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Architect Says Curves Will Give Watergate Project a 'Living Shape'

By LEE FLOB
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The curving lines of buildings in the Watergate complex in Foggy Bottom will give people the feeling of dynamic life by presenting a "living shape," their architects says.

By using reinforced concrete instead of rigid steel framework, the building shape will avoid orthodox cubic and rectangular shapes, he adds.

Luigi Moretti, the Italian architect for the complex, explained the philosophy behind his design at a special press conference yesterday. He flew to the United States from Rome to spend several days here reviewing his plans, and also will do some design work on two reinforced concrete skyscrapers under construction in Montreal.

The \$68 million Watergate complex is on a 10-acre site between Virginia and New Hampshire avenues and the Potomac River.

Compromise Effected

The controversial curvilinear lines of the design at first aroused opposition from some Washington architects and members of the Fine Arts Commission. After a protracted debate over details of the design, a compromise was worked out. Now construction for the first quarter of the complex is scheduled to start this fall.

Mr. Moretti said he carefully studied Washington before starting his design. Washington, he said, has three striking features—its monumental area, its living and business areas, and its park areas.

The Watergate site has its

back to the monumental area, characterized by the Mall and the Lincoln Memorial, and fronts on a park area, Mr. Moretti said.

The Watergate buildings are designed to let the park areas flow into the monumental areas by allowing pedestrians an open view of the river. The four large buildings in the complex will be on columns, allowing an almost unobstructed view of the waterfront, Mr. Moretti pointed out.

No Surface Parking

The design also calls for entombment of all cars in a three-layer underground garage. No automobiles will be permitted to park on the surface.

There will be several fountains in the complex, built at different levels so running water will trickle from one fountain pool to another.

The buildings will not interfere with the visual impact that tourists will receive from the Lincoln Memorial, because it is far enough away that visitors will be able to eye only one structure at a time, Mr. Moretti said.

The possibility that the Watergate complex might interfere with the architectural setting and impression for the Memorial has been a recurring theme in opposition to the design.

Another complaint was partly laid to rest at the conference. An organization called Protestants and Other Americans United for Separation of Church and State has attacked the special-use building regulations granted for the project. The organization has claimed that the Vatican has controlling interest in the Societa Generale Immobiliare of Rome, the financial catalyst for the complex.

Royce Ward, executive vice president of Watergate Improvements, Inc., the local coordinating organization for the complex, said the Vatican has only 10 per cent of the shares in the organization. The Vatican has widely dispersed investments, including stock in many prominent American firms, Mr. Ward added.

When finished, the Watergate complex will have a 331-unit residential hotel, three

apartment buildings with 1,265 units, 17 villas and a 300,000-square-foot office building.

Harold Lewis, president of RiverView Realty Corp., said his agency will start negotiating sales for the units this fall.