



# Skirvin Hotel, Oklahoma City, OK

## Revitalization in the City Core

EPA Region 6—Brownfields Success Story—2007

The Skirvin Hotel, built in 1910 by oilman W. B. Skirvin, sits on a 1.45-acre site in the heart of downtown Oklahoma City. With its elegant English gothic design, the Skirvin reigned in unparalleled opulence as the city's social hub and host to visiting dignitaries, politicians, and oil-rich millionaires. The hotel was one of the first air conditioned buildings in Oklahoma and self-sufficient with its own natural gas pipeline, electric plant, water wells, and telephone switchboard. The Skirvin had operated continuously as a hotel for 77 years before it closed in 1988 during the oil bust and remained vacant for



19 years, until reopening in February 2007. Its closure and abandonment were primarily due to the severe economic blow of the 1980's oil bust and an emaciated downtown economy depleted by a burgeoning suburban growth trend. During its closure, the Skirvin fell into disrepair and became a haven for vandals, homeless, and pigeons, creating an additional financial burden on any redevelopment proposal for the once luxurious hotel.

The Oklahoma City community has always had tremendous affection for the Skirvin. The hotel is listed on the national Historic Registry. In 1992, Preservation Oklahoma, a non-profit preservation group, listed the Skirvin as one of the state's most endangered historic properties.

As downtown Oklahoma City began the long process of recovering from the economic impacts of urban sprawl and the oil bust, what was once the heartbeat of the city remained abandoned and perilously close to the wrecking ball. By 2000 there appeared to be signs of hope for the hotel through a demonstrated need in the downtown hotel market, positive economic trends, and the possibility of blending public incentives with private redevelopment funds to facilitate redevelopment. City leaders and the community acknowledged that the Skirvin should be revived to contribute to the downtown renaissance, and the City took the unusual step of acquiring the hotel.

Asbestos was a major contaminant to be addressed before the restoration of the Skirvin to its former glory could go forward. Oklahoma's Department of Environmental Quality made a \$720,000 loan to Oklahoma City through its EPA Brownfields Cleanup Revolving Loan Fund Grant to clean up the asbestos contamination found throughout the hotel and allow for delivery of a "clean" building to the prospective developer. A total of \$56 million has been invested in this project, an incredible challenge and opportunity for Oklahoma City to create an innovative aggregation of public and private funding sources. Public funding accounted for \$22 million of the Skirvin's redevelopment costs, most of which is expected to be reimbursed. Payback sources include projected sales and ad-valorem tax revenues for the 225-room hotel. Over \$9 million in state and federal historical tax credits were also leveraged by this project. Over 400 construction jobs were created during the hotel's redevelopment, and the Skirvin currently has 225 employees.



For more information on the Skirvin Hotel and other Brownfields projects in Oklahoma City, contact Chris Varga at [chris.varga@okc.gov](mailto:chris.varga@okc.gov), telephone: 405-297-1639, or, for the state, Rita Kottke, Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality, at [rita.kottke@deq.ok.gov](mailto:rita.kottke@deq.ok.gov), telephone: 405-702-5127.