

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. **Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).**

1. Name of Property

historic name Sophian Plaza
other names/site number Sophian Plaza Apartments

2. Location

street & number 1500 South Frisco Avenue West

NA
NA

 not for publication
city or town Tulsa vicinity
state Oklahoma code OK county Tulsa 143 zip code 74119

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,
I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.
In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:
 national statewide local

Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official Date

Title State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:
 entered in the National Register determined eligible for the National Register
 determined not eligible for the National Register removed from the National Register
 other (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

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5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply.)

Category of Property
(Check only **one** box.)

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

- private
- public - Local
- public - State
- public - Federal

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Contributing	Noncontributing	
2	0	buildings
0	0	district
0	0	site
2	0	structure
0	0	object
4	0	Total

Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

NA

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

NA

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)

Domestic: multiple dwelling

Secondary Structure: Garage

Recreation and Culture: Outdoor Recreation

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)

Domestic: multiple dwelling

Secondary Structure: Garage

Recreation and Culture: Outdoor Recreation

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions.)

Late 19th and 20th Century Revivals:

Italian Renaissance

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: Concrete

walls: Brick; pre-cast concrete

roof: Terra Cotta Tile

Other: _____

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Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance of the property. Explain contributing and noncontributing resources if necessary. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, setting, size, and significant features.)

Summary Paragraph

Location and Setting

The Sophian Plaza, completed in 1926 and located at 1500 South Frisco Avenue West, is a unique luxury high-rise apartment building in Tulsa, Oklahoma. It is located on an irregularly-shaped parcel of land extending from Frisco Avenue West to just west of Guthrie Avenue West and from South 15th Street to South 16th Street in the River Ford Addition. This location is approximately five blocks south of downtown Tulsa and two blocks east of the Arkansas River. The Sophian Plaza is sited at a 45-degree angle to the intersection of Fifteenth Street and Frisco Avenue to take advantage of prevailing breezes. A semi-circular driveway provides a connection between Fifteenth Street and Frisco Avenue and the front entry of the building. When constructed, the Tulsa Street Railway (TSR) trolley line ended at Fifteenth and Frisco.¹

The neighborhood is a mix of single-family residential houses and apartment complexes. Neighborhood houses have large street setbacks, and driveway curb cuts that lead to mostly single-car garages. Apartment complexes have adjacent surface parking lots. Street trees are predominantly mature shade trees. The Sophian Plaza grounds were designed by a well-known landscape architecture firm and are professionally maintained. A green belt near the west property line is designated as a "Backyard Wildlife Habitat" by the National Wildlife Federation.

The Italian Renaissance style 144' x 93' building is eight stories in height.² Six units (A through F) are on each floor with 48 units in the building varying in size from three to seven rooms each. A full basement supports the boiler room, laundry, storage units, board meeting room/office, maintenance manager's office, and mailroom. A partially earth-sheltered garage is located at the northwest portion of the property accessible from Fifteenth Street near Guthrie Avenue. Tennis courts and a swimming pool are located west and south of the building, respectively. A surface parking lot is located north of the building parallel to Fifteenth Street.

Narrative Description

The Kansas City-based architecture firm of Shepard and Wisner designed the Sophian Plaza in Kansas City (1922-23) for Harry J. Sophian, a New Yorker who moved to Kansas City in 1916. At that time, Sophian "had gained a reputation as an authority on deluxe apartment construction."³ Manhattan Construction Company (headquartered in Kansas City, but with a branch office in Muskogee, Oklahoma) erected the building just after the completion of the Southwest Main Dial Building (5th & Cincinnati) and at the same time as the Aaronson Building (6th & Boulder).⁴ The cost of construction in Tulsa was estimated to be in excess of \$1,000,000.⁵

The mottled pattern light and dark red brick and pre-cast concrete (Algonite) clad building is a modified "H" plan with a flat roof. On the main (east) and rear elevations, projecting wings flank a recessed center portion. The H-plan is modified because the rear's center portion is more deeply recessed between the projecting wings than the front's and the wings are wider. The building is high-style Italian Renaissance with a distinct three-part appearance: the rusticated cast concrete ground floor wing and entrance, the brick-clad seven stories above, and a decorative roof-line with accents, especially on the wings where the parapet wall steps to a centered angle, and distinctive cast concrete trim.⁶ The wing parapet walls are further decorated with cast concrete ornamentation including crests and machicolation typical of Italian Renaissance architecture.⁷ The center building portion parapet is more sedate in appearance but has three faux roof line

¹ Allison Chandler and Stephen D. Maguire, When Oklahoma Took the Trolley (Glendale, California: Interurbans, 1980) 130.

² These dimensions are shown on architectural drawings created by Shepard and Wisner, Architects and Engineers, Kansas City, Missouri (1925) entitled The Sophian Plaza Apartment House Building/First Floor Plan.

³ John Brooks Walton, One Hundred More Historic Tulsa Homes (Tulsa, Oklahoma: HCE Publications, 2001) 102.

⁴ "Sophian Plaza Rapidly Being Completed," The Tulsa Tribune 21 March 1926: D8.

⁵ "Sophian Plaza Is Nearing Completion," The Tulsa Tribune 25 April 1926: D1.

