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SPOTLIGHT

Cleveland High School in St. Louis could be next project for Memphis developer

Steph Kukuljan | Post-Dispatch

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Broken windows can be seen around the front entrance to Cleveland High School in the 4300 block of Louisiana Avenue in St. Louis on Wednesday, Feb. 25, 2026.

David Carson, Post-Dispatch

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ST. LOUIS — The developer who undertook a \$130 million renovation of a historic Downtown West building now is planning to tackle the long-vacant Cleveland High School.

Memphis-based Development Services Group is proposing to redevelop the dilapidated property in South City's Dutchtown neighborhood into 106 senior apartments.

Rent would range from \$550 to \$1,675 depending on size of the one- and two-bedroom units. At least 95 apartments would be affordable housing, according to a tax credit application DSG filed with the state of Missouri.

DSG is seeking \$2.5 million each from the state and federal government in low-income housing tax credits. The project tentatively is called The Cleveland Residences, documents show.

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DSG President and CEO Gary Prosterman of DSG did not respond to a request for comment Wednesday.

In 2023, DSG **finished** its nearly two-year redevelopment of the Butler Brothers building at 18th and Olive streets into 384 apartments now known as **The Victor**. The more than 700,000-square-foot building was erected in 1906 for a mail-order catalog wholesaler and later

served the Ben Franklin retail chain.

The building had been vacant for more than a decade before DSG, which specializes in historic renovations, closed on its deal. Prosterman previously told the Post-Dispatch that his firm takes on **big, "dirty" projects**.

A redevelopment of the three-story Cleveland High School, situated on 10 acres at Louisiana and Bingham avenues, has been a top priority for St. Louis Development Corp. in recent years.

The 235,000-square-foot school was built in 1915, designed by noted architect William B. Ittner — who designed many St. Louis schools — and named for President Grover Cleveland.

Cleveland operated as a comprehensive high school for much of its history. In the 1980s, it merged with Junior Naval Academy and became a military magnet school called Cleveland Naval Jr. ROTC.

It closed in 2006, and since has suffered from years of vandalism and fires.

Local developer Chris Goodson in 2023 sought to redevelop Cleveland, though his project never advanced. St. Louis Public Schools **sold the building** to SLDC for \$300,000 earlier this year.

A redevelopment of Cleveland is expected to be a major, and costly, endeavor: SLDC officials **have said** the property needs at least \$3 million in structural repairs just to its roof, windows and floors.

DSG is stacking its development team with local firms. EverTrue, formerly known as Lutheran Senior Services, is a partner on the project. Rise Community Development is serving as consultant, according to the city's Community Development Administration, which facilitates federal, state and local grants to city recipients.

"The Cleveland High School project represents a unique opportunity to preserve an important piece of St. Louis history while addressing the overwhelming demand for high-quality affordable senior housing," EverTrue President and CEO Adam Marles said in a statement.

“While there is tremendous enthusiasm for the project, its future depends on the award of Low-Income Housing Tax Credits, which are essential to bringing this vision to life.”

The Missouri Housing Development Commission awards federal and state low-income tax credits, though the city makes recommendations.

The state typically announces its awards in December.

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By Steph Kukuljan | Post-Dispatch

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