolis. Sniffing after technology's misleading aroma of euphoria, twentieth century man has consented to dealing in obsolescence, to earning frantically so he can spend faster. Writer and social critic David T. Bazelon said: "Unsure of

In a search for new styles of life, what role for the church?

what to do with our wealth, we have failed to be creative, to explore ourselves and our freedom, to discover other ways of spending our resources."

Despite unparalleled prosperity and good times, the results of this rush of uncontrolled technology are starkly evident in the crisis-worn cities of 1967: hunger, prejudice, fear, unlovely buildings, ever-congested freeways, pollution, a sense of threat to individuality, a lack of integrity, a lack of compassion and sensitivity, and for those desperate few, a lack of hope.

The significant fact of current history, however, is that man no longer has to accept the inevitability of anything, short of that age-old death and taxes routine. For the first time man has the knowledge, the capability and the re-

sources to rein in on technology's un-mindful thrust, to turn the flow of energy upstream toward the root of social problems, to use technology to shape and mold and create virtually whatever environment he wants—if only he can figure out what he wants.

The planned city is one emerging technique of experimentation. "New town" projects of private enterprise are exploring the delicate balance of jobs, schools, culture, aesthetic values, physical comforts and racial and economic interrelations that comprise the "optimum environment."

Fifty to 200 such projects are underway in the U.S., depending on how strict an interpretation for "new town" is used. Columbia, Md. and Reston, Va. are perhaps the most highly publicized and delicately detailed planned city projects in the country. Although neither is an isolated, completely self-contained community in the strictest sense of the term "new city," both have a balance of industry and commerce that will employ perhaps as much as one-third of their projected populations. And both are designed to house every stratum of society. Reston is virtually a suburb of Washington, D.C.; Columbia, lying between Washington and Baltimore, can serve effectively either metropolitan area. (Both are under jurisdiction of county governments.)

In this sense, these two "new towns"

essentially represent advanced suburban planning in the Washington-Baltimore area. They offer an open, relaxed atmosphere not unlike that of a small town to people who may work in the heart of big cities.

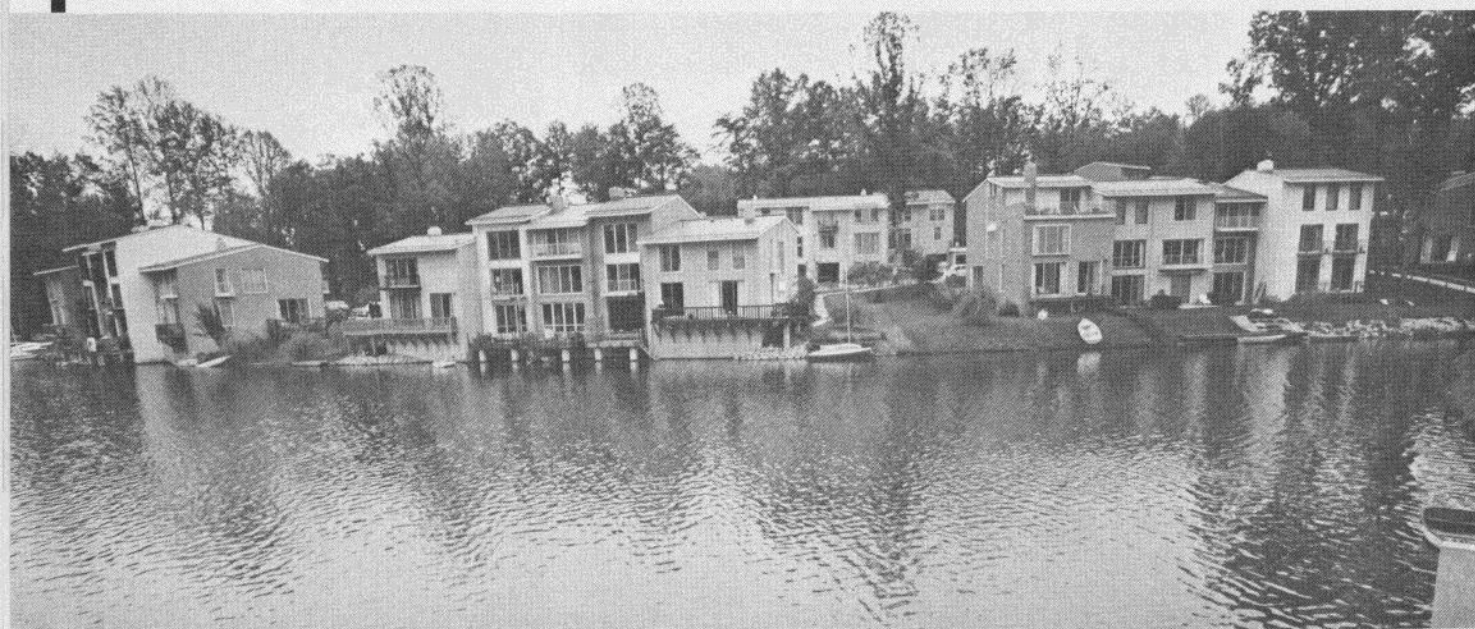
Planned cities are not likely to be the environment of the future, in terms of new, self-contained cities such as Oakridge, Tenn., primarily because of the lack of strong industrial bases and the necessary mammoth investments for private enterprise. But they reflect potential new patterns of urban development.

