

**Convert!**  
**The Adaptive Reuse of Churches**

by

Christopher John Kiley

B.S. Urban and Regional Planning  
Cornell University, 1994

Submitted to the Center for Real Estate and the Department of  
Urban Studies and Planning in Partial Fulfillment of the  
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### **ABSTRACT**

This thesis examines the phenomenon of vacated churches and analyzes the major issues underlying their adaptive reuse in order to help promulgate an awareness of the range of successful strategies and solutions that are available to stakeholders who are interested in seeing a former church building preserved through its conversion to a new use.

The reuse potential of a church is affected by the building typology and its structural condition, the stakeholders involved, the process used, the regulatory context, finance and site issues. Reuse potential for a church can also be informed by researching and documenting examples of previously successful reuse strategies. These issues are examined closely in this thesis, as is a case study of a successful public-private church redevelopment project in Brookline, MA.

The results of the research and analysis are used to form a series of findings and recommendations regarding the reuse of churches. The recommendations include combining funding sources, engaging the congregation and the public, retaining the appropriate kind of developer for the end goal, undertaking public-private redevelopment processes and the importance of identifying interim solutions. The recommendations are tested for credibility by applying them to a real situation in Plymouth, MA while working with a team of developers to assess the reuse potential of a historic church for a downsizing congregation.

Thesis Advisor: Dennis Frenchman

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This thesis is dedicated to my sister Jessica Kiley. The most likely candidate I know to author a major work, and the certainly the best able to pontificate on a topic involving religion, I've somehow managed to beat her to both. So Jessica, you're up next. And remember; only a PhD dissertation trumps a double master's degree thesis!

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## INTRODUCTION

Churches are an important presence in the neighborhood fabric of communities throughout the United States. They serve as local landmarks, establish identities for districts - in Boston most neighborhoods are best known by their parish name - and play a role in the community and spiritual lives of neighborhood residents. However, significant forces at work in urban areas as well as within religious institutions over the last twenty years are increasingly threatening the vitality of urban churches. Closed and vacant churches have become a presence in the urban landscape in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and while a desire often exists within a parish or a neighborhood to save or preserve a former church, the building type has proven particularly challenging to convert to other uses. Issues commonly faced when reusing churches include the atypical nature of church buildings with respect to their interior spaces and exterior features, regulatory factors, financing requirements, and the development process. These issues are compounded by the lack of familiarity on the part of church officials, congregation members, the public and the development community with respect to converting a former church building to a different use.

*Figure 1: Clarendon Court, Boston, MA*



But a former church that has been successfully redeveloped to a different use can provide a rich environment to users that can not be provided in any other building type while remaining a contributing element of the visual image of its community. Clarendon Court in Boston, MA (Figure 1) is a premier example of a reuse project that retains the elegance of the original church structure and emphasizes the unique interior and exterior qualities of the building while transitioning to a new residential function. This thesis examines the phenomenon of vacated churches and analyzes the major issues underlying their adaptive reuse in order to help promulgate an awareness of the range of successful strategies and solutions that are available to stakeholders who are interested in seeing a former church building preserved through its conversion to a new use.

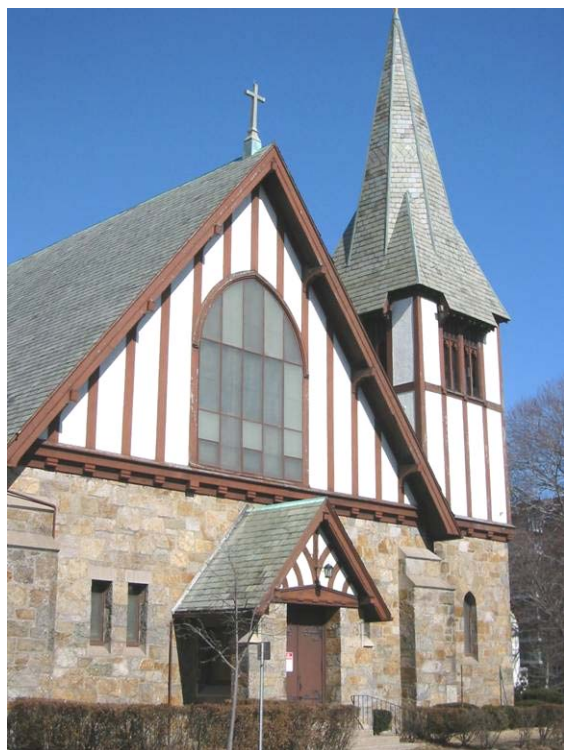
The phenomenon of church closings is currently acute with the Catholic Church, and nowhere more so than in Boston, Massachusetts. Following a trend of sporadic closings over the past 20 years, a major reconfiguration and consolidation of the Archdiocese of Boston's parish and property inventory is now underway in the spring of 2004, and 50-60 churches are expected to close within the next year. This consolidation comes on the heels of two previous decades of closures. The Archdiocese of Boston, comprised of 414 parishes in 1986, will be reduced to as few as 297 parishes by 2005 following the current consolidation, a 27% reduction over a twenty year period. It is likely that many of the churches that are closed will be sold by the Archdiocese along with their accompanying land parcels to private developers, and these sites will transition to new uses. Should a church building be reused or demolished? If the building is to be reused, for what purpose? These questions will be asked by many people in Boston very soon as the specific churches slated for closure are announced by the Archdiocese.

This thesis examines the major physical, regulatory and social issues that affect the redevelopment and reuse of churches. The reuse potential of a church is affected by the building typology and structure, the stakeholders involved, the regulatory context, finance, site and process. These issues are examined closely in the first four chapters. Use types that can be accommodated within a former church are discussed in Chapter Five. The discussion of different use strategies is supplemented with an appendix that documents the examples of reused churches that were uncovered in the process of researching this thesis, highlighting their key features, challenges and solutions.

Chapter Six presents a case study of a successful public-private church redevelopment project in Brookline, MA (pictured in Figure 2), a project which is closely examined to achieve an understanding of the level of complexity involved in reusing a church and to provide an example of a solution meeting both public and private objectives.

The results of the research and analysis component of this thesis are used in Chapter Seven to form a series of findings and recommendations regarding the reuse of churches. The recommendations are tested for credibility in Chapter Eight by applying them to a real situation in Plymouth, MA involving working with a team of developers to assess the reuse potential of a historic church for a downsizing congregation.

*Figure 2: St. Aidan's, Brookline, MA*



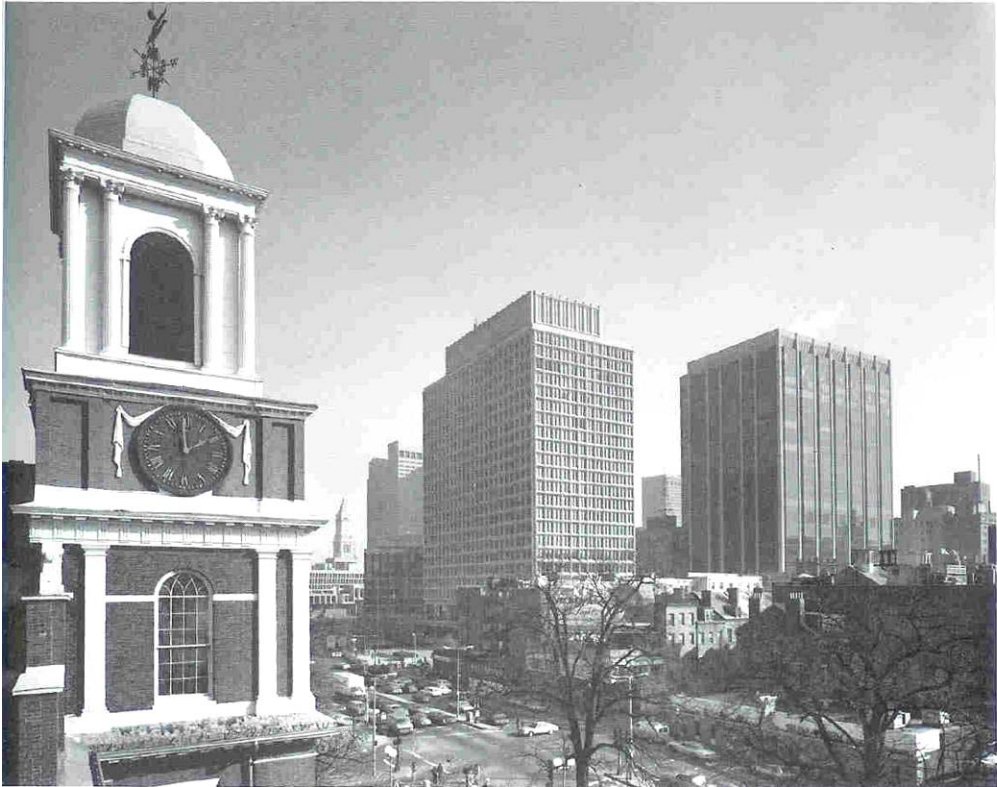
issues related to the conversion of churches in order to develop strategies that can be used to encourage the creative reuse of unique structures through creative development solutions and in order to increase the rate of preservation of notable and valued churches through the dissemination of useful information to interested parties.

The research, case studies and recommendations are intended to be of use by church owners and congregations seeking to address reuse of a church in their own locality. Much of the document is focused on Boston, MA but the analysis, conclusions and recommendations are applicable to situations across the United States. Similarly, the examples used throughout are primarily former Christian churches, but the findings are also applicable to synagogues, temples, mosques and other buildings that house sacred space.

*Figure 3: Old West Church, Boston, MA circa 1925*



*Figure 4: Old West Church, Boston, MA circa 1995. The city grows, the church remains.*



## CHAPTER ONE

### CHANGES IN RELIGION AND THE CLOSURE OF CHURCHES

This chapter examines national and local factors underlying the closure of churches. Analysis of population and religious participation rates in the United States, review of trends in Catholicism nationally and in Boston, and examination of the factors that are driving the closing of churches in the Boston area all help to assess the magnitude of the issue and to establish why the reuse of churches is an important and relevant topic for investigation.

#### **Religious Participation in the United States**

The rate of religious participation in the United States has decreased over the last ten years, from 51% of the population in 1990 to 49% in 2000. Table 1.1 presents religious participation statistics for the largest denominations in the United States. While the total number of religious adherents grew by 8.5% between 1990 and 2000, the total population increased by 13.2% during that time period. Adjusted for population growth, the rate of religious participation has actually decreased 2%.

There are an estimated 2,600 different religious groups in North America<sup>1</sup>. Some religions are experiencing significant growth in terms of adherents (Southern Baptists, Assembly of God and Latter Day Saints) while others are decreasing (Presbyterians, Methodists). Broadly speaking, evangelical protestant religions reported growing numbers of adherents while mainline protestant religions are decreasing. Catholics, the largest religious group in the United States, experienced a high rate of growth between 1990 and 2000, with an increase of 8.6 million, or 16.4%, adherents. The 11.2% growth of non-western European religions like Hindu and Muslim reflects the increasing immigration rates into the U.S. from eastern cultures.

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<sup>1</sup> Howe, Jeffery. *Houses of Worship: An Identification Guide to the History and Styles of American Religious Architecture*. London: PRC Publishing Limited, 2003.

*Table 1.1: Religions in the United States, by Adherents<sup>2</sup>*

Major Religious Bodies	Adherents 1990	2000	Change 1990-2000	Percent Change
Catholic	53,385,998	62,035,042	8,649,044	16.20%
Southern Baptist	18,940,682	19,881,467	940,785	4.97%
Methodist	11,091,032	10,350,629	-740,403	-6.68%
Jewish	5,982,529	6,141,325	158,796	2.65%
Evangelical Lutheran	5,226,798	5,113,418	-113,380	-2.17%
Latter-Day Saints	3,540,820	4,224,026	683,206	19.30%
Presbyterian	3,553,335	3,141,566	-411,769	-11.59%
Assemblies of God	2,161,610	2,561,998	400,388	18.52%
Lutheran	2,603,725	2,521,062	-82,663	-3.17%
Episcopal	2,445,286	2,314,756	-130,530	-5.34%
American Baptist	1,873,731	1,767,462	-106,269	-5.67%
All Other	15,967,838	17,755,923	1,788,085	11.20%
<b>Total US Religion</b>	<b>126,721,485</b>	<b>137,814,924</b>	<b>11,093,439</b>	<b>8.75%</b>
<b>Participation Rate*</b>	<b>51%</b>	<b>49%</b>		<b>(2%)</b>
* the population in the US in 1990 was 248,709,766; in 2000 it was 281,421,839. The total population changed 13.2%.				

Table 1.2 lists the largest religions in the United States in terms of the number of congregations. The number of total religious congregations in the United States increased by 2 percent between 1990 and 2000, with a total of 4,800 net new congregations formed. The fastest growing religions in terms of adherents tend to also show increases in the number of congregations: Latter-Day Saints, Assembly of God, Southern Baptists. The notable exception is Catholicism, which decreased by 2.9%, or 690 congregations, during this period. The major religions exhibiting decreases in the number of adherents (Methodists, Presbyterians) also experienced a decrease in the number of congregations. Not every congregation that forms or disbands maintains control of a church building, nor does every religion maintain a church presence in the same manner, but the trends of congregation formation are an indicator of the demand for church buildings.

<sup>2</sup> Data source: *Churches and Church Membership in the United States 1990* and *Religious Congregations and Membership in the United States 2000*. Association of Statisticians of American Religious Bodies (ASARB)



*Table 1.2: Major Religions in the US, by Congregation<sup>3</sup>*

Major Religious Bodies	Congregations		Change 1990-2000	Percent Change
	1990	2000		
<b>Southern Baptist</b>	37,922	41,514	3,592	9.47%
<b>Latter-Day Saints</b>	9,208	11,515	2,307	25.05%
<b>Assemblies of God</b>	11,149	11,880	731	6.56%
<b>Lutheran</b>	6,020	6,077	57	0.95%
<b>Episcopal</b>	7,333	7,314	(19)	-0.26%
<b>Evangelical Lutheran</b>	10,912	10,739	(173)	-1.59%
<b>American Baptists</b>	5,801	5,555	(246)	-4.24%
<b>Judaism</b>	3,975	3,727	(248)	-6.24%
<b>Presbyterian</b>	11,433	11,106	(327)	-2.86%
<b>Catholic</b>	22,441	21,791	(650)	-2.90%
<b>Methodist</b>	37,238	35,721	(1,517)	-4.07%
<b>Total All Religions</b>	<b>245,541</b>	<b>250,402</b>	<b>4,861</b>	<b>1.98%</b>

## Catholicism in America

Catholicism is the largest religion in the United States, and its 62 million adherents represent 22% of the total population. Catholicism is the only religion in the United States with a strong centralized authority, and all major policy and doctrine for the Church emanates from the Vatican in Rome as it has for thousands of years. It is the Vatican's authority that divides each country in which it is active into Archdiocesan districts which are in turn subdivided into individual parishes. The locations and coverage area of each parish is controlled by the Archdiocese, and in turn by the Vatican. By contrast, congregations from religions without a central authority, like Protestants, Baptists and Judaism, are largely autonomous, draw congregation members from wide and overlapping geographic areas, and freely locate or relocate.

The Catholic Church's position as the largest religion in the country and 16% growth rate in terms of adherents, however, belies some major structural shortages within Catholicism nationally that is impeding the Church's ability to serve existing parishes as well as to grow into new parish areas. Table 1.3 contains data illustrating the structural issues facing the Catholic Church.

<sup>3</sup> Data source: *Churches and Church Membership in the United States 1990* and *Religious Congregations and Membership in the United States 2000*. Association of Statisticians of American Religious Bodies (ASARB)

*Table 1.3: Catholicism in America<sup>4</sup>*

Year	1965	1975	1985	1995	2000	2003	Change 1965-2003
<b>Catholic population (millions)</b>	45.6	48.7	52.3	57.4	59.9	63.4	<b>39%</b>
<b>Parishes</b>	17,637	18,515	19,244	19,331	19,236	19,081	<b>8%</b>
<b>Diocesan priests</b>	35,925	36,005	35,052	32,349	30,607	29,285	<b>-18%</b>
<b>Religious priests</b>	22,707	22,904	22,265	16,705	15,092	14,349	<b>-37%</b>
<b>Total priests</b>	58,632	58,909	57,317	49,054	45,699	43,634	<b>-26%</b>
<b>Priestly ordinations</b>	994	771	533	511	442	441	<b>-56%</b>
<b>Graduate-level seminarians</b>	8,325	5,279	4,063	3,172	3,474	3,414	<b>-59%</b>
<b>Parishes without a resident priest</b>	549	702	1,051	2,161	2,843	3,040	<b>454%</b>

## Demographics and Catholicism

Demographic patterns indicate that the United States population will become increasingly ethnically diverse over the next fifty years, with the largest population increases coming from Hispanic residents<sup>5</sup>. The US Census Bureau forecasts that the Hispanic population will triple from 35.3 million people in 2000 to 98.2 million people by 2050. The white population is forecast to increase about 10 percent, from 194.5 million to 213 million over the next half century.

The historic white, non-Hispanic majority is projected to decline from 69 percent of the population in 2000 to about 53 percent by 2050. The Hispanic population is located primarily in the west coast, with only 14% of the population residing in the Northeast. Since even by conservative estimates, some 56 percent of Hispanics presently adhere to Catholicism<sup>6</sup>, it can be expected that the Catholic Church will continue to experience significant growth in the number of adherents as a result of the

<sup>4</sup> Data source: Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate Georgetown University

<sup>5</sup> Source: Gautier, Mary. "Financing Catholic Parishes in the United States: A National and Regional Comparison" Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate Georgetown University. Washington, DC: CARA. August 2002. pg. 7-9.

<sup>6</sup> Gautier, Mary. "Financing Catholic Parishes in the United States: A National and Regional Comparison". Pg. 8

shifting ethnic composition of the American population, but that the growth will not come from the traditional ethnic group, nor will it take place in the northeast cities that have traditionally supported a large Catholic infrastructure. This is likely to continue the pressure on Archdiocesan authorities to shift resources away from the urban neighborhoods of the Northeast that are currently laden with churches and into newly developing areas in the West to build new churches for the new Catholic population centers.

### The Effect of Suburbanization on Urban Churches

Most U.S. cities developed over the course of the 19th century in a similar physical form: a dominant downtown commercial core was closely surrounded by densely populated residential districts and connected by mass transit systems including trains and subways. After World War II, a new paradigm developed, one that encouraged single-family home ownership and the private automobile. The increase in home buyers triggered a development explosion of sprawling, low-density suburbs dependent on highways and autos.

*Figure 1.4: The Simpsons, First Church of Springfield<sup>7</sup>*



A subsequent exodus from the city by anyone that could afford a car and obtain a mortgage led to a radical restructuring of the geographic distribution of the population. By 1950 the rate of suburban residential development was ten

times the rate in urban areas, and between 1950 and 1970 the U.S. suburban population doubled, from 36 to 74 million people<sup>8</sup>. The suburbs catered to a new, emerging market of white middle-class families created by returning servicemen intent on living a modern life, while abandoning the

<sup>7</sup> Image of Springfield from Simpsons.com. Image copyright Fox Broadcasting Corporation.

<sup>8</sup> Whiteson, Leon. "The Regional Metropolis" in *Dialogue: Architecture + Design + Culture*. September, 2002.

urban cores by leaving behind only the poorest residents (most often people of color and/or new, non-Western European immigrant populations) and by removing many government forms of social and economic support from the central city in favor of the suburbs. The physical role of the church remains an important feature of the American suburban fabric - evidence of this is seen with the central location accorded the town church in the fictional suburb of Springfield in the Simpsons television series (Figure 1.4)<sup>9</sup>.

**Figure 1.5: Abandoned Church, Detroit, MI**



The flight of the white middle class to the suburbs after World War II affected the vitality of the existing network of churches. Some religions reacted differently than others, in part determined by the nature of central control in the religious institution behind the faith. The lack of central control in the Protestant and Jewish religions allowed individual churches and synagogues to move along with their congregation, so many urban churches with predominantly white congregations closed their doors and vacated the inner cities for the suburbs. The church buildings they left behind were boarded up, razed, or were sometimes found burned to the ground

from suspicious fires in the middle of the night. Figure 1.5 is a photograph of the interior of an abandoned church in Detroit, Michigan. The centralized Catholic system, however, by retaining land ownership and by subsidizing parish operational expenses, allowed the increasingly struggling inner city parishes to remain in place even in the face of diminishing membership and decreased donations. The policy of the regionally organized Archdioceses to subsidize struggling urban parishes for the past thirty and forty years has had many positive community effects in transitional urban neighborhoods, ranging from stemming the outflow of Catholics from the inner cities, to helping to stabilize neighborhoods otherwise lacking social services, and by helping assimilate new immigrant populations into the cities<sup>10</sup>.

<sup>9</sup> The Simpsons are the creation of Matt Groening and are copyright protected by the Fox Broadcasting Corporation.

<sup>10</sup> Gamm, Gerald. "When Churches Disappear". *The Boston Globe*. March 14, 2004. Third Edition. A1.

## Catholicism in Boston

With 2.9 million adherents in 2000, Boston is the third-largest Catholic Archdiocese in the country after New York and Chicago<sup>11</sup>. The Archdiocese of Boston serves Essex, Middlesex, Norfolk and Plymouth counties and is one of four Archdioceses in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

The Archdiocese of Boston is one of the largest landowners in the Boston region, with a portfolio of 357 churches and several hundred associated buildings like schools, houses and offices, as well as numerous properties bequeathed through charitable donations. In Boston alone, the Archdiocese owns 67 building complexes and 288 buildings that include 62 churches, 55 rectories, 46 schools, 38 convents, and 10 parish halls. 69 undeveloped parcels (including vacant lots and parking) in addition to numerous parks, shrines and cemeteries associated with a parish, are also under ownership of the Archdiocese within the City of Boston<sup>12</sup>.

**Table 1.6: Catholicism in Boston<sup>13</sup>**

Year	Catholic Population	Parishes
1985	2,017,133	415
1990	2,742,600	404
1998	2,002,322	388
1999	2,042,688	382
2000	2,038,032	368
2001	2,069,225	362
2002	2,083,899	360
<b>Change 1985-2002</b>	<b>66,766</b>	<b>-55</b>
<b>% Change</b>	<b>3.2%</b>	<b>-13%</b>

Table 1.6 contains descriptive statistics for the Catholic population in Boston over the past seventeen years. It is important to note that the number of adherents reported by the Archdiocese of Boston describes the number of people who choose to claim association with Catholicism, and does not provide an indication of the number of adherents who actively participate via attendance at Mass or through financial contributions, which can help to explain the shrinking number of congregations despite an increase in the total reported number of adherents.

In December, 2003, Archbishop Sean P. O'Malley, speaking to a gathering of the priests of the Boston archdiocese, described the immediate need to close additional parishes in Massachusetts. According to Archbishop O'Malley, the effects of two unanticipated factors: the prolonged national recession and the clergy sexual abuse crisis, have left

<sup>11</sup> Data Source: Association of Statisticians of American Religious Bodies (ASARB). *Religious Congregations and Membership in the United States 2000, 2002.*

<sup>12</sup> Data Source: Broomer, Kathleen Kelly for the Boston Preservation Alliance. *Archdiocesan Properties in Boston (by parish/complex/facility)*. Working Draft, January 2004.

<sup>13</sup> Data source: Archdiocese of Boston

the church less able than ever to subsidize parish operations.<sup>14</sup> This follows on the heels of 55 church closings over the past two decades. The Archdiocese undertook a similar consolidation process in 1998 by culling from the then-existing 387 parishes in the Boston archdiocese. These closings were undertaken, according to then head of the Archdiocese Cardinal Bernard Law, “in an effort to revive the Catholic Church in an era of declining attendance and shrinking supply of clergy”.<sup>15</sup>

Five principal reasons have been identified by the Archdiocese as being the primary factors behind the current slate of church closures in Boston, while a sixth, the abuse scandal, is identified here as integral to understanding the reasons behind why so many are about to close at once.

1. Aging infrastructure and deferred maintenance.
2. Decreased church attendance
3. Archdiocese financial troubles
4. Shortage of priests
5. Changing urban demographics
6. The abuse scandal and shaken faith

### **Aging Infrastructure and Deferred Maintenance**

The lack of effective strategic planning and aggressive financial management by individual parishes or by the centralized institution behind them often leads to deteriorating building conditions and spiraling repair costs. Historic Boston’s 1999 *Religious Properties Preservation: A Boston Casebook*<sup>16</sup> reports that parishes are commonly plagued with prolonged management indecision, operating deficits, subsidy dependence, abandoned repair projects, and under-utilization. Occupants and owners tend to wait until a crisis occurs before carrying out critical maintenance and repairs. The worst-off properties tend to lack a constituency of users to support building maintenance, with the consequence that properties are competing with each other for limited funds from organizations that control many sites. Historic Boston Incorporated reports that some churches, as a matter of

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<sup>14</sup> Paulson, Michael. “O’Malley said to eye closing of parishes” *The Boston Globe*. November 22, 2003. Third Ed. A1.

<sup>15</sup> Kong, Delores. “Cardinal Law recommends closing up to 60 parishes.” *The Boston Globe*. March 8, 1998. B1.

<sup>16</sup> Historic Boston. *Religious Properties Preservation: A Boston Casebook*. Boston, MA: Historic Boston Incorporated. 1999.

policy, have not allocated money for building repairs in decades<sup>17</sup>. The Archdiocese undertook an engineering study of its 266 buildings in the greater Boston area in 2004 to assess the state of its infrastructure. The Archdiocese's report concluded that it would cost in excess of \$104 million just to repair 200 of its buildings within the city of Boston<sup>18</sup>. The estimate covers only repairs necessary to make the buildings safe and suitable for use by parishes and schools, and does not include any of the repairs required to bring buildings up to code or to provide needed renovations<sup>19</sup>.

## **Decreased Attendance**

According to the Archdiocese of Boston, fewer than 25 percent of the more than 2 million Catholics in the greater Boston area regularly attended Mass in 2000<sup>20</sup>. That rate dropped even lower in 2002, to 16%, as fewer parishioners attended Mass during the uncertainty of the clergy sexual-abuse crisis<sup>21</sup>. The Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) at Georgetown University estimates that in the 1950's 60 to 75 percent of Catholics nationally attended mass at least weekly, compared to 35 percent today<sup>22</sup>. A CARA study of Catholic parish finances in the United States found that Catholic parishioners donate to the church at less than half the rate of Protestant denominations (1.04 percent of median household income versus 2.13 percent<sup>23</sup>), further impacting the finances of Catholic churches that are facing diminishing attendance rates.

## **Sexual Abuse Scandal**

While the Archdiocese of Boston maintains that the factors that are leading to the current climate have been long in developing, the sexual abuse scandal has undoubtedly served as a propellant, catalyzing the negative impacts of many of the longer-term changes like parish attendance and finances. While sexual abuse by the clergy has long existed within the Catholic Church<sup>24</sup>, the public revelations of the depth and breadth of the abuse in the Boston area over the second half of the twentieth century has garnered extraordinary attention and publicity. The sexual abuse crisis has

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<sup>17</sup> Historic Boston. *Religious Properties Preservation: A Boston Casebook*. Boston, MA: Historic Boston Incorporated. 1999.

<sup>18</sup> Paulson, Michael. "O'Malley Plans Aggressive Cuts" *The Boston Globe*. December 17, 2003. Third Edition. A1.

<sup>19</sup> Paulson, Michael. "Churches Fiscal Crisis Aired" *The Boston Globe*. February 5, 2004. Third Edition. A1.

<sup>20</sup> Paulson, Michael. "Cardinal Eyes More Church Closings." *The Boston Globe*. March 12, 2000. Third Ed. B1.

<sup>21</sup> Paulson, Michael. "1 in 6 go to Mass" *The Boston Globe*. January 30, 2004. Third Ed. A1.

<sup>22</sup> Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate. "Attend Mass Weekly by Marital Status" *The CARA Report*. Vol. 6, No. 4. Spring 2001.

<sup>23</sup> Gautier, Mary. "Financing Catholic Parishes in the United States: A National and Regional Comparison" *Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate Georgetown University*. Washington, DC: CARA. August 2002.

<sup>24</sup> See Eco, Umberto. *The Name of the Rose*. New York: Warner Books. 1983.

exacerbated the financial pressures on the Catholic Church in Boston in two ways: indirectly through decreased attendance at Mass and a decrease in contributions, and directly as a result of committing to significant settlement payments to the victims of abuse. Attendance at weekend Mass services in Boston has decreased 15 to 20% in the two years that the sexual abuse issue crisis has been front and center in the news, and total overall and per person donations have also decreased during that same timeframe<sup>25</sup>. The decreased attendance and drop in donations further widened the operating shortfall for individual parishes. The Catholic Church's conservative stances on moral and social issues, emanating from the Vatican in Rome, increasingly conflicts with personal stances of young, educated urbanites in the United States, and may impact their decisions about participating in the Church as they form their own households. In Boston, only 1 in 6 Catholic households regularly attend Mass<sup>26</sup>. The major financial losses experienced by the Archdiocese of Boston in the form of settlement payments to victims of abuse have further hampered the ability of the Archdiocese to support parish operating expenses: the Archdiocese agreed to pay an \$85 million settlement to sexual abuse victims in 2003, bringing the total amount spent in settlements to in excess of \$120 million<sup>27</sup>.

## **Archdiocese Finances**

Archbishop O'Malley reviewed the litany of factors affecting parish operations in Boston in a 2004 speech describing the state of parish finances<sup>28</sup>:

“Many parishes have been struggling for years, if not decades, with overwhelming money problems, including their inability to meet all their financial obligations. Salaries and benefits, while not in competition with the private sector, must offer a living wage and decent healthcare and retirement benefits. These costs have gone up astronomically over the last ten years. The cost of insurance and of heating and repairing buildings, the cost of maintaining the services a parish must provide, and the costs of something as everyday as clearing snow, have all gone up. Many parishes and schools simply cannot afford to pay their normal operating expenses. At the beginning of the Jubilee Year 2000, the Archdiocese of Boston wrote off \$26.6 million dollars in debt owed by parishes and schools to the Archdiocese. Since that time three years ago, parishes and schools that are not able to pay their bills have accrued additional operating debt of \$7.4 million dollars.”

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<sup>25</sup> Paulson, Michael. “O'Malley Seeks Advice on Closings” *The Boston Globe*. January 13, 2004. Third Edition. A1.

<sup>26</sup> Paulson, Michael. “O'Malley Seeks Advice on Closings” *The Boston Globe*. January 13, 2004. Third Edition. A1.

<sup>27</sup> Lavoie, Denise. “Church Takes Unusual Steps to Raise Money for Abuse Settlement” *The Boston Globe*. December 14, 2003. Third Edition. A1.

<sup>28</sup> Archdiocese of Boston. “Archbishop Seán O'Malley on Reallocation and Reconfiguration” Transcript of Televised Speech. February 4, 2004.



The archdiocese has already has cut programs, laid off employees, trimmed the pensions of retired lay employees, and closed schools as a result of the financial shortages. The archdiocese's financial problems are caused by several factors, including the poor national and local economy, weakened fund-raising by Catholics upset over the abuse scandal, and the \$100M+ cost of the abuse settlements. While the Archdiocese has maintained that the settlement will not be paid from either collection or sales proceeds from closed churches, and points out that church closings have been thus far driven by demographic changes and shortages of priests, the impact of the settlement is serving to accelerate the church closure process by tapping other funds and reserves that could potentially be used to underwrite church operations.

### **Shortage of Priests**

As shown in Table 4, the number of priests in the Boston archdiocese dropped from 1,197 in 1984 to 887 in 2003<sup>29</sup>. According to Archbishop O'Malley, however, this 37% decline in the number of priests only represents the beginning of the shortage<sup>30</sup>. The median age of priests in the Archdiocese is 59 and the number of active priests over 70 is 132. There are currently 40 seminary students in the Archdiocese, not nearly enough to cover the existing shortage, let alone to serve the forecasted growth. This shortage of priests is also mirrored on the national Catholic level, as shown in Table 3.

### **Changing Urban Population Demographics**

The breaking down of ethnic boundaries and the flight of the middle and upper classes were central trends to differing degrees in all American urban areas during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In Boston, many of the Archdiocese's churches were located in the central city and in the inner ring suburbs like Lawrence, Newton, Somerville, Waltham and Salem, where early generations of Irish and Italian Catholics lived in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Each of those locations had six or more parishes as of 2003. Some of those churches had been specifically designated as national parishes to serve earlier generations of immigrants in their own languages, such as French, German, Lithuanian and Polish. St. Margaret's Parish in Dorchester, MA (see Figure 1.7) has served multiple populations over time as the demographics of its surrounding neighborhood have changed.

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<sup>29</sup> Paulson, Michael. "Archdiocese Cutbacks" *The Boston Globe*. December 10, 2003. Third Ed. A1.

<sup>30</sup> Archdiocese of Boston. "Archbishop Seán O'Malley on Reallocation and Reconfiguration" Transcript of Televised Speech. February 4, 2004.

*Figure 1.7: St. Margaret's, Dorchester, MA*



But as subsequent generations of Boston Catholics grew increasingly more affluent (or, at least, attained middle class status), many families from the first waves of immigrant communities made the highly desirable move to the outlying suburbs, steadily increasing demand for parish services in this relatively new area. The new wave of Catholic immigrants populating the inner cities speak an array of different languages – Spanish, Vietnamese, and Haitian Creole for example – and worship in neighborhood churches instead of at designated national parishes as with the previous immigrant populations<sup>31</sup>. The national parishes often no longer have the support base within their traditional population yet can't attract a critical mass from the new, more intermingled immigrant populations. As a result, the archdiocese finds itself needing to address

a shortage of capacity in the outer ring suburbs combined with a surfeit of empty churches in the numerous older neighborhoods of Boston. Cardinal Sean P. O'Malley, in an interview with the Catholic news agency Zinit, outlined the need for the church to reallocate resources away from traditional locations and to the new outer belt suburban locations populated by its adherents<sup>32</sup>:

“In dioceses of the Northeastern United States, such as ours, there are two or three churches in each neighborhood of a city, but few outside. Those small churches have lost many faithful and it is hard for them to remain standing, and more efforts are needed in the suburban belt. Therefore, we have to regroup some parishes to redistribute resources better.”

<sup>31</sup> Convey, Eric. “City Parishes Reassured as Closings Eyed” *The Boston Globe*. December 10, 2003. Pg. 10.

<sup>32</sup> Paulson, Michael. “Archdiocese Cutbacks” *The Boston Globe*. December 10, 2003. Third Edition. A1.

## Historic and Landmark Churches in Boston

Numerous Boston churches are listed on the National Register of Historic Places or have been designated as National Historic Landmarks. While significant in an urbanistic and preservation sense, the historic designations have relatively little effect on the consolidation process currently underway by the Archdiocese. A listing on the Register or a designation as a Landmark does not in any way regulate use of the building, including sale, conversion or demolition. Boston has six National Historic Landmark churches and 31 churches listed on the National Register of Historic Places<sup>33</sup>. The 31 churches represent 13% of all Boston buildings on the National Register. The Boston Preservation Alliance concluded a study in January 2004 of all churches and properties in the Boston Archdiocese. The inventory contains their age, architecture, listing status, and comments on their potential for preservation. The results of the inventory have been forwarded to the Massachusetts Historical Commission, the Mayors Office of the City of Boston and the Archdiocese by the Boston Preservation Alliance and will become a part of the public record and thus available for use by the general public. The inventory will assist the public sector in evaluating which churches they view as most important with regards to preservation, and may also cue the Archdiocese as to which churches are likely to attract the most opposition if closed and sold. The specific implications of listing a property on the National Register and/or receiving Landmark status are both discussed in greater detail elsewhere in this thesis.