⁶ "Sophian Plaza Shown Sunday," The Tulsa World 22 August 1926, Section Three.

⁷ McAlester, A Field Guide to American Houses (New York, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1996). 55, 357

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balustrades defined by contrasting light and dark brick, their cast concrete concrete sills with crests beneath. The B bay parapet wall projects up and lends it additional emphasis. The center portion parapet wall is finished with cast concrete coping. A wide projecting belt course between the rusticated cast concrete and the upper portion of the building has an acanthus leaf frieze with dentils above. Above the belt course is a row of soldier bricks that encircles all four facades. A second row of soldier bricks is above the first at the middle of the second floor windows and it also encircles all elevations except a portion of the west.

Windows on the first floor are the most elaborate. They are arched multi-pane double-hungs, finished at the top with keys, cast concrete rope detail, and angled cast concrete over the arches. These arched windows rest on cast concrete faux balustrades in a framed frieze. Unless otherwise noted, all other building windows are wood double-hungs, multi-pane in the upper sash, and single pane in the lower; all have white wood frames, all sills are cast concrete although second floor windows rest on a belt course rather than sills. The alterations section has more information on windows.

Front (East) Elevation (Photos 1-4)

Center Portion (between wings)

The front elevation of the central portion of the building is symmetrical, with three bays in an A-B-A configuration and it is 81' wide. On floor five, there are balconettes at each window in both the A and B bays. All windows in the center portion are finished at the lintel with a row of dark-red soldier bricks. Note that all cast concrete sills on each floor are in the same horizontal plane. This means that smaller windows' sills are slip brick with small reveal and then an additional cast concrete sill beneath. The line of cast concrete sills across the elevation on floors two through eight add horizontal emphasis to the building's height.

The center B bay is narrower than the A bays, and projects slightly in the elevation. The B bay has triple windows in a single opening on floors two through eight with a central large window flanked by narrower ones. The windows are separated by pilasters with a base and capital. Reminiscent of Palladian windows, they only lack the arch above the main window. Only one multi-pane window on the seventh floor in this B bay has been replaced with a single pane. The windows are distinctively emphasized by their white wood frames which are surrounded first by soldier bricks and then headers of dark red color. The entry is finished with the rusticated cast concrete surround that is the same as on the first floor wings, and the ground floor of this bay has the entrance into the building lobby. The entry is an extended area supported by cast concrete columns covered by a closed gable roof of red tile over a secondary hip roof. The paired entry doors are glazed wood panels.

The two A bays are both 31'6" wide but the windows are not exactly the same configuration because of the arrangement of the units within. The left A bay has a window pattern on floors two through seven of four groups of paired windows, with the two middle pairs smaller. Six upper sashes are single panes in the left A bay. The right A bay has a window pattern on floors two through seven of one pair of windows, and four singles the same size as the pair, and two additional single windows of different sizes. Only one upper sash has a window replacement for an air conditioner in the right A bay.

The ground floor has window patterns in the two A bays that are the same: paired windows and two single smaller windows.

Wings

The front elevation of the two wings also have an A-B-A bay pattern, although the B bays in each wing are mirrors of each other. All A bays have a single window on floors two through eight. The center B bay is unique because the eighth floor is integral to the decorative details of the building. Floor eight has an oversize arched window opening that projects nearly into the parapet wall under the overhead angle. It is composed of cast concrete with double arches over what appears to be two windows separated by pilasters with bases and columns. However, only one window is real, the other is faux with a blind panel (accurate from historic photos). The window's white frame is accented by the surround of dark red sailor bricks finished with headers.

The B bay is decorative, and the window pattern on floors two through seven is a single window in a large rectangle of dark red soldiers and header bricks. The rectangle has four divisions, one with the window. The dark red brick gives the decorative areas visual distinction to the floors that might otherwise seem flat. The first floor has two arched windows and a small window in a frame. The small first floor window has a similar configuration as the eighth floor with the appearance

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of paired windows, but the opening is blank.⁸ The two A bays have raised brick courses every six rows from the second to the eighth floors.

Projecting Wing Portions

These are the north and south elevations of the wings which face the building entry. Both elevations from the ground to eighth floors have two single windows.

North Elevation

The north elevation contains seven bays in an A, B, C, D, C, B, A pattern (photo 5). The first floor's rusticated cast concrete veneer wraps partially to the north elevation on both A bays, but the belt course of dentils and acanthus leaves spans the elevation. Near ground level, a belt course of cast concrete with concrete below spans the elevation and finishes the building at the ground level and varies in height as the topography changes. The parapet wall distinguishes the A bays particularly because they project slightly from the façade and have horizontal bands of recessed brick every sixth row on floors two through eight. The parapet has the faux balustrades in bays A and C. The balustrades are finished in the C bays with a cast concrete sills and beneath the sills are cast concrete crests. The A bays at the parapet are distinguished by decorative accents and machicolated trim. The parapet wall is finished with cast concrete coping.

The A and C bays have two single windows on each floor from the second to the eighth floor. The first floor A and C bays have two arched windows. The eighth floor windows in the A bay are framed with pilasters with bases and capitals. Both A and C bay windows on the eighth floor have an arched row of dark-red soldier bricks surrounded by a row of headers. The arch in-fill is a checkerboard pattern of light and dark header bricks. All other windows have lintels of dark red soldier bricks.