With future transit networks in the planning, the indication seems to be that the big city—in a decentralized, variety-packed pattern—will be the environment of the future. There are some big "ifs". If planners can turn technology upstream for creative, problem-solving purposes, and if the practical forces of politics, finance and proper concern can be mustered, then Columbia and Reston portend lovely, functional, stimulating big cities.

The basic concepts of both projects are simple, really, as perhaps the good life should be.

Population density is strung out in ribbon or circular patterns, freeing nearly 50 percent of the land for creative uses and putting every home within easy access of open space. Even where there is not open space, a sense of openness

A CREATIVE ENVIRONMENT: The use of manmade lakes and "greenbelts" of open space weaved throughout were designed by the developers not only to create a pleasant physical environment; Reston developer Robert E. Simon intended to design a community that would lack the tensions, pressures and lack of individuality that may serve to stifle creative living in urban sprawl developments.



and freedom exists. Clusters of various housing—high-rise, garden apartments, townhouses, single detached dwellings—form neighborhoods distinct from others; then neighborhoods are clustered around village centers that offer village-scale commercial, cultural and recreational facilities.

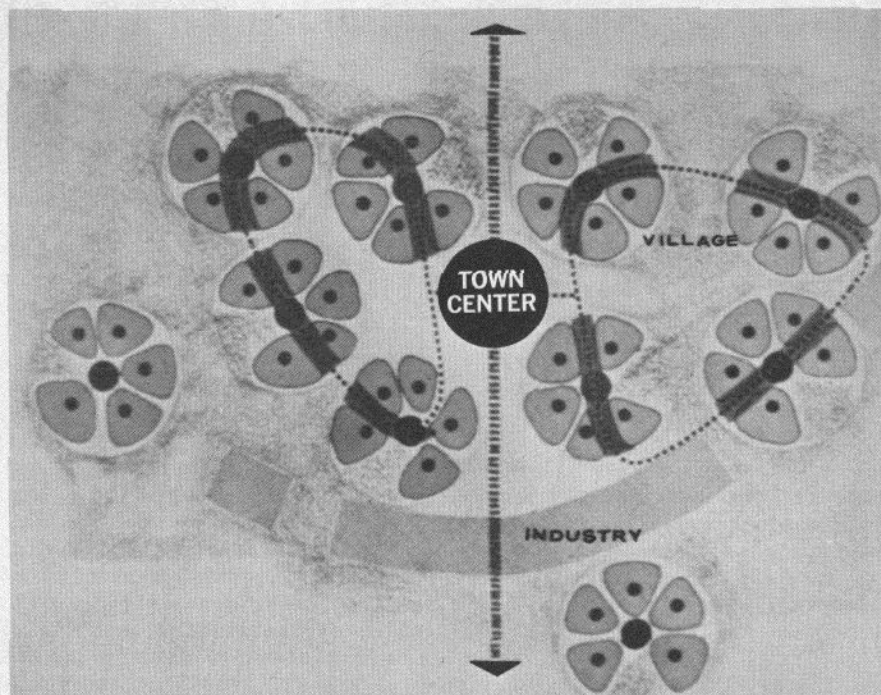
Reston, which has been populating initial developments for two years, has about 2500 residents; Columbia, open only since summer of 1967, has 5-600. As development continues in both projects, other villages will create still a larger cluster pattern around town centers, or "downtowns" (See diagrams), which will offer larger commercial and cultural facilities community-wide.

