

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE:  
1477 BAYVIEW AVENUE  
(REASONS FOR DESIGNATION)

ATTACHMENT NO. 4

Garden Court Apartments

Former Borough of East York By-law No. 6-87, designating the property at 1477 Bayview Avenue (Garden Court Apartments) under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act is amended to revise the Reasons for Designation to describe the site's cultural heritage values and attributes as set out in the 2005 amendments to the Ontario Heritage Act.

The property at 1477 Bayview Avenue is designated under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act for its cultural heritage value, and meets Ontario Regulation 9/06, the criteria for municipal designation prescribed by the Province of Ontario under all three categories of design, associative and contextual value. The property was included on the heritage inventory of the former Borough of East York in 1982, and designated under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act on January 5, 1987 by By-law No. 6-87.

Description

The Garden Court Apartments is a complex of 10 two- and three-storey apartment buildings that was constructed between 1939 and 1946 around a central courtyard in a designed landscaped setting. The property occupies an expansive site in Leaside extending one block east from Bayview Avenue (south of Millwood Road and opposite Davisville Avenue) to Berney Crescent. The Garden Court Apartments were developed by the Berney Realty Corporation and constructed by the Jackson-Lewis Company, both of which were co-founded by Toronto contractor, C. Blake Jackson. Toronto architects Forsey Page and Steele designed the complex, with the landscape plan prepared by Dunington-Grubb and Stensson, landscape architects.

Statement of Cultural Heritage Value

The property at 1477 Bayview Avenue has cultural heritage value for its design as a rare and exemplary apartment complex with highly crafted Art Moderne styling that is arranged around a central interior courtyard with retaining walls, pathways, mature trees, plantings and lamp standards that provides significant views into and across the generous site. The ten apartment blocks, which are identified by the letters A to K (excluding the letter I), are placed around the perimeter of the large courtyard, apart from those that face onto and connect the complex to the neighbouring streets (Bayview Avenue and Berney Crescent). While inspired by earlier garden court apartments in Europe and North America, the Garden Court Apartments in Leaside are purportedly the first of their type in Canada to incorporate the stream-lined Art Moderne detailing and materials that were new in this era. The high-end design featured private entrances (eliminating interior

corridors), with many front-to-back units that included front and rear yards usually reserved for single family residences.

The value of the Garden Court Apartments is also linked to the notable architects, landscape architects and contractors who designed and built the apartment complex. Forsey Page and Steele (afterward Page and Steele) were among the most significant architectural partnerships in Toronto in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, with their longevity linked to the firm's ability to adapt architectural innovations with changing styles, which included the Art Moderne. Forsey Page and Steele's design for the Garden Court Apartments was awarded an inaugural Massey Medal for Architecture in 1950, and the project remains one of the firm's best-known commissions. The memorable landscape design was produced by the famed practice of landscape architects, Dunington-Grubb and Stensson. Headed by the husband-and-wife team of Howard Dunington and Lorrie Grubb and working with master gardener Jesse Vilhelm Stensson, the firm was among the first recognized professional landscape architectural partnerships in Canada. Among its most important private commissions, the Garden Court Apartments are particularly noteworthy for demonstrating Dunington-Grubb and Stensson's expertise creating intimate spaces within their landscape design on a larger public scale. The complex was built by the Jackson-Lewis Company, which was one of the best-known and most prolific construction management and general contracting firms in Toronto in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. C. Blake Jackson, a co-founder of the company, also co-owned the Berney Realty Corporation, which commissioned the Garden Court Apartments and retained the property until 1947.

The Garden Court Apartments are valued for their contribution to the historical development of Leaside as it evolved from its agricultural origins to a planned community inspired by the Garden City movement and the designs of landscape architect Frederick Todd. The initially slow growth of Leaside as the result of war, economic depression and geographical isolation left large parcels of land intact that were developed in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century for "garden court" apartments, including the property at 1477 Bayview Avenue. At the Garden Court Apartments, early occupants of note were the two-time Toronto mayor, Sam McBride (Building C) and architects John B. Parkin (Building C) and Gordon Adamson (Building G).