The B bays have one small window per floor. This elevation keeps the pattern of maintaining the concrete window sills in the same horizontal planes. This means that smaller windows in bays B and D have slip brick sills with a slight reveal beneath.

The D bay contain similar window configuration as the B bay, although the eighth floor has no window. This bay also has an entry door on the first floor, which is a glazed wood. Above this secondary door is a finned metal awning and above the awning is a small arched window.

The first floor is distinguished because the belt course separates it from the upper floors. The eighth floor and parapet wall are also significantly different so they separate themselves from the floor pattern below; thus the building continues to have a three part appearance even on this secondary elevation.

West (Rear) Elevation (Photos 6-7)

The west elevation is the building rear and is similar in shape and size to the east (front) elevation but there are differences (photo 6). The center portion appears more deeply recessed because the wings project further than the wings on the front of the building, and they are wider. The wings' parapets differ from the front wing parapets because they have two stepped angles rather than a centered one. Their decorative attributes, however, are the same as the front elevation's. The center portion of this rear elevation is likewise the same as the front with three faux balusters in the parapet, the baluster sills and the crests beneath. The parapet wall coping is cast concrete. The rusticated cast concrete at the ground level only wraps the rear façade at the junction of the north and west elevations.

Center Portion

The central portion of the west elevation is symmetrical, with three bays in an A-B-A appearance and is 81'4". The B bay is in the center, narrower than the A bays and slightly projecting in the elevation. The B bay window pattern is exactly the same as on the front elevation on floors two through eight, and balconettes are below the fifth floor windows. The first floor has a one-story centered rectangular brick extension with angled corners and a flat roof. The parapet wall on the extension is capped with cast concrete, and has the appearance of five columns each of which has a decorative urn on the flat capital. These columns separate the three groups of paired multi-pane casement windows, which have a fanlight above. Each set of windows has a balconette. Paired wood multi-pane exit doors are located at each of the angled corners of the extension. The doors and windows have a cast concrete key and a row of soldier bricks above the arched windows. The decorative brickwork on the extension parapet wall is a row of normally laid bricks, a row of rowlock brickwork above the keycast concretes, a row of standard brickwork, and two rows of rowlock brickwork. The belt course

⁸ Note the basement six-over-six wood double-hung windows partially show below the first floor on all the elevations because of the changing topography.

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of soldier bricks above the dentiled belt course continues below this brickwork. Two of the original windows in the lobby are altered with plywood to facilitate air conditioner units, though the fanlight remains.

The A bays are slightly different than those on the front. On the right A bay, the windows are configured on floors two through eight with two singles, and two singles of smaller sizes. First floor windows are two singles. The left A bay has a window pattern of two double hungs, and two other double hungs, one being a smaller size. On the first floor there are two double hung windows. The pattern of maintaining the horizontal sill planes continues on this elevation. Most of the upper sashes on the eighth floor are now single pane replacements.

Wings

The wings are 43'2" wide and the window configuration is different from the front elevations. There are still three bays in an A-B-A pattern, and the B bays still mirror each other. The right and left A bays on floors two through seven have two windows. The first floor has a pair of arched windows and two double-hungs in the A bays in both wings. The topography at the building rear allows the multi-pane basement windows to be visible. The eighth floor is integral to the decorative aspects of the building. It has two oversized arched window openings that project nearly into the parapet wall under the two overhead angles. These are composed of cast concrete, with double arches over two single windows separated by pilasters with bases and columns. The windows' white frames are accented by the surround of dark red sailor bricks finished with headers. Both A bays have a row of raised bricks every sixth row. Two upper sashes in the left wing have single pane replacements.

The B bay is decorative only. On floors one through eight, there is a small single window on each floor framed by a dark red brick rectangle created by a double row header bricks about the size of the window. Above the window and frame of red brick is a lintel of red soldier bricks and a cast concrete sill.

Projecting Wing Portions

These are the north and south elevations of the wings which face the rear elevation extension. Both elevations from the ground to eighth floors have two sets of paired windows and a single window.

South Elevation (Photos 8-11)

The south elevation (wing to the left on the front of the building) has six bays arranged in an A, B, C, C, B, A pattern with the fire escape stairs in the center between the two "C" bays (photo 8). Sloping topography makes the basement windows fully visible. This elevation duplicates the north elevation with the exception of the fire escape with the same decorative details and configuration of windows. The first floor is different only in that instead of an exit door, the fire escape exits at ground level.

Garage

The garage is an L-shaped one-story brick structure located west of the main structure. The concrete roof is barrel-vaulted and tar covered. On top of the roof are four large exhaust vents. Due to the sloping nature of the lot, portions of the east elevation are partially below grade and the lot slopes severely away from the building on the majority of the western elevation. Concrete coping finishes the brick walls.

