

Canadian Northern Railway Eastern Lines Locomotive Shop

Description

The property at 85 Laird Drive is worthy of designation under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act for its cultural heritage value, and meets the criteria for municipal designation prescribed by the Province of Ontario under the three categories of design, historical and contextual value. Located on the east side of Laird Drive and overlooking Esandar Drive, the Canadian Northern Railway constructed the Locomotive Shop (1919) as part of an expansive repair facility and marshalling yard in Leaside. The property at 85 Laird Drive was included on the City of Toronto Inventory of Heritage Properties in 2006.

Statement of Cultural Heritage Value

The Locomotive Shop has design value as a surviving example of a railway building in Leaside. According to historical sources, as early as 1906 the Canadian Northern Railway had developed a standard engine house design that focused on symmetry and Classical lines (Forbes, Engine Houses and Turntables on Canadian Railways, 1850-1950, 1990, 71). The Locomotive Shop was designed to face east away from present-day Laird Drive, where large doors provided access to the service bays inside. Along with the Locomotive Shop, a building identified as the Canadian Northern Railway's former freight offices survives on the south side of Esandar Drive where it is recognized on the City's heritage inventory.

Historically, the Locomotive Shop is linked to the development of the Town of Leaside. The area southeast of present-day Eglinton Avenue East and Bayview Avenue was originally farmed by William Lea in the mid 19th century. The railway arrived in the late 1870s and, by 1894, a station was established at "Leaside Junction." After its incorporation in 1899, the Canadian Northern Railway acquired substantial holdings in Leaside as the location of the repair shop and marshalling yard for its eastern lines. In 1912, the company commissioned the notable landscape architect, Frederick Todd, to lay out a model town in Leaside. Monies from the sale of building lots were intended to finance its local facilities. Faced with stiff competition in eastern Canada, the Canadian Northern Railway concentrated on its western routes to open the country's second transcontinental railway before becoming a component of the publicly-owned Canadian National Railways in 1918. The Locomotive Shop was completed the following year.

While the community was incorporated as the Town of Leaside in 1912, its residential and industrial development began in earnest during the 1930s, with Laird Drive north of the railway line as the centre for manufacturers. Beginning in 1936, portions of the Canadian Northern Railway's former property in Leaside were acquired by E. S. & A. Robinson, a company based in Bristol, England that produced packaging materials and purportedly launched its Canadian operation in Toronto in 1932. The former locomotive

shop became part of E. S. & A. Robinson's factory complex on Laird Drive that was first recorded in the city directories in 1941. The company retained the property until 1954. The Locomotive Shop is an important historical reminder of the industrial development of Leaside from its origins as a railway junction.

Contextually, the property at 85 Laird Drive contributes to the character of the industrial sector of Leaside where the former Durant Motors Office Building (1928) at #150 Laird and the Pease Foundry Company Building (1951) at #211 Laird have been identified for inclusion on the City's heritage inventory.

Heritage Attributes

The heritage attributes of the Locomotive Shop related to its design and contextual value as a surviving example of a building associated with both the transportation history and industrial development of Leaside are found on the exterior walls and roof, consisting of:

- The two-storey rectangular-shaped plan under a flat roof with coping and two glazed monitors
- The red brick cladding with brick and artificial stone trim
- The organization of the south façade facing Esandar Drive into 11 bays divided by brick piers, with a stepped parapet that conceals the roof monitors
- The detailing of the south façade, with segmental-arched window openings with brick and stone trim and an entrance beneath a lintel (this opening has been altered)
- The regularly placed openings along the east and west elevations