



# prologue.

## Every 40 years or so, you really should spruce up the place.

**T**he dormitories at the University of Oklahoma are under assault. No, not from the panty raiders of the '50s or the anti-war demonstrators of the late '60s and '70s. These interlopers are roofers, carpenters, painters, brick masons, carpet layers, HVAC guys and all the other building trade specialists whose skills are required for the first major facility makeover in 40 years.

The updating began in summer 2004, funded by the remnants of an earlier revenue bond issue, and concerned mostly life safety issues in parts of Walker Tower and Adams Center. A year later, with \$30 million from freshly minted bonds, the transformation of the three 12-story, four-wing residence halls—Walker, Adams and Couch—began in earnest. Meanwhile, another \$50 million was creating a new era in campus apartment living.

There is more to this project than merely being a good landlord—and the expenditure is not intended to return a profit to the University. While housing must break even, the residence halls and apartments are not moneymakers for the institution, no matter how it may seem to check-writing students and/or their parents. University officials are convinced that students who live in organized housing maximize the college experience, have better access to programming and facilities designed to enhance their educations and develop networks within the academic community that put them ahead of the game. With the constantly improving food service being offered, they eat better, too.

In order to complete the upgrades within the project's five-year time frame, 250 beds at a time are being taken off line. With freshmen required to live in the residence halls, there was initial concern that not all upper-class applicants

could be accommodated—much to the consternation of the upperclassmen involved—but in the end, all requests for fall housing were filled.

As the spring 2005 semester ended, construction crews moved into Tarman and Muldrow in Adams Center and one wing of Couch Center. The structural modifications include new roofs, window recaulking, tuck-pointing, new heating and air conditioning systems, fire sprinklers throughout, plumbing and electricity updates and elevator renovation.

What matters most to the student occupants, of course, are the cosmetic changes: new paint, carpet and bathroom tiles, the addition of wireless Internet access to the current hard wiring and lounges refurbished in Mission style—the new “OU Look.” Replacing the old built-in beds and chests will be modular furniture—personally chosen by the University's first couple, David and Molly Shi Boren—steel and laminates of the “mixed media” variety that allow residents to reconfigure their surroundings in any number of ways.

The most striking addition to the housing scene, however, has just opened on the south campus, south of Timberdell Road and west of Asp Avenue. OU Traditions Square East is a handsome set of 192 red-brick-and-frame apartment units, rented by the bed, accommodating 576 residents, who may choose their own roommates or take pot luck. Choices include 2-bed, 1-bath; 2-bed, 2-bath; and 4-bed, 2-bath, on either 9-month or 12-month contracts ranging from \$455 to \$545 per month per bed with special rates for summer only. One of the buildings is reserved for students of the nearby Law Center; another is designated “academic arts,” the apartment version of honors housing.

The new apartments are designed to offer all the amenities available off-cam-

pus plus the programming and support of campus living. Each furnished unit offers a fully equipped kitchen, in-unit washer and dryer, wireless and Ethernet Internet connectivity, a 27-inch television and DVD player with basic cable, local phone, all bills paid. For those who don't cook, a variety of meal plans is available.

The community center/clubhouse contains a 24-hour exercise facility, meeting rooms, staff offices, a study area and computer lab, a lounge and a catering kitchen. Just outside are a resort-style pool with beach entry, basketball and sand volleyball courts, a putting green, gated parking, bike racks, benches and landscaping. While many residents can be seen walking or biking to class, the CART system buses run right outside the gate.

Work already has begun to clear the site of the former Yorkshire Apartments, at the corner of Chautauqua and Imhoff, for a twin development, OU Traditions Square West. Occupancy is expected in fall 2006.

Like the roads to Dallas for the OU-Texas game, University housing facilities may always be “under construction.” In addition to the residential towers, OU Housing and Food Services Director Bill Henwood oversees the Quads of Cate Center, the Academic Arts Community (honors housing), and Parkview and Kraettli Apartments, the latter two the lowest cost units currently available. He expects the aging Parkview eventually to be removed, along with the older Kraettli units; the newer Kraettli will receive a major upgrade, as will the food-service facilities at Couch and Cate.

Instead of waiting for customers to come to them, Henwood and his staff are busy marketing on-campus housing and food services. He is convinced they have a great product to offer—and anyone whose dorm experience included air conditioning by opening the windows has to agree.—CJB