

## Meeting Minutes

**FROM:** EHT Traceries  
**SUBJECT:** MLK Jr. Library Rehabilitation and Modernization  
Section 106 Consulting Party Meeting #5  
**DATE:** August 24, 2016

The following minutes represent comments received during the fifth Section 106 consulting party meeting for the MLK Jr. Memorial Library Rehabilitation and Modernization.

### Attendees\*

DC Public Library (DCPL)	Richard Reyes-Gavilan Rauzia Ally	Martha Saccocio Joi Mecks
National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC)	Jennifer Hirsch	Diane Sullivan
DC State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO)	Anne Brockett	David Maloney
Martinez + Johnson (MJA)	Tom Johnson	Steven Jensen
Mecanoo	Sebastian Kaal	Ruben van der Plas
Jair Lynch Development Partners	James Fennelly	
EHT Traceries (EHT)	Bill Marzella Anna Dubansky	Emily Eig Alyssa Stein
Stantec	Liz Estes	
Commission of Fine Arts (CFA)	F.J. Lindstrom	Sarah Batcheler
District Department of Transportation	Jonathan Rogers	
Penn Quarter Neighborhood Association (PQ)	Jo-Ann Neuhaus	
MLK Library Advisory Panel	Barb Reck	Susan Haight
MLK Library Friends	Robin Diener Wendy Blair	Mary Alice Levine
Committee of 100	Stuart Gosswein	
DC Preservation League	Rebecca Miller	
National Trust for Historic Preservation (NTHP)	Elizabeth Merritt	
DC Fire and EMS Department	Tony Falwell	Lewis Carter
Additional	Bill Rice Martha Loga	Mark Jenkins

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

## Presentation

1. NCPC opened the meeting and invited attendees to introduce themselves.
2. DCPL thanked the consulting parties, especially the MLK Library Advisory Panel, for their participation and commitment to the process.
3. NCPC reviewed the meeting agenda and purpose of the meeting, which was to review the specific changes to the design since the December 2015 consulting party meeting and May 2016 email update, as well as to present the stipulations of the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA).
  - a. NCPC reviewed the Section 106 and agency review schedule.
4. NCPC reviewed comments given by consulting parties following the December meeting and May email update. The comments received were focused on three topic areas: exterior building and site design, interior design, and design approach and library program.
5. MJA presented updates to the interior, exterior, and site design, specifically the following: exterior curtain wall, east ramp and plaza, G Street plaza, vestibule and cores, Great Hall, Digital Commons, upper floor corridor walls, and auditorium accessibility and circulation.
  - a. MJA noted that several areas of consulting party comments would be addressed through the MOA.
6. DCPL described the ideological approach to the distribution of program elements throughout the building, noting considerations such as passive or active, quiet or loud, and public or private spaces.
  - a. DCPL also discussed how the development of the library program was the result of a prolonged public outreach program that collected thousands of comments.
7. EHT presented the scope of the Historic Structure Report (HSR), intended both to guide building treatment and also to replace the Design Guidelines, which were not intended to address a comprehensive rehabilitation. EHT noted that conflicts between the recommended preservation treatments and the proposed project necessitated an MOA and mitigation actions.
  - a. EHT also stated that the HSR would be shared with the review agencies and consulting parties in the near future.
8. NCPC presented an overview of the MOA, including determination of adverse effect, minimization and avoidance measures, and signatories.
  - a. NCPC discussed two stipulations of the MOA in detail: topics for additional design consultation and mitigation.

## Discussion

### *During Presentation:*

1. MLK Friends (Robin Diener) stated it was extremely helpful to have a presentation of the various design elements. She requested additional information for the reasoning behind locating the auditorium on the fourth and fifth floors.
  - a. MJA responded that, from an architectural perspective, that area was identified as the most conducive to the needs of a two-story auditorium, including both its column-free nature and the ability to span two floors vertically. MJA added that the breakout and pre/post-event spaces would benefit from a direct connection to the roof terrace.
2. The DC Preservation League (Rebecca Miller) asked what percentage of original building material was being removed.
  - a. MJA and EHT responded that, although an exact percentage had not been quantified, demolition floor plans had been included in the Assessment of Effects Report (December 2015) and a reasonably accurate understanding of the amount of demolition could be gained from reviewing those drawings.
3. CFA (Sarah Batcheler) stated that a complete set of floor plans would be helpful for understanding the proposed changes.

