

TJS

<b>FROM</b>	NAME & TITLE	THOMAS J. STOSUR, DIRECTOR
	AGENCY NAME & ADDRESS	DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING 8 <sup>TH</sup> FLOOR, 417 EAST FAYETTE STREET
	SUBJECT	CITY COUNCIL BILL #11-0001 /BALTIMORE CITY LANDMARK LIST- OLD DUNBAR HIGH SCHOOL

CITY of  
BALTIMORE  
**MEMO**



**TO** The Honorable President and  
Members of the City Council  
City Hall, Room 400  
100 North Holliday Street

DATE: February 24, 2012

At its regular meeting of February 23, 2012, the Planning Commission considered City Council Bill #11-0001, for the purpose of designating the Old Dunbar High School located at 500 North Caroline Street as a Commission for Historic Architectural Preservation (CHAP) Landmark.

In its consideration of this Bill, the Planning Commission reviewed the attached staff report which recommended an amendment to and approval of City Council Bill #11-0001 and adopted the following resolution; seven members being present (seven in favor).

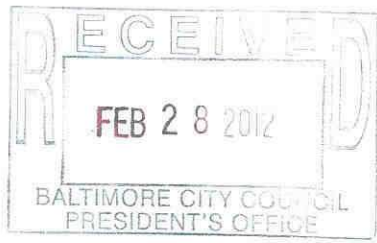
RESOLVED, That the Planning Commission concurs with the recommendation of its departmental staff, and recommends that City Council Bill #11-0001 be amended and passed by the City Council.

If you have any questions, please contact Mr. Wolde Ararsa, Division Chief, Land Use and Urban Design Division at 410-396-4488.

TJS/WA

Attachment

- cc: Ms. Kaliopé Parthemos, Deputy Mayor
- Mr. Peter O'Malley, Chief of Staff
- Ms. Angela Gibson, Mayor's Office
- The Honorable Rochelle "Rikki" Spector, Council Rep. to Planning Commission
- Mr. David Tanner, BMZA
- Mr. Geoffrey Veale, Zoning Administration
- Mr. Nicholas Blendy, DHCD
- Ms. Barbara Zektick, DOT
- Ms. Karen Randle, Council Services
- Ms. Elena DiPietro, Law Dept.
- Mr. Paul Barnes, DGS
- Ms. Kathleen Kotarba, Chief, CHAP



F/A



Stephanie Rawlings-Blake  
Mayor

## PLANNING COMMISSION

Wilbur E. "Bill" Cunningham, Chairman

### STAFF REPORT



Thomas J. Stosur  
Director

February 23, 2012

**REQUEST:** City Council Bill #11-0001 / Baltimore City Landmark List – Old Dunbar High School

**RECOMMENDATION:** Approval subject to amending the bill text to read as follows:  
“FOR the purpose of designating Old Dunbar High School, 540 North Caroline Street, as a historical landmark.”

**STAFF:** Melvin Hicks

**PETITIONER(s):** President Young and City Councilmembers: Mosby, Cole, Scott, Henry, Branch, Clarke, Curran, Holton, Kraft, Middleton, Reisinger, Spector, Welch and Stokes & The Commission for Historical and Architectural Preservation (CHAP)

**OWNER:** Baltimore City Public School System (BCPSS)

#### **SITE/GENERAL AREA**

**Site Conditions:** The property is improved with a four-story multi-colored brick and concrete, L-shaped Art Deco building. There is a paved parking lot and grass area in the rear of the building.

**General Area:** The old Dunbar High School is located at 540 North Caroline St, and sits at the southwestern corner of the intersection of Caroline and McElderry Streets.

#### **HISTORY**

There are no previous legislative or Planning Commission actions regarding this site.

#### **CONFORMITY TO PLANS**

This action is consistent with the City of Baltimore's Comprehensive Master Plan, with respect to protecting and enhancing the preservation of Baltimore's historic buildings and neighborhoods.

