

## **Round Rammed Earth Buildings of Cedar Rock –Inspirations**

### **Renaissance Place and The Heritage Towers:**

These rammed earth living complexes were inspired by the ancient Chinese Hakka design of SW Fujian Province, and re-configured to meet the esthetic temperament of the West. These unique structures are ideal for Cedar Rock’s location, and especially beneficial for those dealing with environmentally-induced health conditions.



**Chinese Hakka Tulou Houses of Yongding County, Fujian Province**

The traditional Chinese Hakka “Tulou” (rammed earth houses), are large -scale residential buildings that have provided a safe place for clansmen to live compactly for over 600 years. The rammed earth and wood construction served a defensive

function in ancient times, when the local Hakka had to flee from disturbances caused by war in the Central Plains. Many of these blockhouse-typed buildings were erected to protect the villagers against conflicts with the original residents. (In the 2200-odd-square-kilometer land of Yongding, there are more than twenty thousand Tulou houses distributed, among which, almost five thousand are large scale ones with more than three layers.)

There are more than twenty construction forms, in which the most common ones are round and square.

Huge Tulou houses can accommodate dozens of families of a large clan and enable the members to enjoy the happiness of several generations living together.

With their special historical background, and almost perfect construction techniques and functions, the Hakka's Tulou are still regarded highly in aesthetic value, right down to their moldings.

Another, more modern inspiration for the round residential rammed earth buildings in Cedar Rock, is that of the late Greek architect, Nikos Despotidis.

His three round condominium complex is one of the most recognized building in Athens, Greece. From the time that the complex was erected (1973- 1974), it was considered a groundbreaking feat in structural design and engineered technology - especially in wake of the significant 6.7Msz earthquake that hit Athens in February 1981, when sixteen people were killed and more than 400 injured.

Despite the impression created by it's round configuration, each building is very efficient and comfortable, with the useful space being maximized. The complex consists of three interlocked circles that are connected with a central functional core (set of stairs, elevators).



**The Condominiums of Kifissias Avenue, Athens Greece by Nikos Despotidis**

## **The Phoenix Studios:**

This round rammed earth educational building is dedicated to the Greek architect, Takis Zenetos, whose futuristic and modern concepts of the 1960's and 1970's, inspired this designer to revitalize his visionary ideas and incorporate her own, with the hope that this educational facility will continue to inspire students to learn, globally.



**The Round School in Athens, Greece**

Not unlike his foreign counterparts, N.Miliutin, Le Corbusier, Frank Lloyd Wright and K. Tange, Takis Zenetos devised a plan for creating progressive versatile communities. The most ground-breaking aspect in Zenetos' concept was the explicit emphasis on user-friendly electronics that was going to –even at that time - change the course of the human race.

In 1969, Zenetos embarked on the construction of one of the most charismatic and

impressive buildings that is still in use today as it was intended: the "Round School." This futuristic architectural wonder was designed as "a unified space that would be able to constantly evolve and even after some time, assume a new form."

After studying existing education systems around the world, and examining the relevant international literature, Zenetos concluded that in order to meet global standards, and create a uniform space that was conducive to learning, it would be essential to discard the linear arrangements that dominated spaces in schools, and have partitions removed.

Zenetos envisioned a school with an electronic command center at its core and recognized its importance as a medium of education. "The school, he argued, is the heart of the community."

Classrooms were designed with facilities that would support educational television on a local, national and international level, and have closed circuit televisions with wired terminals for broadcasting educational programs, even directly from homes.

He also designed big rooms with a magnifying projector of the type Cybernox Telebeam (very high tech at the time) for screening so that the entire school could watch, and terminals would be connected with electronic libraries and other audiovisual information material. His conception abolished the teacher-centric structure of education and the class models of the time, and he adopted more synergistic forms, with students being diffused in the entire building. For this reason, his school building was circular, and courts, internal.

Takis Zenetos stood for an architectural style that worked for the benefit of the people, residents, and workers - not just for the financial stakeholders interested in profit. He kept inspiring people with his ground-breaking nature and his charisma. Sadly, as there were only a few individuals who fully realized the breadth of his vision, his plans never became actualized on a global scale, and tragically, after the murder of his nephew in 1974, he became reclusive and ended his own life in 1978.

By combining elements from both ancient and modern sources, this designer envisions residents and visitors in Cedar Rock will have the opportunity to experience healthier and safer living and working environments.