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.

1. Name of Property
   Historic name: Pioneer Plaza
   Other names/site number: OKLA 73-4
   Name of related multiple property listing: Tulsa Public Housing, 1966-1975
   (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

2. Location
   Street & number: 901 N Elgin Ave
   City or town: Tulsa
   State: OK
   County: Tulsa
   Vicinity: N/A

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
   Applicable National Register Criteria:
   ___A    ___B    ___C    ___D

   ________________________________    ________________________________
   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

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)
Private:  x
Public – Local
Public – State
Public – Federal

Category of Property

(Check only one box.)
Building(s)  x
District
Site
Structure
Object
**Number of Resources within Property**
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contributing</th>
<th>Noncontributing</th>
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<td>0</td>
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- **buildings**
- **sites**
- **structures**
- **objects**

**Total**

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register **N/A**

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6. **Function or Use**  
**Historic Functions**
(Enter categories from instructions.)  
**DOMESTIC/Multi-family Dwelling**

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**Current Functions**
(Enter categories from instructions.)  
**DOMESTIC/Multi-family Dwelling**

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Pioneer Plaza
Name of Property

Tulsa County, OK
County and State

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions.)
MODERN MOVEMENT

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)
Principal exterior materials of the property: Brick, concrete

Narrative Description
(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a summary paragraph that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary Paragraph

Pioneer Plaza (1969) is located at 901 North Elgin Avenue northeast of downtown Tulsa, Tulsa County, Oklahoma. The eleven-story Modern Movement apartment building has a rectangular footprint with small one-story appendages on the north and south sides; a partial basement is under the center of the building. A poured concrete structural system supports each floor and a flat roof. The north and south elevations feature a regular rhythm of balconies and aluminum windows walls on the second through eleventh floors. Tapestry brick clads the remainder of the exterior. A central double-loaded corridor organizes each floor. The first floor contains the community spaces, and the basement houses mechanical equipment. The upper ten residential floors are identical. Elevators, laundry and storage rooms, and an enclosed stair occupy the north side of the center of the corridor on each floor. The apartment tower sits near the center of the parcel; a driveway with parking wraps the north, east, and south of the building, and the north third of the property is wooded. Pioneer Plaza retains historic integrity with few alterations since its initial construction.
Narrative Description

Setting and Site

Pioneer Plaza, located at 901 North Elgin Avenue, sits on one of the highest points in Tulsa, Tulsa County, Oklahoma. The 3.6-acre site is a few blocks due north of downtown near three major thoroughfares (Figure 1). The north loop of I-244 is a quarter mile to the south of the property; Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard is one half mile to the west; and US-75 Highway is one half mile to the east.

Historically, the area between North Elgin Avenue and MLK, Jr. Boulevard contained single-family dwellings. Between 1980 and 1995, this area was cleared.\(^1\) That portion due west of Pioneer Plaza remains open today, and an apartment complex dating to circa 1980 occupies the area to the southwest of Pioneer Plaza.\(^2\) To the north and east of the nominated site, the topography slopes down into a heavily wooded ravine; single-family dwellings remain to the northeast of the wooded area. A former clay mine abuts the property to the southeast and south. Trees and dense vegetation cover most of this area today, and the campus of the Oklahoma State University-Tulsa (circa 1995) fills the southeastern portion of the former mine. The THA Headquarters occupies a parcel adjacent to the south of the tower property.

The nominated Pioneer Plaza property is an irregularly shaped site on a north-south axis (Figure 2). Historically, the site was part of Tulsa’s first waterworks system; a standpipe occupied the site, but no other major development occurred on the property. North Elgin Avenue generally forms the west boundary of Pioneer Plaza. The primary driveway and associated parking lot generally form the stepped south boundary. The driveway and east parking generally form the east boundary. The north boundary within the wooded area to the north of the apartment tower generally aligns with West King Street to the west. Pioneer Plaza is organized on axis with East Jasper Street to the west.

Paved surface parking lots and vehicular circulation wrap the apartment tower. Two driveways from North Elgin Avenue provide access into the property (Photo 1). The primary entrance is the

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1 Based on available historic images from 1967 (earliest), 1980, and 1995 available from historiaerials.com and Google Earth.

2 Based on 1980 and 1995 aerials, the portion of the land south of Independence Street had been cleared by 1980. A paved surface parking lot, built in circa 2000, abuts the west edge of North Elgin Avenue north of Independence Street. Although utilized by the THA, this lot is under different ownership and is not historically associated with Pioneer Plaza.
central driveway off Elgin that leads into a small roundabout with circular median (Photo 2). The apartment building’s passenger drop-off and front entrance is on the north side of the roundabout. The drive continues east and wraps to the east and north of Pioneer Plaza, exiting back onto North Elgin Avenue. Front-end parking lines the outer perimeter of the driveway and the east half of the south side of the north driveway.

