

DC Archives Facility Timeline ¹ ²

1985 - June. DC Law 6-19, At the urging of Philip Ogilvie, the DC Council passed the District of Columbia Public Records Management Act which established the DC Office of Public Records (OPR) Archival Administration, and Library of Governmental Information within the Office of the Secretary. Ogilvie served as its first administrator.

1986 - Mayor's Order 86-28 creates OPR.

1989 - DC Archives facility opens. Located at 1300 Naylor Place, NW, the building was formerly the Talley Ho Stables built in 1889.



2003 - December. *Washington Post* article, "City's Records Center Compiles a History of Neglect," written by Sewell Chan.

- *It's tragic that the city government allows an archives with such a minuscule level of support to keep it going, said Timothy L. Ericson of the University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee.*
- *Archival records preserve people's rights: voting rights, property rights. They document marriage, educational achievements, all sorts of things that are important to people in their everyday life.*
- *Sherryl Hobbs Newman, who since April has supervised the archives as the secretary of the District, said the archives have not been a priority and "absolutely" need more staff and money.*

¹ Note: Cited works are often excerpted. See source links for full citations.

² References are a work in progress. Where they are not readily available on DC.gov, they'll be on the FODCA site.

2003 - December. Prompted by the *Post* article, Society of American Archivists writes Mayor Williams about the deplorable conditions of the DC Archives. Saying:

- *The records and archives of the District of Columbia are essential to the proper functioning of its government and to the protection of its citizens. It is disheartening that this symbol of home rule and civic pride is being left to rot—and that future generations will be robbed of the knowledge of their heritage and the proud history of the District of Columbia.*
- *On behalf of the Society of American Archivists, we sincerely hope that you and the members of the City Council will take steps to ensure that the DC Archives receives the funding that it needs to survive, and that work begins at once to save these records from loss.*

2003 - December. Stephen McShane, President Midwest Archives Conference also wrote Mayor Williams noting:

- *There is a short, but effective motto among archivists, curators, librarians, and persons simply concerned about our nation's documentary heritage: "No records—no history." One might add a corollary for municipalities: "No records—no protection from liability and costly storage rental fees." From fiscal, legal, and historical points of view, operating a professionally administered records center/archives makes sense. I hope you and the DC City Council will find the funds necessary to create such a program in the District of Columbia. Present and future generations will thank you for it.*

2012 - June The National Endowment for the Humanities funded a Preservation Needs Assessment of the facility. [Source: Hartman-Cox Programming Appendix C.](#) The report made numerous recommendations to improve the facility's operation including the need for additional staff. It did not address long term requirements or strategies.

2013 - August. The FY 2014 budget submitted to Congress includes \$44.5 Million for an "Archives Building comparable to state archives in managing their historical records."

2014 - April. Friends of DC Archives organized.

2014 May. FODCA's Trudy Peterson and DC Secretary Cynthia Brock-Smith appear on WAMU's [Kojo Nnamdi show](#). Brock Smith described the housing of DC's Records:

- *We have over 200,000 cubic feet of records. And they are stored in more than 20 locations around the region, primarily at the facility at Naylor Court, 1300 Naylor Court. We have our historical archives with about 50,000 cubic feet of records. We have another 150,000 cubic feet of records at the National -- Washington National Record Center in Suitland, run by the National Archives. And various agencies have used various private storage areas around the region for their records. And we are trying to consolidate all of those into one facility.*

2014 -December. Mayor Bowser requests and Council approves transfer of \$600,000 of new facility's capital budget from the Office of Secretary to the Office of the Chief Technology Officer to *“support the development of an IT system to be used by the Office of the Secretary, Office of Public Records, as that office prepares to move into a new archives facility.”*

2014 - May. FY2015 Budget. Councilmember Kenyan McDuffie, chair of the Government Operations Committee, recommends reducing the budget for the DC Archives. Although he agreed that the construction of the new facility was essential, he did not believe that the necessary planning had taken place.

2014 August. Hunter Vision Report. Briefly reviewed the decentralized nature of DC's holdings noting the need for a definitive survey. Called for a modern, adequate facility. He warned that the city archives were in a crisis and that the District could not put off building a new facility as it had done 10 years before. Source: Hartman-Cox Programming Appendix D

2014 - December. The FY 2015 budget submitted to Congress included \$40 Million for the construction of a new D.C. Archives, a \$5.1 Million reduction from FY 2014.

2015 - January. Department of General Services (DGS) issues RFP for AndE services for new Archives facility.

