

Lew Sichelman

Rotonda Plan Based on Roman Palace Grounds

The first place I ran across the work of Wayne Williams was at the Watergate at Landmark complex in Alexandria, where he designed the lush \$2 million amenities package.

Now this California landscape and recreational architect is working his magic at the soon-to-be-opened Rotonda condominium near Tysons Corner.

There is one major difference. At Watergate, Williams was called upon to place the amenities in and around four buildings that already had been sited to the land. At the Rotonda, he has done the site plan as well.

Without a doubt, the Watergate amenities were as innovative a package as had been seen in the Washington area in some time. But the entire Rotonda project is even more so. It promises to be one of the most fascinating in these parts.

AT THE ROTONDA, Williams has designed a "Renaissance village" based on the elaborate Hadrian's Palace grounds north of Rome. The five 10-story buildings will be drawn together around a central "piazza" by pathways, gardens and criss-

crossing textures, colors and materials.

The buildings, too, will have a Renaissance flavor. Highlighted by free-form terraces with bronzed glass railings, the facades will show alternate bands of dark and light brick to create the horizontal stripe effect that is typical of Italian Renaissance buildings.

There is little doubt that much of the input behind this Renaissance theme belongs to Giuseppe Cecchi, the Italian-born developer of the Rotonda. Cecchi has been so busy since he came to this country 14 years ago to build the original Watergate in Foggy Bottom that he has yet to find time to become a U. S. citizen, although his two children are Americans by birth.

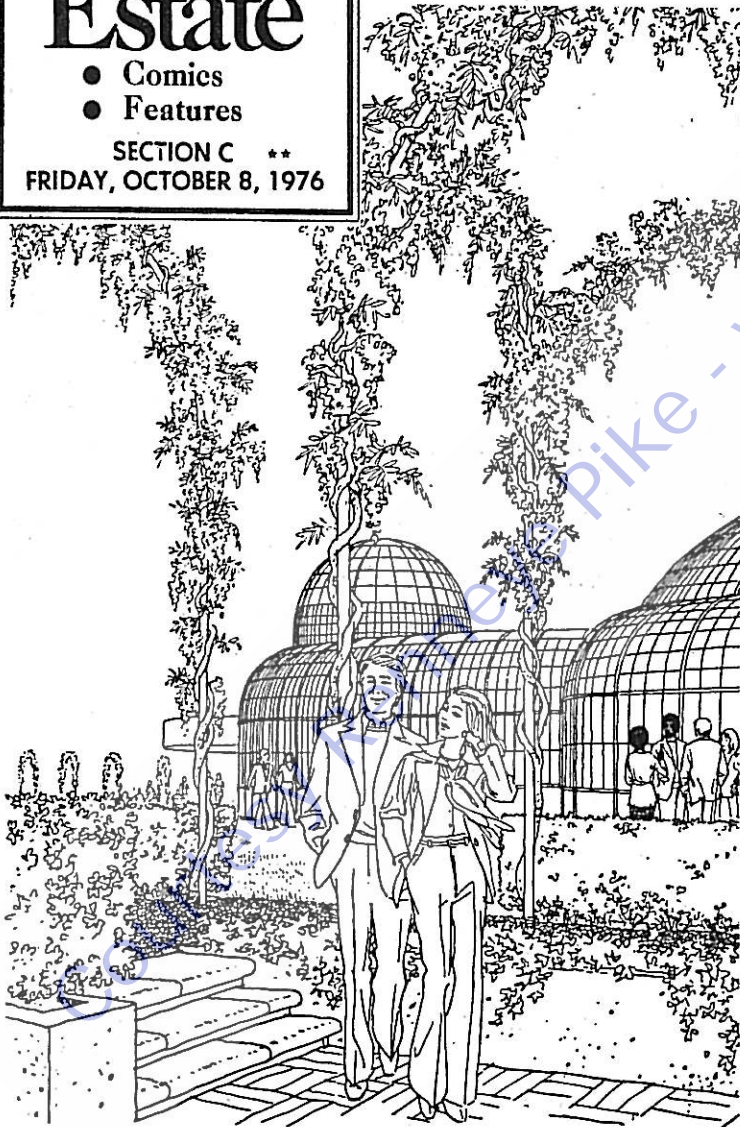
After completing the first Watergate, Cecchi and his former Italian employer started the Landmark Watergate. He left about the time the first building there was finished to start his own firm, International Developers, Inc. IDI now is co-developer of Burke Centre, a planned community in Fairfax County, and owner of Fox Run, a project of 100 or so homes at Oakton; the Plaza condominium in Washington near Watergate I, and the Rotonda.

