James Rouse had a profound influence on the built environment of the United States. He believed in the power of private enterprise and that it could be harnessed to accomplish good. He understood that profit is a primary goal but that "the bottom line" should be put "where it belongs – at the bottom – as a residual of what happens above and ahead of it."

His overarching test of developing places was to create places that work for people. This was true whether he was establishing the Moss-Rouse Company, Baltimore’s first mortgage company; putting his people-centered stamp on regional shopping centers; building a complete city from scratch; or revitalizing decaying cities.

Rouse served in the U.S. Navy during World War II. When he returned to Baltimore and the mortgage business he had started in 1939 he was enthusiastic about building the business. The post-war era offered opportunities for growth and he seized them.

Responding to the growth of the suburbs, he and architects Victor Gruen, Pietro Belluschi, and Kenneth Welch among others, pioneered the new kind of shopping district—the enclosed shopping center or mall.

"Making impressions is not a superficial matter. It results from having a consuming interest in other people's problems and a determination to see things done – and done properly."

Sept. 29, 1947 in a memo to Moss-Rouse employees

Mar. 4, 1952 Letter from JWR to Thomas Church

“We feel that no retail center has yet been built which constitutes a really outstanding solution of the various problems and opportunities presented in retail center development.”

Cherry Hill opened in 1961. It was promoted as a "new experience in shopping." The opening was widely covered by the local press as well as in stories in Reader's Digest, the Wall Street Journal and The New York Times Magazine.

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