



MCDUGALL UNITED CHURCH

10086 MACDONALD DRIVE NW

CITY OF EDMONTON HISTORIC RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

Edmonton

DESCRIPTION OF HISTORICAL PLACE

McDougall United Church is a two-and-a-half storey brick church built in the Italianate style. It is situated on a prominent corner in downtown Edmonton near the edge of the river valley at 10058 MacDonald Drive NW. The main façade is centred on the gable end of the auditorium and features a central entrance flanked by square towers of different height on the northwest and southwest corners. The building is anchored by the southwest bell tower, which rises three storeys with louvred openings on the bell chambers and a bracketed cornice. Pilasters divide the north and south walls into bays consisting of arched and segmented windows, while an intersecting gable wing extends from the south wall. The designation of the building does include the 1954/1955 addition to the southeast corner of the building.

HERITAGE VALUE

The heritage value of McDougall United Church rests in its association with the establishment of early religious institutions in Alberta. It is further significant as an example of early twentieth-century ecclesiastical architecture, and for its identity as a landmark cultural facility in Edmonton.

McDougall United Church represents one of the oldest religious institutions in Alberta. The earliest church on this site was a modest wood structure established by Reverend George McDougall in 1873. The church was part of a larger effort by McDougall to anchor the Methodist church in Alberta on a permanent rather than itinerant basis as the region transitioned from the fur trade to agricultural settlement. A second wood-frame church was

erected in 1892 to accommodate growth in the congregation. During the pre-World War One settlement boom in Alberta, Edmonton's population swelled and a much larger place of worship was needed. The current church opened in November 1910, and was at that time one of the largest Methodist churches in Western Canada. In 1925, the church became known as McDougall United Church after Methodists, Congregationalists and Presbyterians joined to form the United Church of Canada. McDougall United Church is thus associated with one of the earliest and longest-active Protestant congregations in Alberta, and has long been an essential part of the province's religious and social history.

Designed by prominent architect H.A. Magoon, McDougall United Church is a commanding structure built on a scale that reflects the aspirations of a booming, pre-First World War Edmonton. The towers give the church a massive presence, while features such as the pediment-like gable end, brick pilasters, rusticated brick piers flanking the main entrance, and bracketed cornice on the southwest tower reflect the influence of classical architecture on the church's elegant form. The relatively unadorned interior of the church features elements common to early twentieth-century Methodist churches in Alberta. The rectangular plan, high vaulted ceiling and numerous windows create a sense of spaciousness and grandeur, while the auditorium-style seating and U-shaped upper balcony optimized space, maximized the visibility of the service for worshipers, and helped to foster an atmosphere of community and fellowship within the congregation. The kitchen and banquet hall in the basement provided additional space for church and neighbourhood events, further contributing to the





building's role as a social gathering space. The interior design thus reflects the modest, egalitarian and participatory nature of Methodist worship, while the scale and grandeur of the building convey the optimism of a growing congregation in the heart of one of western Canada's major urban centres.

Over the course of its history, McDougall United Church has served not only as a place for religious worship, but also as an important social and cultural centre. The facility has hosted a number of significant events, including political debates and rallies for social justice. It is also well-known for its excellent acoustics and represents one of the city's premier music performance venues.

CHARACTER DEFINING ELEMENTS

The character-defining elements of McDougall United Church include its:

- + location at a prominent corner site in downtown Edmonton;
- + form, scale and massing;
- + main façade consisting of auditorium gable with returning eaves, large round-arched window with prominent keystone, and raised main entrance with rusticated brick piers and paired windows;
- + red brick exterior;
- + concrete string courses and keystones;
- + pressed metal cornices;
- + fenestration, window pane arrangement and glass;
- + door openings, doors and hardware;
- + brick pilasters;
- + louvred openings on the southwest bell tower;
- + configuration of plan;
- + large, open worship space with slightly-sloped floor overlooked by a U-shaped balcony on the north, west and south sides;
- + barrel-vaulted ceiling over the auditorium;
- + curved banks of wooden pews on the main floor and balcony;
- + organ components pre-dating the modern replacement;
- + lath and wood plaster wall finishes;
- + wood paneling, doors and details;
- + wood staircases and bannisters;
- + lighting fixtures;
- + riveted metal frame roof structure; and
- + bell chamber and associated extant bells and mechanisms.

Designated as a Municipal Historic Resource through Bylaw 17481 in March 2016.

Designated as a Provincial Historic Resource in June 2015.



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