TYPICAL OF THE DESIGN departures promised at the Rotonda is Williams' bold manner of handling traffic and parking, which are incorporated into the design of the piazza itself.

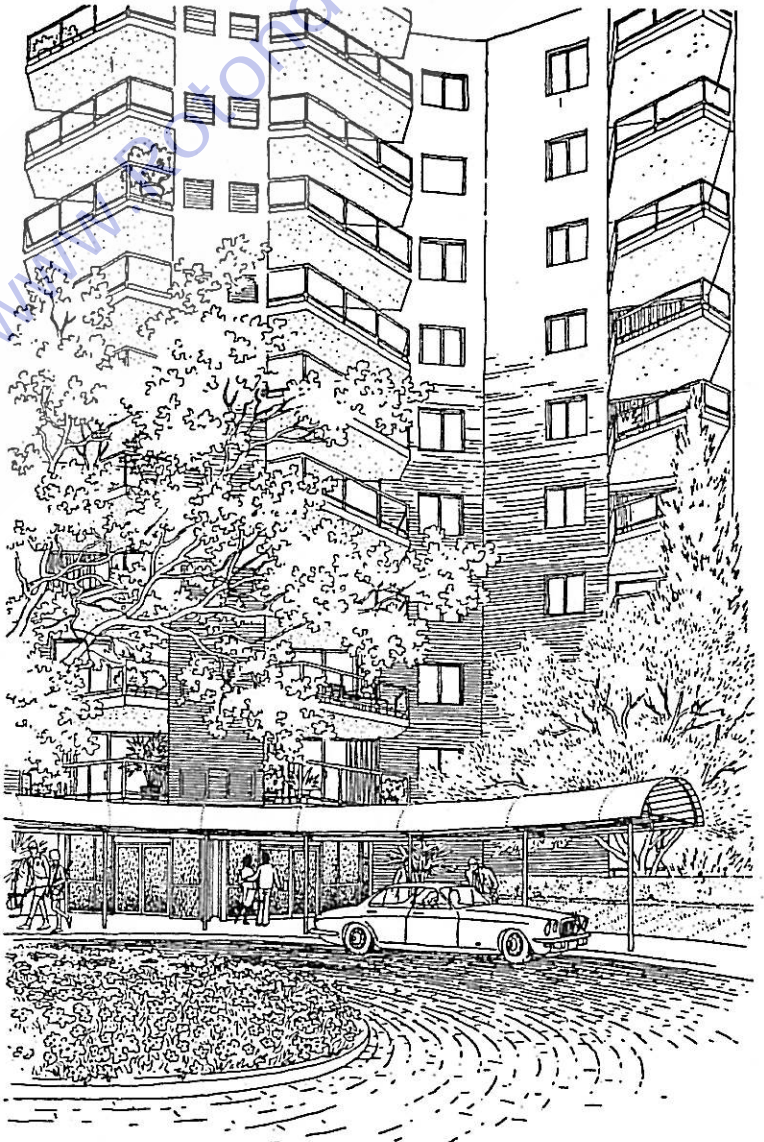
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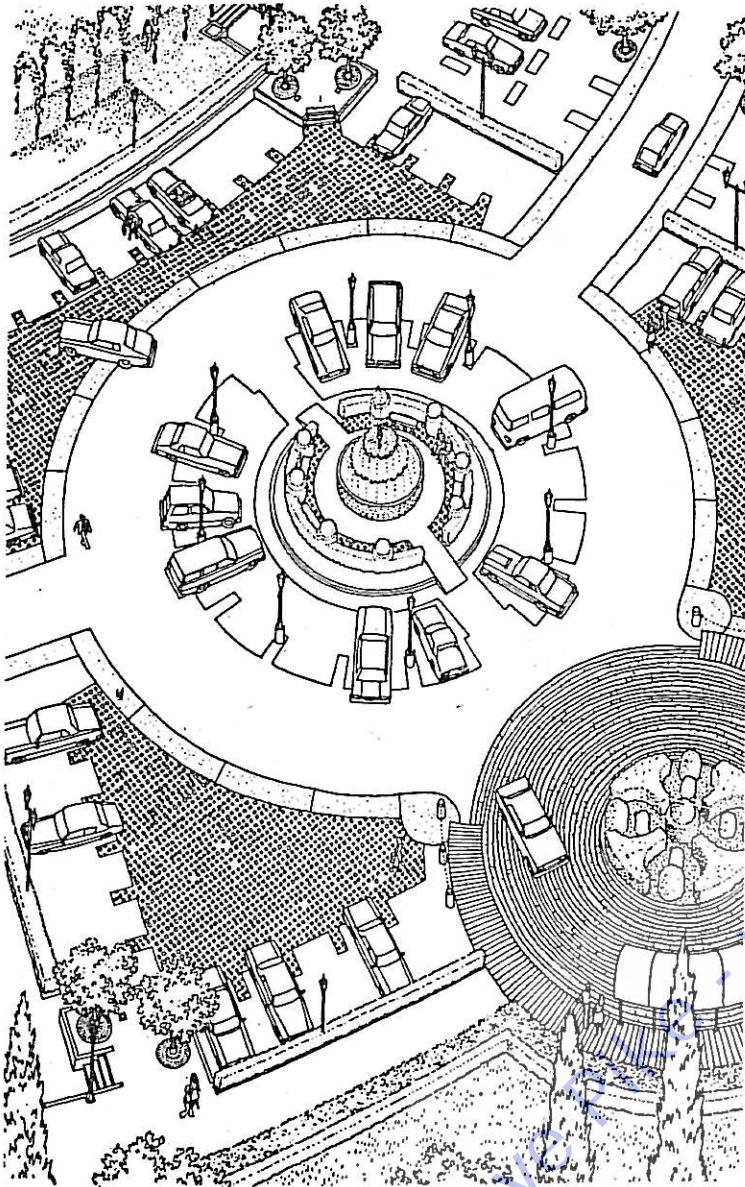
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An arbor-covered walkway surrounds the piazza's core, with the project's indoor amenities package. The glass-domed area in the background houses some of the recreation facilities.



