

Designing The Residences Of St. Monica's In Capitol Hill

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by Amy Rose Dobson



St Monica's in Capitol Hill is **a hundred years** old but has recently been given new life as a set of luxury condos. Earlier today we posted two dozen pictures of the finished product, but it took a few rounds of planning to figure out how get there. Community Three Development took on the challenge and company president Grant Epstein spoke with Curbed about how they came up with the design. As of this writing, there are six units left with prices ranging from \$399,000 for a 1 bed/1 bath to \$1,199,000 for a 3 bed/3.5 bath.

Our conversation with Grant Epstein:

How did you first approach this project?

When we first had access to the space we spent a full day or two really immersing ourselves in it. We spent a lot of time with tracing paper just sketching out idea after idea. Our goal was to make sure that **it still looked like a church from the outside**. The second, more challenging part, was to make sure that it also looked like a church inside each space. One thing we did was to keep the original beams and trusses both to give the units character, but also to remember the heritage of the building.

The floor plans for each of the units are each different from each other. How did you decide on the layout for the building overall?

We also wanted as many of the units as possible to have front doors on the street, just like any other townhouse around it. It worked out that **six of the nine have their own direct access**

front door. When you're trying to create homes in a place like this you have to understand how people live in these places. We tried to make unique homes since not everybody wants the same thing. People like uniqueness.

The stained glass windows definitely say 'church'. What did you do to preserve them?

We found a way to use all the windows that were in the church when it was first built. Some of them that had been added later were made by parishioners and we tracked down those people and gave them back their stained glass windows. But the ones that were there originally have all been preserved and used again. We couldn't keep all of them in same places that they were first installed because that would mean some rooms wouldn't have any natural light. In those situations we installed new windows and the stained glass became art pieces, such as the three in the inner courtyard.

The courtyard is an unexpected part of the building, that no one would know is there from the street. Was that something that was there originally?

That courtyard was originally a light well in the church, but we made it bigger. It became a way for us to **let natural light into the interior spaces** of the condos and it allows access to the upper units. The bell that sits in the middle is from the church bell tower and it was donated to the church in 1929 in honor of someone's mother. We were able to save it and find a place to keep it for the next hundred years.