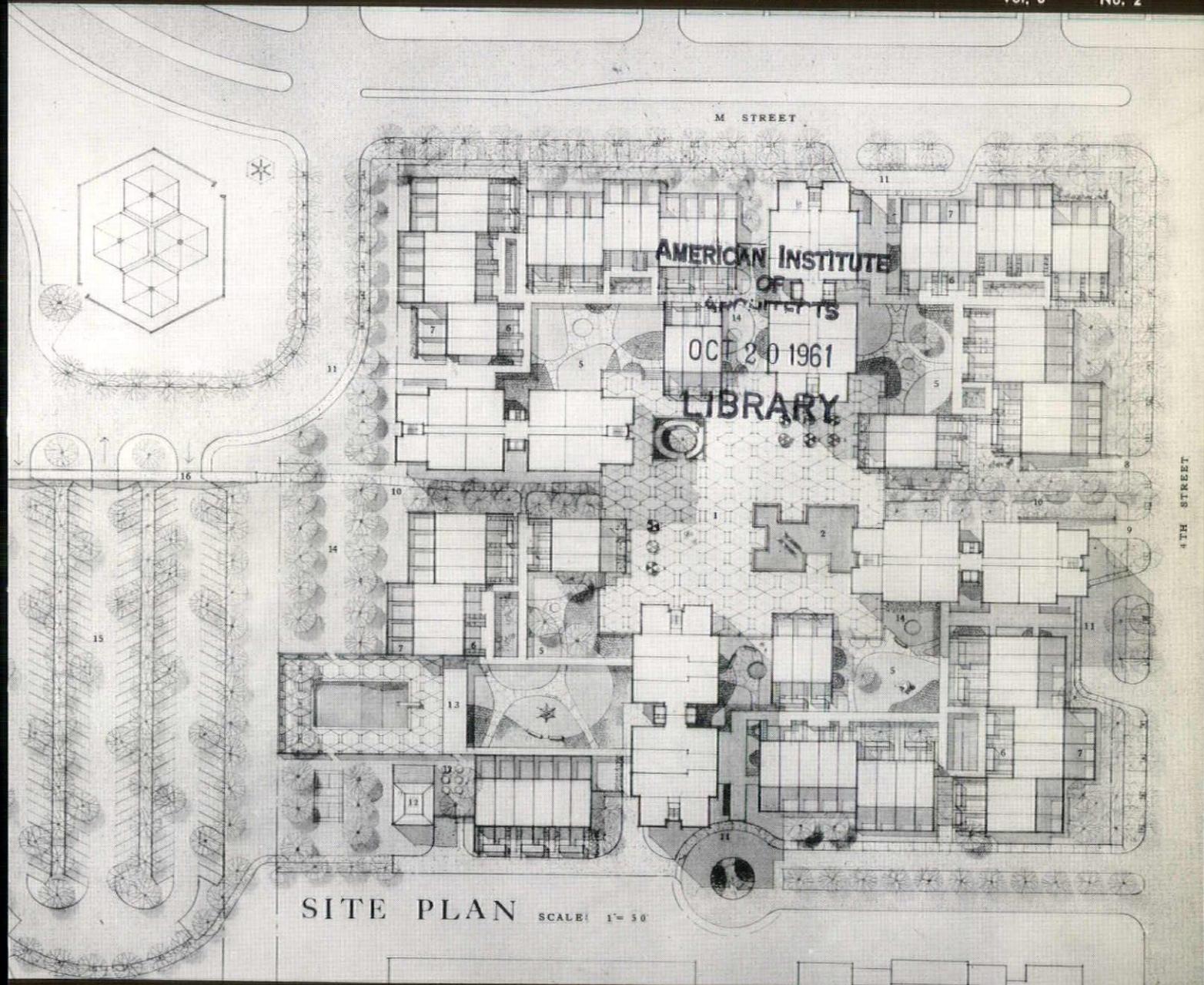


POTOMAC VALLEY ARCHITECT



Official Publication
Potomac Valley Chapter
of Maryland
OCTOBER
Vol. 6 No. 2



SITE PLAN SCALE: 1" = 50'

PROPOSED REDEVELOPMENT OF PARCEL 110a, S.W., WASHINGTON, D. C.

KEYES, LETHBRIDGE & CONDON, ARCHITECTS

- | | |
|---------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1 PLAZA | 9 GARAGE EXIT |
| 2 POOL-FOUNTAIN | 10 PEDESTRIAN WALK |
| 3 PEDESTRIAN RAMP | 11 ENTRANCE DRIVE & PARKING - LOADING |
| 4 DOWN TO GARAGE | 12 LAW HOUSE & GARDEN |
| 5 DRUG STORE REFRESHMENTS | 13 DRESSING CABANAS |
| 6 GARDEN COURTS | 14 PLAY AREAS |
| 7 ENTRANCE COURTS | 15 PARKING |
| 8 LIVING COURTS | 16 PEDESTRIAN OVERPASS |
| 9 GARAGE ENTRANCE | |

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OF MARYLAND

American Institute of Architects

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Published monthly September - June by the Potomac Valley Chapter of Maryland, American Institute of Architects, Room 304, 8055 13th Street, Silver Spring, Maryland. Entered as second class matter at the Silver Spring Post Office. Subscription price: 50c per copy, \$4.50 per year.

Unsolicited manuscripts and photographs will be returned only if accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope. Changes in advertising copy should be directed to: Mr. Joseph Dennison, 7705 Georgia Avenue, Washington 12, D. C.

LETTERS

Dear Editor:

This is in reply to your letter of 27 June and its attached copy of the June "Potomac Valley Architect." I left for Europe 20 June, and only very recently returned — hence the delay.

The press work and layout are excellent, and the material is good. But I feel that good presentation of good material is not quite enough, and that by putting three projects into one issue you are going soon to run out of it. The corollary to this is that unless there is background material, critical analysis, and some connection with the economic and political realities, these articles mean nothing.

I suppose it is not possible for a publication of the type of "The Potomac Valley Architect" to do a really forceful job of review and analysis, because no one wants it and it would hurt too many feelings. So let me again congratulate you on doing your job well within inevitable limitations.

