

**FROM ROCK STARS
 TO REAL ESTATE**
 How a onetime muse to
 Jimi Hendrix became a top
 Connecticut broker. **M5**



MANSION

*I find I never weary of great churches.
 It is my favorite kind of mountain scenery.*
 —Robert Louis Stevenson

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A NEW SANCTUARY
 A former Christian Science
 Church in Seattle was divided
 into 12 townhouses.

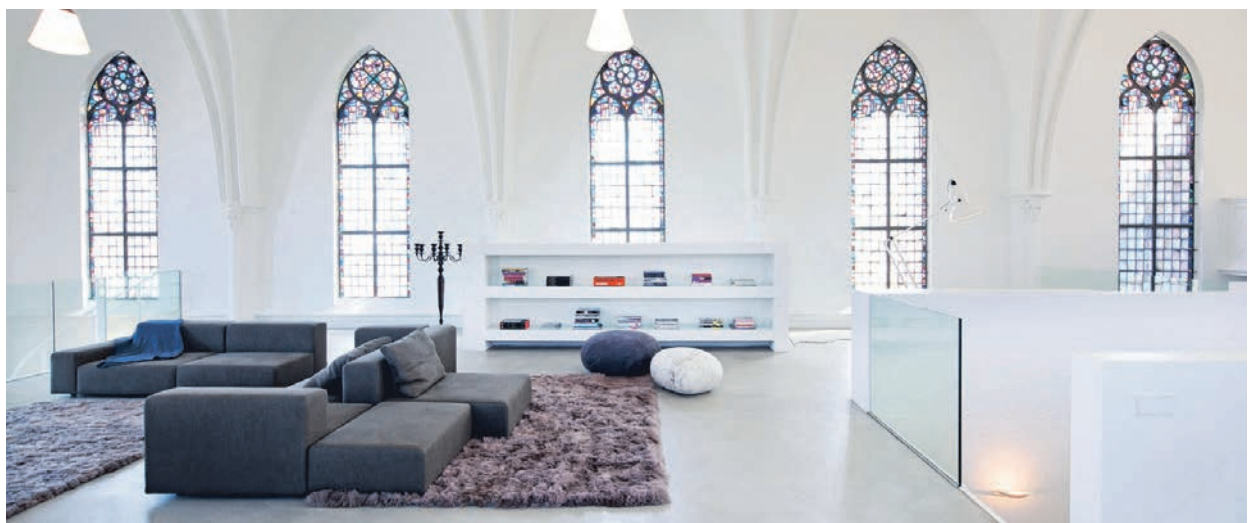


RELIGIOUS CONVERSIONS

As congregations shrink, more churches are selling properties to residential developers. High ceilings and stained glass create ambience, but aging buildings make going from God's house to townhouse a challenge.



TEMPLE TRANSFORMED A former synagogue in Manhattan's East Village.



MODERN LOOK The stained-glass windows were preserved when renovating a former church in Utrecht, Netherlands.

BY LAUREN SCHUKER BLUM

WHEN COLIN BODELL moved into a new 3,000-square-foot condo in Seattle's Capitol Hill neighborhood in August, he was looking forward to living with its 30-foot ceilings, polished-marble floors and 20-foot-tall stained-glass windows. One thing he didn't anticipate, however, was people knocking on his front door to ask what time services were or to speak to the pastor.

"People still thought it was a church because of its ex-

terior," says Mr. Bodell, a 50-year-old technology executive at Amazon. "They didn't realize it had been transformed into a home."

Mr. Bodell's apartment, which he bought for about \$1 million, sits inside a former Christian Science Church that was converted into 12 townhouses earlier this year and re-named the Sanctuary.

The building is one of a number of church-to-home luxury conversions popping up around the country. As dozens of churches close or move to different quarters each year, they're finding second lives as condo developments

and townhouses.

The conversion process is growing more common as shrinking congregations and shifting demographics have made it difficult for some congregations to stay afloat financially. According to a March report from CoStar Group, a real-estate research firm, 138 church-owned properties across the country were sold by banks last year, compared with 24 three years earlier.

The Roman Catholic Church, for example, has closed hundreds of churches in recent years. In 2000, there were *Please turn to page M6*



The Fettle & Firkin pub near Paddington Station, built in 1841 as the Queens Railway Tavern, was converted to apartments after closing in 2009. A contemporary one-bedroom, third-floor flat in the building is now for rent for about \$3,025 a month.



MOVING INTO THE CORNER PUB

A rec room in the beer cellar? Londoners are not amused

BY RUTH BLOOMFIELD

THE PHENE ARMS, a traditional back-street pub, has been catering to the thirsty of Chelsea, in fashionable west London, since 1851. Dylan Thomas, Agatha Christie and Mick Jagger are among the luminaries who have crossed its threshold.

But after more than 160 years, it may soon find itself catering to a much smaller clientele—say, a wealthy family of four.

The owners of the Phene Arms—property tycoon Robert Bourne and his wife, theater impresario Sally Green—have applied to convert the old public house into a private home, complete with a swimming pool, steam room and sauna in what is currently the beer cellar. A final ruling on the project from the government's planning authorities is expected in early 2013.

All over prime central London, developers responding to rising prices

and seemingly insatiable demand for landmark residential properties are turning to the local pub, that quintessential British institution, and a nice piece of real estate at that.

"Pubs can be converted into very stylish, characterful homes as they often have interesting interior features such as carved doors, stained glass, and large cellars which can be converted into spacious basements," says Alex Michelin, co-founder of boutique developer Finchatton.

Mr. Michelin is currently at work converting the Grouse & Claret public house in London's pricey Belgravia section into a 10,500-square-foot, six-bedroom house with a movie theater, gymnasium, roof terrace, and a swimming pool in the old cellar. Homes of this scale in the area can sell for up to \$48 million, according to government property records. *Please turn to page M8*

INSIDE

HOMESTEAD, REVISITED



Losing a grand Montecito home in a divorce—and then buying it back eight years later **M4**

AFTER THE FLOOD

Insurance to keep homeowners from going underwater **M10**

PINE BARONS



Top Christmas-tree types, by state **M8**

Above-clockwise from top: Michael Walmsley, Zacc Architects; Town Real Estate

