

REVISED:

40 WABASH AVENUE

ATTACHMENT 1

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

(REASONS FOR DESIGNATION)

The property at 40 Wabash Avenue (including entrance address at 50 Wabash Avenue) is worthy of designation under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act for its cultural heritage value and meets Regulation 9/06, the provincial criteria for municipal designation.

Description

The property at 40 Wabash Avenue (including entrance address at 50 Wabash Avenue) is located on the north side of Wabash Avenue where it occupies most of the street between Sorauren Avenue to the west and the CNR/CPR railway tracks to the east. The property contains a former linseed oil mill factory comprised of several buildings constructed in phases from 1910 into the 1940s, varying from one- to three-storeys in height, with a prominent chimney stack that is visible from Dundas Street West and the adjacent rail corridor. The factory was purpose built for the Canada Linseed Oil Mills Ltd., a Montreal-based company in operation from 1901 until circa 1970. The property is adjacent to the Sorauren Park and was purchased by the City of Toronto in 2000.

The property was included on the Heritage Register on June 26, 2024.

Statement of Cultural Heritage Value

The property has design or physical value because it is a representative example of an early 20th century industrial mill (or factory) building type, with Edwardian Classicism detailing. While the architecture of industrial buildings primarily focuses on utility and function, architects could help wealthier companies showcase their success by designing the appearance of their buildings to align with the prevailing fashions of the time. As an architect-designed factory, the Canada Linseed Oil Mills exhibits stylistic elements reminiscent of Edwardian Classicism, which was a popular architectural style in Toronto during the early 20th century. Features contributing to the property's industrial typology include but are not limited to its reinforced concrete and brick construction; varying height, scale, and complex massing indicative of the various functions of each building; flat rooflines; regularly spaced window openings; its steel structure canopy that reflects how the factory had direct access to the rail spur along Wabash Avenue; the grain hopper on the roof; its surviving chimney stack; and the remnants of the original company signage painted onto the bricks of the south façade.

The property has historical or associative value because it has direct associations with the industrial activity of the Wabash-Sorauren area which was impacted and encouraged by the location of the railways to the east. The first decade of the 20th century saw a transformation of the area from a residential plan by James Clarkson into

an industrial site by the Ross Land Company; the industrial activity was significant to the development of the historic Brockton Village and Roncesvalles communities. The development of the property at 40 Wabash Avenue in 1910 by the Canada Linseed Oil Mills Ltd. followed several other industries located between Sorauren Avenue and the railway line, including the Dominion Bridge Co., the Chapman Double Ball Bearing Co., the Robert Watson Co., and the National Equipment Company, exhibiting a trend for the area. The presence of the Linseed Oil Mills may have additionally influenced the construction of specific factories in the area, such as the Lowe Brothers Ltd. paint manufacturers that would have used linseed oil in its products. These and other industries provided employment for the residents of the surrounding neighbourhood.

The subject property is valued for its association with the architectural firm of Langley & Howland, who designed the factory with Edwardian Classical detailing. Charles Langley (1870-1951) and William Ford Howland (1874-1948) worked together for over 35 years, from 1905 to 1941, and compiled a substantial list of known works with a marked specialization in prominent residential buildings and bank buildings. The commission for the Canada Linseed Oil Mills at 40 Wabash Avenue is unique within the partnership of Langley & Howland because it is their only known industrial project and contributes to the diversity of their portfolio.

Situated on the north side of Wabash Avenue, east of Sorauren Avenue and west of the CNR and CPR railways, 40 Wabash Avenue is important in maintaining and supporting the historic industrial character of the Wabash-Sorauren area. Constructed as a linseed oil mill in 1910, the Canada Linseed Oil Mills buildings share typological similarities with the remaining historic factories along Wabash and Sorauren Avenue, which individually and collectively maintain a sense of how the adjacent neighbourhood developed in tandem with these industries. The historic industrial buildings exhibit similar large-scale and/or complex massing, brick cladding with subtle examples of decorative brickwork, and large window openings regularly spaced along the façades.

The Canada Linseed Oil Mills is historically and functionally linked to its surroundings as a purpose-built industrial building constructed in the context of an early 20th century industrial subdivision Plan 1256. The plan was purposefully designed with large lots intended to accommodate large-scale industrial buildings with access to the rail corridor. Access to the railway lines was pivotal to the success of linseed oil production in the early 20th century because flax seed had to be transported into the mills for processing. Since the flax seed was also imported from international suppliers, the rail corridor was additionally beneficial for providing access to the waterfront and its inexpensive transportation. The layout of the factory responded to the former rail spur along Wabash Avenue which ran directly parallel to the Mill (and former Grain Elevator) for easy delivery and loading. The steel canopy frame of the loading dock still remains on the Mill's south façade, exhibiting how the property's design was informed by its context.

Heritage Attributes

Design and Physical Value

The following heritage attributes contribute to the cultural heritage value of the property at 40 Wabash Avenue as a representative example of the industrial building type:

- The scale, form, and complex massing of the collection of buildings that comprise the early 20th century linseed oil mill, including:
 - the two-storey Mill building (c.1910) with raised basement on a rectangular plan
 - the three-storey Storage and Barrelling Refinery (c.1910) with raised basement on a rectangular plan
 - the one-storey Boiler House (c.1910) with connected chimney stack
 - the three-storey Warehouse addition (c.1925-1931) on a rectangular plan
 - the detached, one-storey Office building (c.1914-1924)
- The flat rooflines accentuated with corbelled parapets
- The materials, including:
 - reinforced concrete
 - precast concrete
 - brick
 - clay tile coping
- The existing positions and proportions of all original window openings as regularly spaced within the bays on the façades of the Mill, Refinery, and Warehouse buildings
- Segmental brick arches with precast keystones over the window openings along the upper storeys
- Brick pilasters with corbelling and triangular, precast concrete details
- Steel grain hopper on the roof of the Mill building
- Steel "lean-to" or canopy frame structure attached to the south façade of the Mill and Refinery buildings
- The prominent chimney stack, connected to the Boiler House, with corbelling on its shaft and top

Contextual Value

The following heritage attributes contribute to the cultural heritage value of the property at 40 Wabash Avenue as supporting and maintaining the historic industrial character of Wabash Avenue and Sorauren Avenue north of Wabash and for being functionally and historically linked to its surroundings:

- The placement and orientation of the property on the north side of Wabash Avenue, east of Sorauren and in proximity to the rail corridor to the east
- The prominence of the scale, form, and complex massing of the buildings situated within a large property lot with open surroundings
- The location of the steel "lean-to" or canopy frame structure on the south façade of the Mill and Refinery buildings

Note: the three-storey 1940 addition located at the rear (north) elevation of the Warehouse building and the two-storey c.1941-47 addition located at the rear (north) elevation of the Mill building are not included as attributes.