Sincerely,

Henry S. Churchill, F.A.I.A., A.I.P.

NEXT REGULAR MEETING

12 Noon, Oct. 4

Brook Farm Restaurant

7101 Brookeville Rd., Chevy Chase, Md.

NOVEMBER MEETING

Nov. 1, 1961

MEANING IN ARCHITECTURE

by Roger Montgomery

Meaning in today's architecture largely eludes both the architect and his client, the public. But meaning is as crucial in architecture as in any art. Vitruvian canons of architectural value—commodity (usefulness), firmness (sound construction), and delight (aesthetic consequence)—fail to illuminate the quality of our building. Commodity, firmness and delight for what? For whom?

Architecture is an urban art, and its meaning lies in the city. Exploration of the relationship between cities and architectural meaning can provide valuable insights into the humane environment. This exploration is now a chief concern of avant-garde architects. Their findings will be significant to all of us.

Cities, palpable physical realities of brick and stone, are at once the sites of great historic civilizations and the highest expressions of their cultures. Significantly, civilizations and their chief cities often have the same name: Mycenae, Rome, Byzantium. In cities architecture shapes, embellishes and gives expression to the focal places and buildings, those physical points in space which have cultural meaning. In any stylistic idiom, the architectural significance of temples, palaces and meeting places is perceived against the ordered vernacular of non-focal buildings. In Athens or Florence, Kyoto or Williamsburg there is no mistaking the shrines and public buildings; selectivity and emphasis in a proper context of cultural values gives meaning to architecture in these cities. In contrast much of our problem is exposed in the valueless action which permits business offices to masquerade as governors' palaces, which sprouts the same hyperbolic-parabola shell concrete roof on church and gas station.

Profound meaning has never been an easy goal; in our time it may be beyond us. Compare with any conceivable effort of our age the thoroughly typical cultural event that produced Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris. Thousands of people labored for 150 years to build it. Men began it knowing well it could only be completed by their sons and grandsons. An entire community sacrificed for it at a level beyond belief in our affluent society. The architects, anonymous then and now, dedicated their highest skills to ordering and embellishing this church. Such human ef-

fort, love and high purpose gave Notre Dame architectural meaning that comes sharply through 600 years to the most honey-surfeited modern man.

Common, usually unconscious, agreement based on jointly held values selected those works which have become architectural art. Together the architect and his audience, participants in a shared world, built cities with great effort and great love. In a world such as ours, lacking this sense of community, significant architecture may be impossible. In architecture, as in other serious art, what meaning exists today is most often private meaning set in obscure terms behind protective ambiguities.

Grave problems of meaning and purpose are certainly not foreign to modern Western society. Architects are not alone in rejecting meaning in favor of a single-minded emphasis on technique. Possibly the strongest post-war American experimental architectural movement has been the kind of aesthetic technocracy expounded by Buckminster Fuller. Dozens of the brightest, most creative young architects have followed his siren song of "more performance per pound". In their enthusiasm they avoid asking, "performance for what?"

Other architects in our time take as basis for their art transitory notions of taste: refined taste, of course, but insubstantial matter upon which to build great architecture. Taste per se has no power sufficient to create important art; it is, for instance, the whole reality of the city and of 16th Century Japanese culture that created the Ise Shrine in Kyoto. If the new Seagram Building in New York has value, it is as the actual statement of the expressive potential of industrialized man, not as the taste of a whiskey merchant or his employees. This building is characteristic of the best architecture of our time; it surely transcends the meaningless idea of taste and the equally meaningless fetishism of technique for its own sake; but in its city, to the people of the city and the people who built it, it has no more than various, flickering, private meanings.

Is there a contemporary answer to meaning in architecture? Some avant-garde architects believe there is. For fifty years a small band of artist architects and architectural thinkers has been suggesting the answer must lie in the cities

(continued on page 10)



SITE PLAN FOR SOUTHWEST WASHINGTON REDEVELOPMENT



ENTRY 150

TIBER ISLAND GROUP,
SPONSORS

KEYES, LETHBRIDGE & CONDON,
ARCHITECTS

A water front area favored by one of Washington's earliest land developers for his own estate will again attract Washington residents when the development planned by the Tiber Island Corporation is completed. Since the days when Thomas Law lived here, the neighborhood has deteriorated into a blighted area now chosen by Redevelopment Land Agency for redevelopment. The Tiber Island Corporation is a group formed by Frederick W. Berens, Inc., Berens Real Estate Investment Corporation and W. C. and A. N. Miller Development Company for development of area 110a. Architects for the project are Keyes, Lethbridge and Condon. The award was the result of a design competition, the first conducted by Redevelopment Land Agency and one which

attracted entries from many parts of the country.

The architects' plans for the project, which is located on an 8½ acre site immediately south of M Street and adjacent to the water front, contains 384 elevator apartments and 86 row houses. The apartments are located in four 9-story towers with the ground level open underneath except for the entrance lobby. The buildings contain a variety of efficiencies, one and two bedroom apartments most of which have balconies with views of the water front. In the two elevator buildings facing the river, apartments have been planned to extend completely through the building on alternate floors. This skip-stop arrangement permits a maximum number of

