National Capital Planning Commission

401 9th Street, NW North Lobby, Suite 500 Washington, DC 20004 Tel 202.482.7200 Fax 202.482.7272 www.ncpc.gov

IN REPLY REFER TO:
NCPC FILE No. 7610

September 17, 2014

Dear Interested Party:

The District of Columbia Public Library (DC Library) is proposing to renovate and rehabilitate the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial (MLK) Library located at 901 G Street, NW, Washington, DC. The proposed project is subject to the review of the National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC) under the National Capital Planning Act. NCPC will serve as the lead federal agency and work in cooperation with the District of Columbia Public Library (DCPL) to prepare an Environmental Assessment (EA) to analyze the environmental impacts of a range of alternatives, in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA); the Council on Environmental Quality's Regulations of Implementing NEPA (40 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] 1500-1508); and the NCPC's Environmental and Historic Preservation Policies and Procedures. Concurrently, NCPC will conduct consultation under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA).

The purpose of the proposed project is to rehabilitate and modernize the MLK Library to provide a world-class and sustainable central city library. The project is needed because deferred maintenance has resulted in deficient building systems that do not meet current standards. Completed in 1972, the building's major systems, including heating, cooling, plumbing, electrical, and elevators are outdated and need to be replaced. In addition, egress is inadequate and hazardous materials are present throughout the building and require remediation.

The project is also needed to meet the expectations of modern day library users and establish a truly 21st century central library for the District of Columbia. As the methods in which people use public libraries to navigate complex networks of information and convert that information into knowledge evolve, libraries have to adapt their operations and services accordingly. The DCPL has determined the following to be requirements of a 21st century central library:

- Open floor plan that includes clear and well defined horizontal and vertical circulation;
- Flexible interior and exterior spaces that promote collaboration and innovation, and that enhances library programming;
- Destination spaces distributed throughout the facility to promote user movement; and
- Connectivity to the city visually.

To meet the above purpose and need and ensure the long-term viability of the MLK Library, the project may include the construction of additional space for non-library uses through the use of a public-private partnership.

The DCPL has developed the programming for the library and proposes the following to renovate the building: rehabilitate the building's exterior and interior landmarked spaces; enhance the exterior plaza and public space; introduce a mix of uses; improve accessibility and visibility throughout the building; upgrade existing systems; and address the needs of the neighborhood, residents, and visitors.

The following three alternative concepts in addition to the no-action alternative will be analyzed in the EA:

- Rehabilitation with 5th floor curvilinear roof design
- Rehabilitation with 5th floor orthogonal roof design
- Rehabilitation with 5th floor roof design and three story addition

NEPA requires a public process for determining the scope of issues to be addressed and for identifying potential significant issues related to the proposed project. Issues under NEPA are concerns associated with impacts from current environmental conditions and operations, as well as concerns that may arise from the implementation of the proposed project.

The purpose of this letter is to notify members of the community, local and federal agencies, and other stakeholders of an opportunity to assist NCPC and the DCPL in identifying potential environmental issues. Your participation in this process is greatly appreciated. NCPC and the DCPL will accept comments concerning the scope of issues to address in the EA until October 31, 2014. Interested parties are also invited to participate in accordance with Section 106 of the NHPA. Comments received during the scoping period will be used to refine the alternatives and inform the EA analysis.

A public scoping meeting will be held on October 7, 2014, from 6:30 pm until 8:30 pm at the MLK Library located at 901 G Street, NW, Washington, DC. This public scoping meeting will be an "open house" format and will include a brief presentation at the start of the meeting. The presentation will start promptly at 7:00 pm and will include a discussion of the purpose and need of the project, proposed project alternatives, and issues to be analyzed in the EA.

Comments can also be submitted electronically on NCPC's website at www.ncpc.gov under the public participation tab. Written comments may be mailed or e-mailed to:

Ms. Jennifer Hirsch
National Capital Planning Commission
401 9th Street, NW
North Lobby, Suite 500
Washington, DC 20004
jennifer.hirsch@ncpc.gov

If you have any questions or need additional information, please do not hesitate to contact Jennifer Hirsch at jennifer.hirsch@ncpc.gov.

Sincerely,

// ORIGINAL SIGNED //

Marcel Acosta
Executive Director
National Capital Planning Commission