Village schools, sidewalks that pass under streets, manmade lakes for extensive waterfront development, and sculpture aplenty all combine to create an artistic flair and style of living that seem on the surface to be a sure success (see photos and captions). Reston, however, the older of the two, already has gone under financially. Gulf Oil Corp. bailed out the developer, Robert E. Simon (*R.E.S.ton*). And Columbia's developer James A. Rouse (see *separate story*, p. 16) is gritting his teeth for the transitional period of carrying the burden of city services (sewage, etc.) and property investment until the growing population begins to absorb the cost.

The problem boils down to a "chicken-and-egg" discussion—how do you attract people without employers and how do you attract employers without people; which comes first? It's not unlike the decision the church faces. Do Baptists, for example, hire a pastor and try to find an optimum church site before the villages are populated, or do they take a wait-and-see attitude until people are there to serve?

Actually, Baptists in both the Reston and Columbia areas have answered that question by aggressively seeking sites early in development. Baptists in the Mount Vernon Baptist Association in northern Virginia, in fact, went a step further and hired an unusually qualified pastor to be among the first to move into Reston. But there are deeper questions created by these bold environmental experimentations that must be answered by the church if it wishes to play a significant role in decisions that will shape the future.

For the Christian community, the possibility of creating near-flawless environments should signal a benchmark of new opportunity. The questions haunting the perplexed planner are not just physical concerns. What it takes to have the good life is being sought by thinking people who know that



"good water and a comfortable home" is far from an adequate solution.

The planning profession, long linked primarily to the physical sciences, is exhibiting an awareness to feeling, a sensitivity to all the little eccentricities that comprise the experience of daily life. A search for new styles and rhythms of life is underway that will permit man to capitalize on his increasing freedom from required work.

Urgency prevails in the behind-the-scenes brainstorming and decision-making of city planners and urbanologists across the nation. In the next 30 years, more homes will be built in this country than have been built in its history. An entirely new scene will be constructed by the year 2000 on the basis of whatever ideas can be explored for feasibility right now.

Perhaps the greatest need in the planning industry is for enlightenment on how to infuse the lifeless blueprints of tomorrow with the human values, social ethics and subtle environmental factors that will stimulate love and creativity where boredom and unloveliness exist now. Too, planners need to be encouraged to get at the roots of the city's blackest plagues, such as joblessness and inadequate housing for the poor, instead of just mapping escape routes for the wealthy.

If decisions affecting the future moral and ethical climate are at hand, what response should the church make? If the church influences such high levels of decision making, is it meddling in societal structures when it ought to be

PLANNING A CITY: This simplified chart of Columbia, Md. plans illustrates the philosophy of community design that went into both Columbia and Reston, Va. development. Each cluster represents a village and village-center. The single nodules represent neighborhoods within each village. The villages, then, are clustered around the town center, which offers the large-scale commercial and cultural facilities community-wide. The pattern of village life here leaves open space near every home, combining the best of country living with most of the advantages of city life. A strip for industrial development will provide a job base for the new town, providing employment for perhaps as much as one-third of the projected population of 100,000. The major significance of both Columbia and Reston, however, is that they serve the Washington-Baltimore corridor, thus, in a sense, representing advanced suburban planning.

majoring on individuals? Should the church be involved in the continuous creation of the world it exists to serve? For Baptists specifically, can the frontier spirit with which we won our reputation be renewed and reshaped to face the psychological frontier of right now?

If our response is in the affirmative, then the "how" of the matter remains to be thrashed out.

COOPERATION IN PLANNED CITIES:

A Sticky Issue for Baptists

The kingpin developers in the nation who have the power to attempt city building are eager to get religious input into their blue sky thinking.

They are out to create total environments, communities that offer all the services people could want, and offer them conveniently. In Reston, Va. and Columbia, Md., for example, developers deliberately have sought the advice of churchmen and offered to share the planned city with the church as an experimental laboratory for fostering better human beings.

At Columbia, developer James Rouse was interested not only in having churches present for a well-rounded community; he also was interested in seeing what the church could contribute to every phase of community life. As a result of his initiation, the National Council of Churches and the Maryland Council of Churches have set in motion the machinery for an ecumenical ministry that offers both unusual opportunities and sticky problems for Southern Baptists.

According to the executive minister of the ecumenical body, Clarence Sinclair, the cooperative ministry is an attempt to go much deeper than the ordinary ecumenical effort by developing a covenant relationship that pledges denominations and church groups to work together at the local level in programming ministries and missions.

Southern Baptists have not signed the covenant.

The objective of the Columbia Cooperative Ministry is a team ministry approach to the community. Pastors of churches in the denominations signing the covenant agreement will be responsible not only for worship on a local church basis; they also will be given opportunity to work in community-wide ministries such as counseling, youth work, chaplaincy, ecumenical education, peace and social concerns.

Maryland Baptist Executive Secretary Roy Gresham is not adverse to cooperative efforts in most of the areas initially set forth by the cooperative ministry, such as youth work, education, chaplaincy and social concerns; nor is he

opposed to the establishment of an ecumenical staff to coordinate such ventures for Columbia churches. He does, however, reject the control exercised by the ecumenical structure and what he calls a "de-emphasis" of the denominational approach.

"We could have had a strong denominational approach to this community in establishing our churches and then we could have structured the basis for cooperative ministries," Gresham said. "As it is now, the first village in Columbia is populating and no churches are there, only the cooperative ministry."

There is a definite superstructure. The Columbia Cooperative Ministry consists of a congress composed of two voting delegates from denominations and churches that are an active part of the covenant agreement; a cooperative ministry commission composed of 12 members elected by the congress, which is responsible for programs and administration; and a religious facilities corporation, composed of congress members, which is responsible for working with the developers on planning and negotiating for religious facilities.

The cooperative ministry staff consists (or will consist) of Sinclair, a program assistant, a director of religious education, and a three-pastor team for ministry and mission.

In addition to pledging themselves to cooperation in ministry, signers of the covenant agreement (13 denominational bodies and three churches so far) are encouraged, but not required, to invest in the Columbia Cooperative Ministry. No particular amount is necessary, but a church body must invest \$100,000 (at five percent interest) to gain a voting representative on the board of directors. The money is used to finance the cooperative ministry programs and building and site expenses for the investors. Thus those churches participating with sufficient funds will pay only pastors' salaries and related expenses and their investment will take care of institutional concerns.

Cooperating churches also will share office facilities, physical equipment, such as mimeograph machines, and education-

al facilities—approaches "non-threatening" theologically, Sinclair said. The aim here, Sinclair said, is to reduce investment and to free church leaders from institutional burdens for more creative ministries.

The cooperative ministry also screens and approves pastors to assure that they are willing to minister to people of any race, that they are capable of service in the community-wide ministries and that they are willing to work cooperatively with other groups. The organization's leverage here is financial. Local congregations write checks to the cooperative ministry, designating them for pastors' salaries, rather than paying their pastors directly.

In contrast, the council of churches committee in Reston worked out a population increment formula based on a religious study of northern Virginia. Catholics dominated and would have had priority on site location, but chose to plan separately. Methodists, then, had first option on religious sites and chose to build near an elementary school. Baptists, second in line, contracted for a plot on the plaza of the first village center and, per the formula, agreed to have a church building underway when the population neared 2500. It is under construction (*see photo*).

In Columbia, however, the problem of church sites has been secondary to development of the cooperative ministry. Southern Baptists, who are holding out for a decision on sites by the ministry's facilities corporation, feel discriminated against by default, Gresham said.

The cooperative ministry, however, only recently has laid the groundwork for developing the authority to speak for church groups outside the covenant agreement. A Columbia ecumenical planning commission was formed, composed of the Columbia Cooperative Ministry, the Catholic Archdiocese, and others (Jews, and Christian bodies such as Southern Baptists who, for reasons of polity or theology, feel they cannot be part of the cooperative ministry). This body, then, will coordinate strategy regarding church sites and buildings for all religious groups.

