

# Nob Hill condos have a classy past

Restored Embassy mixes elegance and practicality

By Jodi Helmer  
for The Tribune

Northwest Portland is home to an eclectic mix of shops, restaurants, cafes and art galleries, making it one of the most vibrant neighborhoods in the city. Now, with the conversion of one of the neighborhood's finest historic buildings, it's also the place to purchase a brand new piece of old-world real estate.

The Embassy, a five-story former apartment building on the corner of Northwest 20th Avenue and Flanders Street, has been converted into condominiums and restored to its original grandeur by developer Robert Ball.

"The Embassy is a very grand building," Ball says. "Buildings of this quality are few and far between."

Ball, who has preserved a number of historic residential buildings in Northwest Portland and is responsible for the development of the Marshall-Wells Lofts and the Avenue Lofts in the Pearl District, spent five years negotiating the purchase of the Embassy. The building, once known as "Northwest Portland's address of distinction," was owned by a single family until Ball bought it last spring.

Built in 1925 and listed on the National Register of Historic Places, the Embassy offers buyers a rare chance to purchase property in Northwest Portland's Nob Hill area.

"There is not a lot of opportunity to buy in this neighborhood," Ball says, referring to the area's reputation as a Mecca for renters.

The units are priced from \$103,785 to \$265,458, which Ball calls "an affordable product in a great neighborhood." Buyers seem to agree: 38 units have been sold, and more than 130 prospective buyers toured the Embassy during its opening weekend in early March.

After living in Washington, D.C., for two years, Andrew Feinberg was preparing to move back to Portland. When he

toured the Embassy he knew immediately he wanted to make it his home.

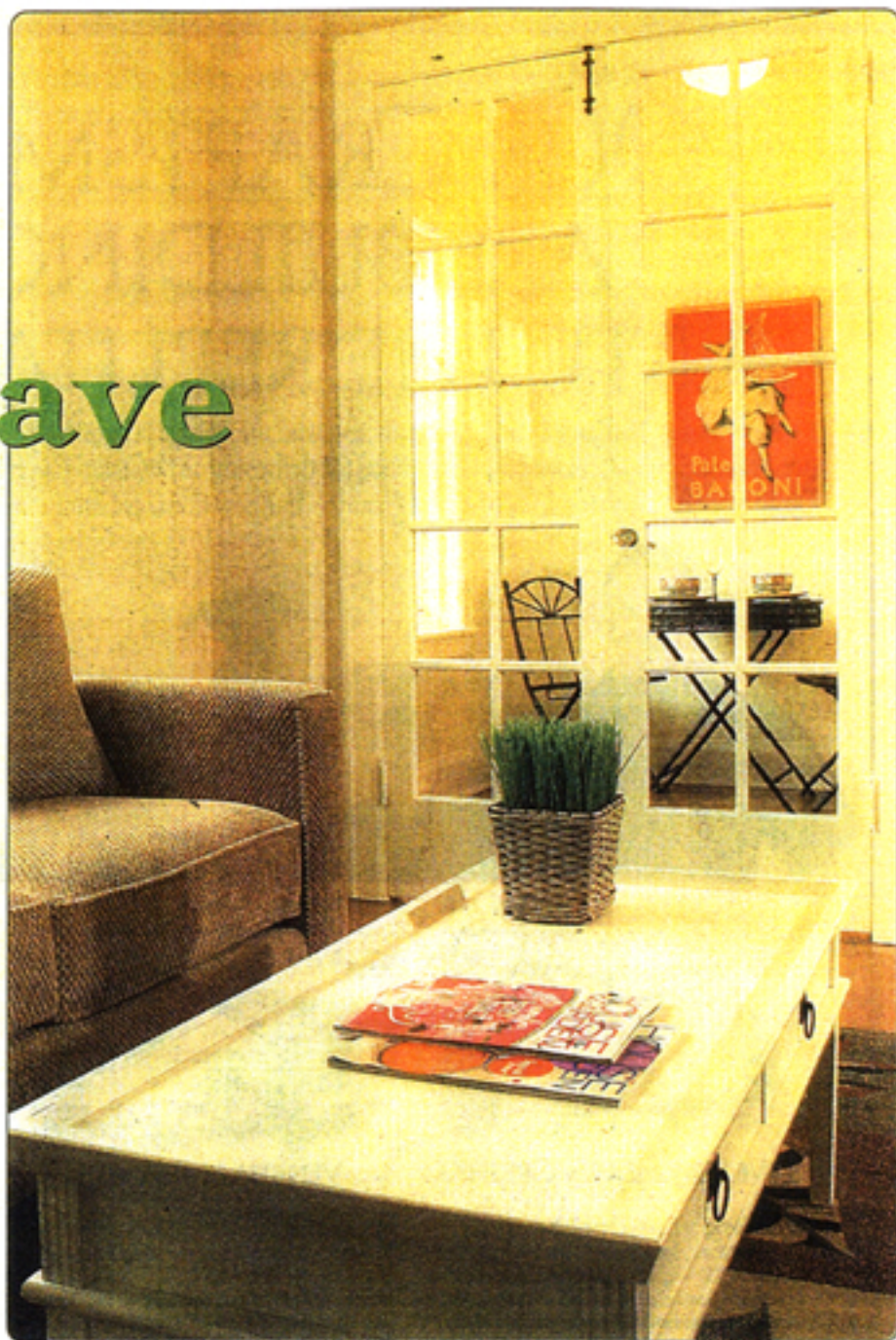
"It's a beautiful building in a great location," says Feinberg, who purchased a one-bedroom unit on the fourth floor. "It's almost too good to be true."

