



*Federal Mogul was one of a wave of corporations that relocated to Southfield in the 1960s. The corporation built this Mid-Century Modern marvel as its world headquarters on the corner of Lahser Road and Northwestern Highway. The building opened in 1965 and, as the company grew, it greatly expanded the building's footprint in the decades following.*

## Iconic Southfield Building Threatened with Removal of its Unique Mid-Century Modern Design

The vacant, former world headquarters of Federal Mogul Corporation at Lahser and Northwestern Highway has a new tenant that is proposing to strip the building of its iconic period design. This unique Southfield landmark is part of Southfield's collection of distinctive Mid-Century Modern architecture.

Relocating from Detroit, Federal Mogul Corporation opened its striking headquarters building in 1965. It was designed by Rosetti Associates. As the company grew, additions were made to the building in 1960s, '70s and '80s. The main building with floor to ceiling glass windows is encased in an outer structure of squared columns (sometimes referred to as the "jewelbox"). The sweeping design gives the building a dramatic effect. Current owners of the building were allowed by the city to remove mature trees that had been obscuring the building's architectural drama.

Marelli, one of the world's leading, independent suppliers to the automotive sector, has leased the former Federal Mogul building. The company was formed in May 2019 through the merger of the Japanese auto supplier Calsonic Kansei and the Milan, Italy based Magneti Marelli. Marelli will consolidate its offices in metro Detroit, moving 458 employees to this Southfield location. Marelli plans to spend millions of dollars in renovating the building, including replacing the façade with a non-descript glass wall.

The transformation of Southfield into a metropolitan Detroit office hub



*A rendering of the proposed "modernization" of the iconic Federal Mogul building would remove the geometric columns encasing the main structure. DoCoMoMo USA terms this "facadicide."*

and home to over 9,000 businesses, including 80 "Fortune 500" firms, began in the 1950s and 1960s with construction of corporate world headquarters and numerous national and regional offices for leading companies. The first major firms to build or lease offices in Southfield were Standard Oil Corporation, Michigan Bell, Bendix Research Laboratories, General Electric and Reynolds Aluminum.

Other major firms relocated to Southfield in the 1960s, including Mac-cabees Mutual Life, Federal Mogul Corporation and E. F. McDonald Travel Company. Additionally, Eaton Corporation, Hygrade Foods,

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**Architect Frank Arvan**

*The former Federal Mogul headquarters today*

the Michigan Credit Union League, Prudential Insurance, Allstate Insurance and IBM (in the Crescent Centre Building on Northwestern Highway) opened offices in Southfield at this time. These larger buildings were joined by a host of smaller structures on Northwestern Highway—most of which were stunning examples of Mid-Century Modern architecture.

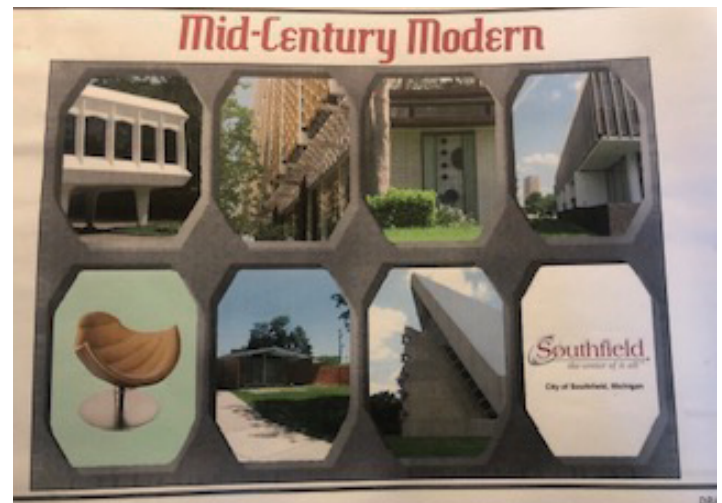
Southfield is proud of its collection of Mid-Century Modern neighborhoods, religious institutions and commercial buildings. Many of these buildings were designed by leading architects of the day, including Minoru Yamasaki, Gunnar Birkerts, Louis Redstone, Victor Gruen, Percival Goodman, Albert Kahn & Associates, Ferruccio deConti, among others. Shaarey Zedek Synagogue, the St. John Armenian Church Cultural Hall, Northland Theater, B'nai David Synagogue (Shriners Auditorium), Michigan Bell Northwest Service Center, Ira Kaufman Funeral Home, Emmanuel Lutheran Church, Crescent Building, Haley Funeral Home, Southfield City Hall and many others are part of this collection. The National Register of Historic Places includes the Northland Gardens and Plum Brooke Estates neighborhoods in Southfield.

The Southfield City Council adopted in 2011, Mid-Century Modern Design Guidelines, developed by the Planning Department in cooperation with Lawrence Technological University. Since 2013, Southfield has hosted a Mid-Century Modern Architecture Tour that has sold out at every offering. Southfield homes and buildings have been featured in numerous media articles as interest in Mid-Century Design has had a significant resurgence. In sum, the Mid-Century architectural collection has served as a marketing tool for the city.

“Architecture throughout history has been a telltale sign of the vitality of a community, and the quality of the architecture directly relates to the quality of a community in a lot of ways. The vitality and its interest in business relates directly to how much money flows through the community, and how much money flows through the community relates to the investment in buildings and environment. On top of that, the quality of the life makes people healthy. If you have a good environment, good sunlight, beautiful parks and trees, people tend to be happier. They tend to be more productive,” Frank Arvan, principal architect at FX Architecture, Royal Oak, MI.

Mid-Century Modern is broadly defined as architecture, furniture, and

graphic design from the middle of the 20th century (roughly 1933 to 1970). The timeframe is a modifier for the larger modernist movement, which followed the Industrial Revolution at the end of the 19th century and also in the post-World War I period. Growth exploded in Southfield following World War II. By the early 1960s, Southfield held the title as Michigan’s fastest growing city. Naturally, the predominant design of the day was reflected in that development.



**City Council adopted Mid-Century Modern Guidelines in 2011.**