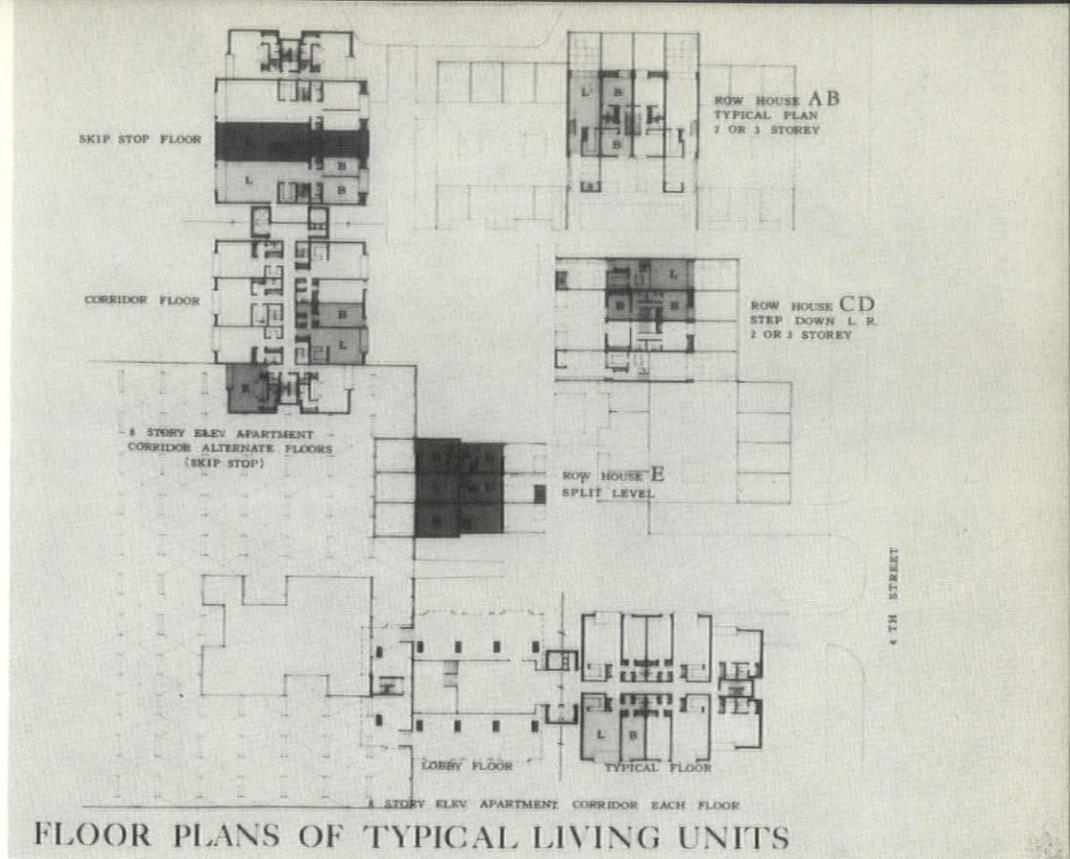
units facing the river.

The row houses are two and three story buildings with walled gardens and entrances. They are connected to the elevator buildings with covered walks and arranged around small landscaped courts which contrast with the larger paved square in the center of the project. Parking for 280 cars is located in a two-story underground garage in the center of the project which connects directly to the lower lobby of the apartment buildings. An open pedestrian ramp also connects the garage to the plaza above. This arrangement permits a complete separation of automotive and pedestrian traffic.

Thomas Law's house, still standing, has been incorporated into the architects' design.



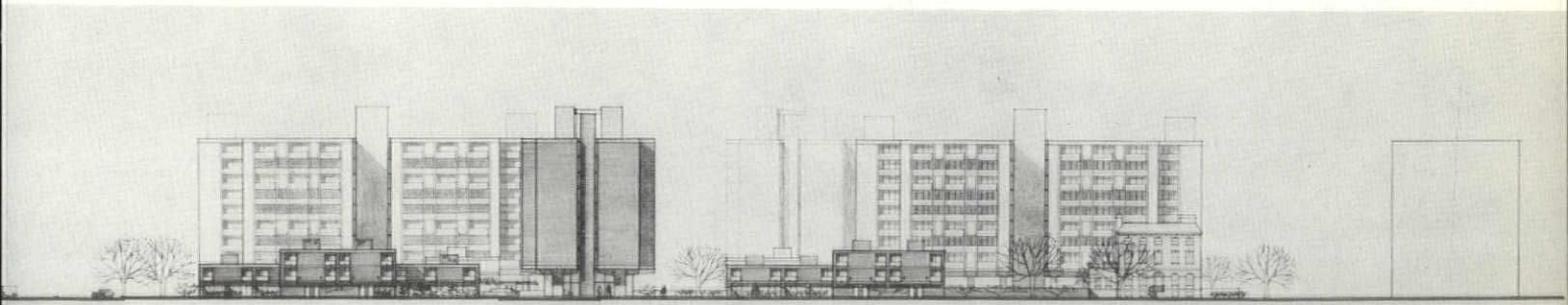
- ROW HOUSE A-B
- A TWO STOREY
- B THREE STOREY
- ROW HOUSE C-D
- C TWO STOREY
- D THREE STOREY
- ROW HOUSE E 1/2 STOREY



