

September 6, 2023

Dear Commissioners of ANC3F:

The D.C. Open Government Coalition is a nonprofit, nonpartisan citizens group established in 2009 to enhance public access to D.C. government information and ensure the transparency of D.C. government operations.

Public access to government records strengthens our democracy by allowing Americans to claim their rights of citizenship, hold their government accountable, and understand their history so they can participate more effectively in their government.

We work through public education, advocacy with the executive branch and Council, and legal action, without staff but an active all-volunteer board of community members, attorneys, researchers and reporters. Glimpses of our work can be seen at our website, [www.dcogc.org](https://dcogc.org/).

We write in response to the invitation in your [meeting announcement](https://twitter.com/ANC3F/status/1694012834491871653/photo/1) for September 6 to express strong support of the new Archives building planned for the UDC campus and to urge your group’s approval of necessary zoning and other approvals. We have [testified](https://dcogc.org/blog/coalition-testimonies-in-d-c-council-oversight-stress-transparency-improvements-needed-in-three-agencies/) many times to the Council in support, and renew that today.

Public access to the District’s story through its records has been inadequate for some years. But the new building will reverse that, thanks to adequate funds in the D.C. capital budget, a renowned firm engaged for the design, and enthusiastic leadership of a new archivist in the executive branch and a new president at the university.

With co-located jazz music and university archives, as well as the rich material that will be assembled from inaccessible storage in scattered locations, public access will at last be assured, facilitating synergy with the research and teaching missions of UDC. With colleagues we wrote a [finding guide](https://dcogc.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/DC_Archives_Records_Fact_Sheet_2022-2.pdf) to help users in the interim cope with extreme difficulty finding historical records, so we join you in welcoming the new building.

In his book *Between Justice and Beauty: Race, Planning and the Failure of Urban Policy in Washington, D.C.,* on the destruction of Southwest D.C., Howard Gillette, Jr., decades ago added a note on sources: “limited funding and staff have prevented the [D.C.] archives from becoming the central resource it was intended to be for the record of the city’s modern history.” He pointed to the contrasting richness of sources on the District in the National Archives and Library of Congress. But that era is ending, thanks to the actions of D.C. leaders.

Thanks for giving the new D.C. archives your full support.

Fritz Mulhauser

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D.C. Open Government Coalition

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