The front of each building will have a canopy-covered entry. Note the free-shaped balconies.



This is an artist's conception of the parking fountain that will be placed in front of each of the five Rotonda buildings. The parking area, which is incorporated into the over-all piazza motif, will be paved with varying materials and textures.

Instead of the usual straight streets there will be traffic circles and curves around fountains and hedged lanes. Concrete and asphalt roadways in changing colors will have textured borders changing to gravel and grass.

Without those repetitive white or yellow lines, parking spaces will be "niches" carved out of the surface by differently colored surfaces. Even the arrangement of the cars will be so manipulated as to provide a geometric pattern that, when seen from above, will be part of the piazza design.

"We have recognized and accepted the challenge that parking, that necessary evil of code and convenience, need not be an ugly liability," says Cecchi. "Through creative design, we have instead made parking an attractive feature."

WILLIAMS SAYS HE subscribes to the philosophy that "an environment must be a living, growing, moving place for people."

That doesn't mean building a better mousetrap, the designer says. "It means building a better place to live, one that is substantially different from and superior to what has been built before. And that takes loving care and exquisite taste."

Rotonda is sited on 42 acres of mostly wooded land. Seven acres will be dedicated for roads; four will be occupied by the five buildings, and the remainder will be reserved for open space. The perimeter of the project will be left in its natural state — "wild," says Cecchi — broken only by a driving lane (for deliveries) which will circle the buildings and fencing surrounding the grounds.

Completely enclosed for privacy and security, the community will be accessible only through guarded gatehouses.

The buildings are limited to 90 feet in height. With 248 apartments, each will provide parking for 375 cars, 150 of them underground.

IN THE RENAISSANCE setting of Rotonda, residents will live in an atmosphere that rivals that of many resorts.