*Table 1.8: Boston National Historic Landmark Churches<sup>34</sup>*

Church	Location	Year Built	Year Listed	Status
<b>New Old South Church</b>	654 Boylston St.	1874-75	1970	Active church
<b>Old North Church</b>	193 Salem St.	1770	1961	Active church and museum
<b>Old West Church</b>	131 Cambridge St.	1806	1970	Active church
<b>St. Paul's Church</b>	136 Tremont	1819-20	1970	Active church
<b>Trinity Church</b>	Copley Square	1874-77	1970	Active church
<b>Vilna Shul</b>	14 Phillips St.	1920	n/a	Cultural center

<sup>33</sup> National Park Service National Register of Historic Places. NRIS database.

<sup>34</sup> Source: National Park Service National Register of Historic Places. NRIS database.

## Church Closure Criteria

Archbishop O'Malley, in a speech to Boston priests in December 2003, outlined the process for closing churches<sup>35</sup>. The process will utilize the Archdiocese's traditional methods as well as utilizing local input. The church's traditional process for determining parish viability looks at a number of measures of parish health, including the number of registered parishioners, the attendance at Sunday Mass, the number of baptisms, funerals and marriages performed, the enrollment in religious education classes, the existence and vitality of a parish school, the physical conditions of parish buildings, and parish finances<sup>36</sup>. The attendance, baptisms, funerals and marriages numbers are used to calculate a Sacramental Index figure for each parish, which is then used to assess the vitality of the church. The current process in Boston also utilizes the input of 82 grouped clusters of parishes, formed by Cardinal Law in the 1990's to share ministerial resources but convened recently to gauge vitality across multiple proximate parish groups. These cluster groups will make recommendations regarding specific closures in their parish areas<sup>37</sup>. Additional special regard will be given to parishes that serve recent immigrants and to parishes that run schools. While the Sacramental Index comes under fire for its mathematical approach and limited inputs, the inclusionary process has been greeted by critics of the church as a positive change from the previous completely closed-door Archdiocesan procedure<sup>38</sup>. The Boston Preservation Alliance's historic resources inventory and the Archdiocese's own engineering studies will also likely play a role in the decision-making process, as will potential disposition price yields, although it is not known how or at what levels this information will be utilized. The recommendations of the 82 clusters will be consolidated and examined by a series of committees of increasingly larger jurisdictions and will lead to a single set of consolidation recommendations for the Archbishop to amend, approve and act upon<sup>39</sup>. All suppressions decided upon by Archbishop O'Malley must also be approved by the Vatican in Rome.

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<sup>35</sup> Paulson, Michael. "O'Malley Plans Aggressive Cuts" *The Boston Globe*. December 17, 2003. Third Ed. A1.

<sup>36</sup> Paulson, Michael. "Archdiocese Cutbacks" *The Boston Globe*. December 10, 2003. Third Edition. A1.

<sup>37</sup> Paulson, Michael. "O'Malley Plans Aggressive Cuts" *The Boston Globe*. December 17, 2003. Third Ed. A1.

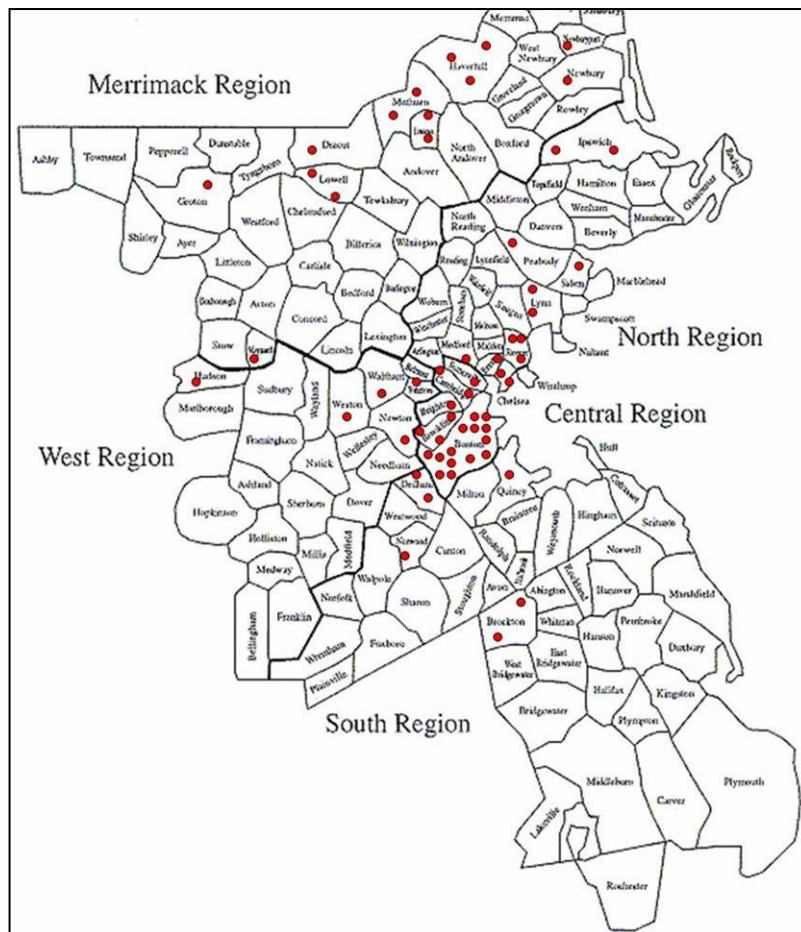
<sup>38</sup> Editorial. "When Churches Close" *The Boston Globe*. December 29, 2003. Third Edition. A10.

<sup>39</sup> Associated Press. "Parishioners to Learn This Weekend What Churches Recommended for Closure" *The Boston Globe*. March 2, 2004. Third Edition. A1.

## Catholic Church Closures in Boston

The Archdiocese of Boston has closed 55 parish churches since 1985, reducing the number of total parishes to 357 as of March, 2004<sup>40</sup>, and averaging 3.3 church closures per year. Figure 1.9 presents a map of parishes closed by the Archdiocese of Boston between 1985 and 2002. This reduction represents a 13% decline in the number of parishes in the Archdiocese. The process underway in spring 2004 will result in the announcement of closures for an estimated 50-60 churches (representing up to 17% of the 357 current parishes), with the selected parishes expected to close within 16 weeks of the announcement<sup>41</sup>. These actions combined will total 105 – 115 churches closed within the Archdiocese of Boston over the past twenty years, a 25% reduction.

**Figure 1.9: Map of Parishes Closed in the Boston Region, 1985 – 2002**



<sup>40</sup> Archdiocese of Boston. *Parish Reconfigurations (1985-2003)*

<sup>41</sup> Paulson, Michael. "Diocese To Speed Parish Closings" *The Boston Globe*. March 3, 2004. Third Edition. A1.

## **Conclusions: Boston Real Estate Implications**

The Archdiocese of Boston, as the owner of all of the church properties and buildings within the Diocese inventory, has the most decision making power with respect to disposition of the closed churches. While the Archdiocese has not made any public declarations with regard to their intended use of the churches after they close, it stands to reason that each will be strongly considered for sale potential. The need of the Archdiocese to reduce their operating expense burden as well as the \$104 million deferred maintenance exposure across their large property portfolio, plus their desire to raise funds in order to support parish improvements and operating expenditures at the remaining parishes<sup>42</sup>, all present compelling reasons for the Archdiocese to consider selling redundant properties. Given the immediacy of their operating and maintenance issues, and of the Archdiocese's stated desire to immediately bolster the remaining parishes, it can be estimated that the Archdiocese will seek to sell many of the properties in their portfolio, and as soon as possible.

From a real estate perspective, this will result in a flood of atypical properties onto the market at the same time. Since in the past occasions to reuse a church or a church site have been infrequent, there does not exist a broad knowledge base within the market for how to best utilize the unique conditions presented by church properties. With few developers and finance entities experienced in redeveloping church parcels, it will be difficult to assess value, which is likely to result in a longer and more complicated disposition process for the Archdiocese. The relatively small niche of the real estate industry that is involved with adaptive reuse projects - even in reuse-intensive Boston - will limit the interest in any one property at a given time, let alone a large number within relative close proximity. While it is relatively easy for a developer to calculate the value potential of a church site if the beginning point is demolition of the existing structure and reuse of the land for new construction (simply figure the value of the land based on developing the most profitable new use for that parcel of land, and then reduce the offer by the expense required to demolish the church and clear the land), it is much harder to arrive at a calculation of land value when the myriad complexities of a reuse development have not yet been fleshed out, nor when the end-use or end-user have not yet been identified. The potential lack of interested redevelopment parties may lead to two circumstances: the sales prices offered will be lower as a result of less competition, and the sales prices offered by developers interested in demolition in order to access the site will be

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<sup>42</sup> Paulson, Michael. "Diocese To Speed Parish Closings" *The Boston Globe*. March 3, 2004. Third Edition. A1.

comparatively larger given fewer opportunities per church for the development of highest and best-use creative adaptive reuse solutions by different developers.

For purposes of this thesis, two observations about the Archdiocese can be gleaned if examined purely from a financial standpoint, with the assumption that the consolidation is intended to act as a revenue generator: first, community uses will not be favored over highest and best financial uses proposed by private developers, and second, that the Archdiocese will be more likely to favor offers from developers that do not result in preservation schemes. Those properties that do end up being preserved and reused will end up competing against each other and against other preservation projects for the number of limited federal, local and private redevelopment funds that only are only deep enough to serve the most compelling cases. As the owner of the land, the Archdiocese can limit the range of buyers and/or users to which it will sell the properties and buildings, and it can attach conditions to the title relative to use or prohibited uses. The more limiting the use restrictions, however, the less inherent value lies in the property to a speculative developer, so the Archdiocese will be likely to limit use restrictions to those that they deem particularly troublesome or profane. These issues of use limitations in accordance with religious belief are discussed in more detail in Chapter Two.

The Archdiocese does have the option of landbanking some or all of the redundant properties in their portfolio by either assuming the holding costs of the properties or by finding temporary users for the spaces to cover operating expenses. Landbanking would provide the church with flexibility to reuse the property and buildings for another Archdiocesan use in the future or with regards to maximizing their value from property sales by allowing for strategic release of properties into the market.

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## CHAPTER TWO

### STAKEHOLDERS

This chapter examines the groups of people involved in the adaptive reuse of a church building: the church, the public and the developer. The church stakeholders include the institution behind the religious movement that is housed in the church building as well as the congregation itself, while the public is comprised of both the government and of the general public. Developers, either for profit and not-for-profit in nature, are responsible for coordinating the development process and for matching the building owner with investors and users. There are a great number of old buildings that are eligible for reuse, but they all compete against each other for the limited resources associated with this development type, and churches in particular offer limited appeal due to their inherent difficulties to convert. For any given church building, at least one party – be it the church, the public or the developer – must be passionately committed to preserving the church building in order for a reuse project to succeed.

#### **The Church**

A church includes two distinct subgroups: the institution behind the religious movement that is housed in the building and the parish or congregation comprising the users of the space. While the church is the legal owner of the building, the parish or congregation members often retain a strong sense of ownership through their association with the spiritual activities of the church, or from their role in contributing funds for its construction, repairs or operation. The levels of autonomy within churches and the distinctions between the church owner and the congregation vary enormously across religious movements. The most autonomous church entity would be a purely local movement that owns their own structure and does not adhere to a doctrine from outside their parish area. The level of distinction between ownership and parish in that case would be nonexistent. The least autonomous church entity is likely the Catholic Church, with a worldwide centralized control network emanating from the Vatican in Rome.

The two sets of stakeholders within the church may have different priorities when it comes to the use or reuse of the building, depending in large part on the broader circumstances involved and on

the amount of local versus central control inherent in the religion's institutional management structure. The goals of the institutional church owner in the disposition or redevelopment of a church will vary greatly depending on both the relationship to building ownership and on the local circumstances specific to the building, place and time. A church could desire to create temporary, or removable, changes that would allow for a different use while preserving the option to return the church to religious use in the future. This could be the case if the church views the conditions and circumstances affecting the particular church as being temporary in nature, such as with the conversion of a church to a nightclub in the United Kingdom with the church retaining ownership and the right to convert the church back to an active sacred space<sup>43</sup>. On the other end of the spectrum of possible goals lies the opinion by those in control that a redundant or closed church represents a symbol of failed Christianity, of retreating or rejected faith, and that the best disposition solution is the demolition of the church<sup>44</sup>.

As the owner of the building, the church retains the most control over the fate of the structure and the site through their decisions on what to do following the closure of a church. The church as the institutional owner will be unable to redevelop a church on their own given their lack of real estate expertise and the likely shortage financial resources available to undertake the project. It is also unlikely that the church entity has any real estate experience with which to produce a development project. Therefore a relationship with a developer is a likely requirement for the church if they plan to be active in determining the next use of the church building and/or the site.

- If the church retains a developer for a fee to consult and to manage a project, the church retains ownership and control of the asset and the outcome.
- The church can partner with a developer, with the church providing the asset and participating in the outcome but ceding some level of control to the developer partner and their goals. The outcome from either retaining or partnering with a developer can range from the church selling the original building directly to the developer to the church retaining ownership of the redeveloped building. Faith Baptist Church in Washington, D.C. (pictured in Figure 2.1) was purchased by a developer from the former congregation and developed into a residential building with 23 units.

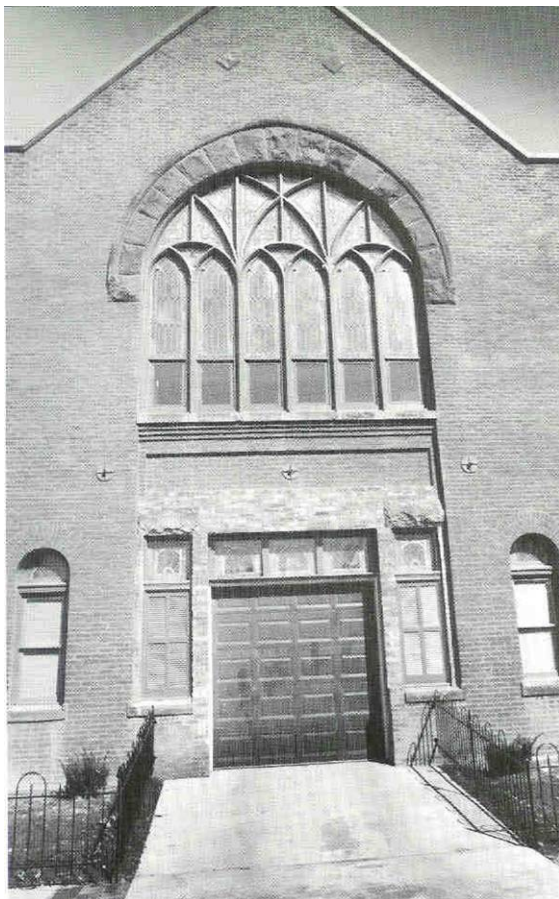
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<sup>43</sup> See Appendix One

<sup>44</sup> Powell, Ken and De La Hey, Celia. *Churches: A Question of Conversion*. London: SAVE Britain's Heritage. 1987.

- The church can also choose to sell the building and the site outright. In this case the church may choose to attach conditions to the deed of the building or to the terms of the sale that will limit its use in some manner. Conditions could range from ensuring preservation of the exterior and/or interior or requiring removal of all religious imagery to prohibiting certain types of reuse (abortion clinics, stem cell research laboratories or other activities deemed profane by the original church, for example). Any condition attached to the deed or the sale will affect the value of the property. Pamela Cunningham believes that these conditions prove to be major encumbrances towards successful reuse of a church building: “In many cases it will be found that the legal problems arising from conversion proposals will be as great as the structural ones, since the sale of a church can often be subject to restrictive covenants governing its future use”.<sup>45</sup>

**Figure 2.1: Faith Baptist Church, Washington, D.C.**



The goals of a congregation or a parish in a church closure and disposition scenario may vary widely within a congregation and are often personal and sentimental. In the middle of the spectrum lie parishes with goals of preserving their local landmark and hoping to retain some of the historical evolutionary memory of the community in that neighborhood via the retention of the image of the church. The congregation or parish maintains little to no control in a church reuse project unless they are also the institutional owner, with a control structure that allows for local decision making. Therefore the active role of a congregation in a church redevelopment planning process is limited to the extent of their actual ownership and/or their relationship with the center of control within the framework of the religious institution. The

congregation brings to the table, however, a significant resource in terms of connections to the local

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<sup>45</sup> Cunningham, Pamela. *Change of Use*. London: A&C Black, 1988. pg. 19

network of unique users and markets that might value the church higher than any other entity precisely because of the local connection – an uncle of a former parishioner that is a broker, or a member who plays bridge with the founder of a growing startup company that needs office space. Parish members can also contribute political support if they are organized either for or against a development proposal that must obtain local zoning or land use approvals.

## **The Community**

The government administers social controls through federal, regional, state and local acts of regulation and enforcement and by providing incentive or disincentive programs to help achieve policy directives. An added layer of complexity arises in the United States with respect to churches because of the separation of church and state as provided for in the First Amendment of the United States Constitution, which states that “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof...”.<sup>46</sup> With regards to the physical regulation of church buildings and sites, this translates to an inability of local governments to regulate the location or operation of churches with the exception of ensuring public safety through life safety codes or traffic and parking measures. A church property by default is not zoned, nor is it on the tax rolls given the not-for-profit designation of churches. When a church reverts to a different use, however, the provisions separating church from state no longer apply and the building becomes subject to land use and zoning regulations.

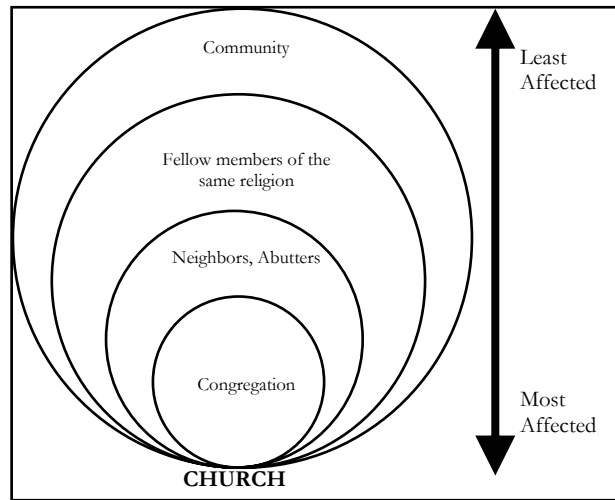
The general public consists of all people that view, pass by, live across from, or have a historic connection with a church. The general public as a whole is the entire group of people that are either directly or indirectly affected by the presence of the church building. Figure 2.2 illustrates a typical range of stakeholders within the general public, and their typical level of involvement in any given church. While it is hard to elaborate upon the goals of such a wide group of stakeholders or identify what they bring to the table, it is possible to identify the range by which they are affected by the building. The least affected may pass by infrequently, or may have a single event association with the building and will likely not notice if it goes missing. The most affected members of the general public may be neighbors living adjacent to the building, and who stand to see changes to their property value (or may perceive impending changes to their property value) if the church leaves. It

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<sup>46</sup> *Amendments 1-27 to The Constitution of the United States of America*. U.S. National Archives and Records Administration.

is these neighbors who may become the most involved and vocal stakeholders in a church reuse process, speaking on behalf of the general public when in fact looking to defend narrow and personal range of property interests.

**Figure 2.2: The General Public**



A church can provide a positive externality to neighboring property values by virtue of its de facto open spaces or from its identity as a local landmark or from the character of its building. The general public as an entire population is subject to indirect benefits resulting from the church’s role in the neighborhood fabric. Of the four elements of the urban landscape described by Kevin Lynch in *The Image of the City*, (pathway, node, edge and landmark)<sup>47</sup>, churches act as both

node and landmark and as such are important to the visual organization of an urban area.

Both the general public and the local government have a vested interest in seeing urban areas retain their vitality, and there is an acknowledgement of the symbolic importance of preserving highly visible and meaningful community buildings. The National Trust for Historic Preservation included churches in its discussion of the importance of preserving white elephant buildings:

“White elephant buildings are generally large structures designed for specific uses...and that are no longer needed for their original use. The size and configuration of these buildings is sometimes the problem. White elephant buildings are often well-known landmarks, occupying a significant location in the community. The health of such buildings is closely linked with the well-being of the neighborhood. The deterioration of nearby buildings sometimes contributes to the decline of white elephant buildings. The renovation and renewed purpose of white elephant buildings not only affects their individual future, but also has a significant impact on the surrounding community<sup>48</sup>.”

The Trust further recognizes the impact on the quality of life in the neighborhood caused by churches by naming Urban Houses of Worship to its annual list of America's 11 Most Endangered Historic Places in 2003<sup>49</sup>.

<sup>47</sup> Lynch, Kevin. *The Image of the City*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1960.

<sup>48</sup> National Trust for Historic Preservation. “New Life for White Elephants: Adapting Historic Buildings for New Uses”. *Preservation Information*, 1996

<sup>49</sup> National Trust for Historic Preservation. “National Trust Calls Seattle's First United Methodist Church "Poster Child" of National Epidemic”

## **The Developer**

A real estate developer is a professional service provider who instigates, coordinates and manages development projects in exchange for financial compensation. The developer provides development expertise and access to capital sources. They also provide the bridge between the building and its next user, and are thus responsible for overseeing the interests of the eventual future tenant. The developer's compensation may come in the form of fees charged for providing development services to a third party or may come in the form of some level of equity interest in the development project. For a church redevelopment project, a developer can work as a consultant for a fee, as a partner for a share of the risk and the return, or can participate as an owner by purchasing buying the church parcel outright. The goal of the developer is to produce a project that meets the financial objectives of the project's investors and financial sources. For the church, matching the developer selected for the job and defining the nature of the business relationship with the desired outcome is an important step to ensuring a successful redevelopment or redeployment of the building.

To meet the goal of producing a project that meets the financial objectives of the projects sponsors and financial sources, the developer must ensure that the end product proposed for the development will be attractive to potential end users. Both the type of use (condominium, office, rental apartment, commercial, laboratory, etc) and the quality of product (mid-level, high-end, custom) must meet or exceed the expectations of the market in that area at the time that the project comes on line so that a user or users can be found at the projected lease or sales rate that the financial backing is based upon. The developer will produce a market study as a means of assessing the supply and demand of different potential uses for a project site, and as a means of determining potential profitability and to identify risks for any given use for that site. A non-profit developer such as a Community Development Corporation (CDC) may include additional factors in their market analysis in order to determine the most suitable use for the site. Additional factors considered by a CDC to determine the highest and best use for the church might include consideration of community goals, underrepresented markets, and opportunities for leveraging larger-scale economic stimulus.

Managing risk and reward is of primary concern to a developer. A developer can theoretically choose to participate across a wide variety of projects, each with different likelihoods of success or

failure and each with different levels of potential return on investment. The developer must factor the amount of risk inherent in a project into the desired returns in order to ascertain whether the development can produce a return that is suitable for the amount of risk involved in the undertaking.

*Figure 2.3 Speculative Church to Condominium Redevelopment, Toronto, Canada*



Figure 2.3 shows a design rendering of a proposed church to condominium redevelopment proposed by a speculative developer in Toronto, Canada. Risk in a development project comes from the likelihood of experiencing changes in the final outcome of the project due to timing, construction costs, market conditions, the entitlements process, fluctuating costs of capital,

and from macroeconomic factors like the national economy, labor conditions, or regulatory changes. Reuse projects have more inherent risk than do new construction projects because of the significant amount of unknown conditions in the existing building that can't be discovered until after construction begins, conditions that include the integrity of the foundation, extent of internal structural degradation due to rot or termites, wiring and plumbing infrastructure, windows, etc. Churches tend to be an even higher-risk undertaking because of the known fact that most churches have deferred all maintenance, and therefore are more likely to have unknown or undiscovered structural conditions that will need to be addressed during construction, thus adding to the cost of the project and reducing the likely return on investment. A developer will require a higher return rate for a church redevelopment project than for a new construction project because of the risk of discovering additional factors and expense items during construction.

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## CHAPTER THREE

### DEVELOPMENT ISSUES

This chapter examines the development issues involved in the adaptive reuse of churches: regulatory considerations, project financing, building valuation, the development process and programming for reuse. An understanding of the central issues at work will help an engaged stakeholder to identify strategies for helping to create a successful reuse project.

#### **Regulatory Considerations**

Regulatory factors that must be considered when examining the conversion potential of a church include growth control policies, historic preservation ordinances, zoning, and building codes.

Regional and local growth controls increasingly inform the development priorities for a jurisdiction. Regional growth controls, implemented on a state or regional level, are becoming more commonplace as governments attempt to harness sprawl and reign in the creation of new development while re-emphasizing the utilization of and investment in existing urbanized centers. Regional growth control policies favor the reuse and redeployment of urban land through infill projects because these developments can be supported with existing municipal services like sewer, water, transportation and emergency services. Local growth controls, enacted by city or county-level governments to stem growth in their immediate area, often prioritize the same goal of reusing existing underutilized areas. Governments may incentivize developments that occur in urban areas targeted for redevelopment by making available block-grant or community redevelopment funds, reducing permit or tap fees, or making property tax exemptions.

While the land parcel occupied by a church building is exempt from zoning regulations so long as the church is being used for religious purposes (due to the separation of church and state), a redundant church proposed for conversion will be subject to a rezoning process. The zoning may revert to the underlying zoning of the surrounding area or it may go through a special review process to determine appropriate use. This process may occur independent of or concurrent with a development proposal. Examining the zoning and land uses that surround a church site will inform

the range of likely rezoning possibilities. It is unlikely that a church building will be rezoned to allow a use that is not in conformance with the surrounding area. The church parcel and building is likely to have non-conforming elements relative to the new zoning that will have to be addressed during the development review process including building setbacks, building height, disabled access, fire protection, open space, floor area ratio and parking requirements.

Building codes can present a significant obstacle to adaptive reuse projects. Many local jurisdictions still don't differentiate between regulations for new construction and regulations for building rehabilitation<sup>50</sup>. Rehabilitation project costs can be substantially increased by rigid code requirements that require major building modifications in order to meet structural, electrical, life safety, wind loading/ seismic, building material, building method, or environmental standards.

Building codes typically present the most serious obstacle to moderate rehabilitation projects, not to major rehabilitation and adaptive reuse schemes<sup>51</sup>. Major rehabilitation projects most frequently involve a scale of work that dictates that the entire interior of a building be gutted and rebuilt, which allows the resulting work to be completed very much in accordance with current construction standards. Although the basic structure and foundation is reused in a major rehabilitation project, virtually everything else in the building is 'new'. Moreover, because of the tendency towards higher overall costs of such projects as a result of the extensive new construction, it is usually not difficult to accommodate the expense of meeting the cost of any incremental additional code requirements that might be imposed.

Stringent building codes present the biggest problems for less drastic rehabilitation projects – those renovations that seek to improve an existing building while retaining as much of its basic structure, walls and materials as possible. Many moderate renovation and reuse projects are undertaken because they are more economical than new construction, and costs constraints on such projects are therefore typically severe. Since these projects often have small budgets, they have more difficulty accommodating the added expenses required by building and life safety codes.

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<sup>50</sup> Taylor, Christine. "Adaptive Reuse: How Regulatory Measures Imposed on Physical Characteristics Impact the Reuse of School Buildings". *Changing Places: Remaking Institutional Buildings*. Eds. 1992., pg. 224.

<sup>51</sup> Bunnell, Gene. *Removing Obstacles to Building Reuse and Community Conservation at the Local Level*, pg 61

From a public safety standpoint, if an existing building cannot be renovated at reasonable cost, there is a good chance that it will receive less and less investment, and in the end will deteriorate to hazardous conditions. Rehabilitation of old buildings is desirable, and should be encouraged for the simple reason that it increases the level of investment in old buildings, which in turn increases the private incentive for continued maintenance and repair.

If the public policy goal is to encourage renovation of existing buildings, the building codes should be written to reflect a desire to prevent rehabilitation only in cases where the proposed renovation brings a building below a minimum acceptable level of safety, and to creatively permit other undertakings<sup>52</sup>. To achieve a balance between safety and reinvestment incentive it is incumbent upon code reviewers to be able to make discretionary decisions when analyzing redevelopment proposals, as described by Gene Bunnell:

“The prescriptive nature of most building code regulations tends to encourage building officials to merely enforce the letter of the code. It does not require discretion or initiative, it permits it. A more flexible, performance-based approach to protecting life-safety in existing buildings will, by its very nature, require initiative and involvement on the part of the local official, and require the use of good judgment in determining how strictly to enforce different code requirements on existing, pre-code buildings.”<sup>53</sup>

Provision of access to mobility impaired users in an office, commercial or rental housing project is compulsory under the Americans with Disabilities Act<sup>54</sup>, and can add significant redevelopment costs to a project. This is of particular importance in a two or three-level structure that may not otherwise require elevators or other mechanical lift conveyances. Wheelchair ramps at entrances and exits, accessible restrooms and provisions for disabled parking are all required for ADA conformance. The insertion of elevators to provide vertical circulation in churches with multiple levels can be an extremely expensive undertaking, with each elevator adding in excess of \$200,000 to the cost of the project.

Federal and state landmark designations and historic register programs include public incentives for preserving buildings. The range of public redevelopment incentives is presented in Table 3.3. Federal tax policy has proven to have had the most profound effect in attracting private investors to

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<sup>52</sup> Bunnell, Gene. *Removing Obstacles to Building Reuse and Community Conservation at the Local Level*, pg 59

<sup>53</sup> Bunnell, Gene. *Removing Obstacles to Building Reuse and Community Conservation at the Local Level*, pg 57

<sup>54</sup> United States Department of Justice. Americans With Disabilities Act. *ADA Standards for Accessible Design*.

urban redevelopment and preservation projects<sup>55</sup>. National Historical Landmark or National Register status alone provides only very limited protections for historic structures and landscapes. Placing a building on the National Register of Historic Places or obtaining certification as a National or State Historic Landmark provides eligibility for rehabilitation tax credits and access to federal historic preservation funding sources like Congressionally appropriated Historic Preservation Fund and Save America's Treasures fund. Both funds are wide in scope and limited in resources, however, and securing grants is an extremely competitive process. These preservation incentives are provided in exchange for the owner agreeing to comply with the National Park Service's *Guidelines for the Rehabilitation of Historic Buildings*, which place virtually no controls on ownership, instead primarily serving to limit the Federal Government's ability to pursue projects that would result in the destruction or alternation of these buildings through efforts like highway expansion or urban renewal. According to the National Park Service<sup>56</sup>,

"The listing of private property as a National Historic Landmark or on the National Register does not prohibit under federal law or regulations any actions which may otherwise be taken by the property owner with respect to the property. The National Park Service may recommend to owners various preservation actions, but owners are not obligated to carry out these recommendations. They are free to make whatever changes they wish if federal funding, licensing or permits are not involved."

The NPS *Guidelines for Rehabilitation* also govern whether or not a rehabilitation project qualifies for federal tax credits, which are the major source of public funds available for reuse projects. Rehabilitation is defined by the Guidelines as "the process of returning a property to a state of utility, through repair or alteration, which makes possible an efficient contemporary use while preserving those portions and features of the property which are significant to its historic, architectural, and cultural values." And that "a property shall be used for its historic purpose or be placed in a new use that requires minimal change to the defining characteristics of the building and its site and environment<sup>57</sup>." The Guidelines are applicable when a property is either a stand-alone landmark or is a contributing resource within a historic district. Qualifying for tax credits is therefore linked to the appropriateness of the new use to the old building, and the extent to which other, more appropriate use are achievable. A conversion project that turned a former church into offices in Kalamazoo, MI (pictured in Figures 3.1 and 3.2) used a combination of state and historic tax credit funds as part of its project funding. The use suitability factor could be an issue for a

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<sup>55</sup> Howe, Kathryn. "Private Sector Involvement in Historic Preservation". *A Richer Heritage*. Eds. 2003., pg. 279

<sup>56</sup> National Park Service. Historic Preservation Services. *Federal Historic Preservation Tax Incentives*.

<sup>57</sup> Secretary of the Interior, US Department of the Interior. *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation*. 1992.

church that is proposing a major change of use and subsequent renovation plan, such as converting to housing or office by inserting multiple interior levels and exterior windows. In that scenario, the National Park Service could conceivably determine that a less visibly impactful reuse proposal like a theatre or restaurant would be more appropriate and therefore more warranting of funding or tax credit eligibility.

*Figures 3.1 and 3.2: Conversion to offices in Kalamazoo, MI using historic tax credits: before and after*



Historic district zoning is another governmental means of encouraging preservation that circumvents the need for individual properties to become listed by their owners. Contributing properties within designated historic districts are eligible for federal and/or state rehabilitation tax credits as well as other funds without having to be individually listed. Properties in Massachusetts within such districts and designated as contributing, however, must get a town’s historic or preservation commission to sign off on “any changes to exterior architectural features visible from a public roadway”<sup>58</sup>, so some level of control is still ceded by the owner in exchange for eligibility for the historic preservation zoning benefits and/or funds.

## **Project Financing**

All developers produce a financial feasibility analysis in the early stages of the project to identify the likely costs and benefits of the undertaking. The feasibility analysis estimates the cost of construction and the cost of borrowing money through debt financing and projects future cashflows

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<sup>58</sup> Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Massachusetts Historical Commission. “Historic Preservation Programs”.

from the project in an attempt to evaluate the profitability potential as well as to identify some of the risks associated with the redevelopment. If the project is estimated to be unprofitable, or is estimated to be too risky, then the developer will choose to pursue another project.

The financial feasibility analysis process can also be used by the developer in the reverse order to determine how much money can be borrowed for construction based on the amount of cashflow that the project is expected to bring in after completion. If the cashflow generated by the project will only support a construction loan that is lower than the amount required to complete the project, a funding gap exists between project costs and available financing. Such a project is not financially feasible using conventional development financing means unless the gap between costs and funding can be spanned using non-conventional means that including both private and public sources. A funding gap often exists for redevelopment and adaptive reuse projects, which typically experience higher construction costs compared to new construction. The inefficient use of space in churches – typically only 50-60% of the space is useable in a church, compared to 80-90% for a warehouse or a school<sup>59</sup> - will also factor into a funding gap, given that constructions costs include making improvements that encompass the entire three-dimensional volume of the building while project revenues are only generated by considering the two-dimensional useable, or net leasable, space.

Sources to fill the project funding gap can come from public or from private entities. Public gap financing sources include tax and funding incentives for redevelopment while private sources include grants and low-interest or otherwise favorable term loans.

The public sector's goal, to prudently distribute resources in order to manipulate multiple and myriad policy objectives, leads them to try and achieve the maximum leverage for their expenditure by distributing the total amount of subsidy spending across as many projects as possible. Public financing sources tend to be small in amount and cover only a portion of the gap. Multiple public funding sources are often combined to complete the financing picture for a development. Subsidy sources exist on the federal, state and local levels, and include tax credits, tax rebates, mortgage insurance and low-interest loans. Table 3.3 presents commonly used public funding sources, listed in order of their likely value to a church reuse project.

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<sup>59</sup> Latham, Derek. Creative Reuse of Buildings, Volume One. pg 79.

