Preservation Chicago Unveils the 2014 Chicago 7 Most Threatened...

Francis Scott Key Public School
517 N. Parkside

OVERVIEW:
The Francis Scott Key Public School, designed by Dwight Perkins, was among the nearly 50 schools that were closed by the Chicago Public Schools in 2013. Key is one of the schools in a high state of preservation and designed by a noted architect that is now vacant and lacks a new use plan.

HISTORY:
The site that now houses Francis Scott Key Elementary School was first the site of the original North School built what was historically in the suburb of Austin in 1872. Key was built in 1907 and designed by Dwight Perkins when he was the chief architect of the Chicago Public Schools. This building is an early example of Perkins' work.

The building is adjacent to the historic Austin Town Hall and park and located within a short distance of many Chicago landmarks including those by Frederick Schock on Midway Park. Key's design features elements of Chicago School and Prairie design and is in an area of Austin abounding in works by noted architects like Frank Lloyd Wright.

THREAT:
Austin is an area of the city that currently suffers from substantial disinvestment. The neighborhood’s orange-rated Brach’s Candy Factory,
Chicago 7: Francis Scott Key Public School

once among the area's largest employers, is currently under demolition and many noted historic buildings have languished in recent years.

In May of 2013, the Chicago Board of Education announced that it was closing 49 of its schools, the largest single wave of closings in the history of the United States. Key was one of those school buildings and is threatened due to an abundance of vacant structures nearby and the close proximity of other schools. Chicago Public Schools is currently evaluating options for some of the closed buildings but it's uncertain what future options, if any, are available for Key. CPS has mentioned in their preliminary reports that some of these buildings may be demolished and now that Key is vacant we would want to encourage a re-use of the building for the community and city.