Undeveloped woodland covers the northern third of the property, and minimal landscaping occurs at the building. Few alterations have occurred to the site since 1969. Lawn surrounds Pioneer Plaza except along the east half of the north side of the tower and the circular median. Strategic small-to-medium sized plantings occur sporadically around the building and along the street. Hardscaping includes concrete sidewalks and concrete patios at the west ends of the north and south elevations of the tower. The south patio formerly had a decorative brick perimeter wall that was removed in circa 2005, according to aerial images (Figure 3); the brick perimeter wall remains around the north patio (Photos 5 & 6). Additional small site features include a bus shelter on North Elgin Avenue to the west of the apartment tower (circa 2004), metal light poles, and a short brick name sign with flagpole (circa 2010) on the north side of the main entry driveway (Photo 1).

**Pioneer Plaza**

Pioneer Plaza is an eleven-story rectangular mass oriented on an east-west axis. The primary elevation faces south. A historic one-story flat-roofed canopy extends from the center of the south elevation, and historic one-story appendages project from the south and north elevations. A flat-roofed cubic brick mass containing the elevator projects from the center of the north elevation and rises a full story above the flat concrete roof. Light brown tapestry brick disguises most of the building’s concrete structure. Concrete floor plates extend out from the building to form the rhythmic pattern of balconies on the north and south elevations. Programmatically, the first floor is community and administrative space while floors two through eleven historically contained studio and one-bedroom apartments; the studio units are now one-bedroom units. The building’s fenestration pattern follows the interior programming. One-bedroom apartments feature a curtainwall consisting of four windows and a sliding door along their balconies. The balcony walls of the former studio apartments have curtainwall system of a single window and a sliding door.

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3 Dates from aerial images. The dates of the light poles are unknown. Although compatible with the design of the building, they may have replaced existing fixtures.

4 The historic plans indicate built-up roofing covers the concrete structure of the roofs.
abutting a woodrock [sic] wall. Generally, all windows and exterior door systems are aluminum-framed units. Unless noted otherwise, the building’s window systems are floor-to-ceiling units with a quarter inch aluminum panel at the base.

South (Primary) Elevation

The primary elevation of Pioneer Plaza faces south (Photos 1 through 3). The eleven-story symmetrical façade is framed by brick wing walls at the east and west ends and by concrete roof overhang. The first story provides a visual base to the elevation dominated by the upper story balconies. A woodrock band separates this ground level from the upper façade. Exposed structural columns divide the façade into twelve bays with the west two and east two bays (Bays 1, 2, 11, 12) wider than the center eight bays. The center two bays celebrate the main entry: continuous brick wing walls flank the bays from ground to roof, a flat-roofed canopy covers the entry itself, painted concrete panels act as balcony railings, and the roof overhang is notched at the outer edges of the bays. Bays 3 & 10, which correspond to interior stair towers, interrupt the horizontality of the façade; no openings or ornament occur within this continuous brick wall except at ground level.

At the first story, historic aluminum window walls fill Bays 1, 4, and 5; each features an aluminum panel below a tall panel of fixed glass. Glazed aluminum pedestrian doors pierce the outer sides of Bays 3 & 10. The main entry into Pioneer Plaza is under the one-story canopy covering Bays 6 & 7. This historic aluminum window wall features aluminum bottom panels and fixed glazing above; a pair of sliding doors (non-historic) in Bay 6 and a single door in Bay 7 provides access into the first floor. Bay 8 corresponds to a historic one-story office block that extends south from the main building. The flat roof of the canopy steps back at the east edge and transitions into the roof of this office block. No openings pierce the brick south elevation of Bay 8, but a set of historic aluminum letters affixed to the west end of the wall reads PIONEER/PLAZA; a series of historic five-part vertical windows pierce the north half of the west wall, and three full height windows pierce the north and south ends and center of the east wall. The windows on the east and west elevations have metal panels at the top and bottom. A ganged set of four historic tripartite windows fill the west two-thirds of Bay 11; brick fills the remainder of the bay as well as all of Bay 12.

5 The plans call this out as woodrock finished with a special masonry coating (which has a sandy finish). Developed by the National Gypsum Company in circa 1964, Woodrock was a composite material of wood fiber, cement, and asbestos that was easily cut and drilled. See “Wood and Cement Mixed in New Building Material,” The New York Times (17 April 1964): 56.

