

HERITAGE CHARACTER STATEMENT

FHBRO Number 01-042

Ottawa, Ontario

Former Ottawa City Hall (Sussex Pavilion)

111 Sussex Drive

DFRP# 54977

The former Ottawa City Hall (Sussex Pavilion) was built between 1957 to 1958 on Green Island. It was designed by the firm of Rother/Bland/Trudeau, Architects. Additions to the building include the Bytown Pavilion and the Rideau Pavilion completed in 1992 by Moshe Safdie and Associates and Murray & Murray Associates. Public Works and Government Services is the custodian of the building. See FHBRO Building Report 01-042.

Reasons for Designation

The former Ottawa City Hall has been designated "Classified" because of its historical associations, its architectural significance and for its contribution to the character of its environment.

The former Ottawa City Hall is associated with the assertion of municipal governance in the post-war era of urban expansion in Ottawa and was influenced by post-war concerns with creating a modern form of civic monumentality. Built concurrent with the new official plan for the city of Ottawa and during an era of development in Ottawa that was characterized by a strong federal presence, the former Ottawa City Hall responded to the administrative needs of the rapidly growing city and was the embodiment of a new civic identity.

The former Ottawa City Hall is an excellent example of the adaptation of the International Style of architecture to a civic facility in Canada, marking a departure from a traditional city or town hall building type, and the advent of a modern civic building. Designed by the firm of Rother/Bland/Trudeau, Architects, the former Ottawa City Hall was constructed with high quality materials and finishes and exhibits a high level of craftsmanship. The building garnered the firm national and international attention and is considered their best work.

The former Ottawa City Hall is located along a prominent portion of the National Capital's Confederation Boulevard between the Royal Canadian Mint and Rideau Hall, the residence of the Governor General. This familiar city landmark reinforces the heterogeneous character of government buildings, embassies and upscale residences found in this area.

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Character Defining Elements

As an illustration of the assertion of municipal governance during the post-war era of urban development in Ottawa, the civic role of the building is reflected in:

- the exterior massing of the public, legislative and administrative spaces which expresses the various functions of the civic government;
- the open grid plan that connects the building's ground floor with the exterior plaza, creating a civic space;
- the ornamentation of the building exterior with publicly commissioned art work such as the cast aluminum city coat-of-arms designed by Art Price and the monumental aluminum fountain sculptures designed by Louis Archambault located on either side of the building entrance; and,
- the cast aluminum relief panels located on the Council Chamber balcony awnings.

These elements, together with the interior decorative elements (such as the commemorative inscriptions and repeated coat-of-arms motif) combine to create a new modern form of civic monumentality.

The influence of the International Style is manifested in:

- the monumental scale and well balanced massing of the building's raised podium;
- the eight-storey horizontal slab block with its recessed observation gallery;
- the three-storey cubic volume of the projecting Council Chamber with its town hall balcony;
- the strongly geometric exterior elevations with their distinct grid pattern and projecting cubic masonry forms integrated within the window bays;
- the pilotis on the ground level of the slab block, creating the impression of a floating volume;
- the vertical band of windows at each end of the slab block, expressing the length-wise interior corridor;
- the simple, unadorned and monochromatic exterior elevations; and,
- the well-crafted, high quality, monochromatic materials used to clad the exterior, including Queenstone limestone panels, extruded aluminum window frames, aluminum railings, and glass.

The hierarchy of well-crafted, high quality interior finishes and hardware which combine

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both traditional and modern materials, and correspond to the hierarchy of civic functions in the building such as:

- the interior treatment of the ground floor reception area which consists of white marble (on walls and free-standing oval stair), black Italian terrazzo, limestone-clad columns, stainless steel, and floor-to-ceiling plate glass, creates a reflective and monochromatic interior within a transparent envelope, and distinguishes this area as a public space;
- the more formal interior treatment of the legislative spaces such as the Council Chamber and Mayor's Office which consist of warmer finishes such as walnut and brown limestone walls, and brass hardware;
- the choice of more utilitarian, monochromatic materials in the administrative spaces such as grey mosaics on the elevator walls, pre-cast terrazzo sills, and brushed aluminum louvers.

The character of the relationship between the building and the surrounding environment is manifested in :

- the open relationship between the building and Sussex Drive, and specifically, the massing of the raised front podium to the street level;
- the strong geometric grid pattern of the building extended to the exterior environment and expressed on the ground plan through the use of hard paving in a monochromatic colour palette;
- the relationship of the two aluminum fountain sculptures to the building facade, main entrance and Sussex Drive;
- the visual openness of the International Style 'floating volume' and its transparent interior-exterior relationship to Sussex Drive and the Rideau River.

For further guidance, please refer to the *FHBRO Code of Practice*.

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