

development news

spectacular graduate hospital lofts carved out of former catholic chapel

DAN ELDRIDGE | TUESDAY, JULY 08, 2014



At the intersection of Fitzwater Street and Grays Ferry Avenue in Graduate Hospital, a 125-year-old former Catholic chapel has been adapted into 30 loft-style homes and eight apartments. They are now leasing.

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Known as [Sanctuary Lofts](#) -- and most recently occupied by the congregation of St. Matthew Baptist Church -- the structure was one of 20 Philadelphia sites that appeared on the 2011 list of endangered historical properties released by [Save Our Sites](#), an urban preservationist group. At the time, the church's congregation feared the building would be demolished to make way for housing if it were sold.

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Instead, the site was purchased by [Barzilay Development](#), a local firm specializing in the adaptive reuse of old buildings. According to Alon Barzilay, the firm's founder and CEO (and son of former [Toll Brothers](#) president and COO Zvi Barzilay), the renovated loft spaces will be rich in intricately preserved details such as exposed marble and salvaged hardwood floors. Even some of the church's pews are being repurposed.

"I basically give people historic buildings, but with contemporary features," say Barzilay, describing his adaptive construction philosophy, "from granite countertops to stainless steel appliances to European cabinetry."

Rents start at around \$1,200 for a one-bedroom loft. Many of the project's most impressive features can be seen simply by viewing the church's exterior. A 128-foot granite clock tower is the jewel of the building -- it earned its 15 minutes of fame after appearing in director M. Night Shyamalan's *The Sixth Sense*. Also impressive are the church's stained-glass windows and its distinctive red door; an outdoor garden courtyard with church pew seating will be completed soon.

A model unit is currently available for viewing; visit [sanctuary-lofts.com](#) for photos and to read about the church's history.

Writer: Dan Eldridge

Source: Alon Barzilay, Barzilay Development

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