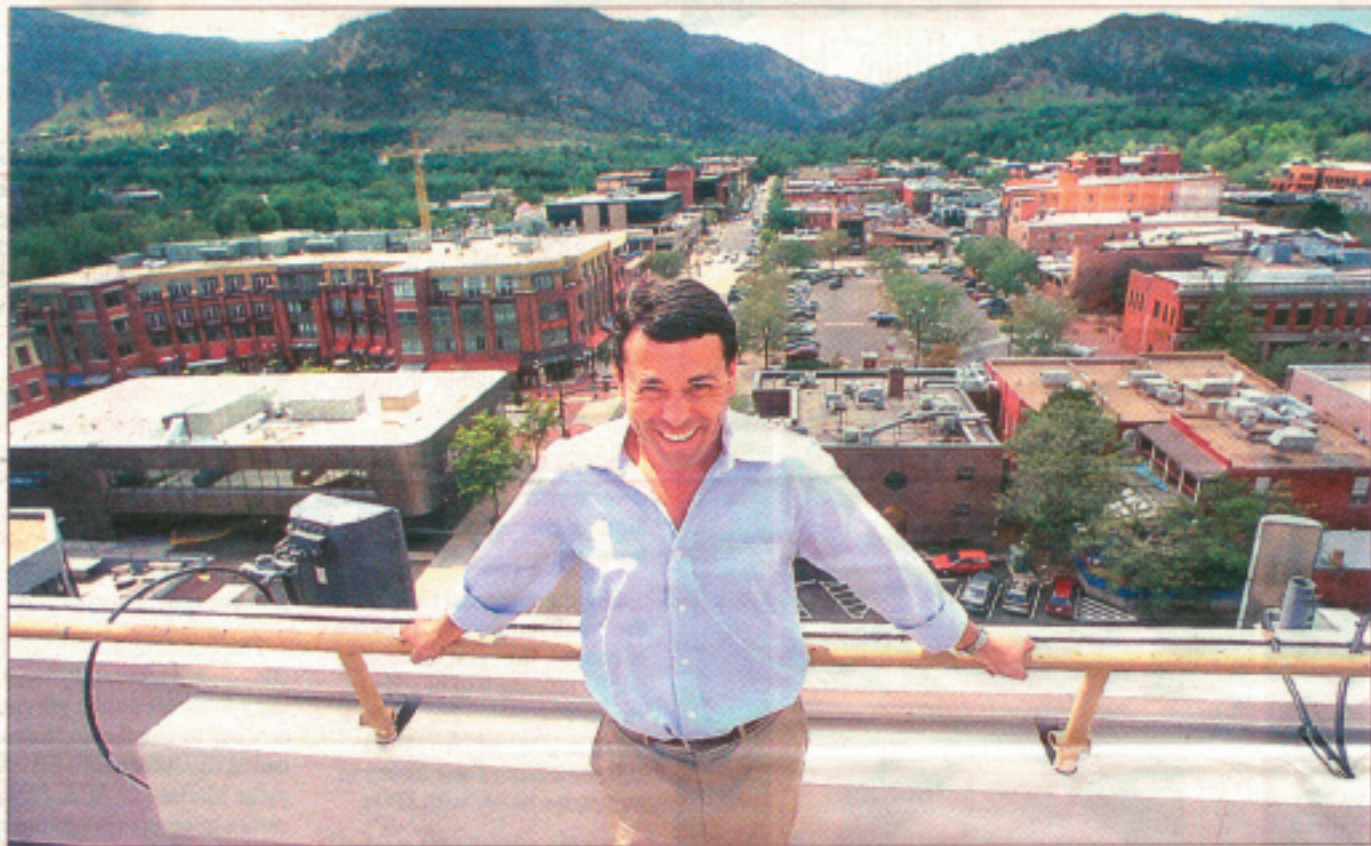


BUSINESS

PLUS



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Jim Chanin, owner of Chanin Development, stands last week from the roof of his office building in downtown Boulder. Chanin is under contract to buy the First Christian Church, 950 28th St., Boulder, to expand his housing project underway on adjacent properties.

By Greg Avery / Camera Business Writer

Houses of the holy

Land value, desire for housing leads Boulder churches to

Sweeping views of the Flatirons. Close proximity to the University of Colorado and plenty of space for parking right at the main entrance to Boulder.

