

MPR News | Minnesota Now Caretakers of Alex Pretti memorial begin planning for more permanent remembrance site 01M2R7ZVW8JTZJ51JJYZMXEORF

After federal agents shot and killed Minneapolis nurse, Alex Pretti, in January, people flocked to the site of his death near Nicollet and 26th Street in South Minneapolis to lay flowers, notes, and candles.

Jadah Green lives nearby and has been taking care of the makeshift memorial since the beginning. And now, she, along with the neighborhood group called Whittier Alliance, are calling on their neighbors to help plan for a more permanent memorial for Alex Pretti. She's with us now to talk more about it. Thanks for joining me, Jadah.

JADAH GREEN: Thank you for having me.

INTERVIEWER: If you could, would you take us back to how you became one of the just few, really, caretakers of Alex Pretti's memorial there. At the site of his death, how did you become involved?

JADAH GREEN: Yes. So I, like you said, live close by the memorial. So that means on January 24, I was aware of everything happening, and I was outside as a legal observer that morning, filming the ICE agents as they kept coming and coming. And then later in the day, from my porch, I filmed ICE agents pulling people out of vehicles very violently.

And there was also a moment where there was a huge amount of tear gas. And so myself, along with my housemates, ended up sheltering many, many people as they were escaping out of the tear gas. So it was a very, very intense day. And the very next day, we were at the memorial to pay our respects. And then I just kept going back every day since then.

INTERVIEWER: When you're going back every day since then, what made you want to go to that site, when you wake up and you think about it? Because so many people have gone through that area, but it takes a lot to take on the responsibility of something like this. Is it something that you did just out of care for your entire community? I mean, why do you think this has resonated so deeply, tending to this area for you?

JADAH GREEN: Sure. I think part of it is proximity. Living so close to it, it feels like a natural thing to do. And I do feel like there is a calling I have to this site. The memorial and I now have a relationship. And I owe it to the memorial to take care of it and to my community and to Alex's family.

And I am following in the footsteps of those who take care of George Floyd Square Memorial. I remember when all of that happened and how they showed up and tended the flowers. And I remember thinking, then I hope someday I would be the type of person who would send flowers, if I was in that situation.

INTERVIEWER: You say that you've watched this memorial every day. Can you tell folks who are not around here or have never been there, what it looks like, what goes through there? I visited myself with our producer, Alanna Elder, in July. Still, steady streams of people at that point coming through. Still, lots there. It continues to grow, and that's why there have to be some plans made for the future.

JADAH GREEN: Right. Yeah, people still come every day to visit the site, to leave offerings and just to be with this space. I think people want to witness the land where this happened, and they also want to be witnessed by it. So there's a reciprocal relationship that happens there.

But it's beautiful. People come, and they leave offerings, and they'll sign it from the state or the country that they're from. They bring flowers. It's an ever-changing place. It's always becoming itself.

INTERVIEWER: So you're working with the Whittier Alliance, the neighborhood group, to talk to some neighbors about what they want to see for a more permanent memorial for Alex Pretti. Tell us about the event that you're holding this Saturday and what you're planning to ask people for. I mean, is there a range that you're thinking in terms of space or where specifically it will be located, or are you really open to all suggestions?

JADAH GREEN: Right now, we're at the very beginning stages, mostly of just collecting data. What do people want from this site? So we're hosting an event at Yes Yoga from 2:00 to 5:00 on Saturday. And we've come up with a series of five questions just as a jumping off point.

So we'll have questions about, what do people want to remember about this place. What vision or preservation or function or concerns? These are the themes of things that we're going to gather from folks on Saturday just to start seeing what direction we might take with a long-term permanent memorial.

INTERVIEWER: I understand there's an online survey as well for folks who can't make it.

JADAH GREEN: Correct. And the same questions that we'll be asking folks in person are what is in the survey.

INTERVIEWER: And I understand you've been holding smaller meetings for people who are connected with Alex Pretti, who knew him. What's coming out of those meetings?

JADAH GREEN: There's been one of those meetings, so far, and it was really beautiful, a really intimate meeting, and it was a lot of just sharing about who Alex was to them. And they talked about the things that he liked and what he might want to see there. So it was a really, really beautiful meeting.

INTERVIEWER: You mentioned George Floyd Square. Obviously, this was May of 2020, recapping for everybody when George Floyd's murder took place. Years have gone by, as you know, where there have been a lot of contentious debates about how that area known as George Floyd Square, should be used.

Should there be traffic? Should there be buses? Should it be pedestrian only? How much space is too much space? How much time has passed? It has become so difficult for folks to reach a consensus about what to do in that area, and it delayed any action for months and years. So were you thinking about that too, when you decided, OK, we've gotta start talking with people?

JADAH GREEN: We started thinking about talking with people because it felt like the right thing to do, not necessarily because of what we have witnessed happening at George Floyd Square. It's not an unrelated concern. We don't yet know our relationship with the city will unfold, but we haven't had any contention at this point.

INTERVIEWER: So have you been in discussion with the city at all, or do you think that will come later from your end?

JADAH GREEN: Sure. I think that will come later. There have been talks. The city has been in touch with different folks who are key in the conversation, but it's going to be tandem planning. Before we can ask the city for permits or permission, we have to know what we're asking permits for.

So we have to get a plan together, and then we'll go to the city and say, here's what we would like to do. And then the city will guide us in terms of what is feasible and what is permissible.

INTERVIEWER: In the eight or nine months that have passed now already since Alex Pretti was killed, I think people who don't this area, Eat Street, the Neighborhood Whittier very well. I would love for you to describe for them how much of a presence this memorial and Alex Pretti and his legacy and his life still are in the area.

Having intentionally visited, recently, a lot of folks in the area, business owners have talked about just how it's actually been a time of a lot of people stopping by, people taking care of one another, people continuing to help out their neighbors. What are you feeling in that area, in the neighborhood?

JADAH GREEN: The neighborhood is amazing. The businesses along that block have been so supportive of the work that we're doing there as caretakers, which makes such a big difference. But it's a very beautiful space. The memorial, I mean, you go and you see the flowers and you see the notes.

And I think it helps put into perspective that, perhaps, national media has moved on, but we are still trying to understand what happened here. And people are still coming, and they're still writing their letters and placing their art at this site as something tangible that they can do to come and bring their grief and maybe set some of it down there for a little while.

INTERVIEWER: And just lastly, Jadah, not that you need to the answer to this, but I do just want to mention, because the makeshift memorial for Renée Good is very close, not in the exact same area, but it's close to where it is for Alex Pretti. Have you heard anything related to any plans related to that space for Renée Good, perhaps?

JADAH GREEN: I am not sure exactly what they have going on there. There is an organizer who's reached out to me, and we have plans to have a conversation. And so hopefully, we can be in communication with that memorial as well.

INTERVIEWER: All right, Jadah, thank you for coming on *Minnesota Now* and talking about this with us. We hope that you'll join us again as this process unfolds.

JADAH GREEN: Of course. Thank you.

INTERVIEWER: Thank you. That was Jadah Green, a caretaker for the Memorial of Alex Pretti.