

Heritage Planner's Statement of Significance

Description of Historic Place:

The West End Telephone Exchange building is an Edwardian-era, two-storey, masonry structure located in Oliver.

Heritage Value:

Constructed in 1912, The West End Telephone Exchange is significant for its architecture and associations with the development of Edmonton's public telephone utility and prominent Edmonton architect Allan Merrick Jeffers.

The West End Telephone Exchange is significant for its Edwardian style architecture as expressed through its modest ornamentation and strong symmetry.

The West End Telephone Exchange is significant for its association with development of Edmonton's municipally owned telephone utility. Edmonton was an early adopter of telephone technology. In 1881, Alex Taylor began Edmonton's first telephone service and operated it privately until 1905 when it was purchased by the City of Edmonton with the intention to operate it as a public utility. Edmonton experienced rapid growth in the period prior to World War One and in order to provide adequate telephone service to its citizens, two new telephone exchanges were constructed in 1912; the North End Exchange in Spruce Avenue and the West End Telephone Exchange in Oliver. These exchanges housed some of the first automatic switching stations in Canada, a major technological advancement relative to the standard manual switching systems.

The West End Telephone Exchange is also significant for its association with prominent Alberta Architect Allan Merrick Jeffers. Jeffers, who designed the building, served as Alberta's Provincial Architect from 1907 to 1912 and as Edmonton's City Architect from 1912 to 1914. Jeffers designed a number of significant buildings throughout Alberta, including the Legislature, Athabasca Hall at the University of Alberta and Government House.

Character Defining Elements

The Edwardian style architecture of the West end Telephone Exchange is expressed in character defining elements such as:

- prominent corner location with minimal setback;
- form, scale and massing;
- overall symmetry of the building;
- distinctive raised parapet at the north gable;
- distinctive multi-paned semicircular attic window;
- horizontal masonry banding;
- the pattern, style and construction of all windows;
- cast concrete parapet cap, sills, keystones and door lintel inscribed with the words 'Telephone Exchange'.