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What Does The Future Hold For Some Of Tulsa's 'Ugliest Buildings?'

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TULSA, Oklahoma - The definition of architectural beauty is different for everyone.

Tulsa has been hailed as a city with some of the most art deco designs - only next to New York and Miami.

But the skyline is dotted with a number of other structures some might not find so appealing. In the past what wasn't appealing was torn down.

So are any of our current buildings in danger? Or could there be new life for these 'ugly buildings?'

The story of Tulsa can be told in just one glance at the skyline.

The oil boom of the 20s brought us art deco - the trendy, upscale architecture of the day. Then came Post World War II Modern and urban renewal, and in the 1960s and 70s our big oil companies wanted sleek and contemporary.

That kind of variety makes for a patchwork of different styles.

Tulsa Foundation of Architecture President Shane Hood said, "And each of those generations, they always look back 20 or 30 years and talk about the bad architecture that came before them - about it being old or not as beautiful as what they're doing today."

So, since beauty is in the eye of the beholder, we asked you to weigh in on some of Tulsa's 'ugliest buildings.'

[Click Here For An Interactive Look At Some Of The Buildings](#)

The Abundant Life building was built in 1957 and housed the Oral Roberts Ministries.

"It was a big 'to do.' And when talked about it, it was a shining example of what Tulsa could be for the future. These people absolutely thought these buildings were beautiful," Hood said.

The Page Belcher complex, built in 1967, is owned by the Federal Government. It went in alongside the Tulsa Civic Center.

In the 60s, that vast complex was the pride of the city.

Hood said, "It is the story behind it, not just what it looks like. It is how it operates and why it's there. It is the fact it is monumental architecture, all that kind of stuff."

Tulsa architect, Roger Coffey said, "That was the cutting edge in master planning, to have a civic center in the heart of your city."



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And you can't ignore the University Club Tower, which is said to be the first major building in the United States designed using a computer. Built in 1966, it was modeled after a similar project in Chicago.

But are the properties in danger of extinction? After all, aerial images of Tulsa from 1978 to 2008 show just how many of our buildings were demolished for parking lots.

"The sad thing is we lost a lot of great buildings in this town through urban renewal and owners not caring about the history or what we had. They said 'let's tear it down,' or 'let's modernize this,'" Coffey said.

Hood said, "I think they're endangered for a lack of vision. I think people don't know what to do with a building."

Both architects, however, point out a shift in society.

Instead of tearing the properties down, many are being rehabbed.

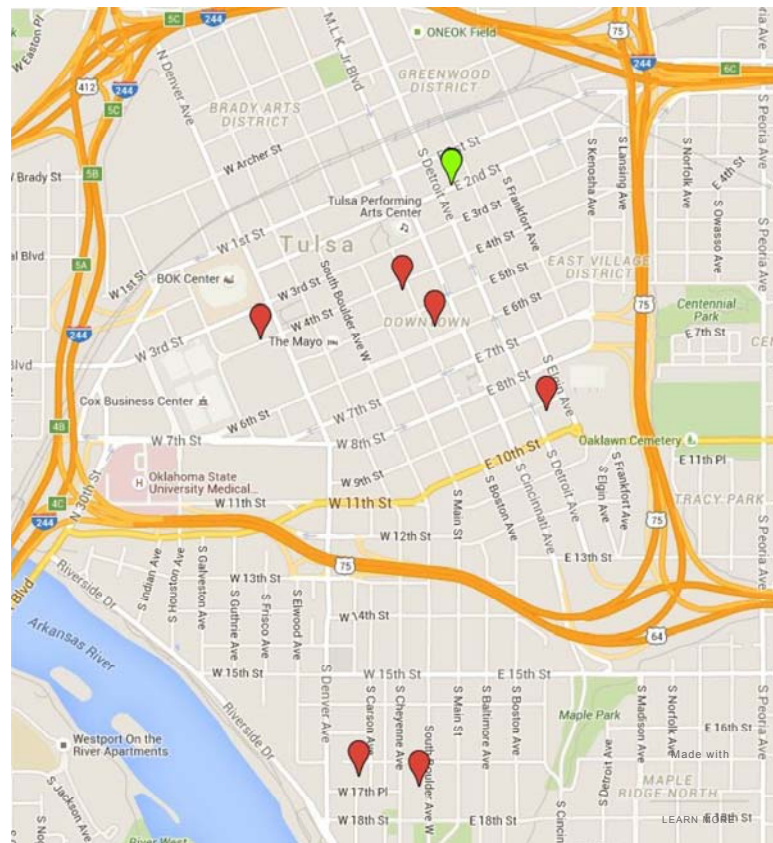
"People are not locked into this 'I don't like it unless it's new.' We've got younger generations that mid-century modern is a big deal and they appreciate it," Coffey said.

University Club Tower is going through a multi-million dollar renovation. The Page Belcher building is for lease or sale, but future plans are uncertain for the Abundant Life building.

And while only The Federal Building is part of a historic district - the Tulsa Civic Center - historic district status is not enough to save any of the buildings from possible demolition.

"People think they are just buildings, but they are art and the physical manifestation of our history," Hood said.

The annual list of Oklahoma's Most Endangered Structures - put out by Preservation Oklahoma - will be unveiled April 6th.



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