The north (front) façade contains two doors; one is a single, overhead, metal garage door and the other is a pedestrian door. The pedestrian door is slab metal. A lintel row of soldier bricks is above the large garage door and there are sconce lanterns at each corner of the door. A brick lesene (a pilaster without a base) and capital flanks both sides of the large garage door. The north façade also contains six other lesenes, including one on both the northeast corner and northwest corner. Because the floor of the garage is below grade on the eastern side of the garage, there are stairs leading up from this elevation's exterior door to the concrete walkway, which leads to the side entry of the building. This exit door is a painted metal slab door. Above this door is a sconce lantern, identical to those by the garage door. Atop the northeast corner of the garage is an acorn globe lantern.

The east, south, and west façades of the garage are identical to the north façade in construction and continue the evenly spaced pattern of brick lesenes. There is, however, a bricked-in window on the west façade with a row of soldier bricks above and a row of rowlock brickwork below.

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Swimming Pool

The in-ground concrete swimming pool is rectangular in design. The pool is surrounded by a concrete trapezoidal pool deck in the following dimensions: 30' on the east, 43' on the west, and 63' on the north and south. The swimming pool and surrounding deck area are enclosed by a chain link fence (4' height) with locking gate.

Tennis Court

The concrete slab of the tennis court measures 36' x 92' and runs parallel with the west-facing façade of the building.

Alterations

Overall, the building maintains much of its original integrity; historic in-kind wood window replacements are the most significant alteration but the majority of windows maintain the pattern of upper sash multi-pane and lower sash single pane. Slightly more than half (56%) of the windows have been replaced: the north and west elevations have the highest percentage of replacements (71% and 59%, respectively). The front (east) façade of the building retains exactly half of its original windows, while the south façade retains 64% of its original windows. There are 194 windows on the east elevation, 97 on the north, 282 on the west and 90 on the south.

The front entry awning and two supporting columns have been added to act as a modified porte cochere. The 1995 awning addition is not permanently attached to the building and could be easily removed. The original concrete sidewalk on the east (front) side of the building has been enlarged to support use by automobiles, although it maintains the same general path as the original. Two concrete expansions on both sides of the drive at front entry can accommodate two automobiles for short-term parking.

At construction in 1926, a sidewalk was located along Frisco Avenue from the corner of 15th Street south to the semi-circular walk/drive. This portion of the sidewalk was removed in the recent past.

The original 92' x 36' slab for the concrete tennis court remains, but is not currently used as a tennis court; it is now used as an outdoor seating area with a wood arbor on a portion of the slab.

A surface parking lot for 17 cars runs parallel with East 15th Street and is located just northwest of the building; it is not original, but the concrete sidewalk that connects the building to the parking garage is original. At the date of construction, the parking garage featured a carwash bay inside the garage (spaces 30-31), but the carwash equipment was removed in the last ten years. The original garage door was replaced with an electronically-controlled metal overhead garage door.

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Architecture

Community Planning and Development

Period of Significance

1926

Significant Dates

1926

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

NA

Cultural Affiliation

NA

Architect/Builder

Shepard and Wisser architects

Manhattan Construction builder

Period of Significance (justification)

1926 is the date of completion; 1978 is the date the Sophian Plaza converted to condominium status.

Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)

NA

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Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance and applicable criteria.)

The Sophian Plaza is significant at the local level and eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C as the only example of Italian Renaissance style as applied to a multi-family building in Tulsa. The Sophian Plaza is also significant under Criterion A in the area of Community Planning and Development. It was the first high rise apartment building constructed in Tulsa. Its striking appearance and height were in direct response to the surrounding neighborhood and planned to be highly visible from the city's busy thoroughfares. The Sophian Plaza also provided housing for wealthy Tulsans moving from the city core and played a significant role in the early suburbanization of Tulsa.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

Architecture

The Sophian Plaza is the only example of a high-rise apartment building in Tulsa in the Italian Renaissance style. The Sophian Plaza is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places due to its unique combination of style, size, materials, use and condition. Its overall integrity and manner in which it has been maintained over the decades is a testament to the people who lived in the building in the past and those who are residents today. Its construction and use are reminders of Tulsa's belief in its stability and longevity in the early years – and this has been sustained over 85 years in continued use.

The Sophian Plaza with its symmetrical brick and cast concrete façade, three-part appearance, full arches above the first-story windows and less elaborate upper windows, rusticated cast concrete first story, dentiled belt course, roofline faux balustrades, entry area which is accentuated by small classical columns, use of red tile, and flat roof with stepped parapet walls, is an exemplary expression of the Italian Renaissance style of architecture.⁹ The wing parapet walls are further decorated with cast concrete ornamentation including crests and machicolation typical of Italian Renaissance architecture.

The Italian Renaissance style is found in early 20th-Century houses throughout the country but is considerably less common than the contemporary Craftsman, Tudor, or Colonial Revival styles. Primarily a style for architect-designed landmarks in major metropolitan areas prior to World War I, vernacular interpretations spread widely with the perfection of masonry veneering techniques; most of these date from the 1920s. The style steadily declined in popularity through the 1930s, and post-1940 examples are rare.¹⁰ The Sophian Plaza was designed and constructed in the mid-1920s when Italian Renaissance style was popular throughout the country; however, no other examples of this style of high-rise deluxe apartments with hotel services were built in Tulsa.