**Table 3.3: Public Development Incentives**

<b>Incentive</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>Federal Investment Tax Credits for Rehabilitation</b>	The credit is for 20% of qualified rehabilitation expenses. For income-producing properties only. Any project that meets the requirements is eligible for the tax credit.
<b>Business Improvement Districts (BID)</b>	A public-private approach to revitalizing urban centers that creates special taxing districts to provide local services and infrastructure improvements in a specific targeted area.
<b>Grants from Federal, State or Local Agencies</b>	May originate from federal, state or local sources for one-time or recurring amounts ranging from several hundred to several hundred thousand dollars. Sources include agencies charged with historic or cultural preservation, tourism, conservation, architecture or community development.
<b>State Tax Credits</b>	More than 15 states offer some form of tax credit for investments in rehabilitation. 13 of these states offer credits to both income-producing projects and historic homes. These credits can be used in association with federal credits.
<b>Local Property Tax Exemptions</b>	Local governments may choose to waive property taxes for a period of years as means of reducing operating expenses, thereby increasing the net operating income (NOI) and allowing support of a larger construction loan. Property tax exemption is a particularly attractive source for local governments given that a church has not and is thus not currently counted on as an existing revenue source.
<b>Federal Low Income Housing Tax Credits</b>	For use with projects that include income-restricted and rent-capped housing units. Both 4% and 9% credits available. Limited number of allocations, competitive to obtain. Tax credits taken over a ten year period.
<b>Other Subsidies</b>	Community Development Block Grant funds, HOME funds, Section 108 grants for preservation. There are myriad other public subsidies available if they can be matched to the reuse project.

The Investment Tax Credit for Rehabilitation is the largest investment incentive provided by the federal government. Created in 1981 (and revised in 1986), the program established a tax incentive for investment in historic properties by encouraging rehabilitation to more contemporary uses. The tax credit program offers a 20 percent credit to qualified investors for all qualified rehabilitation expenditures. Prior to the enactment of the tax credit legislation, historic properties were considered uneconomic undertakings due to the greater development risks associated with construction costs and low rentable area/ building efficiency ratios. The tax credit program has proven to be a very successful initiative, with the IRS estimating that \$21 billion was invested in historic properties between 1981 and 2001<sup>60</sup>. One of the most compelling incentives associated with the rehabilitation tax credit is the fact that it allows a developer to consider nearly all of a project’s development and

<sup>60</sup> Howe, Kathryn. “Private Sector Involvement in Historic Preservation”. *A Richer Heritage*. Eds. 2003., pg. 289

construction costs to be qualified rehabilitation expenditures, as opposed to limiting the consideration to incremental specific items or expenses. Twenty percent of the value of the qualified expenditures can be packaged as a tax credit by the developer and sold to an investment entity in order to raise project equity. Rehabilitation tax credits are valued by investors because of the ability to place them in immediate service and typically sell to investors for 95%+ of face value<sup>61</sup>, thus providing a larger amount of capital to a project than any other tax credit incentive.

Rehabilitation tax credits have been used extensively in association with low-income housing tax credits to develop affordable housing within rehabilitated historic structures. The Low-Income Housing Tax Credit program provides 4 and 9 percent credits for qualified rehabilitation and acquisition expenses to projects that meet affordable housing guidelines. These credits are awarded competitively, unlike rehabilitation tax credits that are available to any qualified project. Low-income housing tax credits can be syndicated and sold to investors. A major difference between the two tax credits is that rehabilitation tax credits may be taken and used in full in the year that the rehabilitated structure is put into service, while low-income housing tax credits are taken over a ten year period. The cash value of the low-income housing tax credits is diminished because the investment pays out over ten years instead of immediately. Low-income housing tax credits typically sell for 80-85% of face value<sup>62</sup>. If affordable housing is a desired element of the adaptive reuse program for a church, the ability for a project to raise cash equity increases significantly when low-income housing tax credits are used in association with rehabilitation tax credits.

According to Kathryn Howe, preservation organizations are increasingly becoming a source of gap financing in order to further incentivize private sector investment in preservation projects:

“The preservation movement itself has turned increasingly from a regulatory approach to a more market-driven reality. Although the use of regulatory tools such as landmark and historic district ordinances and environmental quality legislation will remain the backbone of protecting historic properties and districts, preservationists are working at the state and local levels to establish incentives that encourage market-based development. The realization that making economic use of historic buildings is an effective preservation solution, and, frequently, a financially and politically constructive way to create housing, offices, and industrial space has caused preservation and real estate interests to find common ground.”<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Howe, Kathryn. “Private Sector Involvement in Historic Preservation”. *A Richer Heritage*. Eds. 2003., pg. 279

<sup>62</sup> Marchant, Edward. Lecturer, Harvard University Kennedy School of Government. Class Presentation for Affordable Housing course. March 17, 2004.

<sup>63</sup> Howe, Kathryn. “Private Sector Involvement in Historic Preservation”. *A Richer Heritage*. Eds. 2003., pg. 287



Public sector grant making agencies include:

- Federal Historic Preservation Program grants
- State Historic Preservation grants
- Local historic preservation, heritage, or cultural program grants
- Main Streets or Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) funds
- Local public space funds
- Economic development grants

Private sector gap financing assistance sources include non-profit preservation and community redevelopment funds, government incentives for private investment in the form of the Community Reinvestment Act and tax credit programs, and philanthropic fundraising.

The Community Reinvestment Act (CRA), enacted by Congress in 1977 and revised in 1995, requires banks and lending institutions to “help meet the credit needs of the communities in which they operate, including low- and moderate-income neighborhoods, consistent with safe and sound banking operations”<sup>64</sup>. The CRA requires that each insured depository institution's record in helping meet the credit needs of its entire community be evaluated and taken into account by the federal government when considering an institution's application for deposit facilities, including mergers and acquisitions. Lending institutions are thus required to invest in all areas of the local communities in which they operate if they hope to expand their business, and therefore desire to find and invest in development projects that meet the institutions geographic requirements. A church redevelopment in an area targeted for CRA investment by local lending institutions may be able to attract capital from such a bank even if the risk/reward profile is different than they would otherwise consider.

A phenomenon has been observed with respect to the financing of church redevelopment projects; that of a general reluctance to finance church projects because of the unwillingness of lending institutions to foreclose on a church<sup>65</sup>. While acts like the CRA help to ensure investment in the redevelopment of specific areas, there are no programs in place to incent the redevelopment of specific building types. Churches, in particular, would present a difficult situation with regards to

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<sup>64</sup> Federal Financial Institutions Examination Council (FFIEC). *Community Reinvestment Act*.

<sup>65</sup> Beha, Ann Macy. *Renewal of Place: A Progress Report on Restoration and Adaptive Use at the First Baptist Church, Cambridge, Massachusetts*. 1977.

encouragement of redevelopment via government funding given the need to maintain the separation between church and state.

Fundraising, philanthropic contributions, and company donations or sponsorship are ways of accessing private sector capital, which can be combined with other funding sources to help achieve the critical mass necessary to proceed with a project. These sources seem particularly feasible if most other financing has been put together, and a single, specific amount of funding need remains. It is significantly less likely that a single benefactor or sponsor will provide an amount sufficient to cover the cost of a reuse project.

## Valuation

Determining the value of a church presents some unique hurdles. Property assessment, for either tax or transaction purposes, depends on a process of comparing transaction prices across similar properties in similar markets to establish a value. Churches, however, rarely come onto the market anywhere, and thus there is no transaction record from which to derive comparables. Furthermore, as churches are not on local property tax rolls, there is no historic record for the valuation of that property.

*Figure 3.4: Rose Window in Residential Conversion, Denver, CO*



The valuation assessment for a church or any other building is comprised of two components: land value and/or structure value. In the case of churches a third component of value may exist; symbolic value.

Structure value is a function of the size, space, physical condition and maintenance status, architectural quality and urban design contribution of the building. Land value can be derived from either location value or from additional site development opportunities. Location value is highest in developed urban areas with high surrounding land values where undeveloped land is non-existent.

Site development opportunities take advantage of surface parking lots, grounds, and other undeveloped land areas to infill with new buildings.

Churches offer an additional value component possessed by few other building types – a symbolic and social value that spans all churches and transcends building quality, location or circumstance. Churches have a symbolic association with faith, sanctuary, and good will, attributes that are universally and deeply held across all cultures and races. This symbolic association strikes a chord in people that is hard to replicate in a non-religious structure. Development value, to an owner or to a developer, can be derived from this unique quality to the extent that the reuse of a church is able to serve a user that places a premium on this positive association. The reuse of the rose window in the former Methodist Episcopal Church in Denver, CO (Figure 3.4) illustrates the creative solution to capturing the unique church value by transferring it to a residential context.

**Table 3.5: Location and Structural Considerations for Church Redevelopment**

<i>Determinant</i>	<b>Location Value Low</b>	<b>Location Value High</b>
<b>Structure Value Low</b>	Unlikely to be reused without an engaged stakeholder and heavy subsidies.	May prove most desirable for demolition by developers.
<b>Structure Value High</b>	Attractive for reuse solutions that also address community or public needs.	Most attractive to for profit developers for reuse.

Broadly applied, there appear to be two kinds of churches that are suitable for adaptive reuse: churches with positive land value and structure value appeal to for-profit developers, while churches that have either neutral or negative land value or structure value will require a form of subsidy or subsidies in order to become financially feasible for reuse and are more likely appeal to civic or community developers that place a premium on the symbolic value

associated with the church. Churches without positive land or structure value will, in effect, have a negative value due to the cost of building demolition that must be incurred in order to reuse the land. Table 3.5 summarizes the location and structural use determinants for redevelopment.

## **Programming for Reuse**

When programming for the reuse of a church, the developer must analyze the market and identify potential users as well as consider the development cycle and market timing.

The developer must carefully coordinate in order to move a project through the phases of the development cycle while still meeting suitable market timing goals. Market timing dictates that a project be delivered on or near the projected date in order to synchronize with the conclusions of the market analysis in order to achieve the desired rents or sales prices, unit types or sizes, etc. The development cycle, however, has many steps, each of which can be unpredictable in length: design, financing, approvals, construction, and sales or lease up. A program for reuse should consider the potential length of the development cycles of different use types based on the difficulty or extent of construction or the anticipated length of the financing or approval process. Some complex projects can take three or four years or more to come to fruition, as is the case with St. Aidan's in Brookline, MA, which is projected to take five years from the start of the development cycle to the finish.

Identifying users is as important a means of successfully reusing churches as is identifying a use. A market analysis can be useful for assessing the supply of and demand for particular uses, but a second approach focuses directly on identifying users. The user-centered approach has particular merit for churches given their tendency to need to identify users who are either willing to pay a premium (condominiums) or who come with subsidies (affordable housing or non-profit institutions), both of whom provide a means of addressing the funding gap. Collaborative approach strategies and identifying unique users are two primary means of finding users for the building.

Collaborative approach strategies like public private partnerships can be an extremely effective way of connecting users directly with a church building. Accessing the public sector provides potential connections to municipal uses and users as well as links to non-profit and institutional entities. Non-profit and institutional users include charities, schools, hospitals, or other churches. These community oriented uses can be attractive church redevelopment options from both the end-use perspective as a sympathetic reuse type as well as for the potential for attracting additional sources of funding to help fund the gap.

Unique users for a church are those who harbor a particular interest in locating in a unique building, or in that building precisely. In the case of a church, it could be someone with a personal or family connection to the church who has a use that could fit in that space and the financial wherewithal to make it happen. Examples include architects, doctors or lawyers who can create office space, or benefactors who fund the creation of space for preferred charities or cultural activities.

## **Process**

A church property will go through both an informal development process and a formal public review process as it transitions from sacred space to secular use. The formal public review process is the element of governmental interface in the project, and participants include all of the stakeholders: the owner, the developer, the government, and the general public. Church buildings have specific implications with respect to visibility, emotion, and timing during the public review process that warrant consideration and can serve to inform strategies for both the public and private processes.

Churches are visible redevelopment projects on the public's radar, both from their prominent visual presence and often from the role they played in the history of the people in the surrounding neighborhood. As previously discussed, churches have a quasi-public role in the community and also a quasi-public sense of ownership. For these reasons a church closing down, being razed, or being redeveloped into something else is a newsworthy item, and likely to attract the attention of a wider range of people than any other building type going through a similar process.

The high visibility of a church reuse project will attract a group of members of the public that are likely to express a strong emotional response to the building. The range of reactions generated by these emotional responses is likely to lead to a disparate series of voices coming from the public during a review process, and a resulting inability on the part of the government or of the developer to garner a singular reaction to a redevelopment proposal. In other words, there are lots of people that want to be involved because of the emotional association with the building, and each has their own priorities, vision and sentiments with regards to how it should be reused, if at all.

The visibility and emotional response to the building, as well as the quasi-public feeling of ownership, will generate higher levels of scrutiny for a church, which will in turn lead to the tendency for a lengthier public review process than might otherwise be expected. This extended review process could have serious timing implications for the developer. The unwillingness of the governing body to make a binding decision may manifest itself in extensions to comment periods, desire to excessively study alternative options or to request consideration of additional or unrealistic scenarios, or the desire to delay the project pending outcomes of ongoing or planned master plan, regional plan or historic plan efforts. All of these factors lead to the likelihood of a lengthier review process, resulting in more volatility in terms of levels and degrees of support or opposition than other comparable redevelopment projects. The timing factor is of crucial importance to a developer, however, given their need to match project schedule milestones with funding sources via legally binding contract language, and their desire to capitalize on current market conditions, so any alterations from the normal public review time length standard has a direct impact of the desirability and feasibility of the project from a private-sector development perspective.

Visible public review processes can work both for and against a project. While the timing delays can prove to be a critical limiting factor caused by an open and visible (and thus potentially extended) review process, the visibility can also serve to connect the project developer with possible end users or funding sources. The more attention is paid to a building, particularly when a funding gap exists, the higher the likelihood that unique users or supporters might identify themselves, users or sources that would not have otherwise been tapped by the developer.

The fact that churches are so hard to redevelop using conventional, private-sector market-driven approaches indicates that a potential for different strategies might be suitable for this building type in order to ultimately result in a greater quantity of successful reuse projects. Public-private partnerships, at their best, promote cooperation in a manner that addresses both community concerns and the common sense of ownership while remaining committed to the requirements of the developer.

Public-private development relationships are becoming increasingly common in redevelopment projects in which funding gaps exist, and collaborative efforts have the potential to yield unique results when applied to churches. As discussed in Chapter 6, St. Aidan's Church in Brookline, MA

is a textbook example of how a public-private process can benefit the ultimate outcome of a preservation project, and also how it can increase the risk and exposure to the developer via emotion, visibility and timing issues. But difficult buildings such as churches, monuments, one of a kind or unusual white elephant buildings often benefit from these strategies, even to the point, as noted by the National Trust for Historic Preservation, of resulting in end uses that tend to reflect larger community goals:

“An important characteristic of efforts to preserve white elephant buildings is a strong level of community involvement and public-private partnership. More often than not, projects involving white elephant buildings require an enormous amount of persistence and cooperation among all parties involved. City officials, lending institutions, preservationists, code officials, architects, developers and others must work together during the many stages of rehabilitating a historic building. These cooperative efforts often result in buildings with more community-oriented uses. The level of public involvement in the effort to redefine these buildings is frequently reflected in their new functions.<sup>66</sup>”

The argument for public private relationships in church processes stems from the thought that if the public is to become invested emotionally in a project outcome, they should be prepared to become invested financially, as well, and to share in the fate of the building via risks and returns. Otherwise, the active role of the public may serve to further increase the barriers to redevelopment by delaying the project or by applying onerous conditions of approval.

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<sup>66</sup> National Trust for Historic Preservation. “New Life for White Elephants: Adapting Historic Buildings for New Uses”. *Preservation Information*. 1996

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## CHAPTER FOUR

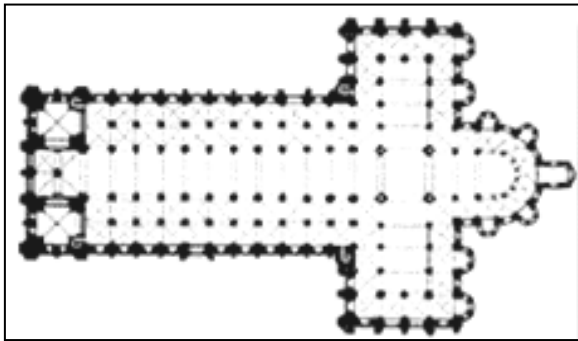
### CHURCH BUILDINGS

The reuse of church buildings presents particularly difficult architectural issues. This chapter examines the nature of church buildings and the conditions that must be considered when contemplating their reuse: building typology and reuse suitability, church archetypes and sizes, exterior structure, interior spaces, deconsecrating sacred space, modernization and deferred maintenance requirements, and site considerations.

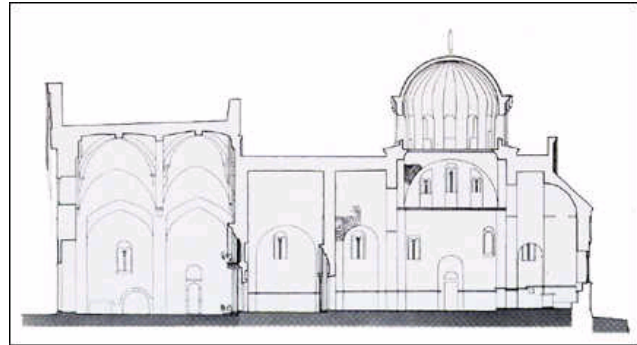
#### Building Typology and Reuse Suitability

Some buildings are easier to reuse than others. Multi-use warehouse buildings like warehouses and schools can be fairly easily converted to a wide range of uses like apartments, offices or commercial spaces, while churches and other single-purpose buildings like jails typically prove challenging to adapt to different uses.

*Figure 4.1: Church Cruciform Floor Plan*



*Figure 4.2: Church Large Interior Volume*



Warehouses, designed to store good with maximum efficiency, are typified by wide bays, high ceilings, flat roofs, and extensive daylighting. These features provide warehouses with an inherent functional flexibility and subsequently lend themselves to a wide number of conversion options because of the ease of inserting new modules within the large featureless interior volumes.

Stewart Brand, in talking about buildings that successfully lend themselves to other functions, writes:

“[Some] kinds of buildings are infinitely convertible....Warehouses and factories that were built between 1860 and 1930 are endlessly adaptable. They are broad, raw space – clear spanned or widely

columned, with good natural illumination and ventilation and high ceilings of 12 to 18 feet. The floors, built strong enough for storage or to hold heavy machinery, can handle any new use. Their heavy timbers and exposed brick appeal to the modern eye. They welcome any use from corporate headquarters to live/work studios.”<sup>67</sup>

A church is everything that a warehouse is not - typified by a hierarchy of interior spaces, lofty ceilings and darkened interiors, the form is not easily changed in terms of structure or of use. Table 8 summarizes some of the inherent differences between a church and a warehouse. This lack of flexibility is a function of its use given the symbolic requirements inherent in the physical program for the building (cruciform layouts, stained glass) as well the space needs for the specific rituals and activities performed inside. Figures 4.1 and 4.2 illustrate the features of a church in both plan and section and Table 4.3 compares the atmosphere of a church with that of a warehouse.

**Table 4.3: The Atmosphere of a Church Compared with a Warehouse**<sup>68</sup>

Church	Warehouse
Tall, lofty space	Wide, expansive space
Changes in level between spaces	Each floor level throughout
Highly inefficient use of space – low ratio of net usable to total	Very efficient use of space.
Single story	Single or multi-story
Often dark, if glass is stained	Usually daylit along two sides
Pitched or articulated roofs	Flat roofs
Hierarchy of spaces	No hierarchy
Axial	Non-axial
Large columns defining spaces	Light columns within space
Solid masonry walls	Infill panels
Tall, high windows	Wide, low windows
Natural materials	Stone, brick, concrete or steel
Ornament, craft, value	System built, plain, worthy
Strong shapes and forms	Rectilinear
Distinct character	Common character
Foreground	Background
Inflexible	Flexible

The lack of efficiency in spatial utilization is a common element of churches. Designed for a single purpose and group of users, churches don’t require efficiency of space as a programmatic requirement, instead placing emphasis on the creation of grandiose and awe-inspiring interior volumes for large gatherings of people. A warehouse, on the other hand, was designed solely for commerce, and an emphasis on economy and efficiency of space is of paramount concern in the design process. Warehouses have 80-90% spatial efficiencies while churches are more on the order of 50-60%<sup>69</sup>. This has serious ramifications to a reuse scenario given that

<sup>67</sup> Brand, Stewart. *How Buildings Learn*. pg. 108

<sup>68</sup> Table adapted from Latham, Derek. *Creative Reuse of Buildings, Volume One*. pg 79.

<sup>69</sup> Latham, Derek. *Creative Reuse of Buildings, Volume One*. pg 87.

constructions costs include making improvements that encompass the entire three-dimensional volume of the building while project revenues are only generated by considering the two-dimensional useable, or net leasable, space.

## Church Archetypes

Churches come in many shapes and sizes. Churches have been built in many architectural styles for many cultures, in many climates, using a wide range of materials, and utilizing different available technologies over time. In an attempt to provide a broad categorization for discussing church archetypes, Douglas James chooses when writing about conversion projects in *Building Adaptation* to describe churches as having either simple or ornate qualities in terms of size and style: “Simple churches are usually associated with the nonconformist or reformed traditions that reacted against the elaborate buildings styles. Their churches were consequently simpler and more domestic in character and size. The latter, however, were usually built on a grander scale.”<sup>70</sup> Writing about the difference between old and contemporary churches, he notes:

“The popularity of modernist architecture in the 1960’s and 1970’s prompted a move away from church buildings of traditional load-bearing masonry construction. This resulted in more framed and clad church buildings, using newer materials such as laminated timbers for structural members. Modernist architecture also reflected changed in liturgical practices, which became more inclusive and less segregated. Moreover, contemporary church buildings are designed to include youth clubs, crèches, coffee rooms and other community facilities. Many churches of traditional load-bearing masonry construction did not originally contain many of these facilities- they were usually added on at a later date in a lateral extension to the main church building”.<sup>71</sup>

Christian churches have been among western civilization’s most prominently sited, designed and ornamented buildings since the conversion of the Roman Emperor Constantine to Christianity in 312 A.D.<sup>72</sup>, and larger more prominently located churches in particular continue to incorporate architectural expression and exploration as a means of providing striking imagery and provoking emotional response from members and non-members alike. Many of the most prominent architects throughout modern history have designed churches, while churches and other sacred buildings have been incorporated into the vocabulary of every architectural movement in the United States.

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<sup>70</sup> Douglas, James. *Building Adaptation*, pg 150

<sup>71</sup> Douglas, James. *Building Adaptation*, pg 158

<sup>72</sup> Kostoff, Spiro. *A History of Architecture*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985.

Alternately, smaller, more modest churches built by local builders can evoke emotional response through simplicity and the contextual suitability of both form and materials.

Three primary urban church property archetypes can be generalized for discussion: large churches that are completely built out on their site, medium size churches on large parcel that also include grounds, parking or other outbuildings, and large complexes that includes a church in addition to a school, convent or other large ancillary uses, all together on a campus setting.

*Figure 4.3: Small Church, Small Site*



Figures 4.3 – 4.5 show examples of these three typologies. The Memorial Methodist church in Plymouth, MA is a small church on a small, built out site. St. Aidan’s church in Brookline, MA is a medium size church on a large parcel that also contains parking, a rectory, and a forecourt. St. Peter’s in Cambridge is a religious complex in Cambridge, MA with a church, a rectory, a high school and facilities and two houses.

*Figure 4.4: Medium Church on Mid-Sized Parcel*



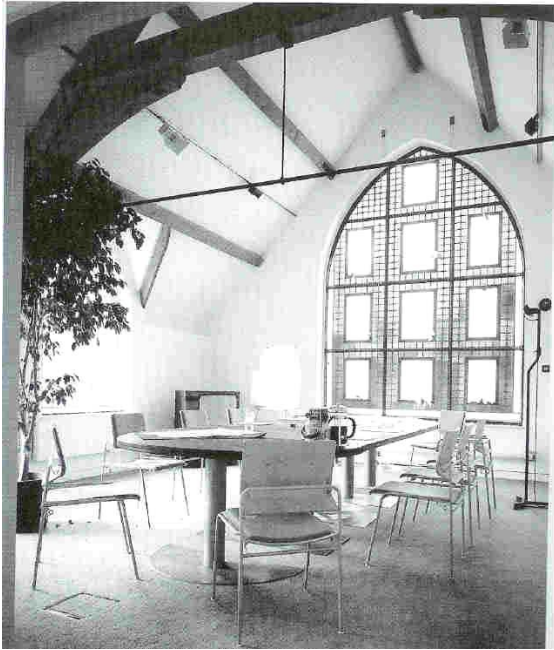
*Figure 4.5: Large Church on Large Site*



## Exterior Structure

The exterior of a church defines its presence with respect to the public realm. The role and image of the church in the community has been strengthened throughout history by the erection of symbolically dominant architecture. To the extent that a church is a visible physical landmark in a neighborhood it is likely because of the fact that it stands out from its surroundings, via site layout, structural massing, ecclesiastical symbolism, and architectural design and ornament. From a community preservation perspective, therefore, the preservation of a church should emphasize the retention of the exterior character of the building over internal preservation.

*Figure 4.6: Reuse of Stained Glass Window*



The major exterior elements of the church building that need be considered from functional and preservation perspectives include fenestration (windows), roofing, cladding, entrances, towers and steeples, and exterior ornamentation. As church reuse architect Derek Latham writes:

“Every exterior surface of a church or chapel is important to its character. The type of roof slate or tile, the wall covering in render and color, must be considered carefully, especially when identifying ways to improve thermal insulation. For all church structures, before making any decisions on insulation of walls, floors, roofs or windows, it is necessary to devise a heating strategy that takes into account the likely high thermal capacity of the structure but with a

provision for added comfort to be achieved at lower temperatures....this will allow for a low-key conversion with minimal structural or exterior alteration”.<sup>73</sup>

Fenestration, in particular, proves to be a limiting exterior building factor with respect to adaptive reuse. The large, singular interior volumes of churches can be lit with relatively few windows, but a reuse solution that involves subdivision of interior volumes into individual rooms or units will require significantly more daylighting. This may result in the insertion of new windows or roof skylights that will disrupt the exterior integrity of the building unless sensitively inserted.

<sup>73</sup> Latham, Derek. *Creative Reuse of Buildings, Volume Two*. 2000. pg 90.

Additionally, removal of original stained glass windows may be desirable by the vacating church, by the new user, or both, and will require sensitive remediation. Figure presents an example of a poor window insertions design that disrupts the roofline and overall image of the church, and Figure 4.6 shows an example of a reused stained glass window opening incorporated into a residential unit.

**Figure 4.7: Major External Disruption**



### **Interior Spaces**

The interior of a church building defines the space to its congregation members. The interior spatial scheme of a church can be very revealing of its congregation's character. The most elaborate plan is characteristic of traditional Catholic, Episcopal, and some other churches whose worship involves an elaborate, formal liturgy. Such churches are generally rectangular in shape, reflecting a hierarchical arrangement of the space inside, and are often sited such so that the building is oriented with the altar facing east, the direction in which the sun rises and the direction from which, according to tradition, Jesus would return again<sup>74</sup>. The more traditional planning arrangement is primarily evident in historic churches and was not often used for newer churches built during the twentieth century. Most buildings for Christian worship are divided into several formal spaces, which are illustrated in Figure 4.8. The common elements of Christian churches are the narthex, nave, sanctuary, chapel, vestry and liturgical stations. Churches also contain numerous other rooms including kitchens, classrooms, studies, dormitories or meeting rooms in addition to the formal spaces for religious worship.

1. *Narthex*. The narthex is the entrance space to the church, the transitional area between outdoors and indoors.

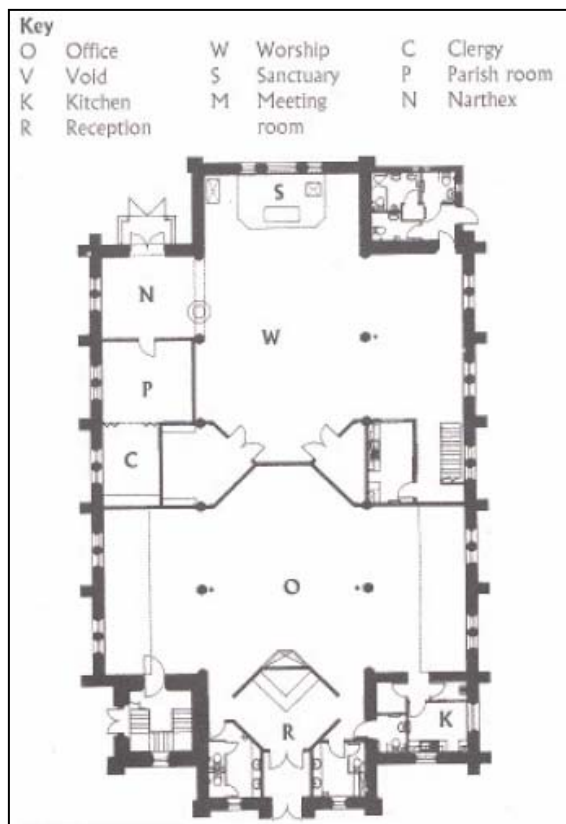
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<sup>74</sup> Kilde, Jeanne Halgren. *Church Becomes Theatre: The Transformation of Evangelical Architecture and Worship in Nineteenth-Century America*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2001.

2. *Nave*. The nave is in the worship area, usually entered through a set of doors separating it from the narthex. The nave is the space in which worshippers sit during the worship service itself, and usually is outfitted with horizontal rows of pews.

3. *Sanctuary and choir*. The sanctuary stands at the far end of the nave, typically separated from the rest of the worship space by a set of steps. The altar, on which the communion service is conducted, may further be separated by a low railing. Some churches contain a choir area between the nave and sanctuary.

**Figure 4.8: Church Interior Spaces**



4. *Chapel*. The term chapel denotes a place for worship smaller than a church. Within a church itself, a chapel may take the form of a niche to the side of the main altar, in which a smaller altar dedicated to a particular saint, such as the Virgin Mary, may be placed, or may constitute an additional worship space outside the main church that set aside for private devotions or small services.

5. *Vestry*. Room for the storage of ceremonial garments (vestments).

6. *Liturgical Stations*. Physical aids to conducting parts of the worship rituals. Liturgical stations include the altar, baptismal font, pulpit and vestry. Catholics also use confessionals, the 14-image

Stations of the Cross, icons, crosses and crucifixes for religious services. Stained glass windows are common features of churches, presenting important iconic imagery as well as providing a diffused light source conducive to the desired atmosphere for religious worship. Many of the liturgical stations, including stained glass windows, are elements that are removable from the church at the time of deconsecration.

Christian religion utilizes an ideal of worship that is based on the regular celebration of the sacraments, or the rituals originating in the ministry of Jesus and the Apostles and intended to mediate divine grace, or saving power, in material form through ritual action<sup>75</sup>. Given the connection between the sacraments, the formal spaces for worship, and the liturgical stations, stipulations for reuse of the interior spaces and ornamentation may prove to be an important item for church owners and members preparing to dispose of a church building.

**Figure 4.9: Simple Church, North Pembroke, MA**



The major reuse issues with respect to the interior spaces of the two different archetypes of churches (simple or ornate) is best described by architect Pamela Cunnington:

“Post-reformation galleried churches, with two floors of windows, generally present fewer problems for reuse. With these churches, the walls are generally quite high, with a low-pitched roof and a flat, or shallow segmental ceiling. The insertion of an intermediate floor, often necessary for many uses, need not present too many difficulties.

**Figure 4.10: Ornate Church, Cambridge, MA**



Even so, if the interior is of any quality, it is often desirable to leave part of it open to the roof. If the church is not galleried, but has the typical tall windows in the side walls, it is often best to keep the inserted floor back from the windows, to avoid having to alter these. The traditional Gothic church can present more difficulties with any conversion scheme which requires the insertion of an intermediate floor. These churches often have a lower eaves level than the post-Reformation type, and steeply pitched roofs. In a simple aisled church the inserted floor is likely to cut across the existing windows, and the upper story may have to extend into the roof space. Here the roof trusses can cause an obstruction, and there will be difficulties with lighting the upper story. A few inserted dormers may be acceptable if carefully designed. Flush roof lights may sometimes be more appropriate, especially in dark colored roofs, but not so many as to spoil the roofline.”<sup>76</sup>

<sup>75</sup> Kilde, Jeanne Halgren. *Church Becomes Theatre: The Transformation of Evangelical Architecture and Worship in Nineteenth-Century America*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2001.

<sup>76</sup> Cunnington, Pamela. *Change of Use*. Pg. 178.



Large, grandiose churches were often built to a size and scale that ensured dominance in the local landscape. Large churches in neighborhoods that have since filled in and increased in value but have retained a lower level of density may provide an advantage to developers if they are preserved and if their interior volumes can be converted to usable space. The church may be able to yield a higher floor area ratio in this manner when compared to what the underlying low-density zoning would allow if the building were demolished and new construction built in its place. The Warren Street Baptist Church in Roxbury, MA is considerably larger than any of the surrounding triple-decker houses (see Figure 4.11), and it is unlikely that a new development would be able to achieve that same level of density.

**Figure 4.11: Warren Street Baptist Church, Roxbury, MA. Larger Than Surroundings**



The interior spaces of churches do not include many of the functions and amenities required by other uses, particularly adequate restroom facilities, heating and air conditions systems, and fire safety provisions. These spaces will have to be accommodated within any renovation program (and project budget) that is designed to change the use of the building.

### **The Scale of Renovation Options**

Table 4.13 presents a breakdown of renovation gradients, ranging from minor to major in scope. The scale of the renovation may be determined by the condition of the existing structure, the desired change of use, or both. The scale of renovation may also impact the project's eligibility for Rehabilitation Tax Credits, as discussed in Chapter Three.

*Table 4.13: The Scale of Renovation Options<sup>77</sup>*

Scale of Alteration	Details
<b>Rehab</b>	Retention of entire building structure and external envelope, internal subdivisions, and upgrading of finishes and services
<b>Core Rehab</b>	Retention of entire building structure, retain most of interior with minor internal structural changes, upgrade interior finishes and services. Possible insertion of new staircases or elevator shafts.
<b>Gut Rehab</b>	Retention of the entire existing external envelope, including the roof, with major internal structural elevations and upgrading of finishes, services and restrooms. Could include new stairs and elevators, demolition of interior structural walls, or the insertion of new floors where heights permit.
<b>Maximum Façade Retention</b>	Retention of all the building’s envelope walls and complete demolition of its roof and interior, with the construction of an entirely new building behind the retained façade.
<b>Moderate Façade Retention – Elevation</b>	Retention of only two or three elevations of the existing building, and complete demolition of the remainder, with the construction of an entirely new building behind the retained façade walls.
<b>Minimal Façade Retention – Elemental</b>	Retention of only one elevation, a single façade wall, of the existing building, and complete demolition of the remainder with the construction of an entirely new building behind the retained façade.

