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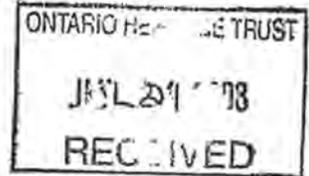
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THE CORPORATION OF THE CITY OF WINDSOR

MBA/10054

IN THE MATTER OF THE ONTARIO HERITAGE ACT  
AND IN THE MATTER OF THE LANDS AND PREMISES KNOWN AS  
2879 RIVERSIDE DRIVE EAST IN THE CITY OF WINDSOR  
IN THE PROVINCE OF ONTARIO



NOTICE OF INTENTION TO DESIGNATE

REGISTERED MAIL

ONTARIO HERITAGE FOUNDATION  
10 ADELAIDE STREET EAST  
TORONTO, ONTARIO  
M5C 1J3

**TAKE NOTICE THAT** the Council of the Corporation of the City of Windsor intends to designate the property, including lands and buildings known as 2879 Riverside Drive East as a property of architectural and/or historical value or interest under Part IV of The Ontario Heritage Act:

**Statement of Significance/Reasons for Designation:**  
**2879 Riverside Drive East**  
(CON 1 PT Lot 99, Plan 487 E PT LOTS 1 to 3 &; E PT BLK A)

**Description of Historic Place**

Our Lady of the Rosary Roman Catholic Church is located in the former Ford City on Riverside Drive facing the Detroit River. The church has served the community since 1884.

**Heritage Value**

**Historic Value:**  
**Historical Importance:**

Our Lady of the Lake (as formerly known) is located in Ford City, which was one of the municipalities known as the Border Cities. According to the *Our Lady of the Rosary Parish*, 1984 Centennial booklet by Mary-Kate Brogan, in 1881 Sandwich East was primarily an agricultural community settled in the French settlement pattern of long, narrow farms with small fronts on the Detroit River that extended back to the Third Concession Road. Today many Windsor roads follow these settlement patterns and are named after the founding farming families who were allotted land in the 1700's. There were at least 50 families farming the area of Sandwich East in 1760.

Our Lady of the Rosary exists because of these French settlers and was built on the Detroit River at the end of a French farmstead. Our Lady of the Rosary was founded in 1884, and was then called Our Lady of the Lake. The name was in honour of Lake St. Clair and the Mother of God.

Before Our Lady of the Lake was established, St. Alphonsus in Windsor was the closest Church for people residing in Sandwich East. This was a very long journey on horse and buggy, and many would travel by foot. Father Wagner, the founder of Our Lady of the Lake, realized there was a need for a parish that was accessible for the residents of Sandwich East.

When the new church was announced in 1881 the community rallied together to make Our Lady of the Lake a reality. The architects were Claude Reaume, J.S. Viger and William Waldman who volunteered for the positions in support of the new church. The contractors were Francois Xavier Drouillard and his cousin Adolphe Labadie. The church drew from the area defined between Howard Avenue and all the way to Little River and four concessions back from the Detroit River.

The cornerstone of the church was laid on May 18, 1884, which was three years after the first plans were initiated for the building of Our Lady of the Rosary. At that time the church cost \$12,745.49.

On March 16, 1907 a fire destroyed the church and a total rebuild was required. The church was then renamed Our Lady of the Rosary and served the community of Ford City, which is now part of Windsor. This new building was referred to as "one of the finest religious edifices in Western Ontario" (Brogan, 1984). A spark from a passing train caused the fire that set the Ideal Fence Company (corner of Cadillac Street) on fire and then spread to Our Lady of the Lake. The church was rebuilt bigger and better to accommodate the growing population of the area. The new architects were from William Brothers, a well-known firm in the area. At this time Ford of Canada had been established, some roads were being paved, and a streetcar connecting Windsor and Tecumseh was built.

*Our Lady of the Rosary Parish* booklet reports that Ford City was booming in 1917 as 3000 people were employed there. Major infrastructure projects took place and a new city hall for Ford City was built next to Our Lady of the Rosary costing \$35,000. Our Lady of the Rosary church served mainly the French community. In 1917 after the current pastor Fr. Beaudion died the parish felt that a French-speaking pastor was very important to them, due to the English educational system that was enforced at the time. F. X. Laurendeau was announced as the new pastor on August 23, 1917. Despite his French name, the parish felt that he was unsympathetic to the French language issues of the time. Upon Fr. Laurendeau's arrival at Our Lady of the Rosary a riot broke out between the French and English communities.

According to *Our Lady of the Rosary Parish* booklet, the church experienced a decline in parish numbers due to the lack of support for the new pastor. Most traveled to other churches, even as far as Detroit. It did not take long for the people of Our Lady of the Rosary to band together, and realized that Fr. Laurendeau would deliver his sermons in both French and English. Under Fr. Laurendeau's leadership the parish rose to 3000 people.