2015 - July. Mayor Bowser announces DGS' selected Hartman-Cox to design the new archives facility including several proposed locations:

- *The selection of Hartman-Cox Architects and EYP of Washington, DC will allow us to continue to move forward with the design of the new Archives building, a facility that holds some of our most treasured historical documents. I look forward to seeing the designs unveiled as we continue this exciting journey that all of our residents can benefit from,” Mayor Bowser said.*
- *The proposed 90,000 square-foot facility will provide the Archives with record storage space, preservation labs, research, exhibits, and space for public service functions.*
- *The new Archives building will be designed to achieve, at a minimum, LEED–Gold Certification.”*

2015 - December. Hartman-Cox issues Preliminary Programming Report recommended a 135,000 gross square foot facility. Construction costs would be \$62 Million and a total cost of \$75 Million.

The report made several recommendations:

- *Further survey work and appraisal is needed in order to finalize designs for storage spaces and shelving systems.*
- *In order to be of value for the design process, this survey work needs to be performed by a qualified archival appraising firm or by trained records management personnel.*
- *DC needs to allocate temporary resources to OPR to undertake this process. OPR does not have the space, staff, or other necessary resources to complete this work.*
- *Move Planning:*
 - *Peer institutions report that the move planning process can take between 2 and 3 years, and that's from institutions that had a stronger baseline handle on their holdings and operations.*
 - *We recommend that the City engage a move consultant as soon as possible.*
- *Site Selection:*
 - * *In order for the programming process to be completed and design to begin, the City needs to establish the site.*
 - * *We recommend engaging the AE team to assist with identification of other candidate sites and to determine the necessary scope for a detailed conditions assessment, feasibility study, and test fit for the existing building, or buildings, being considered.*

2015 - May. The Administration, in cooperation with FDCA, held a public forum to discuss the needs of the new DC Archives.

2015 - November. Councilmember Grosso writes DGS asking questions about OCTO \$600,000 status, Naylor Court's repair status and eventual disposition.

2015 - December. DGS Acting Director Weaver replies to Grosso:

With respect to the OCTO funds, Weaver contradicts the Mayor's reprogramming request:

- *Regarding the archival management system, this is more relevant to the DC Archives and the Office of Public Records day-to-day processes and is **not part of the capital construction** that DGS will spearhead. [Emphasis added].*

2016 May. Hartman-Cox review Naylor Court facility. The report covered potential post archives' land use.

2016 - June. FY2017. Capital Budget for new facility increased to \$84 Million. Request states that the funding will allow the:

- *Archives to relocate to a site that meets several criteria outlined in a report commissioned by the Department of General Services, which found that the preferred alternative would be a stand-alone, purpose-built, new facility requiring approximately 135,000 gross building square feet. The Archives building is to be a mix of high-quality, environmentally controlled storage space, and several thousand square feet of space for the public to access the Archives, office space, and meeting space.*

2016 - September. Hartman-Cox does preliminary site evaluation of 1220 W Street, NE - Lemuel Penn Center. The site was too small for the project.

2017 - July. FY2018 Archives Capital budget sets the appropriation at \$81.3 Million. Other than \$1 Million for project planning in prior years, the project has no proposed activity until FY2020.

2018 - FY2019 Archives capital budget identical to the year before.

2018 - December. OPR & UDC CO-LOCATION FEASIBILITY STUDY.

- *“Representatives from UDC’s administration and the OPR project team began serious discussion about the plausibility of co-location during the Spring of 2018 resulting in a Memorandum of Agreement between The Office of the Secretary of the District of Columbia and the University of the District of Columbia in Support of the Possible Siting of the New Archives / Office of Public Records (MOA) executed on July 2, 2018. Concurrent with the MOA discussions, and in anticipation of the July 2, 2018 agreement, the DC Department of General Services (DGS) engaged the Hartman-Cox Architects with EYP team on May 21, 2018 to formally study the feasibility and cost ramifications of the co-location scenarios identified in the MOA.” P. 4*

SOW modified to make the new facility meet current funding as opposed to archival program’s requirements:

- *“The design team met with the Office of the Senior Advisor on September 13, 2018 to present the draft report of Study Cases 1-3 as outlined in the MOA. Following the discussions, which included the review of the budget projections, the project team was asked to set aside the MOA criteria and to consider a scheme that could potentially be implemented within the limits of the capital funding that the City has already allocated for this project. “P18.*

2018 - March. FODCA members meeting with Councilmember Todd on new facility. He suggests a commission to look at the entirety of DC’s archival holdings with recommendations to the Council for a comprehensive plan.