6 The window wall systems in the apartments are replacements. The original plans show four-part floor-to-ceiling units with a fixed transom above the hung window and the same aluminum panel below. The current windows match the historic materials, widths, and heights but are three- rather than four-part units. The date of the replacement is currently unknown but may have coincided with the 1978 installation of air conditioning in the upper stories. See Figure 4.
The upper ten stories of the south elevation are identical. Continuous balconies span Bays 1 & 2, 4 through 9, and 11 & 12. Excepting the center two bays, metal picket railings line the balcony edges; painted concrete panels form the railing of the center bays. Full height woodrock panels on metal studs divide balconies between units.

**East & West Elevations**

The east and west elevations of Pioneer Plaza are nearly identical (Photos 1, 3, & 5). Each is a solid brick wall with a narrowly inset spine of windows centered in the elevation and corresponding to the interior corridors of each floor. A short concrete canopy extends from the roof to cover the window spine, and a flat-roofed canopy covers the door at ground level. The window system dates to the 1969 construction. At each floor is a set of three fixed panels of glass each over an aluminum panel. Concrete fascia separates each floor. The first story features a single glazed pedestrian door with sidelights and aluminum panel transoms. On the east elevation, the first story extends north approximately ten feet. No openings pierce this portion of the wall.

**North Elevation**

The symmetrical north elevation is organized around the centered brick mass containing the building’s elevators (Photo 4 & 5). This mass is two bays wide and separates five bays to its east and west. Continuous concrete balconies span the façade at each of the upper stories, interrupted only by the elevator tower. Like the south elevation, the two east and west bays of the façade are wider than the center eight bays, and woodrock dividers separate each apartment balcony.

At the first story, the east two bays (Bays 1 & 2) correspond to a historic one-story shop block that extends north from the main building. A woodrock fascia lines the wall (typical of first story), and a pair of metal slab doors pierces the west end; no openings pierce the west elevation of the shop block. Bays 3 and 4 correspond to the former manager’s apartment. A sliding door and window pierce the east end of Bay 3, and a set of three windows pierce the west end of Bay 4. Woodrock panels fill the remainder of both bays. Brick fills Bay 5. Bays 6 & 7 correspond to the brick elevator tower. A glazed pedestrian door with glazed transom and sidelights pierces the west end of Bay 6 and brick fills the remainder of the bay. A non-historic sliding door replaced a curtainwall system at the east end of the bay; a mechanical louver pierces the wall to its west. Historic curtainwalls fill Bays 8 through 11; a single door at the east end of Bay 8 provides access between the first floor and the concrete patio. Except for a single pedestrian door at the west end, brick fills Bay 12.

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7 The current steel railings replaced deteriorated aluminum tube railings at an unknown date. The current railings are compatible in design and height (Figures 3 & 5).

8 The original plans show only the east elevation with a note “West Elev Sim.”
Interior

The concrete structural grid organizes the interior. A double-loaded corridor runs the length of the building on all floors. The first floor contains community spaces, administrative offices, and maintenance rooms. A partial basement occupies the center of building and houses mechanical equipment (inaccessible). The upper ten stories contain apartments. The primary vertical circulation is centrally located on the north side of the building and consists of two grouped elevators and an enclosed switchback stair (Photos 11 & 15). Two additional enclosed switchback stairs occur along the south side of the building equidistant from the center.

Utilitarian finishes throughout the building primarily date to the 1969 construction. Where new materials are used, most replaced in-kind conditions, according to the original room finish schedules. Floor materials include exposed concrete, vinyl (non-historic) and vinyl-asbestos floor tile with vinyl rubber base in corridors and apartments, and mosaic tile floors in bathrooms. Walls are painted CMU set in a stacked bond or painted gypsum board; vinyl wall covering occurs on the first floor (non-historic). Ceilings range from dropped acoustical grids on first floor (non-historic), glued ACT in residential corridors, and gypsum board in apartments. Most interior door frames are hollow metal with a mixture of historic and non-historic wood interior doors is found throughout the building; many historic doors feature louvers.

First Floor

The main entrance into the first floor is under the flat-roofed canopy on the south elevation. A historic airlock leads into the central lobby containing the elevators and restrooms (Photo 7). Administrative offices occupy the east half of the floor. A two-bedroom apartment along the north side of the east corridor formerly housed the building manager but is today a rented unit; the only two-bedroom unit in the building. The residents’ mailboxes line the south wall across from the manager’s apartment. Recreation and community gathering spaces occupy the west half of the floor. Moveable partitions formerly separated the kitchen from the dining room and the dining room from the lounge; gypsum board walls replaced these partitions, and a half-wall was constructed along the south end of the lounge at unknown dates. Historic built-in closets line the south wall of the dining room.

