

Wychwood-Davenport Presbyterian Church

Description

The property at 155 Wychwood Avenue is worthy of inclusion on the City of Toronto Inventory of Heritage Properties for its cultural heritage value. Historical records reveal that the church was completed in 1937 on the northeast corner of St. Clair Avenue West and Wychwood Avenue.

Statement of Cultural Heritage Value

Wychwood-Davenport Presbyterian Church has design value as an example of Neo-Gothic styling, the most popular style for church architecture in the early 20th century. Completed according to the plans of Scarborough architect Frederick Noad, Wychwood-Davenport Presbyterian Church is distinguished by its decorative brickwork.

Wychwood-Davenport Presbyterian Church is associated with the development of the Wychwood neighbourhood. In the late 19th century, Toronto artist Marmaduke Matthews acquired land in the area bounded by St. Clair Avenue West, Bathurst Street, Davenport Road and Christie Street where he constructed a house named “Wychwood.” Matthews established an artists’ colony on the tract of land around Wychwood Park. As the city boundaries expanded, the Wychwood district was surveyed into residential subdivisions that were accessed via streetcar lines on St. Clair Avenue West. After the City of Toronto annexed Wychwood in 1909, the various religious denominations erected churches in the area.

The property on the northeast corner of St. Clair Avenue West and Wychwood Avenue was first acquired as the location of St. Clair Avenue Baptist Church. Its congregation commissioned a permanent church on the site in 1912 before relocating to the opposite side of Wychwood Avenue in 1925. During the latter year, the property at 155 Wychwood was purchased by a Presbyterian congregation whose members had declined to join the newly formed United Church of Canada (created by the amalgamation of Methodist, Congregational and some Presbyterian churches). A new church was completed in 1937. Wychwood Presbyterian Church amalgamated with Davenport Presbyterian Church in 1972, with the congregation retaining the Wychwood Avenue property under the name Wychwood-Davenport.

Contextually, Wychwood-Davenport Presbyterian Church is a landmark on the northeast corner of St. Clair Avenue West and Wychwood Avenue. It forms an institutional enclave with St. Clair Avenue Baptist Church at 156 Wychwood Avenue, opposite, and St. Michael and All Angels (Anglican) Church on the southeast corner of St. Clair Avenue West and Wychwood Avenue.

Heritage Attributes

The heritage attributes of Wychwood-Davenport Presbyterian Church related to its design, associative and contextual value as an example of Neo-Gothic styling that is an institutional landmark on St. Clair Avenue West are:

- The scale, form and massing of the rectangular plan that rises one extended storey above a stone base with a narthex at the west end
- The red brick cladding with brick and stone detailing
- The steeply-pitched gable roof covering the nave, with stone coping along the west gable end and a tall brick chimney on the north slope
- The pointed-arch window openings with brick surrounds on the principal (west) façade and the clerestory (north and south), with flat-headed window openings on the side aisles
- The medieval-inspired detailing, with brick pilasters with stone gablets, coping and, on the roofline of the narthex, crenelles
- The entrances on the west and south walls of the narthex, where paired wood doors in pointed-arch surrounds with multiple mouldings are placed beneath arcades of pointed-arch brickwork
- The date stone marked “1937”
- The secondary entrance at the east end of the south elevation
- The complementary northeast wing with cladding and detailing inspired by the main body of the church