Maryland Baptists are impatient, however. For more than a year they have been promised a decision on church sites. There is another alternative, although it would break with the sociological planning of the community. And that is to purchase a site from the owner of one of the pockets of land still not bought up by the Columbia developers.

Southern Baptists are working with the cooperative ministry where state leaders feel they are able. Maryland Baptist Sunday School representatives have been in from the beginning on planning for a weekday ecumenical education program that will be taught in a shared-time religious facility by professional teachers. Gresham and state missions superintendent Milford Howell feel strongly that this program of study will be a healthy supplement to normal Sunday School education. However, they both voice concern that plans for religious facilities will not be conducive to a traditional Baptist approach to education.

The Religious Facilities Corporation is considering a plan whereby worship facilities will be clustered at the village center in order to share the optimum church site, reduce parking lot requirements and adhere to the planning concept of the community, which is to cluster service facilities at the village level. Maryland Baptists intend to cooperate at this point. Plans for such structures, however, may not include space for the large education buildings to which Southern Baptists are accustomed.

As regards cooperation, Southern Baptist pastors will be encouraged to participate in the cooperative ministries. The Maryland Baptist Convention, or the SBC, however, is not likely to sign the covenant agreement. Nor is a local church or association likely to sign it, although Baltimore Association head Tom Francis is outspoken in his opinion that the state convention should.

The cooperative ministry is involved in or exploring a myriad of other activities, including housing for low-income groups, metropolitan and world mission programs that would reach out to Baltimore and Washington, D.C. and the capital's foreign diplomats and personnel, and an ecumenical retreat center.

Needless to say, the Columbia Cooperative Ministry is complex and fraught with problems, not only for those outside the covenant agreement but for some of those within it. However, the objective is a noble one—to create a harmonious, creative, respon-

sive spiritual environment that will contribute to the community as a whole as well as to the individual. Such bold experimentation in Christian service might uncover channels through which the Christian community can serve and influence society without losing sight of its primary objectives in individuals or compromising valid church-state principles.

Even though Southern Baptists apparently can participate only partly, it seems important that such a struggle for new forms of ministry and influence is taking place. Planned cities such as Columbia are re-creating, in a modern sense, village-style living, which used to mean the church was the center of activity.

Progress away from and back to the village concept, however, may have relegated the church's posture of influence to what Lewis Mumford calls a survival role. "In the metropolis of today the church is a *survival*," he wrote: "It claims much, but except by repetition and rote, it contributes little to the active spiritual life of the city."

Apart from an ecumenical experiment, is exploration for new forms of ministry necessary within denominations? What forms of witness and service will regain for the church a position of authority and influence?

In Reston, William J. Cumbie, executive secretary of the Mount Vernon

PLAZA SITE FOR BAPTISTS: Pastor Bill Scurlock examines construction of the Reston Baptist Chapel, which will be part of the plaza development of the first village. The village center is in the background. A committee formed by the local council of churches (on which Baptists participated) worked out a population increment formula based on population preference studies in the area for churches to enter the new community. Per the formula, Baptists were to have a building underway by the time the population reached 2500.



Should Southern Baptists cooperate in ecumenical explorations for new forms of ministry?

Baptist Association, and Reston Baptist Chapel pastor William Scurlock have struggled to create a new, viable approach to ministry. Cumbie served on the committee that came up with the population increment approach to acquiring church sites and led his association to adopt the Reston chapel as a mission. The Mount Vernon association set up its own facilities corporation to finance the \$230,000 worth of site and structure, with the intention that the congregation would begin paying back the loan as soon as financially able.

Before Scurlock was hired, Cumbie established three major prerequisites for the Reston pastor: 1) that he have 10 years urban experience. 2) that his experience not have been just in the

South, and 3) that he have had a successful interracial experience (both Reston and Columbia are open housing communities).

Scurlock, with most of his experience in the Washington, D.C. area, filled the bill on all counts. His was the fourth family to move into the new town, and his ministry has been flexible and responsive from the beginning.