FLOOR PLANS OF TYPICAL LIVING UNITS



SOUTH ELEVATION



WEST ELEVATION



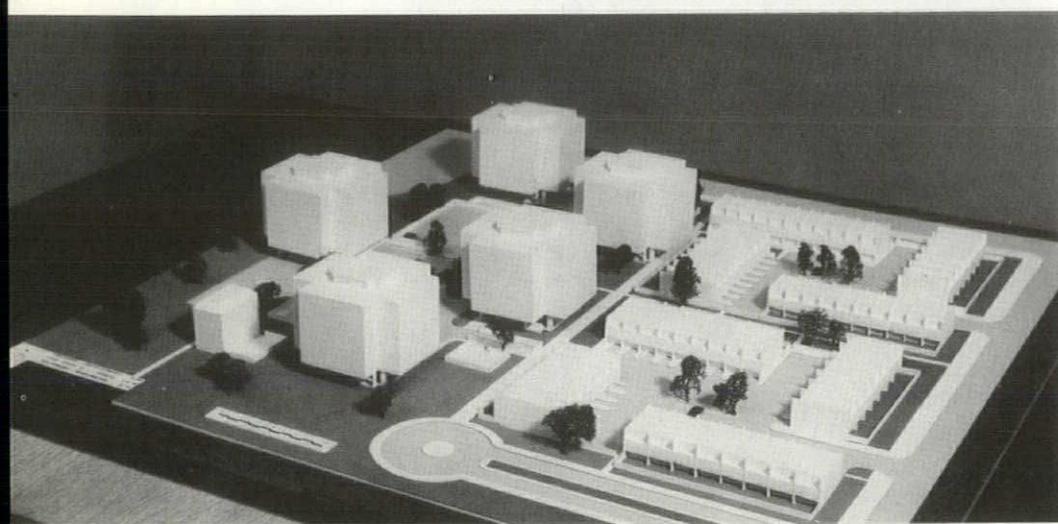
EAST-WEST SECTION



ENTRY 152

URBAN LAND CORPORATIO
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PEDERSEN & TILNEY,
ARCHITECTS



ENTRY 153

SAMCO INVESTMENTS,
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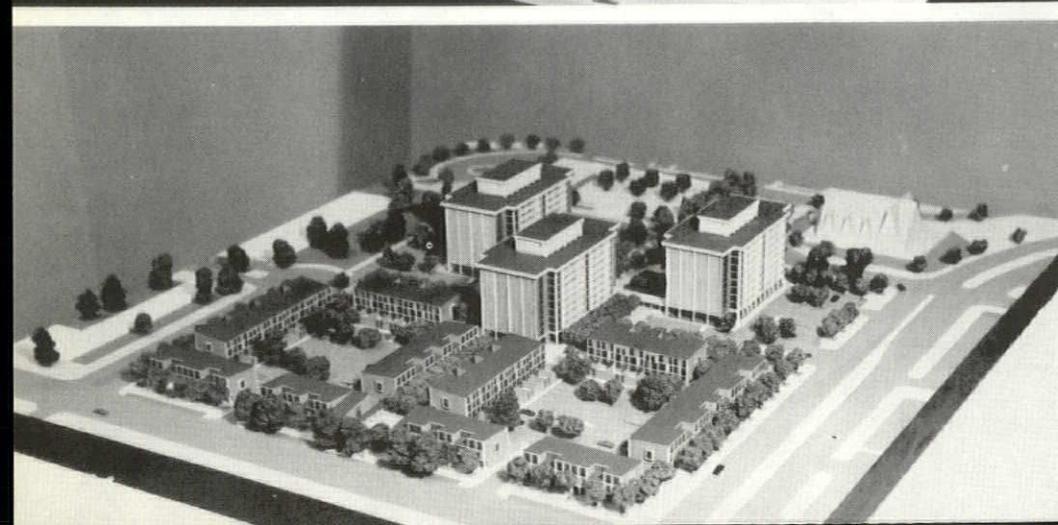
HARRY WEESE & ASSOCIAT
ARCHITECTS



ENTRY 157

FOX BROTHERS -
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COLLINS & KRONSTADT,
ARCHITECTS



ENTRY 160

CHANNEL PARK ASSOCIAT
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ASSOCIATES, ARCHITECTS

JOINT REPORT OF ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW PANEL

LOUIS JUSTEMENT, FAIA; JACOB L. CRANE, CARL KOCH, AIA; G. HOLMES PERKINS, FAIA; HIDEO SASAKI
CONSULTANTS TO THE REDEVELOPMENT LAND AGENCY, WASHINGTON, D. C.

The Redevelopment Land Agency is to be commended for its sincere and effective efforts in improving the living environment of Southwest Washington. The method of handling the competition for the disposal of a section of this area has been in large measure responsible for the large number of proposals submitted. The separation of the financial from the architectural and planning criteria in the judgment of the various entries is, in the opinion of the Panel, a successful and desirable innovation. The modest demands which the Agency made of the competitors in terms of models, drawings and reports, is most commendable in that the competitors were not unduly burdened financially by these requirements and yet the material submitted was in general quite adequate for making a well-informed and reasonable judgment.

On the basis of instructions to the Panel and as a result of discussions within the Panel, it was agreed that the principal emphasis should be placed upon the following points:

(1) the degree of success in relating the proposed development to its existing neighbors to the north and the proposed project to the south and to the Waterfront; the accessibility of the Waterfront to the pedestrian; and the maintenance of a clear view of the Waterfront from those apartments located inland from this project.

(2) the harmony and variety of the hierarchy of open spaces, the architectural quality of these spaces and the influence they would have on the living environment; the relationship of the nine (9) story slabs to similar ones on the adjoining properties and to the sense of enclosure and space which the placing of these apartments generated; the greatest emphasis of all, however, was placed upon those more intimate spaces for outdoor living at the ground level and their treatment in terms of shade, privacy, and general amenity.

(3) evidence in the architectural drawings and model of the likelihood of the developer making a significant architectural contribution to the redevelopment of the Southwest which would be in harmony with the high standards and aspirations of the Agency and which would furthermore be in harmony with the very important work already under

way; the directive of the Agency to the proposers states that one of the major criteria for evaluation would be "the quality of architectural design and the skill in over-all planning."

After an extensive discussion of the relative merits of the 11 submissions, the Panel reached unanimous agreement concerning the division of these submissions into two major groups. The 6 submissions in the first group were considered to be inadequate in some major respect, such as architectural design, overall planning or relationship to other projects in the renewal area.

The second group, consisting of submissions 150, 152, 153, 157 and 160, was then studied for the purpose of selecting the best design. After prolonged discussion, a vote was taken and this resulted in the unanimous choice of 150 for first place. In his individual comment, one member of the panel qualifies his endorsement of No. 150. One or two of the Panel members felt that this choice required a reasonably liberal interpretation of the greenway requirement—but no more so than would be required for several other of the best plans.

Submissions 152, 153, 157 and 160 were not placed in any preferential order because the Panel felt that each of these submissions required some major change before it could receive approval by a majority of the Panel and that these changes would require negotiations with the sponsor.

If submission 150 is not accepted, the Panel recommends that any award made to submissions 152, 153, 157 and 160 should be made subject to the condition that the sponsor is to make a re-submission of his proposal based upon the criticisms of the Panel and that such re-submission is to be approved by this Panel or some architectural review board.

Some of the more general comments are given below but each Panel member may supplement these by his own more detailed comments concerning Submissions 150, 152, 153, 157 and 160.

SUBMISSION 150

The Panel wishes to express its very strong preference for submission 150. We feel that we would be happy to see this design executed just the way it is—and that this is the only one of the sub-

missions that would be wholeheartedly accepted by a majority of the Panel. Most of us were attracted by the qualities of submission 150 from the start. This project stands scrutiny well and the more it is examined, the more one is convinced that it would be an attractive place to live in.

