

The property at 260 High Park Avenue is worthy of designation under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act for its cultural heritage value, and meets Ontario Regulation 9/06, the provincial criteria prescribed for municipal designation under all three categories of design, associative and contextual values. Located on the southwest corner of High Park Avenue and Annette Street, High Park-Alhambra United Church is comprised of a single-storey church building (1908) with an attached Sunday School building (1925). The property at 260 High Park Avenue was included on the City of Toronto Inventory of Heritage Properties (now known as the Heritage Register) in 1990.

Description

The property at 260 High Park Avenue contains High Park-Alhambra United Church, which was completed in 1908 as High Park Avenue Methodist Church. The complementary Sunday School building was added in 1925. The congregation was founded in 1885 as the West Toronto Junction Methodist Mission before becoming the self-supporting Annette Street Methodist Church two years later. Originally occupying a wood frame building, the first brick church was built in 1887, extended three years later and, following the opening of the current church building, remained as the first Sunday School wing until 1925. Following the creation of the United Church of Canada in 1925, the church was renamed High Park Avenue United Church and afterward amalgamated with Victoria United Church. High Park Avenue United Church joined with Alhambra Avenue United Church as High Park-Alhambra United Church in 1970. The congregation disbanded in 1996.

Statement of Significance

High Park-Alhambra United Church has design value as a well-crafted early 20th century ecclesiastical building with the hallmarks of the Neo-Gothic (also known as Modern Gothic) style, which was developed in Britain in the late 19th century and inspired by English Perpendicular Gothic churches from the late middle ages. The crenellated towers, monochromatic colour scheme, flat wall surfaces and Tudor-arched windows that distinguish the Neo-Gothic from the Victorian Gothic style are displayed on High Park-Alhambra United Church. The attached Sunday School building complements the church in its scale, materials and detailing.

The property at 260 High Park Avenue is historically associated with the evolution of West Toronto Junction, which developed in the late 19th century adjoining the intersection of three railway lines. Incorporated as a village, town and city between 1884 and 1908, West Toronto Junction was noted for the beauty of Annette Street as the setting of the community's churches, library and other institutional buildings, where High Park-Alhambra United Church (then known as High Park Avenue Methodist Church) was completed the year before the municipality was annexed by the City of Toronto.

The cultural value of the High Park-Alhambra United Church is also through its identification as an institution of importance in West Toronto Junction for over a century. From its origins as a Methodist Mission in the 1880s, the congregation occupied two earlier churches on Annette Street before commissioning the current building after the turn of the twentieth century. Renamed in 1925 as High Park Avenue United Church, it became one of the largest congregations in the newly created United Church of Canada following its amalgamation with Victoria United Church. The size and success of its Sunday School classes resulted in the commissioning of a custom-built wing (1925). With its late 20th century amalgamation with Alhambra Avenue United Church as High Park-Alhambra United Church, the congregation continued to serve the spiritual and social needs of the community in this location.

High Park-Alhambra United Church is also valued as an important project of the Toronto architectural firm of Burke, Horwood and White, which completed the church after Murray White joined the existing partnership of Burke and Horwood in 1908. The commission for High Park-Alhambra United Church as a Methodist church reflected the evolution of the work of architect Edmund Burke who, after apprenticing and practicing with his uncle, the acclaimed church designer, Henry Langley, continued his execution of notable ecclesiastical designs. High Park-Alhambra United Church was indicative of Burke, Horwood and White's preference for Neo-Gothic styling for their large-scale church projects.

Contextually, the property at 260 High Park Avenue defines, maintains and supports the character of West Toronto Junction as it developed as an independent municipality prior to its annexation by the City of Toronto in 1909. In the community that was established southwest of the railway junction where Dundas Street West served as the "Main Street," Annette Street became the east-west corridor through the residential sector of West Toronto Junction and the setting of important institutional and ecclesiastical buildings, including High Park-Alhambra United Church.

The property at 260 High Park Avenue is also historically, visually, physically and functionally connected to its setting on the southwest corner of Annette Street where it contributes to the important collection of churches that characterizes the street between Medland Street (east) and High Park Avenue (west). The former Annette Street Baptist Church (1888) at 200 Annette and Victoria-Royce Presbyterian Church (1892) at 152 Annette are included on the City of Toronto's Heritage Register along with High Park-Alhambra United Church.

With its appearance and location on an expansive site adjoining the prominent intersection of High Park Avenue and Annette Street, High Park-Alhambra United Church is a local landmark in West Toronto Junction.

Heritage Attributes

The heritage attributes of the High Park-Alhambra United Church on the property at 260 High Park Avenue are:

Church

- The setback, placement and orientation of the church building on the southwest corner of High Park Avenue and Annette Street
- The scale, form and massing of the near-square-shaped plan that rises one extended storey above the raised base with the window openings
- The materials, with the red brick cladding, and the brick, stone, wood and glass detailing
- The steeply-pitched gable roof with the two brick chimneys at the west end adjoining the Sunday School building
- The towers at the northeast and southeast corners of the principal (east) elevation, which have different heights and display crenellated rooflines, Tudor-arched openings, and lancet windows
- On the east elevation of the southeast tower and the east and north elevations of the northeast tower (which overlooks the intersection of High Park Avenue and Annette Street), the raised entrances that are set in the Tudor-arched surrounds with double wood doors and transoms
- On the principal (east) elevation between the towers, the gabled frontispiece with the coping and the diminutive arched opening near the apex, and the monumental Tudor-arched window opening with the brick and stone mullions and the stained glass windows, including the memorial windows relocated from Alhambra Avenue United Church
- The near-identical north elevation on Annette Street and the south elevation (which is viewed from High Park Avenue), with the shallow gabled transepts and the stone detailing, the monumental arched openings with the brick and stone mullions, and the stained glass windows, which are flanked by the single arched openings
- On the interior, the auditorium with the vaulted ceiling supported on the columns, and the gallery that extends around the north, east and west sides

Sunday School Building

- The setback, placement and orientation of the building, which is attached to the west end of the church
- The scale, form and massing of the rectangular-shaped plan, which rises two stories above the high base with the extended window openings and the brick band courses
- The materials, with the red brick cladding, and the brick, stone, wood and glass detailing
- The flat roofline, with the decorative brick band course and, on the north elevation facing Annette Street, the stone motif
- At the east end of the principal (north) elevation, the gable-roofed entrance wing that marks the transition from the church to the Sunday School building, with the flat-headed window openings that distinguish it from the church and, at the base, the gable-roofed entrance porch (north) with the paired wood doors with the lights and transoms
- At the west end of the north elevation, the symmetrical arrangement of the fenestration, with the shallow frontispiece containing the arcade of arched openings in the centre of the wall, the flat-headed openings in the remainder of the wall, and the double windows and transoms
- On the west wall that is viewed from Annette Street, the flat-headed window openings that are organized by buttresses and pilasters
- The rear (south) wall, with the symmetrically-placed flat-headed window openings

- The east wall, which is partially concealed by the adjoining church, with the frontispiece containing the gable-roofed entrance porch with the double wood doors and the transom, and the fenestration that includes the arched opening above the entrance
- The brick detailing on the door and window openings, and the stone sills