

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE: CLARENCE SQUARE ATTACHMENT NO. 4 (REASONS FOR DESIGNATION)

The property at Clarence Square 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.

Description

Clarence Square is a City-owned park located on the east side of Spadina Avenue, north of Front Street West that dates to the 1830s when it was established as a public square in the first residential neighbourhood developed on part of the former Military Reserve. Set aside for public uses before being granted to the City, Clarence Square was laid out as a public park in the late 19th century and redesigned in the 1920s. At the west end of Clarence Square, a historical plaque commemorates the first Canadian recipient of the Victoria Cross (1854), who resided near the site. The City of Toronto's Official Plan includes Clarence Square as an Area of Special Identity in the King-Spadina Secondary Plan, and the late-19th and early-20 century buildings adjoining the square are recognized on the City's Heritage Register.

Statement of Significance

Clarence Square has cultural heritage value for its design as one of the earliest public parks in Toronto. Originating as part of the Military Reserve west of the Town of York that was opened for development in the 1830s, Clarence Square was originally laid out according to British planning principles as an open space that, with Victoria Square to the west, bookended Wellington Place (Wellington Street West), an expansive treed boulevard and a focal point of the exclusive residential enclave. Granted to the City of Toronto in 1860, Clarence Square was opened as a public park with a formal symmetrically-organized design that was replaced in the 1920s by the layout with axial linear pathways. In the City of Toronto's Official Plan, Clarence Square is recognized for its "spatial pattern [that] remains intact, and is unique in Toronto."

The associative value of Clarence Square is linked to its role in contributing to an understanding of the development of the King-Spadina neighbourhood, which originated in the early 19th century as an institutional enclave where landmarks such as the Third Provincial Parliament Buildings and Upper Canada College were adjoined by upscale housing. Coinciding with the incorporation of the Town of York as the City of Toronto and purportedly named for the Duke of Clarence (King William IV), Clarence Square was laid out in the 1830s as part of the first residential subdivision in the former Military Reserve. Originally set aside for a purpose-built Government House for the Lieutenant-Governor, instead Clarence Square was reserved for public uses and, following its transfer to the City of Toronto in 1860, designed as a public park. As the surrounding area underwent a dramatic transformation after the Great Fire of 1904 when Toronto's manufacturing district relocated to the King-Spadina cross-roads, Clarence Square remained as open space and a treed oasis amidst the factories and warehouses. A century later, with the regeneration of King-Spadina as a mixed-use community, Clarence Square is a visual reminder of the historic origins of the neighbourhood and the city.

Contextually, Clarence Square maintains the historic character of the King-Spadina neighbourhood as it was first established as an institutional and residential enclave in the early 1800s, and evolved with the development of Clarence Square as part of a planned residential subdivision that represented the westward growth of the community. The square is also historically, visually and functionally linked to its setting in open space organized by the series of pathways beneath a mature tree canopy. It is overlooked on the north by the Clarence Square Row Houses (1879), the lone survivors of the residential buildings that once lined Clarence Square on three sides. Identified as an area of special identity within the King-Spadina neighbourhood in the City of Toronto's Official Plan, Clarence Square is a local landmark in the community.

Heritage Attributes

The heritage attributes of Clarence Square are:

- The placement of the park on the east side of Spadina Avenue, which forms its west boundary, with roadways named "Clarence Square" around the north, east and south perimeters
- Inside the park, the series of axial pathways across Clarence Square to Spadina Avenue (west) and Wellington Street West (east)
- Adjoining the pathways, the open space with grass
- The mature deciduous tree canopy
- Near the west entrance to the park on Spadina Avenue, the provincial plaque commemorating Alexander Dunn, the first native-born Canadian to receive the Victoria Cross for his heroism during the Crimea War, and who once resided near Clarence Square
- The view of Clarence Square from the west, as it terminates the vista looking eastward along Wellington Street West from Victoria (Memorial) Square
- The view through the tree canopy west from the centre of Clarence Square across Spadina Avenue and west along Wellington Street West toward Victoria Square
- The view through the tree canopy north from the centre of Clarence Square to the late 19th century row houses at 5-16 Clarence Square that were designed to overlook the park

The dog run is not identified as a heritage attribute.