

## **Parkway Plaza Grocery Store**

### Description

The property at 1-95 Ellesmere Road is worthy of inclusion on the City of Toronto Inventory of Heritage Properties for its cultural heritage value. Located on the southeast corner of Ellesmere Road and Victoria Park Avenue, the portion of the property identified for convenience purposes as 15 Ellesmere Road contains a single-storey commercial building constructed as a grocery store (1958) at Parkway Plaza. The remainder of the property, which has been altered and added to over time, is not included in the Reasons for Listing.

### Statement of Cultural Heritage Value

The grocery store at Parkway Plaza is a rare example of Modern architecture in Scarborough that demonstrates a high degree of technical achievement with its innovative roof construction. Its design, with the half-round form, curved roof beams and fully glazed main façade, recalls the sculptural compositions of the later 20<sup>th</sup> century as influenced by practitioners such as Finnish architect Eero Saarinen. In continuous use since 1958, the structure illustrates how innovative forms and contemporary materials were applied to suburban commercial buildings in the 1950s and afterward. The arched roof that is the most distinctive feature of the design contains what was described as the largest wood arch assembled in Canada at that time. Inside, the open plan with a clear span and limited interior divisions was an early example of the change in the function of retail space in the later 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The development of the site is associated with the Toronto architectural partnership of Bregman and Hamann, which was founded in 1953 and prepared the plans for the complex. Completed in 1958, Parkway Plaza was purportedly the first shopping centre commissioned by Montreal's prominent Bronfman family following the creation of the Fairview Corporation (forerunner to Cadillac Fairview) as the real estate arm of their business empire. The Bronfmans were leaders in linking their business expertise with Modern architecture, as evidenced by the Seagram Building (1958) in New York City and the Toronto-Dominion Centre (1965-91) in Toronto. On phases of the latter project, Bregman and Hamann worked in association with the internationally recognized architect, Mies van der Rohe and the Toronto firm of John B. Parkin Associates. Bregman and Hamann are associated with other 'firsts,' including Canada's earliest completely air-conditioned apartment building at 484 Avenue Road, and North York's original highrise office complex at Eglinton Avenue East and Don Mills.

Parkway Plaza with its distinctive grocery store is identified with the suburban development of Scarborough Township, which was noted as Canada's fastest growing community after World War II. In the area named for Maryvale Farm, the country estate of Senator Frank O'Connor, the establishment of residential subdivisions created a need

for a local shopping centre with retail outlets and services, including a grocery store. Following the official opening of the plaza in September 1958, the grocery store has been in continuous operation for half a century, with the Grand Union, Steinberg's, Miracle Food Mart, Dominion and (most recently) Metro franchises.

Contextually, the grocery store at Parkway Plaza is a landmark at the southeast corner of Ellesmere Road and Victoria Park Avenue. With its distinctive appearance, it stands out on its site and in the area where it is viewed from the other corners of the intersection.

### Heritage Attributes

The heritage attributes of the Parkway Plaza grocery store related to its cultural heritage value as a rare example of late 20<sup>th</sup> century commercial architecture designed by Bregman and Hamann and a local landmark are:

- The scale, form and massing
- The rectangular plan that rises one extended storey in the centre, with flat-roofed wings on either side (east and west) that create horizontal lines along the north and south ends of the structure
- The materials, employing steel, concrete, wood and glass
- The arched roof, with the ends of the arch exposed and extending to ground level
- The principal (north) façade with glazing, which incorporates a projecting single-storey portico with a flat roof
- The composition of the north wall, where the portico and the flat roofs of the wings create a horizontal line across the façade and provide a visual counterpart to the arch
- On the interior, the exposed vaulted roof structure with curved beams