The District of Columbia’s public central library is a hub of downtown activity that attracts people who live and work in the District and visitors from around the world. The library specifically serves the nearby neighborhoods, including Chinatown, Penn Quarter, and the Downtown Business District, and can be accessed by all five Metro lines.

All of the District of Columbia Public Libraries’ support offices and administrative staff are housed at the Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Library. In addition there are seven frontline public services departments located there: Popular Services; Digital Commons; Children and Teen Services; Information Services; Adaptive Services; Adult Literacy and Special Collections, which houses the Washingtoniana Collection, and Black Studies Center.

Designed by renowned architect Ludwig Mies van der Rohe (the only Mies library in the world!), the building first opened its doors in 1972. The building is 433,036 square feet and consist of four floors above grade and two floors below including an underground parking garage.

The upcoming renovation of the 40-plus-year-old structure is generating lively debate about the role and purpose of a 21st century central library and impassioned opinions about the Mies design itself.

The tour of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Library will include a look at the Digital Commons Area, a visit to the Special Collections Department, a peek into the Adaptive Technology and Services Department, and a discussion of the Library’s renovation plans.