STORIES OF VICTORIA-FRASERVIEW

A MURAL AND STREET ART PLACEMAKING PROJECT

What is civic engagement without a sense of belonging?

WHAT IS IT?

We are planning to pursue deep engagement with Victoria-Fraserview residents—youth, adult, and senior groups—and to listen to their stories in order to better understand the lived realities of this neighbourhood. In this way, we hope to collect stories that will help inform us in implementing a mural or street art project, which will contribute to a stronger sense of belonging among residents.

We believe that storytelling is powerful because it is rooted in connection and our relationships with each other, and that stories are tools of resistance. One potential space we are looking into is the green space adjacent to Sir Douglas Elementary School (pictured above), right off of Victoria Drive at the centre of the neighbourhood. We imagine it turned into a community park where the many asphalt pathways are painted with resident stories and the neighbourhood's history. The space is currently under-utilized, with few welcoming features that draw people to gather.

COLLABORATORS

Course: UBC EDST 561B
Team: Danielle Tan, Alyssa Harms-Wiebe, Brendan Chan, Bryant Race
Partners: Zahra Esmail (Executive Director of South Vancouver Neighborhood House), Wendy Mendes (Manager of Democratic Engagement for CoV), Oliver Mctavish-Wisden (Arts Programmer at Moberly Arts & Cultural Centre), Kimberly Hurrell (Community-Engaged Artist), Monique Koningstein (Coordinator at VDBIA)

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CityStudio Vancouver is an innovation hub where city staff, students, faculty and community work together to design experimental projects that make Vancouver more sustainable, liveable, inclusive and joyful. It works in collaboration with the City of Vancouver and five post-secondary institutions (SFU, UBC, BCIT, Langara, and ECUAD).

WHY IS IT NEEDED?

Democracy without meaningful participation is not democracy at all. When individuals lack a sense of belonging in their neighbourhoods, their desire to advocate for their well-being decreases. Communities need identities in order to thrive.

In regular conversations with Zahra Esmail from the South Vancouver Neighbourhood House, our group has come to know and understand the assets and deficits experienced by South Vancouver dwellers. The neighbourhood has historically experienced and continues to face discrimination and marginalization from more centralized areas of the City of Vancouver. The systemic issues that South Van experiences translates into reduced access to services and resources.

Our hope is that by drawing attention to the assets of the neighbourhood, Vancouver citizens within and outside of Victoria-Fraserview will become more engaged with its story, leading to new opportunities to address issues of equity, to build community, and to increase neighbourhood advocacy.

HOW DOES IT WORK?

With support and guidance from our network, our plan is to dedicate the months of January to March to gathering stories from youth, adults, and seniors living in Victoria-Fraserview. We want to know what it is like to grow up in the area, or the experience of seeing the neighbourhood change over the years. Many people we speak with might be new to South Vancouver. We hope to find out what it's been like to arrive there. We also want to know what foods are celebrated, what rhythms are danced to, what languages are spoken and being learned.

With these precious stories in our hands, we will work with our partner artists to paint the sights, smells, tastes, sounds, and feelings of Victoria-Fraserview for its residents to enjoy, and for Vancouverites to witness and learn about.

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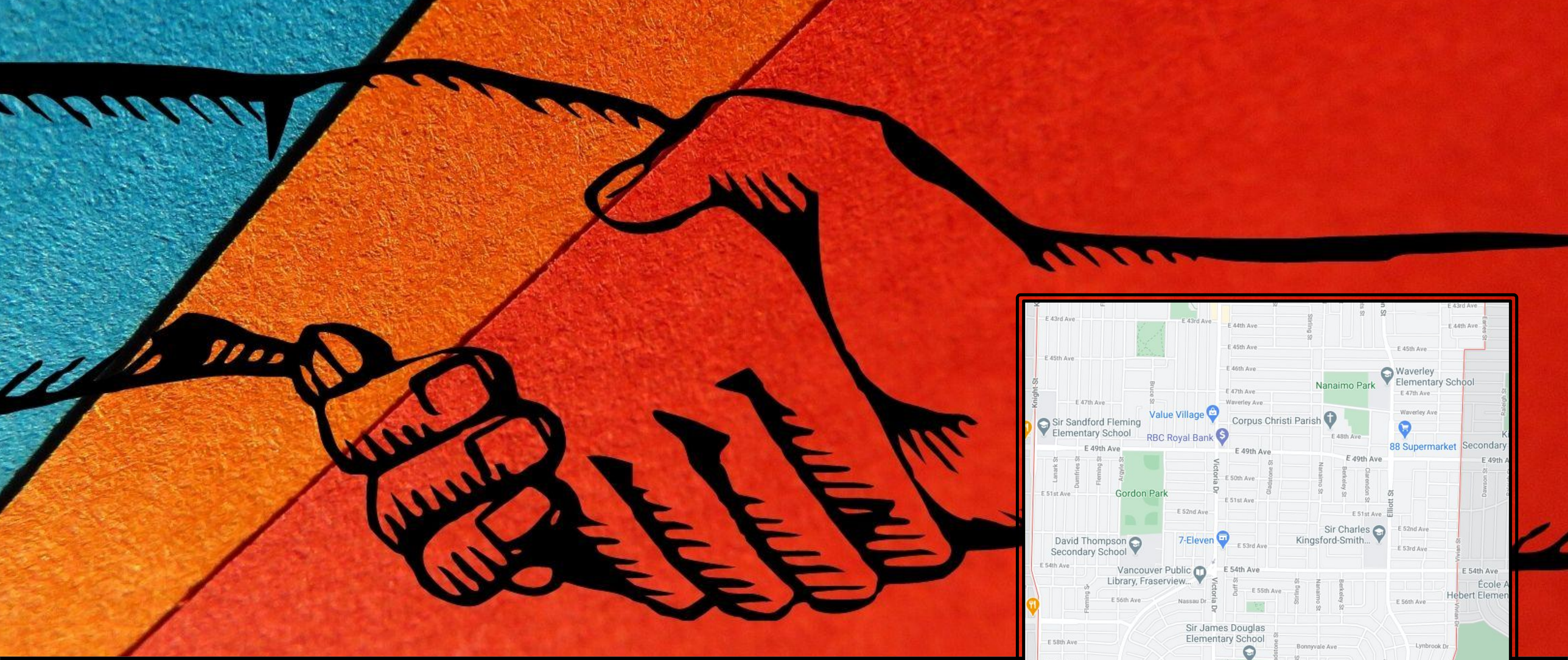

