

October 30, 2025

Reference No.: 536670643-005

To: City Council

From: Kim Petrin, Deputy City Manager, Urban Planning and Economy

Subject: **Notice of Intention to Designate the Harcourt House (10215 - 112 Street NW) as a Municipal Historic Resource**

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### **SUMMARY**

This memo initiates the process to designate a historic resource, the Harcourt House, at the owner's request, as a Municipal Historic Resource in accordance with the *Historical Resources Act*.

### **CURRENT ACTIONS** (*Immediate*)

1. That a Notice of Intention to Designate a Municipal Historic Resource, as set out in Attachment 1, be served on the owners of the property located at 10215 - 112 Street NW in accordance with Section 26 of the Alberta *Historical Resources Act*, RSA 2000, c H-9.<sup>1</sup>
2. That the City Manager be appointed to implement matters arising from the issuance of the Notice of Intention to Designate the Harcourt House as a Municipal Historic Resource, as set out in Attachment 1.

### **FUTURE ACTIONS** (*At least 60 days after the Notice of Intention to Designate is served*)

1. Pursuant to the provisions of the Alberta *Historical Resources Act*, RSA 2000, c H-9, a Bylaw to Designate the Harcourt House as Municipal Historic Resource (the "Bylaw") will be brought forward to Council for their consideration.
2. As per a Council Motion detailed below, \$500,000 has been granted to Where Edmonton Community Artists Network (W.E.C.A.N.) Society towards the purchase of the Harcourt House building.

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<sup>1</sup> On November 26, 2019, City Council passed amendments to the City Administration Bylaw, delegating approval of Notices of Intention to Designate (NOI) under the *Historical Resources Act* (HRA) to the City Manager, where the owner consents to the designation of their property. The NOI initiates the designation process under the *Historical Resources Act*; the final decision on designation remains with City Council by way of a bylaw.

## **BACKGROUND**

The Harcourt House is on the Inventory of Historic Resources in Edmonton, and merits designation under City Policy C450B - Policy to Encourage the Designation and Rehabilitation of Municipal Historic Resources in Edmonton. The building was designed by Freda O'Connor, constructed in 1964, and features International Style influences.

At the September 10, 2024 City Council meeting, Council approved the following motion:

1. That an exemption to City Policy C450B be granted to allow for a grant funded from the Heritage Reserve to the Where Edmonton Community Artists Network (W.E.C.A.N.) Society for the purpose of purchasing the Harcourt House Artist Run Centre property at 10215 112 Street, Edmonton.
2. That Administration prepare an agreement for this grant that could be finalized with the W.E.C.A.N. Society subject to a successful application by the W.E.C.A.N. Society to add the Harcourt House property to the Inventory of Historic Resources.
3. That the grant agreement include a condition that W.E.C.A.N. Society applies to designate the property as a Municipal Historic Resource within three months after acquiring property, and that the grant agreement include a financial penalty if W.E.C.A.N. Society fails to do so.

Harcourt House was added to the Inventory of Historic Resources on November 5, 2024. On March 3, 2025, \$500,000 was paid to W.E.C.A.N. Society in advance of their purchase of Harcourt House on March 31, 2025.

On August 28, 2025, the owners completed the application requirements to have the Harcourt House, located at 10215 - 112 Street NW, designated as a Municipal Historic Resource under the provisions of City Policy C450B.

If designated, any future renovation of the Harcourt House will be required to meet the *Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada*.

The designation of this property will support its proper restoration and continued protection in the future.

## **BUDGET/FINANCIAL**

The Heritage Resources Reserve paid the owner \$500,000 towards the purchase of Harcourt House in March 2025, as an exception to Policy c450b as per the motion above. If the Bylaw is approved, the Heritage Resources Reserve will not pay the owner any further funds for rehabilitation. The current Reserve balance is sufficient to cover the committed funding, including the Harcourt House.

Future restoration work can be funded through the heritage maintenance program once the designating bylaw is passed. Maintenance grants can fund up to one-third of eligible work up to \$100,000, which is renewable every five years.

The projections for the Reserve (using current commitments) anticipate a Reserve balance of \$4.5 million at the end of 2025. Administration is considering a number of

potential heritage designations for use of these funds, which will be brought forward for Council approval as required. Based on the current commitments, the Reserve balance is anticipated to decline to a balance of \$3.0 million at the end of 2026. The Reserve is funded by the tax levy on an annual basis (\$2.4 million in 2025 including \$465,000 specifically for the Edmonton Brewing and Malting Company Ltd).

**PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT**

Public engagement was not undertaken as part of this process, as it is not required under the *Historical Resources Act*.

KP/lk

cc: Executive Leadership Team  
Aileen Giesbrecht, City Clerk, Office of the City Clerk  
Michael Gunther, Acting City Solicitor, Legal Services

**Attachments:**

1. Notice of Intention to Designate the Harcourt House as a Municipal Historic Resource - *Historical Resources Act*
2. Location Map of the Harcourt House
3. Photographs of the Harcourt House
4. Heritage Officer's Statement of Significance



**Attachment 1**

**Notice of Intention to Designate the Harcourt House as a Municipal Historic Resource**

HISTORICAL RESOURCES ACT

R.S.A. 2000, cH.-9, as amended, Section 26

TO: Where Edmonton Community Artists Network (W.E.C.A.N.) Society  
3rd Floor, 10215 – 112 Street NW  
Edmonton, Alberta  
T5K 1M7

Notice is hereby given that sixty (60) days from the date of service of this Notice, The Municipal Council of The City of Edmonton intends to pass a Bylaw that the original 1964 structure known as the Harcourt House and the land on which such structure is located, legally described as:

PLAN B4  
BLOCK 11  
LOT ONE HUNDRED AND FIVE (105) AND THE MOST NORTHERLY TWENTY FIVE (25) FEET OF LOT ONE HUNDRED AND FOUR (104)

EXCEPTING THEREOUT ALL MINES AND MINERALS

and municipally described as 10215 - 112 Street NW, be designated as a MUNICIPAL HISTORIC RESOURCE under Section 26 of the *Historical Resources Act*, as amended from time to time.

AND TAKE FURTHER NOTICE THAT the Municipal Council of the City of Edmonton has appointed the City Manager to implement matters arising from the issuance of the Notice of Intention to Designate a Municipal Historic Resource.

DATED this 20 th day of November, 2025.

  
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Eddie Robar  
City Manager



## Attachment 1

### EXPLANATORY NOTE

The above Notice is addressed to the owner of, or person with a legal interest in, the resource named which the Municipal Council of the City of Edmonton (hereinafter referred to as the Council) intends to designate, by Bylaw, as a Municipal Historic Resource under Section 26 of the *Historical Resources Act*.

### EFFECT OF NOTICE

This Notice of Intention protects the historic resource named in it for 120 days from the date it was served on you. During these 120 days NO PERSON MAY DESTROY, DISTURB, ALTER, RESTORE OR REPAIR A MUNICIPAL HISTORIC RESOURCE OR REMOVE ANY HISTORIC OBJECT FROM IT unless they have written approval of the Council or person appointed by the Council for the purpose.

The Council or the person appointed by the Council, in its or their absolute discretion, may refuse to grant an approval or may make the approval subject to such conditions, as they consider appropriate.

Although there is no right of appeal as such against designation as a Municipal Historic Resource, you are not precluded at any time from writing to the Council, claiming that the site should not or should cease to be designated. Such claim must demonstrate that the property to be designated is not of architectural or historical significance. The evidence provided to support the claim will be carefully considered.

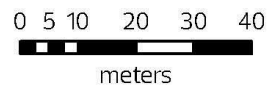
You may also apply by originating application to any judge of the Court of King's Bench for an Order shortening the 120 days of protection.

After 120 days the Notice ceases to have any effect, unless the Council has revoked it sooner, or the court has shortened the period, or unless the Council has passed a Bylaw designating the resource permanently.

Location Map for the Harcourt House



**Harcourt House**  
**10215 - 112 Street NW**



Photographs of the Harcourt House Building



Front (west) elevation of the Harcourt House.



Front (west) and side (south) elevations of Harcourt House, with annex building in the foreground. The annex building is not part of the historic designation.



Rear (east) elevation of Harcourt House, with south driveway visible.



Front (west) elevation of the Harcourt House, circa 1968.

## Statement of Significance

### Description of Historic Place

The Harcourt House building is a three-storey office building located midblock on the east side of 112 Street NW, between 102 Avenue NW and 103 Avenue NW in Edmonton's Wîhkwêntôwin neighbourhood. Built in 1964, the building displays many features of the International Style, with strong emphasis on horizontal and vertical elements. The building features buff brick; tall, evenly-spaced windows stacked atop each other; and an offset main entrance. An underpass driveway on the south portion of the building gives it a "floating box" look.

### Heritage Value

The Harcourt House building is valued for its associations with northern transportation pioneer Robert Earle Harcourt, architects Freda and Dennis O'Connor, and the Where Edmonton Community Artists Network (W.E.C.A.N.) Society. It is also valued as a strong example of the International Style of architecture.

