

### **St. Clair Avenue Baptist Church**

#### Description

The property at 156 Wychwood Avenue is worthy of inclusion on the City of Toronto Inventory of Heritage Properties for its cultural heritage value. Archival sources indicate that St. Clair Avenue Baptist Church was completed in 1925 on the west side of Wychwood Avenue in the first block north of St. Clair Avenue West.

#### Statement of Cultural Heritage Value

St. Clair Avenue Baptist Church has design value as an example of the Neo-Gothic style that was popularized for church architecture in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

St. Clair Avenue Baptist Church is associated with the historical development of the Wychwood district. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, Toronto artist Marmaduke Matthews acquired acreage in the area bounded by St. Clair Avenue West, Bathurst Street, Davenport Road and Christie Street where he built a house named “Wychwood.” Matthews and his fellow artists established a colony around Wychwood Park. As the city expanded into the area in the early 1900s, the remaining lands along St. Clair Avenue West were developed as residential subdivisions. Wychwood remained an unincorporated area until it was annexed by the City of Toronto in 1909. The major religious denominations of the period established churches in the neighbourhood.

The origins of St. Clair Avenue Baptist Church date to 1908 with the organization of prayer meetings in the Wychwood area. The congregation first occupied property on the northeast corner of St. Clair Avenue West and Wychwood Avenue before acquiring vacant land on the opposite side of Wychwood Avenue. The Sunday School wing that was constructed on the site in 1925 became the church after the congregation determined that it lacked the financial resources to construct a separate church building. As a result, the existing building was outfitted for worship services. Actively involved with mission work and musical activities throughout its history, St. Clair Avenue Baptist Church shares its facilities with community groups and celebrates its 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2008.

St. Clair Avenue Baptist Church is related to the practice of Toronto architect J. Gibb Morton who designed the building. Morton prepared the plans for the rebuilding of Metropolitan United Church in 1929 following its near-destruction by fire. His commissions for Corpus Christi Church (1927) at 1810 Queen Street East and Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church (1929) at 208 St. Clair Avenue East are all recognized on the City’s heritage inventory.

Contextually, St. Clair Avenue Baptist Church is a landmark along St. Clair Avenue West where the church is visible on an elevated site overlooking the thoroughfare. It contributes to the institutional enclave near the intersection of St. Clair Avenue West and

Wychwood Avenue, with Wychwood-Davenport Presbyterian Church on the northeast corner and St. Michael and All Angels (Anglican) Church on the southeast corner.

### Heritage Attributes

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

- The scale, form and massing of the L-shaped plan that rises one extended storey above a raised base with window openings
- The red brick cladding, with brick, cast stone and wood trim
- The steeply-pitched gable roof with stone coping along the gable ends, diminutive gables on the east slope, and a tall multi-sided brick chimney on the south slope
- The stone band courses that extend above the base and across the east elevation to balance the verticality of the design
- The principal (east) façade, where a single brick buttress with stone detailing divides the wall into two bays for recessed door and window openings
- The fenestration on the east façade, with narrow pointed arch window openings with brick voussoirs and stone sills
- The main entrances on the east façade, where pairs of paneled wood doors are set in Tudor-arched stone surrounds with quoins
- Flanking the entries, the single-storey enclosed porches with pointed-arched openings and stone detailing
- On the north wing of the L-shaped plan and the side elevations (north and south) of the structure, the repetition of pointed-arch window openings with brick and stone trim