

The Architecture of Nathan Johnson

**Historic Resources Survey and
Multiple Property Documentation
Form (MPDF) and National
Register Nomination**

**Public Engagement Meeting
Tuesday, October 6, 2026**

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- What is a National Register Nomination?
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Project Team



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Noir Design Parti



Michigan State Historic Preservation Office





Project Goals

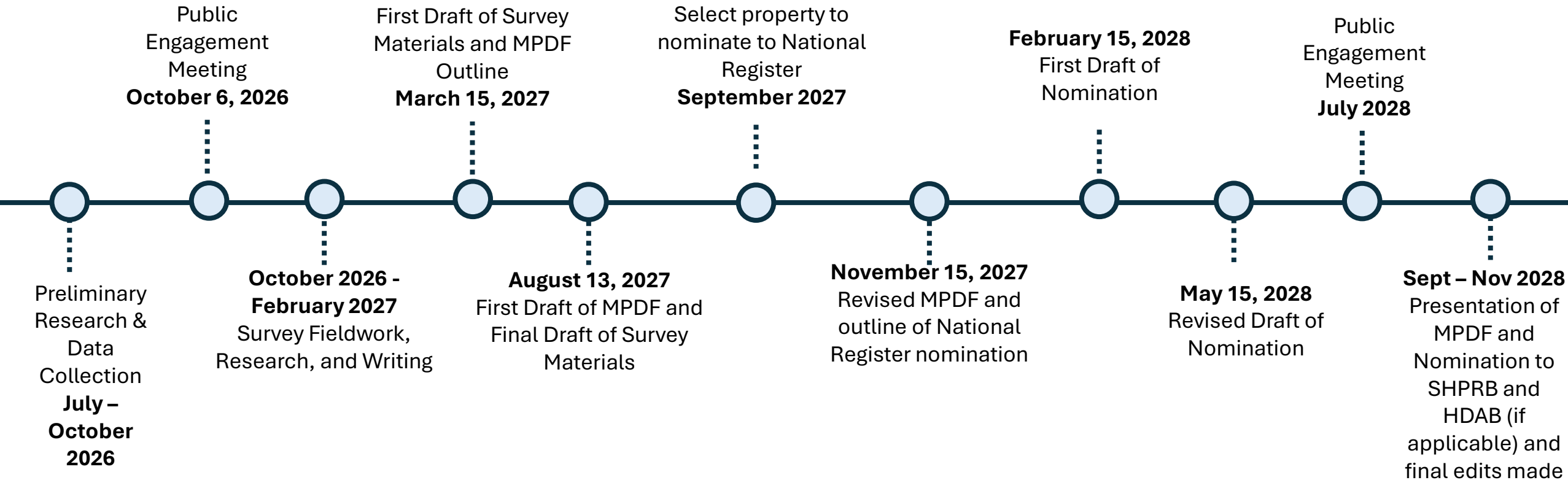
- Nathan Johnson is a pioneering Black architect who designed Modern style churches, offices, businesses, and houses all over Michigan.
- Noir Design Parti has gathered invaluable resources, but a comprehensive survey of his work has never been conducted.
- This project will document Johnson's work and help tell the story of Nathan Johnson's impact and influence in the metropolitan Detroit area. Additionally, the project will help enhance public awareness and formally recognize Johnson's place in Michigan's architectural history.



Project Deliverables

- Historic Survey
 - Survey Fieldwork
 - Survey Report
 - Survey Inventory Forms
- Multiple Property Documentation Form
 - Historic Context
 - Property Types
 - Registration Requirements
- National Register of Historic Places Nomination
 - One site selected
 - National Register nomination

