The Application of a Just City Framework in Ivy City

Miriam Savad

A capstone thesis paper submitted to the Executive Director of the Urban & Regional Planning Program at Georgetown University’s School of Continuing Studies in partial fulfillment of the requirements for Masters of Professional Studies in Urban & Regional Planning.

Faculty Advisor: Brian McCabe, PhD
Academic Advisor: Uwe S. Brandes, M.Arch

IRB: 2017-0209
© Copyright 2017 by Miriam Savad

All Rights Reserved
ABSTRACT

In this paper, I seek to define justice within the context of urban planning, to understand the limitations of community participation as a key element in planning, and to apply a theoretical just city framework to a specific planning process. The construct of a just city has previously been studied on a city-wide scale; this case study focuses on the redevelopment of a long-vacant public site and former elementary school in the Ivy City neighborhood of Washington, DC that intentionally included community input in the process. My research methodology includes interviews with community organizations and government officials, public and meeting records, and a review of the history of Ivy City. I have found that although the redevelopment process included community participation, the request for proposals, decision making, and outcomes fail to meet my definition of justice. Concrete steps could be taken to better incorporate justice as a guiding principle within the entirety of the planning process.
KEYWORDS
Ivy City Washington, DC, Planning Justice, Participatory Planning, Community Development, Gentrification, Neighborhood Planning, Just City

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

What is a theoretical framework for a just city and its connection to participation and community input?

How can a just city framework be used to evaluate both the process and outcomes of the redevelopment of the Alexander Crummell School in the Ivy City neighborhood of Washington, DC?

When considering contemporary planning practices in the redevelopment of public land, what can be learned from the application of a just city framework to the Crummell School within the context of the history of Ivy City and how can justice be better used as a guiding principle?
TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract, Keywords and Research Questions .................................................................1
Table of Contents ...........................................................................................................3
List of Figures ..................................................................................................................4
Introduction ....................................................................................................................5
Literature Review .........................................................................................................7
Research Methodology .................................................................................................20
Why Ivy City .................................................................................................................22
Crummell School OurRFP and Redevelopment Process .............................................28
Just City Analysis ..........................................................................................................38
Conclusion .....................................................................................................................46
Bibliography .................................................................................................................47
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Ladder of Participation.................................................................8
Figure 2. Location of Ivy City in Washington, DC........................................22
Figure 3. Ivy City Boundaries.................................................................22
Figure 4. Historic Alexander Crummell School........................................25
Figure 5. Present Day Crummell School..................................................27
Figure 6. The Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital: Upper Northeast Area Element…31
Figure 7. Ivy City Partners Site Plan.......................................................36
Figure 8: Ivy City Partners Proposal – Ground Floor Plan ..........................37
Introduction

“Cities have the capability of providing something for everybody, only because and only when, they are created by everybody.”

Jane Jacobs

Just over two miles from the iconic white dome of the United States Capitol Building is the neighborhood of Ivy City. A historically working class, African-American neighborhood in the northeast quadrant of Washington, DC, Ivy City has had a rich, close-knit community since its establishment in 1872. The neighborhood has a long history of advocacy and civic involvement, yet like many urban communities, Ivy City has been significantly affected by disinvestment and government intervention. Today, the neighborhood has some of the highest poverty and unemployment rates in the city. At the same time, neighborhoods throughout Washington, DC have been rapidly gentrifying, including Ivy City. Recently, several breweries and distilleries have opened in Ivy City, as well as a Nike Store, Mom’s Organic Market, and new luxury apartments.

The center of Ivy City is the Alexander Crummell Elementary School, a building completed in 1911 that served the community for six decades. However, since 1980 the building has been vacant. Since then, residents have continually asked that the building be reopened and used for community services. In 2015, over three decades after the building was closed, the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development in the District of Columbia chose to redevelop the site and piloted an initiative called OurRFP. A stated intent of the OurRFP initiative was to incorporate more community input into the redevelopment process. In the fall of 2016, the Office of the Deputy Mayor announced their selection of a development team and its proposal for the site. The history of Ivy City and the Crummell School provide a crucial backdrop and context for analyzing its redevelopment process and the proposal that was
chosen. Consequently, it also provides an opportunity to better understand the limitations of participation in planning, as well as the concept and application of a just city approach.

While community involvement and input within land use planning is important, participatory planning alone will not yield just outcomes. A more encompassing definition of justice includes community knowledge, equitable outcomes, participation in decision making, and prioritizing those least able to defend themselves as well as those most likely to be disproportionately impacted; however, this definition as a framework of a just city has not been critically applied to specific public land use processes in the planning field. In doing so, I seek to first understand the history and limitations of participation in planning, explore the theoretical construct of a just city, define my framework of a just city, and then apply that framework to a specific case study of the redevelopment process of the Crummell Site, including the decision-making phase and overall outcomes.

The theory and application of a just city framework is of particular interest to me. It is not with exaggeration to say that my interest in planning the built environment, community involvement, and social justice began when I was a child. This passion is what compelled me to pursue a graduate degree in urban planning, and why I chose to explore and define my own theory of a just city and how it could be applied to a planning process in a neighborhood near my own. I believe that justice ought to be a guiding principle of urban planning, and I acknowledge that this bias is present within this work. Furthermore, I acknowledge the impact of my social conditions as a white, educated woman born in the U.S. on this work.
Literature Review

Community input is a defining feature of the OurRFP process piloted by the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development. I will first review the literature on participation in planning and then explore the limitations of participation in planning. I will then examine literature that considers the role of community knowledge, explore critical urban theory, and propose a definition of justice and a framework of the just city.

Participation in Planning

Stakeholder participation within land use planning has increased earnestly over the past several decades. In 1969, Sherry Arnstein authored “A Ladder of Citizen Participation,” the most referenced article on participation in U.S. planning literature. Arnstein contended that the problem is that the public does not have enough power and proposed a ‘ladder’ of participation. She was held in high esteem, and in 2005 Arnstein was inducted into the American Institute of Certified Planners Hall of Fame and selected as National Planning Pioneer by The American Planning Association. Arnstein's well-known typology of participation identified eight levels of participation (Figure 1). It identifies each level as a rung on a ladder, which corresponds to the extent of citizens’ power in determining an outcome, with manipulation as the lowest level, Level 1, and community control as Level 8, the highest form of participation.

---

3 Ibid., 217.
As concepts and practices of participation developed, spread, and became more popular throughout the 1970s and 1980s, ‘participation’ emerged almost as a prerequisite for any community development initiative and became a ‘buzzword’. Often assumed to be unquestionably positive as well as necessary for positive changes, participation in planning is often justified as a way to improve decisions, advance fairness, and obtain support and legitimacy for public decisions. Most jurisdictions legally require some amount of participation in planning processes, such as public hearings or public comment processes. The language of participation has changed little over recent decades but methods and technology have changed.

---

6 Ibid.
Technological advances have the potential to create more inclusive processes, although barriers to digital access and literacy could also leave people behind. Building upon Arnstein’s work, some authors have suggested ‘ladders’ of participation which describe the diversity of forms of participation that have been observed, including manipulation or citizen control. The reason for participation successes has often been attributed to what is referred to as the transformative power of dialogue, that is, when an inclusive group of people can engage in authentic dialogue where all are equally empowered and informed, where they listen and are heard respectfully, and when they are working on a task of interest to all.

**Limitations of Participation in Planning**

Much of the existing literature on participation in planning in the U.S. been devoted to discussing its problems, how to make improvements with better techniques, and how to be more culturally sensitive. Several authors contend that state-mandated public consultations are mostly ineffective; these consultations have been critiqued as being “nothing more than rituals designed to satisfy legal requirements.” Bond and Thompson-Fawcett qualify local government's approach to participation in planning as limited to a tool, namely charrettes, which is not inclusive and too dependent on a facilitator. Shipley and Utz, in a review of public consultation techniques, concluded that there is a lack of formal training for planners, and that there is a need for more knowledge about the interest and priorities of residents with respect to

---

7 Shipley and Utz, “Making it Count,” 5.
8 Innes and Booher, “Reframing Public Participation,” 428.
10 Innes and Booher, “Reframing Public Participation,” 420.
planning issues. Grossardt and Bailey conducted a study to assess public participation for transportation planning and concluded that the current level of involvement was approximately a 3 or 4 according to Arnstein’s ladder, but that level 6, partnership, was the ideal level. They also argued that in order for the gap to close planners would need to increase their expertise in community engagement.

A traditional way for the community to influence a process is to voice their opposition or support for particular land uses during institutionalized public hearings. As Judith Innes and David Booher argue, community members and advocates are constrained by how much they can participate materially in the development process. Innes and Booher contend that legally required methods of public participation in government decision making in the U.S. do not work, reasoning that these methods do not achieve authentic, representative participation in planning, do not satisfy members of the public that they are being heard, seldom improve the decisions that planners and public officials make, and do not incorporate the full diversity of the community. In fact, they argue that these methods often antagonize the members of the public who do try to work with them and may pit community members against each other. This pattern makes it even more difficult for decision makers to sort through what they hear or use public input to inform a decision.

In 2014, Yan Dominic Searcy conducted a study in the Kenwood neighborhood of Chicago which explored the relationship between participation and the development of housing

---

15 Ibid.
16 Innes and Booher, “Reframing Public Participation,” 424.
17 Ibid., 419.
18 Ibid., 431.
The study revealed that when community-wide participation was involved, more low-income housing units were produced, as contrasted with a plan where participation was negligible and fewer units were built. However, as Searcy describes, participation in planning does not guarantee outcomes. For example, it is possible that after the planning process occurs, plans could be altered. Moreover, participation may not always be perceived as authentic and empowering to community members, as it may instead serve the interests of powerful groups and individuals or replicate the power of dominant institutions and individuals. Participation may also be seen as passing on government responsibility to individual citizens. Biases of planning professionals may also impact the representativeness of a planning process and the diversity of the community involved.

Community Knowledge

In July 2008, the Community Development Journal published a special issue on ‘Participatory Approaches in Community Development,’ which analyzed and dissected participation from international development case studies. Robyn Eversole describes how participation has its roots in grassroots development approaches in the 1960s and 1970s, which challenged international development practices. However, utilizing actor-network social theory, which assigns agency to human and non-human actors and claims that any entity is

---

21 Ibid.
equally important to a social network, mainstream practitioners and policymakers have started to view communities of people as agents of development.\textsuperscript{26,27}

In fact, a consensus is emerging in the community development literature that communities contain knowledge and institutions that are qualitatively different from the knowledge and institutions that guide the work of development organizations.\textsuperscript{28} Natasha Blanchet-Cohen, a scholar of community-based approaches, argues that residents need to be involved in shaping their neighborhoods because they have experiences and knowledge that are distinctly different from the knowledge held by urban planners.\textsuperscript{29} While planning decisions are more likely to reflect community realities when citizens have been involved in the process, community knowledge may be dismissed or difficult to see by professionals who are trained to view knowledge as pertaining only to experts and institutions as official development entities.\textsuperscript{30}

Older approaches to development as something done by experts and professionals may persist alongside the notion that communities themselves enact change, potentially leading to subtle, persistent tensions for practitioners.\textsuperscript{31} Participation in planning often continues to utilize a top-down approach by inviting community voices into a process, one which often does not originate from the community, and fails to acknowledge or value their community-based knowledge and institutions.\textsuperscript{32}
Critical Urban Theory

Critical urban theory is commonly used to refer to the writings of radical urban scholars post-1968. Despite existing dominant ideologies, institutional structures, and exploitation critical urban theory is built upon the premise that another, more just and democratic world is possible. Critical urban theory is abstract, not formulaic, and focuses on the disconnection between the ideal and reality. According to noted urban theorist Susan Fainstein, justice is a goal that must be continually pressed for, as it is far too easy to follow the lead of those who make economic competition the highest priority with little consideration of justice. In a system of global capitalism, social exclusion and economic exclusion are interdependent. She argues that we must concern ourselves with making production more participatory and collective so that the production process responds to the public at large. Alternatively, other thinkers such as Robert Owen and Charles Fourier argue that a just city is impossible within the current system, and is it only through breaking apart the structure of class domination and the seizing of power by the working class that a just city be could reached.

In 1974, Fainstein co-wrote the book Urban Political Movements with her husband Norman Fainstein about citizen participation, which contended that electoral democracy inadequately represented citizens and argued for direct involvement in planning decisions, both to include marginalized groups and their knowledge. Speaking at a 1994 conference honoring David Harvey on the anniversary of Social Justice and the City, Fainstein advanced the notion

35 Ibid., 201.
that planners should aggressively press for better outcomes, especially as they benefit those who are least able to defend themselves.\textsuperscript{40}

Fainstein’s 2014 book \textit{The Just City} was the culmination of decades of work theorizing the just city. Fainstein argues that equity, democracy, and diversity are the three primary qualities constituting urban justice.\textsuperscript{41} Fainstein chooses equity over equality as a politically strategic term, as it is redistributive and implies fairness.\textsuperscript{42} Equity refers to treatment, public policy, or distribution that is appropriate and that does not favor those who were already better off.\textsuperscript{43} John Rawls’s \textit{A Theory of Justice} was foundational in describing justice as fairness and much scholarship on justice has since followed.\textsuperscript{44} Fainstein aligns with Rawls in giving priority to equity, and agrees with David Harvey’s argument that the content of the word justice is contingent upon social, geographical, and historical context.\textsuperscript{45} Moreover, Fainstein utilizes the capabilities approach as discussed by Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum, which places the individual within a network of affiliations and describes people based on what they are capable of or have the opportunity to do.\textsuperscript{46} A commitment to justice, says Fainstein, would then shift the balance in favor of those who are relatively disadvantaged.\textsuperscript{47}

In order to further diversity, Fainstein argues that, for example, public authorities should assist groups who have historically suffered from discrimination in achieving access to

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{40} Susan Fainstein, “My Career as a Planner,” \textit{Journal of the American Planning Association} 80, no. 3 (2014): 273.}
\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{41} Fainstein, \textit{A Just City}, 48-54.}
\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{42} Ibid., 36-37.}
\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{43} Justus Uitermark, \textit{An Actually Existing Just City? The Fight for the Right to the City in Amsterdam} in Brenner, Neil, Marcus, Peter and Margit Mayer, eds., \textit{Cities for People, Not for Profit: Critical Urban Theory and the Right to the City} (New York: Routledge, 2012).}
\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{44} Fainstein, \textit{The Just City}, 23-56.}
\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{45} Ibid., 23.}
\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{46} Ibid., 54-56.}
\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{47} Ibid.}
opportunity in housing, education, and employment. And, with regards to democracy, Fainstein argues that those who are not able to participate directly in decision making processes should be represented by advocates, and plans should be developed in broad consultation with the target population. The purpose of inclusion in decision making should be to have interests fairly represented and ensure that those with less power are treated equitably.

New Urbanism

As Fainstein advocates for equity, democracy, and diversity as the necessary set of values for the just cities, she considers different approaches that may support this notion. The New Urbanist approach may provide a physical framework for a city that offers a higher quality of life to residents and visitors. However, Fainstein critiques New Urbanism, arguing that physical settings can only go so far in fostering a just city; a political consciousness that supports progressiveness, respectfulness, and equity is ultimately the most essential. If the market fails to provide diversity in most places, and planners do not work against homogeneity, then neighborhoods and communities will become increasingly segregated. As Fainstein notes, outcome-orientated physical planning left its mark on cities in the form of urban renewal, low-density development, and racial segregation.

---

51 Fainstein, “Cities and Diversity: Should We Want It? Can We Plan For It?” 16.
52 Ibid., 465.
53 Ibid., 463-465.
The Communicative Approach

The communicative approach constructs the planner’s primary role as an experiential learner, listening to people, and working to form a consensus among differing viewpoints.\textsuperscript{54} Judith Innes contends that in this model planners act as facilitators and negotiators amongst stakeholders rather than providing leadership.\textsuperscript{55} Fainstein’s critique of the communicative approach aligns with Bond and Thompson-Fawcett’s, arguing that even when relatively powerless groups gain the benefits are nominal and they still suffer from biases and injustice.\textsuperscript{56} There may be a gap between rhetoric and action, which in turn may perpetuate the continued dominance of the already powerful.\textsuperscript{57} This model omits the need for other resources in the struggle for power, such as money, access to expertise, effective organization, and media coverage, in addition to the ability to participate.\textsuperscript{58} The key critique is that planning and city building for the benefit of non-elite groups requires empowering those who are excluded not just from discussions but from structural positions that allow them real influence.\textsuperscript{59} The communicative approach neglects essential questions of inequality in power, opportunity, and resources, believing that participation and negotiation alone can remedy structural inequality.

Susan Fainstein’s Just City Approach

Fainstein’s approach to the just city combines criteria for inclusionary processes with a concern for just outcomes, recognizing that the two can conflict.\textsuperscript{60} This approach puts the

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{54} Ibid., 454.
\item \textsuperscript{56} Fainstein, \textit{The Just City}, 29.
\item \textsuperscript{57} Fainstein, “New Directions in Planning Theory,” 457-460.
\item \textsuperscript{58} Ibid., 461.
\item \textsuperscript{59} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{60} Ibid.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
planning theorist in the role of the advocate and promotes the ability of people to lead meaningful lives.61 This is distinct, however, from Paul Davidoff’s much cited article and concept of advocacy planning, which articulates that planners should be advocates for a particular group, acting on behalf of community interests and providing professional assistance to disadvantaged groups.62

Norman Krumholz, Cleveland’s former City Planning Director, provides an early example of this approach, as he recognized that spatial restructuring from economic transformation was the most powerful force in affecting investment into the built environment and prioritized inclusionary processes and equitable outcomes.63 He based his work within the realm of equity and advocacy planning, and led his department to give priority and greater options to Cleveland’s poorest residents.64 In 1975, Krumholz and the Cleveland City Planning Department published the Policy Planning Report, a pioneering comprehensive plan that centered equitable social policy within city planning.65

There are two camps within the just city approach, radical democrats and political economists.66 Radical democrats argue that participation is the vehicle by which those who had been powerless are able to assert power, and that this will yield social change.67 Political economists, such as Fainstein, seek to mobilize the public rather than prescribe a methodology and assume the positive intent or neutrality of government.68 Political economists believe that

---

61 Ibid., 467.
64 Ibid.
65 Ibid.
67 Ibid.
68 Ibid., 468.
one should not assume that participation by stakeholders would be transformational; planning by civil society is not unquestionably morally superior than actions made by the state. 69

A Just City Framework

Participation in public decision making is part of the idea of just city and while it is a worthy goal, it alone will not remedy injustice. 70 The communicative model is insufficient; planners ought to be more than facilitators. My definition of justice understands the limitations of participation, and, utilizing Fainstein’s political economic approach, I believe that justice ought to be a guiding principle of the planning process, decision making, and outcomes. Leonie Sandercock’s theory of a just city similarly values participation as well as equity in decision making and outcomes. 71, 72 I agree with Keiron Bailey and Ted Grossardt who argue that a redistribution of decision authority is a prerequisite for increased justice. 73 That is, justice includes inclusionary processes, a concern for just outcomes, and restructured decision making.

Building on these theories, my framework of a just city includes community knowledge, participation in decision making, equitable outcomes, and the evaluation of who dominates and who benefits. Bringing non-elite interests to bear on the process, particular prioritization is given to those least able to defend themselves and/or those most disproportionately impacted. Fainstein has studied her construct of a just city on a city scale; given the OurRFP’s emphasis on community input and the historical context of Ivy City, I investigate the elements of a just city

69 Ibid., 470.
70 Ibid., 469.
71 Fainstein, “New Directions in Planning Theory, 429.
73 Bailey and Grossardt, “Toward Structured Public Involvement,” 69.
through the specific case study of the redevelopment of the Crummell School Site, including the decision-making process, and overall outcomes.
Research Methodology

The research questions for this paper include: 1. Defining a theoretical framework for a just city and its connection to participation and community input; 2. Using a just city framework to evaluate the process and outcomes of the redevelopment of the Alexander Crummell School in the Ivy City neighborhood of Washington, DC; and 3. Exploring what recommendations and implications there are for contemporary planning practice in the redevelopment of public land given the application of a just city framework to the Crummell School.

I sought to construct a framework of a just city and its connection to community input first through a review of the existing literature on participation, community knowledge, and community involvement in urban planning. Keyword searches included: Community involvement; Community groups or community organizations; Urban renewal; Urban planning; Participatory Planning; Disinvestment; Urban Poor. Through an analysis of critical urban theory, particularly Susan Fainstein’s construct of a just city, I connected the research on participation to create my own definition of justice.

This framework was then applied to a case study of Ivy City and the Alexander Crummell School, which utilized the Washington City Paper, the Washington Business Journal, the Washington Post, WAMU 88.5, historical maps and the existing Ivy City Neighborhood and Oral History Project. The RFP for the redevelopment Crummell School was an important document for the case study, as well as other publically available documents related to the RFP, development proposals, ANC meeting minutes and resolutions. So as to expand the case study’s depth, specifically with regards to the OurRFP process, the methodology included interviews with: Dion Townley, Project Manager, Office of the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development; Melissa Bird, Ward 6 Planner, DC Office of Planning; Andrew Trueblood, Chief
of Staff, Office of the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development; and Parisa Norouzi, Executive Director, Empower DC. This component of my research methodology helped to provide a detailed case study and presentation of the OurRFP process, which allowed for a rich analysis of a just city framework, and recommendations for future planning practices.
Why Ivy City

Ivy City, a small neighborhood in Northeast Washington, DC, was established in 1872, along what was once the site of the National Fairgrounds, Ivy City Race Track, and the B&O Railroad. Jobs with the B&O Railroad initially brought residents to Ivy City, and it largely became a working class, African American neighborhood. Today, Ivy City is home to approximately 2,000 residents. After a population decline over several decades, since the year 2000 the population has been increasing. The African American population has been steadily declining from 76% in 1990 to 56% in 2010. Forty percent of Ivy City residents live in poverty, 36% are unemployed, and approximately 25% of the adult population has no high school diploma.

Figure 2. Location of Ivy City in Washington, DC

Source: Google Maps

---

75 Ibid., 4.
76 “Neighborhood Info DC, Tract 88.03,” The Urban Institute, March 31, 2017, https://www.neighborhoodinfode.org/censustract10/Nbr_prof_trct130.html
77 Ibid.
78 Ibid.
79 Ibid.
Throughout its history, resident advocacy and civic involvement has been a unique, distinguishing characteristic of the 1.7 square mile neighborhood. In 1911, residents officially organized the Ivy City Civic Association, advocating for neighborhood improvements, including lighting, street, and sewer improvements to address chronic flooding problems. The Civic Association aimed to include all ages in the effort towards community betterment and organized teenagers into a separate junior association. The central hub and heart of Ivy City was the Alexander Crummell Elementary School. Built in 1911, the building was named for Alexander Crummell, an abolitionist, Howard University professor and clergyman, and for six decades it served the neighborhood children and provided community services to residents.

Yet, while Ivy City was distinguished by its particularly close-knit and civically engaged community, the neighborhood faced the same external forces as in other working class, minority neighborhoods. Following World War II, the railroad and other industrial employers laid off

---

81 Ibid., 9.
workers in droves.\(^{82}\) Unemployed residents began to move out of Ivy City and as the housing stock and neighborhood declined the area was targeted for one of the prevailing planning practices of the time, the construction of a six-lane highway.\(^{83}\) Highways were planned not only to facilitate movement between new suburbs on the periphery of the city and to decrease traffic, but were techniques for urban renewal and slum clearance.\(^{84}\) Policies and practices such as restrictive covenants and redlining denied African Americans the opportunity of homeownership and contributed to racially segregated suburbs and inner cities.\(^{85}\) Highways were a method to remove blighted, crowded, and predominantly African American neighborhoods like Ivy City, and the proposed highway would have been built through the center of the neighborhood and displaced the majority of residents and businesses.\(^{86}\) Residents quickly formed a group called the Emergency Committee on the Transportation Crisis and led over a decade of sustained protest and action against the proposed highway.\(^{87}\) Ultimately, the plans did not move forward, but the threat of construction compelled many residents to leave Ivy City.\(^{88}\)

As job opportunities decreased, the population shrank, and the neighborhood continued to decline, enrollment at the Crummell School fell and the school was subsequently closed in 1972.\(^{89}\) In October 1976, the neighborhood was selected for a Human Development Project led by the Institute for Cultural Affairs (ICA).\(^{90}\) From 1976-1980, two community organizers with ICA, a nonprofit organization, along with neighborhood residents, created the Ivy City Preschool

\(^{83}\) Ibid., 12.
\(^{85}\) Ibid., 15.
\(^{86}\) Ibid.
\(^{87}\) Ibid.
\(^{88}\) Ibid.
\(^{89}\) Ibid., 15.
\(^{90}\) Ibid.
and the Ivy City Corporation (ICCO).\textsuperscript{91} The group coordinated numerous activities, including block clubs, health fairs, voter registration drives, and a youth group, which were based out of the Crummell School.\textsuperscript{92} Following the end of the ICA Human Development Project in 1980, the building was permanently closed.\textsuperscript{93} Nonetheless, the community continues to be deeply connected to the school and neighborhood; Crummell School alumni continue to hold reunions and former residents often return to visit.\textsuperscript{94}

Figure 4. Historical Alexander Crummell School

Since its closing in 1980 the building has sat vacant. Residents of Ivy City have been advocating for decades for the former school to be repaired and have continued to organize; their efforts helped contribute to the building’s addition to the National Register of Historic Places in 2002 and list of Washington, DC’s Most Endangered Places by the DC Preservation League in

\textsuperscript{91} “Ivy City Neighborhood & Oral History,” 12.
\textsuperscript{92} Ibid., 7.
\textsuperscript{93} “History of Ivy City”, http://www.crummellschool.org/index.php?page=history
\textsuperscript{94} “Ivy City Neighborhood & Oral History,”.
Activism, civic engagement, and resident and youth leadership have continued in Ivy City due to organizing efforts led in part by the grassroots, nonprofit organization Empower DC, which works across Washington, DC to organize low and moderate income residents. In 2011, a neighborhood survey was conducted by the DC Department of Housing and Community Development and National Community Reinvestment Coalition through a federally-funded Neighborhood Stabilization Program, which sought to reveal residents’ top priorities for neighborhood improvements: recreation/after school programs for youth; job training; better schools and libraries; cleaner streets; and more/better police protection to decrease crime and drug activity. In 2013, residents worked with architecture firm Stoiber & Associates to envision a redevelopment of the Crummell School site that would serve community needs alongside private development and contribute to neighborhood improvements. The resulting report proposed the restoration of the Crummell School as a community center, with daycare and elder care, as well as a new gymnasium, with additional buildings for retail and office space, including a job training center and a grocery store. The study recommended significant development of outdoor space as well, providing areas for gardening, play, and community gatherings. The plan would reactivate the former school, and provided a community-led vision for how the building could be used for public needs.

However, in actuality the vacant site has, over time, effectively become a parking lot for government vehicles. In 2012, then Mayor Vincent C. Gray signed an agreement allowing Union

---

97 Ibid.
99 Ibid.
Station to park tour buses at the Crummell Site. Community activism would again be instrumental; residents filed a lawsuit to block construction of the bus depot, and it remains in litigation today. The next administration and current Mayor Muriel Bowser abandoned the plans to use the site for parking and indicated intent to issue a Request for Proposal for a public-private partnership on the site.101

Figure 5. Present Day Alexander Crummell School

Source: Empower DC


Crummell School OurRFP and Redevelopment Process

In 2015, the Government of the District of Columbia, through the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development (DMPED), announced that it would issue a Request for Proposals (RFP) for the Crummell School Site. The RFP was a product of OurRFP, a new initiative by Mayor Muriel Bowser that incorporates community engagement early in the Request for Proposals (RFP) process. According to DMPED, early engagement with the community would ensure that the public’s perspective and priorities are understood in conjunction with the District’s goals when crafting and issuing the RFP. Acknowledging that many current and previous residents of the Ivy City community attended the Crummell School and have a great interest in how the District will use the site, DMPED piloted the OurRFP process with the goal of providing transparency throughout the RFP process as well as accountability for delivering public benefits. "As the nation’s capital, we must strike a balance between preserving our rich history and serving the needs of residents," said Mayor Bowser. “Through the OurRFP initiative, we continue to engage neighbors in order to reflect the community’s voice while positioning Crummell School to achieve its full potential.”

The OurRFP process was predominantly composed of two community input meetings prior to releasing the RFP. On July 29, 2015, a public workshop was held to present information regarding the initiative and provide a thorough analysis of the site, neighborhood, and market context. Dion Townley, DMPED Project Manager for the Crummell Site, led

---

103 Melissa Bird (Ward 6 Neighborhood Planner, DC Office of Planning) in discussion with author, April 2017.
104 Andrew Trueblood (Chief of Staff, DMPED) in discussion with the author, April 2017.
105 “Crummell School Site Request for Proposals.”
106 “Crummell School Site Request for Proposals,” 5.
outreach for the meetings, including going door to door. Empower DC also reported conducting extensive outreach to build turn out. Approximately 100 people attended the meeting, which included facilitated break-out sessions to consider questions around the future development of the site, including what types of retail and housing the community wanted. DMPED also received public input through an online engagement forum, which asked questions similar to those discussed at the July workshop.

According to DMPED, the OurRFP process for the Crummell Site was an unprecedented outreach effort, engaging ANC commissioners, stakeholders, and civic and religious organizations in the area, including weekly calls and meetings with ANC commissioners and stakeholders, and approximately ten canvasses to invite community members to attend the public meetings. DMPED held a follow-up meeting on September 19, 2015 to further refine community preferences and prioritize the potential uses for the Crummell building. According to The DC Voice, the choices to select from were Public Uses (Recreation/Community Center, Job Training/Workforce Development, Library, Arts Center, and Health/Wellness Center), Public Spaces & Amenities (Active Use, Passive Uses, Cultural or Historical, and Public Art), and Development Use (Neighborhood Serving Retail, Destination Retail, Small/Local Business Opportunities, Incubator Space, and Residential). Stickers were used to indicate preference, and the areas that appeared to be the most popular were recreational/community center for public

---

107 Dion Townley (Project Manager, DMPED) in discussion with the author, March 2017.
108 Parisa Norouzi (Empower DC Executive Director) in discussion with the author, April 2017.
110 “Crummell School Site Request for Proposals,” 5.
111 Townley, interview.
112 “Crummell School Site Request for Proposals,” 5.
113 “Crummell School Follow Up Meeting.”
uses and amenities and actives uses for public spaces. The DC Voice reported a noticeable protest vote for development use.\textsuperscript{114}

The RFP was released by DMPED on April 25, 2016.\textsuperscript{115} The RFP indicated that developers that presented the most innovative, comprehensive, and community supported solution would be ‘short listed’ in the city’s process of disposing the site.\textsuperscript{116} The Crummell Site is zoned for moderate-density commercial (PDR-1), and DMPED indicated it would accept both proposals that were within PDR-1 permitted uses (matter-of-right) and Planned Unit Development (PUD) proposals, which would require the DC Zoning Commission to grant zoning relief.\textsuperscript{117} The Crummell School is a DC Landmark and the redevelopment of the site is subject to review by the Historic Preservation Review Board.\textsuperscript{118}

The Crummell Site is within the Northeast Gateway policy focus area of the Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital: Area Upper Northeast Area Element.\textsuperscript{119} The Upper Northeast Area Element provides the following guidance on reuse of the Crummell School site: 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.\textsuperscript{120} The section regarding Protecting Local Historic Resources lists the Crummell School as a historic resource in Upper Northeast that should be protected.\textsuperscript{121} The Northeast Gateway section on Urban Design Improvements calls for developing “additional and interconnected

\begin{footnotes}
\item[{\textsuperscript{114}}] Ibid.
\item[{\textsuperscript{115}}] Ibid.
\item[{\textsuperscript{116}}] “Crummell School Site Request for Proposals,” 1.
\item[{\textsuperscript{117}}] Ibid., 2.
\item[{\textsuperscript{118}}] Ibid., 6.
\item[{\textsuperscript{119}}] Ibid., 3.
\item[{\textsuperscript{120}}] Ibid., 24-19.
\item[{\textsuperscript{121}}] “The Comprehensive Plan,” 24-15.
\end{footnotes}
public open spaces in the Ivy City and Trinidad areas, including… improved open space at the Crummell School grounds.”

