

# Century-old downtown Sinclair Building to get \$15 million facelift after Ross Group purchase

- [Rhett Morgan](#) Apr 30, 2021

A revitalization is planned for a long underused and more than a century-old building in the heart of downtown Tulsa.

Locally based Ross Group has purchased the Sinclair Building, which was among Tulsa's first skyscrapers when it opened in 1919. The company plans to invest at least \$15 million into a refurbishing that will include apartments and commercial space, Ross Group's Dave Friedland, project leader, said Thursday by phone.

"Frankly, it's been vacant for so long," he said. "The vacancy, you can feel it on Bartlett Square. It's sad because there is so much public infrastructure there. The ability to kind of revitalize that space and have people walking around there again makes me excited to come to work every day."

Ross Group, which, according to property records, bought the Sinclair Building for \$4.7 million, has devoted itself to historic preservation for years.

Among its downtown projects include the old International Harvester Building, which Ross Group made into the company's headquarters, the roughly \$36 million conversion of the Tulsa Club building into a luxury hotel in 2019, and the 1920s-era Ice House Building.

The most notable business to occupy the Sinclair Building in recent memory was Billy's on the Square, a restaurant that operated in a two-floor space there from 1984-2002.

“When we opted to purchase the Tulsa Club in 2015, the Sinclair Building seemed unattainable at the time,” Warren Ross, CEO and president of Ross Group, said in a statement. “Fortunately, patience is enabling us to bring another historic property back to life for Tulsa.

“It's been empty for too long, and we look forward to sharing the restoration of another historic landmark within our community.”

Named after Sinclair Oil founder Harry Sinclair, the building encompasses eight stories, a mezzanine and penthouse, the living quarters of former building owner C.J. Morony. Ross Group plans to renovate the Beaux Arts-style building into at least 66 units that will provide workforce housing and include residences from studios to two-bedrooms.

Ross Group, which has partnered with Dallas-based design firm Merriman Anderson Architects, wants to modernize the structure while accentuating its historical aspects, including opulent stone lobbies and oak floors.

“It has that strong, brick horizontal masonry and those really symmetrical windows that kind of go up,” Friedland said. “Those windows are going to make unique apartment spaces. There's going to be a lot of good natural light. Three of the four sides get strong, direct light throughout the day. The fourth one gets good indirect light and has good views still.”

Sinclair Oil & Gas Co. vacated the building in 1953. After experiencing multiple changes in ownership until the 1980s, it was largely

abandoned and in 1994, the building was named named to the Most Endangered Oklahoma Historical Properties list by the Oklahoma Historical Society.

Morony acquired the building in 1993. After accumulating several hundred thousand dollars in fees, taxes and penalties on it, he over the years staved off numerous attempts by the city to place the property on the auction block.

Dilon Argo and Brad Rice of Newmark Robinson Park handled the transaction between Morony and Ross Group.

“We think it’s going to be a great development,” Friedland said.