**Deconsecrating Sacred Space**

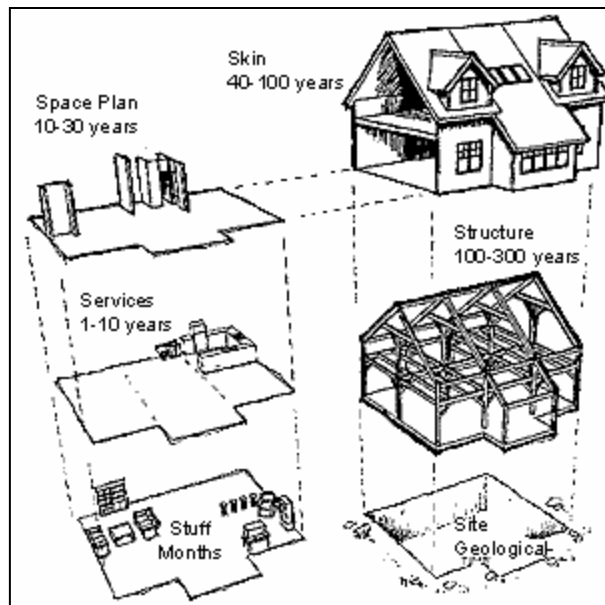
The church owner is likely to remove all sacred artifacts and liturgical stations from the building prior to disposition, but there may remain structural or symbolic remnants both inside and out whose ongoing use must be considered. Deconsecration may also include formal, ritualized processes, performed as the final act within the sacred space. On the exterior, steeples, towers, stained glass windows, inlaid crucifixes or crosses, or other visible religious ornament may remain. On the interior, decoration, stained glass windows, altars, or pews may all have direct or subtle religious overtones that prove desirable to the next user in differing degrees. Interior and exterior elements must be carefully considered by the developer both with respect to honoring the previous sacred use of the space as well as with respect to the next user of the building, who may or may not value (and may well even discount) the fact that their new office, home or center is a former church.

<sup>77</sup> Table adapted from Highfield, David. *Rehabilitation and Re-Use of Old Buildings*. Pg. 21

## Deferred Maintenance and Modernization

The building condition of churches that have been declared redundant or are poised for redevelopment is often poor, and extensive maintenance is almost always required. Historic Boston's 1999 *Religious Properties Preservation: A Boston Casebook* reports that occupants and owners of a church tend to wait until a crisis occurs before carrying out critical maintenance and repairs, and that some churches, as a matter of policy, have not allocated money for building repairs in decades<sup>78</sup>.

Figure 4.14: Layers of Change



Buildings and their interiors change at different rates. Stewart Brand describes six layers of change that are experienced by all buildings over time (see Figure 4.14): site, structure, skin, services, space plan and stuff<sup>79</sup>. Site is the geographical setting of the building, a condition which does not change. The structure of a building is comprised of its foundation and load-bearing elements, and can last from 50 to 300 years (although Brand notes that few buildings last more than 60 years for other reasons). The exterior surfaces of a building, or its skin, can

change every 20 years if timber construction (less frequently in the case of churches due to their tendency towards deferring maintenance and improvements) or for centuries if stone or masonry materials are used. Services are the inner workings of a building and include communications lines, electrical wiring, plumbing, sprinklers, and HVAC (heating, ventilation and air conditioning) systems. Services are described by Brand as wearing out or becoming obsolete every 7 – 15 years, but in actuality regularly last upwards of 30 or 40 years before being replaced. Many older buildings in particular have deeply imbedded service systems that can prove difficult to extract and replace during an upgrade project. The space plan is the interior layout of walls, ceilings, floors and doors,

<sup>78</sup> Historic Boston Incorporated. *Religious Properties Preservation: A Boston Casebook*. Boston, MA: Historic Boston Incorporated. 1999.

<sup>79</sup> Brand, Stewart. *How Buildings Learn*. New York, NY: Viking Penguin, 1994. Pg. 13.

and can change every 5 years or every 50 years depending on the intensity and frequency of use or users. The final layer of change common to all buildings is stuff, or the chairs, desks, pictures and appliances that stock a building and whose layout or use can change daily or monthly.

Architect Ann Beha, while surveying a Cambridge, MA church for renovation needs, identified a series of deferred repair issues caused at the root by water and weather and exacerbated by deferred and inappropriate maintenance<sup>80</sup>. Exterior issues included cracked steeple buttresses, buckled and spalled brick, drains clogged by pigeon excrement leading to leaks in the belfry, rotted wood trim, and warped stained glass assemblies. Interior items included clogged plumbing lines, damp and damaged plaster and paint, and inadequate heating systems. Broadly speaking, rehabilitation issues to address in a church include fire resistance, internal surfaces, thermal performance, acoustic performance, damp penetration, condensation prevention, and timber decay.

A church is likely to require modernization improvements as part of any redevelopment program. Modernization can be either legally required by the public sector via building codes and regulations or desired by the new owner or user for livability, efficiency or marketing purposes. Even structurally sound and habitable churches are likely to violate numerous current code provisions because of the fact that codes change and become more stringent over time as technologies improve and standards increase. Building code and other legal regulatory requirements include accessibility (ADA) standards, energy codes and life safety and fire protection requirements.

## **Site Considerations**

As with church buildings, there is an enormous range in the variety of church sites in terms of both location and size. Some churches have little more than a sidewalk frontage, while others are located on large campus sites mingled with schools, convents, offices, houses and other buildings. Some churches that are shuttered and closed down as active churches are located in fully developed areas with high land values while others are located in receding or marginal areas with diminishing vitality. In the middle lie churches with small grounds and/or surface parking areas, in healthy neighborhoods that have undergone demographic transitions over the years.

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<sup>80</sup> Beha, Ann Macy. *Renewal of Place: A Progress Report on Restoration and Adaptive Use at the First Baptist Church, Cambridge, Massachusetts*. 1977.

The site opportunities presented by the open land held in association with a church may prove to be the most valuable asset of the property with respect to reuse of the church building. Potential subdivision of land into multiple lots, new construction on unbuilt land, reuse of outbuildings or additional FAR opportunities for building extensions all have the potential to help subsidize reuse costs associated with the church building.

Parking lots can either be used as parking for the new user of the church or can become a site for new development. Provision for parking, always in scarce supply in urban areas, is almost always a required element of a building permit for a different use. Residential uses often generate a requirement to provide one or more parking spaces per dwelling unit in typical zoning codes, adding considerable expense to urban infill projects. An existing supply of parking can thus be a valuable resource for a church redevelopment, while a lack of parking can prove to be a major redevelopment barrier.

Open spaces, parking lots or landscaped grounds may contain the potential for carrying new development that can in turn help to subsidize church reuse project costs. Open space can also be preserved in a new plan to create to help retain a sense of connection with the community by providing a neighborhood amenity shared by multiple users.

If the site is largely undeveloped, additional buildable area may be permitted under zoning and floor area ratio allowances for the parcel. Additional building area may be utilized by extending the existing church building, developing elsewhere on the site via infill, or can sometimes be packaged and sold as a transferable development right (TDR). Transferable development rights are allowed in some areas as a means of protecting open space or low-density developments by allowing owners to capitalize on underlying land values while transferring the development entitlements to an area more desirable for additional density.

The location value factor of a church site may also prove vital in a redevelopment scheme. Churches tend to be built in prominent places in a community that are suitable to their prominence in the social fabric and are often located in and adjacent to centers of activity and along major paths of travel. These features of prominence and access all add to the land value premium associated with a church site.

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## CHAPTER FIVE

### NEW USES FOR CHURCHES

Churches come in many sizes, from large cathedrals with capacity for thousands of worshippers to single-room chapels seating a few dozen, and in many styles, from simple Colonial or local vernacular to ornate Victorian or Gothic Revival. Accordingly, there is a wide range of reuse solutions that have been generated as means of reusing church buildings. This chapter reviews the range of uses that have been developed in former church buildings in the United States and in the United Kingdom. The Appendix to this document contains a sourcebook with more information about the examples cited in this chapter, as well as descriptions of additional church reuse projects uncovered during the course of research for this thesis. Types of reuses considered in this chapter include residential, office, commercial, institutional non-profit and community, and art and cultural activities. Minimal alteration and additive uses for church buildings are also reviewed.

#### **Residential**

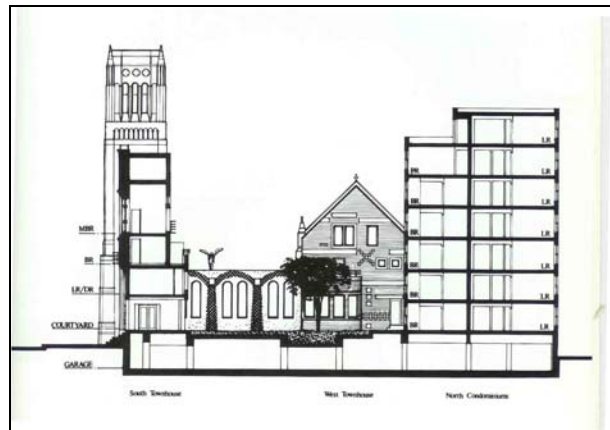
Residential uses include conversion of churches into single-family homes, into multi-unit apartments or condominiums, into inns or hostels, and into special-needs developments including elderly, disabled and affordable housing that are typologically similar to regular residential developments but often have the ability to attract public funding subsidies. Market rate residential uses can take advantage of high land values through the development of high-end condominiums that can carry a high land value component in their sales prices. Affordable housing uses can also take advantage of buildings sited in high land value areas if the church is available for a nominal transaction price, enabling the affordable housing to proceed without carrying a land cost. The structure of churches remains a limiting factor with multiple unit residential uses, and there usually exists a need to incorporate circulation, daylighting, and access into the program, all of which both increase costs and add visual obtrusiveness to the end product. Middle income housing is not a likely end use of a church conversion project unless it is subject to public funding under affordable housing guidelines for the area, given the higher than normal cost of renovating and converting churches relative to building new construction, and the subsequent inability of churches to compete on a price point basis.

Church Court in the Back Bay of Boston (pictured in Figures 5.1 and 5.2) is an oft-cited and well known church reuse project, although it only reuses elements of the façade of a burnt out church. A spectacular fire in 1978 ravaged this large church and leaving only two walls and the tower intact. The L-shaped plan encloses a courtyard, which is protected from the street by walls of the former church, but visible to the passerby through glass doors. Three townhouses are created within the remaining walls of the church, with seven stories containing forty residential condominiums at the opposite corner of the site. Shortly after its completion, the complex was hailed by Boston architectural critic Robert Campbell as “the most influential new piece of architecture in Boston since the Hancock Tower...” The project was also singled out by TIME magazine as one of the ten best designs of the year in 1983.

*Figure 5.1: Church Court Condominiums*



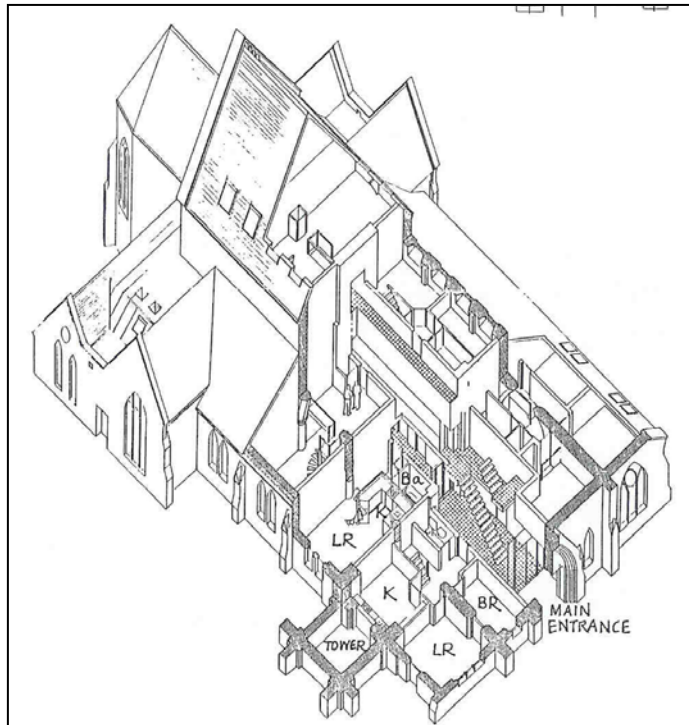
*Figure 5.2: Church Court Section*



The developers of Number Two Clarendon Square also rebuilt a burned out shell of a church building, turning the former Clarendon Street Baptist Church in Boston into 60 condominium units in a prime location in Boston’s South End Historic District. The building retains its essential stately church character but the ecclesiastical imagery has been eliminated to increase its desirability as a residential location.



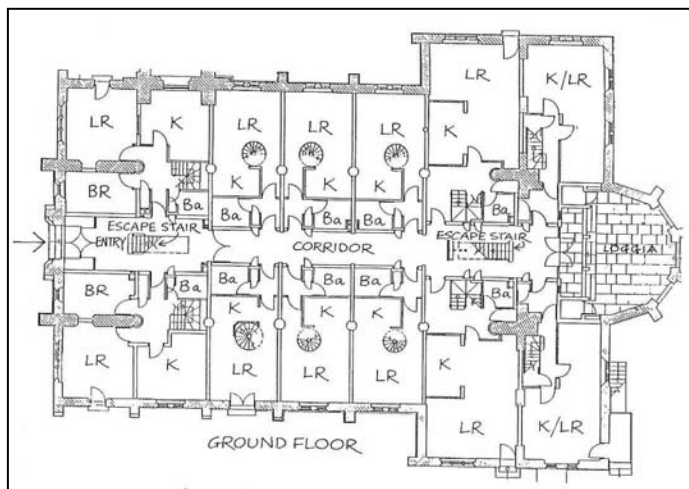
**Figure 5.4: St. James Church Reuse Plan, London**



completely sub-divided. The only visible exterior change is installation of roof skylights to serve the top floor. All of the stained glass was removed to improve the daylighting.

St. James Church in London was a former family parish possessing neither architectural nor historic merit, but viewed as an important landmark and worthy of preservation by the local government and general public. The church eventually sold to a local non-profit housing association for conversion into housing for homeless people from the area. The conversion yielded eighteen one bedroom units by installing two new intermediate floors within the church, one just above the capitals of the nave arcade, and the other at about eaves level. The interior was

**Figure 5.5: St. James Church Floor Plan**



**Figure 5.6: St. James Church Interior**



## Office

Former churches can be developed into office space, either as a multi-office complex for a single user or as suites with shared facilities for a group of users. As with housing, concerns include the need to daylight interior subdivided spaces, although offices can address this by utilizing an open-floor layout with cubicles and partitions instead of fully enclosed offices. Office uses can capitalize on the high visibility of the church building if matched with users that desire a prominent physical presence, or users that are sympathetic to the reuse of buildings. Professional services, including doctors, lawyers, engineers or architects, can make good tenants of a higher-profile, unique office location as a means of differentiating from competition, and can also support a higher level of rent, which in turn can support a larger renovation budget, as is often required by the unique circumstances of churches. Indeed, professional office users can become potential investors in a project if identified early in the process, enabling them to end up with an ownership position in the completed building.

*Figure 5.7: St. Michael's, UK. Before.*



The Swedenborgian Church of the New Jerusalem in Philadelphia, PA was converted to executive offices with room for expansion. The project was leased by an advertising agency, who wanted a unique and visible headquarters. Two balconies were added in four of the six bays, leaving the altar area as unchanged space serving as reception area. Access to the new levels is provided via an interior circular staircase and new elevator. Churches can also be reused by their existing owner, such as the Church of the Immaculate Conception in Boston, MA which was renovated by the church to provide the institution with needed meeting, office and pastoral counseling spaces.

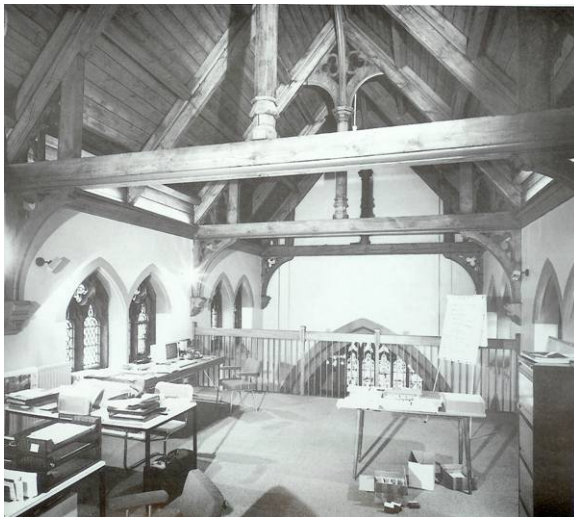
*Figure 5.8: St. Michael's During Construction*



St. Michael's church in Derby in the United Kingdom was converted to architectural offices in a manner that preserved both exterior features and prominent interior spaces while providing commercial viability to the long-vacant redundant church. The conversion created two upper floors of drawing offices for the architectural office as well as providing leasable space on the ground floor for eight additional workspace units leased out to local businesses. Both new floors were designed to 'float' in the larger space of the nave so as to avoid the exterior effect of the new floors cutting across the

window opening. The tower became a conference room. Most of the stained glass remains in place, and choir stalls provide seating for visitors in the reception area. Figures 5.7 – 5.10 illustrate the conversion process for St. Michael's.

*Figure 5.9: St. Michaels as Office*



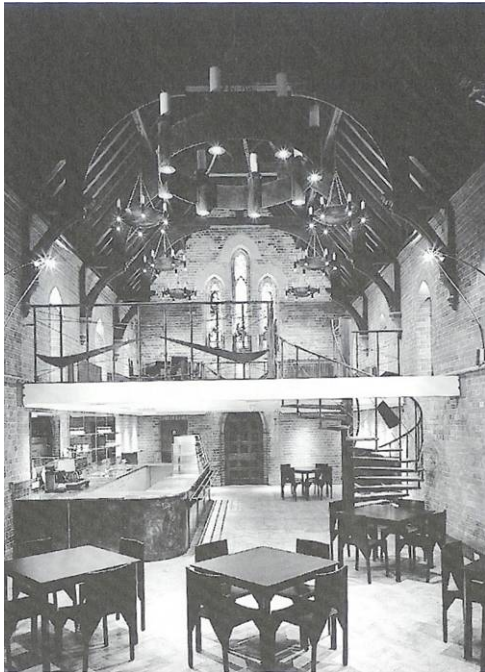
*Figure 5.10: St. Michael's Office Detail*



## Commercial

Commercial uses span a wide variety of food, service and merchandising activities and include retail stores, nightclubs, theatres, bars and restaurants. In *Churches: A Question of Conversion*, Ken Powell and Celia De La Hey posit that the more conservative faiths (citing Methodists and Baptists, specifically) take quite seriously the symbolic interpretation of keeping moneylenders from the temple, and accordingly place restrictions on future allowed uses to preclude anything that involves profit-motivated businesses<sup>81</sup>. The desire to limit commercial reuses can also be specifically oriented around the sales of alcohol in formerly sacred space, or around other vices. The market value of a church for reuse is diminished as a result of the church prohibiting certain uses for moral/ethical reasons, so a fine line must be struck by the church contemplating reuse, as to the value they place on determining the future use of the building. To the extent that commercial activities are allowable, churches can provide a differentiated space that may serve some activities well, including restaurants, theatres, or clubs.

*Figure 5.11: Student Café, London*



Some commercial uses, however, do not seem to work well in former churches. Derek Latham observes that retail projects are dependent on some specific favorable conditions for a project to work:

“Retail has not been so successful. The key to analysis of suitability (for retail) is to analyze both the implications of location and the adaptability of the interior and also the ability to advertise the presence of the operation externally so that the customer is aware of its existence<sup>82</sup>.”

A nineteenth century Victorian Gothic school chapel was turned into a student café by adding a mezzanine floor to almost double the usable space (Figure 5.11). The chapel

<sup>81</sup> Powell, Ken and De La Hey, Celia. *Churches: A Question of Conversion*. London: SAVE Britain's Heritage. 1987.

<sup>82</sup> Latham, Derek. *Creative Reuse of Buildings, Volume Two*. 2000. pg 86.

was replaced by a more modern facility, thus setting up the opportunity for conversion, while preserving the exterior image inherently important in the collective image of the campus.

St. Werbough's church in Derby, UK was a failed attempt to convert a church into to a shopping center. With the chapel reserved for worship, the remainder of the church was converted to retail with the introduction of an independent three-story structure in the nave. Each bay of the aisle partitioned and glazed onto the nave to form a shop unit with the chancel used as a restaurant. The venture failed due to the inability to attract external interest despite appropriate signage and advertising. No external alterations to the structure were allowed by the church as a condition of the development, severely impacting the success potential for the project because it proved impossible to retain the image of the church while attempting to act as a commercial space.

**Figure 5.12: Limelight Nightclub, London**



Nightclubs may carry the burden, just or unjust, of an association with vice and hedonistic behavior, but have proven to be an activity that can successfully capitalize on the interior and decorative features of churches with minimal alteration requirements. The large open spaces accommodate dance floors and audio and light equipment, while the architectural detailing and domed and vaulted spaces provide a dramatic atmosphere and setting. The Limelight nightclub in London was built in a former Welsh Presbyterian chapel (Figure 5.12). One gallery accommodates a bar and the walls and pillars are a backdrop for audio equipment and changing displays of modern art. But there have been no major structural alternations and the

dramatic spatial sense of the domed interior is unimpaired.

*Figure 5.13: Church Brew Works, Pittsburg, PA*



The Church Brew Works in Pittsburg, PA (Figure 5.13) was converted from a redundant Catholic church into a brew pub. According to the pub owners, the church was selected for conversion because of the outstanding craftsmanship and extraordinary attention to detail. The design incorporated and preserved as much of the church as possible in order to take advantage of the existing quality of finish, and to provide a unique atmosphere. While some religious faiths – particularly Methodists or Latter Day Saints - might attach conditions of sale precluding the production or consumption of alcohol, the Archdiocese of Pittsburgh did not appear to view the use as incompatible.

*Figure 5.14: Methodist Church to Indian Restaurant, UK*

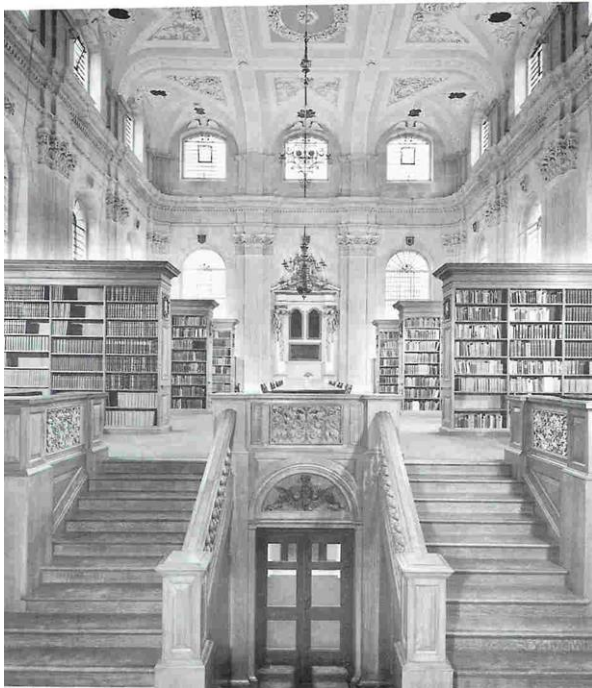


Also proving to be a compatible reuse despite the different cultural and religious origins, the United Reform Methodist Church in Bradford, UK (Figure 5.14) was converted to an Indian restaurant. The symbolic switch from Christian to Hindu-basis was acknowledged architecturally by retaining the imposing Doric ordered external facade while converting the interior by incorporating elements abstracted from Indian architecture. The interior is now divided into a ground floor restaurant and first floor nightclub and banqueting facilities that take advantage of the larger interior volumes.

## Community and Institutional

Matching local community and non-profit institutional space needs with a vacant building may prove to be an effective means of preserving a church, as it can potentially tap into fundraising sources available to the non-profit use. Reuse of a church for an institutional non-profit or community use also allows the original spirit of the church to continue in the form of providing assistance and service within the local community, which is politically desirable and removes some of the contention that can surround conversion to a private, profit-oriented use. Spatial considerations may match with the needs of the non-profit use, as in the case of community centers and gathering spaces, or it may require significant conversion if the use is dependent on smaller subdivided spaces like offices or treatment rooms. Non-profit and community uses may be able to utilize public funds from local, state or federal sources as well as private donations to help construct their new facility, which in turn can help to effect the preservation of a church by acting as funding to address any financing gaps generated by the renovation costs.

*Figure 5.15: Public Library, London*



Churches have been converted into community centers, day care facilities, heritage centers, elderly day centers, museums, schools and libraries. The Orchard Street Methodist Church in Baltimore, Maryland now functions as an African American cultural center and museum, with additional spaces serving as offices for the Urban League. St. Mary's Church in Mansfield, MA was converted after ten years of vacancy to the state's first Islamic high school, a private institution that renovated the building into 12 classrooms, a computer lab, a science lab and a library. A Baptist church in Atlanta, GA has retained its community orientation by becoming a YMCA, with day care facilities, meeting rooms and exercise studios. The First Unitarian Church of Oakland, CA has partnered with the Center for Urban Family Life to use the redundant church as a resource to serve

families from within and from outside of the congregation. A church in London was converted to a public library (Figure 5.15).

### **Art and Cultural Activities**

Art and cultural activities can be accommodated within former churches and can take advantage of the large open spaces and high ceilings. Performance halls, art galleries, and exhibition spaces can all be created from church buildings.

*Figure 5.16: Sacred Heart Church Community Center, Atlanta, GA*



The Sacred Heart Church in August, Georgia was converted to a community cultural center containing event spaces and non-profit office space (Figure 5.16). The cathedral's revitalization was the cornerstone of the city wide initiative to revitalize downtown Augusta. The center's main hall is used for events such as weddings, concerts and civic gatherings. Office space was also provided for arts and cultural institutions including the local ballet company, symphony, and arts council.

The Chesil Little Theatre was constructed in a redundant 12<sup>th</sup> century church in London that remained under the ownership of the local archdiocese. An agreement was made that the church could be used by the local dramatic society, rent free, but with the society accepting responsibility for all repairs and maintenance. A local preservation trust funded the initial renovations and alterations. No external alterations were made to the church as part of the agreement with the archdiocese. The three-bay nave and chancel have been divided almost equally into the stage and the auditorium, with a bar, green room and a workshop placed in the former aisle. Two existing exit routes provided sufficient egress for the theatre.



*Figure 5.17: Concert Hall, Huddesfield, England.*



A concert hall was developed from a former church in Huddesfield, England, as a result of the church selling the building to the local authority for a nominal amount (Figure 5.17). Extensive renovations to the roof and building were required along with the additions of a stage, fixed seating and lighting and insertion of restrooms and other facilities.

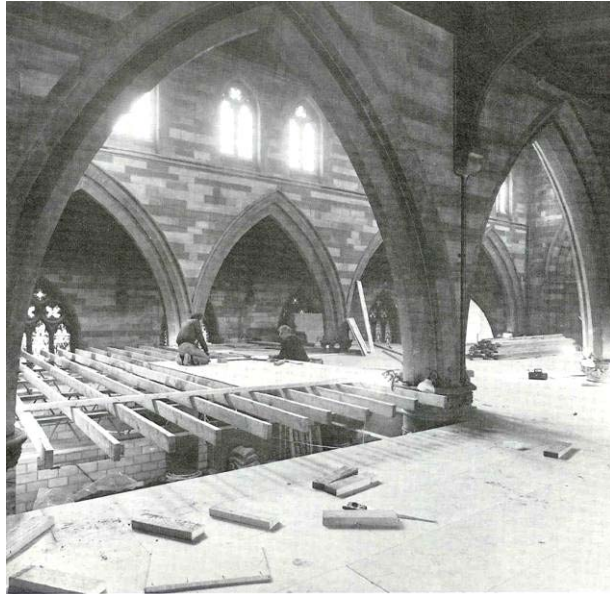
### **Minimal Alteration and Additive Uses**

Some reuses alter the physical conditions of a church less than others, while some uses can be added while portions of the church remain an active sacred space. Minimal alteration options include community centers, theatres or clubs. Residential conversions tend to be the most significant in terms of physical alternations to the interior and exterior of a church.

Additive uses include converting unused church areas outside of the nave and chapel into leasable office or events space, or leasing space within an active church for cell phone towers or telephone exchange equipment. These additive uses require either separate entrances for the new use or infrequent or off-hours access requirements, as is the case with cell phone equipment.

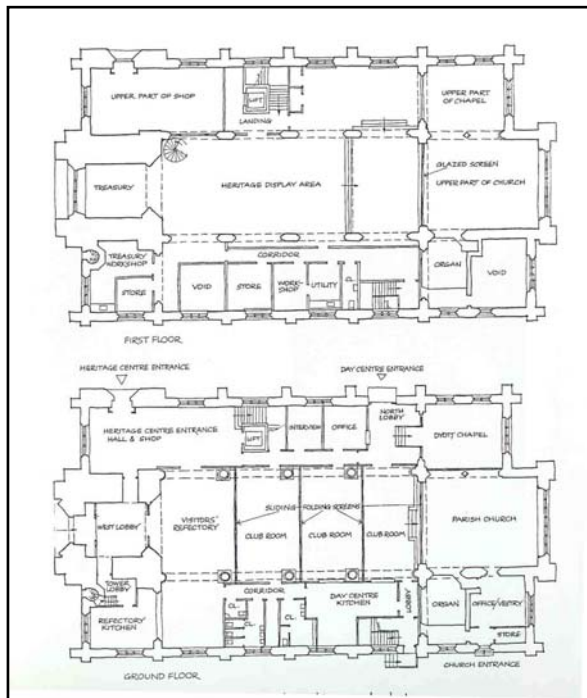
A Roman Catholic Church in Harper's Ferry, WV was undergoing a renovation when approached by a cell phone company about placing signal boosting antennas in the spires, in exchange for an annual lease fee that could support the renovation costs. The church now has three antennas and one G.P.S. device located in the four spires surrounding the main steeple, none of which are visually evident or require regular maintenance or service.

**Figure 5.18: Installation of Intermediate Floors at St. Mary's**



Saint Mary's Center in Staffordshire, UK (Figures 5.18 and 5.19) was a large Gothic revival church in the center of town with a very small congregation, and the church converted the unused space into a heritage center while retaining the consecrated spaces of the chancel, sanctuary and vestry. An intermediate floor was inserted into the deconsecrated areas of the church to accommodate the uses specified in the program. The only exterior modifications were the creation of a new entrance for the visitor center, accommodated using the existing porch.

**Figure 5.19: St. Mary's Center Floor Plans**



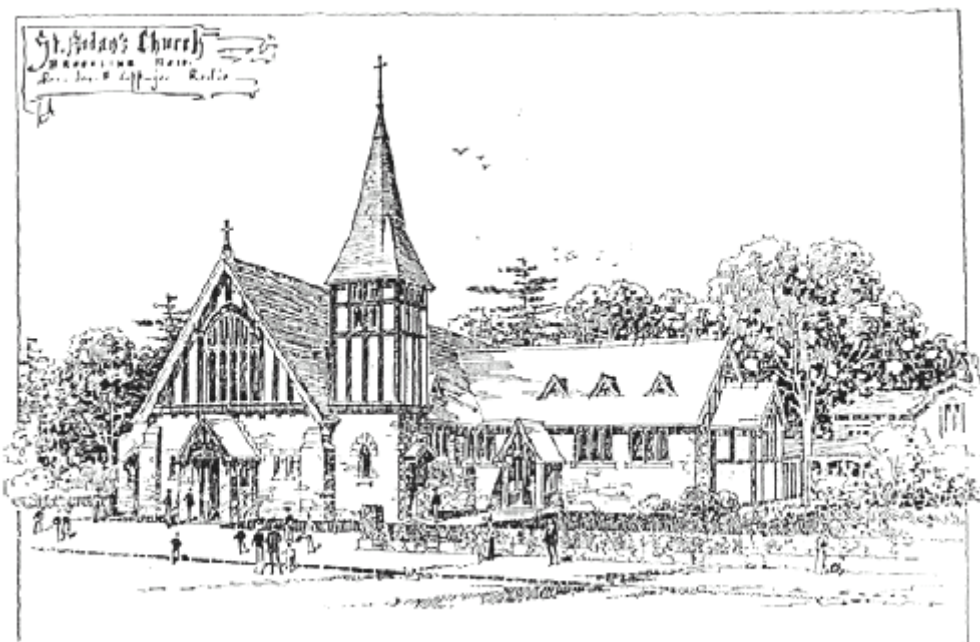
The ongoing maintenance for the church and the converted space are supported by revenues from the heritage center and supporting retail. The adaptive work, including the insertion of an intermediate floor, is reversible if desired in the future.

## CHAPTER SIX

### CASE STUDY: THE REUSE OF ST. AIDAN'S CHURCH IN BROOKLINE, MA

This chapter examines the reuse of St. Aidan's church, a project currently under development in Brookline, MA. The St. Aidan's case is an example of a church reuse project that incorporates the reuse of the church and its site, involves the active inclusion of multiple stakeholders, utilizes multiple funding sources, and dealt with a lengthy approval process. Located on a large parcel in an affluent inner suburb of Boston, the church was closed by the Archdiocese of Boston in 1999 but is currently being redeveloped into a 59-unit mixed-income housing project. The Planning Office for Urban Affairs, non-profit affordable housing developer affiliated with the Archdiocese of Boston, is converting the church building into luxury condominiums while infilling the site with two new buildings containing affordable rental and ownership units. The study of St. Aidan's illustrates important lessons about public-private undertakings, cross-subsidies and the importance of underlying land values.

*Figure 6.1: St. Aidan's Church, Brookline, MA<sup>83</sup>*

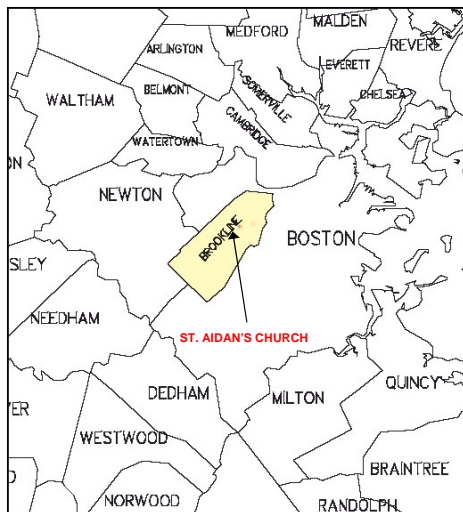


<sup>83</sup> Figure Source: Town of Brookline, Dept of Planning and Community Development. *Update: St. Aidan's Special Edition*. Nov. 2003.

## Context

Brookline, Massachusetts is an inner suburb of Boston with 6.6 square miles of land area, 55,000 residents, and 300 years of history. Figure 6.2 shows Brookline's proximate location to Boston. Located immediately west of the city, Brookline is a largely residential community comprised of single-family homes, triple-deckers, and low- and mid-rise apartment buildings<sup>84</sup>. Brookline has evolved into one of the Boston area's most affluent neighborhoods, and is a desirable location for the city's legions of academic and scientific professionals, many of whom work at Boston's nearby medical research campuses. Well regarded for its high quality of public education, connections and to Boston, vibrant commercial areas and rich sense of community, Brookline has attracted a diverse population including young families, foreign-born residents and seniors. Brookline residents earn a wide range of incomes: in 2000, the median household income was \$66,711 (\$92,000 for families), with 32% of incomes exceeding \$100,000 and 19% of incomes below \$25,000. Brookline's major retail centers, like Coolidge Corner and Brookline Village, are bustling pedestrian-oriented shopping areas with a variety of shops - antique stores, coffee shops, bookstores, fresh fruit and vegetable markets, delicatessens and restaurants. Subject to growth pressures from Boston for more than three centuries, Brookline contains very few developable sites for new housing and even fewer protected open space parcels.

