

Exclusively from THE OKLAHOMAN  See our daily edition on Oklahoman.com.

Tiffany House high-rise reopens as retro Oklahoma City apartments

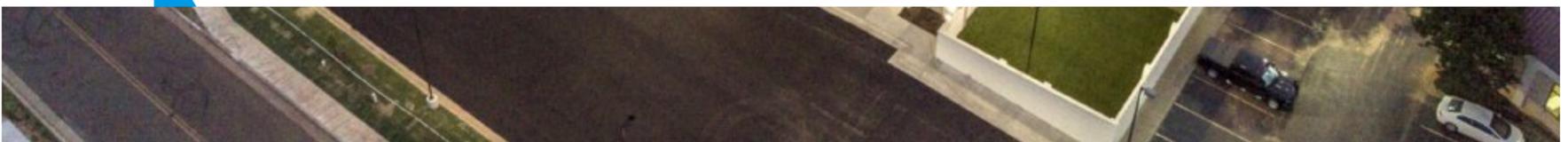
BY HANNAH PIKE BUSINESS WRITER HPIKE@OKLAHOMAN.COM

Published: Sun, July 1, 2018 5:00 AM



newsok 

87°



The Tiffany Retro Apartments high-rise is viewable from the Northwest Expressway. Its neon, rooftop sign is original. [Photo by David Morris, The Oklahoman]

The story behind the name of the Tiffany House is a mystery, but after a developer “fell in love” with the 1960s high-rise apartment building, its future is not.

Developer Glenn Ferguson said that he could not stop looking at the 12-story building, originally constructed in 1966, every time he came to Oklahoma City. He finally purchased it in 2008 for \$5.8 million, and after a \$25 million makeover, it reopened last week as Tiffany Retro Apartments.

“I was just so impressed with how unique it was, its location,” said Ferguson, president of Ferguson Property Group, which owns, develops and manages apartments from Tennessee to Oklahoma. “But it was very clear that it really needed to be updated. ... I have been very happy to bring it back to life.”

The building, about 7 miles northwest of downtown, was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 2016. It is one of only three buildings in Oklahoma City that was originally built as a high-rise apartment complex.

It was about 100,000 square feet when Ferguson purchased it, but with a new add-on that includes “podium units” and a platform pool, it is now about 130,000 square feet.

“For people who have lived in Oklahoma City for a long time, I think it’s really satisfying to see a building not be torn down, especially something that’s kind of an iconic landmark that so many people have memories of,” Ferguson said.

Historic and hip

Bob Blackburn, executive director of the Oklahoma Historical Society, said the building is historically significant because it represents rapid urban flight after World War II as highways were extended, developers moved outward and downtown declined.

“In my opinion, Tiffany Apartments, Lakeview Towers (now Mid-Town Apartments) and United Founder’s Tower are the symbols of this transition,” Blackburn said.

Additionally, he said midcentury architectural style is very rare in Oklahoma City because unlike in Tulsa, there were not enough major oil companies that survived the downturn in domestic drilling in the 1950s and 1960s.

“So what we have, we need to recognize as being significant, adding texture to the built environment and representing time and place,” Blackburn said. “That’s kind of what we do at the National Register, we recognize buildings for the stories they can tell.”

The Tiffany House’s original, neon rooftop “Tiffany” sign has been restored and is viewable for drivers on the Northwest Expressway. The canopy and robin egg blue tile at the entrance are also original.

And though the interior was gutted, it has been renovated in a midcentury style like when it was built. Ferguson said the units, though most are unfurnished, maintain the style with midcentury style colors, shapes and “orbit” lighting fixtures.

“One of the things we really tried to focus on was really preserving the original identity of the building,” Ferguson said.

Modern amenities

Though the style of the building is midcentury, many of its features are modern or even futuristic.

It uses a passive, geothermal heating and air conditioning system and a softened, “instant hot” style water system, which will save water and be more efficient. It also has electric vehicle charging stations and a bicycle storage and repair area.

“Part of what we did was to try and not only make it very convenient for everybody, but also to be green, to be energy efficient and to also be very low utility expenses,” Ferguson said.

The apartments are also pet-friendly, with Ferguson being a self-described dog-lover. There will be a dog park next to the building and a pet washing station in the basement.

Other amenities include an automated package delivery system similar to Amazon lockers, a movie theater room, fitness center and yoga studio, conference room where residents can hold meetings, elevated pool, resident lounge with a demonstration kitchen, laundry pickup and delivery system, 24-hour concierge and enhanced security.

“I think that they (repurposed buildings like the Tiffany House) bring so much joy to the community,” said Cyndy Hoenig, public relations officer for the development. “I know that it updates the community, and it updates their property value.”

Rooms for rent

Rent starts at \$1,100 per month, and 12-month leases are available. Move-in begins Aug. 1, and tours will start mid-July. There are 150 one and two-bedroom units with several floor plan options, and about 25 percent have already been reserved.

As far as the name “Tiffany” goes, Ferguson cannot figure it out. The building was originally developed by Paul E. Plowman, who Ferguson said his team reached out to in 2016 to learn more about the building’s history.

“We said, ‘Why’d you name it Tiffany?’ and he goes, ‘I can’t remember.’

“So that’s still a mystery.”