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THE CORPORATION OF THE CITY OF WINDSOR

FILE NUMBER: MBA/14620

IN THE MATTER OF *THE ONTARIO HERITAGE ACT*
AND IN THE MATTER OF THE LANDS AND PREMISES KNOWN AS
1646 ALEXIS ROAD IN THE CITY OF WINDSOR
IN THE PROVINCE OF ONTARIO

NOTICE OF INTENTION TO DESIGNATE

REGISTERED MAIL

ONTARIO HERITAGE TRUST
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 Gordon McGregor School (former) at 1646 Alexis Road as a property of cultural heritage value or interest under Part IV of *The Ontario Heritage Act*:

Statement of Cultural Heritage Value and Interest
Gordon McGregor School (former)
1646 Alexis Road

Description of Historic Place:

The former Gordon McGregor Public School is located at 1646 Alexis Road, within the former boundary of Ford City (East Windsor). The red-brick, two-storey plus basement school constructed in 1924, was originally designed with an asymmetrical facade, a protruding northwest block and front entrance with carved oak doors flanked by brick masonry. Prominent in the design is a horizontal decorative stone banding with low relief medallions above the second story window, as well as two storey stone surrounds around the glazing. The building is one of the oldest remaining public elementary school buildings. It is a significant neighbourhood landmark at the southeastern boundary of the former Town of Ford City, reflecting the early phases of the town's development and its demands for public educational facilities. Only the historic building and proximate surroundings (not including severed lands to be redeveloped) is part of the designation.

Design/Physical value:

The former Gordon McGregor School exhibits elements of Art Deco architecture popularized between 1910 to 1940. Known for its vertical and geometric form with design

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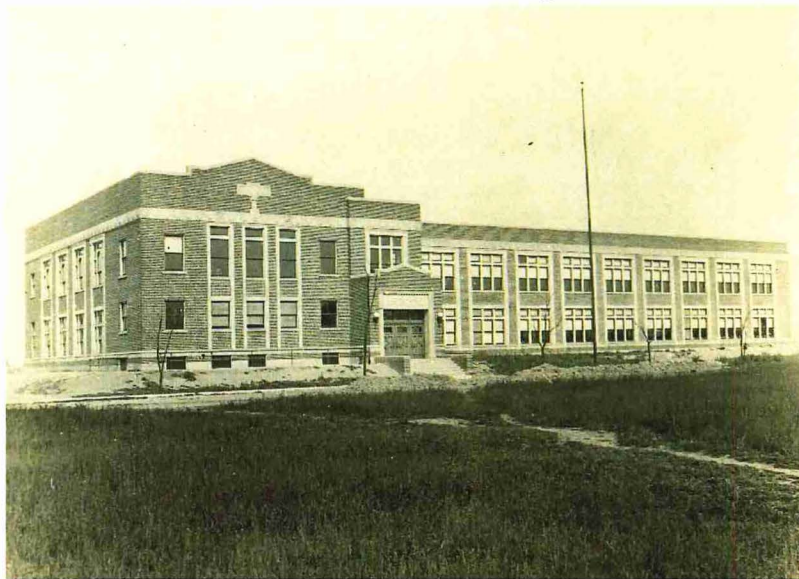
City of Windsor | 350 City Hall Square West | Windsor, ON | N9A 6S1
www.citywindsor.ca

MAR 18 2024

Ontario Heritage Trust

motifs, Art Deco architecture is often also recognized by its flat roofs, glass plate windows, center or side entrances with motif detailing and its smooth facades.¹

The Gordon McGregor School is a two-story building with a partial basement constructed in 1924. Designed by the locally significant architectural firm Nichols & Sheppard, the collaboration between Nichols, Sheppard, and Masson were then responsible for the addition in 1927 just two years after the initial construction. Travelling South on Alexis Road, the generous set back and landscaped main entrance provides visitors with unhindered views of the school building.



