

SURVEY
and
NATURE CENTER PLAN
for
RESTON, VIRGINIA

Prepared by
Nature Centers Division
NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY
1130 Fifth Avenue, New York, N. Y. 10028

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Preface

One of the primary needs in our fast-urbanizing nation is the preservation of lands of unspoiled natural beauty--areas of undeveloped land, untrampled open space and green landscape where city and suburban dwellers can frequently and easily maintain close communion with nature. Man is, after all, a biological being, tied by countless physiological and spiritual bonds to an environment that over the millennia has been essentially natural. Children of each generation must continue this bond with the land lest they grow to adulthood completely unconscious of the role of nature in cultural development and human happiness. It is becoming more obvious every day that man can wrest himself from the natural world only at his own peril.

Modern social science is beginning to uncover the factors that lead to the make-up of a happy and contented people. Pleasant livability is one of these factors. It is not enough, however, for a community just to have gracious amenities in living, to have open space and non-developed lands or natural areas in their midst. Frequently taken for granted and often abused, unused lands are soon lost to development. To assure their long-range integrity they must be put to intelligent use, and impor-

tant activities such as education, enlightenment and spiritual and esthetic enjoyment are among some of the best uses for such areas. Moreover, only through the instrument of education can such lands be safely perpetuated.

Like other expanding urbanized areas Fairfax County, Virginia, needs open space, wildlife sanctuaries and green islands of unspoiled hinterlands. It needs them particularly for the intrinsic educational, scientific and cultural values that they hold for people. A nature center in the Reston area--in an area that aspires to become a model industrial-residential community--would be a significant natural asset. What's more, it could prove to be in the long run a priceless educational heritage for present residents of Fairfax County and for future generations of Washington suburbanites.

This survey and plan, then, is one approach to the preservation and use of some important open space in the lovely, 10½ square mile Reston area. It contains background information, a survey and evaluation of a 101.4-acre sector, and a detailed plan of action for the development of a model community nature center. Embodied in the report are some fresh ideas, many tested proposals, and a number of practical recommendations covering what should be sought, how planning and development should proceed,

what standards should be prescribed, and how a nature center project can become a reality in a promising, new type of an American community.

**Joseph J. Shomon, Director
Nature Centers Division
National Audubon Society**

June 24, 1964

The modern age has brought to us new dimensions in power, including power to move and change vast resources of the earth and much of our natural environment. Moreover, automation, improved transportation and communications, and higher wages are creating a socio-economic revolution in the United States. The change is marked by spreading urbanization, the continued flight of humans from the land to the cities and suburbs, the sudden manifestation of abundant non-work time, and a new rush of activities back to the country for outdoor recreation.

Emerging Risks and Challenge

While these modern physical and social changes, in part, have given our nation an affluent society, better health, and an ever-increasing higher standard of living for more and more people, they have also brought us face-to-face with some serious problems in social viewpoint and readjustment. Lack of appropriate