Community Planning and Development

The Sophian Plaza is located in an area integral to Tulsa's early expansion. The Riverford Addition in which the Sophian Plaza is located was platted in 1907 prior to Oklahoma statehood. The west boundary is the left bank of the Arkansas River; the north boundary is West Fifteenth Street (formerly Cherry Street); the east boundary is South Elwood Avenue; and the south boundary is West Sixteenth Street.

The design and construction of the Sophian Plaza is a physical manifestation of one of the most important periods in the development of Tulsa's residential community just outside of the urban core. The Sophian Plaza was built at a time when Tulsa was in its zenith as "Oil Capital of the World" when many fortunes were made and commerce and political achievements were realized.

Early transportation efforts included multiple, competing electric streetcar lines, and, eventually, bus lines that transverse the city in its exponential growth. In 1905 eighteen Tulsa businessmen organized the Tulsa Street Railway Co. to build the city's first rail line.¹¹ The new service was welcomed by Tulsans; from opening day until the end of the year the TSR [Tulsa Street Railway] counted 336,000 passengers and took in \$17,186 in gross revenue. By October of 1907, the company offered a 10-minute headway on the North Main Street and West Fifth Street lines, and 15-minute service on the South Main and the Third Street line.¹² In 1910, the TSR line ended at Fifteenth and Frisco and influenced where the

⁹ "Sophian Plaza Shown Sunday," The Tulsa World 22 August 1926, Section Three.

¹⁰ McAlester, 398.

¹¹ Chandler and Maguire, 124.

¹² Ibid, 126.

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Sophian Plaza would later be built. This existing rail line helped facilitate the transportation needs of the service staff employed by the Sophian Plaza: maids, waiters and cooks for the Sophian Tea Room, doormen, and beauty shop and barber shop attendants, to name a few.

The real threat to the service lines was the private automobile. Paved streets and automobile registrations were at an all-time high in 1925; TSR went into receivership in 1929 and, ultimately, the assets sold for a paltry \$233,334 to United Service Co. On July 17, 1935, United Service Co. went bankrupt.¹³

The time for privately-owned automobiles (fueled by oil and gasoline) for affluent Tulsans had arrived. The Sophian Plaza met this trend with its 60-car garage complete with carwash bay, constructed at the same time as the apartments. Only the wealthy could afford chauffeured cars and valet service.

The Sophian Plaza is part of Tulsa's community planning and development as it is a physical manifestation of the built environment created for affluent residential living just outside the urban core. Its proximity to downtown with a spectacular view of the Arkansas River, and its location at the terminus of the Tulsa Street Rail line, made the Sophian Plaza accessible to work staff and visitors of the affluent Tulsans who resided there. Fifteenth Street soon became a major thoroughfare from the Arkansas River on the west to Harvard Avenue on the east in 1926.¹⁴ The full-service garage and carwash bay, downstairs tea room, barber shop, beauty salon, delicatessen, "grocinette", and tavern amenities attracted Tulsa's affluent. The attention to detail in the exterior, interior, and grounds made the Sophian Plaza a much sought-after and attractive living option in early Tulsa.

Developmental history/additional historic context information (if appropriate)

Historical Background

The discovery of oil in northeastern Oklahoma on April 15, 1897, brought wildcatters to this part of the country in hopes of striking it rich in the oil fields. After the first large strike, The Glenn Pool, Tulsa was in a position to grow from its former small community of 1,390 in 1901 to a population of 18,182 in 1910. Between 1910 and 1920, Tulsa's population reached 72,075. By 1930, it nearly doubled again at 141,258.¹⁵ The demand for hotels, office buildings, and residences increased exponentially. Tulsa's success attracted people from all over the United States, including architects who were hired by oil tycoons and other businessmen eager to build and invest in the "Oil Capital of the World." In 1927, a million dollars per month was spent on building construction in downtown Tulsa.¹⁶

According to Danney Goble, "By 1927, Tulsa provided the headquarters for fifteen hundred oil-related companies, and the city was at once the nerve center, the heart, and the guts of the midcontinent fields, which produced two-thirds of the nation's oil. Its refineries furnished more gasoline than any other city in America. Its pipelines ran to each coast. Its producers were directly responsible for 90 percent of the crude oil flowing from Oklahoma fields, which, in turn, accounted for a third of all the oil originating in the United States."¹⁷

The building was constructed in the River Ford Addition, platted on May 22, 1907, when Oklahoma was still Indian Territory (pre-Statehood). The plat was amended in 1920 by A. T. Thorne. Construction began on the apartment building in 1925. Many newspaper articles compared the Sophian Plaza's apartments as "the equal of any which can be found even in New York City. In addition to usual features they will have three baths; the maid will have her own apartment in connection, including living room, kitchen and bath."¹⁸ The lobby was described as "a palmroom, the plastered walls giving a Caen stone effect. The walls and entrance vestibule will be yellow Kasota marble with a black York fossil base and a smaller band about the ceiling. The floors of the entrance passage will be white Italian marble with black fossil squares set checker-board fashion."¹⁹ The interior common spaces' color scheme were described as "gray and cream

¹³ Ibid, p. 131.

¹⁴ "Rapid Growth for Fifteenth Street," Tulsa Daily World, 8 August 1926.