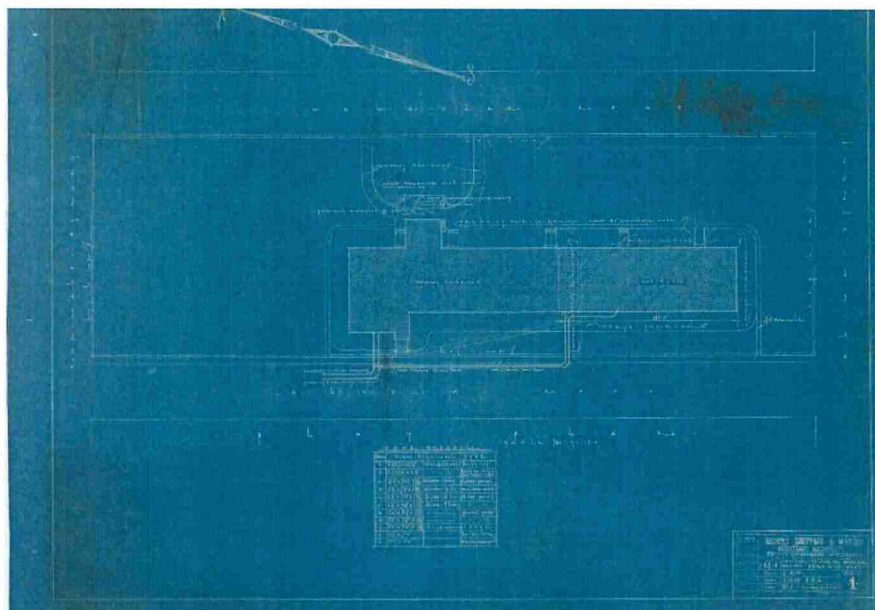
Historical Photo of the Former Gordon McGregor School²

The building is currently identified by its asymmetrical variegated red brick façade constructed using common bond brick with a stone parapet. In addition, the elongated rectangular massing and its simple, streamlined design further accentuates the building's overall linearity, drawing vertical emphasis on the façade through the utilization of clean straight lines (through the stone surrounds at glazing) and minimal decorations that are often found in Art Deco architecture.³ The same architects were responsible for the 1927 addition, incorporating the same uniform design for the 19-room expansion.

¹ Heritage Resource Center. *Ontario Architectural Style Guide*. Retrieved from <https://www.therealtydeal.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/Heritage-Resource-Centre-AchitecturalStyles-Guide.pdf>.

² Windsor Public Library. (1924). *Gordon McGregor School*. PC-CD105.

³ RIBA. *Art Deco*. Retrieved July 5, 2023, from <https://www.architecture.com/explore-architecture/art-deco>



Blueprint depicting the original and addition to the Gordon McGregor School⁴

The building has a protruding front entrance on the Northwest block accented by a stone frame, with a stepped front concrete stairwell flanked by brick masonry side walls. The entrance was decorated with a pair of sconces, and featured the words "Gordon McGregor" and "ad. School. 1924" inscribed onto the stone panel overhead, and formerly a triple set of decorated carved wooden doors (since replaced). The Northwest protruding block of the building also houses the school's gymnasium.

The Northwest block was originally designed with a stepped (peaked) parapet roof capped with stone/concrete while the rectangular back portion of the building is complimented by a flat roof. The Northwest block's peak was removed and now features a flat roof in correspondence to the rest of the building. The smooth surface of the building's façade is enhanced by a decorative stone banding with low relief medallion designs below the roofline, while simple stone banding below the first-floor windows can also be seen surrounding the exterior of the back building block. Slightly below the roofline on the Northwest block is a shield and sword crest that seamlessly merges into the horizontal decorative stone banding on the façade. Two distinguishable low-relief medallions can be found on the same stone banding, one with a symbol of two keys crossing while the other pictures a symbol of a tree. A tall squared brick chimney with chamfered corners is located also at the northwest block, towards the back.

Uniformly repeated rectangular bay windows with classical stone frames and window sills are found on the front protruding block, whereas 22 bays of windows with banding can be seen spanning the entire front facade. The original windows were double hung with

⁴ Windsor Municipal Archives. (1926). *Blueprint of the Gordon McGregor School Addition*.

sashes or fixed windows. Contrasting stone and brick vertical banding around the windows emphasizes the building's verticality. A typical brick panel featuring variety of header and stretcher brickwork is found between the floors of the windows.

