

Meeting Minutes

FROM: EHT Traceries
SUBJECT: MLK Jr. Library Renovation
Section 106 Consulting Party Meeting #3
DATE: July 14, 2015

The following minutes represent comments received during the third Section 106 consulting party meeting for the MLK Jr. Library Renovation.

Attendees*

DC Public Library (DCPL)	Richard Reyes-Gavilan Joi Mecks Manya Shorr	Jonathan Butler Martha Saccocio George Williams
National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC)	Jennifer Hirsch	
DC State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO)	Anne Brockett	
Mecanoo Architects (MA)	Francine Houben	Sofia Pereira
Martinez + Johnson (MJ)	Georgina Sperber	Tom Johnson
Jair Lynch Development Partners	Joshua Firebaugh	
EHT Traceries (EHT)	Emily Eig Bill Marzella	Kimberly DeMuro
Stantec	Liz Estes	Laura Cooper
Commission of Fine Arts (CFA)	Thomas Luebke	F.J. Lindstrom
ANC 2C01	John Tinpe	
Penn Quarter Neighborhood Association (PQ)	Jo-Ann Neuhaus	
DCPL Federation of Friends	Susan Haight	
MLK Library Friends	Robin Diener	
Brookfield Properties	Anne Clinton	
Downtown BID	Gerry Widdicombe	
Glover Park Group	Lisa Miller	
Turner Construction Company	Jeff Burnham	Tom Sawyer
Gilbane Building Company	Clare Archer	
The InTowner	Anthony Harvey	
Additional	David Edwards	

* This list includes attendees who signed the sign-in sheet or were otherwise noted

Presentation

1. NCPC introduced the project and provided a brief description of the Section 106 process.
2. DCPL discussed the program and vision for MLK Library, including the commemoration of Dr. King.
3. NCPC reviewed the meeting agenda, presented the process flowchart, and discussed comments received at the November 2014 Consulting Party Meeting.
4. EHT presented the Historic Structure Report and the updated NEPA Alternatives to be analyzed in the Environmental Assessment.
5. MJ presented the existing building and glazing conditions
6. MA presented the preferred alternative design
7. EHT reviewed the Area of Potential Effect (APE) and criteria of adverse effect, including examples of adverse effects
8. EHT presented the character-defining features of MLK that would be potentially adversely affected from the proposed undertaking.
9. EHT invited questions and discussion.

Discussion

1. David Edwards is concerned with the physical presence and representation of Martin Luther King, Jr. within the renovated library. He feels that more emphasis needs to be put on artwork than programming.
 - a. He also reintroduced his idea of incorporating the Edmund Pettus Bridge and/or the Ebenezer Baptist Church podium into the design of the building.
 - b. DCPL (Richard Reyes-Gavilan) responded that commemoration is of concern for DCPL. DCPL hopes to bring Dr. King to life through programming in addition to a possible exhibit, the details of which were still under development.
 - c. Mr. Edwards asked DCPL to explain programming.
 - d. DCPL responded that DCPL would like to employ a Dr. King scholar who would utilize existing collections to make Dr. King's and Civil Rights history more accessible to the public. However, all the details of programming have not been developed. Commented that currently DCPL was concerned with working through the regulatory process, but would work on program planning in the future.
2. SHPO (Anne Brockett) agreed with Mr. Edwards that commemoration of Dr. King should be incorporated into the plan. Indicated that perhaps it could take the form of a mitigation measure if there are any adverse effects to the building, and that these commemorative elements should be a part of the current review.
 - a. Asked if the Advisory Council of Historic Preservation (ACHP) had been contacted.
 - b. NCPC stated that ACHP had not yet been contacted, that both ACHP and SHPO would be notified in writing when a Determination of Effect had been formally completed.
 - c. NCPC agreed that commemoration could be a topic for discussion regarding mitigation for any adverse effects.
 - d. SHPO asked what the pivoting door material is.
 - e. MA (Francine Houben) stated it was undecided.
 - f. SHPO asked if the café would be connected to exterior seating.
 - g. MA responded yes.
 - h. SHPO asked for clarification that there would be new doors on the building's exterior for this purpose and if a new egress was necessary for the proposed stairwell.
 - i. EHT (Bill Marzella) stated that there were existing doorways in some of those locations.
3. MLK Friends (Robin Diener) stated that the legacy of Dr. King was not the original focus of the design, but that it was now. Recommended that a committee, sub-committee or some other sort of advisory group be appointed for commemorative designs.

