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By Stephanie V. Siek

GLOBE STAFF

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The development company that purchased the property is looking for a religious group to maintain the church building as a house of worship. The French-

speaking parish had been based on Main Street in Waltham for more than three-quarters of a century.

L'Eglise LLC paid \$14.5 million for the church and four parcels adjoining it. The deal was closed July 15. L'Eglise, which means "church" in French, is a subsidiary of Eastport Real Estate Services, a Waltham-based property management and development company.

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Michael L. Price, the president of Eastport and one of three managers for L'Eglise, said his firm was holding talks with a church interested in buying the building but he declined to provide details.

The developers plan to build housing on the surrounding parcels.

"Our redevelopment plan for the property was primarily aimed at maintaining the streetscape," Price said. "We learned that Waltham residents were interested in making sure there wasn't a change in the appearance of the property, and an interest among the parishioners of St. Joseph in making sure that the property stays a church."

The current church building was built in 1929 and expanded to its current form during the 1950s, Price said.

The rectory, built in 1850, will be redeveloped as a single-family home, single-family, owner-occupied business, or two-family resi-



GLOBE STAFF FILE PHOTO/BILL POLO

The company that purchased St. Joseph's Church is looking for a religious group to maintain the church building.

dence. The convent, built in 1965, and the sexton's house, built in 1890, will be demolished and six two-family town houses are to be built on the site.

The town houses will be built and developed by Sagem Realty Co., another Waltham company.

"All I can tell you is that they're very tasteful, and Federal-style," said Price. He said Sagem last week filed parking plans with the Zoning Board of Appeals and subdivision plans with the Planning Board.

Sagem drew fire from neighborhood activists last year over its plan for more than 50 homes in Lincoln Woods. The Planning Board unanimously rejected the proposal.

Sagem proprietor Roberto Pandolfi said the company would hold a meeting with neighbors once designs have been drawn up. Each three-bedroom, 2½-bath home will be about 1,600 square feet, and priced between \$479,000 and \$499,000.

Pandolfi said he and partner Curtis Beaton would be giving donations to their respective Catho-

lic churches — he to Our Lady Comforter of the Afflicted and Beaton to Sacred Heart.

"I'm not a religious fanatic but I am Catholic," Pandolfi said. "I'm going to be benefiting from building some homes on church land, and I want to give something back."

He said his philanthropic resolve was strengthened on Monday when his wife and two children were involved in a rollover accident on the Maine Turnpike. Pandolfi said a trooper at the scene told him that the accident was like nothing he'd ever seen, and Pandolfi's son was thrown from the car. Pandolfi called it a miracle that they all survived.

Mayor Jeannette McCarthy, who was baptized at St. Joseph's and whose parents were married there, said she was relieved to know the church building wouldn't be torn down.

"It was a very hard-working community church where the people who built it up hated to see it go. In light of everything that's happened in the archdiocese, their frustration is justifiable," McCar-

thy said, speaking of the archdiocese's decision to give some churches a reprieve.

St. Joseph's emerged at a time when six churches served the city's Catholic community that was swelling with Irish, Italian, and French-Canadian immigrants. The Canadians were drawn to St. Joseph, where they could hear Mass celebrated in French and have their children learn in both French and English at the parish school, L'Ecole St. Pierre.

As ethnic communities assimilated and the founding parishioners' descendants moved away, attendance dwindled. French-speaking Haitian and Ugandan families joined, but when the church closed last year it was attracting only about 250 people for Sunday Mass.

The only current tenant of the St. Joseph's property is Little Souls Center for Children, a day-care center that has used part of the convent building since 1996. Director Jocelyne Wolfe said she had known since last year that the parish's closure and building's sale were inevitable. The center made plans to move to a rectory at St. Charles Borromeo Church on Hall Street, but the archdiocese decided against leasing the space.

Wolfe said the center was involved in negotiations for another site but declined to give specifics until a deal was sealed. She said the center was unable to find another site in downtown Waltham that met the code requirements for child care.

The center, which serves about 100 children ages 2 months to 5 years, faces an October deadline to move out, but Price said Eastport would try to be flexible.

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