



GRETCHEN WHITMER
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MICHIGAN
MICHIGAN STRATEGIC FUND
STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE

Quentin L. Messer, Jr.
PRESIDENT

January 2, 2023

To Whom It May Concern:

Gunnar Birkerts was among a small circle of elite architects able to work closely with two of the twentieth century's architectural masters, Eero Saarinen and Minoru Yamasaki. In 1949, Birkerts chose to leave his native Latvia and move to southeast Michigan, then the center of American postwar prosperity and a mecca for modern architecture.

The opportunity to work with these internationally respected architects shaped Birkerts' innovative and original style. After establishing his own architectural firm in 1963, Birkerts designed many celebrated buildings and received numerous design awards. Some of his most expressive buildings include the Brutalist style University Reformed Church in Ann Arbor, the acclaimed Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis, and the dynamic University of Michigan Law School underground addition.

Birkerts work is signified by dramatic expressive shapes and the innovative use of glass and metal accents. The Alfred Noble Library in Livonia, which opened at the height of his career, is a strong example of his architectural vision. It should be evaluated within the full scope of his work and career to determine its eligibility for the National Register of Historic Places.

Livonia was one of the first modern suburbs of the city of Detroit, its growth beginning around 1948 with the construction of the General Motors Hydra-Matic Transmission Plant (coincidentally the same time period that Gunnar Birkerts arrived in Michigan). The city's significant postwar history should be examined and the role of modern architecture within that history assessed.

Sincerely,

Amy Arnold
Preservation Planner