During the first year, he and his wife greeted each new family on their moving day with a spaghetti lunch. His first services were held in unoccupied homes near the village square until the size of the group merited renting the community center theater, where, incidentally, he played one of the lead roles in the first production by the Reston Players

theater group. (Worship in the unoccupied homes was satisfactory, Scurlock said, except for the one Sunday morning that a bikini-clad neighbor, forgetting about the services, strolled by the picture window.)

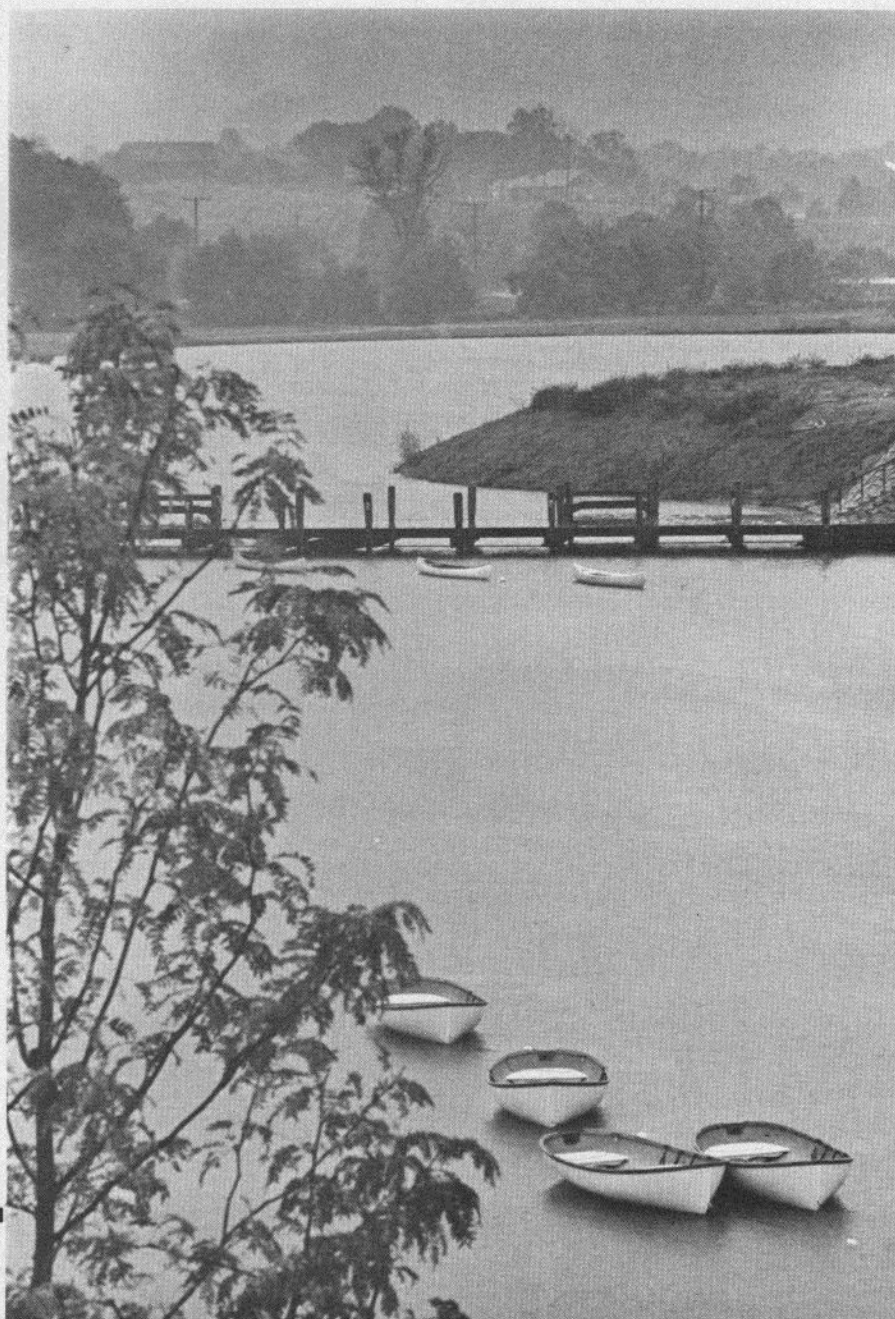
Scurlock has tried to create a viable, flexible type of ministry that would relate the Christian faith to the style of living in Reston. "These people are living in 'Utopia,' or the nearest thing to it," he said. "They are intelligent, moral, decent, well-to-do—where is the struggle for these people that makes faith so real and meaningful to most of us?"