¹⁵ Angie Debo, *Tulsa (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1943)*, 97.

¹⁶ Debo, *ibid.*, 105.

¹⁷ Danney Goble, *Tulsa! Biography of the American City*. (Tulsa, Oklahoma: Council Oak Books, 1997), 108.

¹⁸ "Sophian Plaza Will Soon Be Underway," The Tulsa World 27 September 1925.

¹⁹ "Sophian Plaza is Nearing Completion," The Tulsa Tribune, 25 April 1926.

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with insets of blue, green, and orange.”²⁰ Exterior amenities were described as having “a stable for riding horses, a large tennis court, a decorative pool, a 60-car garage with 24-hour service. The lawns and grounds generally are being carefully landscaped and shrubs and trees will be plentiful.”²¹ Arguably, the Sophian Plaza luxury apartments with the full-service, upscale amenities and attention to detail and ease of its residents created an opportunity for luxury living and a shift from existing downtown residential housing. Affluent Tulsans moved south of downtown into neighborhoods like Riverview and Maple Ridge. This building was built as a result of accumulated wealth notably related to the oil and gas industry, the residential shift from the central business district (downtown), and the development and expansion of Tulsa’s community including its transportation modes.

Affluent persons in Tulsa’s past have consistently been associated with the Sophian Plaza beginning with its opening in 1926. Among them are:

- Well-known member of Tulsa’s oil and gas industry Carl K. Dresser, President of S. R. Dresser Manufacturing Company, supplier of most of the oil pipeline couplings in the world;
- Horace G. and Mary Frances Barnard, members of prominent Tulsa oil, cattle, ranching, banking, and investment empire. Mary Frances Barnard died on August 17, 1981, at the age of 92, having donated an estimated \$750 million to charity including Holland Hall School, Tulsa Boys Homes, and University of Tulsa;
- M. A. Breckinridge, “an illustrious attorney and the first county attorney in Tulsa after statehood.”²²
- P. C. Lauinger, third generation President of “The Oil & Gas Journal” from 1931 until 1970;
- Dr. Murl P. Springer, founder of Springer Clinic at 604 South Cincinnati Avenue. In 2006, Warren Clinic merged with Springer and now has eleven different clinics in Tulsa, Bixby, Broken Arrow, Owasso, and Jenks;
- Samuel A. Boorstin, noted attorney who operated his law practice from the Sophian Plaza, and father of Daniel J. Boorstin, American historian, professor, attorney, writer, appointee as twelfth Librarian of the United State Congress;
- Paul Revere Braniff, co-financier of an aviation company named Tulsa-Oklahoma City Airways, later known as Braniff International Airways (BIA). Eventually, BIA was purchased by what later became American Airlines;
- Eugene Frank Blaise, independent oil producer and founder of United Producers Pipeline Company and the Inland Refining Co. at Fort Worth, Texas. Blaise was co-owner and President of the Farmer’s National Bank of Tulsa, later reorganized as the Exchange National Bank of Tulsa. Blaise was also President of the State Bank of Kiefer, Oklahoma;
- Helen Jane Phillips Breckinridge, daughter of oil tycoon and philanthropist Waite Phillips;
- Charles W. Bliss, President and Manager of the ten-story, 225-room Bliss Hotel, designed by Leland I. Shumway, and located at 108 W. 6th St. in Tulsa; and
- Carl Dean Radle, Tulsa musician considered “the vanguard of the Tulsa Sound.” Radle played bass guitar with Gary Lewis & The Playboys, appeared on the Ed Sullivan Show, The Tonight Show, and recorded with Delaney & Bonnie, Leon Russell, Rita Coolidge, Dave Mason, and collaborated on writing and arranging two of Delaney & Bonnie’s hit songs, “Get Ourselves Together” and “Never Ending Song of Love.” In 1970, Radle joined Leon Russell who was forming the “Joe Cocker, Mad Dogs and Englishmen” ensemble touring 46 cities in 56 days (it emerged as the biggest rock and roll tour in history, a major movie, and a gold album). Later, Radle toured and worked with George Harrison, Bob Dylan, Billy Preston, Ringo Starr, and Jim Keltner. Just before his death at age 37, Radle worked with Eric Clapton, Jamie Oldaker, and Yvonne Elliman on the “461 Ocean Boulevard” album and was a collaborator on an almost endless string of gold and platinum albums.

²⁰ “Sophian Plans Full Service,” The Tulsa World 25 April 1926.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Michael Wallis, Beyond the Hills The Journey of Waite Phillips (Oklahoma City, Oklahoma: Oklahoma Heritage Association, 1995) p. 263.

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9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

Caliendo, H. (2008, February 22). These Walls: Tulsa's Sophian Plaza. The (Oklahoma City) Journal Record.

City of Tulsa Preservation Commission (1996). A Neighborhood History of Tulsa's Historic Riverview, pp. 20-21.

Debo, Angie. Tulsa. Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1943.

Everly-Douze, Susan, Tulsa Times: A Pictorial History: Coming of Age. Tulsa, OK: World Publishing Co., p. 37.

