

# Church Sells Air Rights to Condo Development, Gets 3 Apartments in Return



By [Mathew Katz](#) | February 19, 2014 8:18am

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The French Evangelical Church will get three apartments in a neighboring condo development. [View Full Caption](#)  
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CHELSEA — They're getting the Lord's perk.

A Chelsea church will get three luxury apartments and a 3,000-square-foot community room in exchange for giving a developer the rights to build a big condo next door.

The French Evangelical Church on West 16th Street sold a neighboring parcel to the [Einhorn Development Group](#) for \$4 million in 2012 so the developer could erect a six-story building, according to city records. But under a new agreement, the church sold off its remaining air rights for an undisclosed amount, letting Einhorn build an 11-story, 14-unit condo building at 124 W. 16th St., the developer said.

The cash from the deal will go toward restoring the dilapidated church, which is more than 125 years old and in need of repairs and ongoing maintenance, according to Einhorn Development Group and Department of Buildings records. The church will get three of the new apartments and use of the community room in the new building, the developer said.

Neighbors of the building were furious the developer would plan such a tall building on a block where most buildings top out at six or seven stories.

The block first found out about the revised plan in December, when the city approved it, and said they received no public notice from either Einhorn or the French Evangelical Church.

"The church, they're never involved with the neighborhood," said neighbor Paul Groncki, who leads the local block association. "I think that it's odd that they get apartments. I don't know what they're going to do with them."

The church was empty on Tuesday and did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

It was not immediately clear who would live in the church's new apartments.

The new building will be designed by DHD Architecture + Interior Design, which pledged to keep the tower in character with the rest of the block.

"We are confident that our design vision for the condominium will elegantly bridge the old-world neighborhood charm with innovative new construction offering an elegant and modern living environment," said David Howell, the firm's principal, in a statement.

Valery Einhorn, a spokeswoman for the developer, said that floor plans and renderings of the building were still a few weeks off.

"Fitting in with our neighbors while still being distinctive is a wonderful design challenge, which we take seriously," she said.

In addition to the three apartments and use of the community room, the church will also get a dedicated elevator to make the building wheelchair-accessible, Einhorn said.

Groncki said he's heard nothing from the church, but plans to have a community meeting with Einhorn and other neighbors in March.

"This is a nice little low-height space for the neighborhood," Groncki said.

"Now it will blossom into [11] stories — like a weed."