

# PROFILES: AWARD WINNING COMMERCIAL LANDSCAPES

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**Federal National Mortgage Association** retains the formality and grandeur of earlier times in a modern environment.



**Hix Green Buick** was the ultimate challenge of naturalizing parking areas, acres of steel, and separate sales and service facilities.

Prior to high interest rates, landscape architects and contractors had a difficult time convincing businesses to invest sufficiently in professional landscaping. Obviously, it is tougher now. Nevertheless, a few good salesmen with creative designs were able to preserve award winning landscapes for commercial sites in the past year.

The American Association of Nurserymen and the Associated Landscape Contractors of America recognized these determined landscape businessmen in 1981. We present a few of the winners to show that the art persists despite the economy.

These winners got a special prize in addition to their association awards. Most of them also received a handshake from First Lady Nancy Reagan and presidential advisor Ed Meese in Washington, D.C. in September. If you share the Reagan platform that business must be healthy to have a healthy nation, and if you associate the importance of a beautiful landscape at the White House with the image of American business, then you must also support commercial landscaping across the United States. The excuse "we can't afford plants to make our office pretty" is pure shortsightedness. Image carries a company farther than the few thousand dollars more on the bottom line because the janitor stuck in a few maples and planted annual ryegrass or redtop around a commercial building. Commercial landscaping has not been credited with any particular percentage in property value like residential landscaping has, but the value is definitely there.

We invite you to read the following job descriptions and challenges. I guarantee you and any of your customers the companies that paid for the following projects are very pleased with their investment. And the contractors and architects have a little better feeling of citizenship after being a White House guest.

## **Federal National Mortgage**

The new Federal National Mortgage Association headquar-

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ters in Washington, D.C., is a combination of old and new. The architectural concept was to complement the original design by utilizing the same materials, i.e. handmade brick, slate roof, plant varieties, but to lessen the ornate formality by simplifying the new building and planting design.

Existing specimen plant material had to be moved as contractors required specific areas of the site for their work. In many cases, both with transplanted and new plant material, supplementary drainage was installed because of the density of clay soil on the site.

The gardens are located one story below grade in the interior of the complex where existing and new buildings join. Because these gardens are completely enclosed by building walls and inaccessible by crane, the only option was to bring the soil and plant materials through the ground level of the addition.

The area between the addition and the multi-level parking garage is a series of terraced gardens. The brickwork is intricate and similar in style to that used in colonial Williamsburg with its curved and graceful design. The difficulty in working in areas such as this is potential damage to the brickwork.

The exterior of the site was graded and sodded to provide the required effect of full, green carpet. The planting in the front of the building retains the formal effect of the existing planting but as one walks to the sides and to the back of the complex, the planting becomes much more natural and blends gracefully into the wooded areas.

Although the site retains its formality and grandeur, there is the simple, attractive quality of a forest glade.

The contractor was Chapel Valley Landscape Co., Woodbine, MD. The landscape architect was EDAW, Alexandria, VA.

**Hix Green Buick**

The site of the Hix Green Buick Co. in Atlanta, GA, had no existing trees and was very flat and monotonous. The dealership was designed into three separate buildings. Planting islands were



**Marriott Corporation Headquarters** tied a modern office building to an existing park-like business complex.

created to break the expanse of asphalt and parked cars. Architectural mounds were constructed and planted with large trees and shrubs to soften these areas.

Outside the sales showroom topsoil was brought in to construct a mound. Plantings of large River Birch, dwarf Burfordi Holly, Pampas Grass and hybrid Daylilies were used for an interesting color and texture combination. Low shrubs are used to maintain the scale and balance of the one-story building. Masses of variegated Liriope were planted to incorporate color into the landscape.

Small garden areas were designed that could be viewed through the windows of the adjacent sales office. Featured are a dwarf Japanese Maple, weeping Yaupon Holly, and various other plants which provide color con-

trast year round. Another garden which can also be viewed from the showroom has a variety of textures and colors featuring Crepe Myrtle, variegated Aucuba and Mahonia Bealei.

Mounding was effectively used to soften the expanse of parking areas in front of the service building. Large Cedrus Deodara, Crepe Myrtle, Weeping Willow and River Birch were planted on these berms. Small mounded areas were constructed and planted with Blue Rug Juniper, dwarf Yaupon Holly and hybrid Daylilies to help soften the harsh walk leading to the service building.

The used car building was landscaped with large Cedrus Deodara. Magnolia provided excellent evergreen screening and had to be installed by a large crane.

The plants were selected espe-

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The Memorex Corporation Headquarters utilized sunken nature areas for employees to get together next to a building designed for efficiency.



**Nationwide Plaza** met the desire of a national company of rural origin to make an urban setting informal and restful.



**The Stanford Shopping Center** project gave a 25-year-old shopping center new life and attraction to California shoppers.

cially for their tonal values, creating a color variation necessary for year-round interest.

The landscape contractor and architect was Green Brothers Landscape Co., Smyrna, Georgia.

#### **Marriott Corporation**

The new Marriott Corp. headquarters and parking area was designed to be integrated into an existing park-like business complex in Bethesda, MD. The effective use of planting in bermed parking medians; along streets and pedestrian walkways; at entrances and around the building; in the garden and pond area; and on the 4th and 6th floor terraces achieved this integration.

The landscaping included not only an enormous quantity of plantings but also specialized contouring and placement of plant material in the garden area; planting, including crownvetch, on steeply bermed slopes that screen the parking from Interstate 270; and sodding and seeding.