Contextually, the property at 1477 Bayview Avenue with the Garden Court Apartments is historically, visually, functionally and physically linked to its expansive setting in Leaside where it is situated in the residential sector, east of Bayview Avenue. While the scale of the buildings complements the adjoining neighbourhood, the size of the property (encompassing over 5 acres or 2.023 hectares) with its privately-owned open space contributes to its value as a local landmark.

### Heritage Attributes

The heritage attributes of the Garden Court Apartments and the landscaped setting of the property at 1477 Bayview Avenue are:

## Buildings

- The setback, placement and orientation of the ten apartment buildings (identified as Buildings A-K, excluding the letter I) on Bayview Avenue (west), Berney Crescent (east), and in relation to the central open courtyard located on the interior of the property
- The placement and orientation of the individual structures, with Buildings A and K facing west onto Bayview Avenue, Buildings E and F facing east toward Berney Crescent, Buildings C and H placed at the north and south ends of the complex, respectively, to overlook the central courtyard, and Buildings B, D, G and J anchoring the four corners of the central courtyard
- The scale, form and massing of the individual buildings, where the six buildings identified as Buildings A, C, D, F, H and K consist of rectangular-shaped structures with two- and three-storey sections, and the four buildings identified as Buildings B, D, G and J have two-storey L-shaped plans
- The materials, with the buff brick cladding and the brick, stone, wood, metal and glass detailing
- The hipped roofs covering the three-storey buildings, the flat roofs on the two-storey buildings, and the roof detailing with the coping and the brick chimneys, including the extended chimneys on Buildings C and H (the original coping was replaced)
- On Buildings A, C, E, F, H and K, the two- and three-storey sections that are symmetrically organized with the main elevations divided into three parts with a central frontispiece containing a shared entrance to the units
- On the frontispieces of Buildings A, C, E, F, H and K, the first (ground) floor entrances containing panelled doors with geometrically-patterned glass inserts that are placed in surrounds with the stylized classical detailing associated with the Art Moderne and protected by either cantilevered canopies or open porches
- On Buildings B, D, G, and J, the recessed entrances and the corner windows (these features also are found on the extended two-storey wing on Building F)
- On all of the buildings, the fenestration with the flat-headed window openings in various sizes, including the basement openings (the original steel-sash windows have been replaced, but in a style that evokes the originals)
- The detailing on the buildings, with the corner quoins and the multiple string courses, and the treatment of the balconies that ranges from projecting to recessed and incorporates both curved and straight brick walls or open metalwork
- The symmetrical treatment of the rear and side elevations on the buildings, with the secondary entrances and, in some cases, window openings
- The individual treatment of the buildings with Art Moderne detailing, including the diminutive punched window openings with glass blocks on the principal (east) elevation of Building F on Berney Crescent

- The main entrance to the complex, which is found on Bayview Avenue between Buildings A (north) and K (south) and identified by the brick portico with the name “Garden Court” in metal letters

#### Landscaped Setting and Views

- The open green space along Bayview Avenue and Berney Crescent and in the four corners of the property
- The large rectangular-shaped central courtyard, which is oriented on a north-south axis and outlined by stone pathways and stone retaining walls with steps
- The axial stone pathways that cross the central courtyard, connect the individual apartment buildings, and lead out to the adjoining streets and laneways (many of the pathways incorporate steps and flagstones, and others are separated from the buildings by brick walls, some of which have been restored)
- Highlighting the downward slope of the site from the west to the east, the sets of stairs leading from the main entrance on Bayview Avenue down to the central courtyard, and the steps leading up into the complex from Berney Crescent (between Buildings E and F)
- The mature trees, hedges and other plantings
- The lamp standards, including the brick posts with lamps marking the east pedestrian entrance and the south vehicular entrance on Berney Crescent (the original lamp heads were replaced)
- The views into the complex from the main (west) entrance on Bayview Avenue and the east entrance on Berney Crescent on a straight east/west axis to and from the central courtyard (the original views across the central courtyard are partially obscured by the large spruce tree in the circle at the centre)
- The views from the central courtyard on a north/south axis from the circle in the centre north to Building C to and south to Building H