The Panel was most favorably impressed by the relationship of the main building masses with the approved projects to the north and south of the site and with the relationship to the waterfront. It would be quite simple, as suggested by the sponsor's small scale model to relate the proposed project to the east with submission 150. We suggest that if submission 150 is approved by RLA, the contestants for Site 111a be advised of this fact so that they may relate their planning to submission 150 if they deem it advisable.

From the point of view of compliance with the building code and zoning requirements, submission 150 would appear to involve no difficulty with respect to Zoning. This is most fortunate because this would avoid any lengthy delays resulting from an effort to secure variances in building code or zoning requirements.

The chief criticism made by members of the Panel in their discussions concerning submission 150 related to an apparent violation of the greenway requirement. It is felt, however, that the argument made by the sponsors is a valid one. At the most, we would suggest the omission of some of the row houses in the Southwest portion of the plan and the addition of this space to the greenway area.

The incorporation of the Law House is very attractively arranged; this is almost the only plan submitted of which this can be said. There is some doubt on the part of some Panel members concerning the merit of retaining the Law House. If it is to be retained, however, we all feel that it should not be left as an isolated 2-story house surrounded by high-rise apartments and that it is almost mandatory to relate it to other nearby 2-story structures.

SUBMISSION 152

The placing of practically all automobile parking below grade makes for a most acceptable handling of the row house

(continued on next page)

(report continued)

problem and the living arrangements within the row houses would be quite desirable.

The chief criticism of this plan is the fact that the uniformity of spacing of the three high-rise apartment buildings appears to be most monotonous. If the center building were turned north and south, as is done in submission 157, it would not be so long as to suffer from the disadvantages referred to in the criticism of submission 157. Alternatively the east-west orientation may be retained for all three buildings provided they are related to each other and to the row houses in a more interesting manner.

SUBMISSION 153

This submission, like submission 160, suffers from a most inadequate handling of the automobile parking problem.

The 5-high rise apartments constitute a welcome relief from the slab-type design which is used prevalingly throughout the Southwest urban renewal area. The problem of connecting them together to comply with technical zoning requirements is not solved and may prove difficult.

The row houses face a vast expanse of concrete on what should be their garden side or at least the side on which one might expect a minimum of private space. This would seem to be most unsatisfactory.

It will require a very liberal interpretation of the greenway requirement to accept this submission but one may consider that the plan provides equivalent areas of green space if the parking between the high-rise apartments is placed underground and if the present parking pavement is replaced by lawns and shrubbery.

Approval of this submission should only be considered IF a satisfactory method is found to omit the above-ground parking for the high-rise apartment AND IF more green space and privacy are provided for the row houses.

SUBMISSION 157

The arrangement of the row houses appears to be quite reasonable and the plan complies with the major program requirements concerning greenways. It would, however, require major adjustments to comply with zoning requirements.

The chief criticism of this submission was threefold: (1) its architectural design was uninspiring, (2) the north-south high-rise apartment blocked the river view

most unfortunately and (3) the distance between the ends of the center building and the sides of the north and south buildings was too small.

The Panel feels that criticisms (2) and (3) would be much alleviated if the length of the center building were reduced by two bays. We feel that this proposal should not be accepted unless this is done or unless some other means is found to overcome the panel's criticism.

SUBMISSION 160

The attractiveness of this design is entirely contingent on getting rid of most of the parking above ground, especially the following elements: (a) parking near the Law House on N Street, (b) parking near M Street.

The high-rise apartments are attractively designed but the Panel feels very strongly that the view towards the river should not be concealed by solid grillwork which is used on the end elevations of all buildings.

While there is an infringement on the greenway requirement by one of the high-rise apartments, it is felt that there is a technical "out" for this infringement by the open story at ground level, provided this open story is properly incorporated in the surrounding greenway area.

The Panel would not recommend approval of this submission unless the parking near the Law House on N Street is omitted so as to add this space to the greenway and unless more green space is provided for the row houses.

A general criticism of all the designs is that excessive crowding of buildings, especially the row houses, can only be relieved by resorting to expensive underground garages. One is led to wonder whether, within the permissible height limitations, it is wise to provide as many dwelling units as the program required.

In the course of discussions, the Panel raised a number of points which it feels should be brought to the attention of the Board. It recognizes that procedures for competitions of this kind are still in an early stage of development and that each Agency has made experiments which should be of value to others as well as themselves. The procedure followed in this case was in many ways a distinct advance on many of the most recent efforts in other cities, but there are still points which are susceptible of improvement. There was unanimity of opinion that the program was in most ways too restrictive and yet, possibly in one area not firm enough. There was