The planting of the 4th and 6th floor terraces was the most challenging part of the project. These two floors jut out from the rest of the building. The plans called for the planting of 7,083 *Cotoneasters* in planters to create a hanging garden effect. The first problem was locating that number of *cotoneasters*. The 760 planters had to be lifted by crane into place. A specially designed, crane-mounted, self dumping hopper was used to lift the gravel, pre-mixed planting soil and mulch for the planters.

The landscaping blended the building into the park-like surroundings without sacrificing its architectural uniqueness.

The contractor was Chapel Valley Landscape Co., Woodbine, MD, and the landscape architect was Meade Palmer, Warrenton, VA.

#### **Memorex Corporation**

The Memorex Corp. headquarters is one of the many major industrial/research facilities in Santa Clara County, CA. Major objectives of the landscape project were to create an environment impressive as a corporate symbol, and to create a working environment,

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focused upon landscape spaces, conducive to communications, relaxation and efficiency. It was considered vital that the buildings and landscape be designed in concert.

The first goal was to set the crisp, international-style building into a contrasting, free form landscape. This was accomplished by large earth forms at the base of the building. Trees were massed in irregular groupings rather than in formal arrangements. Dark conifers provided contrast with the white facade of the building and Birch repeated the white vertical elements of the arcades around the courtyard. The landscape forms were further emphasized by shaping the parking areas into small bays to control and reduce the visual impact.

The second goal was to give visual prominence to the Employee Center, entrance fountain, and plant materials. The courtyard was placed four feet below the arcaded walkways with surrounding mounds rising three feet above the walkway. The fountain and courtyard were surrounded by Rhododendron, Pieris and Camellia which provide colorful contrast to the white building when in bloom.

Employee terraces were set into the earth, repeating the bowl effect of the entrance courtyard. Large stones, irregular pavements, broad steps, and angular concrete seatwells were used to emphasize intimacy of scale and closeness to landscape. Seasonal flowers add color to the spaces.

Plant materials were selected to match the constraints of soil quality and prevailing afternoon winds. Trees and shrubs on the perimeter of the site were selected for drought tolerance and for natural forms which would develop into a "fuzzy" enframement of the complex. The landscape adjacent to the buildings is neat with turfgrass dominating. Shrubs, primarily *Cotoneaster dammeri*, *Coprosma kirkii*, and *Raphiolepis* sp. were placed to give form to steep slopes, to emphasize heights of earth forms, and to provide seasonal variety in flower and color.

The contractor was the late Rudolf Watson of Watson and Associates, and the landscape archi-

tect was Royston, Hanamoto, Beck & Abey of Mill Valley, CA.

#### **Nationwide Plaza**

It was the expressed desire of Nationwide Insurance that their new home office plaza in Columbus, OH, be informal in character and reminiscent of the company's rural origin. The 1½-acre plaza was to include a meandering water course and pools, lawn areas for lounging, and ample opportunity for sitting.

The design for the Plaza is a hillside with a spring and resultant stream with waterfalls and pools. Wooded knolls and open glades are blended with functional walkways and plaza spaces.

Access ways are provided along the Tower and Pavilion while low walls separate the planted area from the spray of road salts along major roads. Terrace walls were designed for sitting, relieved at points with overhanging plant material. Inside this plaza frame, the composition is more rustic. Walls take on the character of exposed ledge and are constructed of natural split-faced granite. Near the top of the Plaza, a spring flows over the granite ledge into a pool. A stream leads from the pool and spills over a second outcrop of granite and into a large pool at the base of the hill adjacent to the main entrance.

While the urban environment places limitations on the choice of plant material, the composition of plantings is intended to be natural. Evergreen knolls frame the plaza on each side. A grove of birches punctuate the inside corner of the plaza, while a variety of shade trees and flowering trees surround the central lawn area. Along the water course, weeping shrubs and vines soften the rock edges. A variety of plants, including perennials, emphasize the stream course and weeping cherry trees overhang the waterfall at the base of the hill.

The landscape contractor was Site Improvement Co., Canal Winchester, OH. The landscape architect was Saski Associates, Inc., Watertown, MA.

#### **Stanford Shopping Center**

Mounting competition from regional shopping centers motivated

Stanford University to revitalize its 25-year-old shopping center in California.

The basic revitalization plan was to create a sequence of spaces. Free-standing, semi-enclosed arched porticos served as the main design device. The arch was both the architectural and landscape design symbol throughout the project.

Circular planters and circular brick paving patterns were introduced in close architectural relationship to the pipe columns which connected paving patterns with vertical architectural expression.

Visitors ramble in and out of covered glass arcades along varying widths of the mall, around rusticated modern columns, landscaping, fountains, hanging baskets, flowering pots, vine-colored trellises, sitting areas, and through large columns of pavilion display spaces. A vibrant environment was created from existing trees which were the foundation for the mall planter locations.

The landscape contractor was A & J Shooter, Inc., Mountain View, CA. The landscape architect was Fong & LaRocca Associates, San Francisco, CA.

#### **Summary**

The move away from formal garden areas to natural overall settings is complete. Cold open parking lots and noisy concrete walkways are giving way to rolling landscapes and greenery both outside and inside. The use of low-maintenance, local plant material is also firmly established for exterior landscapes. The growing awareness of energy conservation will push the inclusion of screening and insulating plant material.

Customers have a choice for shopping areas and will pick the better landscaped, more comfortable setting. Employees too are being considered more in corporate design plans as open landscape plans necessitate use of interior plants and remote settings outdoors for privacy.

The interior landscape has arrived and strengthened the investment in exterior landscaping. In December, award-winning interior landscapes will be featured. **WTT**