- a. MJA responded that floor plans were available in the project plans attached to the MOA.
4. MLK Friends (Wendy Blair) questioned the safety of the roof terrace, including the height and setback of the perimeter railings.
  - a. DCPL and MJA responded that the railing surrounding the roof terrace was designed to meet building codes and minimize visibility from the street, including a five-foot setback from the roof edge. MJA noted that similar conditions could be found on buildings throughout the city. DCPL added that the roof terrace would be supervised by DCPL staff during hours of library operation.
5. PQ (Jo-Ann Neuhaus) asked where the ANC and similar meetings would occur.
  - a. DCPL responded that there would be a dedicated conference center for these and similar uses.
6. MLK Friends (Wendy Blair) expressed concern that the King/van der Rohe exhibit required by the MOA would be perfunctory. She expressed hope that it will be an exciting and engaging exhibit.
  - a. DCPL responded that it was committed to creating an exciting and appropriate exhibit.
  - b. PQ (Jo-Ann Neuhaus) stated that her interpretation of the terms of the MOA was that the exhibit would remain static over time. DCPL and NCPC responded that the terms of the MOA required that the exhibit remain permanently in the building, but that individual components could be updated over time.
7. Bill Rice expressed concern over the plans for the Washingtoniana Collection in the interim library, and requested that DCPL form a working group to discuss the issue.
  - a. DCPL stated that those specific plans remained under development and would be addressed in a different venue. DCPL added that they would conduct additional public outreach as they finalized plans for the interim library. DCPL also stated that they would publicly present the final plans for the MLK Library rehabilitation and modernization at the completion of the entitlement review process.
8. MLK Friends (Robin Diener) asked if natural light was an environmental resource. She reiterated her preference for a reading room on the top floor to take advantage of natural light, rather than an auditorium in that location.
  - a. NCPC responded that light could be an environmental resource, but for this specific project, there were not anticipated to be impacts on light or the availability of light. The proposed adult reading room on the third floor is located on the east side of the building along an exterior wall and natural light should be plentiful.
9. The DC Preservation League (Rebecca Miller) reviewed the list of mitigation items and noted that most elements focused on interpretation and documentation rather than a specific treatment of historic features.
  - a. NCPC agreed that much of the mitigation was related to interpretation or documentation, but also noted that the library would be rehabilitating and reusing some of the original furniture.
  - b. NCPC also highlighted DCPL's commitment to accommodate the archaeological collection in the library building as a significant component of mitigation that the SHPO specifically requested.
10. SHPO (David Maloney) noted that the architectural salvage component of mitigation would be more appropriately categorized as a minimization action. He continued to say that he was not objecting to the specific mitigation actions, and that he could not overemphasize the importance of accommodating the DC archaeological collections in the building.
11. MLK Friends (Wendy Blair) and PQ (Jo-Ann Neuhaus) discussed the design of the core stairways. Both noted that the renderings made it difficult to understand the appearance and character of the stairs.
  - a. The Committee of 100 (Stuart Gosswein) stated that the stairs appeared to be a sculptural element rather than a staircase. MJA responded that the stairs were conceived as an element to be differentiated from the Mies van der Rohe design vocabulary.
  - b. MLK Friends (Robin Diener) later questioned the visibility of people using the stairs. MJA responded that the stair design had evolved to respond to earlier comments, including the use of an open railing to increase visibility.
12. CFA (Sarah Batcheler) expressed confusion over the purpose of the meeting.
  - a. NCPC responded that, per the introductory comments, the purpose was to present specific design items in response to consulting party comments. EHT added that a more comprehensive

- understanding of the project and associated avoidance and minimization measures were documented in the MOA.
13. SHPO (David Maloney) offered support for the stair and core design and provided a discussion of the evolution of the design, which included a balance of retaining building fabric, promoting visibility, and preserving the volumetric nature of the cores.
    - a. He added that the D.C. preservation law requires the SHPO to consider alterations that encourage adaptation for contemporary use in addition to preservation of historic resources, and stated that the proposed project met this test.

## **Conclusion and Next Steps**

NCPC and DCPL thanked the consulting parties for attending and participating in the discussion. The meeting closed by noting the project would be presented to NCPC and CFA at their upcoming fall meetings. The comment period for the Environmental Assessment, MOA, and consulting party meeting materials would remain open until September 6, 2016. NCPC stated that presentation would be posted on NCPC's website within the next few days.

*Minutes prepared by Bill Marzella, EHT Tracerics, August 26, 2016 (revised September 7, 2016)*