

Rethink Urban

ST JOHN THE DIVINE

March 2021 Summary Report

I'm happy to provide the first summary report for leadership in what is already proving to be an incredible project that is heavily supported by everyone we have met with to date. This is the first Community Safety residency of its kind in Victoria, BC and has the potential to set the stage for other neighbourhoods experiencing similar issues around crime reduction, fear of crime and improving quality of life. Naturally, part of this work is to reduce barriers and encourage safe design without fortifying our neighbourhoods, properties, and particularly places of worship.

The initial stages of a project of this scope require good planning, and making sure all the i's are dotted and the t's are crossed which is exactly what we did. Special thanks to those who assisted us in finalizing the contract, and scope of work. While some of these details were being finalized, site visits were well underway and will continue throughout the project period.

Several meetings at the church were organized through March, including brief intros to key people that are directly involved such as Lorraine, Jacy and others. An indoor tour of St John the Divine was completed last week, and further tours of the surrounding area including the senior's residence will be scheduled for next week sometime. There was also a short meeting with Joan Huzar last week regarding the construction/design of the new ramp that will provide improved accessibility into the food bank located in the lower level of the church.

There are several meetings coming up during the first few weeks of April, including an interview with UVIC students that are currently working on a project in North Park. These geography majors understand how neighbourhoods are connected and how important the role of St John the Divine is to the neighbourhood.

We have also been working on several placemaking ideas that we will suggest and help coordinate this spring/summer. It is our intention to host these in the courtyard, and invite parishioners and any other groups you may suggest to enjoy these events. These will be geared towards activating the courtyard area with positive activities that create more ownership of the space.

Discovery circles (focus groups) will also be scheduled throughout April/May to begin capturing local concerns, ideas and invigorate residents to become more engaged with their surroundings. Although Covid restrictions may create some barriers we have been planning these through March, and will offer them in small groups for those that feel safe doing so, and over zoom.

All in all, March was a very productive month and a great kickoff for the project. We

were well supported and see things really picking up steam in April/May. Our local team has also decided to extend the project until mid-September at no-charge to the church. They felt that March was really a time for meetings, planning and getting underway and wanted to ensure that this project is successful and not rushed in any way. As a result we are anticipating some incredible outcomes, and permanent changes that will help improve design, reduce crime and social disorder and engage the community. For your review,

Steve

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