"The effectiveness of the Rotonda amenities," says Williams, "must be measured not only by their number, which equals or surpasses that of most other developments, but by the way they are incorporated into the life style of the community."

Indeed, it does not do justice to the planned \$2.5 million worth of amenities to simply list them here. The lake, for instance, is another one of those "necessary evils" Cecchi mentions that have been turned into assets, for it actually is the water-retention pond required by the county.

Elsewhere on the grounds will be formal gardens tied together by footpaths and jogging trails. Interspersed throughout will be picnic groves, gardening plots, gazebos and fountains.

Six lighted tennis courts will be grouped around the lake. There also will be a golf putting green and playground.

AMENITIES ARE ALSO visual highlights of the piazza. A large terrace and lighted promenades will overlook the outdoor swimming pool complex. And on each side will be circular, glass-enclosed conservatories.

At the center of the piazza, cradling the edge of the first building, will be an indoor complex, partly underground, including a health fa-

cility, an indoor pool with jacuzzi, cocktail and snack lounges, hobby workshop, billiards, table tennis, golf driving range, television and card rooms, convenience shops and four bowling alleys.

When presented visually and in its entirety, the amenity package is as dramatic as any. But it must be paid for, and in a condominium it is the owners who must share the cost.

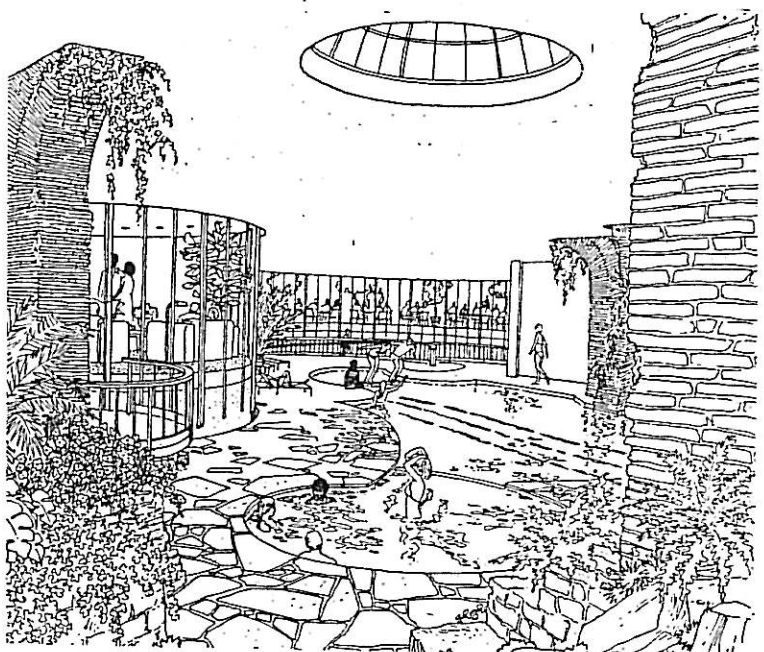
According to Cecchi, however, when split among the eventual 1,240 owners at the Rotonda, it will cost each about 13 cents a year per square foot of apartment space to operate the package, including the owner's share of the entire project's electric bill.

Cecchi maintains that this is little more than the cost of maintaining a single swimming pool in an average one-building condominium. And experience has shown, he says, that amenities such as these "generate an esprit de corps that makes the community a vibrant one."

THE ROTONDA WILL open for sale in a few weeks, with first occupancies expected in late 1977. The first stage of construction will include the main entrance and gatehouse that can be seen in teaser ads for the development, plus the sales pavilion with three furnished models, the first residential building and the bulk of the recreation facilities.

Nine types of floor plans will be offered, ranging in size from an 890-square-foot, one-bedroom apartment with one bath to a 1,685-square-foot, three-bedroom, two-bath unit. Prices will range from \$38,000 to \$79,000.

This is about \$46 per square foot, says Cecchi, slightly more than the \$44.50 per foot at the Landmark Watergate and about \$10 less than the \$55-\$60 at the Regency Club across Route 128.



An indoor pool is one of the features of the Rotonda's recreation complex.