

# CEO buys monastery for \$120M

Palantir executive's purchase includes 3.7K acres; Trappist Monks built campus in 1950s

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Colorado's most expensive real estate listing has been purchased by the CEO of Colorado's most valuable public company.

Alex Karp, co-founder and CEO of Palantir, a leading software and technology company based in Denver, has purchased St. Benedict's Monastery for \$120 million, according to The Wall Street Journal and Aspen Times.

The purchase includes 3,700 acres in the Snowmass Creek Valley, water rights and the monastery compound.

That consists of the monks' residence, a chapel, a communal dining hall, a library, meeting rooms, a retreat center, guest cabins, as well as several agricultural buildings.

Pitkin County on Monday recorded a special warranty deed showing the sale of the monastery and ranch property to Espen LLC, which is registered in Delaware. The Wall Street Journal links that property to Karp.

The monastery and ranch were being marketed at \$150 million, making it the most expensive real estate listing in the state. But the pool of buyers was limited, and an earlier offer fell through.

In April 2024, Steve Wynn, founder of Bellagio and Wynn casinos, and financier Thomas Peterffy purchased a home at 419 Willoughby Way on Aspen's Red Mountain for \$108 million. That ranked as the most expensive home sale in state history, but it came with only 2.45 acres of land.

Karp, if he is the buyer, is getting a monastery and retreat center and 3,700 acres of prime real estate with meadows, forests and creeks. Known for his grueling cross-country ski training sessions, Karp should have plenty of room to roam.

Palantir is based in Denver. And Karp would rank as the state's wealthiest resident if he lived here. His primary residence is a 500-acre estate he purchased in New Hampshire for \$825,000 in 2019, and he reportedly owns 20 properties around the globe, most near ski resorts, according to Realtor.com.

Palantir, which moved to Colorado from Silicon Valley in 2022, is a leading provider of AI software. The company's share price has ridden the AI wave to a three-year gain of about 2,500%, and it is currently valued at \$436 billion, more than every other public company based in the state combined.

Karp, who holds a sizable block of Palantir shares, ranks among the world's wealthiest men, with a net worth estimated at \$16 to \$18 billion. The company has come under fire from civil liberty advocates because its products and services are used in government surveillance, immigration enforcement, predictive policing and military operations. Protesters regularly have targeted the company on college campuses and in several cities, including Denver.

Karp, in defending the company, says it works only with democratically elected governments and that its software has accountability controls to prevent misuse. He also argues that Western democracies must maintain technological superiority or they will be overtaken by authoritarian regimes.

The controversy contrasts with the spirit of peace and oasis of contemplation that the Trappist Monks cultivated after they built St. Benedict's Monastery in the mid-1950s. The monks, originally from Massachusetts, combined a life of prayer and work, following religious rules for life developed in the 500s in response to the collapse of the western half of the Roman Empire.



Among the monastery's most famous residents was Father Thomas Keating, a leader in the centering prayer movement. For decades, the monastery attracted those seeking spiritual renewal and inner calm.

Besides the retreats, beef sales from cattle raised on the land and the sales of "Monastery Cookies" were important sources of income. With the monks aging and dwindling in numbers, they were unable to sustain the ranch. The Trappist Order decided to close the monastery in 2023 and put it up for sale.

The Aspen Times reports that there will be one final public Mass at St. Benedict's on Jan. 11 to say farewell.