**Figure 6.2: Brookline Proximity Map**



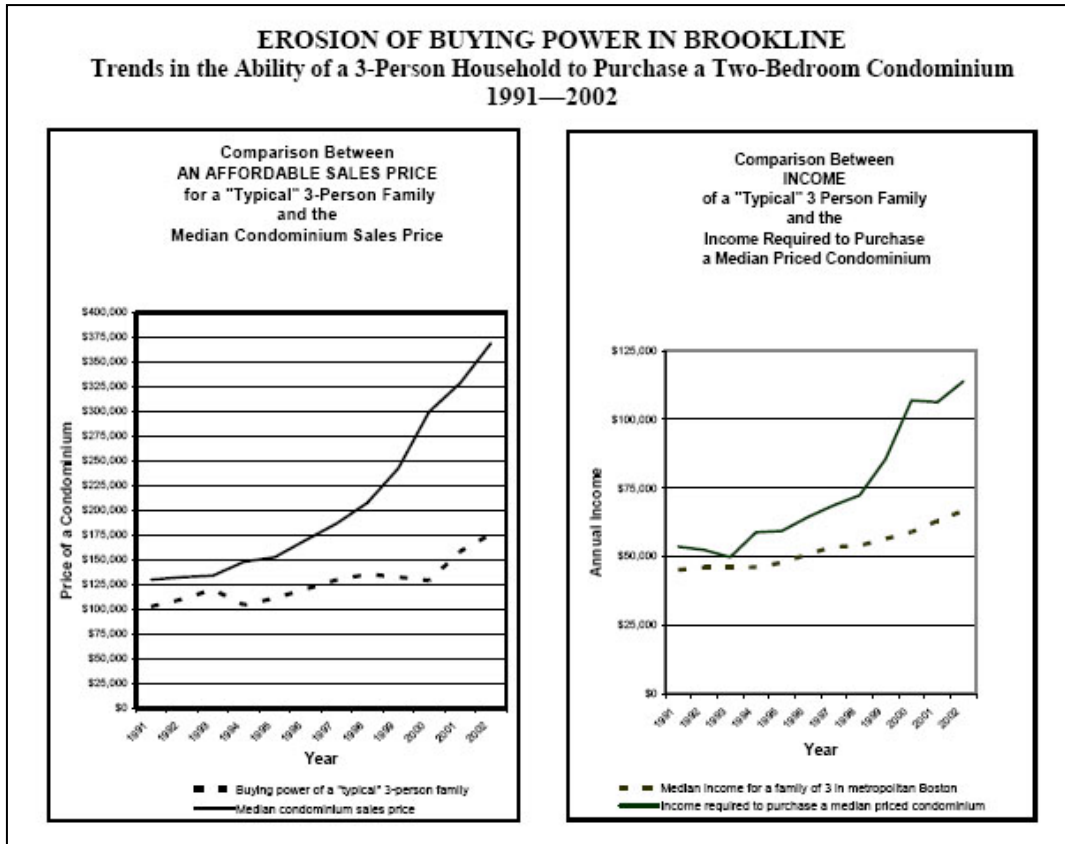
Residential land values have increased dramatically in the last ten years as a result of regional housing market demand and because of Brookline's particular desirability and lack of sites for new housing. The median price of a single family home in Brookline was \$775,000, a 131% increase over the price eleven years ago<sup>85</sup>. The median price of a condominium increased 184 percent to \$369,000. Figure 6.3 presents an excerpt from the Town of Brookline's *Affordable Housing Policy and Programs* that illustrates the growing gap in

<sup>84</sup> Context information and housing statistics: Town of Brookline, Department of Planning and Community Development. *Housing Brookline: Affordable Housing Policy and Programs*. August 2003.

<sup>85</sup> Town of Brookline, Department of Planning and Community Development. *Housing Brookline: Affordable Housing Policy and Programs*. August 2003. Pg. 6.

affordability between income and sales prices for a three-person family trying to purchase a two-bedroom condominium in Brookline. The Town of Brookline has a goal of at least 10% affordability in its housing stock, and currently maintains approximately 8%<sup>86</sup>.

*Figure 6.3: Erosion of Buying Power in Brookline<sup>87</sup>*



**St. Aidan’s Overview**

St. Aidan’s is located on a large 1.8 acre, 80,000 square foot site on a transitional block bounded by residential uses, with single family homes on one side and mid-rise apartment buildings on the other. Blocks from Coolidge Corner and two MBTA train lines, the site has excellent access to the Town’s commercial and social activities. Figure 6.4 contains a proximity map of the church. The 27,000 square foot church building was built in 1911 and designed by nationally prominent church architect and neighborhood resident Charles D. Maginnis in the style of a medieval French village church.

<sup>86</sup> Town of Brookline, Department of Planning and Community Development. *Housing Brookline: Affordable Housing Policy and Programs*. August 2003. Pg. 3.

<sup>87</sup> Figure Source: Town of Brookline, Department of Planning and Community Development. *Housing Brookline: Affordable Housing Policy and Programs*. August 2003. Pg. 6.

Listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1978, the church is well-known locally for being the baptismal and boyhood church of President John F. Kennedy. St. Aidan's was the third of four Catholic parish churches constructed and active in Brookline through the first half of the twentieth century, but was closed and merged with another local parish in 1999.

*Figure 6.4: St. Aidan's Proximity Map*



This move was part of the larger consolidation program undertaken by the Archdiocese of Boston in the eighties and nineties that resulted in nearly 50 parish closings over a fifteen year period<sup>88</sup>. Shortly after the building closed in 1999, the Archdiocese of Boston's affordable housing affiliate Planning Office for Urban Affairs (POUA) tentatively agreed to purchase the property from the Archdiocese in order to redevelop

the site as affordable housing. POUA's initial concept was to tear down St. Aidan's and build a 100-140 unit affordable housing development, but this plan was to change significantly as other stakeholders began to get involved in the process.

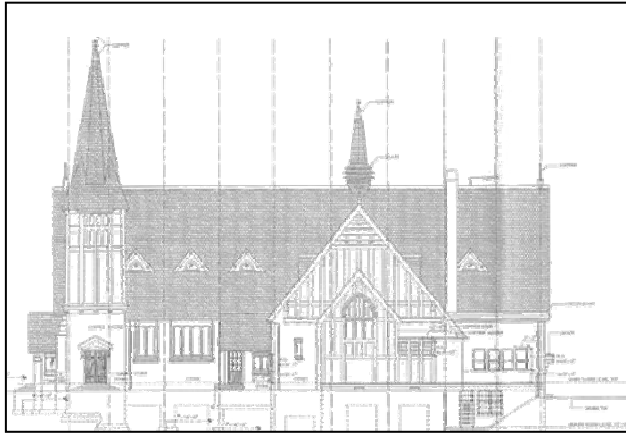
## Stakeholders

The St. Aidan's church building and grounds, as with all of the Archdiocese of Boston's parishes, was under the ownership of the Archdiocese at the time of the church's closing in 1999. The church was closed in response to shrinking congregation sizes across the multiple Brookline parishes, and the decision was made to merge the congregation into the nearby St. Mary's parish. Cardinal Bernard Law instituted the closure of St. Aidan's and almost 50 other parishes during a fifteen year period to address the shrinking population of active Catholics in Brookline as well in response to the

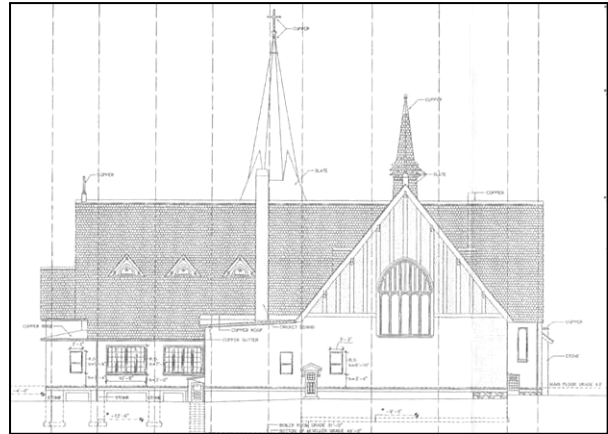
<sup>88</sup> Rajewski, Genevieve. *Continuing Their Mission. Closed Church Property Finds New Life as Affordable Housing*. Affordable Housing Finance. January 2004.

financial situation of the Archdiocese and a reduction in the number of available priests<sup>89</sup>. The Archdiocese made the decision to merge the parishes and close the building before making any determination about what to do with the property<sup>90</sup>.

**Figure 6.5: St. Aidan's Existing Façade Side**



**Figure 6.6: St. Aidan's Existing Façade Rear**



The congregation members of St. Aidan's were naturally upset at the announcement of the closure of the church, with longtime member Eleanor Bart saying "It's a big mistake to close St. Aidan's. The church serves a purpose in the community, and it has historical value<sup>91</sup>." The congregation had dwindled to 300 people at a weekend Mass in 1998, according to surveys conducted by the Archdiocese, as compared to 1400 at St. Mary's. The congregation was absorbed into a healthier parish system, but did lose its traditional home, and did express immediate concern about the fate of the building and grounds<sup>92</sup>.

The Town staff and elected officials were interested from the start in seeking ways to preserve the site and/or utilize it for affordable housing, and initiated discussions with the Archdiocese and the POUA upon announcement of the closure<sup>93</sup>. The Town of Brookline government is a well funded operation with a sophisticated staff and seasoned elected officials. The Town operates under a representative town meeting form of government, which includes a Board of Selectmen as well as an assembly of Town Meeting members. Minor projects can be approved by the Board of Selectmen, while major development projects also require a difficult to achieve 2/3 vote of the Town Meeting

<sup>89</sup> Morell, Ricki. "From Four Parishes to Two; Archdiocese to Merge 4 Churches in Brookline." *The Boston Globe*. April 25, 1999. City Weekly Section, pg. 1.

<sup>90</sup> Morell, Ricki.

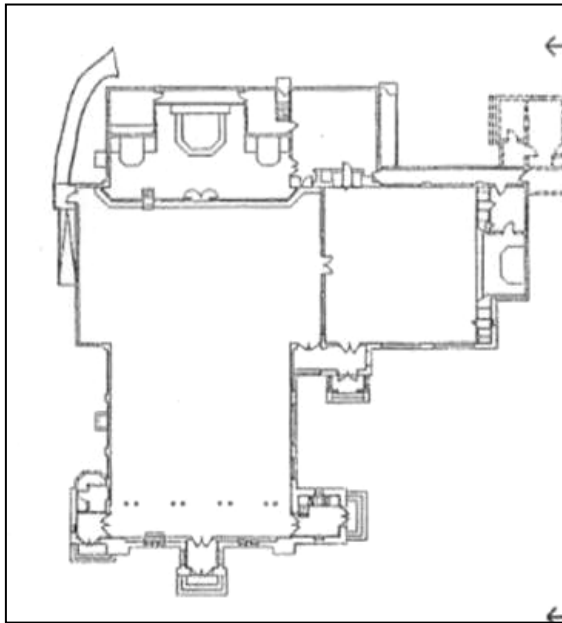
<sup>91</sup> Morell, Ricki.

<sup>92</sup> Morell, Ricki.

<sup>93</sup> Town of Brookline, Dept of Planning and Community Development. *Update: St. Aidan's Special Edition*. Nov. 2003.

members<sup>94</sup>. Town of Brookline staff involved in the St. Aidan's discussions included members of the planning, affordable housing, preservation and economic development divisions of the Town's Department of Planning and Community Development.

*Figure 6.7: St. Aidan's Existing Floor Plan*



Many people in the community and the archdiocese felt a passing sadness at the loss of an important landmark and spiritual institution. The group of local stakeholders who took an active role in the project was comprised in large part by people living in direct proximity to the site and who felt an added financial incentive to ensure that redevelopment would not compromise property values in the area. Advocating for preservation of the church represented a means to ensure continuity of property values, particularly when contrasted with the initially proposed teardown and 150-unit affordable housing

unit development. Town Meeting member Evelyn Roll lived near the church and was an active member of the citizen's Campaign to Preserve St. Aidan's, and a vocal opponent of POUA's initial proposal to demolish the building and construct 100 plus units of affordable housing. "It is a beautiful building surrounded by a beautiful piece of green space. This is not an issue of affordable housing versus the church. Both of them can co-exist. To demolish that church would be the rape of a beautiful building. Others have been torn down, and life goes on, it's true. But it's a little less beautiful<sup>95</sup>." Other stakeholders from the general public who became actively involved were people promoting the development of affordable housing on the site, and who were to become allied with the Town and the POUA during the process.

The Planning Office for Urban Affairs is an affiliate of the Archdiocese of Boston that produces affordable and mixed-income housing in greater Boston. POUA is a seasoned affordable housing developer and has produced over 1700 units in 21 projects, many on former parish properties but only a few involving the reuse of existing structures. Monsignor Michael Groden is credited for

<sup>94</sup> Marchant, Edward. Lecturer, Affordable Housing Course, Harvard University Kennedy School of Government. Discussion. April 7, 2004.  
<sup>95</sup> Scharfenberg, David. "City Weekly". *The Boston Globe*. May 6, 2001. City Weekly Section, Page 1.



creating and running the POUA, which was largely dependent on contributions from fundraisers organized by the Archdiocese for working capital until 2001, when Lisa Alberghini, former Director of Development for regional non-profit affordable housing developer The Community Builders, was hired as executive director and charged with changing the business model to a self-sustaining one. The emphasis currently within POUA is to build mixed-income projects, with the market units serving as subsidy vehicles for the affordable ones. POUA stresses the production of high quality housing for low and moderate income residents. The stated emphasis of the office “is not on numbers, but on having a qualitative impact on the harsh reality of housing deprivation for poor families, the elderly, and disabled persons<sup>96</sup>.”

## **Regulatory Environment**

In 1999, approximately eight percent of the Town’s 26,000 housing units were dedicated to low and moderate income households, and fell short of the Town’s own minimum goal of 10 percent affordable stock by more than 600 units. The majority of the Town’s affordable housing had been developed in the 1970’s and 1980’s, and in 2001 one of the significant issues at hand was concern over the number of upcoming expiring use provisions of many of these projects<sup>97</sup>. The Town had taken several more recent steps to expand its affordable housing production by implementing inclusionary zoning requirements in 1987 and by launching an affordable housing initiative that resulted in the creation or reinvigoration of several task forces and committees and a bolstering of the Town’s Affordable Housing Trust with annual contributions from the Board of Selectmen’s ‘free cash’ stash. The housing trust was burgeoning for lack of suitable development projects, however, given the lack of developable land remaining in Brookline.

The Town also decided to seek out the private sector by encouraging the development of projects under the Comprehensive Permit laws enacted by Massachusetts Chapter 40B regulations. Enacted in 1969 to encourage the development of affordable housing by reducing the barriers created by local zoning and approval processes, Chapter 40B permits a local Zoning Board of Appeals to grant zoning and regulatory waivers for low and moderate income housing which meets certain State-mandated thresholds. The State Housing Appeals Committee can overrule a local decision in

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<sup>96</sup> Planning Office for Urban Affairs. Archdiocese of Boston. *Planning Office for Urban Affairs Development Resume*. August 2003.

<sup>97</sup> Town of Brookline, Department of Planning and Community Development. *Housing Brookline: Affordable Housing Policy and Programs*. August 2003. Pg. 3.

communities in which fewer than 10 percent of the housing units meet the State's definition of low and moderate income housing, unless the proposed development 'presents serious health or safety conditions which cannot be mitigated'.<sup>98</sup> To apply for such a variance, a developer must price at least 25 percent of the units at affordable levels. Prior to this project, the Town had limited experience with Chapter 40B, due to its nearly built out condition, but was intrigued with the prospect of using this approach to try and produce higher-density affordable housing projects without compromising or trying to change the underlying low-density zoning designations.

From the POUA's perspective, Chapter 40B was the obvious route by which to pursue redevelopment of the site. Their desire to construct affordable housing more or less precluded the development of single-family homes on the site, which was the only activity allowed as a use by right per the underlying zoning. Any other use would require a lengthy zone change process, an act which is further complicated in Brookline by the requirement to obtain such an approval from both the Board of Selectmen and from a 2/3 vote of the Town Meeting members. With both the Town officials and POUA verbally agreeing that affordable housing was appropriate for the site, and that 40B was an appropriate means of pursuit, POUA was able to enter into a cooperative planning process with the Town knowing that they retained the option of applying to the State in order to override local zoning if they were unable to acquire the necessary approvals locally.

## **Site Issues**

When closed by the Archdiocese in 1999, the St. Aidan's site consisted of a church, a rectory, a forecourt enclosed by the two buildings, a large surface parking lot and a small garage on an 80,000 square foot site. One of the few pieces of relatively open space in crowded North Brookline, St. Aidan's was viewed as an important amenity by many people in the neighborhood, particularly those that lived close by and spoke highly of its exceptionally large, 150 year-old copper beech tree in the forecourt. The church and courtyard together were described by a neighbor as "one historic element – sort of an emblem for that part of town, a signature for that corner of the neighborhood"<sup>99</sup>. The church is built right up to the edge of the sidewalk on busy Freeman Street, and the church entrance and the expansive, treed forecourt are a dominant visual image along that

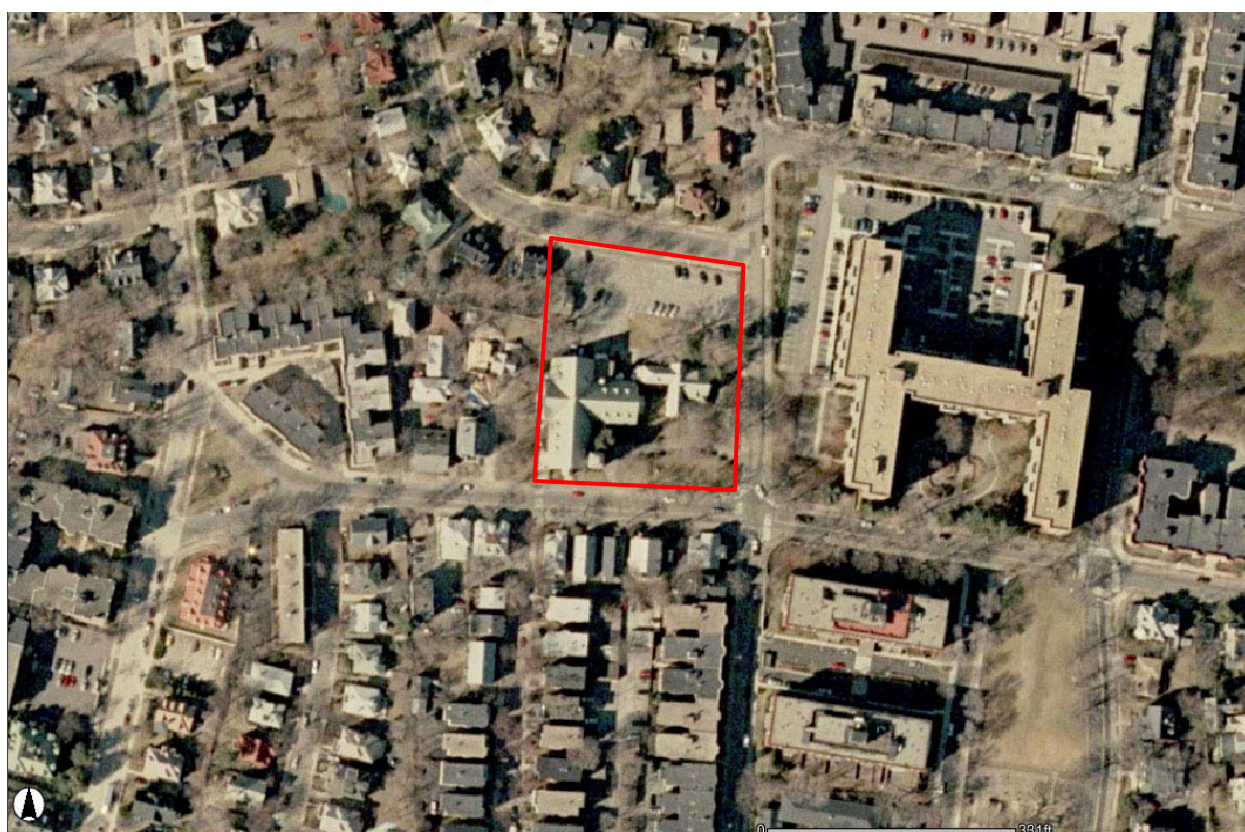
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<sup>98</sup> Town of Brookline, Dept of Planning and Community Development. *Update: St. Aidan's Special Edition*. Nov. 2003.

<sup>99</sup> Berdik, Chris. "Can JFK's Memory Save St. Aidan's?." *The Boston Globe*. December 15, 2002. City Weekly Section.

corridor. On slower paced Pleasant Street and Crownshield Road the church building is less visible, and the back portion of the site reveals a surprisingly large surface parking lot and service area with two small outbuildings. The rectory itself is not a particularly impressive building, but does serve to nicely frame the forecourt and the beech tree. The church parcel is bounded by single family homes on one side and by mid-rise rental apartment buildings on the other. Figure 6.8 provides a detailed aerial view of the St. Aidan's site. The site was assessed at \$2.28 million by the Town of Brookline Assessors Office in 2004<sup>100</sup>, and POUA ultimately agreed to acquire the property from the Archdiocese for \$3.5 million<sup>101</sup>.

*Figure 6.8: St. Aidan's Site Photo*



<sup>100</sup> Town of Brookline, Assessors Office. *Assessors FY 2004 Database*.

<sup>101</sup> Planning Office for Urban Affairs, Archdiocese of Boston. *St. Aidan's Mixed Income Housing Development: Preliminary Sources and Uses of Funds*. HAB Submission, October 15, 2003.

## Programming for Reuse

The St. Aidan's site and building went through several design iterations over a lengthy planning process. While not initially contemplated by POUA to be a conversion project, adaptive reuse of the church became an integral part of the programming and design discussions between POUA and the Town early into the process. The affordable housing program and the site layout, as well as the proposed use of the church building, each went through myriad levels of discussion and analysis over the two year planning process. This section reviews some of the major considerations discussed, and traces the evolution of some of the milestone design proposals along the way to the final approved plan.

The use by right alternative, allowed under the underlying S7 zoning for the parcel, would have allowed single family homes with a 7,000 square foot minimum lot size and generated approximately \$12 million in sales. Under that scheme, the 80,000 square foot St. Aidan's site could accommodate 11 houses. Although never proposed by POUA, this use by right undertaking could have been pursued by a developer with minimal time and effort from a zoning and approval perspective, with each lot selling for around \$300,000<sup>102</sup> and finished house ultimately easily yielding in excess of the \$1.1 million dollar median sales price of a home in Brookline in 2003<sup>103</sup>. The fairly large difference between the assessed value of the church and the purchase price is likely to be partially accounted for by the significant financial value of the use by right option associated with the underlying zoning.

POUA indicated that they viewed the St. Aidan's site as important for affordable housing because of the large amount of undeveloped land that could be used for affordable housing in a land-poor community that was in desperate need of the delivery of additional units. The site was also always viewed as a 40B project in order to obtain the zoning variances necessary to build at a high enough density to make a mixed income project with as high of a proportion of affordable units as possible<sup>104</sup>. POUA's original idea for the St. Aidan's parcel, developed in 2000, contemplated a six-story T-shaped building above an underground parking structure, with 92 of the 140 units designated as affordable. The final plan, designed to preserve the church and forecourt and build

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<sup>102</sup> Lisa Alberghini. Executive Director, Planning Office of Urban Affairs, Archdiocese of Boston. Interview. March 17, 2004.

<sup>103</sup> Sales data: Multiple Listing Service. *Town of Brookline Single Family Total Sold Market Statistics Report 2003-2004*. MLS Property Information Network, Inc.

<sup>104</sup> Lisa Alberghini. Executive Director, Planning Office of Urban Affairs, Archdiocese of Boston. Interview. March 17, 2004.

two new mid-rise buildings of affordable housing, will yield 59 total units, with 50 designated as affordable. So while affordable housing in as high a concentration as feasible has always been a program element of the redevelopment of the St. Aidan's site, the reuse of the church has not. Reuse of the church became a programmatic element in the process following the release of the initial tower plans, at which point the Campaign to Save Saint Aidan's organized and began to lobby the Town to preserve the building and the site.

The encouragement of the Town and pressure from the Campaign to Save St. Aidan's led to POUA considering reuse options for the church. The architectural caliber of the exterior and the expansive nature of the interior could be maximized in terms of development value by creating large, voluminous residences designed to appeal to niche users seeking a unique condominium space with new construction at a premium address in Brookline. Luxury condominiums were concluded by POUA to be the best reuse of the existing church building, even in an affordable housing-motivated project, because the high per-dollar square foot sales price of high end housing could support the higher than normal construction costs associated with renovation, could carry a high land cost as a component of their sales price (attributing 15-20% of the unit sales price to land<sup>105</sup>), and could contribute to the funding gap created by the rental affordable housing units. The sales of these high-end units could thus help to subsidize the affordable units directly as well as by assuming a large proportion of the land cost for the entire site. This bears out the experience of affordable housing developer Bob Kuehn, president of Keen Development in Cambridge, who said, "Generally it is difficult to build low-cost housing in a church building. Churches are difficult to adapt. If you're going to do a decent job of preservation, you need to build around the major features of the church, and you tend to get larger, more expensive units<sup>106</sup>."

The citizen's group, meanwhile, lobbied at various times and through various means to see the building reused as something other than housing because of a desire to reduce the extent of any changes to the exterior of the building, and to attempt to maintain public access to the interior. A community center, a rehearsal space, or complete or partial conversion to a National Park Service-maintained monument were all proposed over the course of the study process<sup>107</sup>. No firm funding

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<sup>105</sup> Rule of thumb: 15-20% of sales price attributable to land value, per Ed Marchant.

<sup>106</sup> Scharfenberg, David.

<sup>107</sup> Berdik, Chris. "Can JFK's Memory Save St. Aidan's?." *The Boston Globe*. December 15, 2002. City Weekly Section.

sources were identified to support any of these ideas, and they were all correspondingly rejected by POUA as infeasible.

The density of the project was another recurring programming issue, with the citizen’s group lobbying for less density in the name of keeping to the single-family scale of the adjacent houses. This was to manifest primarily in the final unit yield of the project, with the loudest citizen voices protesting that the amount of housing designated for the site would come at the expense of preserving one of the neighborhood’s few open spaces, and instead advocating for distributing the affordable housing across other sites in other locations in Brookline. Table 6.9 reviews the program iterations for the St. Aidan’s site, illustrating the decline in the total number of units and the increase in the Town subsidy as the process progressed. Figures 6.10 and 6.11 present interim and final site plans for the St. Aidan’s redevelopment.

*Table 6.9: Program Iterations for St. Aidan’s Site*

<b>Plan</b>	<b>Plan Status</b>	<b>Total # Units</b>	<b>Total AH Units</b>	<b>Town Contribution</b>	<b>Church Reuse?</b>
Initial (2000)	POUA conceptual	140	92	\$0	No
Interim (Aug 2002)	Approved by Review Committee, submitted to Zoning Board of Appeals	90	58	\$2,500,000	9 luxury units
Final (Feb 2003)	Approved and Funded	59	50	\$3,500,000	9 luxury units

*Figure 6.10: August 2002 Interim Site Plan*<sup>108</sup>

*Figure 6.11: Final Site Plan*

*Figure 6.12: Final Plan Sections*<sup>109</sup>

## **Building Issues**

The retention and preservation of the building was a major goal of the Town and the participating general public. While the outright preservation of the church was determined infeasible given the larger goals of generating housing on the site, several major building issues were identified by the developer as necessary to successfully convert the building, and by the Town and the vocal neighbors as important for consideration of neighborhood aesthetics. Important building issues for the developer included the requirement to make use of the large interior volume by inserting new floors, the need to bring in additional daylight to the new subdivided space, the requirement to provide access to the units from the exterior of the building, and the need to provide vertical access within the building. The Town and the neighbors were concerned principally with the desire to minimize exterior alterations to the church façade and roof in the process of accommodating the program needs of the developer.

The large, singular interior volume (see Figure 6.7: St. Aidan's Existing Interior Plan) will be converted to luxury condominiums by increasing the useable square footage through the insertion of two intermediate floors. The two upper floors are contained within the volume of the nave, leaving a ten foot first floor height and creating a ten foot second floor height and an average fifteen foot height third floor that is under the rafters of the steeply pitched roof. These two new floors will be supported by a new structural framework core built within the shell of the existing building, essentially creating a new structure within the old one. This specialized construction will cost more than would a comparably built new building that efficiently integrates the shell and core of the building. The section drawings in Figures 6.13 and 6.14 illustrate the new floor insertions within the church.

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<sup>108</sup> Figures 6.10 and 6.11: Town of Brookline, Department of Planning and Community Development. *Update: St. Aidan's Special Edition* Nov 2003.

<sup>109</sup> Figures 6.12 – 6.21: Antonio DiMambro + Associates. *St. Aidan Redevelopment Comprehensive Permit Application (Plan Set)*. February 12, 2003

***Figure 6.14: St. Aidan's Reuse Plan Section B***

The insertion of new floors, and the creation of a series of bedrooms and living spaces in the nine condominium units led to the need to bring in many new sources of light. The existing two levels of windows will be reused to light the first two floors and a new series of dormer windows will be inserted into the roofline, and are designed in a manner to complement the existing architectural character. Figures 6.15 and 6.16 contain elevations of the converted church with window insertions, while Figure 6.16 illustrates a proposed dormer treatment for the third floor windows.



*Figure 6.15: St. Aidan's Reuse Plan Front Elevation*

*Figure 6.16: St. Aidan's Reuse Plan Rear Elevation*

*Figure 6.17: St. Aidan's Reuse Plan Dormer Window Detail*

Exterior access to the existing church is limited to three entrances, and the new program calls for a total of nine condominiums, each requiring private and secured access. The design calls for access via an interior common space accessed from the traditional church entrance and from the creation of new exterior entrances. The new exterior entrances need to be integrated into the church design as with the new window insertions, and Figure 6.18 illustrates the proposed solution by integrating a set of doors into an existing window frame. Vertical access to the new floors was accomplished by stacking each residential unit on three levels and providing stairs within each unit. Any other vertical circulation solution or unit layout would have required the insertion of an elevator and internal corridors, adding considerably to the cost and eliminating saleable space. Figures 6.19 – 6.21 provide floor plans for the three levels of the reused St. Aidan's church.

*Figure 6.18: St. Aidan's Reuse Exterior Door Study*

*Figure 6.19: St. Aidan's Reuse Plan Floor One*

*Figure 6.20: St. Aidan's Reuse Plan Floor Two*

*Figure 6.21: St. Aidan's Reuse Plan Floor Three*

## Project Timeline

1999	St. Aidan's church closed by the Archdiocese of Boston. POUA and Town both indicate an interest in seeing the site reused for affordable housing.
Late 2000	POUA develops 40B plan for 140 unit (92 affordable) 6-story tower. Church and rectory to be demolished. Campaign to Preserve St. Aidan's is formed and begins lobbying the Town of Brookline to designate the church as a local historic district.
May 2001	Campaign to Save St. Aidan's proposes to establish the property as a Local Historic District. Proposal placed on hold pending a study on the reuse of the church. POUA agrees to postpone its own planning during this study.
Sept 2001	Study Committee convened
Feb 2002	Study Committee presents findings detailing goals and guidelines for redeveloping the site and the church for housing. Endorsed by Selectmen.
April 2002	POUA commits to working with the Town through an open process and to consider adaptive reuse of the church and overall site design issues.
August 2002	Preliminary plan with 90 total units (58 affordable) in a five-story building, townhouses and a reused church. Underground parking. Removal of forecourt and rectory. \$2.5 million tentatively committed by Town.
Sept 2002	Board of Appeals begins review process.
Feb 2003	Board of Selectmen approve a new plan with \$3.5 million Town commitment that reduces number of units, scale of buildings, and preserves forecourt and beech tree. Preservation easement required as condition of approval.
June 2003	Project awarded allocation of Low-Income Housing Tax Credits, as well as Federal and State HOME monies and other grants, helping to close the affordable housing affordability gap.
Oct 2003	Brookline Preservation Commission approves condominium plans and preservation easement for building.
April 2004	Historic Preservation Act compliance approved via Section 106 review. Final design for church and affordable housing underway.
July 2004	Construction scheduled to begin.
Dec 2005	Tax credits required to be in service; construction of AH must be complete.

## Process

In response to news of preliminary planning underway by POUA to take down existing buildings and create between 100 and 140 affordable housing units using a Comprehensive Permit under Chapter 40B, neighbors, former parishioners and preservationists began to organize to save the St. Aidan's Church. Their concerns centered on historical and architectural legacies, and the contribution of the site to neighborhood open space and character. Their proposal to Town meeting in May, 2001 to establish the property as a Local Historic District was placed on hold pending a study, proposed by the Board of Selectmen, on the adaptive reuse of the church and site. At the same time, POUA agreed to put its own planning on hold as it awaited the outcome of the study, an extremely unusual step for a developer.

The report's recommendations were endorsed by the Board of Selectmen and submitted to POUA. In April, POUA met with the Board of Selectmen to express its commitment to work with the Town and neighborhood through an open process, to reconsider the adaptive reuse of the church, and to rethink its overall design. Over the next six months, POUA and the Town worked together to craft a Chapter 40B comprehensive permit application that could be endorsed by both parties by mutually agreeing that a reduction of density and massing be accomplished with as little impact as possible on the number of affordable units, to the extent that the cross subsidy provided by market rate units could be off-set by designing fewer, larger units for a higher priced market, the market unit count and overall massing and density could be reduced<sup>110</sup>. Instead of six months, the study proved to be a 22 month process of public meetings with myriad levels of review and adjustment. As shown in the timeline, the level of public involvement directly impacted the programming and design decisions, in no small part because of the commitment of the Town to provide increasing levels of funding in exchange for development concessions, open space and historic preservation, and affordable housing tenancy commitments.

Indeed, the issue of housing, and the intent of providing housing for Brookline residents and employees, seemed to get lost at times by the citizen's groups and the Town during the discussions, as is best evidenced by the ultimate decision by the Town to reduce the density and unit yield while increasing the subsidy support by an additional million dollars in order to preserve the forecourt

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<sup>110</sup> Town of Brookline, Dept of Planning and Community Development. *Update: St. Aidan's Special Edition*. Nov. 2003.

beech tree. One of the few residents recorded by the Boston newspapers as supporting the project stated: “The way people talk about people in this process compared to the way they talk about that tree; it’s just mind boggling<sup>111</sup>.”

## Financing

St. Aidan’s is a product of many financing sources, mostly on the project level to fill the affordable housing gap but also as a result of the reuse of the church building.

Project level funding sources include proceeds from sales of the nine luxury condominiums and first-time homebuyer units, a permanent mortgage on the rental units, and various affordable housing gap financing programs. Gap financing sources include syndication of Low Income Housing Tax Credits, \$3.5 million from the Town’s Affordable Housing Trust, and Federal and State HOME and other affordable housing grant funds. Figure 6.21 presents the preliminary sources and uses of funds schedule for the St. Aidan’s project.

### Figure 6.21: St. Aidan’s Preliminary Sources and Uses of Funds<sup>112</sup>

One of the major sources of income for the project will be the proceeds from the sale of the market rate units in the reused St. Aidan’s church. The proforma calculates a \$440 per square foot sales price rate for break even purposes by assuming sales of \$1.25 million for each 3,000+ square foot unit<sup>113</sup>. This is an aggressive price for a very particular niche market of high end users that has shown signs of waning in Boston’s recent residential real estate market<sup>114</sup>. St. Aidan’s is not the first church in Brookline to be converted to luxury condominiums, however, and the other project appears to perform in line with expectations for St. Aidan’s: St. Mark’s at 90 Park Street was converted in 1994 to 12 luxury condos, ranging in size from 1000 to 1800 square feet and assessed in 2004 at between \$390,000 and \$700,000 each<sup>115</sup>.