The back, east facade of the building resembles the design on the front facade, where four back entrances each with an overhead stones inscribed with 'Boys' and 'Girls' are located in intervals, between 19 sets of bay windows but unlike the front facade, unaccompanied by stone surrounds. In place of the stones surrounds, header, stretcher, soldier and rowlock brickwork emphasize the openings.

It was noted that a 12' by 45' addition was made in 1956, of which is deduced to be an enhancement to the existing back entrance located northeast of the school building.

The tree-lined landscape character along the west property line was introduced through original young samplings of American Elm which were planted along Alexis Road when the building was first constructed. These trees were likely replaced by the current Norway Maple trees as a result of Dutch Elm Disease which was rampant throughout the region in the 1970s. The mature Maples are in similar location to the original trees. (The deciduous trees stationed right by the school's Northwest entrance have since been removed.) The tree-lined landscape is part of the original design intent of the property. Parks (Forestry) Department has confirmed that the trees are shared trees and would be maintained by the City.

The school building is a representative display of simple elements of Art Deco architecture from the 20th Century, in an institutional context in Windsor.

Historical/Associative Value

The construction of the Gordon McGregor Public School has direct associations to the emergence of Ford City and its roots in the Canadian automotive industry. Constructed in 1924, the school honored the late Gordon McGregor, founder of the Ford Motor Company of Canada. Gordon McGregor was one of the most prominent figures involved in the establishment of Windsor in the 20th Century.

Following his father William McGregor's death, Gordon McGregor assumed as president of the company Walkersville Wagon Works, which was going through a slump upon his succession.⁵ Eventually, McGregor partnered with Henry Ford of Detroit who saw his company as a gateway to the proliferation of his products in the Canadian market. Thus, the Ford Motor Company of Canada was founded in 1904 with McGregor as Managing

⁵ David Roberts, "McGREGOR, GORDON MORTON," in Dictionary of Canadian Biography, vol. 15, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, Retrieved, July 2, 2023, from http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/mcgregor_gordon_morton_15E.html

Secretary.⁵ McGregor passed in 1922 due to internal injuries he sustained in a previous railroad accident.⁶ Following his death, the Gordon McGregor Public School in Ford City was named after him both due to contributions, and because his brother, William Donald McGregor, who was the chairman of the Ford City Planning Board at the time.⁷

With its beginnings as a Village in 1913, Ford City achieved Town status by 1915 and grew alongside the Ford Windsor Engine Plant. By 1928-29, the Village was incorporated into the City of East Windsor, with over 16,000 residents, many originating from Central European countries to join the Ford work force.⁸ Eventually, Ford City was amalgamated into the City of Windsor in 1935 and is now a well-recognised part of Windsor's history.

As more young families surged into town for employment in shops and factories, the Ford City population accompanied by the demand for schools soared. Between 1921 to 1924, there was a 300% increase in the demand for schools as the Bell Isle School (now demolished) constructed in 1917, was the only public school available in Ford City and was nearing its maximum capacity.⁹ Furthermore, this demand for schools was also apparent in the emergence of bungalow-styled schools used to temporarily curb congestions in schools across the city.⁹ Eventually, the Ontario Street School (now demolished) constructed in 1923 was also at its maximum with even the auditorium being used for classes.¹⁰

And so, the Gordon McGregor Public school was planned in 1923 by the Public-School Board of Ford City and opened on November 11, 1924, with a capacity of 470 students and an occupancy of 11 elementary classes.¹¹ This 19-classroom building was designed by the renowned architectural firm Nichols & Sheppard. Mr. K.C. Hortop served as the school's first principal from 1924 to 1955, followed by his time serving on the Windsor Board of Education in 1964.¹² It was noted that the school expanded after only two years of opening to accommodate the extensive growth of Ford City. The addition was built in 1926 and opened in February 1927, where architects Nichols, Sheppard, and Masson were once again responsible for the design. In 1927, the building was known to be the

⁶ The Border Cities' Star. (1922, March 11). *Gordon M'Gregor Fails to Rally from Effects of Operation in Montreal Hospital*, pp. 1. ProQuest

⁷ Roberts, D. (2006). *In the shadow of detroit: Gordon M. McGregor, Ford of Canada, and motoropolis*. p.261. Wayne State University Press.