Figure 6. The Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital: Upper Northeast Area Element

Source: The Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital: District Elements

The RFP expressed DMPED’s commitment to maximizing community benefits for its residents and expectation that Respondents consider and incorporate stakeholder and community preferences into their project. Respondents were asked to include a detailed description of the activities and strategies completed to date that demonstrate the Respondent’s efforts to work with the local community and stakeholders to ensure their meaningful involvement in the submitted

---

123 “Crummell School Site Request for Proposals,” 18.
response; and a detailed description of the post-award approach and strategies to working with the local community and stakeholders to ensure their meaningful involvement in the development process.¹²⁴

According to the RFP, and based on input from the two community meetings, higher ratings would be awarded to proposals that: Redevelop the Crummell School to be repurposed for recreation and community uses or elements; activate the public space on the site with outdoor active uses; provide mixed use development, including neighborhood serving retail use; provide job training or workforce development component for District residents; incorporate designs that include a cultural or historical reference to Alexander Crummell and the Ivy City Neighborhood; include retail space for local and emerging businesses and incubator space; demonstrate, through entity experience and expertise of proposed key personnel, that they are qualified to execute a project of this scale; provide evidence of sufficient organizational and financial capability to ensure on budget and timely delivery; and improve the quality of life for the surrounding neighborhood by incorporating the District’s goals with respect to promoting vibrant, walkable, mixed-use neighborhoods and commercial corridors.¹²⁵ The RFP explicitly indicated it would give preference to the issues stressed as particularly important by community members, including recreation and community uses, job training/workforce development, and small/local business opportunities.¹²⁶

Additionally, strong consideration would be given to Respondents who achieve and exceed District of Columbia policy goals, including: maximizing the overall economic benefit to the District; maximizing value to the District through land value proceeds; maximizing

¹²⁵ Ibid.
¹²⁶ Ibid.
community benefits, seeking the least amount of subsidy; providing Ward 5 residents and
businesses with opportunities to participate in the project; and providing realistic and achievable
funding plans.\(^{127}\)

Respondents had sixty days to respond to the RFP.\(^{128}\) DMPED held an information
session and introductory site visit at the Trinity Baptist Church, one block away from the
Crummell Site, on Wednesday, May 4, 2016.\(^{129}\) Attendees were required to complete a site tour
waiver, release, and indemnification form.\(^{130}\) On July 7, 2016, DMPED announced the three
responses to the Crummell site RFP, which included: Ivy City Partners, LLC (a collaboration of
StonebridgeCarras and The Jarvis Company); Trammell Crow Company (partnering with CSG
Urban Partners); WC Smith (partnering with DC Habitat for Humanity, Empower DC, City First
Enterprises, and Stoiber & Associates).\(^{131}\) Deputy Mayor Brian Kenner announced that, “We are
excited to see the redevelopment of Crummell School moving forward. This project further
cements our commitment to engage residents as we increase affordable housing opportunities,
expand local businesses, and preserve our historic neighborhoods.”\(^{132}\)

Empower DC, which has been organizing in Ivy City since the early 2000s, held
community meetings to first consider and then develop a proposal with WC Smith.\(^{133}\) Youth
from the neighborhood were actively involved in developing the proposal, having felt
motivated to engage others in investing in the outcome of the Crummell School by the changes

\(^{127}\) “Crummell School Site Request for Proposals,” 19-20.
\(^{128}\) Ibid., 1.
\(^{129}\) Ibid. 13.
\(^{130}\) Ibid.
\(^{133}\) Norouzi, interview.
and gentrification of Ivy City.\textsuperscript{134} Antwan Williams, then 19, said, “We wanted it 100% for the community because we felt it was ours.”\textsuperscript{135}

The proposal included a health clinic run by Community of Hope in a new building owned by WC Smith, a discount home goods store by Habitat for Humanity, a public gym, and a childcare facility.\textsuperscript{136} There would be three stories of apartments above the building’s ground floor, ranging from studios to three-bedrooms, with none renting for more than 60% of the area median income (AMI).\textsuperscript{137} Twenty percent would be reserved for families making under 30% of AMI and 10% would be permanent supportive housing.\textsuperscript{138} Open space would contain a playground, a garden, as well as historically and culturally relevant art.\textsuperscript{139} The Crummell School would be owned by a nonprofit community land trust and provide community services, including classroom space for GED courses, a technology lab, after-school programing, workforce development, sound studio for after-school and entrepreneurial use, art space for artists and classes, and senior services.\textsuperscript{140}

The Trammell Crow Company, a Dallas-based real-estate firm, proposed a 20,000-square-foot YMCA facility surrounded by green space, a 230-unit apartment building with 17 affordable units, 14,000 square feet of retail, and a new 12,000-square-foot Mary’s Center with 88 affordable senior apartments.\textsuperscript{141} The western half of the site would be temporarily converted

\textsuperscript{134} Colleen Cosgriff, “Youth Lead Ivy City Civic Engagement, Call for Crummell Rec Center,” Street Sense, July 27 - August 9, 2016.
\textsuperscript{136} Giambrone, “What Will Become of a Vacant, Century-Old School in Ivy City?”
\textsuperscript{137} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{138} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{139} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{140} Perry-Brown, “The Three Proposals to Transform the Crummell School in Ivy City.”
\textsuperscript{141} Giambrone, “What Will Become of a Vacant, Century-Old School in Ivy City?”
into recreational space during the first development phase.\textsuperscript{142} Additionally, Trammell Crow committed $250,000 to improve a small, nearby park before starting construction.\textsuperscript{143}

Ivy City Partners, consisting of The Jarvis Company, StonebridgeCarras, and Ivy City-based wholesaler ProFish, proposed to restore the school for an estimated $14 million.\textsuperscript{144} Their concept would expand the existing operational space for ProFish.\textsuperscript{145} The District would retain ownership of the site and their proposal called for a garden and working farm around the Crummell School.\textsuperscript{146} The proposal included apartments that have townhouse-style elements, most of which would rent for market rate and several dozen would be affordable.\textsuperscript{147} On the Okie Street NE side of the residences there would be a lobby, storefront space, and restaurant, each about 5,000 square feet.\textsuperscript{148}

