



ALEXANDER CIRCLE

CITY OF EDMONTON HISTORIC RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PROGRAM



13301 - 103 AVENUE NW

DESCRIPTION OF HISTORICAL PLACE

Alexander Circle is a charming open space located within the Glenora neighbourhood. The park site is a total of 0.263 hectares in size and is divided into four quadrants. It is bound by the Alexander Circle roundabout that connects to 133 Street and 103 Avenue in the four cardinal directions. It is a passive park site with a central fountain, plant beds, and benches. Alexander Circle was the first open space in Edmonton to be designated as a Municipal Historic Resource.

HERITAGE VALUE

Originally subdivided in 1911 and constructed in stages in subsequent decades, Alexander Circle is valued for its association with the development of the Glenora neighbourhood and neighbourhood parks across Edmonton more generally.

Alexander Circle is situated on land initially acquired as River Lot 2 by Malcolm Groat, who worked for the Hudson's Bay Company until the 1870s.

In 1906, James Carruthers subdivided the portion of River Lot 2 north of Stony Plain Road in conventional gridded fashion and named the community Glenora. In 1911, Carruthers hired surveyor Richard Knight to lay out two very different subdivisions for the area south of Stony Plain Road. These subdivisions were Edmonton's first examples of Garden Suburb design. Garden suburbs were low density residential areas carefully integrated with gardens and/or open spaces.

At a time when previous subdivisions in Edmonton had not been deliberately planned with public parks, garden suburbs like Glenora were a revelation that coincided with a societal increase in time for leisure and recreation. Eventually, public parks came to be seen as a necessary element of all neighbourhoods. Glenora's open spaces— and especially Alexander Circle, the only legally titled parkland in the Glenora's two Garden Suburb subdivisions— were thus antecedents to neighbourhood parks across Edmonton.





HERITAGE VALUE; CONTINUED

The earliest houses in Glenora were built between 1911 and 1918, primarily along Connaught Drive, Alexander Circle, St. George's Crescent and the two blocks immediately west of Groat Ravine along Athabasca Avenue (now 102 Avenue). The eastern half of the circle was built by 1924 and by 1930, and the circle was grassed. Children used the space for activities such as rugby, hockey and other active games. The 16 boulevard trees within the circular road right-of-way – one for each residential property around the circle – were added sometime in the 1930s or 1940s.

The circle did not originally have a name, so its surrounding houses were addressed as being on 133 Street. Some people unofficially called it Glenora Circle. After World War II, the community tried multiple times to get a proper name for the circle. In 1952, residents first proposed the name Alexander Circle. Since other streets in Glenora were named after past Governors General of Canada, Alexander was suggested in honour of Harold Alexander, the 1st Earl Alexander of Tunis, who had just completed a six-year term as Governor General. The renaming did not go ahead at the time.

That same year, however, residents led by J. Percy Page of 10312 - 133 Street (now 16 Alexander Circle) raised money for a fountain to be installed in the middle of the circle. Page was a famed Edmonton Grads basketball coach, MLA and future Lieutenant Governor of Alberta. He had been to Paris and other European cities on basketball tours and no doubt had seen formally designed open spaces.

As a result of the community funding, an illuminated fountain designed by the City Parks Department was installed and opened in 1954.

Paved pathways aligning with 133 Street and 103 Avenue were also added, along with flower beds and benches. After additional attempts by the neighbours, the open space was named Alexander Circle in 1968 and the surrounding road renamed Alexander Circle in 1992.

Alexander Circle park is valued for being a local landmark, favourite meeting spot for residents, and as a popular photography site, especially among wedding photographers. The design of the park is unique in Edmonton with the use of quadrants and the number four. There are four walkways, four benches, and four flower beds with one of each in the four quadrants. There are also 16 trees, with four trees in each quadrant in the surrounding boulevard area. The park's symmetrical design features and central fountain are reminiscent of formally designed landscapes elsewhere and lend an attractive beauty to the open space that has drawn Edmontonians and visitors to Alexander Circle for decades.

CHARACTER DEFINING ELEMENTS

The character-defining elements of the Alexander Circle include:

- + Circular open space within a Garden Suburb subdivision design;
- + Formal, symmetrical landscape architecture with hard surface pathways from the four cardinal directions that intersect at the centre;
- + Deciduous trees and shrub landscaping in a circular pattern along the edge of the park, with four trees and one shrub per quadrant;
- + Manicured circular planting beds in each quadrant;
- + Manicured open lawn;
- + Radial design of elements from a central fountain; and
- + Four seating pads surrounding the fountain.

Designated as a Municipal Historic Resource through Bylaw 20985 in December 2024.

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