- a. Ms. Diener mentioned earlier plans from the second consulting party meeting, asking about the design alternative with light wells, stated she previously believed the commemorative bridge could have been incorporated but based on the preferred alternative design presented today that it could not, and asked about marble being incorporated into the design.
 - b. Ms. Diener also asked how the preferred alternative design was reached. Upon review of the design alternative B.3, asked for clarification of the presence of light wells.
 - c. EHT Tracerics responded that two smaller courtyards were incorporated into B.3, so the planned large auditorium could be maintained.
 - d. DCPL stated that the rationale for the chosen preferred alternative was threefold: CFA had previously mentioned that the addition should be distinct and not appear to be an original portion of the building; that it meet the library's needs; and that the design will be approvable for the historic structure.
4. Mr. Edwards continued the discussion of his opposition of programming being used as a substitute for commemorative pieces of art.
 5. The InTowner (Anthony Harvey) brought up Mexico City's memorialization of the 1968 Tlatelolco Massacre, which took the form of a neon monument on the foreign affairs building. Went on to comment that the exterior of the MLK Jr. Memorial Library said nothing about Dr. King, and should.
 - a. Stated that activity is vital for a destination building in an urban city, and asked how the library's philosophy was being transmitted to its interior design.
 - b. DCPL stated that the design of the building was for the people and not for formats. The hope is to create something that won't be outdated in five years and will offer what other libraries offer. The library hopes to double the amount of visitors per day. Stated that designing for the people is the focus while other things can take a backseat in the philosophy. Stated that it is exciting to discuss and develop the spirit of the program.
 6. Downtown BID (Gerry Widdicombe) stated that the group was supportive of the library's goals and programs. Stated that the library should be bright, flexible and welcoming, and noted it is located in the best downtown location.
 - a. In support of the increase of useable public space – a projected increase of sixty-three percent, creation of the first floor café with seating, open stairwells, creation of a meeting space within the current loading dock, removal of a selection of exterior brick walls, a change in the sidewalk material, creation of the roof deck, and the incorporation of a piece of exterior sculpture.
 7. CFA (Thomas Luebke) began his comments by saying that the Commission was scheduled to review the project within the next few days.
 - a. Identified the challenge of keeping a functioning library, which would contribute to the city, and commemorate Dr. King.
 - b. Complemented the extremely responsive efforts made by the DCPL and NCPC during this regulatory process.
 - c. Noted that it was tempting to improve on what might have been, but it was important to remember the history we have been handed and that it was important that this existing history be honored.
 - d. Remarked it was important that one understands three things when the building is entered: people, Dr. King, and the way in which one moves around the building.
 - e. Held that the preferred alternative aligned with preservation principles.
 8. Penn Quarter Neighborhood Association (Jo-Ann Neuhaus) was in support of the removal of the Ninth Street wall and the creation of an outdoor café. Paraphrased Jane Jacobs by saying that cafes put eyes on the street. Recognized that this change would cause damage to the building's historic fabric, but felt it was necessary to help the city and society.
 9. SHPO called for the quantification of historic material to be removed, to be illustrated with demolition plans.
 - a. NCPC responded that this quantification had not yet been completed, but could be created with the architect.

- b. SHPO mentioned MA's comment about retention of the core wall, which could be a mitigation measure.
 - c. SHPO also asked how the new Historic Structures Report (HSR) would be different than the library's approved existing guidelines.
 - d. EHT (Emily Eig) responded that the HSR would be a more complete document, a compendium of all of the information that has been collected up to this point. The document would provide more insight, including existing conditions, and the manner in which to remediate existing issues. Stated that the existing guidelines would be referenced, but that they were written with the intention of maintenance of the existing building, as opposed to the new HSR, which will be more forward thinking.
10. MLK Friends commented that the project could be summarized in two words: Books and Bricks. Ms. Diener went on to state she teaches adult literacy and the people she teaches think the existing library looks like a prison, and that these people are the people the library has to reach. The building has to be made more welcoming and accessible.
- a. Ms. Diener commented that she was open to the introduction of new technology within the building, but felt that a grand reading room, and not the planned auditorium, should be constructed on the fourth and fifth floors, stressing that the pride of place within the library should be put to books. Voiced concern over the accessibility of this area during an event and if the staircases and elevators would have enough capacity for events. Supported the creation of an auditorium space on the first floor in place of the existing loading dock which would be accessible to everyone.
 - b. DCPL commented that there was a lot of discussion on this issue. The proposed use on the fourth and fifth floors would create a level of continuity, and that people would not have to be moved around the building, interrupting normal operations. Also preferred that storage was below grade. Stated that these comments did not mean disagreement with Ms. Diener's opinion, but served as an explanation of the thought process for the proposed use. DCPL referenced how the New York Public Library handled events. DCPL explained their desire to create a destination on the fourth and fifth floors, and held that the staircases and elevators would provide enough access for this purpose.