Over the years, Our Lady of the Rosary has given back to the community, most notably through Drouillard Place, which is still active today. The East Windsor Citizen's Committee and Our Lady of the Rosary Church founded Drouillard Place in 1979. The centre offers quality programs and services for area families and youth. Drouillard Place is also striving to redevelop and revitalize the neighborhood of Ford City.

Our Lady of the Rosary has had several daughter parishes over the years including: St. Anne, St. Rose de Lima, St. Therese, Most Precious Blood, St. Cyril and Methodius, St. Joseph, St. Francis, and Our Lady of Guadalupe.

In May 2007 the Auxiliary Bishop of London wrote a letter to the parish of Our Lady of the Rosary announcing the closure of the church. This news came a year after Our Lady of the Rosary was recommended to remain open. The new recommendation was based on the facts that the numbers of parishioners are declining, and rising costs of upkeep for Our Lady of the Rosary.

#### **Architectural Importance:**

The style may be considered Renaissance Revival, but includes Classical Revival details. The twin bell towers are visible from the Detroit River and from the Detroit shore, lending distinction to the Canadian vista. The towers flank the gabled entrance with a rose window and arched pediment over the imposing main entrance. The original flight of steps, which stretched across the entire façade, was later replaced with a Renaissance-inspired design. There is a stone carving in the middle of the front steps.

According to a Windsor Star article dated September 12, 2002, Our Lady of the Rosary was the first to have an illuminated crucifix displayed on the exterior of the church.

Our Lady of the Rosary went through major reconstruction projects – like the restoring of the towers in the mid 1980's and refurbishing the front entranceway in the late 1990's. In 2002 the parish celebrated the completion of a \$2 million renovation project.

**Interior features that contribute to the architectural importance:**

The interior has a half dome-shaped ceiling over the sanctuary that is the end of an arched vaulted ceiling over the central aisle way of the church. Both sides of the aisle way have ionic style capital columns that extend to support the half dome as well. The rear (North) of the church has a balcony that has been used for the organ at one time.

**Contextual Importance:**

Our Lady of the Rosary faces Detroit and is visible from the U.S. shoreline. The church is an important element of the Windsor skyline, which gives it landmark status. Its location on Riverside Drive, a historical street, is also significant in Windsor. Riverside Drive is very historic due to its origins as a path for Ottawa Indians in the 1700's. Riverside Drive was previously called Bordage Road, Front Road and Sandwich Street.

**Character Defining Elements**

**Items that contribute to the historical value include:**

- Its association with early French settlement of Sandwich East.
- Its association with the prosperity of Ford City and the beginnings of the Ford Motor Company of Canada.
- Its involvement in the Ford City riot of 1917.
- Its connection with many daughter parishes in the City of Windsor.

**Exterior features that contribute to the architectural value include:**

- Its symmetrical front (North) façade, with a bell tower at the North East and North West corners of the church.
- Renaissance style staircase leading up to the entrance of the church.
- Red brick and white brick trim, accents and relief.
- Three arched wooden door entranceways on the front (North) façade of the church. Two into the bell towers and one in the centre of the North façade.
- An arched stained glass window above each entranceway in the bell towers.
- A copper dome sits atop each bell tower housing the bells of the church. The domes are supported by 6 arched openings.
- A cross once extended from each dome.
- A cross at the peak of the roof and one over the entranceway.
- The rose window over the entranceway.
- The central entranceway being housed by pillars and a small canopy.
- The six sets of stained glass along the East and West facades of the church separated by white brick pilasters.
- Stained glass windows on either side of the central entranceway.

**Interior features that contribute to the architectural value include:**

- Arched vaulted ceiling of the central aisle way of the main public space that ends in a half dome at the front (South) of the church.
- Columns supporting the church down both sides of the main aisle way that also support the half dome, with ionic style capital.
- Balcony at the back (North) of the church.

**Characteristics that contribute to the contextual value include:**

- Its location on Riverside Drive East.
- Its landmark status in Ford City on Riverside Drive East.
- Its visibility from the Detroit River and the shores of Detroit making Our Lady of the Rosary an important part of the Windsor skyline.

Any person may, within thirty days of the publication of this notice, send by registered mail or deliver to the Clerk of the City of Windsor notice of his or her objection to the proposed designation together with a statement of the reasons for the objection and all relevant facts. If such a Notice of Objection is received, the Council of the Corporation of the City of Windsor shall refer the matter to the Conservation Review Board for a hearing.

**DATED** at Windsor, Ontario this 14th day of July 2008  
Steve Vlachodimos, Manager of Council & Committee Services / Deputy Clerk

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Steve Vlachodimos". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above a horizontal line.

Steve Vlachodimos  
Manager of Council & Committee Services / Deputy Clerk

KK/ct