

## **Deer Park United Church**

### Description

The property at 129 St. Clair Avenue West is worthy of designation under Part IV, Section 29 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, associative and contextual value. Located on the southeast corner of St. Clair Avenue West and Foxbar Road, Deer Park United Church was completed in 1912 and extended in 1931 with the completion of the Sunday School wing. The property is listed on the City of Toronto Inventory of Heritage Properties.

### Statement of Cultural Heritage Value

Deer Park United Church is a significant institution in the Deer Park neighbourhood where it is the oldest surviving church building. The origins of the church date to the late 1800s when a Presbyterian congregation was formed in “Deer Park,” the residential community that developed around the intersection of Yonge Street and St. Clair Avenue as the City of Toronto expanded northward. After Deer Park was annexed in 1908, the congregation relocated to a new building on St. Clair Avenue, the main east-west thoroughfare in the neighbourhood. The current church was completed in 1912 and dedicated the following year as Deer Park Presbyterian Church. In 1925, the majority of the congregation elected to join the newly-formed United Church of Canada (an amalgamation of Methodist, Congregational and some Presbyterian churches).

As Deer Park United Church, the congregation continued the mission work, musical interests and social services for which it was known. It provided outreach and employment programs during the Depression of the 1930s, welcomed displaced British women and children during World War II, offered English classes for new immigrants in the 1950s and 1960s, and sponsored Vietnamese refugees in the 1970s. Deer Park United Church was a founding member of “The Churches-on-the Hill,” a group of local churches representing different Christian denominations that serve the community through joint programs, including food banks and affordable housing. Located on St. Clair Avenue West for nearly a century, the congregation of Deer Park United Church celebrated its 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2006.

Deer Park United Church also has design value as a well-crafted example of the Neo-Gothic style, which was popular in the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century for ecclesiastical and educational buildings. Displaying a distinctive corner tower and stone facing, the designs for the church were profiled in the September 1911 issue of Construction magazine, and featured at the Toronto Society of Architects’ exhibition in 1912. Alterations to the complex over time, including the expanded Sunday School wing dating to 1931, have respected the original fabric and style of the church.

Contextually, Deer Park United Church is a landmark on St. Clair Avenue West in the Deer Park community. The church anchors the southeast corner of St. Clair Avenue West and Foxbar Road, one block east of Avenue Road, where its iconic architecture is highly visible. The

church's location and setting are complemented by the city parks on the northeast and northwest corners of St. Clair Avenue West and Avenue Road, opposite. Amsterdam Square Park, located near the northeast corner of the intersection, features a replica of a fountain from the Peace Palace at The Hague, which dates to 1929 and is designated under the Ontario Heritage Act. Glenn Gould Park, near the northwest corner of St. Clair Avenue West and Avenue Road, contains the Peter Pan Statue (1929), which is recognized on the City's heritage inventory. With its placement on the south side of St. Clair Avenue West, Deer Park United Church adjoins the residential neighbourhood where the Foxbar Apartments at 54 Foxbar Road also date to the pre-World War I era and are listed on the City's heritage inventory.

### Heritage Attributes

The heritage attributes of Deer Park United Church related to its cultural heritage value as a representative example of Neo-Gothic styling associated with a significant institution in the Deer Park neighbourhood where it is a local landmark are:

- The scale, form and massing
- The materials, including Credit Valley stone, Indiana limestone, terra cotta, slate, metal, glass and wood
- The long rectangular plan with shallow transepts and low side aisles on the east and west elevations
- The steeply-pitched cross-gable roof with brick and stone chimneys, and the shed roofs over the side aisles
- At the northwest corner, the square tower with a flat roof, finials and a pinnacle
- The main entrance, which is placed in a shallow porch on the north façade, with pairs of paneled wood doors and multi-paned transoms
- The secondary entrance on the west face of the tower, and the entrance porch at the north end of the east wall, with wood doors with glazed inserts and blind transoms
- The detailing on the entries, with pointed-arched surrounds, mouldings, quoins, carvings and, on the tower, a roundel
- The window openings, with Tudor-arched, pointed-arched, flat-headed, lancet and clerestory windows
- The window detailing, with stone mullions, tracery, labels and continuous sills
- The applied detailing, with smooth band courses, buttresses, coping along the gables and, on the north façade, a niche with quoins
- The cornerstones from the second Deer Park Presbyterian Church (1888) and the current church (1911)
- The collection of stained glass windows, including commissions by artists Peter Haworth and Yvonne Williams and memorial windows in the sanctuary, transepts and chapel
- The Sunday School wing at the south end of the church, which complements it with the stone cladding and trim, Neo-Gothic detailing, and combinations of flat-headed and pointed-arched openings