



ST. MARK'S ANGLICAN CHURCH

5522 Russell Street, Halifax, NS. B3K 1X2
(902) 454-0207 • stmarkshfx@gmail.com • www.stmarkshalifax.ca

13 March 2024

A letter to the Hydrostone community from St. Mark's Church

Dear Neighbour:

We are writing today to advise you of some developments related to St. Mark's church property on Russell Street.

As you may know, St. Mark's Church has been in its current location since rebuilding immediately after the Halifax Explosion in 1917. The original church, which was built in 1866 near the corner of Russell and Vincent Streets, was destroyed in the explosion.

The current hall, St. Mark's Community Centre, was built in 1974 to replace the 1921 hall, which was lost to fire. When it came time to rebuild the hall in 1974, the Parish reached out to the Provincial Government and received a grant to help with the rebuilding costs, on the condition that it be run as a community hall and that it provide low-cost space for social programs for ten years. St. Mark's had already launched a Food Bank to help its neighbours, so incorporating Ward Five Neighbourhood Centre and North End Day Care (NEDC) in its plans came easily. Over the next ten years, St. Mark's, Ward Five and NEDC developed a strong working relationship, so much so that when the ten years were up, we continued with the same arrangement for the next four decades.

In 2022, after much soul-searching and prayer, St. Mark's made the difficult decision that it would need to sell its property. It had become clear that we could no longer maintain our two buildings with the resources available to a shrinking congregation. We are keenly aware of the importance of the church building as the only remaining church from the Explosion era still in operation as a public space for worship and gathering. We also deeply appreciate the importance of the work done by Ward Five and NEDC, operating out of the church's hall. Over the past 50 years, the hall has been operated on a cost-recovery basis rather than a profit basis in order to keep the rental costs for Ward Five and NEDC as low as possible and thereby support the delivery of their programs.

In March 2023, the church property, including both the church building and the hall, were sold to Cosmos Properties & Development. Under the sale agreement:

1. The church building will remain on the property and will be renovated and upgraded to better suit current needs, while maintaining its historic character. Unlike other developers that St. Mark's spoke with, Cosmos had the express desire to protect and restore the historic church building. Other developers would have torn down both buildings.
2. The hall and the playground will be torn down and an apartment building will be built on that part of the property.

Throughout this time, the Parish has been in communication with Ward Five and NEDC to keep them informed about the situation. St. Mark's has had and continues to have a wonderful working relationship with both tenants. We let them know in 2019 that our financial situation was causing us to explore all avenues, including possible sale and we let them know about the plans for sale as soon as

we reached the agreement in principle with Cosmos in April 2022. The tenants have been working on their plans since that time.

However, we now have more information about when the changes will start to take place and a deadline toward which we are all working. The developer plans to start to tear-down the hall in late July 2024. As a result, our tenants, Ward Five Neighbourhood Centre and North End Day Care were given six-months' notice on January 18, 2024 and will need to move out of the hall by July 17th.

So what happens now?

1. NEDC has plans to permanently relocate to the new St. Joseph's/A MacKay (SJAM) school when it is completed. We had all hoped that the timelines of the two projects would dovetail better, but the delay in opening the new SJAM has resulted in NEDC needing to find interim space. We're keeping our eyes and ears open for anything that might be available and hope you will too!
2. Ward Five is still exploring their options and we're still in discussion with them about possibilities. As a not-for-profit, they are not able to afford the normal commercial rates for rental property. If you know of a space that might work for them, please do share your ideas!
3. And speaking of ideas ...

**You're invited to an open meeting at
St. Mark's Church
Wednesday, March 20, 2024 @ 6:30-8:00**

We will share with our neighbours what we know to date about the development of our property and answer as many questions as we can at this time.

Our plan for renovations to the church is to also make it more accessible as a hub for community events. We'd love to hear from you about what types of events you might want to see happen in this space.

**We're looking forward to building up St. Mark's in this neighbourhood and
for this neighbourhood!**

**If you have any questions or comments prior to the meeting, please submit them to
StMarksBuildings@gmail.com.**

Blessings,
St. Mark's Parish



Rev. Tammy Hodge Orovec



Rev. Vivien Hannon



Steve Beeler
Warden



Bob Barnes
Warden