The 69 studio and one-bedroom condominiums, which range from 407 square feet to 879 square

feet, feature large living spaces with hardwood floors, updated kitchens and historic detailing. In keeping with the building's history, the condominiums have their original built-ins and beautiful doorway and window moldings.

The kitchens include new cabinets and appliances. Though they are equipped with modern amenities, the kitchens are designed to fit the period in which the Embassy was built. Black and white hexagon tiles are laid in a geometric pattern on the countertops, and period lighting has been installed throughout.

The large living areas are light and bright, highlighting the original honey-colored hardwood floors. Many units feature



photos by Greg Kozawa

The 69 studio and one-bedroom condominiums in the Embassy have large light, bright living areas with honey-colored hardwood floors. All the units also have Murphy beds, which give the homeowners more space and a room for guests.

French doors and large closets with dressing rooms and built-ins. Every unit has a floor-to-ceiling Murphy bed — a bed that folds up into a closet — that is original to the building. With a quick adjustment, homeowners have an instant guest bedroom.

"The Murphy beds give homeowners a lot more space and flexibility," Ball says. "This is something you just won't find in other buildings."

Though the Embassy retains much of its original charm, the building has also undergone upgrades to enhance livability. Aluminum windows, for example, have been replaced with new wooden windows that reflect the original architecture. The terrazzo flooring in the bathrooms has been restored. Even the old-fashioned telephone intercom

system was retained, though there are plans to install an updated intercom system.

The Embassy has also undergone major upgrades to the wiring, plumbing, elevators and common areas; the hallways have new carpeting, paint and lighting.

A private interior courtyard provides a secluded space for homeowners to spend time with neighbors and friends in a shared outdoor space.

"The courtyard is beautiful in the summer," Ball says. "Residents can hang out and barbecue outside, if they choose to."

The Embassy has a community laundry room, and several units include a designated off-street parking spot — a coup in the high-traffic neighborhood. Best of all, the building offers buyers a historic 15-year tax freeze,

saving them several thousand dollars in property taxes.

Ball is excited about the work that's being done at the Embassy. "I feel really good about saving and restoring older buildings," he says. "They give our neighborhoods character."

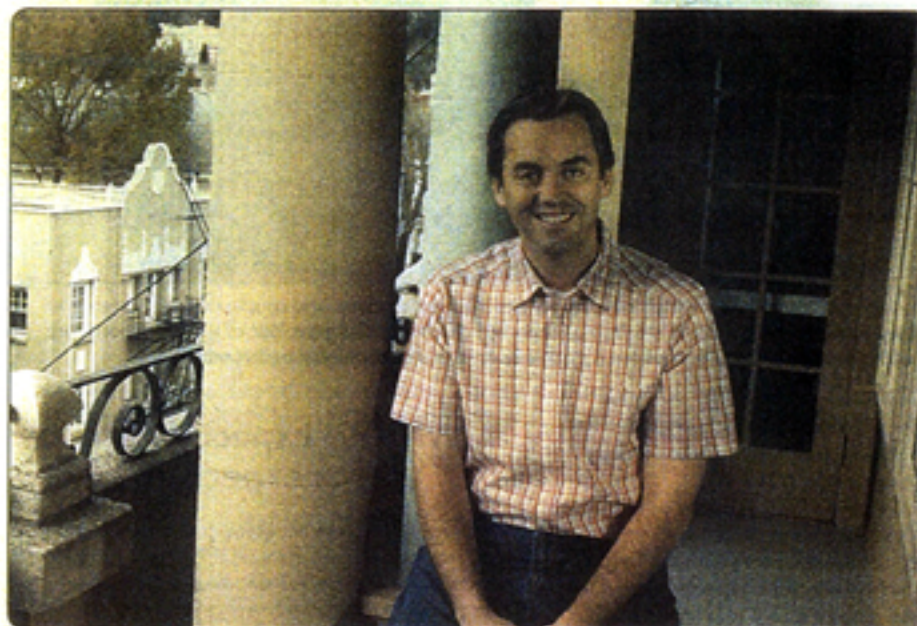
Ball likens the Embassy to a traditional New York walkup. "It is a very classic building in an old-world way," he says. "The architecture and building materials and designs are things you couldn't afford to build

today."

Feinberg, an architect, recognized the Embassy's beauty and historical significance.

"There is something really cozy and inviting about the building," he says. "The units have a lot more character than many of the other spaces being built. I am very excited about it."

The Embassy is being marketed through Pearl Real Estate. For more information visit [www.embassycondos.com](http://www.embassycondos.com) or call 503-225-2255.



Robert Ball, top, takes great pride in saving and restoring older buildings. He spent five years negotiating the purchase of the Embassy, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Many units include French doors and large closets with built-ins and dressing areas (above). The Embassy, known as "the address of distinction," is very classic in its architecture and craftsmanship (right).