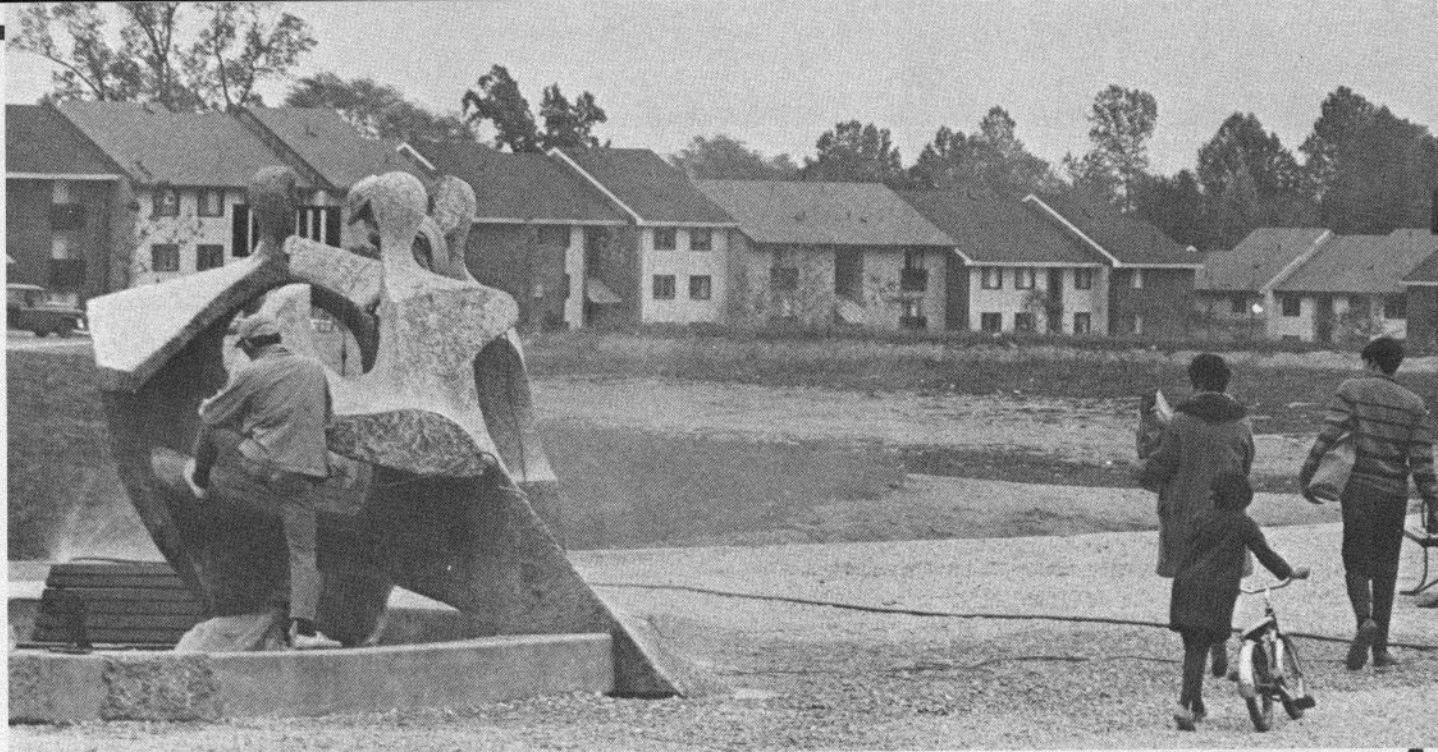
One technique Scurlock has used to make Restonites wrestle with their faith is weekday or week-night discussion groups with young people and adults. With adults, for example, a discussion on goals for children produced well-articulated ideals such as freedom to explore themselves, their abilities and weaknesses; a chance to experience God in creative encounter; freedom from prejudice, and so on. Scurlock's major reaction was: "I didn't hear any of you say that you wanted your child to be the kind of person who would change the world, who would serve mankind."