Fleming, John, Honour, Hugh & Pevsner, Nikolaus, The Penguin Dictionary of Architecture. Great Britain: The Chaucer Press, 1980.

Harris, Cyril M., Historic Architecture Sourcebook. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1977.

McAlester, Virginia and Lee, A Field Guild to American Houses. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1996.

Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, Tulsa, Oklahoma, 1939. University of Central Oklahoma special collections.

Tulsa City Directories. Dallas, Texas: R. L. Polk & Company, 1927, 1941, 1946, 1951, 1954, 1956, 1958, 1961, 1963, 1967, 1972.

Tulsa Daily World, Tulsa, Oklahoma, 8 August 1926.

Tulsa Preservation Commission and the City of Tulsa's Urban Development Department. Tulsa's Historic Preservation Resource Document. Tulsa, Oklahoma: City of Tulsa's Urban Development Department, 1997.

Wallis, Michael, Beyond the Hills: The Journey of Waite Phillips. Oklahoma City, OK: Oklahoma Heritage Association, 1995.

Walton, John Brooks, One Hundred More Historic Tulsa Homes. Tulsa, OK: HCE Publications, 2001, pp. 101-102.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67 has been requested)
 previously listed in the National Register
 previously determined eligible by the National Register
 designated a National Historic Landmark
 recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
 recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____
 recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

State Historic Preservation Office
 Other State agency
 Federal agency
 Local government
 University
 Other
Name of repository: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):

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10. Geographical Data

Approximately 2.5
Acreage of Property Acres
(Do not include previously listed resource acreage.)

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	<u>15S</u> Zone	<u>230487</u> Easting	<u>4003676</u> Northing	3	<u> </u> Zone	<u> </u> Easting	<u> </u> Northing
2	<u> </u> Zone	<u> </u> Easting	<u> </u> Northing	4	<u> </u> Zone	<u> </u> Easting	<u> </u> Northing

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

Part of lots 1,2,3,4 and 5, block 2, Riverford Addition to the City of Tulsa, Tulsa County, Oklahoma; more particularly described as follows: beginning at the northeast corner of Lot 1, Block 2, Riverford Addition, then north 90 degrees west along the north line of Lot 1, a distance of 390.0 feet to a point; thence south 0 degrees 05 minutes 40 seconds west, a distance of 70.0 feet to a point on the south line of lot 1; thence south 25 degrees 35 minutes 29 seconds east, a distance of 198.47 feet to a point; thence north 90 degrees east, a distance of 114.65 feet to a point; thence south 30 degrees 15 minutes 56 seconds east, a distance of 127.36 feet to a point, said point being the southeast corner of lot 5; thence north 0 degrees 05 minutes 40 seconds east, along the east line of lots 5,4,3,2, and 1, a distance of 359.00 feet to the point of beginning.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundaries include all the land that has historically been associated with the Sophian Plaza.

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11. Form Prepared By

name/title Lee Anne Zeigler/Executive Director & CEO
organization Tulsa Foundation for Architecture date January 2011
street & number 2200 South Main Street telephone (918) 583-5550
city or town Tulsa state OK zip code 74114
e-mail laz@tulsaarchitecture.com

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Continuation Sheets**
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

Photographs:

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map.

Name of Property: Sophian Plaza
City or Vicinity: Tulsa
County: Tulsa County State: OK
Photographer: Derek Lee
Date Photographed: January 24, 25, 2011 and February 25, 2011
Description of Photograph(s) and number:
Location of original digital files: Tulsa Foundation for Architecture Archives

Photographs are labeled with the subject, direction of photograph, and date

- 1 of 15: Sophian Plaza. East (front) elevation, looking west. 1-26-11
- 2 of 15: Sophian Plaza. Brickwork detail of east elevation, looking west. 2-25-11
- 3 of 15: Sophian Plaza. Front (east) main entry, looking northwest. 1-25-11
- 4 of 15: Sophian Plaza. Algonite cast concrete belt course detail, looking south. 1-26-11
- 5 of 15: Sophian Plaza. North elevation, facing south. 1-25-11
- 6 of 15: Sophian Plaza. West (rear) elevation, facing east. 1-25-11
- 7 of 15: Sophian Plaza. West (rear) courtyard detail, facing east. 1-25-11
- 8 of 15: Sophian Plaza. South elevation, facing north. 1-26-11
- 9 of 15: Sophian Plaza. Freight elevator penthouse detail, facing north. 1-26-11
- 10 of 15: Sophian Plaza. Swimming pool, facing west. 2-25-11
- 11 of 15: Sophian Plaza. Elevation detail, facing north. 2-25-11
- 12 of 15: Sophian Plaza. North (front) garage elevation. 2-25-11
- 13 of 15: Sophian Plaza. East garage elevation. 2-25-11
- 14 of 15: Sophian Plaza. West garage elevation. 2-25-11
- 15 of 15: Sophian Plaza. East (front) elevation, looking west. 1926

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Property Owner:

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name Sophian Plaza Park, Inc.
street & number 1500 South Frisco Avenue telephone (918) 691-2662 Michael Wallis
city or town Tulsa state Oklahoma zip code 74119

(see sheet of current owners provided by the Board of Directors, Sophian Plaza Park, Inc.)

