



EMPOWER DC

Organizing Community Power!

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Dear Friend,

What does community-led development look like? This year, with your help, we can show the city how it's done by supporting the Ivy City community's ability to influence the development of their historic Alexander Crummell School. Please consider supporting this work with a suggested donation of \$50 to help us reach our \$15,000 goal by June 30th. Your donation will allow us to continue a paid leadership development program with Ivy City youth, called #TheReallIvyCity.

Ivy City has fought for its civic heart, the Alexander Crummell School, to be restored as a community center for decades. I have battled alongside them for the last 15 years. In fact, my experience in Ivy City inspired the founding of Empower DC in 2003.

If you have followed Empower DC's work, you know that in 2013 we successfully sued the city to stop the placement of a polluting tour bus depot at the Alexander Crummell School. You may also know that the community has asked the city to make this a site for recreation and workforce development, but instead Mayor Bowser recently released a Request for Proposals (RFP) for developers to propose projects there. We stopped what would have been an environmental catastrophe for the neighborhood – and now we also need to make sure the redevelopment of the site takes into account the needs of the current residents of the neighborhood, instead of just more condos for the new residents that are streaming into the city.



Antwan and Burke tour the Crummell School site along with interested developers.



Fatima, Antwan, Willis and Burke at the at City Council on testimony day.

Here's where you come in. We are building a team to respond to the RFP and deliver what the community has long desired. With your support, we will make sure that the Ivy City community is leading the decision making process throughout the development of the proposal, through the selection process, and into the actual development.

Meet #TheReallIvyCity, a youth leadership program we developed in January which has employed 7 Ivy City youth age 19-24 as Community Designers, a title they came up with to explain the leadership role they are playing in their community. Members of #TheReallIvyCity came to us with little or no previous work experience. They have faced discrimination when attempting to gain employment at local businesses like the new Nike store on New York Ave. But with Empower DC they have developed their public speaking skills, written and presented testimony at the DC City Council, met with the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development, and created and

carried out a survey of over 160 residents, the results of which were even cited in the city's RFP for Crummell School.

The mantra of #TheRealIvyCity is "Ivy City Needs a Rec," which is also the title of the new song we helped them record (video coming soon). Their survey of residents proves it. Over 88% of respondents said that recreation was the greatest need in Ivy City, and over 85% said that recreation would be the best use of the historic Alexander Crummell School. As Burke says in his verse, "Ivy City needs a rec, everybody knows it's true."

Our work with #TheRealIvyCity shows that we can develop leadership among Ivy City youth by providing them with tangible, real world leadership opportunities. Together we can help these amazing youth build on what they've learned thus far and develop employment skills by working as organizers in their neighborhood. We initially planned to end this program on June 30th, but the vision has expanded now. We want to continue to offer positions for Ivy City youth at least through the end of the year, and we want them to learn how community development is done by being part of the team that is responding to the RFP for Crummell School.



Tycho & Willis testify at City Council on the importance of Ivy City youth having recreation to keep them out of the streets.

We intend to demonstrate how to put the Community back into Community Development. #TheRealIvyCity will be ambassadors for their community throughout the process, gaining detailed feedback from residents as plans are developed, and keeping residents informed and involved throughout the city's timeline of decision making.

Rev. Alexander Crummell famously said, "Strive to make something of yourself, then strive to make the most of yourself." He was a noted abolitionist, educator and clergyman who dedicated his life to the uplift of Black Americans. We envision the Crummell School and site, the only known monument to Crummell, as a beacon of opportunity in keeping with his legacy.

But it can really only be so if we create opportunities for the people of Ivy City to lead this process. Your donation to continue #TheRealIvyCity will allow us to employ Ivy City youth at a critical time which will determine the future of the historic Crummell School, the heart of Ivy City.

We appreciate your donation of any amount, which can be made online at empowerdc.org or with the enclosed envelope. Thank you for helping us demonstrate what it looks like for residents to lead the development in their communities! We are so excited about this work. I hope you are too.

In power,

Parisa

Parisa Norouzi
Executive Director

