

Deer Park United Church

Description

The property at 129 St. Clair Avenue West is worthy of inclusion on the City of Toronto Inventory of Heritage Properties for its cultural heritage value. Historical records indicate that Deer Park United Church was completed in 1912 on the southeast corner of St. Clair Avenue West and Foxbar Road, east of Avenue Road.

Statement of Cultural Heritage Value

Deer Park United Church has design value as a well-crafted example of the Neo-Gothic style, which was popular in the early decades of the 20th century for ecclesiastical and educational buildings. The designs for Deer Park United Church were profiled in the September 1911 issue of Construction magazine and featured at the Toronto Society of Architects' exhibition of 1912. Alterations to the complex over time have respected the original fabric and stylistic elements.

The church is associated with the historical development of the Deer Park neighbourhood. The area around the intersection of present-day Yonge Street and St. Clair Avenue was originally the setting of country estates and farmland, including the Heath family's farm named "Deer Park." The northward extension of the street railway along Yonge Street in the late 19th century opened the area to residential development. Deer Park remained an unincorporated area between the Towns of Yorkville and North Toronto until it was annexed by the City of Toronto in 1908.

Prior to the availability of public transportation to Deer Park, Presbyterians travelled to the City for services. Deer Park Presbyterian Church was founded in the early 1880s, with the first church buildings located on Yonge Street. The present church opened on St. Clair Avenue West at Foxbar Road in 1912 according to plans prepared by the architectural firm of Sharp and Brown. In 1925, after the majority of the congregation elected to join the newly-formed United Church of Canada (amalgamating Methodist, Congregational and some Presbyterian churches), the name was changed to Deer Park United Church. A Sunday School building with a chapel was added in 1931. Throughout its history, the church has been associated with mission work, musical interests, and social services. Deer Park United Church celebrated its 125th anniversary in 2006.

Contextually, Deer Park United Church is landmark on St. Clair Avenue West in Deer Park. The church is placed in a park-like setting, which is complemented by the city park at the northeast corner of St. Clair Avenue West and Avenue Road, opposite, where the Amsterdam Square Fountain (1929) is designated under the Ontario Heritage Act. The residential neighbourhood south of the church includes the Foxbar Apartments (1910) at 54 Foxbar Road, a property that is recognized on the City's heritage inventory.

Heritage Attributes

The heritage attributes of Deer Park United Church related to its design, associative and contextual value as a well-crafted example of Neo-Gothic styling that is an institutional landmark on St. Clair Avenue West are:

- The scale, form and massing of the long rectangular plan, with an asymmetrically placed tower at the northwest corner
- The cladding with Credit Valley and Indiana limestone, with stone, terra cotta and wood detailing
- The steeply-pitched gable roof with brick and stone chimneys, cross-gables over the shallow transepts, and coping along the gable ends
- On the principal (north) façade beneath the gable end of the roof, the oversized Tudor-arched window opening with stone mullions and tracery and, in the apex of the gable, the smooth band courses and the niche with quoins
- The main entrance, which is placed in a shallow porch on the north facade, with stone carving, an oversized arch, lancet windows, and pairs of paneled wood doors with multi-paned transoms
- On the east and west elevations, the low side aisles with shed roofs and trios of flat-headed window openings with stone labels and continuous sills, and the pointed-arch clerestory windows above
- The tower, where the flat roof is marked with a copper-clad pinnacle on the southeast corner and decorative finials on the remaining corners
- The secondary entrances on the west face of the tower and in a single-storey flat-roofed entrance porch at the north end of the east wall
- The detailing of the entries, where pointed-arched surrounds with mouldings and quoins contain wood doors with glazed inserts and blind transoms (with a roundel on the tower entrance)
- The fenestration on the east and west elevations, transepts and the corner tower, with Tudor-arched openings and lancet windows with buttresses and stone detailing
- The complementary south (rear) Sunday School addition, with the stone cladding and trim, Neo-Gothic detailing, and combination of flat-headed and pointed-arched window openings