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

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Sophian Plaza
Name of Property

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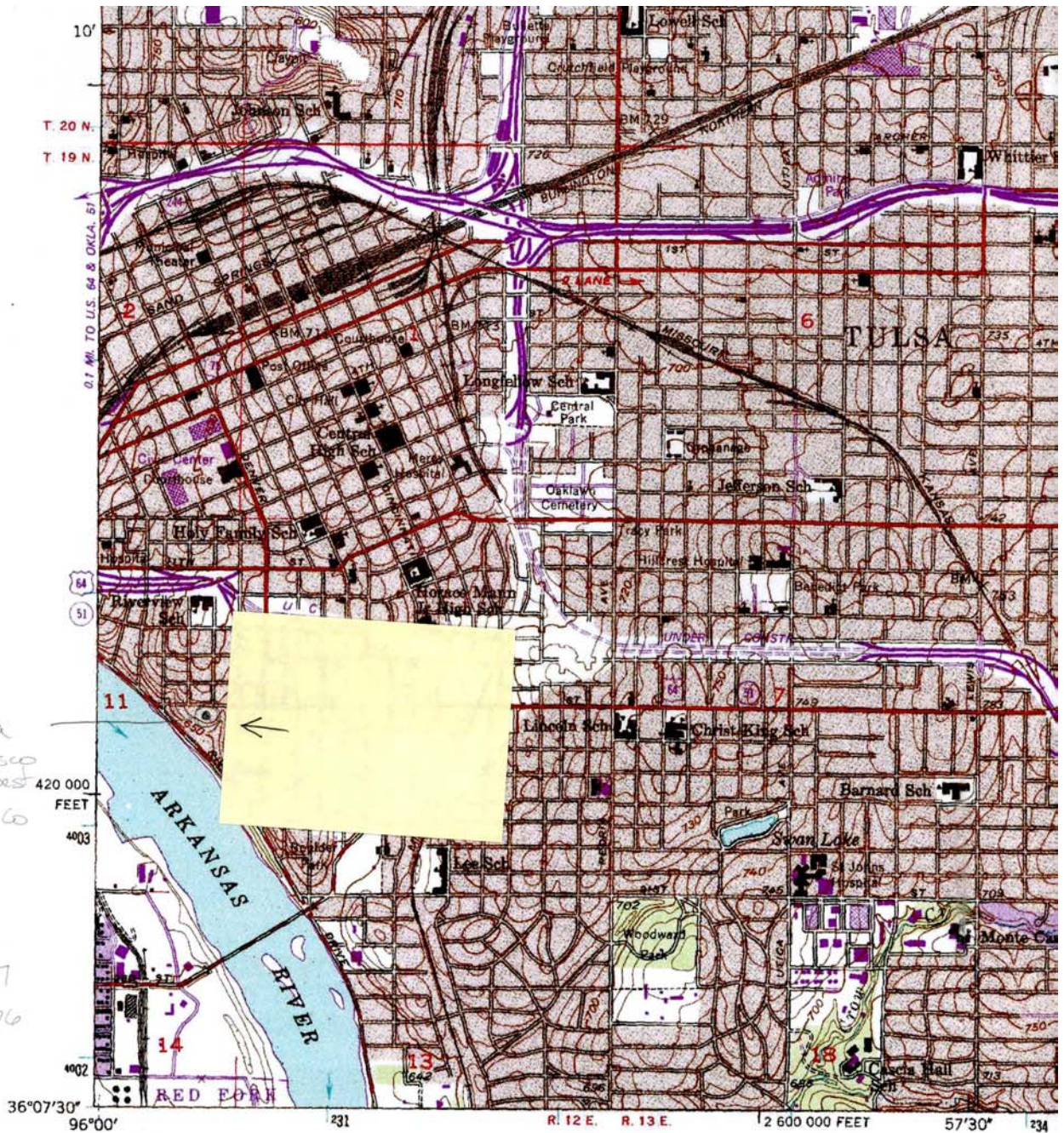
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Sophian Plaza
Name of Property

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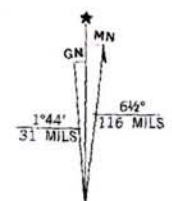


Sophian Plaza
1500 South Frisco
Avenue West
Tulsa, Tulsa Co
Oklahoma
Z = 15
E = 236487
N = 4003676

SAPULPA NORTH
6756 II SE

Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey
Control by USGS, USC&GS, USCE,
and Oklahoma Geodetic Survey
Culture and drainage in part compiled from aerial photographs
taken 1950-1951. Topography by plane-table surveys 1954
Polyconic projection. 1927 North American datum
10,000-foot grid based on Oklahoma coordinate system, north zone
1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks,
zone 15, shown in blue

Red tint indicates area in which only landmark buildings are shown
To place on the predicted North American Datum 1983
move the projection lines 3 meters south and
23 meters east as shown by dashed corner ticks
Revisions shown in purple compiled from aerial photographs taken 1980
and other sources. Map edited 1982. This information not field checked
Purple tint indicates extension of urban area



UTM GRID AND 1982 MAGNETIC NORTH
DECLINATION AT CENTER OF SHEET

FOR