2018 - June. Bill 22-842, the "Commission on Archives and Record Management Act of 2018, was introduced by Councilmember Brandon Todd. It would establish the Commission on Archives and Records Management to advise and make recommendations to the Mayor, the Council, and the public on the management of public records and for the collection, custody, and preservation of the official records, documents, and publications of the District of Columbia.

2018 - September. Committee on Government Operations Hearing. Fynnette Eaton, interim Chair FODCA and Dr. Trudy Huskamp Peterson and Carl Bergman presented its position noting:

- *To be more specific, we see the commission as an opportunity to bring the now separate records of the DC courts, schools, police and fire, transportation, the Council and the independent agencies into a central preservation and record management regime. For example, the commission could examine locating all DC Archives in one place as Maryland and Virginia do and almost every other state does.*
- *“Under such a scheme, the archives would be responsible for managing records in all forms, both paper and electronic, including audio or video audiovisual, as well as architectural drawings and plans.*

At the hearing, Dr. Peterson’s testimony noted the critical role that an archives can play:

- *On September 19 the Arthur Capper Senior Center caught on fire, with a tragic loss of life avoided but raising many questions about the building and its safety. Let us look where records relevant to the fire are located in the DC government.*
- *1. Permission to build the building and the plans for it would be in the records of DCRA, the Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs. Because the building was built 10 years ago, the submission by the builder might be paper plans; today it would be an electronic file. The file would include architectural and engineering drawings and the decision of DCRA on the application.*
- *2. If the building required zoning relief, the records of the hearing on the zoning would be in the records of the Board of Zoning Adjustment or the Zoning Commission. Those hearings are televised, so the records would be both the paper record of the hearing and the decision and the video recording of the hearing.*
- *3. The building would have been inspected prior to occupancy. The inspection records should also be in DCRA.*
- *4. The Fire Department has records of routine maintenance inspections of all buildings, including annual license renewal inspections for select occupancies such as the senior Center.*
- *5. DC Health has the records of all persons working at the facility with social work licenses.*
- *6. During the fire, records (electronic, audiovisual, perhaps paper) were created by the Fire Department and the Police Department.*
- *7. Also during the fire, the Mayor's Office and the office of Councilmember Allen were alerted, probably first by text or phone, then by regular reports. These records are in those two official offices.*

- 8. *The Council may decide to hold a hearing on the fire. These hearing records would include the video of the session, electronic and paper submissions, and background materials in the offices of the Members.*
- 9. *If in the future a lawsuit is filed over the fire, those records would be in the DC court system, with electronic, audiovisual, and paper evidence likely, plus the records of the hearing and the organization of it.*
- *In short, every physical type of records (paper, electronic including text and email, audiovisual, architectural and engineering drawings) from all parts of the government would be involved in unraveling the story of the fire. From the Mayor and Council, to the administrative offices, the fire and police, and possibly the courts, all those records need to be managed under a public, coherent, effective regime. Such a regulatory framework does not at present exist.*
- *This bill provides for a Commission to consider the preservation, protection, and public availability of the records of the District of Columbia. Now, 45 years after Home Rule, the District needs to put its records in order, acting like the records-rich world capitol it is and not like an archivally - blighted community. Now, more than ever.*

2018 - September. At the bill's hearing, District's Secretary objected to the commission's makeup preferring just a reestablishment of the moribund State Historic Records Board.

2018 - November. Todd's Government Operations Committee acceded to OS' bill changes but kept planning requirements. As reported out to the Council, which approved it unanimously, the bill amended the District of Columbia Public Records Management Act of 1985, established the District Historical Records Advisory Board ("DHRAB").

The DHRAB serves as the State Historical Records Advisory Board and was tasked with developing a Public Records and Archives Action Plan to provide recommendations for the management, custody, and preservation of public records of historical value to the District of Columbia.

The bill also set out the DHRAB's membership, which shall consist of 13 voting members appointed by the Mayor. The Office of Public Records within the Office of the Secretary of the District of Columbia shall provide administrative and staff support to the DHRAB.

The original Todd bill provided for several governmental representatives. The DHRAB as requested by the OS, has only public members.