⁸ Windsor Architectural Conservation Advisory Committee 1996-1997. *The Village/ Town of Ford City Windsor, Ontario, Canada*. City of Windsor. Retrieved from, <https://www.citywindsor.ca/residents/historyofwindsor/documents/ford-city-walking-tour.pdf>

⁹ The Border Cities' Star. (1925, December 31). *Border School Attendance Figures Jump Over 2,000 - Caring for Ever Increasing Number, Problem of Boards*, pp. 24. ProQuest

¹⁰ The Border Cities' Star. (1924, July 5). *Ford Schools Grow Rapidly*, pp. 16. ProQuest

¹¹ Norris, B. History of Windsor Public Schools. *Gordon McGregor Public School 1924 – Present*. Retrieved from Windsor Public Library. Local History Centre

¹² Drouillard Place. *Ford City Historic Walking Tour*. Retrieved From, <http://drouillardplace.ca/wpcontent/uploads/2017/04/Ford-City-Historic-Walking-Tour2015.pdf>

largest school in Ford City in addition to being the largest Elementary Educational Institution in the Windsor Region following the construction of its 18 new classrooms.¹³ Despite all, the architects were met with criticism in 1927 when the School Board claimed that the finishing on the school was unsatisfactory, alongside the inconsistent brickwork and wainscoting on the school walls.¹⁴

Initially constructed as an elementary school, the Gordon McGregor School began offering Grade 9 classes in 1931, marking the introduction of Secondary education in East Windsor.¹¹ At the school's most glorious days, enrollment peaked in 1934 with 1,327 students, ranging from kindergarten to Grade 10, all cumulatively attending the Gordon McGregor School.¹⁵ The Gordon McGregor school would go on to serve the neighborhood youths for just under a century, marking the closure of the Ford City neighborhood's longest remaining Public School constructed during the early 1920's.

In recent decades, decreases in school enrollment and consolidations resulted in closures of many public schools throughout the early 2000s. This was no different for the Gordon McGregor School, as the school continued its operation until 2016 when it officially closed due to dwindling student populations. The existing students were then transferred to the neighboring Percy P. McCallum, which was renamed W.F. Herman Academy following an amalgamation with the former W.F. Herman Secondary School during the same year.¹⁶ After the school's official closure, the City of Windsor purchased the east section of the property, incorporating it into the Ford Test Track Park before it was listed for sale at \$899,990.¹⁷

Throughout its 92-year history, the Gordon McGregor Public School was well recognized as a neighborhood landmark serving young students in the community. Dedicated to the founder of Ford Canada, Gordon McGregor's local success as both a leading businessman and charitable individual contributed much to the significant growth of Ford City and the City of Windsor itself. The need for the Gordon McGregor Public School was a direct outcome of the thriving motor enterprise and the associated population boom of the early 20th century.

¹³ The Border Cities' Star. (1927, December 31). *Public and Separate Schools Rapidly Expanding*, pp. 41. ProQuest

¹⁴ The Border Cities' Star. (1927, September 29). *Say School Poorly Built*, pp. 7. ProQuest

¹⁵ Windsor Star. (2016, July 7). *Doors Close, But Memories Live On*, pp. 1. ProQuest

¹⁶ Schmidt, D. (2016, June 18). *Students bid farewell to Gordon McGregor, vow to take school spirit with them*. Windsor Star. Retrieved July 2, 2023, from <https://windsorstar.com/news/local-news/students-bidfarewell-to-gordon-mcgregor-vow-to-take-school-spirit-with-them>

¹⁷ Cross, B. (2019, April 28). *Former Gordon McGregor school listed for sale at \$899,900*. Windsor Star. Retrieved July 2, 2023, from <https://windsorstar.com/news/local-news/former-gordon-mcgregor-school-listed-forsale-at-899900>

The design of the building is attributed to locally significant architects David W.F. Nichols and Hugh P. Sheppard in 1924, with Nichols, Sheppard, and George Y. Masson responsible for the addition in 1926. In 1925, Masson was invited to join the existing partnership between Nichols and Sheppard, thus forming what was considered the most successful collaborations in the Windsor area.¹⁸ The Nichols, Sheppard & Masson collaboration were credited with the design of over thirty institutional, educational, and commercial buildings, with some of the significant commissions being the John Campbell School, the Dr. Charles W. Hoare Residence, and the former Y.M.C.A. building, all designated heritage properties.

