

**Friends of the DC Archives**  
**Testimony Before the**  
**Committee on Executive Administration and Labor**  
**Performance Oversight Hearing**  
*on the*  
**Office of the Secretary of the District of Columbia**  
Friday, February 10, 2023, at 9:30 AM

My name is Carl Bergman, and I am testifying for the Friends of the DC Archives (FDCA). Formed nine years ago, FDCA members are professional archivists and concerned citizens. We are interested in preserving and managing DC's records and archives. We have three major areas of concern:

- Increasing the Office of Public Records staff.
- Facility development and operation of the new DC Archives; and
- A comprehensive records management system for the DC Government.

As the committee is aware, the District needs a modern Archives facility. For years, finding a location for it made slow progress. That problem was resolved by a site on the UDC campus.

The new facility's operations also benefited from the Council's creation of the Archives Advisory Group. Its reports clarify many issues and provide the Council with sound policy recommendations.

There has also been significant progress on the facility's design. In December, Hartman-Cox, the Office of Secretary, and DGS' archives consultant released the first [Concept Design](#) for the facility. For the first time, we have an idea of the Archive's sitting, what it will look like, its floor layouts, and its main systems.

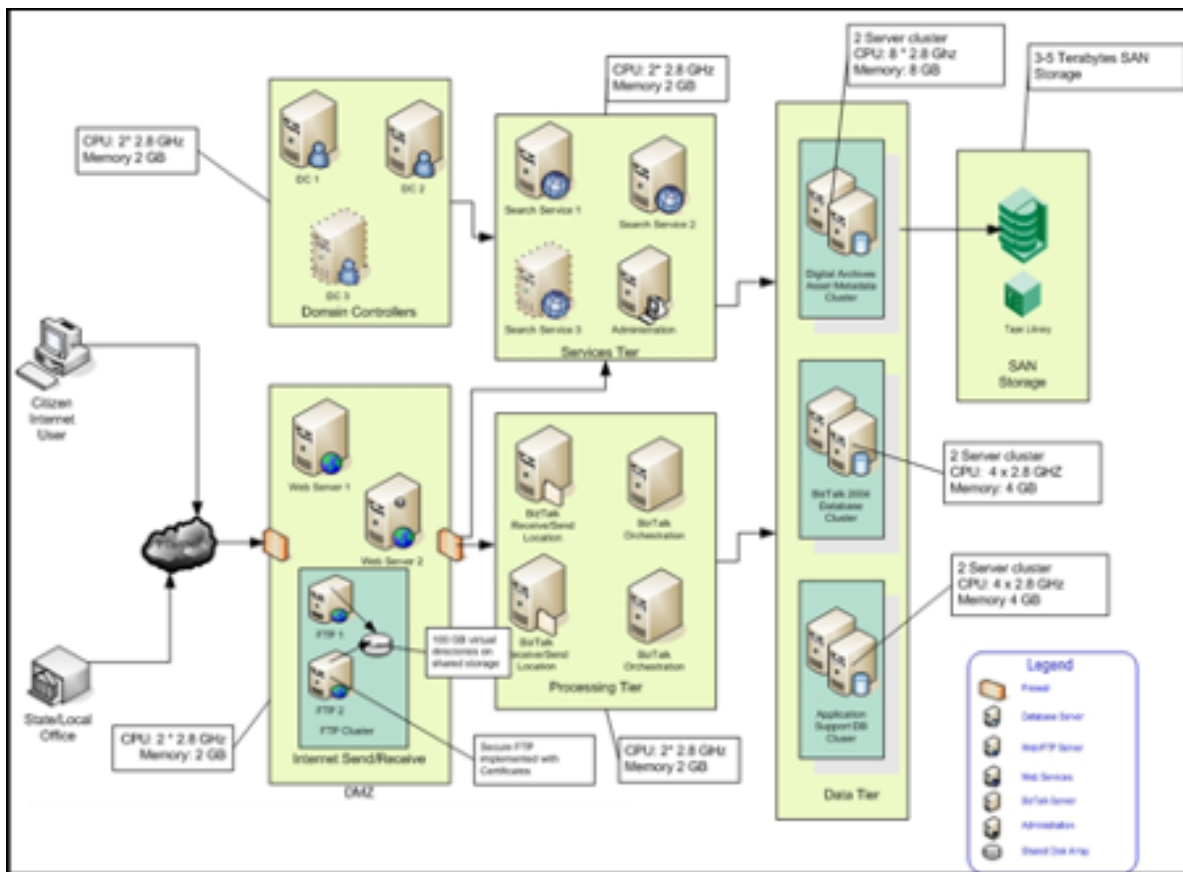
The design represents a prodigious amount of work. While I am concerned about one major aspect of the design, I recognize the great effort that went into the design. Below is an example of the Design's first floor.



The issue I want to address is how the concept treats digital records. Digital records have come to predominate both the private and public sectors. They have grown in kind and volume in ways that were not easily predicted. For example, five years ago, no one would have predicted how ubiquitous police body cam videos would become. Yet, these are commonplace, numerous and important.

The Concept Design, however, treats digital records as an afterthought. The design has one 1,000 sq ft Digital Archives server room on the first floor. The second floor has one Electronics Records Processing room of 400 sq ft.

In contrast is Washington State’s Digital Archives: digitalarchives.wa.gov. Established 19 years ago, their digital archives has 243 million digital records, of which 85 million are searchable. Their technical configuration is shown below. Contrast this with what is proposed for DC.



Here is what we believe the facility’s system should have:

- Dedicated 24/7 power. The design only provides for an uninterruptible power supply or UPS. An UPS allows for the controlled power down of a system. Instead, there should be a backup power system.

- An offsite controlled environment. It is unwise to locate the Archives servers in its facility. Management of the facility's holdings should be in the facility, not their data servers.
- Ability to distribute their files dynamically. That is a cloud computing environment.
- A dedicated place for controlling the building's data network.
- Space for managing its electronic archival inventory and internal and public search system.
- Single search engine for all DC archival records. Modern archives allow the public to search holdings through the web. Regardless of the facility's holdings, other city agencies will continue to have archival records. Users should not face three or four search systems to find what they want. Users should be able to go to the new Archive's website and search all archival records. To do this, the facility must dedicate adequate resources and space to managing all DC's holdings.
- Website. The new Archives needs its own website that is a gateway to the archives and which highlights its holdings and their importance.

The new Concept Design is an important step in providing the District with a modern facility. It needs to treat the District's digital records with a similar degree of importance.

We will address OPR staffing and its related issues in our FY2024 Budget testimony.

Thank you.

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