The very things that once made the 3-acre property owned by First Christian Church a logical site for a house of God today make it prime for redevelopment into condominiums.

Call it the divine scrape-off.

Chanin Development Co. reached an agreement with the First Christian Church last week to buy the angular

building and parking lots at 950 28th St.

The company plans to replace the distinctive, 46-year-old church — the exterior of which appeared in the movie "About Schmidt" — with housing. The deal would allow the congregation to rebuild elsewhere and fund ministries it has previously been unable to afford.

The church turned to Chanin because the company is tearing down two motels next door to the church and building dozens of condominiums designed to attract college students and young

Churches jump on housing demand

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Driving it all is the demand for housing in Boulder, increasing land values and a city eager for high-density urban infill projects to increase the city housing stock without encouraging sprawl.

"The church gets what they want, the city gets what it wants and it's a really good thing for everybody," said James Chanin, head of Chanin Development.

However, fans of First Christian Church's architecture worry about it going away, and about the possibility that other distinct places of worship could follow.

It is not the only Boulder congregation considering redevelopment.

The Sacred Heart of Jesus Catholic parish is weighing a developer's offer to buy its church and school property on the edge of downtown, at 14th Street and Mapleton Avenue.

The Catholic Archdiocese of Denver, which oversees northern Colorado parishes, and other church bodies are exploring the impact of moving the 1,700-household congregation. It has not decided whether to accept the developer's offer.

If it accepts the offer, Sacred Heart would move to archdiocese-owned land just east of Boulder.

The Sacred Heart congregation has worshipped on the property for 131 years. The structures there are more modern and not old enough to automatically be reviewed as potential historic landmarks.

Part of the consideration is the land's value and whether growth patterns in the neighborhood support keeping the church in the core of the city, said Jeanette DeMelo, archdiocese spokeswoman.

"You pay attention to the real estate value and you pay attention to the demographics, and hopefully you find a place where they meet," she said.

Trinity Lutheran Church, at Broadway and Mapleton Avenue, is proposing to build 28



PAUL AXEN / Daily Camera

The First Christian Church in Boulder has signed a contract to sell its property, making it the second church in the city to capitalize on continued demand for housing.

condominiums — half designated affordable housing, half for congregants — on its parking lot. It is undertaking the project to help people in the community, rather than sell off its property and move elsewhere, church leaders said last month.

First Christian Church is taking a different route, using the sale of its property to create a more functional church and to pay for its spiritual contracts.

Chanin Development put the property under contract Wednesday.

The county assessor values it at \$3.9 million. Terms of the sale to Chanin are not being disclosed.

The church plans to use the money from selling its 28th Street property to build a new

church that is more energy efficient and suits the congregation's needs better. The sale also would fund the church's long-standing desire to pursue mission work domestically and in Latin America, the church said in a written statement issued jointly with Chanin.

The property would cap a super-block of condominium redevelopment right at the city's main entrance.

Chanin Development spent \$7.9 million to buy the Lazy L Motel, 1000 28th St., and the New West Inn, 970 28th St., and turn the stretch of frontage road just east of the University of Colorado campus into the Landmark Lofts.

The company demolished the Lazy L buildings and are on the verge of getting building

permits to build just more than 100 condominiums and a couple of shops on the 1.8-acre site.

It expects to start on the neighboring property, the New West Inn, in about six months. The motel — formerly Super 8 of Boulder — remains open.

The company has not begun working on specific plans for the First Christian Church property, but it likely will include razing the existing site, Chanin said.

That concerns historic preservationists.

Historic Boulder, a nonprofit group that works to preserve notable local architecture, would like Chanin to find some way to integrate the church into the redevelopment, said Joyce Davies, Historic Boulder's co-president.

"It's an excellent example of the really good architecture that was being done at the time," Davies said, adding that its profile is raised by being at the city's entrance. "It makes such a fantastic site."

The Sacred Heart of Jesus has yet to really draw the group's attention. But as developers continue to include churches in their lists of properties with redevelopment potential, preservationists continue to hope architectural history doesn't get obliterated in the process.

"One hopes they'll be cautious about tearing things down," Davies said.

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