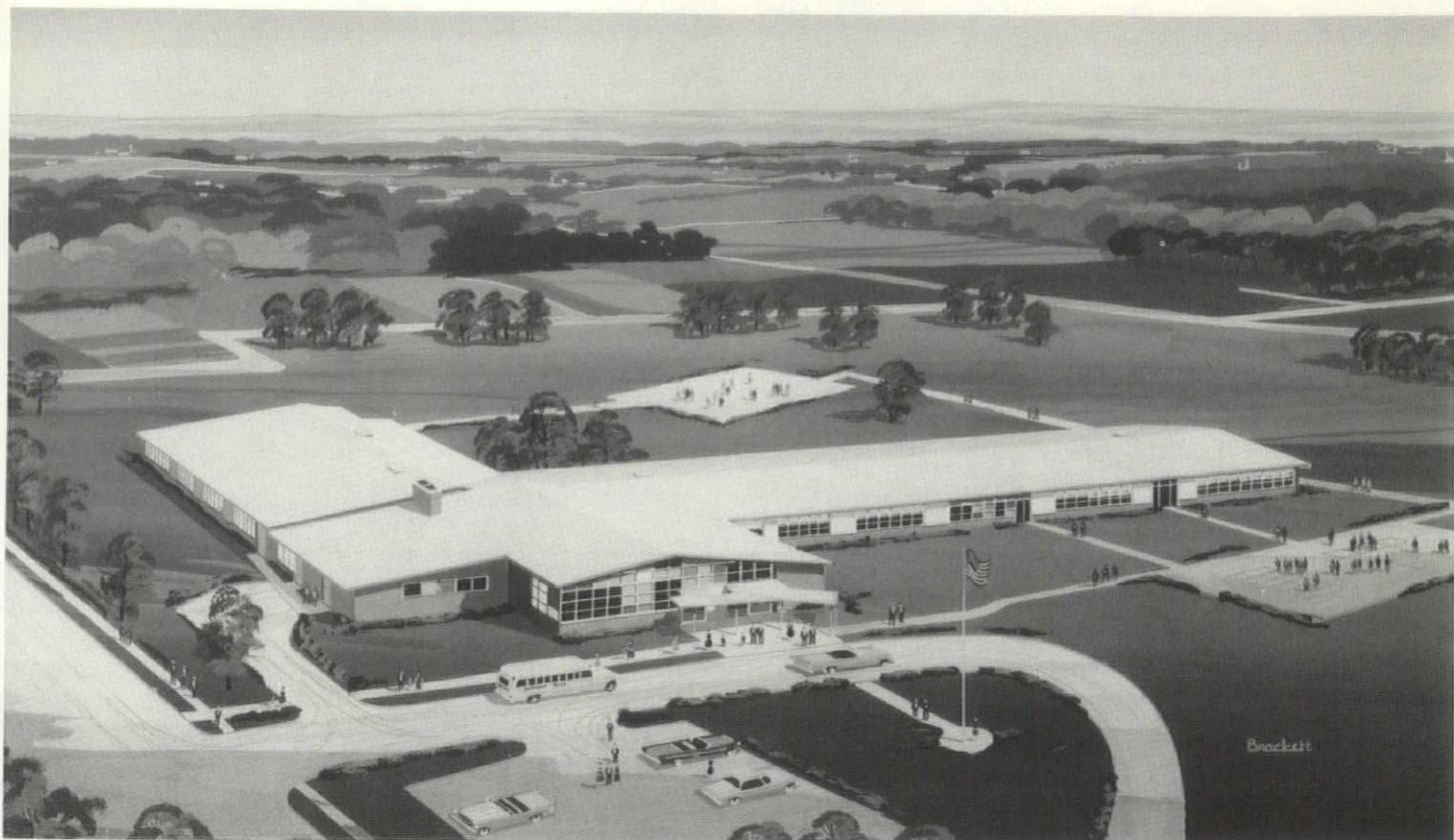
doubt expressed as to the wisdom of having written so tight a program around a site plan, which had not received very intensive study or criticism. The particular criticism was the location of the greenways which had a tendency to divide the area into small land segments which seriously handicapped the architects. If the greenways could have been described more clearly in terms of intent with their points in connection with the neighboring plots firmly fixed but with freedom of location within the site, the competitors might have been far less inhibited. The division of the site by a north and south greenway between the low and high rise buildings tended to limit the variety of schemes. Similarly the rigid shape of the park in the Southwest corner of the site caused great and unnecessary difficulties. It would have been far wiser to have firmly fixed the area of the park while giving the maximum freedom to the developer in terms of shape that this area might take.

An almost universal experience has been that during the course of negotiation with a successful competitor as well as during the development of final preliminaries and working drawings, that many changes from the winning scheme are quite properly made. Some means must therefore be established to review the changes so that the high level of architectural performance represented by the winning project can be maintained. The review of such changes is of necessity a continuing function of the staff, but it would be well to obtain the continuing review at key points in the development of the final design by an architectural review board similar to those which have been very successfully used by the Charles Center Development in Baltimore or by the Redevelopment Authority in Society Hill in Philadelphia.

The Panel was concerned by the height and location of the two-story garage which separates part of the site from the Waterfront. It would be well to give the most serious consideration to the means whereby the roof of this garage could be made an inseparable part of the greenway and park, by minimizing the changes in level between the park and the roof. The consideration should be given to lowering the garage to one-story and expanding the amount of land covered in order to maintain a clear view of the river from the park. In the opinion of the Panel, there is no advantage to roofing surface parking.

