

Proposed Partnership of Local Developer and Church Would Benefit West Palm Beach

A visionary idea between the Related Companies and the First Church of Christ, Scientist would create jobs, preserve history and shape the future of the city.

WEST PALM BEACH, FLORIDA, U.S., July 16, 2017 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The [Related Companies](#) has a development plan that would create Class-A office space to be known as [One Flagler](#), preserve the historic First Church of Christ, Scientist, and protect and maintain the West Palm Beach waterfront with 1.25 acres of public greenspace.

The city needs additional Class-A office space, and the construction of One Flagler would result in a reported 700 construction jobs and 1,000 high-paying jobs as financial firms, family offices and hedge funds, among other businesses, take up residence in the tall, slender, tiered structure of 25 stories with a total of 274,000-square-feet that would anchor the city's growing Financial District and proposed Okeechobee Business District.



“

West Palm Beach is really positioning itself for smart growth, maintaining quality of life, and job growth”

Chris Roog, Director of Economic Development, City of West Palm Beach

“There’s a supply problem in the Class-A office market,” said Mark Pateman, managing principal at Cushman & Wakefield’s Palm Beach County office. “There hasn’t been any new office construction since 2008.”

At the ULI Southeast Florida’s West Palm Beach Development and Investment Forum on March 10, 2017 local officials and real estate development experts outlined the city’s plan for attracting new companies to the area. Related’s Senior Vice President Gopal Rajegowda, the City of West

Palm Beach’s Director of Economic Development Chris Roog and President and CEO of the Business Development Board of Palm Beach County Kelly Smallridge presented a session on “Fostering Economic Prosperity and the Flagler Financial District.

The repurposing of historic buildings and non-traditional spaces for office buildings are attractive to companies looking for unique office environments.

“We build and lease office buildings all around the world, and have spoken to close to 20 qualified potential tenants who have been looking for this type of space in the Palm Beach market for a long

time,” Gopal has stated. “The Palm Beach County Business Development Board, and the top-tier commercial brokers in this market have been telling us the exact same thing we’re hearing directly from CEOs in the Northeast.”

“When we look at the trend of who’s moving into Palm Beach County, we realize there are CEOs and company executive who own homes here and yet they don’t have business locations here, said Smallridge. “I can tell you that there has been a lot of lost opportunities in the city of West Palm Beach because of a lack of office space.”



The First Church of Christ, Scientist, one of the most architecturally significant buildings in Palm Beach County, is at-risk of demolition, as it is not currently landmarked. Numerous development proposals have been presented over more than a decade, all of which covered the entire site with a new building. Under the Related proposal, the house of worship, designed by Julian Abele, a prominent African-American architect whose notable works include the Philadelphia Museum of Art, Widener Memorial Library at Harvard University, and the Duke University Quad and Chapel, would be preserved forever through an endowment fund.

One Flagler would provide space for companies wanting to move to West Palm Beach, and preserve the church for its original intent and use.

At a community reception on June 8, 2017, nearly 100 community leaders gathered together at the church and learned about the endowment plan in detail from Harvey E. Oyer III, a historian and partner in the West Palm Beach office of Shutts & Bowen.

“Landmarking the church, preserving greenspace, and maintaining its original concept is important for the church and the West Palm Beach community at-large,” he said. “Related’s creation of an endowment ensures the historic preservation of the building, regardless of what happens to the congregation or office building, provides reassurance to the public and sets a new standard for historic preservation that may be followed in the future.”

David Childs, the architect behind the plans for One Flagler, which would stand at Chase Street and Lakeview Avenue, behind the First Church of Christ, Scientist, designed Manhattan’s One World Trade Center (Freedom Tower) and 7 World Trade Center. He has vowed to preserve the church building, constructed in 1928. His plans include an axial reflecting pool along Lakeview Avenue that would mimic the First Church of Christ, Scientist’s mother church in Boston, MA. Childs previously led the National Capital Planning Commission, which reviews projects that affect Washington, D.C. and its many historic and cultural assets.

“We took great care to select the most uniquely qualified architect in the nation to design this building, helping us create a magnificent architectural structure for West Palm Beach,” said Related Urban President and Chief Executive Officer Kenneth A. Himmel. “He thoroughly understands how to build proximate to historical buildings and celebrate the site’s history heritage in ways that create 21st century vitality and enrich the value and experience of every aspect of this high-profile site.”

Tenants in the building would be offered unparalleled views of the Intracoastal Waterway, Palm Beach and the Atlantic Ocean, along with access to a high-definition webcam that would provide instant traffic information and views to tenants and accessible by all West Palm Beach residents.

Related has proposed numerous strategies to ease traffic, including adding computer software to more efficiently sync traffic signals, staggering work hours, utilizing the Tent Site property on Okeechobee Boulevard for an additional turning lane on to Quadrille Boulevard, and getting the Coast Guard to stop Intracoastal drawbridge openings during peak traffic hours.

“I believe Related has proposed a series of good solutions to the traffic concerns, as well as taken every precaution necessary to preserve the views of the surrounding buildings,” said Downtown Development Authority Chairwoman Upendo Shabazz.

It is estimated that tax revenues from the project could be used by West Palm Beach to reduce taxes, fund neighborhood projects, and improve public safety services.

“West Palm Beach is really positioning itself for smart growth, maintaining quality of life, and job growth, said Roog.

Related Companies is the single largest investor along the Okeechobee Corridor. The developer has opened [CityPlace](#), CityPlace Tower, and the Hilton West Palm Beach. One Flagler would join Phillips Point, Esperante and CityPlace Tower as the fourth Class-A office building in the downtown area.

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