On September 22, 2016, the three teams presented their proposals at a community meeting.\textsuperscript{149} There were no handouts given at the meeting and the presentations did not include information on financing; however, there was a question and answer period for attendees to ask questions to the development teams.\textsuperscript{150} On October 11, 2016, the proposals were discussed at the monthly ANC 5D meeting, which is held at the Metropolitan Police Station’s Fifth District Station.\textsuperscript{151} At the meeting, residents spoke poorly of WC Smith, including unsubstantiated claims that they were a slumlord, but highly of their proposal.\textsuperscript{152} Ultimately, the ANC voted 4-2-1 in

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item[142] Giambrone, “What Will Become of a Vacant, Century-Old School in Ivy City?”
\item[143] Ibid.
\item[144] Ibid.
\item[145] Perry-Brown, “The Three Proposals to Transform the Crummell School in Ivy City.”
\item[146] Giambrone, “What Will Become of a Vacant, Century-Old School in Ivy City?”
\item[147] Ibid.
\item[148] Ibid.
\item[150] Norouzi, interview.
\item[152] Ibid.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
favor of issuing a resolution, which stated their rankings of the three proposals as: 1. Ivy City Partners; 2. Trammel Crow, and 3. WC Smith/Crummell School Site Community Redevelopment Team.\textsuperscript{153}

On November 2, 2016 DMPED announced their selection for the Crummell Site development team: Ivy City Partners, consisting of StonebridgeCarras, The Jarvis Company and ProFish.\textsuperscript{154} In total, the project will provide 320 rental units from studios to two-bedroom units, including more than 60 affordable units, 35,000 square feet of industrial space and 22,000 square feet of retail.\textsuperscript{155}

Figure 7: Ivy City Partners Proposal

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{ivy-city-partners-proposal.png}
\caption{Ivy City Partners Proposal}
\end{figure}

Source: Ivy City Partners Crummell School Presentation

Figure 8: Ivy City Partners Proposal – Ground Floor Plan

Source: Ivy City Partners Crummell School Presentation
Just City Analysis

The redevelopment of the Crummell School provides an important case study to critically examine how justice can and should be a guiding principle of planning and if and how it unfolded. Restating the key components of my construct of a just city framework, it includes community knowledge, participation in decision making, equitable outcomes, the evaluation of who dominates and who benefits, bringing non-elite interests to bear on the process, and prioritizing those least able to defend themselves and/or those most disproportionately impacted. This analysis examines the community involvement, decision making, and outcomes of the Crummell School redevelopment process.

Community Involvement and Input

DMPED chose to pilot a new initiative, OurRFP, for the Crummell School site. Yet the announcement of the OurRFP process by DMPED did not include an explanation as to how or why the that site was selected. Interviews with staff members at the Office of Planning and the DMPED indicate an understanding of the preexisting “stickiness” of the site and acrimony between residents and developers.\(^\text{156}\text{,157}\) That is, there appears to have been an earnest, authentic desire to improve the traditional process RFP, which includes no community involvement until after the RFP is issued, through the belief that listening and engagement is valuable and that community input would enhance the RFP. The OurRFP process took more time and resources from DMPED than when traditionally developing a RFP, and in conversations with DMPED staff it appears to be viewed positively; DMPED has continue to use and refine the OurRFP

\(^{156}\) Bird, interview.  
\(^{157}\) Trueblood, interview.
process. Nonetheless, Empower DC considered the process business as usual, and the lack of transparency around why the Crummell School was selected for the OurRFP process may have indicated and reinforced the power of the city government, in contrast with the community. Within the historical context of Ivy City and the imposed power of government intervention, the community may not have felt authentically engaged in the process from the outset.

The OurRFP process included two community meetings prior to issuing the RFP. DMPED conducted more outreach than normal, including going door to door and posting flyers, and Empower DC also spread the word. The consensus between both DMPED and Empower DC was that with approximately 100 in attendance, turnout was good for the first meeting. However, the meeting asked questions such as “What type of retail do you want?” rather than beginning with brainstorming from a blank slate. My intent is not to dissect the participatory planning process; as such, there appear to have been attempts to gain input into the defined project that were broader than those simply required by law. At the same time, the constraints of allowing limited feedback on preselected topics, which, for example, presumed that the site would include retail, may have felt limiting and less democratic to community members.

Moreover, with two meetings that approximately 100-140 people participated in and an online process within a community with potentially low digital literacy and access, the process may not have been representative nor diverse. Nevertheless, while insufficient to remedy structural inequities, participation in and of itself is worthwhile, and ultimately input from the two meetings was included in the RFP itself, which indicated that preference would be given to

---

158 Townley, interview.
159 Norouzi, interview.
160 Norouzi, interview.
161 Townley, interview.
162 Norouzi, interview.
issues that community members raised, including recreation and community uses, job training/workforce development, and small/local business opportunities.

With the strength of community organizing and its infrastructure in Ivy City, it is plausible that participation in the process was enhanced and more diverse. Yet, the OurRFP process did not specifically prioritize those most likely to be disproportionately impacted by the redevelopment of the site, or those least able to defend themselves. Ivy City has experienced rapid change and gentrification over the past several years. Given the subsequently increasing property taxes, history of urban renewal, disinvestment in the Crummell School building, and high rates of poverty and unemployment there may be a greater imbalance in power between long-time Ivy City residents and government. Residents without financial or political capital may be indirectly or directly harmed by the outcomes of a redevelopment process, including displacement, yet the participation and pre-RFP process did not aim to specifically benefit them.

