

Ivy City Human Development Project

Sue Allen, November 2024

i Historical Context.

In October 1976 the Institute of Cultural Affairs (ICA) launched one of its 24 Human Development Projects (one for every time zone around the world) in Ivy City, Washington, D. C. This small urban community had suffered severe economic and social difficulties. Nevertheless, there were indicators that many Ivy City residents were ready for profound social and economic change in their small urban neighborhood. The ICA began its work with the intention of assisting the residents to realize their vision to restore the community to its historical vitality as well as provide a sign to other communities around the globe that such change is possible (see [Ivy City HDP Consult document](#), Prolegomena, p.1).

Ivy City is a small neighborhood in Northwest Washington D. C. in the United States. About half of the neighborhood is industrial or formerly industrial. Much of the community is dominated by warehouses. This [Oral History Project](#) details Ivy City's history from its beginnings until 2009:

- In 1873 Ivy City was designated to be a suburban development for working class Black citizens. At the time of Ivy City's founding the acres of ground outside of the original federal city designed by Pierre L'Enfant, were open and sparsely developed. Early maps show only tracks of ground named for landowners, and a Baltimore & Ohio Railroad line.
- A Georgetown lawyer, Frederick W. Jones, established the Ivy City community and laid out the streets of the neighborhood, along with 205 building lots which were offered at \$100.00 apiece. (See Ivy City Neighborhood Oral History project above, provided by courtesy of Empower DC).
- Development of the community was slow, especially in the city's provision of public utilities to the neighborhood. From 1879 to 1901 the neighborhood hosted the Ivy City racetrack, a horse racing site.
- Construction of a rail yard began in 1907 and was completed within a year. The economic status of Ivy City fluctuated with the economic success of the railroads. After World War II, U. S. rail travel suffered terrible declines due to the rise of the commercial airline industry and the Interstate Highway System. Many of the railroad system facilities were demolished in 1953 and 1954 as railroads switched from coal-fired locomotives to diesel-fuel or electric trains.
- Alexander Crummell School, a community focal point, was built between 1910 and 1911. As built in 1911, it was an early extensible six-classroom building, and the addition of a second story at the rear of the building, built according to the original plans, followed in 1932. The school was named in honor of Alexander Crummell, the noted African American clergyman, activist, educator, and founder of the American Negro Academy. For decades the school served to educate children, kindergarten through sixth grade. It also served as a meeting space for community gatherings. In 1972, the school was closed due to decreased enrollment.

- Rapid social and economic decline ensued in the 1960's and 1970's.
- On June 5, 1976, a one-day community forum called Town Meeting '76 was held in Ivy City. (See Town Meeting 76 Document). Thirty of the 100 Town Meeting attendees formed the Ivy City Human Development Club. They met weekly to carry out the proposals described in the [Town Meeting document](#).

II The ICA Consultation October 10-16, 1976

Four months after the Town Meeting, a one-week Human Development Consult was scheduled for Ivy City. Two hundred eighty-five participated fulltime with an additional 400 Ivy City residents involved through the fieldwork contacts.

During the 6-day consult, ICA staff, volunteers and community residents worked together to formulate the [HDP Consult Document](#), a comprehensive four-year plan of Ivy City. They explored the following topics:

- The Operating Vision (Pages 11-16 in the Consultation Document)
- The Underlying Contradictions to the Vision (Pages 17-28 in the Consultation Document)
- The Practical Proposals to address the Contradictions (Pages 29-44 in the Consultation Document)
- The Tactical Systems to Implement the Proposals (Pages 45-71 in the Consultation Document)

III The Early Years of Implementation: 1976 – 1980

The final task of the Consult was to organize the Tactical Systems into 13 Actuating Programs. The Programs provided several functions in that they supplied a broad cost analysis of the project, a phasing design for implementation, and rationale for an essential support network. (See Actuating Programs Pages 71-102 in the Consultation Document)

The 13 Actuating programs included:

- | | |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| I Early Learning Center | VIII Elders Engagement Association |
| II Vocational Skills Academy | IX Light Industries Complex |
| III Adult Training Institute | X Business Expansion Enterprises |
| IV Health Services Outpost | XI Neighborhood Beautification League |
| V Public Safety Network | XII Youth Mobilization Corps |
| VI Community Culture Project | XIII Community Housing Cooperative |
| VII Ivy City Community Center | |

The community leadership, local residents and ICA staff hit the ground running in the autumn of 1976 to implement the plans designed in the 13 Actuating Programs. Over the next four years, due to the hard work and determination of the community, much progress was achieved. The following links give a direct view of what was accomplished in the four years of the project:

- The [Ivy City Voice](#) was the Ivy City monthly newsletter
- The Ivy City Showcase for the Future pictures the community guilds
- [First Anniversary Celebration](#) and Ivy City on the Move, October 1977
- [Ivy City Accomplishments](#), 1977=1978
- [Ivy City Report](#), July 4, 1979 and [June 1980](#)
- [Four Year Summary](#), January 1981

IV Post ICA Presence in Ivy City

In 1980 The ICA completed its four-year commitment to implement the 1976 plan. However, the community did not give up their determination to meet the challenges to keep the vision of Ivy City on the Move alive. Much has been done with the help of various efforts of organizations like [Empower DC](#). To continue being an example of what it means to enliven a sense of community, the following are current goals of the community:

- Economic Sustainability – Over the years businesses have moved into Ivy City, with the hopes of boosting the local economy.
- Affordable Housing
- Confronting environmental Injustice (See People Rising, YouTube, April 28, 2023)
- Protecting Historical Root of Ivy City’s heart though Alexander Crummell School Site (See Alexander Crummell School with Empower DC, YouTube, 5/27/2022)
- Reclaiming Green Space for Ivy City