#### **ANALYSIS**

The Paul Laurence Dunbar School has a long history as an elementary, junior high, and high school for African American students in East Baltimore. A school for African Americans was first established in 1890, when a white school at Caroline and Jefferson Streets was turned over for African American students. Named “Colored Annex School No. 2,” the school was intended to serve students from primary, grammar, and high schools, though appears to have only served



as a primary school. Originally constructed in 1855 for white students, this school served African Americans for 25 years.

Due to the tireless efforts of community members, particularly the Colored Citizens Equitable Improvement Association in East Baltimore, a new school was constructed in the same block in 1916. Public School No. 101 was named for Paul Laurence Dunbar, the seminal African American poet. It was exclusively an elementary school until 1925, when it expanded to include a junior high school, the first for African Americans in Baltimore City. By 1930, it was the largest school in East Baltimore, according to the Afro-American, which likely spurred the need for a new building.

In 1931, a new Art Deco school building was constructed at the corner of Caroline and McElderry Streets. Opened February 1, 1932, the new Dunbar Junior High School, PS 133, was praised by the Board of School Commissioners of Baltimore City as being a “building which exemplifies utility as well as beauty and simplicity of design”. It became the second African American High school in the city. The school began awarding diplomas in 1938. For over 35 years, students attended Dunbar for junior and senior high school.

Due to several factors, including the fact that the school served as a junior and senior high, a general lack of schools for African Americans in Baltimore City, followed by the economic crunch of World War II, Dunbar quickly exceeded maximum capacity. This was temporarily remedied by the installation of portable classrooms in the school yard in 1939, which by 1944, were in extremely poor condition and causing health problems to the students and teachers alike. The School Board’s heightened awareness of the overcrowding at Dunbar also led to a new addition at Dunbar. Bids for proposals were sought in 1948, and the addition was completed October 18, 1950. Only part of this addition still exists – the South Addition, located on the Caroline St. wing.

The Art Deco building was phased out of use as Dunbar High School when the current Dunbar High School was constructed on Orleans Street in 1974. Despite Equitable Improvement Association and Student Committee on Racial Equality (S.C.O.R.E.) push for a new building, the community still valued PS 133. The school played a critical role for the children who attended that school for junior and senior high between 1932 and 1974, but it also served the larger community in a variety of ways. It was one of the few recreational facilities in East Baltimore open to African Americans during segregation, used by children and adults alike. It was the site of professional concerts and plays open to the community, dances for service members in World War II, women’s teas, statewide educational meetings, evening study centers for students, and more. The school provided free public baths to children in the 1930s, part of a city-wide effort in the early 20th century in parts of Baltimore with older housing stock that lacked modern plumbing. During the Great Depression, Dunbar, along with other African American schools that had vocational shops, repaired broken or discarded toys so that they could be given to children for Christmas. Dunbar was a critical part of the community in East Baltimore. Of the three original African American High School buildings in Baltimore City – Frederick Douglass High School, Paul Laurence Dunbar High School, and Carver Vocational Technical High School – only the Dunbar building is still used as a school. The original Carver building was demolished, and the original Frederick Douglass building is no longer used as a school.

Many great leaders in Baltimore City, Maryland, and the United States at large were part of the Dunbar community, as faculty, staff, and students. Dunbar provided a quality education to generations of students, and nurtured their talents in other ways as well, through the arts, sports, and various other extra-curricular activities. Dunbar has shaped alumni that are exceptionally civically-engaged, with many serving as lawyers, judges, doctors, and elected officials at all levels of government. Countless other graduates of Dunbar have been leaders in the civic, business, and sports communities. Dunbar is an important site in Baltimore's history, both for its striking architectural heritage, but equally for its important role as the site of community empowerment and a hard-won quality education for African Americans, bearing the legacy from the late 19th century to the present day.

Staff has notified the following of this action: City Council President, City Council Representative, Baltimore City Public School System (BCPSS), NAF High School, The Dunbar Alumni Association, Inc., Baltimore Heritage, Baltimore AIA Chapter, Baltimore City Historical Society, Preservation Maryland, Sojourner-Douglass College / Change4Real and East Baltimore Community Corporation, Inc.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Thomas J. Stosur". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name and title.

**Thomas J. Stosur**  
**Director**