

**PUBLIC POSTING
FOR 60-DAY REVIEW PERIOD**

**Historic District Designation Preliminary Report
PHDD20-0003 – Smokey Robinson House –17077 Westland Avenue**

Purpose: The purpose of Historic District Designation is to secure and recognize properties that hold a unique place in Southfield history. The Southfield City Code states that the process is intended to: (1) Safeguard the heritage of the city by preserving areas in the city which reflect elements of its cultural, social, spiritual, economic, political engineering or architectural history or its archaeology; (2) Stabilize and improve property values in each historic district and the surrounding areas;(3) Foster civic beauty and community pride; (4) Strengthen the local economy; (5) Promote the use of historic districts for the education, pleasure and welfare of the citizens of the city, the state and of the United States of America.

Properties with local Historic District Designation that seek to undergo building changes that require a permit or a demolition must first report to the Southfield Historic Commission which reviews the proposed alterations.

Historic District Designation Process: Upon receipt of a Historic District Designation application, the Southfield Planning Department arranges an agenda item at a City Council Study Meeting and begins a preliminary study of the property. At the meeting, the City Planner or his/her designee outlines the Historic District Designation process and the subject property. At Council's consent, the item is then authorized for full study at their next Regular Meeting. The Planning Department completes a preliminary report for the property, which is given to the Historic District Advisory Board (HDAB) for review. This body consists of the City Planner, Building Official, Planning Commission Chair, a member from the Parks & Recreation Board, three (3) regular members, and 2 ad hoc members (usually the property owner(s) from the subject property). Once the preliminary report is approved by the HDAB, it is sent out to several organizations (such as the Planning Commission, the Historic Commission, etc.) and posted for a 60-day review. During this time the Planning Department prepares a draft ordinance for the property's approval. At the end of the 60-day review period, the HDAB holds a public hearing. The HDAB or its designee presents the Final Report to Council, who then grant the new ordinance.

Historic District Advisory Board Members

- Terry Croad, Director of Planning
- Mark Pilot, Building Official
- Jeremy Griffis, Planning Commission Chair
- Rosemerry Allen, Parks & Recreation Board Member
- Dale Gyure, Regular Member
- Corey Moffat, Regular Member
- Darla Van Hoey, Regular Member
- Kenson Siver, Ad Hoc Member
- Sheila Booker, Ad Hoc Member

Site Acreage: 0.683

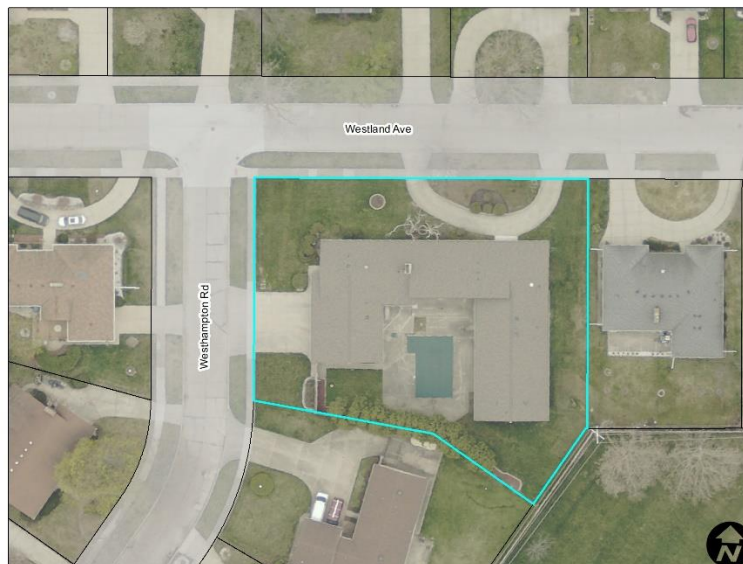
Gross Building Area: 5,215 square feet

Architectural Style: Midcentury Modern Ranch

Architect: Unknown

Constructed: 1958

Boundaries: Sidwell Parcel 2436-377-023, T1N,R10E,SEC 36 92-3 NORTHLAND GARDENS LOT 92 & 93 EXC TRIANGULAR PART OF LOT 92 BEING 11.49 FT ON WLY LOT LINE & 0 FT ATSE LOT COR & LYING ADJ TO LOT 91 000000, on the southeast corner of Westland Avenue and Westhampton Road, Section 36, City of Southfield, Oakland County, State of Michigan.



History: The J. L. Hudson Company was an important part of Detroit as generations of customers used its flagship department store for decades. As suburbanization increased, the company looked outside the city to Southfield Township and there developed one of the first malls in the country: Northland Shopping Center. The real estate arm of the company, as part of the overall Northland development, platted the Northland Gardens subdivision nearby in 1956, with widespread construction commencing soon after. The neighborhood, composed of 117 mostly of Midcentury Modern homes, featured most of its construction during the 1960s, and was built out by 1980.

Northland Gardens was approved as a National Historic District in 2020 due to its outstanding design quality, cohesiveness, and continuing historical integrity to its original Midcentury Modern design.

The subject home, a 1958 Midcentury Modern Ranch, was constructed for Morris and Bernice Dickstein. It is one of the largest homes in the neighborhood, featuring an asymmetrical U design with a courtyard and in-ground pool.

Notably, Motown legend Smokey Robinson purchased the home and lived there in the early 1970s.

William “Smokey” Robinson, Jr. was born in 1940 in Detroit. He founded and fronted the Miracles in 1955 and met future Motown founder Berry Gordy two years later. One of the first acts signed to the label, the Miracles were a key part of Motown’s success in spreading the Detroit sound around the world. After extensive recording and traveling through the 1960s, Robinson sought retirement from touring to spend time with his family—in 1970 he purchased the home in Southfield. Robinson and his wife did not fully leave the Miracles until 1972, around the same time that Motown itself left Grand Boulevard and relocated to Los Angeles. Robinson, a VP at the label and seeking to launch a solo career, followed shortly after and sold the home in 1973.

The current owners, Sheila and Howard Booker, purchased the home in 1986, and have maintained the high degree of integrity with virtually no alterations.

Significance: The home is already recognized on the national level for its inclusion in the Northland Gardens subdivision—it retains a high degree of integrity of its original Midcentury Modern design. Instead, the home is important to local Southfield history as the noteworthy residence of Smokey Robinson: today, the home is still known in the neighborhood as “Smokey’s house.”

The Smokey Robinson House meets the criteria for exceptional significance under Criteria Consideration B, as it is associated with lives or persons significant in our past.

