

months, with public school construction totaling \$2,294 million and private school building \$430 million.

Along with office buildings, stores, and hospitals, one of the brightest spots all year has been apartment building, which continues a dramatic upswing after a disappointing 1960 record. In the first nine months, apartment construction rose 9.8 per cent, totaling \$2,329 million, and continuing strength should put it in a fine position for the 16 per cent rise expected in 1962.

Accompanying the generally strong trend of building construction has been a relatively steady cost picture. In the 12 months ending last August, construction costs over all, as measured by the Department of Commerce index, rose only 1.4 per cent, and E. H. Boeckh's index of costs for commercial and factory buildings showed the same increase. Boeckh's apartment, hotel, and office building index rose only slightly more, by 1.8 per cent in that period. Costs in heavy construction seem to be rising much faster, according to most indexes, than are costs for buildings.

Costs of building materials are also showing reassuring stability through August. Structural steel shapes, for instance, showed no price rise at all for the year, and plumbing equipment costs, which had been rising faster than average costs, gained only 1.5 per cent.

High rise, yes—low, no

Although there has been much enthusiasm for the high quality of Mies van der Rohe's design for Detroit's Lafayette Park urban renewal apartments (FORUM, May '60), the project has weathered severe economic storms since it opened less than two years ago. While the 22-story apartment tower is fully rented, and has been almost from the start, the town houses have been faring badly. By last month only 48 of the 186 town houses had been sold, another 48 were vacant, and the owners of the project were renting out the remaining 90 houses.

Detroit observers believe the project's economic ills stem from problems of the total neighborhood rather than the project's own design. Schools are still a key problem and this makes it especially difficult to attract families with young children.

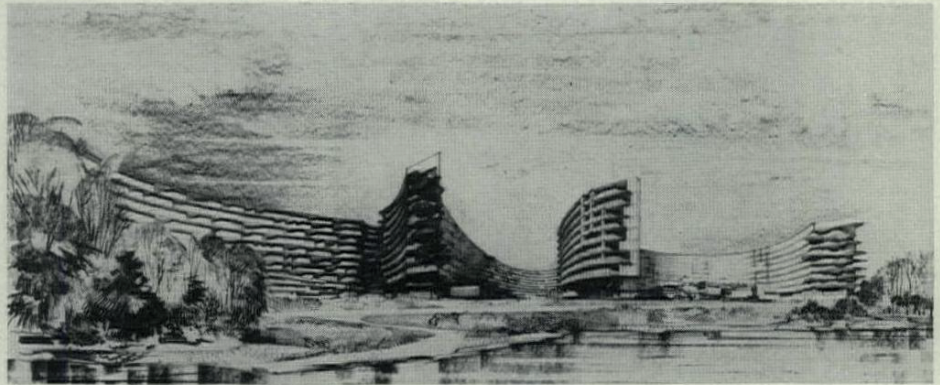
Actually, the owners were forced to rent as many town houses as possible to keep their FHA mortgage from falling into jeopardy. But now a local FHA official says: "After a shaky start, they seem to be rolling along well. I see no immediate danger of FHA getting in there. If we do get in, it will be

because they asked us. . . . At the moment, we are doing everything we can to help make it a success. We have offered to grant them a mortgage increase but so far they haven't asked for one."

While the town houses languish, rents

are being upped (\$3 to \$5 per month) in the high-rise apartments, where rentals were initially relatively low to lure new tenants into the striking glass-walled tower. And plans are underway for two more Mies-designed towers.

continued on page 10



Antipasto on the Potomac

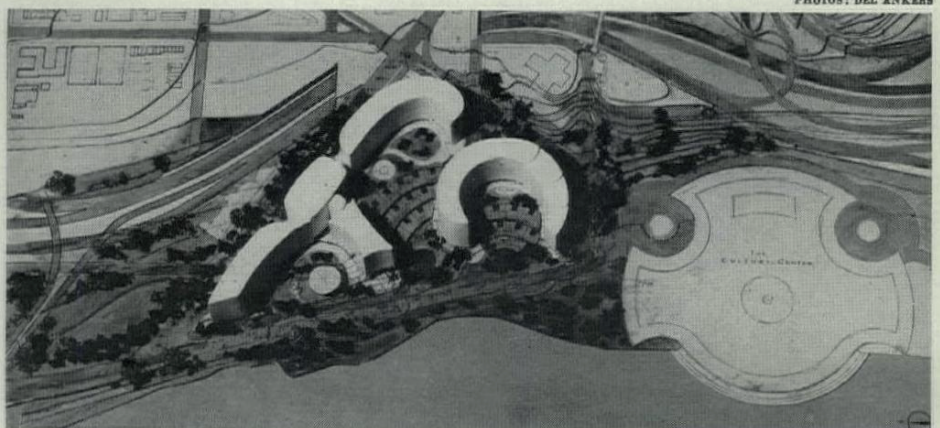
A startling, free-form design by Rome Architect Luigi Moretti was unveiled last month for a huge \$45 million residential-commercial project to be built in Washington, D. C., next to the projected U. S. Cultural Center (by Architect Edward Durell Stone) on the banks of the Potomac River. The project, called the Watergate Development, will be completely privately financed. Its 10-acre site is already owned by a group headed by the *Società Generale Immobiliare di Roma*, a leading Italian investment corporation, which has developed projects in Montreal and is building a new hotel in Rome to be leased to Hilton Hotels.

The project will have three apartment buildings, with a total of 1,400 units. The first apartment building will be the C-shaped one nearest the Cultural Center (picture below). There will also be a residential hotel with 350 units (building at center of project) which is connected in a rough V-form to an office building with 200,000 square

feet fronting on Virginia Avenue. The third building, nearest the intersection of Virginia and New Hampshire Avenues will also be an apartment building.

Three levels of underground parking will provide space for 1,250 cars and there will also be community shopping facilities including a restaurant located in the hotel. A limited number of villas will be scattered about through the heavily landscaped site. The high-rise buildings have been designed to conform to the triangular site and to the gentle undulations of the Potomac shore. The curved façades will be broken by irregularly shaped balconies and loggias. Professor Moretti's associate architect on the project is Milton Fischer of Corning, Moore, Elmore & Fischer of Washington.

The most immediate obstacle to the project is zoning, which presently would not permit an office structure on the site. A variance will also have to be granted to permit closing off two streets, and to permit the buildings to rise to 130 feet, some 40 feet higher than present zoning allows.



PHOTOS: DEL ANKER