

## **St. Alphonsus Church**

### Description

The property at 540 St. Clair Avenue West is worthy of inclusion on the City of Toronto Inventory of Heritage Properties for its cultural heritage value. Historical records reveal that the church complex that anchors the northeast corner of St. Clair Avenue West and Vaughan Road was completed in two phases in 1911 and 1929 for a Presbyterian congregation that joined the United Church of Canada. The premises were subsequently acquired by the Roman Catholic congregation of St. Alphonsus.

### Statement of Cultural Heritage Value

St. Alphonsus Church has design value for its incorporation of design elements from the Neo-Gothic style of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, which was popular for ecclesiastical and educational buildings. St. Alphonsus Church displays two distinct building phases that are united with the application of red brick cladding, Tudor-arched openings, and buttresses.

St. Alphonsus Church is associated with the historical development of the Wychwood neighbourhood. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, Toronto artist Marmaduke Matthews established an artistic enclave in the area bounded by St. Clair Avenue West, Bathurst Street, Davenport Road and Christie Street. Matthews's residence, named "Wychwood," provided the name for the district, which was annexed by the City of Toronto in 1909. The increase in the area's population during the World War I era resulted in the construction of churches by various Protestant denominations.

The Wychwood Park Mission of Bloor Street Presbyterian Church acquired the corner lot at St. Clair Avenue West and Vaughan Road in 1903. The first modest church on the site was demolished. In 1911, the sanctuary was constructed and set back on the north part of the lot. The church was renamed St. Columba Presbyterian in 1918. A majority of the congregation elected to join the United Church of Canada (a union of Methodist, Congregational and many Presbyterian churches) in 1925, acquiring the name St. Columba United Church. In 1966, the congregations of St. Columba and St. Clair Avenue United Church amalgamated as St. Matthew's United Church. The property at 540 St. Clair Avenue West was acquired for the Roman Catholic congregation of St. Alphonsus, which altered the structures for its church and rectory.

Contextually, St. Alphonsus Church is a landmark on St. Clair Avenue West where the buildings are aligned to address the angle of Vaughan Road. Directly west, St. Michael and All Angels Church, St. Clair Avenue Baptist Church, and Wychwood-Davenport Presbyterian Church form an institutional enclave at the corner of St. Clair Avenue West and Wychwood Avenue.

## Heritage Attributes

The heritage attributes of St. Alphonsus Church related to its design, associative and contextual value as an example of the Neo-Gothic style and an institutional landmark on St. Clair Avenue West are:

### **1911 Church (Vaughan Road)**

- The scale, form and massing of the long rectangular plan above a raised stone base with window openings
- The red brick cladding with brick, stone and wood trim
- The medium-pitched gable roof with stone coping along the gable ends and a brick chimney
- The principal (west) façade on Vaughan Road, where the main entrance is raised and placed in a frontispiece flanked by Tudor-arched window openings
- The main entry, with paired wood doors with panels and glazed transoms set in a Tudor-arched surround
- Above the entry, a monumental segmental-arched window opening with a keystone, voussoirs, buttresses and a continuous sill, which is surmounted by a trio of diminutive pointed-arched openings with louvres and a continuous sill
- At the northwest corner, a crenellated tower with a pyramidal roof, buttressed corners with coping, Tudor-arched window openings in the lower walls, and oversized segmental-arched openings above with louvres and buttresses
- The south tower, which is connected to the nave by a single-bay link and features corner buttresses with coping and bartizans under a pyramidal roof with extended eaves and brackets
- The detailing on the south tower, with a Tudor-arched door opening with brick and stone detailing and paired wood doors on the south face, and Tudor-arched window openings surmounted by oversized segmental-arched window openings with buttresses and continuous stone sills
- On the north elevation, which is viewed from Vaughan Road, the segmental-arched window openings with brick and stone detailing above flat-headed window openings with stone lintels and sills

### **1929 Addition (St. Clair Avenue West)**

- The scale, form and massing of the 2½-storey plan L-shaped plan above a raised stone base with window openings
- The red brick cladding with stone, brick and wood trim
- The medium-pitched cross-gable roof with stone coping on the gable end, hipped roof sections flanking the tower, and hipped dormers on the east slope
- The principal (south) façade with a central flat-roofed tower
- The detailing of the tower, with corner buttresses with coping, a stone cornice about the entrance that forms the sill for the flat-headed window openings, the pair of Tudor-arched window openings with stone labels, and the stone parapet with medieval-inspired motifs

- The main entrance, which is raised at the base of the tower and features an oversized Tudor-arched surround with stone detailing and a sculpted blind transom
- The bays flanking the tower, with buttresses, monumental Tudor-arched window openings in the first floor, oversized flat-headed window openings in the upper storey, stone detailing on the openings, and pedimented dormers
- The west elevation, where a gabled frontispiece incorporates buttresses and Tudor-arched and flat-headed window openings with stone trim
- The east wall, which is viewed from St. Clair Avenue West, with flat-headed window openings