### *Background*

The land that Edmonton was developed on was used by Indigenous peoples for millennia, as the North Saskatchewan River Valley and ravine systems were a source of shelter, travel, trade, materials, and food. In the fur trading era, the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) established a fort on the north side of the river. When the HBC sold its vast Rupert's Land territory to the Dominion of Canada in 1870, it retained reserve lands around its various trading properties, including a 3000 acre reserve around Fort Edmonton that became known as the Hudson's Bay Reserve. In 1876, the Canadian government signed Treaty 6 with Indigenous leaders in what is now Saskatchewan and the following year Indigenous chiefs in the Edmonton region signed adhesions to the treaty. Edmonton is also part of the Métis homeland.

In 1882 the HBC began parcelling off the southern portion of its reserve and as Edmonton began to grow in the early years of the 20th century, the HBC subdivided the area north of Jasper Avenue and west of 109 Street. This area was part of what was initially called the West End. In 1934, the West End Community League changed its name to Oliver in honour of recently deceased colonist and politician Frank Oliver. In 2024, the City renamed the neighbourhood Wîhkwêntôwin, which means "circle of friends" in Cree.

The West End was largely developed by the 1920s. Most of the area was residential but the area between 109 and 112 Street began to take on an industrial and commercial

character as a result of the Canadian Pacific Railway yard (CPR) that was established in conjunction with the opening of the High Level Bridge in 1913. When the City of Edmonton adopted its first Zoning Bylaw in 1933, the area east of 112 Street was zoned for industrial land uses. Warehouse / office buildings started being built in the area after World War II.

It was into this context, amidst rapid economic development and a wave of Modern architecture, that Harcourt House was constructed. Built with concrete, steel, and masonry, the Harcourt House building began construction in 1964 and was completed in 1965. The original June 1964 building permit states the building was to be two storeys tall; an October 1964 building permit, however, was issued for an addition that added a third storey as well as an elevator.

Prior to 1964, residential dwellings sat on the lots. The 1913 and 1925 fire insurance plans show a small apartment building, the St. Laurence Apartments, on the site, as well as some other residential units to the south. When Harcourt House was constructed, the three houses to the south were still standing; however, these were demolished for the annex building in the 1970s.

Originally constructed as an office building for Decury Supply Ltd., the Province of Alberta obtained ownership of the property before construction was completed. Upon completion, it was leased to the Edmonton Rehabilitation Society, later known as Goodwill Industries of Alberta. Goodwill moved into a newer building in 1987. The W.E.C.A.N. Society has occupied the building since 1988, operating it as Harcourt House.

### *Robert Earle Harcourt*

Harcourt House is valued for its association Robert Earle Harcourt. Earle was born in 1910 while his father, George Harcourt, was serving as Alberta's first Deputy Minister of Agriculture. Earle played on the Edmonton Eskimos rugby team in the late 1920s and had an adventurous spirit. After silver and other minerals were discovered along the Great Bear Lake, he made dog sled and boat trips to the region to work in the region's mines.

Gold was discovered on the north side of the Great Slave Lake in the mid-1930s. The community of Yellowknife sprang up to supply the mines and house workers, and the need to supply the community and the mines arose. Earle saw the potential for a winter road linking the Peace River district and Great Slave Lake. In 1938 he investigated the potential route by dog team. His trip helped convince the Alberta and Dominion governments to construct a winter road from Grimshaw, Alberta, which was at the northernmost extent of the Northern Alberta Railway, to Hay River on the Great Slave

Lake. The road was established in early 1939 and Earle's newly incorporated Yellowknife Transportation Company made the first delivery of freight to Yellowknife by tractor train in April 1939. This initiative laid the groundwork for the construction of the all-season Mackenzie Highway which opened a large portion of northwestern Alberta to development, reached Hay River in 1948, and was later extended to Yellowknife.

Earle Harcourt also established river transportation services on northern waterways linking Alberta and the Beaufort Sea. He was the primary competitor to the government-owned Northern Transportation Company. In 1965, the federal government acquired Earle's companies and consolidated their operations with Northern Transportation Company to further its northern resource and development objectives. At the time that negotiations with the government began, Earle was constructing a headquarters for his company Decury Supply on the east side of 112 Street in Edmonton. No longer needing the building, which became known as Harcourt House, he offered it to the Government of Alberta. It was looking for space for the Edmonton Rehabilitation Society. The society needed more room than the building had been planned to accommodate, so the third floor was added as part of the property sale.

