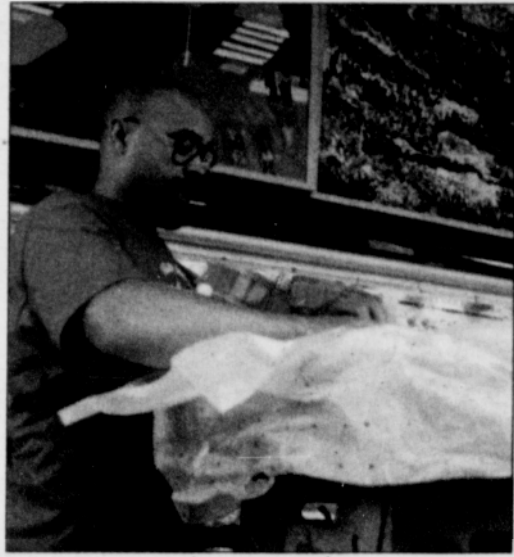


# The




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# Portland Observer 43

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## Landmark for Urban Living

Developer buys Washington High for housing

BY LEE PERLMAN  
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

The former Washington High School in southeast Portland is on course to come alive once more, but this time as a center for urban living.

A local company known for preserving historic buildings has purchased the abandoned school from the Portland School District and plans to keep the four-story building standing by renovating the structure into housing.

Exact plans for the remodel will take months of study, but some things are now clear: one of Portland's largest and oldest school buildings, vacant since 1982, is now in the hands of someone who wants to keep it standing.

The School Board last month unanimously agreed to sell the building for \$2 million to developer Art DeMuro, owner of Venerable Properties, on the condition that he can preserve the 112,000 square foot structure and use it for housing.

Venerable will have nine months to pursue "due diligence," which will include pursuing ways to make the project work financially.

While DeMuro said he is committed to the housing conversion, "What form that will take, I don't know," he told the Portland Observer.

He said the pool of possibilities includes rental versus ownership suites, single rooms or larger family units, market rate or subsidized housing, or a mix of housing types.

DeMuro said he will adhere to the wishes of the school district and neighborhood advocates who want to see the building nominated for national historic designation, either

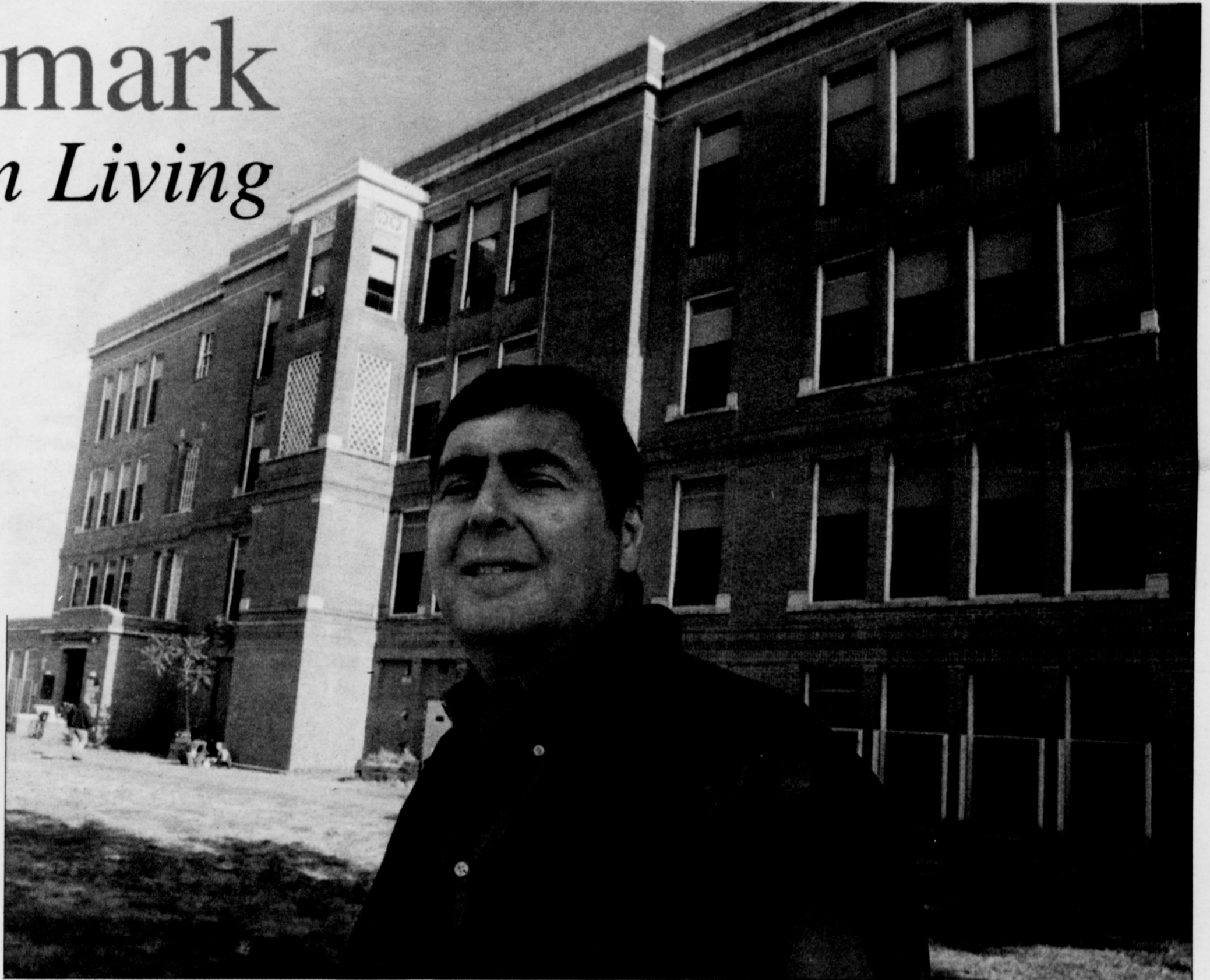


PHOTO BY MARK WASHINGTON/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Art DeMuro of Portland and his company Venerable Properties has purchased the abandoned Washington High School in southeast Portland from the Portland School District and plans to renovate the four-story building into a housing complex.

*One of our mandates with Portland Public Schools is that we nominate the building for national historic designation, either as a landmark or as a contributing structure.*

— Art DeMuro, owner of Venerable Properties

as a landmark or as a contributing structure to a future Buckman Historic District.

This means, in effect, that the school's 600 seat auditorium will be preserved. "It is a character-defining feature, but not necessarily in its

current use," DeMuro said.

Washington High School was combined with the defunct Monroe High School and renamed Washington-Monroe before both schools closed in 1982. Since then, the building at Southeast 14th and Stark and

has been used for a variety of other purposes. In 2003, it was declared surplus, and the following year a citizen task force examined the 7.5 acre property and developed a master plan for its use. Part of the site was set aside for a future commu-

nity center, part as public open space, and the rest, including the old building, was designated for sale for housing development.

The city of Portland purchased the community center site, but does not have the funds to build a center, with an estimated cost of \$40 to \$60 million. At one point Brad Malsin and his Beam Development bid to acquire the housing portion, but the deal fell through.

DeMuro and his Venerable Properties have specialized in restoration of historic properties. He has served as chair of the Portland His-

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