In a sense, Scurlock's ministry represents an experiment in ministering to the up and out. The cup of cold water ministry is not needed in the middle class-and-up area. "I've tried to provide a balance of experience to our young people, though," he said. "I've taken them to prisons, mental hospitals and other such institutions and now I think I have several interested in going on a regular basis to work as volunteers."

Early in the fall, about 100 Restonites were attending services with a degree of regularity, although membership was only about 35—an inverted proportion of attenders to members for most Baptist churches. Scurlock, however, does

RELAXED LIVING: The Columbia town center is developing on one side of this manmade lake. New single detached dwellings can be seen in the distant background. Such pleasant open space is protected by the design of the community, which will string out population density in circular patterns. Columbia opened its first village in July. More than 500 residents had moved in by October.





not press church membership or baptism. Only about one-half of the congregation is of Baptist background; the rest are general Protestants of practically all denominations.

"We probably could build church membership now, but then they would miss the point of our ministry," Scurlock said. "I try to emphasize four things: belief, responsibility, participation and fellowship. You can build church membership without these four things, though. Our membership will come."

Although Columbia and Reston are the major attention-getters, Maryland Baptist Missions Superintendent Milford Howell has 19 lesser-planned "new towns" to contend with in the Maryland suburbs of Washington and Baltimore.

In seven of the areas, Howell and area missionaries had managed to secure sites or had work underway by October. In one instance, four Maryland pastors led their congregations to join together to sponsor a mission in Calverton, a subdivision-type community.

Just the effort to keep up with the technological developments in city planning and the creative work of private developers has meant cooperation with local councils of churches in most every instance. For one thing, the councils have manpower assigned to keep track of such activity; for another, developers seldom attempt to deal with a long list of church groups individually—almost invariably they work through the councils.

There is a tremendous flux of thought about the future of American cities

now, brainstorming that could spark creativity on the part of church planners. Craig Noren of the National Association of Home Builders, for example, believes the experiments in Chicago and Pittsburgh with centralized education parks may be a technique that churches, by coordinated planning, could utilize.

Rather than church groups bidding on property in a new area just as commercial firms do, he suggested, a coordinated planning policy could secure the best possible site for religious facilities and then church buildings could be clustered (similar to the Columbia plan) in a "church park."

Other lessons for creative city building are being worked out in planned projects such as Reston and Columbia that will have a major impact on urban development—village-style "clustering" of housing, use of "greenbelts" of open space, decentralizing of job centers, centralizing of local governments for regional planning, creative use of art and culture.

Land costs, transportation problems, zoning ordinances, lack of incentives for the smaller developers (who are the majority) to plan housing in creative forms, and the gap between good ideas and methods of implementation are but a few of the most obvious obstacles. It took politicking to push through special zoning allowances in Fairfax County, Va. so that a variety of housing could be clustered. Mount Vernon Association head Bill Cumbie did not hesitate to promote the project, which he felt would contribute to the welfare of northern Virginia. It could be that more of this type of awareness and activity

SCULPTURE APLENTY: An artistic flair, even down to tiny cubistic sculpture in sidewalk underpasses, is evident throughout both Columbia and Reston. Here artists are shown putting the final touches to a sculpture in the plaza of the first village at Columbia. In the background are the row-type townhouses that offer diverse vertical living as part of the variety package of Columbia housing. The zoning variances that allow mixtures of different types of housing, the village patterns and greenbelts of open space are techniques in city planning that may begin to appear in big city suburban planning in the next few years.

will be required on the part of religious leaders.

It is significant, perhaps even historic, that in Columbia and Reston and the Maryland suburban developments, Southern Baptists have been willing to do their homework and take a few risky shots-in-the-dark in order to be a part of the future. Traditional "better judgments" have not kept Baptist leaders from doing what is necessary.

However, the major opportunity of the time may be the chance to carve out a deeper, more meaningful role for Christianity in the future—if Christians can exhibit a bolder willingness to explore for new forms of communicating the gospel they know is sound for any age. ■