



DC PRESERVATION LEAGUE

Most Endangered Places Nomination Form

Since 1996, the DC Preservation League has announced a list of *Most Endangered Places* to draw attention to Washington DC's historically, culturally or architecturally significant places that are in danger of destruction, significant alteration, or demolition through neglect or abandonment. To nominate a building or place to this year's Most Endangered list, please provide the information below to the extent possible.

Site Name: Alexander Crummell School

Location or Address: 1900 Gallaudet St NE

Year Built: 1911

Owner Name and Address: DC Government, 1350 Pennsylvania Ave NW

Specify occupant if different from owner: N/A

Is the property occupied or vacant? Vacant

Historic Designation:

☒

National Historic Landmark

☒

National Register

☒

DC Inventory of Historic Sites

☐

Not Designated or Don't know

Submitter's name, address and telephone number: Parisa Norouzi, Empower DC, (202) 234-9119, parisa@empowerdc.org, 1419 V St NW, Washington, D.C. 20009 and Andria Swanson of Ivy City Civic Association

Please provide the following information:

1. The historic, cultural or architectural significance of the site.

The Alexander Crummell School served as an elementary school for black children from 1912 to the early 1970's. The school is located in the center of the historic Ivy City community, and also served the adjacent community of Trinidad. The same year that the school was built, 1911, the Ivy City community established their civic association. Their mission was to ensure that the school provided a quality education for local children. The civic association advocated for a new bell and lighting, and it was the same association that over 90 years later nominated the school for historic landmark status.

The school is remarkable for many reasons. It was designed by Snowden Ashford, the first municipal architect of Washington, DC. It was named for the Reverend Doctor Alexander Crummell, the only known

monument to this leading African American educator who established the first African American Episcopal Church in DC, St. Luke's, was a colleague of Frederick Douglass and mentor to W.E.B Dubois, and founder of the leading black think tank of its time, the American Negro Academy. Rev. Dr. Crummell resided in DC at the time of his death in 1898, just a short time before the school was named in his honor.

But, most of all the school is remarkable for the role it played as the civic heart of the Ivy City community, one of DC's most historic and least known communities. The school was the center of all community activity, a gathering place, a polling place, and place of education and celebration. Many alumni of the Alexander Crummell School are today engaged in trying to ensure that the school is protected and redeveloped into a community center so it can once again serve as the heart of the Ivy City community.

2. A description of the threat facing the site and the immediacy of that threat.

The Crummell School has declined terribly since the time of its closing. From 1976-1980 a nonprofit organization used the building and did some repairs, but since that time it has been vacant and left to decay. Copper roofing was removed from the building several years ago and the gaping roof and open windows were left unsecured until 2002. The outward appearance of the building shows the city has practically allowed the building to be demolished by neglect, however remarkably those who have been in the building in recent times say the interior is relatively intact.

Additionally, the building is at risk of being lost as the biggest public asset of the Ivy City community. Despite decades of advocacy from community and alumni to restore and reopen the school, the Mayor recently approved the site to become a parking lot and bus depot for 65 diesel-fueled inner-city charter buses, at a time, on the Crummell School lot for the next 5-10 years. This decision was made without proper notice to the community and its Advisory Neighborhood Commission, and without study of the resulting impact on the environment and human health.

The Mayor's plan to park buses at Crummell is inconsistent with the city's own plan, including the Comprehensive Plan which states "[a] high priority should be given to the rehabilitation of the historic Crummell School with a mix of uses for community benefit such as workforce/affordable housing, job

training, or meeting space.” The Ivy City community is experiencing a rebirth with families moving into 58 new homes being built by nonprofit developers Manna Inc, Mi Casa and DC Habitat for Humanity. This housing is paid for in part by DC and federal funds obtained through the Neighborhood Stabilization Initiative, which emphasizes the revitalization and greening of the area. It has come as a shock and surprise to longtime and new residents that the Mayor would propose such a polluting, unwanted and hazardous use where the community and city alike have advocated revitalization.

The threat to destroy the Crummell School site by making it a bus depot is imminent. The city has started construction, however a few community members have filed suit in District court seeking an injunction. Should the bus depot be constructed, buses are slated to arrive this November. The community fears that forevermore the site will be relegated to nothing more than industrial uses, and the dream of Ivy City’s civic heart being restored will be destroyed.

3. Suggestions on what actions are needed to alleviate the threat.

The community has expressed its vision Crummell School over and over again for the past 30 plus years, which is reflected in the language found in DC’s Comprehensive Plan. Unfortunately, this community has had little political power nor political allies to make the vision possible. Empower DC is currently working to organize residents, rebuild and strengthen the Ivy City Civic Association, assist the community with asserting their right to have a voice in the fate of the school, identify and recruit allies in this fight, and to increase visibility and support for the community’s goals.

The community has identified The Work Place DC as a nonprofit partner to create an education and workforce development center on the site. Work Place DC is a collaborative including some of DC’s best known education and job training groups such as STRIVE DC, Academy of Hope, Jubilee Jobs, Byte Back and Wider Opportunity for Women. The Work Place DC is provides supportive services to hard-to-serve residents in areas including literacy, GED training, computer skills, job training and placement.

Ivy City residents are recruiting support for their lawsuit to halt the Bus Depot. ANCs have been requested to pass resolutions in support. Expert witnesses are needed for a hearing scheduled October 29th in the area of air quality and the harmful effects of diesel bus fumes. The community is also seeking an expert to testify about the federal standard that environmental assessments be conducted when actions are taken on national designated historic sites.

4. A description of how listing on DCPL's Most Endangered Places list would help the site.

The Alexander Crummell School is assuredly one of DC's most endangered landmarks. Including the Alexander Crummell School on the Most Endangered Places list would greatly help this site by increasing visibility and recognition of its historic nature and cultural significance, and educating the public and potential supporters who may be moved to join the Ivy City community in its efforts to save Crummell. Revitalization of Ivy City is underway, yet this community will never be complete without the inclusion of the Crummell School which is literally the centerpiece of the community.

Supporting documents:

None