Conclusion and Next Steps

The meeting closed by noting the project would be presented to CFA on Thursday (7/16) and to HPRB on the following Thursday (7/23). The fourth consulting party meeting would be held in the fall and would focus on mitigation. The presentation given at the third consulting party meeting was to be posted on NCPC's website and a link to the website would be on DCPL's website. Public comment on the project and material presented would be taken until July 28, 2015.

Additional Comments

See enclosed.

Minutes prepared by Bill Marzella & Kimberly De Muro, EHT Traceries, July 15, 2015 (revised August 11, 2015)

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE



August 12, 2015

Ms. Jennifer Hirsch
National Capital Planning Commission
401 9th Street NW, Suite 500
Washington, DC 20004

Re: Martin Luther King Jr Memorial Library, Section 106 Consulting Party Meeting 2 Comments

Dear Ms. Hirsch:

The District of Columbia State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) offers the following comments on materials distributed in conjunction with the Section 106 Consulting Party Meeting held on July 14, 2015 for the renovation of the Martin Luther King Jr Memorial Library. The Library, including the first floor public spaces, was designated a D.C. Landmark in 2007 and was subsequently listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

We are pleased to see the development of revised Alternative B.2 for the roof addition, which offers a more successful approach to the Miesian symmetry of the building without being replicative. The modifications to the proposal have limited the amount of demolition to the façade and stair core walls and have kept much of the new construction within the vertical circulation cores.

While overall effects have been reduced through these changes, we agree with the potential adverse effects identified at the meeting, including effects to the building's form and massing, interior circulation pattern, and loss of fabric through removals of the roof, site walls, plaza paving, interior center core walls, rear lobby wall, and vestibule walls. We do not agree that the enclosure of the rear loading dock would have an adverse effect in and of itself; however, connecting the space to the library via new door openings in the lobby wall would affect the historic lobby. We seek further information on the effects to reading rooms (if any) and to original furnishings, built-in amenities, and equipment (i.e. the central information desk, built in desk along the rear lobby wall, book dumbwaiters, phone booths, water fountains, elevator cabs, etc.).

As the project evolves, the SHPO looks forward to a thoughtful exploration of ways to continue to avoid and/or minimize effects. To that end, we recommend leaving intact some of the center core walls on the upper floors, some of the original stairwells and handrails, the vestibule walls except the center recessed area, and more of the rear lobby wall where the pivoting doors are proposed.

To further evaluate adverse effects and develop mitigative actions commensurate with those effects, it would be helpful to quantify the amount of historic fabric removal and the changes to the library's character through more detailed demolition and construction plans.

Please note that the project was reviewed on July 23, 2015 by the District of Columbia Historic Preservation Review Board (HPRB), under the city's Historic Landmark and Historic District Protection Act of 1978 (D.C. Law 2-144, as amended). At that public meeting, the HPRB approved the project in concept.

The SHPO looks forward to continued consultation on this important project. If you should have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Anne Brockett at anne.brockett@dc.gov or 202-442-8842. Thank you for providing this office the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brockett", enclosed in a thin black rectangular border.

Anne O. Brockett
Architectural Historian

From: [Peter kouRIBA](#)
To: [Hirsch, Jennifer](#)
Subject: NCPC Website Email
Date: Monday, July 20, 2015 9:29:03 AM

Thank you for the open discussion opportunity for the MLK Library project.
I confine my views on the historic context in the urban setting and continue to insist that Mies himself saw this building one or two storey higher in the same cladding treatment.

From: [Peter Kou RIBA](#)
To: [Hirsch, Jennifer](#)
Subject: NCPC Website Email
Date: Monday, July 20, 2015 9:38:03 AM

Further to my comment on Mies' original vision for his building, the ground floor could be opened up more if not completely, to provide urban public spaces to liven up the neighbourhood with weekly markets stalls, food and cafe and other activities under cover.

To honor the memory of the great architect, the hard landscape for this big covered space could, say, detailed to the footprint of the Barcelona Pavilion. in other words, the project architect might have to be the interpreter of Mies rather than of his own ego!!!!

From: [Peter Kou RIBA](#)
To: [Hirsch, Jennifer](#)
Subject: NCPC Website Email
Date: Monday, July 20, 2015 9:46:45 AM

This landscaping ideas for the roof and the terrace would seem a high cost item for maintenance and underused facilities.

Elevator motor rooms, air handling plant rooms seem to be missing. A more realistic approach would be to integrate solar collectors, winter garden, greenhouse landscaped reading spaces