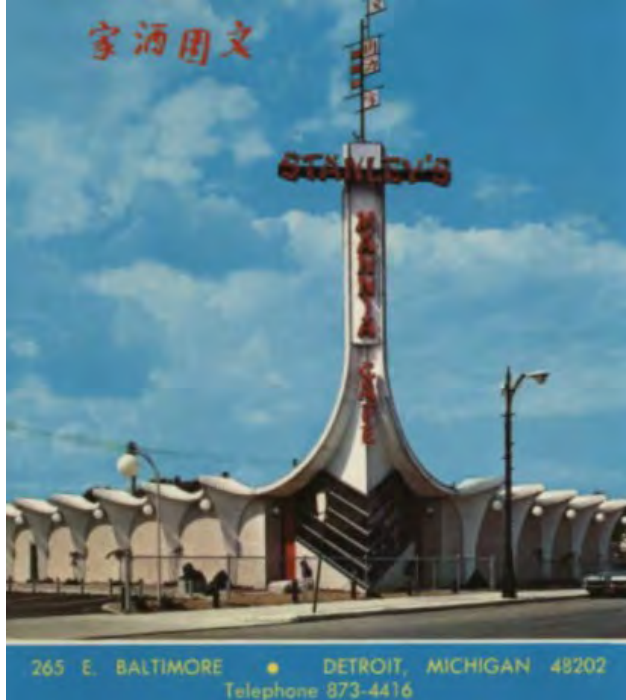
Project Timeline



What is a Historic Resource Survey?

- Gathering information on historic resources to identify those with historical, architectural, archaeological, or cultural significance
 - Research (books, articles, maps, historic photographs, oral histories, etc.)
 - Fieldwork photography to document resources
- Levels of surveying: Reconnaissance vs. Intensive
- Survey products:
 - Inventory Forms
 - Survey Report
 - Research Materials





Why Conduct a Historic Survey?

- Surveys provide the foundation for nearly all preservation activities
- Document existing historic resources and important histories
- Provide historic contexts to evaluate the significance of resources
- Provide recommendations for further preservation work like:
 - More intensive survey efforts
 - National Register of Historic Places designation
 - Local historic district designation
 - Oral history recordings, etc.



What is a Multiple Property Documentation Form (MPDF)?

- An MPDF is essentially an initial study that is used by the National Park Service to organize and evaluate a group of thematically related properties.
- “Thematically related” simply means the properties included in the MPDF are not necessarily contained within one contiguous boundary. Rather, the properties are often scattered around but related to a specific theme. In this case, the theme is properties designed by Nathan Johnson.
- An MPDF includes: a historic context, associated property types, and registration requirements.
- An MPDF is not a National Register nomination on its own. Instead, it acts a comprehensive planning and evaluation tool that sets the baseline criteria for listing specific buildings or districts on the National Register.





Why complete an MPDF?

- Streamlines future nominations because it reduces repeated research by setting pre-approved historical themes, geographic scopes, and time periods for groups of similar properties.
- Improves eligibility. Properties that may lack significance on their own may qualify for the National Register by connecting their history to a broader context.
- Provides objective standards for evaluating properties
- Essentially: it makes future nominations of Nathan Johnson's work easier!

What is a National Register nomination?

- The National Register is a federal list of cultural resources that are worthy of preservation
- The nomination process is a formal application package that is used to propose a building or district for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places
- The National Register is an honorary designation. Listing on property on the National Register does not place any restrictions on private property owners.
- The National Register is separate and distinct from local historic districts. In Detroit, local historic districts require that exterior changes are reviewed by the local Historic District Commission. This is different than the National Register.





Why nominate a property to the National Register?

- Official recognition
- Listing a property on the National Register unlocks eligibility for certain historic tax credits and some grants.
- It triggers formal review process if a federally funded, licensed or permitted project threatens to impact the historic property.
- Highlights important history that may otherwise be overlooked

Project Focus

- Areas: Detroit, Inkster, Ecorse, Westland, and Highland Park
- If additional properties designed by Johnson are found during the research phase, those properties will be surveyed too.
- Focus is on buildings designed by Nathan Johnson after founding his firm Nathan Johnson and Associates
- Survey will include residential, multi-family, mixed-use, and commercial resources
- 70-100 resources (the list is evolving)
- Nomination will be selected from one of the surveyed sites





What to Expect

- Initial research phase
- During the survey work, our team will be taking photographs of resources.
Photographs are only taken from the public right-of-way.
- Driving and walking by properties taking photos and notes
- A second public engagement meeting will be held closer to the end of the project

What to Expect

- After the survey work is completed the project team will begin writing the MPDF.
- Once the MPDF is completed the SHPO, Noir Design Parti, and Loggia Preservation will meet to discuss which site will be selected to nominate to the National Register.
- If you have thoughts as to which property should be nominated, please reach out!



Want more information?

Please visit the project website!

<https://www.miplace.org/historic-preservation/programs-and-services/mi-civil-rights-project/nathan-johnson-architecture/>



Questions? Comments?

We want to hear from you!



www.loggiapreservation.com/hello-loggia

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