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<sup>111</sup> Berdik, Chris. “Can JFK’s Memory Save St. Aidan’s?” *The Boston Globe*. December 15, 2002. City Weekly Section, pg. 1. Quote attributed to Rebecca Onie.

<sup>112</sup> Data Source: Planning Office for Urban Affairs, Archdiocese of Boston. *St. Aidan’s Mixed Income Housing Development: Preliminary Sources and Uses of Funds*. HAB Submission, October 15, 2003.

<sup>113</sup> Planning Office for Urban Affairs, Archdiocese of Boston. *St. Aidan’s Mixed Income Housing Development: Preliminary Sources and Uses of Funds*. HAB Submission, October 15, 2003.

<sup>114</sup> Marchant, Edward. Lecturer, Affordable Housing Course, Harvard University Kennedy School of Government. Discussion. April 7, 2004.

<sup>115</sup> Town of Brookline, Assessors Office. *Assessors FY 2004 Database*.

The Town's initial commitment of \$2.5 million from the Affordable Housing Trust was increased to \$3.5 million in the final plan in order to compensate for the decision to remove building mass in order to preserve the forecourt and beech tree. Use of the Affordable Housing Trust funds also allowed the Town to insert a provision that a portion of the affordable units be prioritized for existing employees and designees of the Town.

The Town of Brookline is seeking to recapture some of their \$3.5 million financing commitment by applying the project for Community Development Block Grant funding and National Park Service Historic Preservation Fund grants, and is currently undergoing a Section 106 review for federal compliance with the Historic Preservation Act. The project's eligibility hinges on the fact that the church has been preserved (although one of the Section 106 requirements is that the most appropriate use be utilized, giving the remaining citizen opponents one final leverage point), thus bringing the building into the realm of subsidy by triggering the eligibility for preservation funds.

## **Findings**

The redevelopment of St. Aidan's church is ongoing as of this writing, with construction documents going out to bid, and final permits being signed. Despite the lack of any implementation information, several findings can be drawn about the planning and programming processes for the St. Aidan's project that relate to the general examination of the reuse of churches and that prove applicable as lessons for other church redevelopment efforts:

- ***The developer was passionate about the reuse of the site***, and ultimately of the church, which proved critical with respect to the final plan outcome. The first two plans – the use by right and the 100-140-unit building - would have generated more profit and more affordable housing, respectively, but neither represented an ideal outcome from the Town's perspective, and the developer prioritized creating a project that was welcomed by the local residents, hence the willingness to reuse the church and reduce the density on the site. The voluntary adherence of POUA to local guidelines for site redevelopment as well as its involvement in a comprehensive review process, even prior to the actual submission of an application for a Comprehensive Permit, is unprecedented for a 40B process. Would a private, for-profit developer have reached the same conclusions or made the same

concessions as POUA? Not likely, and certainly not to the ratio of affordability they pursued (50 out of 59 units are affordable versus the 25% required by 40B).

- ***The length of the approval process can have negative consequences for project viability.*** While the willingness of POUA to engage the community in an upfront, open comprehensive permitting process led to an end product that is arguable better as a result, the 22 months committed to planning was an extremely long process and increased both development costs and development risks compared to a conventional approach. While a long process with activated stakeholders may lead to a better consensus with respect to the ultimate approved plan (and in this case led to the preservation of the church), it may also jeopardize the viability of the project itself, as financing sources could disappear or market conditions could change. This may yet result with St. Aidan's, as the luxury residential condominium market has begun to show signs of saturation in the Boston area between the time of the original use programming and the beginning of construction. If POUA is not able to achieve the anticipated sales prices for the condos, one of the principal subsidy sources will be eliminated, and either affordability levels will diminish in the affordable housing units or replacement funds will have to be identified at an extremely late point in the development process.
  
- ***Creative financing and multiple funding sources were required to make this project work.*** Affordable housing funds from multiple sources helped to address the affordability gap, while a programming decision to reuse the church as high-end condominiums will preserve the building and help to support the affordable housing component. Multiple funding sources allow this project to happen while maintaining preservation and affordability goals, sources that range from grants to loans to tax credits and from affordable housing as well as preservation and community redevelopment sources.
  
- ***The Town's willingness to participate in the project enhanced the church's prospects for a successful redevelopment.*** Public-private cooperation was enhanced by the Town's willingness to both pursue a zoning exempted project and its desire to contribute financially.

- ***Site factors were of principal importance in the development of this site***, allowing for an accommodation of both of the desired end goals: affordable housing and the reuse of the church. The project proforma indicates that the redeveloped church will generate sales of \$11.2 million in sales against \$11 million in project costs, netting a return of 1.8% to the developer. This return rate would not be accepted by any private developer looking to match the upside of a reuse project with its relatively high risk. So the ability to construct additional square footage on the site in the form of affordable housing, combined with the community desire to reuse the church, led to the compromise programming decision by POUA to reuse the church only for its minimal subsidy contribution potential and not for any real profitability.
  
- ***Churches have financial value to neighbors and communities***. The value of a church building, even an inactive one, to a neighborhood and to a community (or at least to several committed abutters) is evidenced by the eventual commitment of \$3.5 million in Town funds to subsidize a project that reuses the church but results in a lower yield of affordable housing than the version of the project that didn't reuse the church and also didn't require a financial contribution from the Town.

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## CHAPTER SEVEN

### RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE REUSE OF CHURCHES

This thesis investigated the redevelopment and reuse of churches in urban neighborhoods in light of the intentions of the Archdiocese of Boston to close and dispose of 50-60 churches in the next year. The expected closures will bring the total number of churches closed by the Archdiocese in the greater Boston area to over 100 since 1985. While churches prove difficult to reuse and convert compared to other building types, they may have special or unique attributes that can be capitalized upon in order to create a successful redevelopment plan for the building. There are several important findings to be drawn from studying the contextual issues surrounding the adaptive reuse of churches and from looking at examples of completed projects. These findings are used to form the basis for a series of recommendations and strategies for stakeholders seeking to address the reuse of a church in their own locality.

#### Findings About the Reuse of Churches

1. ***The best use for a church is a church.*** Churches provide a public good which is largely a product of its spiritual activities and their role in the lives of people in the community. This public good is maximized when the church building is utilized as it was designed, for ecclesiastic activities. Additionally, the long view holds that religion is not going away, that neighborhoods will repopulate and reorder themselves but will remain neighborhoods nonetheless, and that demand is cyclical over time in any given place, leading to the conclusion that if a church was once in demand in a particular area, that it will once again be in demand in the future. Therefore, the first and in many ways most relevant effort for a congregation and a community is to explore every avenue to maintain the building as a house of worship. This might include identifying other denominations and religions to take over the building, combining multiple congregations or faiths in a single structure, or increasing the area served by the existing congregation in order to increase membership.

2. ***Churches evoke a strong visceral and emotional response from a wide range of people***, and this response is likely to encourage active citizen participation in any church redevelopment process. Given the shared ownership feeling of these buildings and places, A wide group of people will feel that they have something at stake when a church is closed and redeveloped. While the general public has limited if any direct ability to preserve a church building or otherwise dictate reuse, citizens do possess the power to delay through regulatory and legal means, which can prove an effective deterrent tactic to a reuse proposal that is not liked. The higher the underlying land value of the surrounding area, the more sophisticated and well-funded the general public and the government is likely to be, and the more likely that an engaged set of stakeholders will become involved in the process, especially abutters who fear decreases in their own property values. Churches and congregations value the interior spaces of a church for their sacred nature and special role in personal matters of ritual and faith, while the community and the general public value the exterior and the site for its architectural presences and open space contributions to the surrounding urban environment. The public should be engaged during the process, both to address concerns and to minimize delay tactics as well as to tap into the resources of a wider set of motivated stakeholders. The general public values the presence of churches, and in numerous cases has proven a willingness to step up and support redevelopment projects through financial contributions. Many sources of public funding exist to assist with preservation projects, and all regard highly the inclusion of the public in determining outcome of the project.
  
3. ***Church redevelopment efforts take longer than conventional development projects***, due to the sentiments of shared ownership and the subsequent engagement of multiple levels of emotionally vested stakeholders. The relative infrequency of churches closing and redeveloping also means that each one is likely to draw a great deal of attention within its local area. Because churches infrequently turn over to other uses, the market, the developers and the public do not have systems in place for addressing their unique conditions. The need to address the numerous building, site and regulatory issues specific to reusing churches also contributes to a longer process. The longer process and the unfamiliarity with the building type leads to churches being viewed as a higher risk development undertaking, and thus attracting less attention and lower valuation by developers.

4. ***Churches are expensive to convert.*** Development costs are increased by the deferred maintenance conditions in the building as well as from the need to convert a large volume of space and address a low ratio of useable square footage. Churches are also difficult to subdivide to compartmentalized uses like residential or office because of the additional expenses incurred by the need to insert intermediate floors, add vertical circulation and address daylighting by adding fenestration. Churches tend to be a higher-risk undertaking because of the deferred maintenance and the likelihood of containing unknown or undiscovered structural conditions that will need to be addressed during construction. To compensate for these risks, a developer will require a higher return rate for a church redevelopment project than for a new construction project, further increasing total project costs. These added expenses create a funding gap between development costs and the projected future revenues or sales proceeds from the project, requiring the developer to identify additional sources of revenue or to secure funding offsets. Public and private funding sources are available to help to fill the funding gap, although many are competitive to receive and few suffice to fill a funding gap on their own and need to be combined with others.

5. ***The regulatory context is both a barrier and a benefit to the redevelopment of churches.*** The land use process and code requirements can have negative consequences with respect to the desirability of the building as a development project. A developer requires a relatively narrow window of time in which to put together a project, and uncertainly in the amount of time required to obtain approvals decreases the development value of the project. Life safety, structure, modernization, and access codes all present difficult design challenges for a church, increase costs, and add additional layers of approval requirements. Building codes are typically prescriptive instead of performance-based which limits flexibility with respect to creative solutions, a condition further exacerbated by the fact that codes are typically designed for new construction projects. The regulatory context can also be a source of benefit to redevelopment and reuse, however, if financial incentives are provided via tax breaks, tax credits, grants, low-interest loans, and/or gap financing. Jurisdictions can actively promote the preservation of building stock by establishing historic districts or special programs that provide additional ability to tap into funding sources.

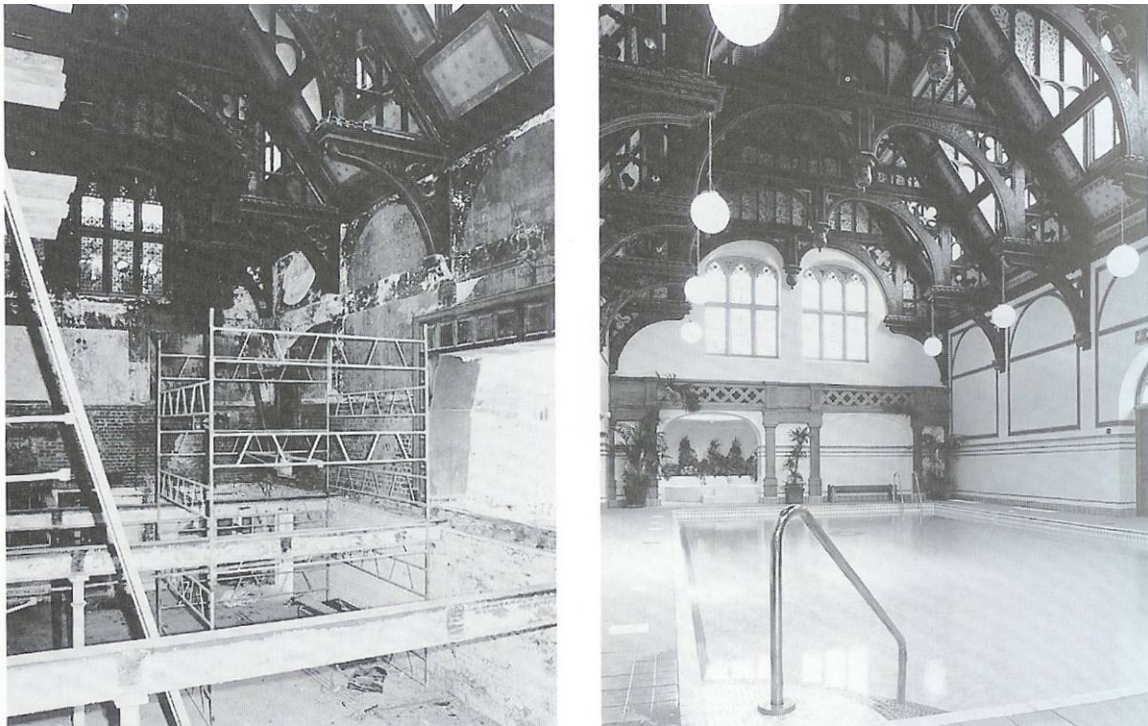
Preservation regulations provide access to incentives for redevelopment of a building, but in and of themselves do little to prevent sale or demolition of a structure.

6. ***A seasoned redeveloper can help identify creative adaptive reuse solutions and strategies, while a traditional, speculative developer may find demolition to be the most attractive development option for a church.*** While a church building can be a valuable presence to a larger development by establishing identity and character, the specific redevelopment difficulties are likely to overwhelm the appetite of a conventional, build and sell developer. The lack of familiarity with these kinds of projects, additional expenses likely to be incurred from construction, the risks associated with finding a new use and user, plus the uncertainties of time all add to the decreased desirability of taking on a church redevelopment when compared to the one-time financial and emotional costs associated with demolition and site clearance. Demolition allows a developer to access the underlying site and develop a conventional building using familiar, conventional construction and marketing techniques. The notable exceptions to this conclusion is if the building is larger than underlying zoning would permit, in which case the virtual density bonus might swing the viability towards reuse from a conventional development perspective, or if retention of the building motivates community support for an even larger development undertaking, as with St. Aidan's in Brookline where the reuse of the church was packaged with an affordable housing development. A seasoned developer that is experienced in adaptive reuse or historic preservation projects, however, can use creative solutions to better tap the value associated with a unique or a white elephant building in order to make reuse the most profitable redevelopment strategy. Figure 7.1 presents a particularly creative reuse solution, a conversion of a church structure to a pool house.

7. ***The site is at least as important as the structure and the size of the church in determining successful reuse,*** because of the underlying land value in the area and from the potential of any unbuilt areas and open spaces. The underlying land value of the church site may be high if the area is built out and the local supply of developable land is constrained. Additional site area in the form of lawns or landscaping, outbuildings, or parking lots can be used for infill development, parking, or preserved as open space for compensation or as mitigation. Conversely, the lack of available site area for parking, open

space, landscaping or ancillary activities can diminish the development value of an otherwise attractive or viable building. The larger the site or size of the building, the more space or units are available to distribute the costs associated with redevelopment: permitting, construction, etc., increasing the likelihood of successful redevelopment.

**Figure 7.1: Creative Reuse Strategy: Conversion of Church to Swimming Pool**



## **Recommendations for the Reuse of Churches**

1. *If adaptive reuse is to be achieved, at least one party – be it church, the public, or developer – must be committed to preserving the church building.* There are many old buildings that are eligible for reuse, but they all compete against each other for the limited expertise and public funding incentives required in order to make redevelopment feasible. In many cases, there may be no strong desire or compelling reason to save a church, and no subsequent advocates for its reuse. In these cases demolition of the church building and/or clearance of the site may well be best option with regards to achieving the highest and best use for the property. In the absence of a city or state-level commitment to preserving the

historical or cultural context provided by urban churches, there is no means by which to tap into the residual cultural value provided by maintaining a stock of churches in the urban landscape. This is unlike many Western European countries including Great Britain, Germany and Italy, all of whom have established national trusts to preserve vacated churches and to maintain public access.

2. ***The church owner should determine the desired outcome for the building as well as the church institution, and should engage a developer that suits the goal.*** A

conventional speculative developer will buy the property outright or partner with the owner and will seek the use that generates the highest return, thus putting speculative developers in a position to be able to pay the most for the site, although the church loses control over the outcome of the building proportional to the price premium they seek. A fee developer or community redevelopment agency will have less at risk in the development and will be able to consider a wider range of redevelopment strategies. Given the likelihood that a gap will exist between development costs and future revenues, the closer the acquisition price is to zero, the more likely the church can be redeveloped. The higher the desired sales price, the less likely the building will be preserved. From a development standpoint the more potential uses are possible the better the chance of creating a successful project, so churches with limitations such as prohibitions on the sales of alcohol sales prohibitions are going to prove less valuable. Larger, more ornate churches in high value locations may be attractive to for-profit developers, who will participate by either purchasing the property outright or joining with the church owner in a partnership arrangement. Smaller or simpler buildings in less than high value locations will generally find the most success by looking towards community uses as a reuse solution and to fee developers to coordinate the process. An increasingly common renewal tool is the establishment and support of community development corporations that facilitate these types of projects.

3. ***A public policy initiative designed to stimulate the redevelopment and reuse of former church buildings is warranted by the magnitude of recent church closings.***

The importance of the presence of church buildings to the people living in their surrounding neighborhoods and communities, and the magnitude of the number of church closings in some cities and regions, is significant enough to warrant public action. A public initiative

could help to address the difficulties experienced by developers with regards process, regulation, timing and funding. The National Trust for Historic Preservation named Historic Houses of Worship to its' endangered building list in 2003, which could be used as a springboard for broader legislative action and locally-based initiatives. The scope and scale of a public initiative would increase if undertaken on a federal level, but the site-specific issues so central to the successful redesign of churches indicate that local implementation, at least, will lead to better end results. Regulatory changes could include the relaxing of building codes for adaptive reuse projects and the streamlining of emotionally charged review processes to minimize delays. Similar to affordable housing tax credits, any federal funds directed towards encouraging the reuse of former churches could be distributed in a manner similar to affordable housing tax credits, which allows distribution by city and regional entities to ensure that the most warranting projects received any limited funds. An appropriate such source in Boston for a church redevelopment program could be Historic Boston Incorporated, a non-profit institution that is active in facilitating the reuse of a wide range of important buildings.

4. ***The developer should engage the community during the redevelopment process for a church.*** Redevelopment proposals for churches are likely to garner a significant amount of public attention due to their physical prominence as well as from the emotional attachment that may remain, particularly in the case of recently closed churches. People that feel a stake in the church are going to want to be involved, and will find a way through either the legal or regulatory process. Active engagement can be used to address issues of particular concern to the community while accessing potential sources of public financial or regulatory support. Solutions that utilize local input and recognize local contextual conditions are more likely to result in positive public support during the approval process. Engaging the local public may also lead to unique development solutions that maximize both site and timing value. Political support is key to addressing critical development issues of timing uncertainty, gap financing and regulatory process, and community support is the best means of gaining political support. A spirit of public-private cooperation will help to navigate relationships and timing issues relative to regulation and codes, and to overcome any emotional issues that might remain relative to the conversion of the church to a private use.

5. ***The church owner and the developer should strive to engage the congregation and utilize their interest and connections to further the redevelopment.*** The former congregation can be a rich source of resources and knowledge, as well as a source of either support or opposition. The active role of a congregation in a church redevelopment planning process is limited to the extent of their actual ownership and/or their relationship with the center of control within the framework of the religious institution. The congregation brings to the table, however, a significant resource in terms of connections to the local network of unique users and markets that might value the church higher than any other entity precisely because of the local and personal connection. Parish members can also contribute political support if they are organized either for or against a development proposal that must obtain local zoning or land use approvals.
  
6. ***Collaborative strategies like public private partnerships can be an extremely effective means of reusing a church building.*** Community activities in need of a facility, like non-profits, performance, daycare or gathering spaces can be matched with a church in need of redevelopment. This two birds with one stone approach can also be used to leverage additional funds otherwise accessible only to the community group or use but applicable to the church project, i.e. endowments for the arts, fundraising, or revenue streams from operations. Multiple uses and users can be combined to achieve the critical mass necessary to occupy the space of a vacated church and to raise required project funds.
  
7. ***Successful reuse strategies must address the large volume of interior space in the church.*** Two types of strategies have proven most successful: those that reuse the singular volume of space, and those that reuse the quality of construction and unique character of the space while subdividing into smaller units for discriminating users. Uses that reuse the singular volume of space include community centers, institutional assembly and performance spaces, restaurants and bars, open plan offices, and nightclubs. Subdivided uses include residential units and offices, and can capitalize on the quality of construction and the character of the space while spreading extra redevelopment costs across multiple units. The best design solutions remove the overt ecclesiastical associations while retaining and enhancing the special character and quality of the building; high ceilings, finish materials and



detailing, dramatic rooflines and steeples, and impressive fenestration like rose windows, and minimize external interruptions to appeal to the neighbors and the general public.

8. ***Consider interim solutions if development in the short term is not feasible.*** The best long-term reuse solution for a church may not prove feasible immediately or may require the alignment of larger and greater forces, like the focused redevelopment of an entire surrounding area. The pressure to resolve the reuse of a church site in a short time frame in order to address current pressing needs may lead to a compromised solution. Churches can pursue short-term solutions and users in order to buy time to seek out the longer term best use solution. Short-term use solutions can include leasing part or all of the church to additional users (other churches, community agencies, meeting rooms, daycare) or pursuing more passive additions like incorporating cell phone towers or communications equipment.
9. ***Layer funding sources.*** Many public and private funding sources exist to assist with preservation of historic buildings. Funding assistance can come in the form of grants, loans, waivers or favorable terms. Historic preservation, community redevelopment, special needs, Business Improvement Districts, and Community Development Block Grant funds are all potentially accessible for a church reuse project. These funds rarely suffice to cover the entire project financing gap, and must be layered to achieve the required subsidy level to match the gap between project costs and future revenues.
10. ***Church administrators should utilize landbanking strategies to maximize reuse potential across a series of churches to be closed.*** Instead of overwhelming the limited market that is capable of processing these projects, religious institution such as the Archdiocese of Boston that are contemplating the closure of numerous churches in single area should consider land-banking in order to maximize reuse value of the largest number of churches. This approach allows for the churches to be deployed onto the market at a pace that allows the church, the public and the development community to address best use solutions for each church individually. Landbanking strategies to achieve timing optimality can be further enhanced by a church if they set the stage for adaptive reuse and preservation while the church is still active in order to preempt the rapid deterioration or vandalism that accompanies vacant buildings.

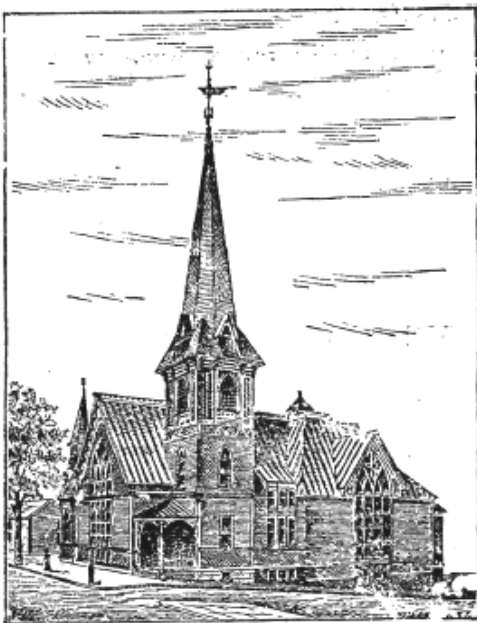
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## CHAPTER EIGHT

### CASE STUDY: REUSE ANALYSIS OF MEMORIAL METHODIST CHURCH IN PLYMOUTH, MA

This chapter presents the results of an analysis of the redevelopment potential for Memorial Methodist Church/ Beth Jacob Community Center. A local landmark building in Plymouth, MA, the white clapboard church, now clad in aluminum siding, is a picturesque element of central prominence in Plymouth's historic downtown (see Figure 8.1). It is used by the Congregation Beth Jacob, its current owners, as a secondary facility for staging large events that exceed the capacity of their small, nearby Synagogue. The building has accumulated a significant backlog of deferred maintenance, and the current owners are wary of their ability to continue operating it. They have decided to sell the building but would like to see it reused if possible. The reuse analysis for the church was produced by the author and utilized the guidance of a group of development professionals acting on behalf of the owners to begin thinking about the reuse potential of the building. The Congregation expects to use the study as they begin the disposition process for the church by providing relevant information and generating specific redevelopment scenarios in order to inform the general public and to elicit interest from potential developers.

*Figure 8.1: Memorial Methodist Church*



This analysis recommends that the best redevelopment strategy for the church will involve implementing short-term additive solutions to cover the operating expenses as well to as provide a window of time in which to utilize an open process that includes the community. An open process engages a wide range of stakeholders in order to identify the largest range of users and to make the best match between the church's unique qualities and a specific user's particular requirements, values and aesthetics. The analysis also presents a series of potential reuse scenarios and some of their important considerations as a means of generating interest and

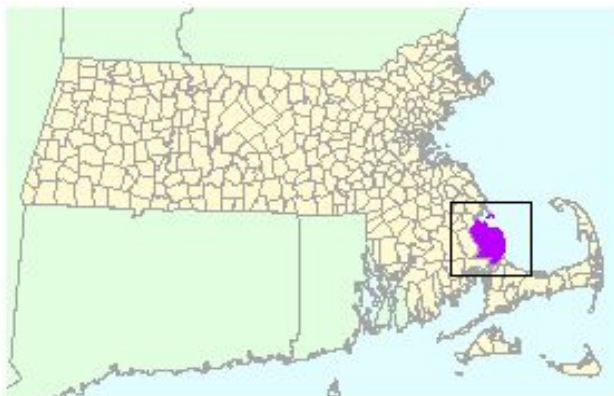
stimulating thought among the participants involved in the disposition of the church.

The analysis of the Memorial Methodist church was informed by the conclusions and recommendations that were reached in the process of researching the adaptive reuse of churches, and the analysis of the church in return served to reinforce that the academic findings are applicable and practical in an actual development scenario.

## Context

The Memorial Methodist Church is located in Plymouth, Massachusetts, a coastal community known worldwide for its role in the history of the settlement of America. Figure 8.2 shows Plymouth's location on the Massachusetts coastline. Incorporated in 1620, the Town of Plymouth is the oldest town in Massachusetts, and remains an active tourist destination rich in historic resources. The historic downtown waterfront area, of which the church is a part, is the site of the original settlement at Plymouth and remains the commercial and business center of the Town and the County. Plymouth Rock and a recreation of the Mayflower ship are both located on the waterfront, within blocks of the church, and draw over a million tourists annually<sup>116</sup>.

**Figure 8.2: Plymouth County Proximity Map**



Plymouth is a seaside community on the southern coastline of eastern Massachusetts. Known to most of the world as the landing place of the Pilgrims, Plymouth's economic base went from fishing, trading and shipbuilding in the 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries to manufacturing in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Its population by 1970 was only

18,000 people. Today it is close to 55,000. At 104 square miles, Plymouth is the largest town in Massachusetts, and today finds itself subject to residential growth even greater than that it experienced over the past 30 years. This is the result of growth pressures from both Boston to the north and Cape Cod to the south, as each area's escalating land prices continue to drive people

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<sup>116</sup> Plymouth County Convention and Visitors Bureau. *Plymouth Tourist Information Center Annual Visitor Report*. 2002.

further out from the traditional centers of development, and as access has improved with the restoration of commuter rail to Boston and regional highway improvements. The extensive amount of developable land coupled with comparatively low land prices is contributing to a surge of interest in Plymouth as a residential area. Population has increased by 178% over the last thirty years, as shown in Table 8.3, and is projected by the Town of Plymouth to continue growing at a rapid pace<sup>117</sup>. The Town's economic base is a combination of blue-collar marine and tourist/service-based businesses and light industry, with a growing commercial and regional retail base. The median household income in 2002 was \$54,677<sup>118</sup>. The composition of the Town is changing, however, as the exurban boundary of Boston drives commuting professionals further south and as Cape Cod's traffic and land prices drive recreationalists further north. Land and home prices as well as median income are increasing and will continue to inflate the Town's 2003 average single family home sales price of \$288,000 and condo price of \$173,000<sup>119</sup>.

**Table 8.3: Plymouth, MA Population Growth<sup>120</sup>**

Year	Town of Plymouth Population	Cumulative Growth since 1970 (%)
1970	18,606	
1980	35,913	93%
1990	45,608	145%
2000	51,701	178%
2010 (projected)	59,383	219%

The runaway success of the recent master-planned, mixed-use Pinehills community is indicative of the increasing demand for new housing stock in Plymouth, and is already spurring further large scale speculative residential development. A 1999 buildout analysis of Plymouth indicated that the 29,000 developable acres in the Town would yield an additional 20,000 homes and 54,000 residents using the existing underlying 1-3 acre zoning

designations<sup>121</sup>. The spur in residential demand throughout Plymouth County will impact the project site by creating a critical mass of population that will increase the demand for in-town commercial and professional services, and may also result in an increased demand for in-town housing as well, although Plymouth's desirability seems to thus far stem largely from the large amount of undeveloped land suitable for new residential construction more so than for its existing community housing stock.

<sup>117</sup> Town of Plymouth. *Draft Town of Plymouth Master Plan*. 2004.

<sup>118</sup> Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Department of Housing and Community Development. *Community Profile: Town of Plymouth*. 2002.

<sup>119</sup> The Warren Group. *Town of Plymouth 2003 Residential Sales*.

<sup>120</sup> Data Source: Town of Plymouth. *Draft Town of Plymouth Master Plan*. 2004.

<sup>121</sup> Executive Office of Environmental Affairs (EOEA), Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Community Preservation Initiative. Buildout Map. 1999.

## Memorial Methodist Church Overview

Memorial Methodist Church is located on a small 7,500 square foot parcel located on a prominent corner in the center of Plymouth's historic downtown<sup>122</sup>. Built in 1894 to house the growing Methodist population in Plymouth, the church is a timber framed white clapboard building, now clad in aluminum siding, with two distinctive steeples and a prominent street corner entry porch. The building is located at the intersection of Court Street, the principal commercial street of the historic downtown, and Brewster Street, a wide avenue lined with large houses connecting the historic downtown with the waterfront. A small pocket park across Court Street is framed by the church on one end and a historic County Courthouse on the other, with suitably impressive large historic buildings and houses on either side. Figures 8.4 and 8.5 contain photos of the building and its features as well as the relation to Court Street and the surrounding site.

*Figure 8.4: Memorial Methodist Church  
Court Street Elevation Photo*



*Figure 8.5: Memorial Methodist Church  
Brewster Street Elevation Photo*



The 12,000 square foot church<sup>123</sup> was purchased by the Congregation Beth Jacob in 1979 and is currently known as the Beth Jacob Community Center<sup>124</sup>. The building was purchased at a time of congregation expansion in order to accommodate the high holiday services that had outgrown the smaller sized Beth Jacob Synagogue. The building was renovated at the time of the initial purchase and the basement was remodeled to include a kitchen and large meeting room. Figures 8.6 and 8.7

<sup>122</sup> Town of Plymouth Assessors Office. *The Town of Plymouth, Massachusetts Property Assessment Data*. 2004.

<sup>123</sup> Approximate figure used for purposes of this analysis, includes full basement, ground and second levels.

<sup>124</sup> Gellar, Rose Sherman for Beth Jacob Synagogue. *Seventy-Fifth Anniversary Program of Events*. History of Congregation Beth Jacob Section. September 23, 1988.

show the interior spaces of the church nave, and Figure 8.8 shows the basement auditorium. The Beth Jacob Synagogue remains the spiritual and administrative home of the Congregation, with the Community Center used primarily for larger events, including the high holiday services, Sunday school, meetings and events. The first floor contains the nave and chapel - a large singular volume that fills the full height of the building. A second floor addition subdivides the south-west end of the building and contains six classrooms used for Sunday school activities as well as a small balcony overlooking the nave. The basement contains the meeting room, kitchen and building services/utility rooms. The building basement can be accessed directly from Brewster Street (see Figure 8.5).

*Figure 8.6: Memorial Methodist Church Nave*



*Figure 8.7: Memorial Methodist Church Pews*



*Figure 8.8: Memorial Methodist Basement*



The Congregation commissioned an architectural consultant in 2002 to assess the maintenance and rehabilitation requirements for the building that detailed \$500,000 worth of essential work<sup>125</sup>. Additionally, the Congregation pays annual operating expenses of between \$15,000 and \$20,000 for the building for heating, utilities and repairs<sup>126</sup>. For the last few years the heating system has only been used when the building is

<sup>125</sup> Figure provided by Larry Rosenblum, March 09, 2004 during discussion with author. Figure is generalized.

<sup>126</sup> Figure provided by Larry Rosenblum, February 24, 2004 during discussion with author and development team. Figure is generalized.

occupied, saving money in the short term but significantly accelerating dry rot and other invasive structural problems.

## **Stakeholders**

The Congregation will play the initial role in determining the next use of the building. The area where the building is located is currently zoned for multiple uses including, but not limited to, commercial, retail, and residential, and the building is within the town's historic district. This will make any reuse subject to Historic District Commission review. Because of its age, character, and strategic location in the community, it will also be a subject of interest for the broader community.

The Congregation is at a juncture where its facilities exceed both the Congregation's size and resources due to a steady decrease in the size of the active membership, and they have decided to relinquish the Community Center and relocate all of their activities back to the Beth Jacob Synagogue, while contemplating the longer term possibility of creating a new temple or community center in a different location in Plymouth as the Jewish population grows as a component of the overall residential growth. The decision to sell the building was spurred by the order of magnitude of the necessary repairs identified in the rehabilitation report, coupled with the increasing operating costs and declining rate of use of the building by the Congregation. Sherrie Sore, President of Congregation Beth Jacob, stated "The building has gotten too expensive for how much we use it. We as a congregation cannot afford this building anymore. That is the bottom line<sup>127</sup>." The Congregation has thus far eschewed pursuit of any historic designations out of concern over placing governmental restrictions on use of the Temple's property, with the consequence that the building is effectively eliminated from consideration from many sources of public preservation funds. The President of Congregation Beth Jacob, responding to a query about listing the church on the State Register of Historic Places, expressed deep concern about placing any restrictions on the property, because of both moral considerations as well as concerns over the added financial constraints they might impose on the building and the congregation.

The Town government and the general public both have a stake in the outcome of the church with respect to the role played by the building's visual prominence in the historic early American urban

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<sup>127</sup> Stated during March 13, 2004 meeting with author, developer team, public officials and Congregation representatives to discuss reuse of the church.



fabric that gives Plymouth its identity. The Town utilizes a Representative Town Meeting form of government, with a Board of Selectmen and a Town Manager<sup>128</sup>. The public, both the residents of the Town and the millions of tourists who visit every year, take the presence and the image of the white clapboard church and its steeple into account when forming their impressions of Plymouth as the picture of the quintessential American colonial village.

## Regulatory Environment

Two recent community master plans, one for Plymouth as a whole and the other for its downtown, plus the recent adoption of the Community Preservation Act all serve to reinforce the Town's goals of preserving its historic building stock. These are positive factors in assessing the viability of the church's adaptive reuse, should another congregational owner not be found. The fact that all three have been so recently implemented or updated is indicative of the need to respond to the recent surge in residential growth after a relatively sleepy 300 years, and is also a sign that the current political administration and the community are willing to participate and engage in undertakings that can be of benefit to the entire Town.

The two planning documents most germane to the future of the church are: the *Draft Town of Plymouth Master Plan* and more site-specific *Downtown Village Center/ Waterfront Area Master Plan*. The *Plymouth Master Plan* will "guide the development of the entire 104 square mile township for the next 15 to 20 years".<sup>129</sup> Goals enumerated in the *Draft Town of Plymouth Master Plan* include controlling sprawl, maintaining character, encouraging economic development and improving quality of life with the vision that by the end of the plan term "Plymouth will be an even more desirable town to live in than it is today."<sup>130</sup> The draft plan also provides a policy framework for future preservation efforts, recognizing that the Town possesses "a significant inventory of homes and sites which, together with the many natural features, are the foundation of the Town's pleasant community character."<sup>131</sup> The Master Plan additionally directs the Town to "focus resources on preserving and promoting its historic heritage as a major component of a strategy to increase tourism."<sup>132</sup> The second major planning document, the *Downtown Village Center/ Waterfront Area Master Plan*, covers

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<sup>128</sup> Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Department of Housing and Community Development. *Community Profile: Town of Plymouth*. 2001.

<sup>129</sup> Town of Plymouth. *Draft Town of Plymouth Master Plan*. 2004. Page 1-2

<sup>130</sup> Town of Plymouth. *Draft Town of Plymouth Master Plan*. 2004. Page 1-3

<sup>131</sup> Town of Plymouth. *Draft Town of Plymouth Master Plan*. 2004. Page 1-7

<sup>132</sup> Town of Plymouth. *Draft Town of Plymouth Master Plan*. 2004. Page 1-3

the historic downtown and waterfront area that forms the commercial and tourist heart of the Town. The goals of the Downtown/Waterfront Plan goals focus on expanding the commercial activity around the waterfront area while maintaining the desirability of the residential experience by focusing on neighborhood and building stock preservation programs and expanding the types of housing available.<sup>133</sup> An additional important consideration for future use of the building is that the subject site is within the boundaries of a local historic district, which stipulates that any exterior changes to the building will require review by the town's Historic District Commission.<sup>134</sup>

Plymouth's Community Preservation Act (CPA), adopted in 2002, is the most important local regulatory element in place because it provides a source of funds to help implement public preservation goals. Funded by a 1.5% property tax surcharge, matched in full by the Commonwealth, the CPA currently generates around \$2,000,000 annually and are earmarked for the acquisition and protection of open space, creation and support of affordable housing, and historic preservation. CPA funds can accumulate over multiple years and are also bondable, meaning that the Town has the potential to leverage even greater capital for important projects. Administration of the funds is under the purview of the Town's Community Preservation Committee, the Chairman of which has indicated that the Church would likely be an eligible candidate for funding<sup>135</sup>. CPA funds can be used towards renovation and upgrades (including code compliance) but cannot be used for repairs<sup>136</sup>. In order to qualify for consideration for funding for preservation, the building must be certified as historic through any of a series of local, state or federal processes. As previously noted, the current leadership of the Congregation is opposed to accepting funds that would impose severe restrictions on the building's maintenance or reuse.

Worthy of note is the fact that Plymouth's low incidence of affordable housing (less than 4% of its 19,000 residential units are considered affordable by the State<sup>137</sup>) make it eligible for Massachusetts' Chapter 40B Comprehensive Permit provision, which allows developers to overrule local zoning conditions when building projects that contain 25% affordable units. While the Memorial Methodist land parcel is too small on its own for a 40B project, it could be combined for a development.

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<sup>133</sup> Town of Plymouth. *Downtown Village Center/ Waterfront Area Master Plan*. Spring 2004. Pages 9 and 19.

<sup>134</sup> Editorial. "Start Planning Now" *Old Colony Memorial*. April 7, 2004

<sup>135</sup> Per Bill Keohan, Chairman of the Community Preservation Committee during March 13, 2004 church reuse meeting.

<sup>136</sup> Town of Plymouth Community Preservation Committee. *CPC Application Process Memorandum*. January 6, 2004.

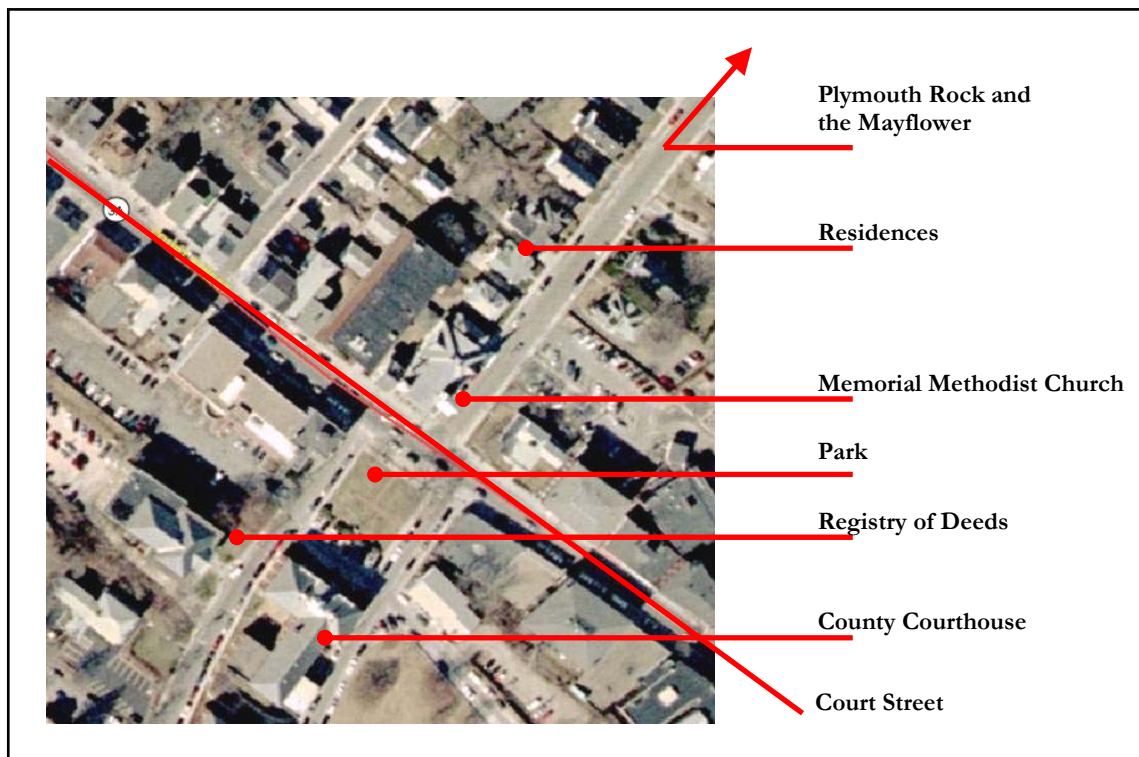
<sup>137</sup> Source: Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development. *Chapter 40B Subsidized Housing Inventory 2001*.

## Site Issues

Memorial Methodist Church is located on a small, nearly built out corner parcel in the center of Plymouth's mixed-use historic downtown and waterfront district. Figure 8.9 provides an aerial view of the church site and surroundings.

Site issues with the church include the lack of parking, limited expansion room, and split level access due to sloped site (see Figure 8.15). The lack of parking associated with the building is currently not a problem given the off-peak use of the building by the Congregation and the availability of public lots nearby, but a new use may have to provide a different parking solution for either marketability or code compliance purposes. Given the split-level access, it is conceivable that parking could be accommodated in the basement level and accessed from Brewster Street, although this would be a costly, and likely prohibitive, option.

*Figure 8.9: Memorial Methodist Site Map*



The limited expansion room on the site prevents any infill opportunities or building expansion potential. The split-level access, however, could provide a conceivable advantage in allowing an easy compartmentalization between basement and ground level uses. The underlying Downtown Harbor

(DH) zoning prioritizes preservation of building stock while allowing a wide range of uses by right, including housing, commercial, office, tourist, service, hotel or inn, cultural or community use<sup>138</sup>.

Analysis of the adjacent sites reveals a wide array of building types and uses, while two concurrent redevelopment projects are under discussion that could provide synergistic energy to the church reuse project. Figure 8.10 and Table 8.11 list the buildings surrounding the site and reveal a plethora of uses and building types not uncommon in an old colonial town but unusual in its concentration around the immediate site – commercial, single family housing, multi-family housing, tourist, government, professional, community uses are all located within 500 feet of the site. The wide range of existing adjacent uses will allow for a wide range of potential church reuse activities to integrate into the existing fabric and supplementing or reinforcing one or more of the existing uses. The parcels immediately surrounding the church are typically small and built out, which decreases the prospect of being able to assemble adjacent parcels to create additional developable area

**Figure 8.10: Map Key for Adjacency Analysis**



Two major redevelopment projects in the immediate vicinity have relevance through their proximity and similar timing trajectories, presenting both community wide attention on redevelopment of the area as well as providing the potential for direct involvement with the church reuse effort. These two projects are the revitalization of the waterfront and the redevelopment of the County Courthouse and

Registry of Deeds buildings. Reinvestment in Plymouth’s waterfront is a longstanding goal of the community that has been recently re-articulated in the *Downtown Village Center/ Waterfront Area Master Plan*, which outlines public and private strategies for improving the condition and expanding the presence of the waterfront area that includes the church site.

<sup>138</sup> Town of Plymouth. Zoning Bylaws. Section 401.21: Downtown/Harbor District (DH)

**Table 8.11: Memorial Methodist/ CBJ Adjacent Parcel Analysis<sup>139</sup>**



Map Key	Address	Parcel Size - Acres	Owner	Plymouth 2004 Assessed Value (building/land split in 000's)	2003 Assessed Value	2002 Assessed Value	Land Use (year built) Zoning
A	27 Court St	0.164	Beth Jacob Society	\$ 513,700 (375/138)	\$513,100	\$513,100	Church/Syn (1900) DH
B	8 Brewster St	0.128	Janina Mateja	\$244,500 (94/151)	\$231,800	\$177,800	Single family (1917)R20S
C	10 Brewster St.	0.131	Charles Ciulla	\$283,100 (132/150)	\$270,900	\$217,600	Single family (1935)R20S
D	12 Brewster St.	0.234	Paulindas Trust	\$350,000 (195/154)	\$328,200	\$284,400	5 unit apartment (1900)R20S
E	9 Brewster St.	0.257	Genieve Mayers	\$308,200 (152/155)	\$294,300	\$231,000	Two family (1900)R20S
F	7 Brewster St.	0.232	Rose Anne Geller	\$425,100 (270/154)	\$398,500	\$345,400	8 unit Apartment (1900) R20S
G	4 North St.	1.167	S-Bank Plymouth	\$2,291,600 (1,364/927)	\$2,291,600	\$2,291,600	Bank (1950) DH
H	25 Court St.	0.200	Old Colony Club	\$284,700 (136/148)	\$284,000	\$284,000	Fraternal Order (1769)
I	15 Court St.	0.160	Peter Hodges	\$1,066,500 (929/137)	\$1,042,700	\$977,100	Office (1898) DH
J	10 Court St.	0.111	10 Court St. LLC	\$179,400 (95/83)	\$220,700	\$220,700	Store (1920) DH
K	32 Court St.	1.059	The 1855 Corp.	\$1,846,600 (1,514/332)	\$2,298,000	\$2,303,000	Office (1805) DH
L	39 Court St.	0.201	John Shea Jr.	\$377,400 (242/134)	\$362,300	\$347,200	Res/Comm (1850) DH
M	37 Court St.	0.072	Gloria Shea	\$253,200 (122/130)	\$220,800	\$209,600	Res/Comm (1850) DH
N	33 Court St.	0.270	New England Telephone	\$1,495,400 (1,333/164)	\$2,143,300	\$2,143,300	TelEx Bldg. (1957) DH
O	27 Court St.	0.041	Rose Anne Geller	\$211,000 (110/101)	\$185,400	\$178,100	Res/Comm (1900) DH

<sup>139</sup> Data Source: Town of Plymouth Assessors Office. *The Town of Plymouth, Massachusetts Property Assessment Data*. 2004.

Of principal interest are the imminent redevelopments of the historic courthouse (1820) and the registry of deeds (1904) buildings on the other side of Court Street and a small, traditional New England park. These two buildings are owned by the County and are expected to become available for redevelopment within the next three years. A new Registry building is currently under construction and new courthouse plans are complete, with construction expected to begin within a year. While the understanding of the Town officials in the past was that the County would continue to use the buildings for offices, recent word indicates that fate is not so clear<sup>140</sup>. Both buildings are more suitable for conventional redevelopment than is the church given their more traditional multi-floor organization and, in the case of the courthouse, frequent windows. This would allow them to be more readily converted to residential, commercial or office use with little structural difficulty. However, both buildings need extensive maintenance and rehabilitation work and need to deal with accessibility issues. The redevelopment of these buildings has become a significant issue with the Town recently, as noted by articles and editorials in the local newspapers, bringing further attention to that cluster of buildings and perhaps leading to a desire to comprehensively address the redevelopment and reuse of the entire area in that proximity. The multiple landowners (County, Town and private) as well as the vagaries of timing may muddy the waters with respect to the reuse of Memorial Methodist Church, but this more comprehensive development may ultimately provide the critical mass needed- to give the church building a new life consistent with the goals of the congregation and the broader community.

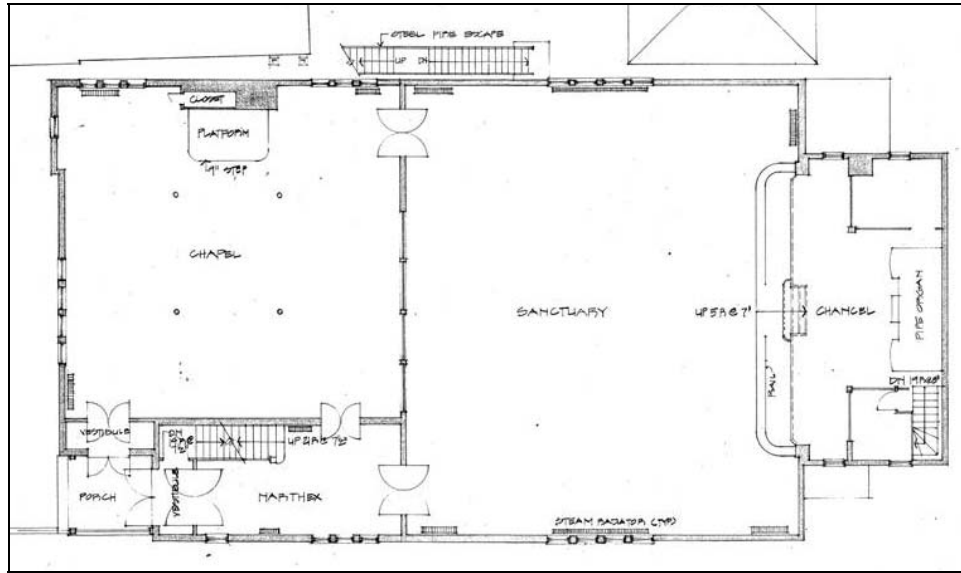
### **Building Issues**

The 12,000 square foot structure has three levels: a ground floor sanctuary, a furnished basement, and a partial second floor. Expansion of the second floor to run the full length of the sanctuary could lead to the creation of an additional 2,000 plus square feet. A third level is achievable volumetrically but could prove difficult to achieve with respect to access. Figures 8.10 and 8.11 contain the floor plans for the church.

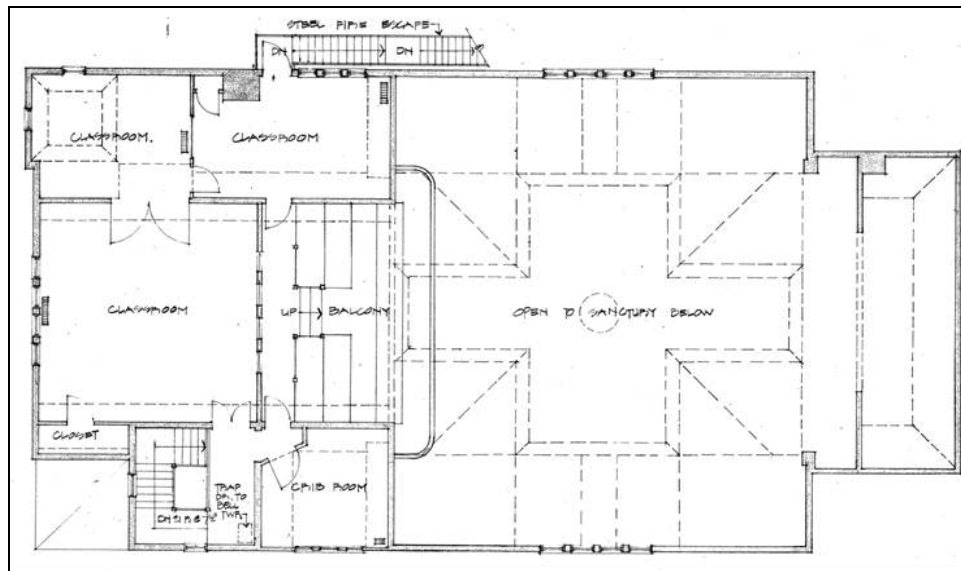
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<sup>140</sup> Editorial. "Start Planning Now" *Old Colony Memorial*. April 7, 2004

*Figure 8.11: Main Level Floor Plan*



*Figure 8.12: Second Level Floor Plan*



The church's greatest concern is the backlog of maintenance that has accumulated over the last century of use. The Congregation does not maintain a maintenance budget, instead addressing maintenance and repair issues as they arise, which has led to the gradual erosion of the condition of the structure, services and skin of the building. This pattern of reactive building maintenance is common element of congregation-owned church-buildings, particularly those with diminishing congregation sizes or support. The maintenance report produced in 2002 for the Congregation by

an architectural consultant detailed major items requiring attention and listed over \$500,000 in total necessary maintenance and repairs<sup>141</sup>. The major repair items include the need to replace the shingle roof, address warping walls, repair the steeple, provide disabled access and fix the foundation. In addition to the major repairs, the Congregation only heats the building when occupied, and not constantly, as a means of saving operating expenses<sup>142</sup>. The irregular heating pattern leaves the building susceptible to dry rot and other invasive occurrences, increasing the overall rate of degradation, and further compromising the already significant susceptibility to fire of the all-wood structure. The building does not have an emergency sprinkler system, an item of particular concern given the numerous susceptibilities to fire. Any significant remodel or renovation will trigger the need for the building to meet state building code standards for fire protection, access, etc., which could add to total project costs. The insertion of a sprinkler system will undoubtedly be required in any major renovation scenario.

The large central volume of the nave is partially subdivided by a second floor. The remaining open space of the sanctuary, quite impressive as exists currently, is best suited for the assembly of groups of people, but the volume could also be subdivided into a full second floor to expand the usable square footage of the building. The interior has adequate daylighting for its current use, but a new user or a major remodel may require the insertion of new windows into the structure. Window insertions will visibly alter the exterior of the building, which is not desirable from a historic preservation standpoint and may become an issue with the Historic District Commission.

Construction costs are higher when redeveloping a church than they are for a conventional project utilizing new construction. This is because the amount of unusable space leads to low space efficiencies and higher costs of construction per usable square foot. A rule of thumb used by developer Roger Tackeff for church reuse projects that involve conversion to residential use via the insertion of intermediate level floors is to double construction cost estimates – thus if current construction costs are \$125 per square foot for new residential construction, then the equivalent building costs for a church reuse will be between \$250-\$300 per square foot<sup>143</sup>.

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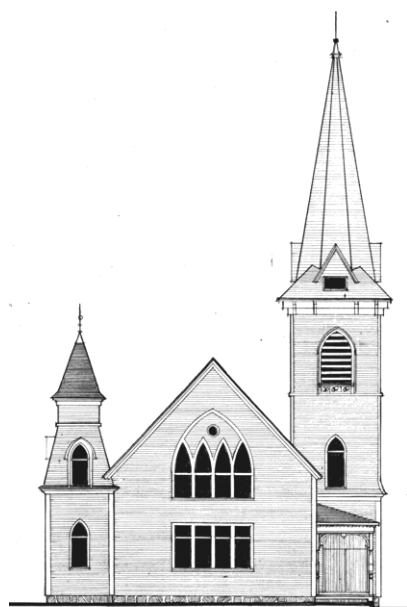
<sup>141</sup> Figure provided by Larry Rosenblum, March 09, 2004 during discussion with author. Figure is generalized.

<sup>142</sup> Per Alan Koplan, former President of Congregation Beth Jacob during March 13, 2004 meeting.

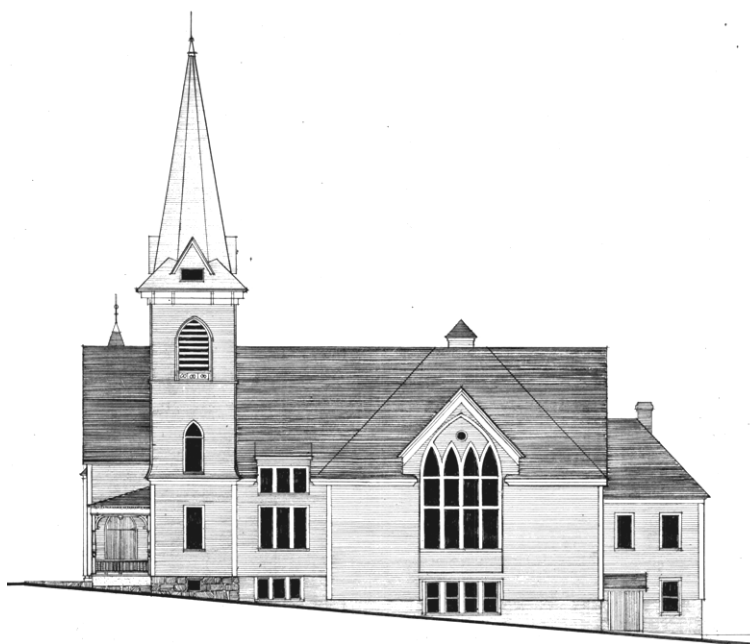
<sup>143</sup> Figures provided by Roger Tackeff during discussion with author. February 19, 2004



*Figure 8.13: Court Street Elevation*



*Figure 8.14: Brewster Street Elevation*



## **Financing**

Redevelopment of the church to a different use will require addressing deferred maintenance items, code upgrade issues, conversion requirements, and remediation for any off site impacts like parking. The fact that the project is starting with a deficit of \$500,000 from known critical maintenance items, plus the knowledge that church reuse projects cost more on a square foot basis than conventional construction, is likely to lead to a gap between construction costs and financing potential in a small market such as Plymouth. While one solution to the prospect of a funding gap is to identify a use that can support a high payment load – such as conversion to a high end condominium – other remedies exist through both public and private funding sources. These sources exist to encourage preservation of buildings by helping to fill the gap. Funding sources can also come from use-specific programs that encourage development for certain types of uses like affordable housing or non-profit uses. A list of possible relevant gap funding sources for the Memorial Methodists is presented in Table 8.15.

In all likelihood multiple funding sources will be required to fill any financing gap. Public and non-profit funding sources like to leverage the amount of benefit from their contributions by applying

them to as many projects as possible instead of looking to fund a smaller number for their entire amount of need.

*Table 8.15: Potential Gap Funding Sources*

<b>Funding Type</b>	<b>Source</b>	<b>Pros</b>	<b>Cons</b>
<b>Historic Preservation Tax Credits</b>	Federal Government (IRS) and Commonwealth of Massachusetts	At 30% of total rehab expenses, federal credits provide a significant source of funds. A 20% program was implemented in MA in 2003	State credits are competitive to acquire. May require adoption of preservation easement for exterior, as well as limitation on building modifications.
<b>Community Preservation Act (CPA) Funds</b>	Local Government (Community Preservation Committee)	Available specifically to Plymouth projects involving historic preservation. A currently well-funded account.	Properties must be certified by local government or via listing on National/State Register
<b>Preservation Grants</b>	Public (Fed, State, Local) or Private (Institutional, Non-Profit, Sponsors)	Many different sources exist that provide preservation grants: National Park Service, MA Preservation Projects Fund, etc.	Often come in small amounts, multiple grants from multiple sources often required to address funding gap.
<b>Community Development Block Grant (CBDG)</b>	Federal Government (Dept of Housing and Urban Development), administered by locality.	Grants can be used for rehabilitation projects and infrastructure improvements.	Focused primarily on low-income communities, residential programs
<b>Fundraisers/ Benefactors</b>	Congregation members, community sources, faith based benefactors	Can be either a major or a minor source of funding, depending on the source. The church would be an attractive type of preservation project for a benefactor to be associated with.	Hard to count on finding one source; multiple fundraising approaches must be combined.
<b>Funds for Other Uses – Affordable Housing, Special Needs, Community, Cultural</b>	Public (Fed, State, Local) or Private (Institutional, Non-Profit, Sponsors)	Can achieve multiple goals with a single source of funds. There has been a significant infusion of public and private funds for affordable housing projects in MA in 2004.	Tied to a specific use that may or may not be what the Congregation or surrounding neighborhood desires.

## Process

The determination by Congregation Beth Jacob to sell the church building is a fairly recent decision that has a long time in the making. The Congregation formed a committee in 2003 to investigate disposition options for the church building. This committee sought out development advice for the church by reaching out through congregation member Larry Rosenblum to seasoned adaptive reuse developer Roger Tackeff. Mr. Rosenblum is trained as an architect and urban designer - and is a member of the Town of Plymouth planning board. Mr. Tackeff has developed numerous adaptive reuse projects in Boston, notably the redevelopment of the Clarendon Street Baptist Church and the Bancroft and Rice schools in South Boston to market rate condominiums. In response to the request for advice, Mr. Tackeff enlisted the assistance of architect Michael Leabman,; Boston area commercial broker Leigh Freudenheim; and Chris Kiley, a graduate student studying real estate development and city planning at MIT and the author of this thesis on the adaptive reuse of churches. This group was convened in order to analyze the church and its surroundings and to identify a series of possible redevelopment scenarios. The analysis was performed by the group as a mitzvah, or good deed, with the results intended to inform the Congregation of some initial thoughts and strategies for approaching the reuse of the church.

The group of Tackeff, Rosenblum, Leabman, Freudenheim and Kiley met periodically between February and April, 2004 to formulate the analysis. The core group meetings were supplemented by discussions with members of the Congregation, the Town of Plymouth, and the local real estate community. A large meeting with members of all stakeholder groups on March 13, 2004 served to announce to the broader community the intentions of the Congregation to ultimately sell the Church. The Congregation sought to inform the public early about the decision in no small part because of the inherent difficulties in finding a new use or user for the building, and because of the Congregation's feelings that the structure should be preserved and reused as opposed to demolished.

The next steps in the process of determining reuse will involve the Congregation making a series of decisions with respect to expectations and priorities for timing, yield expectations, and extent of desired reuse and preservation. These decisions will inform the Congregation as to whether they should pursue a private, closed process with a for-profit developer or whether they should pursue an open process involving community input in order to leverage public assistance.

Timing considerations for the church will require an assessment and balancing of the Congregation's multiple goals of minimizing further extraordinary expenditures on maintenance, preserving the building, and obtaining a profitable return on the sale of the church. Emphasis on getting out from under the immediate pressures could lead to either immediate sale or short-term additive use solutions. The yield expectations of the church, or the extent to which the Congregation desires a financial return on the sale of the property, will also inform their strategy moving forward with respect to process, as a high yield expectation will likely require a private process with a speculative developer who seeks to maximize the most profitable use of the site, while a lower yield expectation can open the door to a more open programming process that might identify a wider range of uses that may or may not maximize economic viability but that do serve to address greater community goals and needs. Hand in hand with yield expectations is the need for the Congregation to consider their desire to include any provisions for preservation and reuse as a condition of sale or property transfer.

A closed process will lead to a faster disposition of the property and will likely lead to a higher yield from the sale but will decrease the level of control of the Congregation and the public over the outcome. An open process will take longer and will not likely lead to the most profitable end use, but it will increase the role of the Congregation and the public by providing an opportunity to match common desires and goals with funding sources and other development incentives.

### **Programming for Reuse**

While the next user of and use for Memorial Methodist remains to be determined, the process to get there is now underway. The program is likely to go through several iterations before a new use is ultimately implemented. This section presents initial brainstorm concepts for reuse of the church but does not attempt to rank order or otherwise evaluate the options. The intent of the initial list of scenarios is only to inform the Congregation of the wide range of strategies and reuses that might prove achievable.

Elements for a developer to consider when programming the church building for reuse include the timeframe for implementation (short term versus long term solutions), the magnitude of conversion

work required, the potential income from the new user, and the ability for the reuse to attract gap funding. The better the Congregation understands the relevant issues, and the broader they're able to think in terms of reuse, the better they'll be able to steer the reuse process towards the outcome they desire.

The reuse scenarios proposed in Tables 8.16 and 8.17 include both short-term and long-term solutions, many of which can be combined or packaged. Some reuses address the existing maintenance and operating expense issues and allow the Congregation to retain ownership, while others involve the sale and redevelopment of the structure. The list is ranked in order of each reuse scenario's estimated potential for success as a redevelopment strategy as measured by the likelihood that it can be implemented in the appropriate time frame.

**Table 8.16: Reuse Scenarios for Memorial Methodist Church Part I of II**

<b>Reuse Scenario</b>	<b>Solution Time Frame</b>	<b>Viability/ Likelihood of Success</b>	<b>Magnitude of Conversion Work Required</b>	<b>Revenue Potential</b>	<b>Ability to Attract Gap Funding</b>	<b>Notes</b>
<b>Religious Use – Church or other Faith-Based Institution</b>	Short term or Long Term	Highly Likely	Minimal conversion, although substantial deferred maintenance issues remain	Low – enough to cover operating expenses only	Low - active churches are rarely awarded public preservation funds.	Maintain community gathering, quasi-public use of space. Multiple users can share space.
<b>Events – weddings, meetings, conferences</b>	Short term	Highly Likely	Minimal conversion needed, space is already suited for these uses.	Medium – the aggressiveness of booking events is the main factor	Medium – possible for permanent conversion	Would require use of public lots. Could also remain as active congregation space.
<b>Market Rate Condos or Apartments</b>	Long term	Highly Likely	Major – insertion of floors, fenestration, circulation, access	Highest sales potential of all options if built to high level of finish, amenity and scale.	Low – a more intrusive conversion, and less likely to get pres. funding.	Parking problematic, market not yet high enough to match construction costs
<b>Non-Profit or Institutional</b>	Short term or Long term	Highly Likely	Minimal if use is oriented towards gatherings and assemblies.	Low to Medium – depends on the nature of the tenant	High – multiple sources accessible.	Community or cultural center, theatre, daycare
<b>Professional Offices</b>	Long term	Highly Likely	Major – insertion of floors, fenestration, circulation, access	High – a high end tenant like lawyer, architect or doctor's offices	Medium – could be eligible for preservation funds	High profile building and location very desirable; parking problematic

**Table 8.17: Reuse Scenarios for Memorial Methodist Church Part II of II**

<b>Reuse Scenario</b>	<b>Solution Time Frame</b>	<b>Viability/ Likelihood of Success</b>	<b>Magnitude of Conversion Work Required</b>	<b>Revenue Potential</b>	<b>Ability to Attract Gap Funding</b>	<b>Notes</b>
<b>Elderly/ Assisted Living</b>	Long term	Likely	Major – insertion of floors, fenestration, circulation, access	Low – additional funds likely needed to cover ongoing operating costs	Medium – depends on the type of program developed	Use with the lowest demand for parking
<b>Affordable Housing</b>	Long term	Likely	Major – insertion of floors, fenestration, circulation, access	Low – additional funding needed to cover ongoing operating cost gap	High - multiple sources accessible.	Parking problematic
<b>Bed and Breakfast/ Inn</b>	Long term	Likely	Major – insertion of floors, fenestration, circulation, access	Medium to High – planned tourism enhancements would enhance	Medium – preservation or tourism funds	Good fit with community master plans
<b>Tourist – visitor center, museum</b>	Long term	Likely	Minimal if use is oriented towards gatherings or display	Medium – municipal tenants don’t pay premium rents	High - multiple sources accessible.	Visitor center or museum
<b>Restaurant, bar or club</b>	Long term (nightclub could be short term)	Less Likely	Minimal structural, although exterior, service, circulation and access required	Medium – these uses have higher risk of failure than other options, but more upside potential	Medium – depends on whether the community views the new use as desirable	Parking very difficult. End use could be of concern to some congregations
<b>Municipal Use – Offices</b>	Short term or Long term	Less Likely	Minimal if temporary offices, major if permanent – insert new floor, fenestration	Medium – municipal tenants don’t pay premium rents	Medium – possible for permanent conversion	Permanent or temporary, possible tie to courthouse relocation project
<b>Demolition and New Construction</b>	Short term	Less Likely	Demolition permit and a bulldozer	Maximizes land values, minimizes conversion costs	None	Likely to generate community protest; very difficult politically to demolish

## **Findings – Key Factors Affecting Reuse**

The process of determining the next use for Memorial Methodist was initiated by the Congregation Beth Jacob when they begin to solicit development advice, and this process will continue until ownership of the property has been transferred and a new user is in place on the site. The goal of the development group convened to examine the church was help the Congregation to maximize the value of their building going forward. The initial overview and review provided in this analysis of the church leads to a series of findings that are intended to be of use in identifying some of the major elements needing consideration as the Congregation moves forward with its disposition process.

- 1. Further development of possible approaches and strategies can help the Congregation to increase the speculative value of the building by informing the public and potential developers of the reuse potential of the church.*** A number of issues lead to the conclusion that the building has, at best, a marginal valuation assessment from a speculative redevelopment perspective. This limited value is due to the extent of the required deferred maintenance, the current risky structural condition of the building with respect to fire, the lack of additional developable land, the ongoing utility and repair expenses, and the sentimental attachment of the Congregation and the community to the building. The community sentiment towards the building will result in negative feedback against any proposed uses that require either demolition or a severe modification of the exterior, which serves to limit the buildings value by reducing the number of viable options for its reuse. The Congregation can address this minimal valuation factor through developing approaches and strategies such as is done in this analysis that will inform both developers and the public of positive potential outcomes for the building. Further refinement of options will include the creation of schematic programs and floor plans for the different end use scenarios and the development of a cursory development pro forma to assess economic viability or funding gap needs.
- 2. Use short term strategies to buy time.*** The Congregation is motivated by both short term and long term financial concerns, but identifying the best use and users for the church will take time. The \$15,000-20,000 annual operating and repair expenses are an immediate

concern while the \$500,000 of deferred maintenance accumulation becomes less of a long-term concern and more of an immediate one as the building continues to degrade. The future relocation of the Congregation to a new facility is a long-term goal that currently has no timeframe. A redevelopment strategy should address both long-term and short-term concerns, by looking at combining multiple redevelopment strategies to both bring in revenue to supplement the operating expenses and to identify an exit strategy that will eventually result in the transfer of ownership from the Congregation to another entity. The best use and user will be one that values the historic, visual and spatial qualities of the church and is willing to pay a premium to be able to occupy the space. Finding this match by making connections with individual potential users in the community can be expected to take a long time, and may ultimately require waiting for the market to further develop in Plymouth, underscoring the need to find short-term solutions to bolster the current financial situation. Short-term strategies can be used to leverage the time needed to identify the best long-term user and to maximize the ultimate yield from the building. Leasing the space to another religious group, to a civic or cultural group, or other temporary users can help to cover the ongoing utility and repair costs for a period of months or years without requiring capital investment on the part of the Congregation. Selling an option to purchase to a developer for a set price for a set period of time is another solution to cover operating costs, but the difficulty of determining the future value of the church a priori will make for difficult option pricing. An option may prove desirable to a developer either looking to reuse the church or one that is holding out for the chance to redevelop the courthouse and registry of deeds building, and is looking to create a land assembly project.

