Bradford J. White

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January 12, 2023

Mayor Maureen Brosnan
Livonia City Hall
33000 Civic Center Drive
Livonia, Michigan 48154

Dear Mayor Brosnan:

I am writing as a former resident and 1978 graduate of Bentley High School. I have over 35 years of experience in community development, affordable housing, and philanthropy. Major projects include overseeing the restoration of Frank Lloyd Wright's Unity Temple in Oak Park, Illinois; working with a wide variety of arts, architecture, advocacy, and historic preservation organizations; and overseeing the development of affordable housing. In 2011, I received a presidential appointment to the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, where I directed the development of a policy statement on community revitalization. I served as a General Public Member until my term ended in 2020. I am the former chair of Landmarks Illinois and Preservation Action. I currently serve on the Public Policy Committee of the Chicago chapter of the Urban Land Institute and am a member of the board of DOCOMOMO US, an organization focused on architecture of the Modern Movement.

I fondly remember the Livonia Public Libraries as I and other members of my family were frequent visitors to the Carl Sandburg Library and the Alfred Noble Library. It was a treat to spend time at the newer Alfred Noble Library picking out autobiographies, reading books, or in later years researching subjects for junior high and high school reports and projects. How many other children and adults have used the Alfred Noble Library since its opening in 1967? It must be in the hundreds of thousands.

The Alfred Noble Library is also important because of its association with the world-renowned architect, Gunnar Birkerts. His other notable designs include the Corning Museum of Glass in Corning, New York; Marquette Plaza in Minneapolis, Minnesota; Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art in Kansas City, Missouri; the U.S. Embassy in Caracas, Venezuela; and the National Library of Latvia in Riga, Latvia. He is credited with extending the vocabulary of Modern architecture through the use of unexpected angular forms, folding planes, and ingenious, light-suffused interiors, all of which are exemplified, perhaps in a more modest way than some of his other work, in the design of the Alfred Noble Library.

It is my understanding that you and other elected officials are meeting soon to decide the fate of the library. Based on the published accounts, the building has water damage and mold, and was deemed "functionally obsolete." I know from years of experience that none of the damage that has been described is irreversible nor are the costs associated more than the costs of a new, high quality building. In fact, the OHM Advisors report dated July 8, 2021, confirms this. According to the

report, the cost for demolition of the library and a replacement building is estimated to be nearly $6.7 million, while rehabilitation of the Alfred Noble Library is about $1.6 million. Even if the rehabilitation costs are off by 100%, which is unlikely due to OHM's review of the building assessment report and its years of expertise in architecture and engineering, the cost of rehabilitation is still less than half of the cost of demolition and new construction.

It is difficult to comment on functional obsolescence. Perhaps the building is no longer suitable for a library. However, based on the building's floorplan and construction, it is readily adaptable to multiple other uses (e.g., offices, public gathering space, and community center, among a wide variety of others). Therefore, until a plan is developed for new city services or other uses on the site, I urge you to keep the Alfred Noble Library building in place. After a plan is developed, it can be determined whether the building is a suitable candidate for the proposed new uses.

I urge you to work to save the Alfred Noble Library, a Modern gem and important building in the history of Livonia, as well as a potentially significant contributor to its future.

Please do not hesitate to contact me with any comments or questions.

Sincerely,

Brad White

Bradford J. White

cc: Jeff Dutka, Save Alfred Noble Library