



ADVISORY NEIGHBORHOOD COMMISSION 6E
PO Box 93020 Brentwood Station, Washington, DC 20090

April 15, 2021

Richard Reyes-Gavilan
Executive Director
District of Columbia Public Library
1990 K Street NW
Washington, DC 20006

RE: Letter Opposing the DC Public Library's Proposed Closure of the Northwest One Neighborhood Library

Dear Executive Director Reyes-Gavilan:

On February 2, 2021, at a duly noticed and regularly scheduled meeting of the Advisory Neighborhood Commission 6E ("ANC 6E" or "Commission") and with a quorum of 7 out of 7 Commissioners and the public present, ANC 6E approved the following resolution by a vote of 7 in favor, 0 against, and 0 abstentions.

ANC 6E strongly opposes the closure of the Northwest One Neighborhood Library as proposed in the DC Public Library ("DCPL") facilities master plan for 2021-2020. The Northwest One Library is well-used by residents of ANC 6E, is an essential community asset for the Sursum Corda / Northwest One neighborhood and serves as a cultural anchor for the planned redevelopment of the Northwest One neighborhood. Closing the Northwest One Library would harm a primarily Black and low-income community that has for decades been consistently underserved by DCPL.

The most important reason for a library to remain in the Northwest One neighborhood is that the area is currently undergoing wholesale redevelopment that will result in significant population growth in future years. It is unclear if the data analysis for the Plan takes into consideration the thousands of new and returning residents that will arrive in Northwest One and surrounding communities in the coming years. For example, the table of library statistics in the Plan's Appendix A anticipates a population growth of only 726 persons between 2018 and 2023, despite nearly 3,000 new units planned for the Northwest One neighborhood.¹ The planned new housing makes it difficult to gauge the representativeness of community engagement efforts, limited as they have been, to assess future demand for library services. What is clear is that the

¹ Sursum Corda Cooperative Redevelopment: 1,331 units
Northwest One Parcel Redevelopment: 750 units
DCHA Headquarters Redevelopment: 1,000 units
Sursum Corda Turnkey & Sibley Townhomes Redevelopment: TBD units.



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future Northwest One neighborhood will feature dense, mixed-use, and mixed-income development that can only drive further demand for a local full-service library.

In November 2020, DCPL published its facilities master plan, titled *Next Libris: Facilities Master Plan 2021-2030* (“the Plan”).² The Plan articulates DCPL’s ten-year, \$175 million plan to maintain the public library system, adapt libraries to meet changing community needs, and extend access to library services to more District residents. The plan recommends the closure of the Northwest One Neighborhood Library in order to open a new library to serve the Edgewood and Eckington communities. Northwest One is the only library closure recommended in the plan.

The Northwest One Library was built as a community anchor and cultural gateway for the physical revitalization of the Northwest One neighborhood, as prescribed in the Northwest One Redevelopment Plan. The Central Washington Area Element of the 2011 Comprehensive Plan likewise calls for a neighborhood library serving Northwest One. Similar language supporting the Northwest One Library is retained in the Office of Planning’s proposed amendments to the Comprehensive Plan currently before the DC Council. Closing the Northwest One Library would not only run counter to the planning documents guiding redevelopment of Northwest One, it would also represent another setback of the DC government to deliver on the promises of the New Communities Initiative.

The *Next Libris* Plan frames the closure of the Northwest One Library as necessary to build a new library serving the Eckington and Edgewood neighborhoods.³ Residents of the Eckington and Edgewood neighborhoods clearly face a library service gap, but it is unacceptable to remedy this service gap by stripping away existing library service from Northwest One. The study identifies barriers, such as busy roads and distance, as limiting access to the Northwest One Library for residents of Eckington and Edgewood. Those same barriers and distance would also limit residents of Northwest One from accessing a library in Eckington or Edgewood. The Study is therefore misleading when it describes the proposed library at Eckington or Edgewood as a “replacement” for the Northwest One Library.⁴ Both Northwest One and Eckington/Edgewood deserve a library, but it is unfair for DCPL to frame the provision of library services as a zero-sum competition between these neighborhoods.

² *Next Libris: Facilities Master Plan 2021-2030*. Available: https://www.dclibrary.org/sites/default/files/DCPL_NextLibris_111020-Web.pdf.

³ *Ibid.*, p.46.

⁴ *Ibid.*



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The Northwest One Library is one of four “small neighborhood libraries” in the DCPL library system.⁵ The Plan recommends that the three other small neighborhood libraries at Deanwood, Rosedale, and Parklands-Turner each be converted to full-service libraries serving their existing communities.⁶ Northwest One is the only small neighborhood library that DCPL proposes closing and relocating to a separate community.⁷ The Plan provides no coherent rationale for why Northwest One should not also be converted to a full-service library like the other small neighborhood libraries. Instead, the Plan identifies an unrelated need for a full-service library in the Eckington and Edgewood neighborhoods and inexplicably identifies the Northwest One Library as the library that must be closed to enable the Eckington/Edgewood library to be built.

The *Next Libris* plan includes an equity impact statement that acknowledges that DCPL’s placement, size, and programming of public libraries have not always factored in the needs of all residents. The equity impact statement commits DCPL to further scrutinize individual recommendations contained in the Plan to ensure that there are no unanticipated adverse impacts to community members. The closure of the Northwest One Library constitutes an adverse impact to the Northwest One community that should have been obvious to the Plan’s authors. An equity statement is incomplete if it does not acknowledge and actively work to reverse the adverse impacts of decades of underinvestment in low-income and Black communities, including the Sursum Corda/Northwest One. The recommendation to close the Northwest One library undermines the credibility of DCPL’s commitment to equity in its Facilities Plan.

The community engagement conducted by DCPL in preparation of *Next Libris* was limited and did not capture the viewpoints of residents of Northwest One or ANC 6E. Between February and June of 2019, DCPL held six community engagement events, but none of these events were held in ANC 6E.⁸ The closest event was held two miles from the Northwest One Library at the Westminster Presbyterian Church at 401 I Street SW. The Plan recommends closing only one library —Northwest One—but DCPL conducted no formal outreach to the communities served by the Northwest One Library. This lack of engagement is unacceptable and undermines the Plan’s stated commitment to equity and inclusion.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that ANC 6E strongly opposes the closure of the Northwest One Library as proposed in the DCPL Facilities Master Plan.

⁵ DCPL defines small neighborhood libraries as libraries with small square footage in buildings that are not owned by DCPL.

⁶ *Next Libris*, pp.46-47.

⁷ *Ibid*, p.46.

⁸ *Next Libris* Appendix C: Community Engagement.



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THEREFORE, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that ANC 6E believes that the current Northwest One Library is deficient in floor space, amenities, circulation, and programming required by the community it serves, and it is therefore inadequate to meet current and future demand for library services;

THEREFORE, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that ANC 6E advocates for replacing the existing Northwest One Library with a full-service library in the same Northwest One community with floor space of at least 1.25 square feet per capita, based on updated projections for the service area population in 2030;

THEREFORE, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that ANC 6E urges DCPL to conduct dedicated outreach to the Northwest One and broader ANC 6E community to identify service needs and desired attributes and features of a new full-service library for Northwest One;

THEREFORE, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that ANC 6E also supports the creation of a library serving the Edgewood and Eckington Neighborhoods but rejects the false premises that (1) the Northwest One Library must close in order to create a new library at Edgewood/Eckington and (2) that the Edgewood/Eckington library is a viable substitute for the Northwest One Library.

ON BEHALF OF THE COMMISSION,

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'Rachelle Nigro'.

Rachelle Nigro
Chairperson

CC: Councilmember Charles Allen, Ward 6 Councilmember

Members of the Committee on Recreation, Libraries and Youth Affairs:

Ward 8 Councilmember Trayon White, Sr.

At-Large Councilmember Anita Bonds

Ward 1 Councilmember Brianne K. Nadeau

Ward 4 Councilmember Janeese Lewis George

Ward 5 Councilmember Kenyan McDuffie

DC Public Library

Martha Saccocio, Interim Director, Community Engagement