

Dr. Lopez D. Matthews, Jr.
State Archivist and Public Records Administrator
DC Office of Public Records and Archives
1350 Pennsylvania Ave., NW, Suite 419
Washington, DC 20004
Sent via email: lopez.matthews@dc.gov

September 30, 2022

RE: Draft Hartman-Cox/EYP programming report

Dear Dr. Matthews:

Thank you very much for making the report available for public comments and for the deadline extension. I'm submitting comments on behalf of the Friends of the DC Archives, a group of archivists, records managers, and other engaged citizens who advocate for the DC Archives, founded in 2014. Our goals are:

- Upgrading the physical plant and increasing the staff at the current Archives at Naylor Court.
- Creating a new state-of-the-art Archives for the District.
- Supporting the OPR staff in preparing to move to the new facility and strengthening DC's records management program, including the electronic records management component.

Our comments relate to the following eight areas: Current and future staffing at the OPR; Electronic records processing and storage; Training spaces for DC records management program; Conservation labs; Instruction spaces; UDC co-location, synergies, and agreement; Move preparation and need to fund a full records survey; and community engagement and input into the planning process.

1) Current and future staffing at the OPR

OPR has five employees (direct reporting), plus one on detail. Under your leadership the current staffing is being expanded to eight, including one additional professional archivist. While we applaud the expansion, the current staffing level is well below the staffing at comparable state archives. For example, the Maryland State Archives – which manages a volume of records comparable to what DC is expected to manage – has a staff of 75, including 5 FTEs dedicated to records management. The Virginia State Archives has 51 FTEs, including 10.5 FTE dedicated to records management.

How will the OPR project staff develop in the next two decades and beyond? If OPR will increase its staff to 20 FTEs, a minimum level, how will this staff be accommodated especially since the staff space has been reduced from 12,947 sq feet to 8,220 SF, that's minus 4,727 (calculation by Carl Bergman).

2) Electronic records processing and storage

While the development of an electronic records management program for the city is a programming concern rather than a strictly architectural problem, it does impact the design of the new building. What plans are there to survey the city's electronic records?

Where will the city's electronic records management program and processing space be located? Does the new space account for storing electronic records locally and not only in the cloud?

Is there sufficient space in the 400 SF electronic records processing area for these functions:

- Accommodate forensic workstations and staff?
- Manage legacy electronic records?
- Will the space be dedicated to scanning and printing that's part of the research center's function?
- Will it also serve as the staff's workspace?
- Will it provide enough space to house state-of-the-art scanning equipment, such as overhead scanners operated by OPR staff?

3) Training spaces for DC records management program

One key function of OPR is to provide oversight of the city's records management program. This oversight requires extensive training of records management liaisons for DC agencies, including independent agencies.

Are you planning records manager training at the new site? If so, is the one multipurpose room sufficient to accommodate these sessions? Or should there be a dedicated training area? This space could also serve as a disaster training location for the city agencies.

4) Conservation labs

We applaud the vision for a consolidated conservation lab for UDC and the OPR. Are there any plans to create a shared conservation lab, including the MLK Jr. Library as well?

5) Instruction spaces

While the multi-use meeting space will accommodate meetings of different sizes, are there plans of adding at least one, if not more, areas dedicated to instruction to the new space? For example, there is no plan for an instruction area adjacent to the research area. Is that correct? However, instruction for K12-through college, including courses in primary source and information literacy, will be a key component of any future programming. It is also one way to leverage co-location with UDC.

6) UDC synergies and agreements

We believe that the co-location with UDC offers many advantages and opportunities. When will the agreement with UDC be finalized? Will the DC Law School also be part of the agreement, including the Law School archives (f.e., the Edgar Cahn papers)?

7) Move preparation, program scope, and funding for full records survey

The Archives facility's capital budget justification, approved by the Mayor and Council, states this:

The new archival facility will address the records center storage needs of the District and provide a facility that meets the standards for records centers. It will consolidate current collections in one location and anticipate ongoing needs for space and support services.

In order to implement this goal, it is vital to survey the city's records currently stored at Naylor Court and at least 13 off-site locations, including records that have not yet been appraised yet. We commend the initiative to survey all the records being held by DC. This is long overdue and necessary for a through planning process. When do you project the survey will be finished? How will you integrate the survey's findings with the programming process? Does the survey also include a survey of the city's electronic records?

It will be necessary to hire additional staff to support the preparation of the move, including preparing shelf lists for both facilities and labelling and housing archival materials. The complexity of the move will also require extra staff who will be coordinating the logistics. What additional resources does the OPR need in order to prepare for the move? How committed is the city in providing these resources to OPR? Will the OPR hire additional staff to support the preparation of the move, including preparing shelf lists for both facilities and labelling and housing archival materials? Will there be sufficient staff to coordinate the complexity of the move?

8) Comment and community engagement process

We appreciate the opportunity to comment on the draft programming report and the deadline extension. How will the community engagement process be organized in the coming year? How will key stakeholders be involved, including the People's Archive at the MLK Jr. Library, NARA, and other local archives and stakeholders who also hold some of the city's official records or papers from DC politicians, such as the SCRC at Gelman Library and the Moorland-Spingarn Research Center?

Thank you for your leadership and for your consideration of our comments.

On behalf of the Friends of the DC Archives,



Katharina Hering, president, FDCA

Friends of the DC Archives

Follow us on Twitter: @FDCArchives

"Like" us on Facebook: Friends of the DC Archives

<https://www.dcarechives.org>

Email FDCA: friendsofdcarechives@gmail.com