3. ***Find users that value the existing large interior space.*** The nature of the large open volume of space that comprises the bulk of the interior volume will generate a reuse solution that either maximizes the singular high volume or will require one that can afford the construction costs associated with subdividing the space. Uses that place a value on the large open interior volume of space include congregational users, community use, special events, theatre, restaurant, or some professional office tenants like architects or designers. Uses that will require increasing the amount of useable space by inserting an intermediate floor include residential use, bed and breakfast or inn, or offices.



4. ***Consider accepting encumbrances on the building in order to secure public preservation funding since a funding gap is likely to exist.*** A gap will exist if the cost of redevelopment construction exceeds the future revenue from the new user. Multiple public funding sources are available to fill project cost gaps, but many come with a required degree of concession towards preservation (in terms of agreements not to demolish or alter the building for a fixed-term or in perpetuity) that the Congregation may continue to find unacceptable. Other public funds may be utilized that are tied to a specific use that the church could convert to – affordable housing, non-profit, or eldercare. Becoming listed on the National or State Register of Historic Places will result in eligibility for consideration for a wide range of preservation funds, and will not in and of itself require placement of any meaningful encumbrances on the property. If public funds for redevelopment like tax credits or grants are eventually obtained and used, they may come with a condition that the owner place limits on the property for a defined amount of time regarding the ability to make future changes to the physical appearance of the building. These conditions would prove restrictive only to the extent that the building owner would want to make structural additions in the future, which would likely be already prohibited under building codes or local zoning anyway. If the end goal is to minimize financial exposure caused by the building while preserving the asset, the Congregation or any future owner would be well-served to consider accepting these conditions. The building will already be required to go through the Town’s Historic District Commission review for any significant changes due to its location within the Historic District overlay, so few if any additional layers of review are likely to be required as a result of the listing.

5. ***Multiple users may be combined to achieve critical mass.*** Using either different spaces at the same time or the same spaces at different times, separate users may be combined to achieve the critical mass necessary to support the redevelopment, particularly in the case of continuing to use the building as for religious purposes or reusing the building as a community or arts center. While a single congregation, like Congregation Beth Jacob, may not be able to support the required improvements, a scenario featuring multiple users sharing the building may be able to combine efforts and together leverage the funds required to address the maintenance concerns.

6. ***Combining multiple parcels or redevelopment projects may help to add options.***

Looking to combine the church redevelopment with the reuse of the County Courthouse and Registry of Deeds buildings has very attractive complementary potential that could help to build a critical mass for a developer, but the effort could also prove burdensome by adding to the timing vagaries and development complications of an already-complex situation. Likewise, waiting for the revitalization of the waterfront to occur may provide some advantages in terms of marketability or incremental value increases, but does not address short-term or long-term goals on its own, and must be supplemented with other strategies in order to address the operating expenses and deferred maintenance issues.

7. ***Engage either a private or a community developer depending on the desired type of end use; private for the end uses with the greatest economic viability and community or fee developers for end uses that will involve public funds like affordable housing or community use.***

A private redevelopment process will lead to a faster disposition of the property and will likely lead to a higher yield from the sale but will decrease the level of control of the Congregation and the public in the outcome. A private process will involve taking the property to market by either outright sale or partnership with a speculative developer, and the end use will involve identifying the best revenue generating use for the redeveloped building: residential, office, inn or restaurant, for example. A more open, public-private process will take longer and may not lead to the most economically viable end use, but will increase the level of control in the outcome by both the Congregation and the public by providing an opportunity to match common desires and goals with funding sources and other development incentives. A public-private process could utilize a non-profit or community developer with experience in crafting public-private partnerships and in obtaining public financing, which can lead to less impactive and more community-oriented reuse solutions for the building.

## Recommended Strategies for Reuse

The Memorial Methodist church, with its combination of history, character and location, can remain a valued piece of the Plymouth's historic town fabric long into the future by proactively addressing its current malaises. The strategies put forth here provide four recommended approaches for the Congregation as they move forward with determining disposition and reuse of the building. The four strategies involve different time frames, different levels of risk and likelihood of successful implantation, and differing prospects for financial return. The Congregation can choose to initially pursue all of these approaches, which can be reduced or combined as the process evolves. Each approach will require further refinement through discussion with architects, developers and potential end users. These strategies are intended for use by the Congregation Beth Jacob as they continue to determine priorities and end goals for the building.

- 1. The best use for the Memorial Methodist church is for it to remain congregational – the building should be retained for use by one or more religious groups.*** The building was designed for ecclesiastical use and the first and most relevant reuse effort for the congregation and the Plymouth community is to explore every avenue towards maintaining the building as a house of worship. This might include identifying other religions or denominations to take over the building, combining multiple congregations or faiths in a single structure, or increasing the area served by the congregation in order to increase membership. Identification of a new faith-based user or users, however, will not in and of itself address the critical maintenance problems currently experience by Congregation Beth Jacob or the next owner, meaning that a parallel strategy to find the funds to renovate the building will be required if the building is to remain a church. This may be more difficult to achieve in the near future because many church buildings will be coming on the market in connection with the Archdiocese of Boston's decision to close numerous churches, increasing competition for limited historic preservation and other public funds.
- 2. Condominiums are likely to be the long-term option that maximizes economic viability.*** Conversion of the church to condominiums has significant potential from a profit-maximization perspective, but the market does not currently support a price level

high enough to support the necessary construction. The Congregation could put the property onto the market now and either take the best offer by a speculative developer or partner up with someone via the sale of an option to buy for a set time into the future. Identifying a short-term user while waiting for the market to catch up with the required sales price of condominiums could provide the highest potential long-term yield from the building.

3. ***Redeveloping the church into affordable, elderly or special needs housing will create the opportunity for the project to access the most public funding.*** This approach addresses community needs and can tap into multiple funding types and sources, ranging from historic preservation and rehabilitation to affordable housing funds, and from federal to state to local sources. Several new or bolstered sources of public and private funds for the development of affordable housing have become available in Massachusetts in the six months. This solution would be likely to receive support from the Town of Plymouth, as it would help to meet the goal of 10% affordability required to get out from Chapter 40B.
  
4. ***Pursuing redevelopment of the church as a piece of a larger redevelopment scheme involving the Courthouse and Registry of Deeds buildings could yield the best long-term solution for both the Congregation and the Town.*** Studying the reuse of the church in the context of redeveloping the surrounding site could lead to new types of reuse strategies. This option may take the most time to arrive at a redevelopment solution but could also ultimately lead to the greatest economic value for the Congregation as well as leading to the highest and best use solution for the Town of Plymouth with regards to their long-range planning efforts. The mass and scale offered by redevelopment of multiple buildings could prove an attractive opportunity for either private or community developers, which would serve to bring more suitors to the project and increase the economic viability of redeveloping the church.

## APPENDIX

### SOURCEBOOK OF CHURCH ADAPTIVE REUSE EXAMPLES

This appendix provides a summary of the projects referenced in this thesis as well as additional church reuse projects uncovered while performing research into the subject. The wide range of use solutions found for churches is a testament to the variety of users that can be attracted to a former church building. The data source(s) for each example are recorded at the end of the description.

#### RESIDENTIAL

- Property: Church Court Condominiums  
Location: Boston, MA  
Project: **conversion to condominiums**  
NOTES: A spectacular fire in 1978 ravaged this large landmark neo-Romanesque church, built in 1891 on a prominent site in Boston's Back Bay, leaving only two walls and the tower intact. For redevelopment of the site, we chose to save as much of the church as possible. The L-shaped plan encloses a courtyard, which is protected from the street by walls of the former church, but visible to the passerby through glass doors. Three townhouses are created within the remaining walls of the church, with seven stories containing forty residential condominiums at the opposite corner of the site. The design idioms of the new condominiums derive from the neighborhood design elements found in the surrounding blocks of Back Bay. Shortly after its completion, the complex was hailed by Boston architectural critic Robert Campbell as "the most influential new piece of architecture in Boston since the Hancock Tower..." The project was also singled out by TIME magazine as one of the ten best designs of the year in 1983.  
Data Sources: Graham Gund Architects, [www.grahamgund.com](http://www.grahamgund.com); Smeallie, Peter H., and Smith, Peter H. *New Construction for Older Buildings*.
- Property: St. Peter and Paul's  
Location: Boston, MA  
Project: **conversion to condominiums**  
NOTES: The 155 year old granite church was converted to 36 luxury condos. Sales prices ranged from \$275,000 for a studio to \$1.3 million for the penthouse, which includes bell tower access.  
Data Source: Vique, Doreen Iudica. "Converted". *The Boston Globe*. May 11, 2003
- Property: Number Two Clarendon Square  
Location: Boston, MA  
Project: **conversion to condominiums**  
NOTES: Redesign of the Clarendon Street Baptist Church, formally a burned out shell in Boston's South End Historic District. By restoring the badly damaged exterior walls, dating from 1868, and constructing a new steel frame building entirely within the shell, FA+A successfully respected the original structure and established a new image for the building. The seven-story building now contains 60 condominium units.  
Data Source: Finegold Alexander + Associates Inc, [www.faainc.com](http://www.faainc.com)

Property: Church Tower  
 Location: London, UK  
 Project: **residential conversion**  
 NOTES: An elevator and two or more rooms on each floor are achieved by means of a small four-story extension on one side of the 120 foot tall tower. The residence contains four bedrooms, three bathrooms, living room, kitchen, dining room and roof terrace.  
 Data Source: Latham, Derek. *Creative Reuse of Buildings, Volume Two*.

Property: The Berkeley Center  
 Location: Boston, MA  
 Project: **33 luxury apartments and commercial space**  
 NOTES: Restoration and rehabilitation of a former Unitarian church, which later housed a cooking school, film studio, and night club.  
 Data Source: The Architectural Team. [www.architecturalteam.com](http://www.architecturalteam.com)

Property: Tarrytown Methodist Church and Church of St. John and Mary Rectory  
 Location: North Tarrytown, New York  
 Project: **Church to affordable housing; rectory to group home for the elderly.**  
 NOTES: Affordable River Communities Housing purchased the small church and transformed the building into six affordable housing units with designs by Martin Kravitt Architects. The rectory project was undertaken by AHOME, a coalition of 23 religious and community groups, and made a 13 room group home. Completed 1993.  
 Data Source: Partners for Sacred Places, [www.sacredplaces.org](http://www.sacredplaces.org)

Property: The Cloisters  
 Location: Philadelphia, PA  
 Project: **Church, school and parsonage to housing**  
 NOTES: The Cloisters development converted a large complex of church buildings into a secure garden community. The 45,000 square foot school was transformed into 51 units between 450 and 1,265 square feet; the mansion annex, 14 units 540 to 1,636 sq. ft.; and the church with another 51 units 500 to 1,500 sq. ft. There are also communal gardens, health center, on site parking, and 24 hour security. Completed 1990.  
 Data Source: Partners for Sacred Places, [www.sacredplaces.org](http://www.sacredplaces.org)

Property: Faith Baptist Church  
 Location: Washington, DC  
 Project: **Church to residential**  
 NOTES: The Faith Baptist Church, built in 1891, stands only a few blocks from the U.S. Capitol. As the population of Capitol Hill changed, the church's congregation moved on. There remained an empty, historic, Romanesque, twin-turreted brick church building. The church has been converted into a residential building with 23 units. Because of the shape of the building, the units are quite individualistic in layout. Parking for the residents was required to be on the site. This was achieved by putting parking inside the building. The entrance to the garage was created by greatly enlarging a side door beneath a stained-glass window of the former church.  
 Data source: Smeallie, Peter H., and Smith, Peter H. *New Construction for Older Buildings*.

Property: Saint Alban's Church Tower  
Location: London  
Project: **single family residence**  
NOTES: Restoration and rehabilitation of a church tower. The last remaining remnant of a Gothic church by Sir Christopher Wren, the tower was maintained by the City as a monument and gradually islanded as a result of street widenings on either side. The 90' tall tower has only 12 square feet of floor area per level. The single family residence was created by stacking a total of five single-room levels on top of each other. A roof terrace was created on top of the tower. The space is so narrow that trapdoors had to be installed in each of the floors to allow for vertical movement of furniture.

Data Source: Cunningham, Pamela. *Change of Use*.

Property: St. Luke's Church

Location: Harrogate, UK

Project: **apartments**

NOTES: The large open internal volume of the church allowed a total of twenty-nine apartments to be accommodated with minimal loss of the existing structure. This enabled all of the units, and the circulation areas, to incorporate some of the original architectural features. Selective demolition of some internal walls and excavation of the existing ground floor allowed four new floors to be inserted. The lowest floor was used as a services void beneath the ground floor apartments, connecting to vertical service ducts serving the upper level apartments.

Data Source: Highfield, David. *Rehabilitation and Reuse of Old Buildings*.

Property: Saint James' Church

Location: London

Project: **homeless housing**

NOTES: An 1860 Victorian Gothic revival church, built to serve a family estate outside of London. Possessing neither architectural or historic merit, the church was nonetheless an important local landmark and local residents and government vociferously protested upon learning of the church's intend to amalgamate with another parish and demolish the church. The church eventually sold to a local non-profit housing association for conversion into housing for homeless people from the area. The conversion involved installing two new intermediate floors within the church, one just above the capitals of the nave arcade, and the other at about eaves level. The interior has been completely subdivided, new solid party and cross walls having been inserted to carry the new floors. The only visible exterior change is installation of roof skylights to serve the top floor. All stained glass was removed to improve the daylighting. The church has been divided into eighteen one bedroom, two-level units.

Data Source: Cunningham, Pamela. *Change of Use*.

Property: St. Mark's

Location: Brookline, MA

Project: **condominiums**

NOTES: St. Mark's at 90 Park Street was converted in 1994 to 12 luxury condos, ranging in size from 1000 to 1800 square feet and assessed in 2004 at between \$390,000 and \$700,000 each

Data Source: Town of Brookline, Assessors Office. *Assessors FY 2004 Database*.

## CULTURAL

Property: United Reform Church

Location: Hackney, UK

Project: **Theatre**

NOTES: The auditorium is used as a theatre, arts center, place of worship and activity hall seating 300-500.

Data Source: Latham, Derek. *Creative Reuse of Buildings, Volume Two*.

Property: Sacred Heart Church  
Location: Augusta, Georgia  
Project: **Sacred Heart Cultural Center**  
NOTES: It had been fifteen years since the Catholic Church last held mass in the Sacred Heart Church, when it was reopened as a cultural center for the Augusta community. Knox Limited invested \$2.5 million into the cathedral's revitalization, the cornerstone of the city wide initiative to revitalize downtown Augusta. The center's main hall is used for events such as weddings, concerts and civic events. Office space was also provided for arts and cultural institutions such as the local ballet company, symphony, and arts council. Completed 1987.  
Data Source: Partners for Sacred Places, [www.sacredplaces.org](http://www.sacredplaces.org)

Property: Chesil Little Theatre  
Location: Winchester, Hampshire, UK  
Project: **theatre**  
NOTES: The local preservation trust was granted a lease by the diocese, and the 12th century church remains consecrated. An agreement was made that the church could be used by the Winchester Dramatic Society, rent free, but with the Society accepting responsibility for all repairs and maintenance. The preservation trust funded the initial renovations and alterations. No external alterations to church. The three-bay nave and chancel have been divided almost equally inot the stage and the auditorium, with a bar, green room and a workshop placed in the former aisle. Two existing exit routes provided sufficient egress for the theatre. The building has required several significant repair and maintenance projects on a regular basis even after making the intial redevelopment repairs, projects which were paid for by the new tenant, and underscoring the need to ensure provisions for ongoing repairs and maintenance by the new user or owner of a church.  
Data Source: Cunnington, Pamela. *Change of Use*.

Property: Tabernacle United Church  
Location: Philadelphia, Pennsylvania  
Project: **Movement Theatre International**  
NOTES: Movement Theatre International is located in a registered historic landmark - a 19th century English Gothic Church which has been described by the Philadelphia Inquirer as "both grand and intimate." This beautiful facility with its wood carved interior and handsome stained glass windows, provides a memorable setting for your meeting, performance, or special event. At MTI, you can enjoy a fully modernized theatre/auditorium set in the heart of an architectural masterpiece.  
Data Source: Partners for Sacred Places, [www.sacredplaces.org](http://www.sacredplaces.org)

Property: Vilna Shul  
Location: Boston, Massachusetts  
Project: **Vilna Center for Jewish Heritage**  
NOTES: The Vilna Shul was built in 1919-20 in Beacon Hill in Boston, and has been the focus of reuse as a community center since 1990. The Vilna Center for Jewish Heritage, Inc. took hold of the title in 1995, and has been raising money since for the restoration. Plans are to rent out the ground level offices to generate maintenance income, and to have the upper floor for cultural programming.  
Data Source: Partners for Sacred Places, [www.sacredplaces.org](http://www.sacredplaces.org)

Property: St. Paul  
Location: Huddesfield, England  
Project: **Concert Hall**  
NOTES: Sold to the local authority in 1976 for a nominal amount. Extensive renovation and conversion to reroof, add a stage, fixed seating and lighting. Insertion of restrooms and other facilities. Used as a concert hall.  
Data Source: Powell, Ken and De La Hey, Celia. *Churches: A Question of Conversion*



## INSTITUTIONAL

Property: St. Mary's Church  
Location: Mansfield, MA  
Project: **Islamic High School**  
NOTES: Conversion of an 89 year old church into a private high school. The renovation includes 12 classrooms, a library, a science lab, a computer lab, and a prayer room oriented towards Mecca. The building had stood vacant for ten years before the conversion. The church was bought from a private party for \$200,000 and an additional \$300,000+ was spent on renovations.  
Data Source: Laidler, John. "Islamic School To Make Home in Catholic Church". *The Boston Globe*. Sept 9, 2003

Property: Baptist Church  
Location: Atlanta, GA  
Project: **Northeast Intown Y.W.C.A.**  
NOTES: The congregation left after 70 years, but the building still serves its community. The YWCA houses day care facilities, meeting rooms, and exercise studios. Exterior modifications were limited in this Remodeling Magazine 1992 award winning reuse, with the stained glass being replaced by clear glass, and a new, colorful entry. A third floor was inserted within the volume of the sanctuary so that it does not interfere with the light from the tall windows. The 1991 renovation costs were \$58 per square foot. Completed in 1991. Surber & Barber Architects, Atlanta; Carter-DeGolian General Contractors, Smyrna, Ga.  
Data Source: Partners for Sacred Places, [www.sacredplaces.org](http://www.sacredplaces.org)

Property: Orthodox Synagogue, Congregation Beth Jacob  
Location: Miami Beach, Florida  
Project: **Sanford L. Ziff Jewish Museum of Florida; Home of MOSAIC**  
NOTES: The 1936 Art Deco Building is on the National Register, now offers wheelchair accessibility, and ample parking. The museum tells the story of 230+ years of Jews in Florida. The restoration maintained the 80 stained glass windows, and made room for an archive with more than 7,000 items in its collection. A video was made that tells the history of Florida Jewish life, the building, its former use as a synagogue, and the extensive restoration process.  
Data Source: Partners for Sacred Places, [www.sacredplaces.org](http://www.sacredplaces.org)

Property: Santuario de Guadalupe  
Location: Santa Fe, New Mexico  
Project: **The Guadalupe Historic Foundation**  
NOTES: In 1976, The Guadalupe Historic Foundation oversaw a \$300,000 renovation for the adobe structure built in 1776 by Franciscan missionaries. It had been remodeled in both the 1880's and 1820's. The Foundation preserves and interprets Hispanic culture and history in the Southwest, and provides a location for local people and visitors to enjoy music and art. Completed in 1995.  
Data Source: Partners for Sacred Places, [www.sacredplaces.org](http://www.sacredplaces.org)

Property: Mount Moriah AME Church  
Location: Annapolis, Maryland  
Project: **Banneker-Douglass Museum**  
NOTES: The Museum is run under the auspices of the Maryland Commission on African American History and Culture. The building is on the National Register (1973), and was saved from demolition after the county petitioned to raze the church in 1971. The museum offers its collections, programs, exhibitions, library, space for community groups and research facilities. Completed in 1984.  
Data Source: Partners for Sacred Places, [www.sacredplaces.org](http://www.sacredplaces.org)

Property: Orchard Street Methodist Church  
Location: Baltimore, MD  
Project: **Baltimore Urban League/ African American Cultural Center & Museum**  
NOTES: The renovation was a co-winner in Commercial Renovation in 1993. The 1882 vintage building had been vacant for 17 years, with a 1903 Sunday school annex. The School building serves as offices for the Urban League, while the open spaces of the church are used for the cultural center and museum. The 22,000 square foot complex was renovated for \$3,700,000. (\$168./sq.). Completed in 1983.

Data Source: Partners for Sacred Places, [www.sacredplaces.org](http://www.sacredplaces.org)  
Property: United Hebrew Temple  
Location: St. Louis, Missouri  
Project: **Missouri Historical Society**  
NOTES: The temple, whose congregation left the building in 1988 to move into the suburbs, also left a large and well kept building across the street from the cramped building of the Missouri Historical Society. The society at the same time was the recipient of more funding so the two problems were ideally matched. The architect designed a four level addition to the temple to house the receiving, processing, and conservation facilities, as well as storage space. The temple itself was adapted to house the library and administrative offices. The large dome room became the main reading room. Two problems for the architect were the HVAC system and the control of sound reverberation in the dome. Completed in 1992.

Data Source: Partners for Sacred Places, [www.sacredplaces.org](http://www.sacredplaces.org)

Property: Pratt Memorial Methodist Church  
Location: Rockland, Maine  
Project: **Farnsworth Museum Center for the Wyeth Family**  
NOTES: The Architects designed a system of sliding sail cloth screen panels across the sanctuary to hang the artwork and maintain the open feeling. A former community room also became a gallery. Although it would have been cheaper to start from scratch, the building spoke of the community of the town, and it was decided that it was more important to preserve a piece of Rockland history than to build new. Completed 1998.

Data Source: Partners for Sacred Places, [www.sacredplaces.org](http://www.sacredplaces.org)

## COMMUNITY

Property: St. Sampsons Church  
Location: York, UK  
Project: **Community Day Center**  
NOTES: An early example of church conversion, St. Sampsons Church is used as a day center for meals and dances with a reading room/library. The church courtyard has become a semi-public garden.

Data Source: Latham, Derek. *Creative Reuse of Buildings, Volume One.*

Property: St. John's  
Location: Belper, UK  
Project: **Town hall and heritage center**  
NOTES: The town council decided to convert a redundant chapel into their own council chamber. The division of the interior was by way of a glazed paneled screen separating the council chamber and the heritage center. The old vestry was converted into a small office, accessible restroom and kitchenette.

Data Source: Latham, Derek. *Creative Reuse of Buildings, Volume Two.*

Property: St. Vitus Catholic Church  
Location: Southwest Pilson, Chicago, Ill.  
Project: **Child Care and Community Center**  
NOTES: The former church at 18th and Paulina Streets is situated in a primarily Latino neighborhood. In 1990 the Archdiocese closed the church, opening the space for reuse. The community was rich in human resources but not so in economic resources. The former parishioners enlisted the aid of Chicago non profit, Resurrection Project, Chicago Commons. The community purchased the building for \$10.; and raised \$60,000 themselves, and were aided by \$1.2M of outside assistance from corporations, foundations and businesses.  
Data Source: Partners for Sacred Places, [www.sacredplaces.org](http://www.sacredplaces.org)

Property: First Unitarian Church of Oakland, California  
Location: Oakland, California  
Project: **The Center For Urban Family Life**  
NOTES: Mission of the Center is to serve as a resource through which families can be nourished and empowered, and to enhance the quality of life and the integrity of the community. Partnership between church and Center to plan, develop, coordinate, and implement services to families within and outside of congregation. Center holds long-term lease defining relationship between the two. Building renovation to include fire safety codes, accessibility, and reorganization of interior spaces, while maintaining the historic fabric of the building. The renovation desired to provide facilities suitable for weddings, including bridal changing room, shower and lounge.  
Data Source: Partners for Sacred Places, [www.sacredplaces.org](http://www.sacredplaces.org)

Property: The Immaculate Heart of Mary Church  
Location: Windthorst, Kansas (Eastern Ford County)  
Project: **Windthorst Heritage, Inc.**  
NOTES: In July of 1997, the Diocese of Dodge City closed the church (founded in 1878), due to a low membership and a shortage of priests. The former congregation established a non profit to care for the building, create a community social center, and to institute a German Heritage Museum.  
Data Source: Partners for Sacred Places, [www.sacredplaces.org](http://www.sacredplaces.org)

Property: Pearl Street Temple Emanuel Foundation, Inc.  
Location: Denver, Colorado  
Project: **Temple Events Center Uptown**  
NOTES: A concert Hall, performing arts space, a place for large business meetings, or an elegant setting for a wedding. Built in 1899 for a reformed Jewish congregation, the landmark building now has a new life. The City of Denver purchased the building in 1986, and transformed the Moorish/ Gothic/ Italianate building into the Temple Events Center Uptown. The main auditorium seats 900, the mezzanine 150; and a ballroom with kitchen facilities capable of a party of 300. They maintained the original stained glass windows, and a 1911 Esty 27 rank pipe organ. Completed 1987  
Data Source: Partners for Sacred Places, [www.sacredplaces.org](http://www.sacredplaces.org)

Property: St. James Church  
Location: Paddington, London  
Project: **community rooms and nursery**  
NOTES: A renovation of a listed church. The project, which has taken ten years from conception to completion, has seen the creation of community rooms and a nursery. Outside, two landscaped areas have been created, including a play garden. The project was partially enabled by the disposal of the old church hall site to a housing developer, which also made a contribution to the scheme through a planning agreement with Westminster Council. Completed 2004.  
Data Source: *Regeneration & Renewal*. London: Jan 16, 2004.

## COMMERCIAL

- Property: St. Werburgh's  
Location: Derby, UK  
Project: **Shopping center**  
NOTES: With the chapel reserved for religious worship, the remainder of the church was converted to retail with the introduction of a (rather intrusive) independent three-story structure in the nave. Each bay of the aisle partitioned and glazed onto the nave to form a shop unit with the chancel used as a restaurant. The venture failed due to the inability to attract external interest despite appropriate signage and advertising. No external alterations to the structure were allowed.  
Data Source: Latham. *Creative Reuse of Buildings, Volume One.*
- Property: Congregational Church  
Location: Belsize Park, London, UK  
Project: **Recording Studio**  
NOTES: Integration of high tech facilities while remaining sympathetic. The main hall is well lit with new recording booths tucked under the balcony. A central stack of three control rooms in double isolated dense concrete boxes, over a plant room in an excavated basement, provides the nerve center between the main hall and studios on each level.  
Data Source: Latham. *Creative Reuse of Buildings, Volume One.*
- Property: School Chapel  
Location: Folkestone, UK  
Project: **Student café**  
NOTES: Nineteenth century Victorian Gothic. Large single space. Conversion to student café, adding a mezzanine floor supported by steel columns to almost double the useable space.  
Data Source: Latham. *Creative Reuse of Buildings, Volume Two.*
- Property: Welsh Presbyterian Chapel  
Location: Charing Cross Road, London  
Project: **Limelight Nightclub**  
NOTES: Put on the market in 1983 and converted to the Limelight nightclub. One gallery accommodates a bar and the walls and pillars are a backdrop for audio equipment and changing displays of modern art. But there have been no major structural alternations and the dramatic spatial sense of the domed interior is unimpaired. An adjacent presbytery was converted to office spaces for the club administrators.  
Data Source: Powell, Ken and De La Hey, Celia. *Churches: A Question of Conversion*
- Property: Church Brew Works/ St. John the Baptist Church  
Location: Pittsburgh, PA  
Project: **Brewpub**  
NOTES: Closed in 1993 as part of a larger Diocesan structural reorganization, and converted to a brewpub in 1996. The 1902 church was selected for conversion because of its extraordinary level of craftsmanship and attention to detail throughout. The bar and booths were built from wood recycled from the pews. The bricks salvaged from the removal of the confessional have been reused for the pillars on the outdoors sign. The most breathtaking element is the position of the brew house on the altar. The placement of the steel and copper tanks in the alter space acknowledges the spiritual center of the church.  
Data Source: [www.churchbrew.com](http://www.churchbrew.com)

Property: United Reform Church/ Sheik's  
Location: Bradford, UK  
Project: **Sheik's Indian Restaurant and Nightclub**  
NOTES: The United Reform Methodist Church in Bradford, UK was converted to an Indian restaurant. The symbolic switch from Christian to Hindu-basis was acknowledged architecturally by retaining the imposing Doric ordered external facade while converting the interior by incorporating elements abstracted from Indian architecture. The interior is now divided into a ground floor restaurant and first floor nightclub and banqueting facilities that take advantage of the larger interior volumes.  
Data Source: Powell, Ken and De La Hey, Celia. *Churches: A Question of Conversion*

## OFFICE

Property: St. Michael's Church  
Location: Derby, UK  
Project: **Architectural office conversion**  
NOTES: Aside from providing two upper floors of drawing offices for 25 architectural employees, the conversion created leasable space on the ground floor for eight workspace units that house a variety of businesses. The ringing chamber in the tower has become a conference room. Lavatories were added. Many of the original fittings and artwork were removed by the archdiocese for use elsewhere. Most of the glass remains. Choir stalls provide seating for visitors in the reception area (the former church porch). Thanks to the wealth of detail, the reception area establishes at once the character of the building; it is still recognizable as a church, albeit one re-used.  
Both new floors have been kept back from the walls of the building, thus avoiding the distressing effect of new floors cutting across window openings. Heating costs are saved by using recirculating fans at roof level. Both floors are intended to 'float' in the larger space of the nave. Additionally, the first floor is cut back at the east end in order to preserve the chancel as a distinct space – that is still the climax of the building.  
Data Source: Latham, Derek. *Creative Reuse of Buildings, Volume One.*

Property: Church of the Immaculate Conception  
Location: Boston, MA  
Project: **meeting and office space for church**  
NOTES: renovation of a certified historic church into new meeting, office and pastoral counseling space.  
Data Source: The Architectural Team. [www.architecturalteam.com](http://www.architecturalteam.com)

Property: Headingley Hill Church  
Location: Leeds, UK  
Project: **offices for architecture practice**  
NOTES: renovation of a certified historic church into offices for an architectural practice. Minimal external and internal alteration due to open space office layout desired by the design firm.  
Data Source: Highfield, David. *Rehabilitation and Reuse of Old Buildings.*

Property: Swedenborgian, Church of the New Jerusalem  
Location: Philadelphia, Pennsylvania  
Project: **Graduate Health System Corporate Headquarters (now an advertising agency)**  
NOTES: The church space was converted to executive offices with room for expansion. Two balconies were added in four of the six bays, leaving the alter area an unchanged space for reception. A glass curtain wall was inserted in the interior to define the space and keep noise down. Additionally, a large spiral staircase and an elevator were placed to give access to all levels. Built in 1881, the building now houses 24,000 square feet. Completed in 1991.  
Data Source: Partners for Sacred Places, [www.sacredplaces.org](http://www.sacredplaces.org)

## MINIMAL ALTERATION AND ADDITIVE USES

Property: Methodist Church  
Location: London, UK  
Project: **church and community users**  
NOTES: the original volume is retained while dividing the space with single height glazed partitions, some folding to allow various sized congregations. Two spaces under the balcony are sealed off for meeting rooms.  
Data Source: Latham, Derek. *Creative Reuse of Buildings, Volume Two*

Property: Christchurch  
Location: Oldbury, UK  
Project: **partial conversion to offices and workshops**  
NOTES: Originally sized for 3000, the congregation had diminished to 100 members. The commission was to convert the church into office and workshop accommodation for small businesses but retain a chapel for the congregation. Two intermediate floors were introduced within the nave: the first at the springing point of the arches and the second just below the clerestory windows. The eastern end of the church was retained as a chapel with ancillary meeting rooms for use by the community.  
Data Source: Latham, Derek. *Creative Reuse of Buildings, Volume Two*

Property: First United Methodist Church  
Location: Seattle, WA  
Project: **Proposed teardown and replacement with 37 story office tower with church in the base.**  
NOTES: First United Methodist Church, built in 1907 in the Beaux Arts style, occupies a prominent site in downtown Seattle and is the last historic church remaining in the city's commercial core. The church uniquely represents Seattle's maturation from a hardscrabble frontier town to a cultural and commercial center in which religion played an integral role. The church has resisted landmark status, claiming that preservation regulations would make repairs unaffordable. Additionally, the Washington State Supreme Court has ruled that under the terms of the state's constitution, landmark designation of religious properties is unconstitutional. The church is moving closer to completion of a Master Use Permit for a 37-story office tower that will replace the historic church. The church claims that preservation of the historic sanctuary is an impossibility, but local preservationists are working to identify feasible alternatives that could save the building and meet the church's needs. Update (01.2004): The draft environmental impact statement examining plans to demolish the 95-year-old First United Methodist Church is now available through the city of Seattle. Members say they must tear down the distinctive domed church at Fifth Avenue and Marion Street in order to continue their ministry of providing food and shelter for the homeless. They say they can't afford to spend money to save the crumbling building, and they plan to raze it and replace it with a 37-story office building with a new church in its base. The plans have been harshly criticized by historic preservationists.  
Data Sources: National Trust for Historic Preservation. "National Trust Calls Seattle's First United Methodist Church "Poster Child" of National Epidemic"

Property: Roman Catholic Church  
Location: Harper's Ferry, WV  
Project: **Cell phone antennas**  
NOTES: A Roman Catholic Church in Harper's Ferry, WV was undergoing a renovation when approached by a cell phone company about placing signal boosting antennas in the spires, in exchange for an annual lease fee that could support the renovation costs. The church now has three antennas and one G.P.S. device located in the four spires surrounding the main steeple, none of which are visually evident or require regular maintenance or service.  
Data Source: Vanamee, Norman. "The Height of Ingenuity" *The New York Times*. September 17, 2003

Property: Saint Mary's Center  
Location: Staffordshire, UK  
Project: **elderly day center, city heritage center and supporting retail**  
Notes: Saint Mary's Center in Staffordshire, UK was a large Gothic revival church in the center of town with a very small congregation, and the church converted the unused space into while retaining the consecrated spaces of the chancel, sanctuary and vestry. A trust was set up to take over the redundant sections of the church under a nominal long-term lease. The trust determined the program for the reuse of the spaces: a day center for the elderly, a heritage center with displays and exhibitions about the local area's history, and a gift shop and coffee shop. An intermediate floor was inserted into the deconsecrated areas of the church to accommodate the uses specified in the program. The only exterior modifications were the creation of a new entrance for the visitor center, accommodated by using the existing rear porch. The ongoing maintenance for the church and the converted space are supported by revenues from the heritage center and supporting retail. The adaptive work, including the insertion of an intermediate floor, is reversible if desired in the future.

Data Source: Cunnington, Pamela. *Change of Use*.

Property: All Saints Church  
Location: Lewes, UK  
Project: **Arts center**  
NOTES: Redundant church converted to an arts center, with minimal external or internal alteration.  
Data Source: Cunnington, Pamela. *Change of Use*.  
Property: Chapel  
Location: Worcester, UK  
Project: **Reversible conversion to nightclub and discotheque**  
NOTES: A redundant chapel was converted to a discotheque and nightclub. It would sometimes be difficult to obtain permission for such a change of use, but in this case the fabric has been largely unaltered, and the internal works are reversible.

Data Source: Cunnington, Pamela. *Change of Use*.

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