Residential Floors (Two through Eleven)

The upper ten floors are identical. A central double-loaded corridor organizes the apartments (Photos 11, 13, 14). When constructed, the two west and east apartments on both sides of the corridor were one-bedroom units; the center twelve apartments were studio units (Figure 6), and
these were converted into one-bedroom units in circa 2017.⁹ A laundry room occupies the space to the north of the centralized elevators (Photos 10 & 11). The south wall of the north stair includes a trash chute (Photo 12). A storage room occupies the space between the stairs and the laundry room. Similarly, the south egress stairs have adjacent storage rooms.

One-bedroom units feature a full-length living/dining room on one half of the unit (Photos 16 & 18). The other half contains the bedroom (with closet) along the balcony wall (Photos 17 & 18), a galley kitchen along the corridor walls, and a full bathroom (with shower stalls instead of tubs) between them (Figure 7; Photo 20). Built-in wardrobes in the living room are installed along the bathroom wall (Photo 16).¹⁰ Former studio units have a similar arrangement with the units divided lengthwise (Figure 8). A wardrobe separates the bedroom area on the balcony side from the living room area on the corridor side. The galley kitchen is adjacent to the living room, and the bathroom is adjacent to the bedroom along the balcony. Each apartment features emergency buttons with corresponding call light next to the apartment door on the corridor.

**Integrity**

Pioneer Plaza retains historic integrity. Built in 1969 on open land, the tower remains in its historic location. As will be mentioned in Section 8, the location was intentionally selected due to its proximity to downtown, allowing seniors to continue using services to which they were already accustomed. The setting has been altered somewhat since 1969 by the removal of the single-family houses to the west and southwest; however, the wooded landscape to the north, east, and southeast remain intact. The nominated site also retains its historic design with no major alterations occurring to the property; the site design remains intact. Pioneer Plaza itself retains its historic design. Significant character-defining features of its design include the central double-loaded corridors on each floor, the rhythm of apartment doors along corridors, the centrally located elevators, the rhythm of the exterior balconies, and the symmetry of the primary elevation. The few design changes within the building itself have been minor. Exterior curtainwalls within apartments were replaced with compatible units. Centralized HVAC installed in 1978 required the inclusion of concealed ductwork throughout the building. Permanent walls replaced moveable partitions on the first floor. Two studio apartments per floor were combined into one apartment, and the remaining studios were converted into one-bedrooms. The former change kept the original entry doors into units, and also required the installation of a door in the demising wall between the two former

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⁹ On each floor studio units “X13” & “X15” were recently internally combined to create a one-bedroom unit. Operable corridor doors remain.

¹⁰ According to the THA, the current wardrobes date to circa 2010 and replicate the historic cabinets found in the apartments (see Figure 8).
units, the removal of one galley kitchen, and the transformation of one bathroom into a closet; no major structural alterations occurred, and the unit can be easily restored back into two studios. The replacement of the curtainwalls on the exterior also do not adversely affect the overall design of the building; the current walls are compatible and retain the sash width and type and the lower painted aluminum panel of the original system. The *materials* of the curtainwalls also match the original materials. Other materials throughout the building are mostly historic or compatible. Historic mosaic tile floors remain in apartments. Brick, woodrock, and concrete remain on the exterior. Replacement balcony rails replaced in-kind railings. Vinyl asbestos floor tiles remain and are being replaced with new vinyl tiles matching the size of the historic within public spaces. New dropped acoustical tile grids replaced in-kind ceiling on the first floor. Evaluating *workmanship* in public housing buildings from this era is difficult due to reduced evidence of artisans’ labor and skill. Pioneer Plaza’s retention of integrity of location, setting, design, and materials communicates its qualitative aspects of integrity of *association* and *feeling*.
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.)

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.)
SOCIAL HISTORY __


Period of Significance
1969 __________


Significant Dates
1969 __________


Significant Person
(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)
N/A __________


Cultural Affiliation
N/A __________


Architect/Builder
Coleman-Ervin & Assoc. (architects)
Manhattan Construction Co. (general contractor)
Carnes Construction Co. (builder) __________
Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

constructed in 1969, Pioneer Plaza is locally significant under Criterion A in the area of SOCIAL HISTORY. This apartment building was the first low-income senior housing project constructed for the Tulsa Housing Authority, established in 1966. When it opened, this apartment building provided two hundred units, supplying almost a quarter of the needed units in the city at the time. The period of significance is 1969, the year the building opened and thus the year the housing need was partially fulfilled. Pioneer Plaza is a High-rise Housing Project property type described in the Tulsa Public Housing, 1966-1975 multiple property document.

