

IN REPLY REFER TO:
NCPC File No. 7610

December 2, 2015

Mr. John M. Fowler
Executive Director
Advisory Council on Historic Preservation
401 F Street, NW, Suite 308
Washington, DC 20001-2637

RE: Notification of Adverse Effect Determination for the Rehabilitation and Modernization of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Library

Dear Mr. Fowler:

On behalf of the National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC) and in accordance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), I am writing to document our determination of adverse effect for the rehabilitation and modernization of the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Library (MLK Library), located at 901 G Street, NW in Washington, DC. The District of Columbia Public Library (DCPL) is proposing the project and will submit the project plans for NCPC's review in 2016. The project is subject to the review of NCPC under the National Capital Planning Act of 1952. An approval action by NCPC is an undertaking subject to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) of 1966, as amended, 54 USC § 300101 and its implementing regulations, 36 CFR § 800. Therefore, NCPC is responsible for Section 106 compliance for the proposed project as the District of Columbia government is not a federal agency and is not independently required to fulfill the requirements of Section 106 consultation. We are forwarding our determination of effect and the documentation required by 36 CFR § 800.11(e) for your review and comment. The documentation has also been submitted to the DC State Historic Preservation Office (DCHPO) and posted on NCPC's website for the consulting parties to review.

MLK Library was listed in the DC Inventory of Historic Sites and the National Register of Historic Places in 2007. Constructed between 1969 and 1972, MLK Library is glass-and-steel-clad building that serves as the main branch of the District of Columbia's public library system. The building was among the last works of legendary Modernist architect Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, who died in 1969 before the building was completed. It was also his only executed library design. Four stories tall with a recessed, first-story loggia, the building is characteristic of Mies' work, which distilled architecture into its essential components of structure and envelope. In 1971, the library board voted to dedicate the building in the memory of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., as the first memorial to the assassinated civil rights leader in the District of Columbia. The building's landmark designation extends to its principal interior public spaces on the first floor.

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The purpose of the proposed project is to rehabilitate and modernize MLK Library to provide a world-class and sustainable central library for the District of Columbia. The project includes the construction of a fifth-floor addition and alterations to the building and site, including: remediation of the exterior envelope and glazing; reconfiguration of the building interior to introduce a new library program; enhancement of the exterior plaza and public space; improvement of accessibility and visibility throughout the building; and upgrading of building systems and equipment. The proposed project seeks to reinvigorate the interior and exterior spaces of MLK Library while preserving its significant architectural character and features. The project is described in greater detail in the enclosed assessment of effects report and also includes the project drawings.

NCPC initiated consultation with the DCHPO and other consulting parties regarding the MLK Library project on September 17, 2014. NCPC hosted several consulting party meetings in 2014 and 2015 to discuss the project and its potential to cause effects on historic properties within the identified area of potential effects (APE). Details of the meetings and consulting party comments are described in the enclosed report. Based on the consultation as well as the analysis in the enclosed assessment of effects report, NCPC has determined that the rehabilitation and modernization of MLK Library will have an adverse effect on historic properties, specifically the MLK Library building and site. NCPC has determined that there would be no adverse effect to all other historic properties located in the APE. In accordance with 36 CFR § 800.6(a)(1), we are notifying you of our adverse effect determination and request that the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation determine its participation in the development of a memorandum of agreement (MOA) to resolve these effects to historic properties. NCPC plans to work with DCPL, DCHPO, and the consulting parties to identify minimization and mitigation measures to include in the MOA.

Thank you for your assistance in this Section 106 consultation and we look forward to receiving your response. If you have any questions, please contact Jennifer Hirsch at (202) 482-7239 or jennifer.hirsch@ncpc.gov.

Sincerely,

//ORIGINAL SIGNED//

Marcel C. Acosta
Executive Director

Enclosure

cc: Christopher Wilson, Program Analyst, Advisory Council on Historic Preservation
Richard Reyes-Gavilan, Executive Director, District of Columbia Public Library