

# The Douglass at Page Woodson

OKLAHOMA CITY, OKLAHOMA

THE RESTORATION AND adaptation of Page Woodson School into affordable apartments marks a vibrant cultural rebirth in Oklahoma City and is a source of pride for former students of the once-segregated school.



**BEFORE** Constructed in 1910, the former all-white elementary school was renamed Douglass High School in 1934, when it transitioned to serve African American students from across Oklahoma City. Douglass became a center for African American progress during the Civil Rights Movement and frequently housed meetings of activists such as U.S. Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall. Many notable members of the faculty and student body were influential in the fight against segregation in Oklahoma City. The school went through many name changes and uses before the Oklahoma City School Board finally voted to close it in 1993 as populations declined in the surrounding area.

**TRANSFORMED** After years of vacancy and vandalism, the school was purchased in 2013 by developer Ron Bradshaw with plans to restore the building's Art Deco details and address the community's needs. The Douglass at Page Woodson now contains 60 affordable housing units and a community auditorium that is used for meetings, lectures, film screenings, and the arts.



**National Trust for  
Historic Preservation®**

2600 Virginia Avenue NW Suite 1100  
Washington, DC 20037

[SavingPlaces.org](http://SavingPlaces.org)

PHOTOS BY JUSTIN CLEMONS PHOTOGRAPHY

**Media Contact:**

Juvenio L. Guerra | Public Affairs | 202.588.6030 | [jguerra@savingplaces.org](mailto:jguerra@savingplaces.org)

**FORMER OKLAHOMA CITY SCHOOL WINS NATIONAL PRESERVATION AWARD**



*The Douglass at Page Woodson, an artful adaptation of a historic school into affordable apartments, receives the Richard H. Driehaus Foundation National Preservation Award, the nation's highest honor in preservation*

**WASHINGTON (October 15, 2018)**—Today, highlighting a vibrant cultural rebirth in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, the National Trust for Historic Preservation announced **The Douglass at Page Woodson** apartment community as one of only three winners of the **2018 Richard H. Driehaus Foundation National Preservation Awards**. Given each year at the end of a juried competition, the Driehaus Foundation National Preservation Awards, the nation's most coveted and prestigious, are bestowed on historic preservation efforts that demonstrate excellence in execution and a positive impact on the vitality of their towns and cities.

“Through creative and meticulous restorations that reinvigorate older buildings, elevate the quality of public life, and educate and encourage others, the winning projects are outstanding examples of the power and potential of preservation to improve lives,” said Stephanie Meeks, president and CEO of the National Trust. “We are honored to partner with the Driehaus Foundation to celebrate The Douglass at Page Woodson apartment complex as one of this year's awardees and a source of inspiration for the future—remarkable not just for its historic and architectural character, but for the many ways it puts community first.”

“Page Woodson School has been given a second life,” said Ron Bradshaw, owner and developer. “Along the way, this process taught us something about community. We thought we were the owners, but soon found out that there were many owners and we were just fortunate enough to be stewards of this restoration.”

Constructed in 1910 as the Page Woodson School, the former all-white elementary school was renamed Douglass High School in 1934, when it transitioned to serve African American students from across Oklahoma City. Douglass became a center for progress during the Civil Rights Movement and frequently housed meetings of figures such as Thurgood Marshall, the nation’s first African American Supreme Court Justice. Many notable members of the faculty and student body were influential in the fight against segregation in Oklahoma City. The school went through many name changes and uses before the Oklahoma City School Board finally voted to close it in 1993 as populations declined in the surrounding area.

“The Douglass at Page Woodson is an incredible success story of redevelopment for Oklahoma City, and a great example of providing community resources without reinventing the wheel,” said Cayla Lewis, executive director of Preservation Oklahoma. “By taking a historic building in a once again growing area and converting it into affordable housing, the site provides residents with the sense of identity, history, and authenticity that engenders well-being.”

After years of vacancy and vandalism, the school was purchased in 2013 with plans to restore the building’s Art Deco details and address the community’s needs. Developed by Colony Partners and SCG Development and designed by Smith Dalia Architects, the restoration capitalized on the building’s outstanding example of Classical Revival red brick, its rich artisanal ornamentation, and educational themes to give this affordable housing solution a far more distinguished architectural identity than it would otherwise have today. The Douglass at Page Woodson contains 60 affordable housing units and a historic community auditorium, which once hosted personalities such as jazz great Duke Ellington, restored for meetings, lectures, film screenings, and the arts.

“We are always concerned when our important historic buildings stand vacant for long—especially one with such an important connection to the community—but the developers and architects took what was an incredibly challenging resource and converted it into residential living that is not just for the people who live there but for the people of Oklahoma City at large,” said Lynda S. Ozan, deputy state historic preservation officer of the Oklahoma Historical Society. “The Page Woodson apartment community deserves recognition for preserving the identity of the

school and the history associated with the African American students, and for completing an innovative, multimillion dollar reuse project in a city where many historic buildings are demolished for modern development.”

“Oklahomans have begun to embrace historic preservation because of its economic value and the ‘sense of place’ historic structures impart. However, preserving Page Woodson means much more,” said Gina Sofola, project manager and advocate for The Douglass at Page Woodson. “This historic African American school communicates the value of a people, their contributions to Oklahoma City, and their stories. Our history as a city or nation is collective, and while sometimes painful, our acknowledgement, elevation, and celebration of the full history frames the way in which we move forward—the way we begin to build together.”

Established in 2012, the Driehaus Foundation National Preservation Awards have honored distinguished individuals, nonprofit organizations, public agencies, and corporations whose skill and determination have added to the richness of their communities by preserving their architectural and cultural heritage. As the most sought after of all National Trust awards, the initiative recognizes efforts in landmark preservation, historic restoration, skilled craftsmanship, and educational and advocacy activities.

The Richard H. Driehaus Foundation National Preservation Awards winners, chosen from among 50 nominated projects by a jury led by Pulitzer Prize-winning architecture critic Paul Goldberger, will be honored as part of [PastForward 2018](#), the nation’s largest historic preservation conference, on November 14 at the Palace of Fine Arts Theatre in San Francisco. This year’s other awardees are the Crosstown Concourse mixed-used facility in Memphis, Tennessee and the Richardson Olmsted Campus architectural masterpiece in Buffalo, New York.

Members of the public are invited to learn more about the award-winning set of projects, individuals, and organizations that have demonstrated excellence in the field of preservation at: [www.SavingPlaces.org/awards](http://www.SavingPlaces.org/awards)

**Images at top:** The Douglass at Page Woodson in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. Photo: Justin Clemons Photography.

###

#### **About the National Trust for Historic Preservation**

The National Trust for Historic Preservation, a privately funded nonprofit organization, works to save America’s historic places. [www.savingplaces.org](http://www.savingplaces.org)

#### **About the Richard H. Driehaus Foundation National Preservation Awards**

The Driehaus Foundation National Preservation Awards have honored distinguished individuals, nonprofit organizations, public agencies, and corporations whose skill and determination have given new meaning to communities by preserving their architectural and cultural heritage. The coveted awards recognize efforts such as citizens saving and maintaining important landmarks, companies and craftsmen restoring the richness of the past, public officials supporting preservation projects and legislation in their communities, and educators and journalists helping Americans understand the value of preservation.