IN REPLY REFER TO:
NCPC File No. 7610

December 2, 2015

Mr. David Maloney
State Historic Preservation Officer
for the District of Columbia
1100 4th Street, SW
Suite E650
Washington, DC 20024
Attn: Anne Brockett

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

Dear Mr. Maloney:

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. An approval action by NCPC is an undertaking subject to Section 106 of the 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.

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.

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.

Since initiating Section 106 consultation on the MLK Library project in September 2014, NCPC hosted several consulting party meetings to discuss the project and its potential to cause effects on historic properties within the identified area of potential effects (APE). 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. We have enclosed an assessment of effects report that details our finding and includes the documentation required by 36 CFR § 800.11(e). To resolve the adverse effects associated with the project, NCPC intends to pursue the negotiation and execution of a memorandum of agreement (MOA). NCPC will 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 comments and working towards the negotiation of a memorandum of agreement. The assessment of effects report will also be posted to NCPC’s website and available for the consulting parties to review and comment. 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: Richard Reyes-Gavilan, Executive Director, District of Columbia Public Library