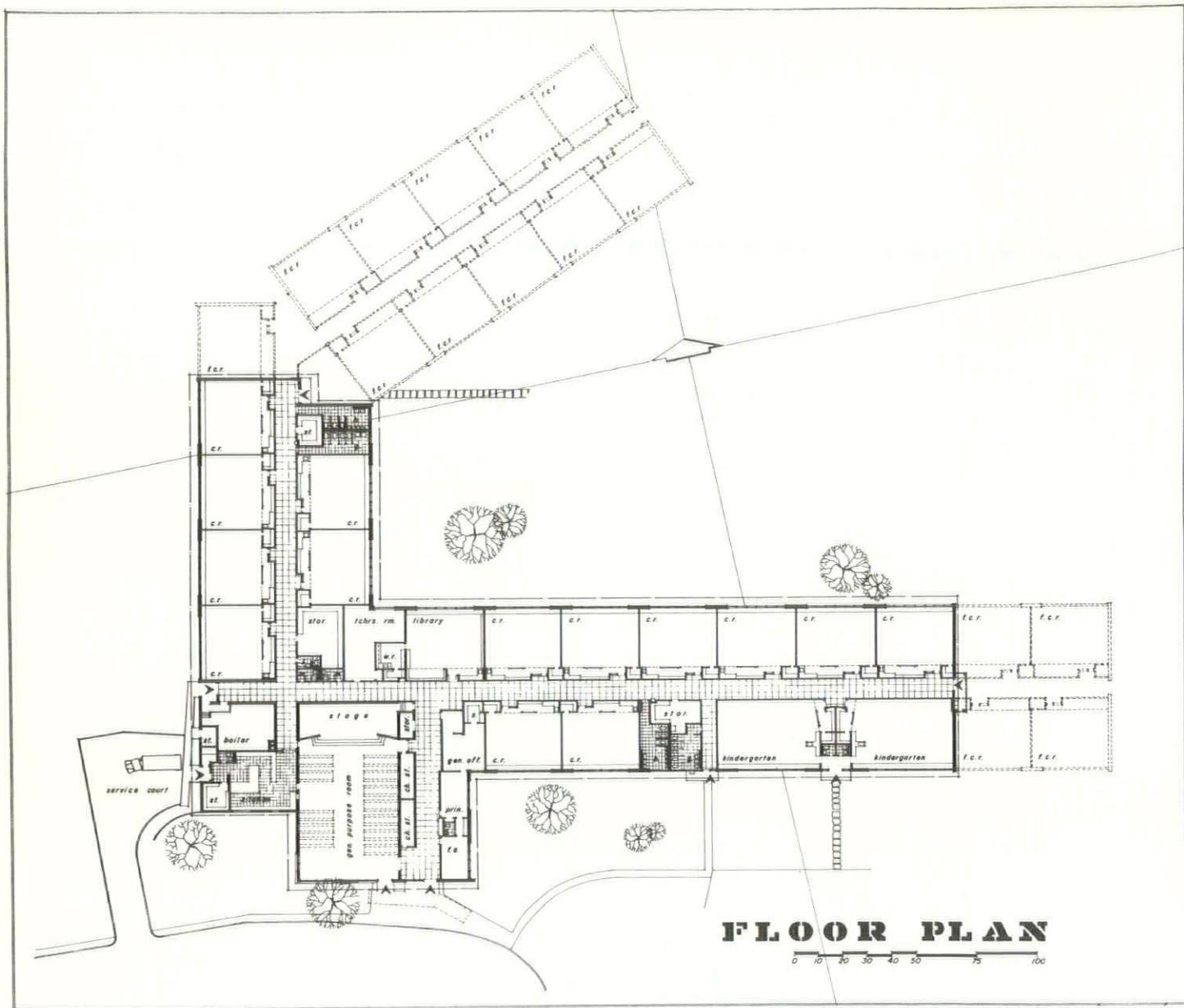
TRAVILAH ELEMENTARY SCHOOL,
MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND

STANLEY H. ARTHUR, ARCHITECT



The new Travilah Elementary School is set on a gently sloping 9.73 acre site in beautiful farm land of upper Montgomery County, Maryland. Materials are sand finish, rose red range brick, vertical V-joint wood siding, and exterior grade, waterproof plywood panels painted various colors as color accents to the building. The design is intended to fit into the rural area in as complimentary and attractive a manner as possible. Transportation for children is mainly by school bus.

The all-purpose room not only serves as an assembly area, cafeteria and gymnasium, but also serves as a community meeting hall for stage performances, square dancing, etc. With this in mind, this area including the kitchen and toilet facilities can be locked off from the rest of the school facilities. The library, workroom, teachers' facilities were all located adjacent to the administrative "core", centrally located within the building.



Travilah Elementary School

Architect: Stanley H. Arthur, A.I.A.

Grades: Elementary School, Kindergarten and grades 1 through 6.

Number of Students: 425 total.

Classroom Size: To accommodate a maximum of 30 students each.

Library: Classroom size approximately 800 sq. ft. of effective floor area, 275 linear feet of shelving—work room adjacent to Library.

Kitchen: Approximately 1000 sq. ft. to provide for quick service of hot lunches for entire school body.

Kindergartens: Two required, 1200 sq. ft. each with separate toilet facilities

and outside exit door and direct access of toilets to play area for summer recreational facilities.

All-purpose Room: 2400 sq. ft. of floor area with stage and inwall tables for use as cafeteria. This room is also equipped with climbing ropes, horizontal bars, and facilities for other gym activities. Maximum seating for 400 persons with direct access to outside. Toilets nearby for public use also.

Administration Facilities: General office, principal's office, first aid room, teachers' room and toilets.

Future addition of 12 classrooms.

Meaning in Architecture

(continued from inside front cover)

themselves, and the social and human values that form them. Among this group were Clarence Stein, Lewis Mumford and the St. Louisan, Henry Wright, who met in the artistic ferment of New York during the 1920's and began to explore this concept. In Europe, at about the same time, the "official" voice of avant-garde architecture was formed, the *Congres Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne*. Though, from the beginning, this group recognized that real architectural meaning lay in the culture of cities, its accomplished works were limited to individual buildings. Two years ago CIAM discovered, with almost suicidal consequences, that these buildings, supposed monuments of the modern movement, were, in fact, meaningless and dissociated from their urban context. New words, strange to architecture appeared: "habitat", "environment", "cluster", "growth and change", "human association". Today a revitalized avant-garde has pledged the art of CIAM to the reformulation not only of architecture, but of "the community in all its varying degrees of complexity".

Designs for the whole urban environment appear as the architect's intuitive and rational response to the present condition of man. The values of Western society—now so signally concerned with private gratification and status quo preservation—find their expression in the most formless, chaotic, squalid, anti-human and utterly graceless cities in all history. What is more natural than that the architect, by training and bent exceptionally responsive to his physical surroundings, focus his efforts on re-making environment? David Riesman has called them "the one small group in society" that has "continued to produce and stimulate thinking in the utopian tradition."

Architect designed utopias provide a noble list of attempts to give form and meaning to industrialized mass society within the humane traditions of Western man: Ebenezer Howard's "Garden City", Tony Garnier's "Cite Industrielle", le Corbusier's "La Ville Contemporaine", "La Ville Radieuse" and "Unite d'Habitation", Wright's "Broadacre City", Percival and Paul Goodman's "Comunitas", Bakema's "Alexander Polder", A. and P. Smithson's "Cluster City".

Architecture is thus expanded to become the design of the total environ-

ment. Little actual work has been realized, for utopia depends on revolutionary changes in human values and social purposes. The accomplished works, TVA, Stein's Radburn and Chatham Village, the Scandinavian towns of Vallingby and Saynatsalo, and precious little else, show the state of environmental design. Yet even this slight evidence shows artist-architects can build a meaningful, human environment of transcendent beauty, responsive to the multiplicity and the oneness of man and nature.

