

## The River Oaks Condominiums Versailles In The Sky?

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A garden sitting area, with landscape design by McDugald-Steele



The motor court

What do The Beverly Hills Hotel, The Surrey in NYC and the St. Regis in Aspen have in common? Interior architect Lauren Rottet. Having completed several \$100 million-plus condo projects around the U.S., this new building will be her first in Houston. Her firm, Rottet Studio, along with a dream team comprised of architectural firm EDI International and landscape architect McDugald-Steele, have taken on the transformation of the building formerly referred to as The River Oaks Apartments on Westheimer between Edloe and Buffalo Speedway.

Built in the early '60s, the landmark Miesian-style building was originally designed by Cameron Fairchild. And with help from New York-based Arel Capital, which purchased it in September of last year, the 17-floor mid-century gem will be transformed into The River Oaks — a luxury condominium with 84 large residences, starting at \$875,000. The building, which was in bad repair, is being taken down to its frame and completely rebuilt, says Richard Leibovitch, Arel Capital managing partner. The original footprint of the three-acre property will be retained, along with its classic modern feel. Construction started last December, and the building will be ready for move-in Fall 2016.

It's early in the design phase, but Rottet promises that it will “possess that spirit of minimalism” where the outside is brought inside, with floor-to-ceiling windows that look straight through the

lobby to the back terrace. True to the period and Miesian precepts, conceptual design ideas include slabs of limestone and book-matched wood walls, marble floors with metal inlay and antiques mixed with fine modern art in the lobby.



River Oaks pool

Another unique aspect of the site will be the sitting gardens surrounding the private pools (each penthouse has the option to have one), as well as terraced gardens to insulate the building and expansive, stately grounds. “Residences will include two 9,000-plus-square-foot two-story penthouses with unobstructed panoramic views, says Leibovitch. “Because of the location of the building, which is surrounded by St. John’s School and St. Luke’s United Methodist Church, the view will likely remain unobstructed.” The second floor will contain six two-level garden residences with double-height ceilings and elevated gardens. There will also be a dog park and dog grooming spa. Naturally, the building will also have the kind of luxury amenities expected at this level, such as a state-of-the-art fitness center, yoga and massage rooms, concierge and valet services, 24-hour doorman, outdoor and catering kitchens and overnight guest suites.

Jacob Sudhoff of Sudhoff Companies is handling the sales and marketing. And it has been rumored that the sales center will open as early as next month (May 2015). But if plans for the interior finish-out are any indication, the building just may sell itself. The River Oaks might be one of the sleekest, most well-considered residential high-rises in years.