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

The Oklahoma Housing Authorities Act of 1965 enabled municipalities throughout the state to form public housing authorities. These authorities were partnerships between local and state agencies and the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The city of Tulsa established a local housing authority in 1966 to administer public housing programs for the city’s most vulnerable citizens. During its first operation year, 1967, the Tulsa Housing Authority (THA) provided two hundred forty public housing units in Tulsa. Of these, fifty (50) units (21 percent) were reserved for elderly residents earning less than $3,000 annually. The creation of senior public housing was an early priority for the THA. The THA authorized the construction of Pioneer Plaza to provide additional housing for senior citizens in Tulsa.

Site Selection

In the planning of senior housing projects, the THA noted that proximity to downtown was an important factor because it allowed residents to maintain a lifestyle they knew, as well as retain access to important goods and services. In addition to services such as transportation and charge accounts at stores, the THA also stressed the importance of established relationships to the health and happiness of elderly public housing residents. A 1970 study later released by the Tulsa

11 Equivalent to roughly $23,378 in 2020 USD.
13 “Elderly People’s Need for Housing Urgent,” Tulsa Daily World (December 6, 1970).
Metropolitan Area Planning Committee found that the largest concentration of elderly residents in Tulsa could be found in the downtown area. Of these residents, between six and seven hundred sought THA housing.\(^{14}\) Public housing sites located near downtown helped current and future residents of THA buildings maintain connections and conveniences and provided Tulsa seniors “a place to go” for vital human interaction.\(^ {15} \) For this reason, purpose-built public housing senior projects completed under the THA were typically located near downtown. The construction of Pioneer Plaza at 901 North Elgin Avenue reflects this practice.

**Construction and Building History**

In 1968 the THA began its first turnkey public housing project for the elderly. The project, named Pioneer Plaza (OKLA 73-4), was to be an eleven-story apartment tower constructed specifically for the housing of Tulsa’s elderly. A site located less than one-mile northeast of downtown Tulsa was selected for the project.\(^ {16} \) In addition to views of the city skyline, reported as “one of the best views in Tulsa,” the site offered other conveniences.\(^ {17} \) It was located directly behind the Tulsa Housing Authority general offices, providing easy access to program staff. The location also allowed residents to continue to patronize the downtown area.

Construction of Pioneer Plaza began in January 1968.\(^ {18} \) Coleman, Ervin & Associates designed the apartment tower while Manhattan Construction Co. served as the general contractor.\(^ {19} \) Local Tulsa firm Carnes Construction Co. was the builder.\(^ {20} \) The project was specifically designed with its elderly future residents in mind. Community rooms and services occupied the first floor and included, among other resources, conference rooms, hobby shops for wood-working and ceramics, and a clinic area operated by the Tulsa City-County Health department.\(^ {21} \) Only the first floor had central air; tenants could install air-conditioning in their units, but they were required to pay an additional bill associated with their use. While only the first floor had central air, the entire building had central heat. Laundry facilities and a central rubbish chute were located on each floor for

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\(^{14} \) “Elderly People’s Need for Housing Urgent,” *Tulsa Daily World* (December 6, 1970).

\(^{15} \) “Elderly People’s Need for Housing Urgent,” *Tulsa Daily World* (December 6, 1970).

\(^{16} \) The selected site was known as Standpipe Hill and was the location of Tulsa’s first water tower reservoir.


convenience and walkway grab bars were installed in corridors for safety.  

Storage rooms on each floor contained caged areas for each apartment unit to utilize. A pair of “medium speed” elevators accessed the upper floors which contained two hundred apartment units. Of these units, one hundred nineteen (119) were studio apartments for singles and eighty (80) were one-bedroom units for couples.

Like the common spaces, the apartment units were designed with the convenience and safety of elderly tenants in mind. Wide doorways accommodated wheelchairs and walking assistance apparatuses. Master light switches were installed to control all lights with a single switch, eliminating the need for unnecessary movement to manage lighting, and consequently reducing the risk of falls. The light switches were placed low on the wall providing easy access to wheelchair users. Each unit was finished with easy to clean vinyl floors and contained an all-electric kitchen to facilitate simplified cooking and cleaning. Bathrooms contained shower stalls only to reduce fall risks; each shower stall contained grab bars and seats. Each unit also included a distress bell call system. Should a resident become injured or ill, call bells located in the living room and bathroom alerted building staff members and request immediate assistance.

In addition to building elements designed to serve an elderly population, the THA also provided programming and recreation for residents. Social and recreational programming was managed by a director from the Tulsa Park Department. In a Tulsa World article published shortly after the building opened in November 1969, Al Seymour, first recreation director of Pioneer Plaza, reported the apartment building had “everything imaginable for the residents to do… we have two big new kilns for ceramics and pottery-making. We’ll have games and special musical programs.” In addition to in-house recreation activities, events and trips were also organized with bus transportation provided “right to the door.” Outdoor recreation was also encouraged. Games such as horseshoe pitching were arranged, and playground equipment installed on site for use by

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24 Broadd, “Public Housing Unit a Gem for Old folks,” Tulsa World (November, n.d., 1969). Reports contemporary to construction consistently reference this division of units and available architectural plans suggest each apartment floor contained eight one-bedroom apartments and twelve efficiency units, for a total of two-hundred units. It is currently unclear why this discrepancy occurred.
visiting grandchildren. Numerous benches were installed surrounding the playground to allow residents to watch their grandchildren or simply spend time outdoors.

Construction of the nearly $3 million building, lauded as “Tulsa’s jewel of public housing” in local papers, was finally completed in the autumn of 1969. Although the THA originally expressed that the project site was selected to appeal to elderly residents living in downtown Tulsa at the time, the agency issued a statement at an October 9 board meeting suggesting that “little shifting” from downtown residence hotels currently occupied by the elderly to Pioneer Plaza would occur when the building was completed in the following three weeks. The THA went on to explain that this was because senior residents living in residence hotels did not want apartments where they would need furniture and cooking facilities and those who would move into Pioneer Plaza were expected to be relocating from homes. These residents, they reasoned, would have belongings to bring and would be those who were used to a more home-like living arrangement and looking for a similar environment, which the THA believed Pioneer Plaza would provide.

Applications for leases at Pioneer Plaza officially opened on November 11, 1969. However, by November 10, 1969 eighteen units had already been rented. Eligible applicants were limited to annual incomes of $3,400 if seeking a one-bedroom unit. If applying for an efficiency unit, the income cap was lowered to $3,000 annually. Monthly rents were capped at $42 per month for efficiency units or $48.50 per month for one-bedroom units. Rents included all bills paid except for costs associated with air-conditioning, should a tenant choose to install a unit. Pioneer Plaza officially opened on November 15, 1969. A dedication ceremony was held three weeks later on December 4, 1969 and by this time forty-eight units were leased. Mayor James Hewgley and state representative Rev. Ben Hill presided over an overflow crowd in the building’s community

30 “Protest Fails to Materialize on Southwest Housing Units,” Tulsa World (October 9, 1969): E8.
32 “Elderly High-Rise Opening Soon,” Tulsa Tribune (November 10, 1969): B1. Although applications opened on November 11, some residents could access units early for reasons currently unknown.
33 Equivalent to roughly $24,113 2020 USD.
34 Equivalent to roughly $21,276 2020 USD
35 Equivalent to roughly $298 and $344 2020 USD, respectively.
In his address to the public, local officials, and Pioneer Plaza residents, Rev. Hill extolled the virtues of the project, praising the Tulsa Housing Authority for “fighting waves of criticism” to complete the building which was, in his words, “a representation for all that we deem good and all the hope we have.” Audience members were then invited to tour the building following the address while some residents offered tours of their apartments.

Occupancy at Pioneer Plaza continued to steadily rise after the dedication ceremonies. By January 9, 1970 seventy-five residents occupied units and approximately one hundred applications were under review. Within two weeks the number of occupants jumped to ninety. Between six and seven hundred of the 4,000 applications submitted for public housing in 1970 were from the elderly. However, only three-hundred-fifty units were available. In addition to the two hundred (200) units within Pioneer Plaza, one hundred fifty (150) units were to be located in the Hewgley Terrace apartments elderly housing project, which was dedicated in December 1970. Once both buildings reached full occupancy, approximately three hundred (300) applications remained, highlighting the desperate need for elderly housing within the public housing system. In 1971, THA director Tom Hares reported Pioneer Plaza was at full occupancy, and by 1973 both Pioneer Plaza and Hewgley Terrace reported full occupancy, resulting in a waitlist. The THA would not complete the next, and final, senior public housing high-rise, LaFortune Tower, until 1975.

**Significance & Registration Requirements**

Pioneer Plaza is locally significant under Criterion A in the area of Social History because of its direct association with the efforts of the Tulsa Housing Authority to provide housing for low-income seniors in the city. When the THA formed in 1966, nearly seventeen (17) percent of the total population needed adequate housing, including a large percentage of senior citizens. Along with Hewgley Terrace, Pioneer Plaza filled a portion of the need, housing over three hundred fifty of the nearly seven hundred senior applicants.

As a High-rise Housing Project, Pioneer Plaza meets the registration requirements outlined in the *Tulsa Public Housing* cover document. The property was created for the Tulsa Housing Authority

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40 Jim Sellars, “‘Old Folks’ Bedazzled by Concern,” *Tulsa Tribune* (January 1, 1970), 1B and 7B.
42 “Plan for Single-Family Housing Units Accepted,” *Tulsa World* (November 11, 1971).
and retains a high degree of integrity, especially related to location, design, materials, association, and feeling.

Conclusion

Constructed in 1969, Pioneer Plaza was the first low-income senior housing project constructed for the Tulsa Housing Authority, established in 1966. The eleven-story apartment tower provided the first two hundred, purpose-built public housing units for seniors in Tulsa. The project site was selected to allow residents to maintain access to the conveniences of downtown Tulsa while the building design integrated safety and modern conveniences tailored to improve the lives of residents while providing a home-like atmosphere. Pioneer Plaza is locally significant under Criterion A in the area of SOCIAL HISTORY. This apartment building was built to help alleviate severe shortages in housing for low-income seniors. Pioneer Plaza is a High-rise Housing Project property type described in the *Tulsa Public Housing, 1966-1975* multiple property document.
9. Major Bibliographical References

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

Architect 1, Inc. Current plans.


“Elderly People’s Need for Housing Urgent,” Tulsa Daily World (December 6, 1970).


Historic aerial images from historicaerials.com and Google Earth.


“Plan for Single-Family Housing Units Accepted,” Tulsa World (November 11, 1971).

“Protest Fails to Materialize on Southwest Housing Units,” Tulsa World (October 9, 1969).

Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps.

Sellars, Jim. “‘Old Folks’ Bedazzled by Concern,” Tulsa Tribune (January 1, 1970).


Tulsa Public Housing Vertical File. Oklahoma Room. Tulsa City/County Public Library.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

___ x 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:

___ x State Historic Preservation Office
___ Other State agency
___ Federal agency
___ Local government
___ University
___ x Other
   Name of repository: Tulsa Housing Authority

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _N/A__________

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 3.6__________

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates
Datum if other than WGS84:__________
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1. Latitude: 36.166938  Longitude: -95.990704

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

The nominated boundary is described as follows, as surveyed by John L. Libby, Jr. in December 2019 for the Tulsa Housing Authority:

Parcel A: A tract of land that is part of Block 1 and Block 2 of amended plat of “Davis-Wilson Heights” and that portion of Jasper Street that has been vacated lying within Block 1 and Block 2 of amended plat of “Davis-Wilson Heights,” a subdivision in the SW/4 of Section 36, T-20-N, R-12-E, City of Tulsa, Tulsa County, Oklahoma, according to the recorded plat thereof and being more particularly described as follows, to-wit:
Beginning at the northeast corner of Lot 8 in said Block 1; thence along the easterly line of said Lot 8, and a southerly extension of the easterly line of Lot 8 S 01°05'43" E (called S 00°13'05" E) a distance of 489.34'; thence S 88°54'17" W a distance of 105.36 feet (called S 89°46'55" W for 100.56'); thence S 01°05'43" E a distance of 58.14' (called S 00°13'05" E); thence S 88°54'17" W a distance of 106.13 feet (called S 89°46'55" W); thence N 01°05'43" W a distance of 44.02 feet (called N 00°13'05 W); thence S 88°54'17" W a distance of 79.58 feet (called S 89°46'55" W for 84.32') to a point on the westerly line of said Block 2 and the beginning of a non-tangent curve to the right with a radius of 300.00 feet, a central angle of 10°53'34", and a chord bearing and distance of N 10°15'09" W 56.95 feet; thence along said westerly line and said non-tangent curve to the right an arc distance of 57.04 feet to the end of curve; thence N 04°48'22" W a distance of 75.11 feet to the southwest corner of said Block 1; thence along the west line of said Block 1, N 01°05'43" W a distance of 371.00 feet (called N 00°13'05" W) to the northwest corner of said Block 1; thence along the northerly line of said Block 1, N 88°39'43" E a distance of 305.00 feet (called N 88°30'17" E) to the point of beginning of said tract of land and containing an area of 155,884 square feet or 3.58 acres of land, more or less.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)
The boundary includes the area historically associated with Pioneer Plaza senior housing tower (Figures 2 & 16).

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Emily Lenhausen, Historic Preservation Specialist & Amanda K. Loughlin, National Register Manager (Jennifer K. Bailey, Historic Preservation Specialist, OK SHPO)
organization: Rosin Preservation, LLC
street & number: 1712 Holmes
city or town: Kansas City state: MO zip code: 64108
e-mail: amanda@rosinpreservation.com telephone: 816-472-4950
date: October 2020; rev. November 2020 & February 2021

Additional Documentation
Submit the following items with the completed form:
• Maps: A USGS map or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property’s location.
• Sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
• Additional items: (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)
**Photographs**
Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn’t need to be labeled on every photograph.

**Photo Log**

Name of Property: **Pioneer Plaza**  
City or Vicinity: **Tulsa**  
County: **Tulsa County**  
State: **OK**  
Photographer: **Brad Finch, f-stop Photography**  
Date Photographed: **September 2020**

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

01 of 20. Looking NE at Pioneer Plaza  
02 of 20. South elevation, view north  
03 of 20. South and east elevations, view NW  
04 of 20. North elevation, view SW  
05 of 20. North and west elevations, view SE from NW corner of property  
06 of 20. Patio on north side of building, view NW  
07 of 20. First floor, lobby, view NW  
08 of 20. First floor, lounge, view NE  
09 of 20. First floor, community/dining room, view ESE  
10 of 20. Sixth floor, laundry room (typical), view NE  
11 of 20. Eleventh floor, elevator lobby (typical), view NW  
12 of 20. Second floor, central corridor (typical), view NW  
13 of 20. Sixth floor, west corridor (typical), view ESE  
14 of 20. Eleventh floor, east corridor (typical), view E  
15 of 20. Southwest stair, landing between Sixth & Seventh floors (typical), view NW  
16 of 20. Second floor, unit 201 living room, view SW  
17 of 20. Second floor, unit 201 bedroom, view NW  
18 of 20. Eighth floor, unit 803 living room, view S  
19 of 20. Eighth floor, unit 803 bedroom, view N  
20 of 20. Sixth floor, unit 618 bathroom, view SW

**Figure Log**


Sections 9-end, page 23


06 of 15. Typical apartment layouts, showing one-bedroom units, Type A, and studio units, Type B. Source: Coleman-Ervin and Assoc., Architects, 1969.


**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 100 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.
Figure 1. Contextual map, showing Pioneer Plaza within Tulsa. Base Map: Google, 2020.
Figure 2. Boundary map. Boundary shown in bold line. Base map: Google Earth, 2017.
Figure 5. View southeast from a south balcony of newly completed Pioneer Plaza. Source: “Elderly High-Rise Opening Soon,” *Tulsa Tribune* (10 November 1969): B-1, clipping in Pioneer Plaza folder, Tulsa Public Housing vertical file, Tulsa City/County Public Library.
Figure 6. Typical apartment layouts, showing one-bedroom units, Type A, and studio units, Type B. Source: Coleman-Ervin and Assoc., Architects, 1969.
Figure 7. Example of a resident bathroom in Pioneer Plaza shortly after completion. Source: “Elderly High-Rise Opening Soon,” Tulsa Tribune (10 November 1969): B-1, clipping in Pioneer Plaza folder, Tulsa Public Housing vertical file, Tulsa City/County Public Library.
**Figure 9.** Snippet of Sheet 51 of the Tulsa Sanborn Map 1915-June 1962, vol. 1. Bold dashed line denotes approx. site boundary.
Figure 10. Exterior and Site Photo Plan. Not to Scale. Base plan: Google Earth, 2017.
Figure 11. Current First Floor and Photo Plan. No scale. Base plan: 1Architecture.
Figure 12. Current Second Floor and Photo Plan. No scale. Base plan: 1Architecture.

Figure 13. Current Sixth Floor and Photo Plan. No scale. Base plan: 1Architecture.
Figure 14. Current Eighth Floor and Photo Plan. No scale. Base plan: 1Architecture.

Figure 15. Current Eleventh Floor and Photo Plan. No scale. Base plan: 1Architecture.
Figure 16. Snippet of the plot plan, showing extent of the tower work. Most of nominated boundary depicted in dashed line. Source: Coleman-Ervin and Assoc., Architects, 1969.
National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 11  Page 1

OK_TulsaCounty_TulsaPublicHousing_PioneerPlaza_0001
Pioneer Plaza

Name of Property
Tulsa County, Oklahoma

County and State
N/A

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

United States

Section number 11
Page 2

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

OK_TulsaCounty_TulsaPublicHousing_PioneerPlaza_0002
Section number _11_     Page 3

Pioneer Plaza
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OK_TulsaCounty_TulsaPublicHousing_PioneerPlaza_0003
National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Pioneer Plaza
Name of Property
Tulsa County, Oklahoma
County and State
N/A
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number 11 Page 4

OK_TulsaCounty_TulsaPublicHousing_PioneerPlaza_0004
National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 11       Page 5

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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 11 Page 8

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Continuation Sheet

Section number _11_  Page  _11_

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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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County and State
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National Register of Historic Places
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