

## WORK OF ART

# New Luxury Condos in the Museum District are Tailor-Made for Art Lovers

Details matter at The Mondrian at the Museums.

By [Abby Ledoux](#) 8/29/2019 at 6:00am

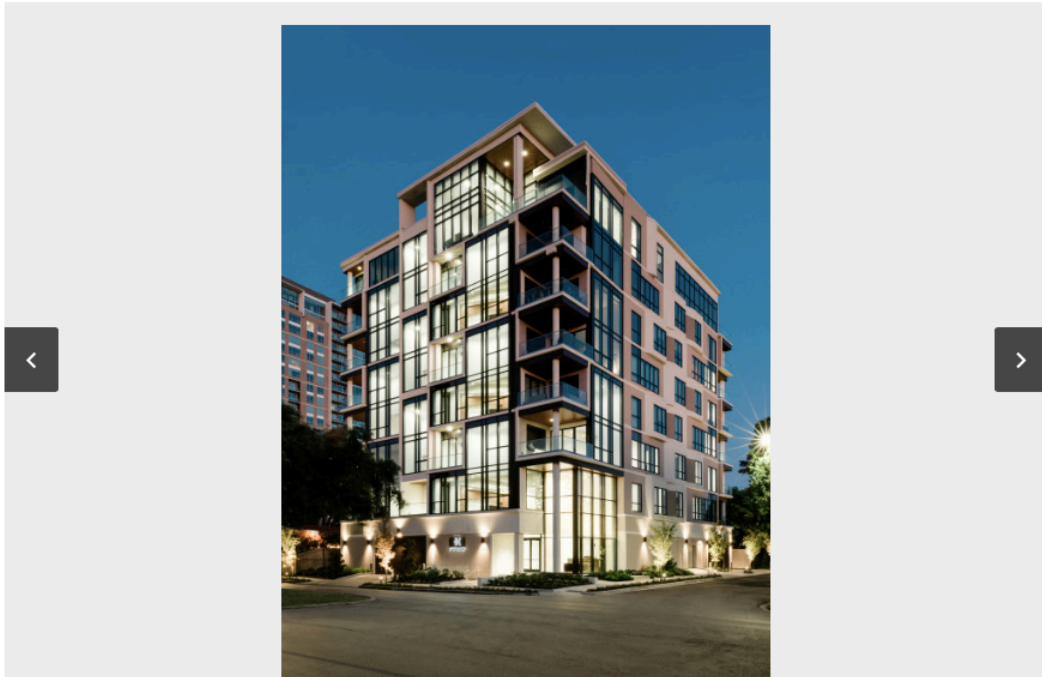


Image: [Divya Pande](#)

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**THE MONDRIAN AT THE MUSEUMS** is something of an art lover's dream. Inspired by its location in the Museum District—on Caroline Street, surrounded by dozens of cultural institutions from museums to parks to Rice University—and its namesake, the renowned abstract painter Piet Mondrian, the new luxury condos take design seriously.

The ultra-modern building, which officially opened this spring, is billed as a mid-rise but technically carries a high-rise designation. Still, there are only 20 units across just eight floors. "When we started designing after we were permitted, we realized that we were losing some of the ceiling heights to the mechanical, electrical, and HVAC," says developer PJ Jamea, co-principal of Oxberry Group along with his brother, Sean. "We actually went

back and elongated the building. It cost us way more money, but we had to do that just to make sure every single unit has at least a 10-foot ceiling, which was really important for artwork.”

Banking on a fine art-collecting, design-minded buyer, developers spared no expense to make The Mondrian worthy of its namesake, opting for museum-quality finishes throughout like a high-quality, Level 5 drywall—“which takes a lot of work,” Jamea adds, “and a lot of sanding”—plus adjustable LED lighting and professionally engineered soundproofing. While every unit has at least 10-foot ceilings, some boast soaring heights of 22 feet—perfect for displaying oversized artwork and, often, statement light fixtures.

The result, thanks to architecture by Perkins + Will and interiors by MaRS, Mayfield and Ragni Studio, is a beautiful space that feels like a livable museum both inside and out. The exterior—a sleek combination of glass, steel, and concrete—reveals the unique, geometric design achieved by interlocking units (three per floor) with strategic double-height ceilings. Inside, designers took cues from the artist himself: “Open plans and floating objects in space are derivative of the color fields often found in Piet Mondrian’s paintings,” MaRS principal Kelie Mayfield writes in her vision statement.

But don’t expect to find any primary colors in this Mondrian. Designers opted for a modern, muted palette throughout the project, with stark white, canvas-like walls flooded by natural light through dramatic, floor-to-ceiling windows with skyline views from practically every vantage point.

Going from a mid- to high-rise classification meant the potential to add more units, but developers refrained. “We just didn’t feel like a high-rise would really fit the neighborhood,” Jamea says. “It was really important to us to be up to par with the buildings around us.” That includes 19 surrounding museums and including the Asia Society facility—the first free-standing building in the country by Japanese architect Yoshio Taniguchi, famous for the 2004 MoMA expansion—which is catty-cornered from The Mondrian. “How could you just put something ordinary across the street?”

Their first luxury condo project, The Mondrian will be Oxberry’s signature building. “That was the reason we really took our time,” Jamea says. “We want to make sure everything is just right.”

Two- and three-bedroom units average 3,000 square feet, while two penthouse suites—one still on the market—clock in around 4,600. Most buyers are empty-nesters who travel frequently, Jamea says, looking to down-size in favor of a lock-and-leave lifestyle. As such, The Mondrian employs 24-hour concierge service.

Four of the 20 units offer direct elevator access, and all come with custom European cabinetry, Miele appliances, California closets, pre-wiring for surround sound and home network automation, and a private terrace with a grill and outdoor fireplace.

The latter—plus reduced HOA fees—replaces traditional shared amenities, which come at a higher cost. So far, Jamea says, Mondrian buyers have appreciated the swap. “You go to those very nice, resort-type apartment buildings, and the very first thing they show you is the pool or the poker room or the theater room,” he says. “But how many times do you actually get to use all of that?”

Construction is still wrapping up on the penthouse suites, but The Mondrian is 65 percent sold with eight units remaining. Prices start at \$1.5 million for regular units and \$3.3 million for penthouses.

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