

Area Faces Growth By Fragmentation

By Philip Stoddard Brown

The Washington Post, Times Herald (1959-1973); Dec 14, 1959;
ProQuest Historical Newspapers *The Washington Post* (1877 - 1993)

pg. B8

Our Changing Economy

Area Faces Growth By Fragmentation

By Philip Stoddard Brown

FOR years the capacity of the Potomac River bridges has been almost unchanged. Suddenly, beginning in the fall of 1961, four new bridges will be completed in about a year's time. These will add eight lanes for southbound traffic and seven for northbound. The number of motor vehicles that will be able to cross the water barrier that divides Washington will be increased by 70 or 80 per cent.

Indeed it may be that the potential movement of traffic, now limited by the approaches as much as by the bridges themselves, will be doubled when the Inner Freeway and all the new ramps, overpasses and underpasses are completed. In any case, the increased capacity of the Potomac bridges will be sufficient to cause some spectacular congestion, in a few years time, on other arteries of traffic.

These new bridges will spur residential developments in Virginia, now deterred by the agonizing stop-go-stop movement of traffic during the prolonged morning and evening rush hours. But in the meanwhile, over the next two years, this congestion will become worse.

When one contemplates what the effect of even the present congestion must be on marital relationships and the consumption of milk and crackers, 1960 and 1961 look formidable indeed. But this situation will change abruptly about two years from now.

Washington Will Expand Southward

The enormous CIA building and the Dulles Airport will bring thousands of jobs to Virginia and there is talk of building three large office buildings along the Virginia rim of the new circumferential highway to accommodate thousands of Defense Department employees. New industrial parks, shopping centers and housing projects are planned for Fairfax and Loudoun Counties.

Within the District itself, the tremendous Southwest redevelopment will go ahead faster and faster. Within three or four years, the Potomac waterfront may be largely rebuilt with fine restaurants, a handsome new theater for Arena Stage and many other attractions including new boating facilities. The Town Center, the dramatic South Mall and block upon block of apartments, town houses, office buildings and parks will provide the most modern, most attractive and the only large architecturally integrated development in the area.



Brown

Washington in the mid-1960's will face south for the first time in its history.

Impact on Real Estate Values

Who can say what the effect upon real estate values will be of the abrupt and collective impact of these and other developments

- Four new bridges to be completed in quick succession beginning in the fall of 1961, which will nearly double present bridge capacity.

- The simultaneous building of a second big airport south of Washington, the huge CIA establishment of Pentagon-size and perhaps other big Federal office buildings.

- The great Southwest redevelopment accidentally timed so as to be served by these bridges.

- The big expansion along Route 240, and to the east, which will be hastened by the transfer of the National Bureau of Standards. (This area that already encompasses the AEC, National Institutes of Health, Naval Hospital and some private electronic firms, may soon become one of the greatest concentrations of physical scientists anywhere in the world.)

- The sudden emergence of a rapid transit system from just a dream of planners to a widely endorsed proposal that may soon find expression in engineering blueprints.

- Finally, as suggested in this column two weeks ago, the apparent slowing of Washington's growth at the very time when so many large public and private facilities are being completed and others undertaken.

One wonders about the effect of all these shifts and new developments on property values in the older communities within the District, which are not within easy access of the new freeways and which may be leapfrogged over by rapid transit facilities.

One wonders too about the fragmented, decentralized pattern of growth—about current plans for two 1000-room hotels, one on the new 10th st. Mall in the Southwest and the other on Temple Heights near Columbia rd., and Connecticut ave., and about the scattered distribution of existing hotels and motels.

What a way to build and run a great city—to let it grow by fits and starts and by entirely unrelated projects of private investors and separate governing agencies, and then to keep it running by a series of improvisations . . . Planning is accepted as being all right for individual businesses, but somehow a lot of people are shocked by the idea of planning the growth of cities—and the births of those that will live in them.