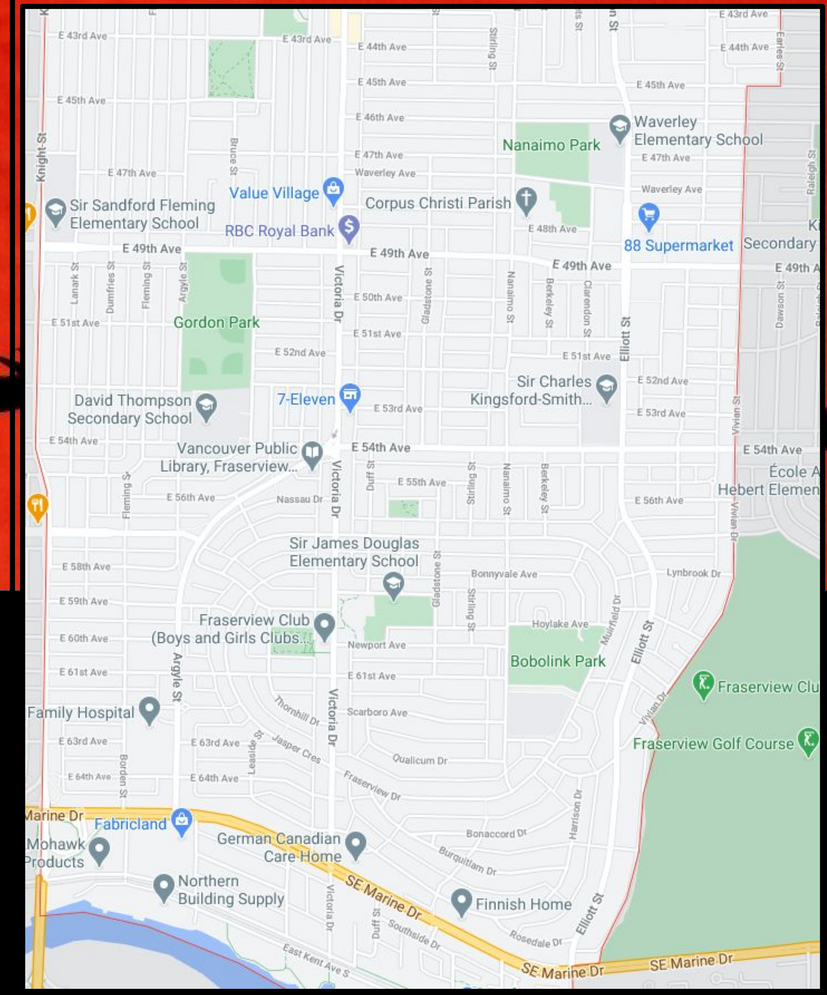

OUTCOMES

After transforming these stories into public art, we hope that our mural or street art will lead to more public art projects in this neighbourhood (historic markers, a tapestry of neighbourhood history), based on interests already expressed by our community partners.

Alongside our story-gathering process, we will be building resources for SVNH. These resources will include a step-by-step process on how to initiate a democratically engaged project like the one we're working on. The resources will teach community members how to turn their ideas into action with practical tools and information to guide them along the way. We hope that by building these resources, similar projects will take place both in South Vancouver and in other underserved areas across our city.

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