Can these intimations of the new environment be realized? Is the humane city a possibility? Can meaning in architecture be achieved? The answers depend upon moral questions, upon fundamental changes in our values. Specifically:

Will we commit enough of our wealth to build much better than we now do, to rebuild what we have built badly?

Can we unscramble land holding patterns so that building is at an appropriate scale, and so the realities of environment rather than the abstractions of titles govern design?

Will issues of environmental quality govern major policy decisions as they have under TVA?

Will we put respect for natural order and high social purpose above greed?

Civilized values, great cities and fine buildings are inevitably bound together, and bound to the way we answer these questions.

(This essay appeared on the Sunday art page of the St. Louis *Post-Dispatch* of April 5, 1959.)



Bas-relief Panel of "King Lear" at The Folger Shakespeare Library

Henry Clay Folger, Shakespeare student and collector of Shakespeare items, decided, some forty or more years ago, to make his collection available to the public. For this purpose he donated funds for the purchase of land and the erection of a building to house the exhibit. He wanted the building to be near the Capitol and the Congressional Library and spent nearly eight years acquiring the land he wanted, at the corner of Second and East Capitol Streets.

This delay was unfortunate for him, since because of it he did not live to see the building completed. He did see the full-size model of the bas-relief of King Lear, one of the panels to adorn the facade of the building when completed. This was shown him at the studio of its sculptor, John Gregory, and he was so greatly thrilled and excited about it that he confided to a friend later that he had difficulty in going to sleep that night.

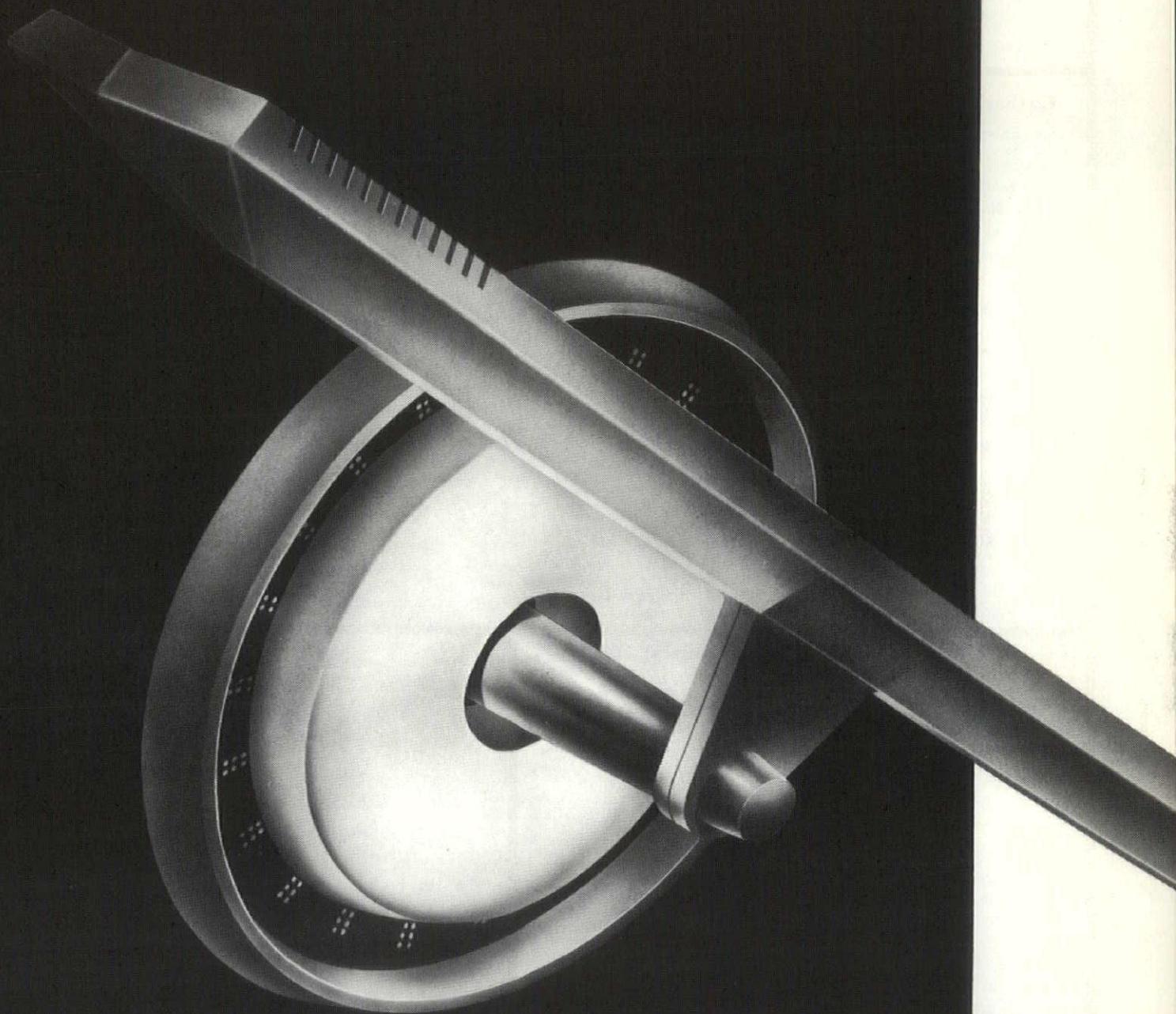
Edwin Bateman Morris FAIA

Chapter Office Opened

The Potomac Valley Chapter of Maryland of the American Institute of Architects now has an office—and an executive secretary. The office, located in the Bryan Building at 8055 Thirteenth Street, in Silver Spring, is presided over by Mrs. Robert Dobres (Amalie), now very busy getting everything properly organized. In addition to managing the chapter office, Mrs. Dobres serves as assistant to the editor of the Potomac Valley Architect, and upon her devolves all the trying details of getting out a monthly

paper. It is hoped that once the routine of the chapter's business is established, that activities can be expanded to include other useful services to members, such as an employment directory for draftsmen, and a speakers' bureau as well as public relations functions.

Architects having business with the chapter or items to contribute to the paper, may contact Mrs. Dobres. The phone number of the Executive Secretary is JUniper 8-1125.



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