2018 - November. DHRAB Funding. The CFO estimated the bill's fiscal impact:

- *Funds are not sufficient in the fiscal year 2019 through 2022 budget and financial plan to implement the bill. The bill will cost \$196,780 in fiscal year 2019 and \$846,710 over the four-year financial plan.*

- *The Office of Public Records (Office) in the Office of the Secretary will need additional funds to hire one Archivist to assist and implement the recommendations of DHRAB. The Office will also need to hire a Program Analyst to conduct best practice research, conduct interviews, and to publish a Public Records and Archives Action Plan. The Office will need additional non-personal services funds to purchase computers and materials needed to support the functions of DHRAB. Additionally, DHRAB will need funding to conduct community events required in the bill and to publish the action plan in fiscal year 2022. In total, the Office will need \$196,780 in fiscal year 2019 and \$846,710 over the four- year financial plan.*

Importantly, the CFO's finding that "Funds are not sufficient," means the DHRAB could not begin operations, that is, its provisions were termed "*subject to appropriation.*"

2018 - December. UDC leases, plans to buy 4250 Connecticut Ave. NW. The purchase would allow UDC to vacate UDC Building 41 for the Archives.



UDC Building 41

2019 - January. Mayor signs DHRAB Bill, DC Act 22-0600.

2019 - March. FY2020 Budget. Mayor submits FY2020 budget. DHRAB not mentioned nor funded.

Archives facility budget set at \$73.2 Million, an \$8.1 Million reduction. The reduction is not explained. In three fiscal years, the capital budget for the new facility dropped \$11 Million.

2019 - May. Kimberly Bassett confirmed as new DC Secretary.

2019 - June. FY2020 Budget. Council approves FY2020 budget including UDC's purchase of 4250 Connecticut Ave. NW. However, the budget contained no funding for the DHRAB.

2019 - August. FODCA meets with Beverly Perry, Senior Advisor to the Mayor and Secretary Bassett on UDC Archives location and DHRAB function. FODCA offers to provide nationally known persons who could lead or aid in DHRAB planning. OS does not follow up offer.

2019 - July. FODCA suggests letter from Councilmember Todd to Secretary Bassett for DHRAB funding. Todd sends letter September 12 suggesting three ways to fund the board:

- *Budget Amendment. The Mayor could request, and the council could add funding to the FY2020 budget. Similarly, a supplemental budget could fund it for this fiscal year.*
- *Reprogramming. The mayor could move funds from one or more other programs to your office. This is similar to the transfer of \$600,00 from DGS to OCTO for the new archives' data system. At \$200,000, the transfer would not require council approval.*
- *IntraDistrict Agreement. The Department of General Services, which is vested with building the new archival facility, could use its archive facility capital funds to contract with your office for the DHRAB and its study.*
- *As Secretary of the District of Columbia, I will defer to your judgment and expertise as to which of these three solutions you believe to be most attainable.*

2019 October. Secretary Bassett replies to Todd's July letter. Response does not mention DHRAB's funding.

2019 - October. Kimberly Bender and Neil Flanagan write *Post OP Ed* "D.C. Archives is a vital resource for the District. The city must save it."

- *Millions of documents that tell more than 200 years of D.C.'s history fester in a converted stable without appropriate climate control or space for researchers. Even as Maryland has carefully catalogued the heritage records stored in its state archives, the D.C. Archives has never been given enough money even to determine what sits on its shelves. And while Virginia entrusts its history to a well-funded agency run by an independent board, the D.C. Archives is lost in the government's organization chart. By finally funding and restructuring the D.C. Archives, Mayor Muriel E. Bowser (D) and the D.C. Council could show that the District's history is as worthy as that of its neighbors.*
- *The dire state of the D.C. Archives means some files are physically unavailable, while others have never been catalogued and more might fall apart before anyone can see them. How much is hidden in the decaying building in a Shaw alley?*
- *As part of D.C.'s most recent budget, Bowser and the D.C. Council committed funds for a new D.C. Archives facility at the University of the District of Columbia. That is a good first step, but*

a new building alone will not bring D.C.'s archives to the level of those in states or even midsize municipalities. And though the storage of old paper on new shelves in a climate-controlled environment will help preserve them physically, it will not make them accessible.

- The mayor and the council need to provide the D.C. Archives with the same baseline support that all other professional archives receive across the country and around the world: proper operational funding. This money would pay archivists to do the painstaking work of organizing and protecting physical documents so the information they convey will survive long into the future.*
- The D.C. Archives should also be made independent for the same reasons Congress gave the D.C. Public Library autonomy: to insulate it from politics and ensure that experts in the field will keep it well run and relevant to the public. This method of organization has proved successful for state archives from Alabama to Pennsylvania.*