

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE:
481 UNIVERSITY AVENUE (REASONS FOR DESIGNATION)

ATTACHMENT NO. 14

481 University Avenue: Maclean-Hunter Building (1961)

Description

The property at 481 University Avenue containing the Maclean-Hunter Building (1961) is worthy of designation under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act for its cultural heritage value, and meets the provincial criteria prescribed for municipal designation under all three categories of design, associative and contextual values. The Maclean-Hunter Offices is a nine-storey commercial building that occupies the east side of University Avenue between Dundas Street West and Edward Street. The property was listed on the City of Toronto Inventory of Heritage Properties in 1976.

Statement of Significance

The Maclean-Hunter Building (1961) has cultural heritage value as a fine representative example of a commercial complex from the post-World War II era designed in the Modern Classical style with the scale, materials and features inspired by the urban design guidelines established for University Avenue in the 20th century. Extending across a city block where it overlooks the landscaped central boulevard of University Avenue, the office building is distinguished by the interplay of the stone cladding and fenestration on the principal façade and side elevations, as well as the decorative detailing with the rare sculptural panels depicting the theme of communication.

The property at 481 University Avenue is valued for its associations with Maclean-Hunter, which was the successor to the Maclean Publishing Company founded by John Bayne Maclean in 1887. As the largest publisher in Canada during the 20th century of trade journals, internationally-circulated periodicals and newspapers, in this location Maclean-Hunter became a diversified media conglomerate and occupied these premises until the early 1980s.

The value of the Maclean-Hunter Building (1961) is also linked to its association with the prolific Toronto architectural firm of Marani and Morris that was responsible for innumerable commercial buildings in Toronto during the post-World War II era, including the Bank of Canada Building (1958) on the opposite side of University Avenue. The significant Canadian sculptor, Elizabeth Wynn Wood designed the incised panels depicting communication themes in the latter part of her career when she undertook architectural commissions for landmark buildings.

Contextually, the Maclean-Hunter Building (1961) is valued for its historical and visual links to the other buildings that form part of the publishing complex on the site, as well as to the adjoining neighbourhood. When the Maclean-Hunter Building was completed in 1961, it was the final component of the enclave filling the city block bounded by University Avenue, Dundas Street West, Centre Avenue and Edward Street that included

the original offices and printing plant on Centre Avenue, a second printing plant on Edward Street and the site's first 'tall building', combining a printing plant at the base of an office building on Dundas Street West. With its presence on University Avenue, the Maclean-Hunter Building is an integral part of the Maclean Publishing Company's complex that contributed to the development and evolution in the 20th century of University Avenue as one of Toronto's most distinctive and prominent streets.

The Maclean-Hunter Building (1961) has cultural heritage value in its role in defining, maintaining and supporting the character of University Avenue following the adoption of the University Avenue By-law (1931) that established guidelines directing the scale, materials and appearance of the commercial and institutional buildings along the ceremonial boulevard leading to Queen's Park. The Maclean-Hunter Building contributes to the group of custom-designed edifices characterizing University Avenue, including the Canada Life Building (1931) at 330 University, the Bank of Canada Building (1958) at 250 University, the Sun Life Assurance Company Building (1961) at 200 University, and the Toronto Courthouse (1966 with subsequent additions) at 361 University, which are recognized heritage properties in the city.

Heritage Attributes

The heritage attributes of the property at 481 University Avenue with the Maclean-Hunter Building (1961) are:

- The building known historically as the Maclean-Hunter Building (1961)
- The setback, placement and orientation of the building on the east side of University Avenue between Dundas Street West and Edward Street
- The scale, form and massing on the nine-storey plan
- The materials, with stone cladding and stone and glass detailing
- The flat roofline that is surmounted by a penthouse
- The organization of the principal (west) façade on University Avenue into three parts where the centre part projects as a shallow frontispiece with square window openings above the first storey and the flanking bays are devoid of openings
- The detailing on the west elevation, where the main entrance is centred in the first (ground) floor and flanked by single-storey pavilions
- On the north and south ends of the pavilions, the sculptural panels with figures portraying the theme of communication (the incised lines with gold leaf have eroded over time)
- The side elevations (north and south), where the fenestration from the west façade is repeated