



Street Talk

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School Set To Be Lofts

After more than a year spent in limbo, Robert E. Lee Elementary School on the corner of Park and Belmont avenues in the Museum District has accepted its next incarnation.

Lofts! Lots and lots and lots of lofts. OK, maybe 40.

City Realtor Constance Schwartz tells Style the three-story Colonial-revival-style school will be turned into apartments. For now, the city is shy on details while it waits to seal the deal.

But the ubiquitous developer Robin Miller is happy to talk.

“We’ve had verbal conversations and we’re negotiating with the city,” says Miller. In most respects, he says, it seems like a sure thing. Miller is one of five potential developers who submitted proposals for the building’s future use.

Miller’s most recent Richmond project was the total renovation of the old Kensington Gardens into Kensington Court luxury apartments. Just a few blocks away from the Robert E. Lee School, that project was completed in October and already the place is 80 percent occupied.

Miller says he plans to “retain the architectural features” of the school including its high ceilings.

The project seemed the right fit for Miller who, oddly enough, has renovated an old school before. Recently Miller renovated the old Albuquerque High School in, well, Albuquerque, N.M. It was such a success, he says, he thought the idea would translate nicely here.

Miller aims to catch the interest of young professionals. And that, he insists, is anyone in their 20s, 30s or 40s. And empty-nesters, too. The 40-unit complex initially will include apartments — no word yet on rental prices — but Miller hopes to convert them to condominiums after five years or so.

If all goes as planned, says Miller, the old school could get the beginnings of its facelift in September. Renovations will likely be completed by summer 2002.

— [Brandon Walters](#)