Earle Harcourt died in Edmonton in 2000 at the age of 90. His childhood home, the George Harcourt Residence in the Windsor Park neighbourhood, was designated as a Municipal Historic Resource in 2009.

#### *Freda and Dennis O'Connor*

Harcourt House is valued for its association with Freda and Dennis O'Connor Architects. Born in Wales in 1926, Freda May Lewis received her architecture degree from King's College, Newcastle upon Tyne (now called Newcastle University) at 19 years of age and started her career in 1947, working with pioneering modernist architect-planner Donald Gibson, who was later knighted for his radical rebuilding of Coventry after the Blitz. Along with one other woman on the team of 100, Freda designed temporary structures to fill the holes left by bombs in downtown Coventry. Freda met her future husband and business partner, Dennis O'Connor (born 1921), in the late 1940s. After Dennis became a registered architect in 1951, he and Freda married. In 1952, the couple moved to Ghana for work. While there, they met Noel Dant, who had recently left his position as City of Edmonton's Town Planner. Partially due to Dant's influence, the O'Connors ended up emigrating to Canada and establishing themselves in Edmonton.

Over the next several years, Dennis & Freda O'Connor Architects designed many buildings in Edmonton and beyond. The couple partnered with Ronald Maltby in the early 1960s and the firm became Dennis and Freda O'Connor and Maltby Architects &

Planning Consultants. They were known for their equal partnership and exceptional communication, which enabled them to balance several projects at once between the three of them. The firm designed a myriad of buildings, including churches, 52 schools, award-winning houses, apartment buildings, commercial buildings, and health centres. The firm was also involved in development, and financed and built several apartment buildings in the Oliver (now Wihkwentôwin) neighbourhood, such as York House (10030 - 114 Street NW), Lancaster House (10025 - 116 Street NW) and the Albany (10155 - 116 Street NW).

In 1974, Freda was elected president of the Alberta Association of Architects, and thus became the first woman ever elected president of a professional architectural association in Canada.

Freda and Dennis O'Connor retired from their practice in 1982 and moved to Salt Spring Island. Despite her retirement, Freda chaired a panel reviewing development proposals on the island for several years. Freda passed away in 1993, at the age of 67, after suffering from a brain tumor for some months. Dennis continued to live on Salt Spring Island until his passing in 2006 at the age of 85. The successor to their firm was Maltby & Prins Architects, which was still operating in Edmonton as of 2025.

### *W.E.C.A.N. Society*

The Harcourt House building is also valued for its association with Where Edmonton Community Artists Network (W.E.C.A.N.) Society, which has operated the Harcourt House arts studios at 10215 - 112 Street NW since 1988. W.E.C.A.N. began after several local artists organized an art auction to benefit victims of the Black Friday tornado that struck east Edmonton on July 31, 1987. Harcourt House comprises the single largest community of visual arts studios in Alberta by providing 44 studio facilities to artists, as well as exhibition and art education facilities. After leasing the building from the Government of Alberta for 37 years, W.E.C.A.N. Society purchased the building in 2025.

### *Architecture*

Harcourt House is a good example of the International Style, which was popularized in the late 1920s and early 1930s and emphasized a pared-down, unadorned style, with rectilinear forms, flat roofs, and smooth wall surfaces. Like other forms of Modern architecture, the International Style emphasized the function of a building, avoiding any ornamentation that was not essential to the building's use. The International Style emphasized volume over mass, regular patterns over symmetry, and reliance on the materials used to convey style and feeling. New building technologies, such as mass-produced steel, also influenced the International Style.

The Harcourt House building displays many features of the International Style, with a minimalist form that emphasizes both vertical and horizontal lines. Harcourt House has a flat roof; tall, evenly-spaced windows stacked atop each other, buff brick facades, and an offset main entrance on the north end of the front facade. An underpass driveway was installed on the south portion of the building to give the building a “floating box” look as viewed from the front and rear. The low, flat, horizontality of the building suggests the prairie landscape and emphasizes the functionality of the structure – first as offices, later on as a space that fosters art and creation.

### **Character-defining Elements**

Key character-defining elements of the 1964 Harcourt House Building include:

- Form, scale, and massing
- Three storeys
- Flat roof
- Buff brick facade
- Grid patterning of tall windows on three floors
- Continuous horizontal glazing on basement level
- “Floating box” design on a low podium with south driveway underpass
- Offset front entrance on north end of west elevation
- North stairwell glazing
- Cornerstone with “Harcourt House 1964” inscription