
**HISTORIC PRESERVATION REVIEW BOARD
STAFF REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION**

Landmark/District:	Crummell School Community Center	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agenda
Address:	1900 Gallaudet Street, NE	<input type="checkbox"/> Consent Calendar
Meeting Date:	December 21, 2023	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> New Construction
H.P.A. Numbers:	23-565	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Alteration
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Demolition

The District Department of Recreation (DPR) and the Department of General Services (DGS), along with Sorg Architects, are proposing to rehabilitate Crummel School and construct new additions to provide a Community Center and Recreation Center for the Ivy City neighborhood.

Crummel School

Crummel School is a DC Landmark and listed in the National Register of Historic Places. It was designed by Municipal Architect Snowden Ashford in 1910 and provides a unique and relatively rare example of Ashford's early work in an eclectic Elizabethan style that predates the Commission of Fine Arts' later insistence upon the Colonial Revival style being used for all District Schools. Construction was completed in 1911 and the new facility was named in honor of the noted African American abolitionist, Episcopal priest and professor, Alexander Crummell (1819-1898). In the early 1930s, a second story was constructed on the north side to replace the original meeting hall with two extra classrooms, but the building otherwise reflects Ashford's intended design. Like other schools of its time, Crummell's interior was based upon a "pinwheel" layout with classrooms, cloakrooms, a teachers' room, and a small library radially arranged around a central hall. Separate entrances for boys and girls were provided in decorative projecting bays on the north and south. The school is constructed of red brick, features a decorative tile and stucco frieze, and is capped by a hipped roof which, unfortunately, no longer retains its original slates, southern dormer or ventilator cupola. Crummell School served Ivy City's African American children from the time it opened through 1977 when it was closed and transferred to DGS. Although the building continued to be used for a variety of purposes through the 1990s, the school has suffered significantly from prolonged abandonment and is in poor condition.

Proposal

The current proposal involves rehabilitating the historic school to provide multi-purpose spaces in the former classrooms. The central main hall will be restored/reconstructed along with one historic classroom and both sets of historic stairs, including the distinctive glass and metal screens that separate individual flights. The cloakrooms on the west side of the school's two upper levels will be modified to serve as connecting corridors that lead to a newly constructed stair tower and new additions to the west and north. The new facilities will be subdivided into three distinct parts to provide space for 1.) community gatherings and exhibits, 2.) a fitness center and 3.) a gymnasium. The surrounding site, which currently consists almost entirely of a

paved parking lot, will also be significantly rehabilitated to accommodate a variety of active and passive recreational spaces, bioretention areas and parking.

Evaluation

The project's exterior rehabilitation scope includes the desperately needed cleaning, repair and restorative work that will return the landmark building to its former grandeur. Noteworthy interventions include using historic drawings and images to accurately reconstruct the original dormer and cupola, installing a new slate roof, restoring dilapidated entry bays, replacing all deteriorated windows and doors and carrying out the overall repair and restoration of each elevation and decorative feature of the building.

The proposed site plan and massing for the new additions will also benefit the historic school by limiting physical connections to a glazed window wall on the northwest corner where the former cloakrooms provide ideal locations to minimize demolition of historic fabric. This orthogonal approach will also preserve unobstructed views of the school's primary north and south elevations as well as the east and much of the west side of the building. Additional deference will be paid to the landmark by limiting the height of all new construction so that no new addition will project above the eaves of the historic school. The school's namesake will be memorialized through signage that will spell out "Crummell" using large letters above the south side of the connector and attached to the east wall of the connector.

Compatibility will be further enhanced through the use of corrugated metal panels in reddish hues that are reminiscent of Crummell's brick exterior, and by introducing fenestration that echoes the large expanses of punched openings in the original building. Simulated wood grain metal brise soleil panels will provide additional color and visual interest like the "checkerboard" pattern of metal panels that is proposed on select elevations. The use of polychromatic panels should not visually overwhelm the historic school provided it is used in moderation. HPO recommends that the "checkerboard" treatment be eliminated from the east side of the connector because this elevation is immediately adjacent to the historic school.

The Community Center Project will also rehabilitate Crummell School's setting by introducing formal landscaping in front of the building's main entrance on the south and by incorporating play areas and other recreation functions on the north where such activities likely occurred in the past. Bioretention areas will be incorporated on the southwest side since this is the lowest area of the site. Parking and outdoor fitness areas will be introduced on the northwest corner while a multipurpose field and existing basketball courts will round out the remainder of the site.

Although Crummel School's interiors are not designated, they are subject to HPO review under Section 9b. HPO supports the restorative work that is proposed in the central hall but also anticipates requiring interpretive displays to document the history of the school, its namesake and the surrounding community to help mitigate the loss of historic fabric.

Recommendation

For the reasons outlined above, HPO recommends that the Board find the concept for the Crummell School Community Center Project compatible with the landmark and delegate all remaining design review to HPO.

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