Community Knowledge

Community or institutional knowledge was not explicitly recognized or valued in the OurRFP process. The 2013 feasibility study and proposed plan for the Crummell Site led by community members and Stoiber & Associates were disregarded. Empower DC has been organizing in Ivy City for over 15 years, yet it was not specifically engaged as a stakeholder in the OurRFP process. The institutional knowledge of the Ivy City Civic Association, which has been an organized, neighborhood entity for over 100 years was also not purposely engaged.
Decision Making Process

The RFP itself included input from the community meetings and online portal and indicated which components would ‘short list’ a proposal. However, there was little else included with regards to how proposals would be fully evaluated. In a conversation with Dion Townley, Project Manager for the Crummell School RFP process, he indicated that there is an internal panel for the proposal selection process, which deliberates and makes recommendations. Ultimately, the Deputy Mayor makes the selection, and as is common in procurement practices, it is not policy to disclose the panel’s members. DMPED is required to present proposals to the community and to consider the opinion of the appropriate Advisory Neighborhood Commission (ANC). ANC 5D, which includes Ivy City, voted 4-2-1 in favor of issuing a resolution that ranked the winning proposal first.\(^\text{163}\) It should be noted that this ANC has been specifically documented for its corruption and dysfunction.\(^\text{164}\)

Outcomes

The outcome of the RFP and the opaque evaluation process is critical in analyzing the alignment of this case study with a just city approach. The winning development team, Ivy City Partners, includes two large regional developers StonebridgeCarras and The Jarvis Company, as well as ProFish, a seafood wholesaler with $60 million in annual sales, clearly stands to benefit. Their proposal will more than double ProFish’s operational space.\(^\text{165}\) The community may experience fewer benefits from this expansion; there is no job placement guarantee and a


wholesale business provides few direct amenities or services. The winning proposal does include workforce development training opportunities, including a culinary school, although it also has significantly less affordable housing than each of the other two proposals. The proposal emphasizes a garden and farm for the open space, which may have positive health benefits for residents, but may fail to provide the outdoor play and recreation space that younger residents strongly advocated for. It remains to be determined how the Crummell School itself will be used, so it is difficult to fully compare the outcome with what the community wanted. Perhaps the school will be used for a recreation center or other community services that residents have been seeking to build for years.

Moreover, a stark difference among the three proposals is that the proposal from WC Smith and Empower DC was overwhelmingly led by community members. They held community meetings to craft the proposal and youth were particularly integral in guiding the process. Such a proposal is unique, and it was the first time Empower DC was involved in responding to a RFP. Indeed, this indicates the strength of relationships and the community knowledge that the grassroots organization possessed. Their proposal explicitly included services requested by the community, as well as 100% affordable housing and a community land trust to maintain affordability over the long term.

*Overall OurRFP Analysis*

The process and outcomes of the OurRFP for the Crummell School site fail to meet my construct of justice, which emphasizes inclusionary processes and equitable outcomes. The process failed to proactively include people who may be significantly, disproportionately

166 Ibid.
impacted, the opaque decision making process did not include non-elite voices, and the outcomes favored private interests. The community may experience benefits from the winning proposal, but the development team will benefit disproportionately. After years of disinvestment, Ivy City has high rates of unemployment and poverty and the Crummell Site has sat unused, in disrepair; the winning proposal does not expressly support equitable solutions requested by community members, such as job placement guarantees or affordable housing. By not selecting a proposal that community members directly worked to create, the power of government and private interests is also further delineated. Additionally, community members who contributed to developing the proposal may become further disillusioned by the outcome. The Crummell School site is complex from a land use planning perspective, considering the Comprehensive Plan and current zoning. However, it is public land, which is an important element when considering justice, as arguably it should be for public use and needs. A proposal that mainly serves to expand an existing wholesale business’s operations and develop market rate housing fails to sufficiently address public needs. As Parisa Norouzi, Executive Director of Empower DC, stated, “[Having] input is great, but if it doesn’t influence the outcome—or isn’t directly tied to the outcome—that’s where the disappointment comes in.”

**Recommendations**

In order to move in towards a just city, the Crummell School case study allows for the consideration of modifications to the redevelopment process of public land. One area that could be modified is the process by which proposals are evaluated. A point system or rubric could be

---

167 Fainstein, “Cities and Diversity: Should We Want It? Can We Plan For It?” 9-16.
used to clearly indicate the criteria and how each proposal is weighed. Presently, there is no transparency as to how proposals are weighed and compared with one another. Such a method could require numerous elements of justice, such as to what extent a proposal meets community needs and to what extent those needs were determined, if and how it provides public use, and the examination of the proposed outcomes, considering who benefits and who dominates. This evaluation could provide increased transparency and accountability, better balance the interests of the public, limit elite and private interests, and emphasize equitable outcomes. Required documentation and consideration of such impacts may institute a standardization for the presently ambiguous process, and increased transparency may serve to bring clarity and attention to the justice of the evaluation process.

In addition to the evaluation of proposals is the decision making itself. Certainly, the city desires projects that are financially viable and aligned with the city’s goals. The role of government, DMPED in this case, is to use its expertise to make such determinations. Yet once proposals are considered for their financial viability, the community’s knowledge could be utilized. Indeed, perhaps a more diverse and democratic decision making process could be instituted, such that proposals could be first be evaluated and considered by DMPED for their financial standing and overall alignment with city goals. Proposals that met DMPED’s approval could then be given to the community to make the ultimate decision. This approach could reduce the gap between rhetoric and action and could truly allow non-elite groups and individuals influence, not just in discussions, but in structural decision making.

Similarly, entities or people that may be significantly or disproportionately impacted and/or those least able to defend themselves could be proactively and deliberately included early in the process. This could include involvement in early meetings and negotiations, as well as
identifying issues and alternatives. Such involvement could allow those most impacted to help shape the goals for the public land and provide an accountability mechanism for the redevelopment process. This may validate and affirm the expertise and knowledge of community members, ensure a more representative process, and bring non-elite interests to bear on a planning and decision making process.

The Crummell School redevelopment process is unique in that a viable, community-led proposal was developed and submitted. Community-led solutions such as theirs could become more conventional with capacity building support and resources such as educational sessions, connections to lending institutions, developers and architects, and support from community organizers.

---

Conclusion

A commitment to justice within planning for public land will require intentional, deliberate actions. A dramatic shift in political consciousness and dismantling of existing power structures may be one theoretical approach to a just city. Yet as Susan Fainstein advances, more incremental steps may shift the planning field towards justice as a guiding principle. The OurRFP enabled community members to help shape the request for proposals and not merely respond to proposed plans, and as a result, within the context of a well-connected community due to decades of organizing, the planning process was improved. Yet, participation alone is insufficient; the process, decision making, and outcomes could be modified to better contribute to the definition and framework of a just city that I have advanced. Moreover, a viable, community-designed proposal that included community needs and equitable solutions was proposed and not selected, which speaks to the need for the application of my proposed just city framework. I believe that planners must pursue justice, and within existing economic and political realities, the application of the just city framework provides a rich opportunity to challenge us to better incorporate justice within the planning process and the outcomes it unveils.
Bibliography


Cosgriff, Colleen. “Youth Lead Ivy City Civic Engagement, Call for Crummell Rec Center.” *Street Sense*, July 27 - August 9, 2016.


https://www.neighborhoodinfodc.org/censustract10/Nbr_prof_trct130.html


