



Name of Property: McGregor Memorial Conference Center
City, State: Detroit, Wayne County, Michigan
Period of Significance: 1956-1958
NHL Criteria: 4
NHL Theme: III. Expressing Cultural Values
5. Architecture, landscape architecture, and urban design
Previous Recognition: 2012 National Register of Historic Places
National Historic Context: Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Initiative
XVI. Architecture
Z. Modern

NHL Significance:

- The McGregor Memorial Conference Center was a benchmark work in the career of the nationally significant, Japanese-American architect Minoru Yamasaki (1912-1986).
- One of the twentieth century’s most important Modern architects, the building represents a key turning point in Yamasaki’s career as he moved away from International Style orthodoxy into his own distinct vision, later considered part of the stylistic trend “New Formalism.”
- The building best exemplifies the principles of “surprise, serenity, and delight” that Yamasaki emphasized throughout his later career. From his insights into historic architecture and dedication to modern materials and construction methods, Yamasaki sought to infuse humanism into his buildings and their surroundings and create “usable, livable areas where man can lead his life both productively and happily.”
- The building and surrounding landscape, the first fully-realized design of his mature work, remain the best example of his design principles. It was in the McGregor Center that Yamasaki first used many of the design characteristics that would become common in his later work.



Integrity:

- Through the careful stewardship of Wayne State University, the McGregor Memorial Conference Center retains a very high degree of integrity. The building's character-defining features remain fully extant and the meticulously-restored reflecting pool and sculpture garden reflect Yamasaki's design intent for the building and its surroundings.
- The most significant changes to the fabric are the windows and skylights. The single-glazed windows have been replaced by double-glazed units that generally retain the historic pattern; the skylights have likewise been fitted with double-glazed units and an additional structure was added to carry the structural weight, somewhat affecting but not destroying the delicate tracery effect of the original skylights. The interior retains an exceptional level of integrity with only minor replacement in kind of carpets and the like. Even the original Barcelona chairs and couches (designed by Mies van der Rohe) are still in use.
- Integral to the design of the McGregor Center are the adjacent reflecting pool and sculpture garden. Although the pool sat empty for many years due to persistent leaking and deterioration, it has recently undergone a complete restoration that followed Yamasaki's original design and materials, with only minor changes, to ensure the long-term functioning of the pools.

Owner of Property: Wayne State University

Acreage of Property: Approximately one acre

Origins of Nomination: The Michigan State Historic Preservation Office hired a consulting firm to prepare the NHL nomination as part of its Michigan Modern Initiative.

Potential for Positive Public Response or Reflection on NHL Program:

- NHL designation will recognize one of Minoru Yamasaki's exceptional Modern designs, regarded as a benchmark in his nationally significant career and a turning point in his design philosophy.
- NHL designation will recognize one of the most significant Modern designs—integrating architecture, landscape, and interior design—in the United States.

Potential for Negative Public Response or Reflection on NHL Program: None known.

Landmarks Committee Comments:

Landmarks Committee Recommendation: Designation. Dr. Allan moved, Dr. Carson seconded; unanimous approval.

Public Comments Favoring Designation (received as of 05/27/14):

Brian D. Conway, State Historic Preservation Officer, Michigan
Debbie Dingell, Chair, Wayne State University Board of Governors, Detroit, Michigan (owner)
M. Roy Wilson, President, Wayne State University, Detroit, Michigan



Jerry Herron, PhD, Dean, Wayne State University, Detroit, Michigan
Debbie Stabenow, United States Senator, Michigan

Advisory Board Recommendation: