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## LUXURY LIVING

# A Midcentury River Oaks Property Has Been Reimagined Into Posh Luxury Condos

Look inside luxury Westheimer high-rise The River Oaks.

By [Abby Ledoux](#) • 6/21/2018 at 8:00am



Image: [Courtesy of The River Oaks](#)

**AN ICONIC 1960S BUILDING** in the heart of River Oaks was finally revealed on June 20, more than three years after construction began in 2014 on extensive renovations to transform the property into 79 luxury condo units. Aptly named The River Oaks, the 18-story high-rise at 3433 Westheimer between Edloe and Buffalo Speedway has the trappings of a modern luxury property while still retaining its midcentury charm.

“We chose to, rather than bulldoze the building and build some large building, we kept the original bones,” said managing partner Richard Leibovitch of Arel Capital, the project’s developer. “We took this midcentury modern treasure and really brought it into the 21st century. That’s pretty unique.”

Originally designed by Houston architect Cameron Fairchild in the early ’60s, the building—previously known as The River Oaks Apartments—became known for its exclusive, rental-only units and Miesian architecture. In reimagining the space for condo living, developers expanded floor plans and thereby reduced the number of original residences, adding two penthouse floors to the now 250,000-square-foot building on nearly three acres of land sandwiched between St. John’s School, St. Luke’s Methodist Church, and River Oaks District.

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In the condo market, where views reign supreme, those are particularly good neighbors to have. “One of the curiosities of Houston is you can pretty much build whatever you want anywhere,” Leibovitch said. “The beauty of this building is, given who are neighbors are ... we really have protected views, and that’s very special.”

That can be most appreciated from the 19th floor, where construction continues on the top two penthouse suites—a total of 14,000 square-feet. The vistas are stunning and sweeping, 360-degree panoramic views of the entire city—uptown, downtown, and everything in between—through floor-to-ceiling glass. Two more penthouse suites on the floor below are both sold; the top, unfinished units remain available for around \$7.5 million a pop. Originally, developers planned to market the top floor as one residence for a single buyer. At 14,000 square-feet, that would have made the apartment “the

largest and most expensive in Texas,” said Jacob Sudhoff, founder of real estate and marketing group Sudhoff Properties.

Split between east and west, the two units (with 14-foot ceilings and 1,700-square-foot outdoor terraces) are still among the priciest in the city, but higher costs reflect the luxury market trend of more discerning buyers willing to pay for finer finishes and closer attention to detail. “We’re seeing Houstonians ante up with their pocketbooks,” Sudhoff said.

In The River Oaks, even the “standard” features are top notch: Calcutta gold marble, wine refrigerators, and pristine hardwood floors are found in even the most basic units, which start at \$1.8 million. Residents also have access to amenities typical of fine hotels, like a 24-hour, state-of-the-art fitness center (with a Peloton bike, mind you); a separate Pilates and yoga studio and a massage room, all with on-call professionals; overnight guest suites; a pet park and dedicated grooming spa; a library; valet parking; two resort-style pools; and a catering kitchen. Full-time concierge service means, “if you go away and you want fresh flowers when you get back,” Leibovitch said, “you just make one call.”

The building’s history reveals itself in the design choices, curated by Lauren Rottet of Rottet Studio. Designers adhered to modernist principles, extending themes both in- and outside, prioritizing green space and transparency, and ensuring no wall ever touched the perimeter. There are whimsical touches throughout the communal spaces, and furniture is carefully mixed between contemporary and vintage, including latter pieces from [Lynn Goode](#).

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Beyond staying true to the midcentury modern roots, the aesthetic was a response to Rottet’s consideration of the question: What is Houston’s style? “It’s a city of contrast,” she said. “It’s crude oil and magnolias; it’s yellow diamonds and rust.”

Front of mind were the people who’d be living in The River Oaks, Rottet said, a refined bunch—and many of them art collectors. To that end, art is a major focal point throughout the space rather than an afterthought. Weingarten Art Group consulted on the pieces, which include both international and local names. “People know what they’re looking at,” Rottet said.

About half of the The River Oaks' units are spoken for, and at least five owners have already moved in. Buyers range from young professionals to empty-nesters, the latter making up the biggest demographic slice. By and large, they seek a lock-and-leave lifestyle that permits travel, downsizing, and a greater sense of security—no need to keep up the big house, largely unused once the children moved out, or prepare for the next hurricane.

“It’s amazing to see the difference in the quality of their lives,” Sudhoff said, noting that, beyond the convenience and security, condo-style living also offers an easier way to foster relationships for the “young empty-nesters” who previously centered their lives around their children. The River Oaks residents, who gather for celebratory cocktail parties when new buyers close on their units, have already begun fraternizing, starting dinner clubs, and even traveling together, he said. “This building has been able to inspire new relationships and new friendships and a new chapter in people’s lives. These [type of] buildings become vertical communities.”

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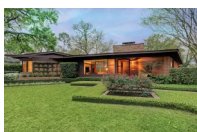
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