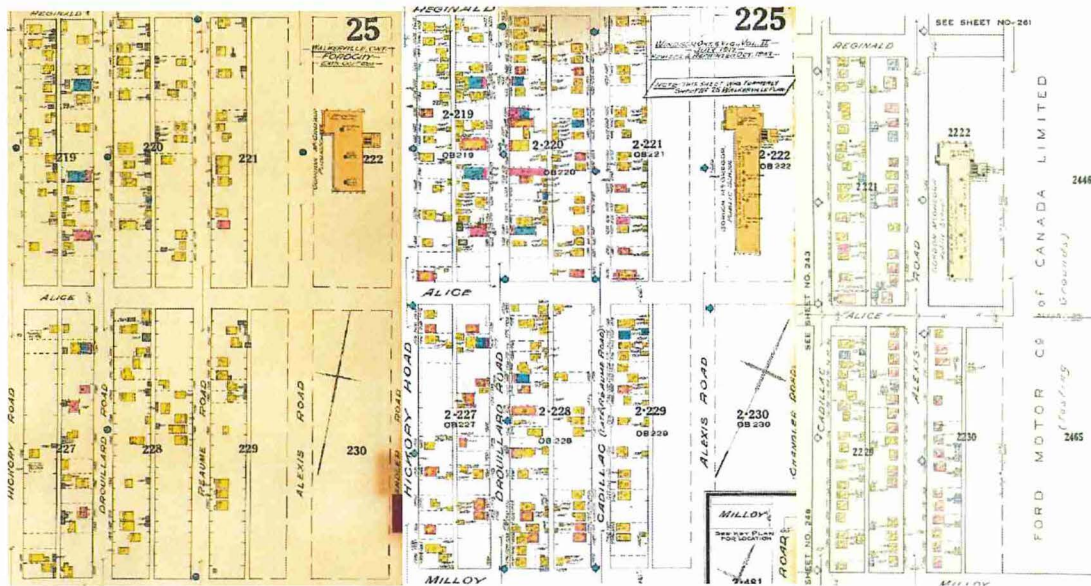
CONTEXTUAL VALUE

The subject property is located on Alexis Road, South of Reginald Street, North of Alice Street, and in proximity of the Drouillard Road Main Street that marked the center of Ford City. The former Ford Test Track (now municipal park) is located adjacent to the school property where physical education and races were once held at. When the school building was first constructed in 1924, the immediate surroundings were minimally inhabited. This is shown in the 1924 Fire Insurance Map, where houses are shown sparsely scattered in the area. Furthermore, there were no paved roads between Tecumseh Road, Pillette Road, Seminole Street, and Alexis Road for young students to travel on for short cuts when the school was first built.¹⁹

As families continued to populate the city, new dwellings began to emerge around the school property as indicated by the rise of home advertisements in the local newspaper. Reflected in the 1937 Fire Insurance Map is the new addition made to the school building. By 1953, it was evident that significant development had occurred in the neighborhood as the once existing empty parcels had become progressively filled.

¹⁸ Hill, R. G. (n.d.). Masson, George Yule. Biographical Dictionary of Architects in Canada. Retrieved July 2, 2023, from <http://dictionaryofarchitectsincanada.org/node/2171>

¹⁹ The Border Cities' Star. (1927, September 7). *Parents Rap School Rule*, pp. 5. ProQuest



Fire Insurance Maps from 1924 (left), 1937 (middle), and 1953 (right)

The Gordon McGregor School is historically linked to its surrounding, with the demand for the school originating directly from the early growth of the Ford City neighborhood and the City of Windsor. At the time, the former Ontario Street School (now demolished) was reaching its peak capacity which resulted in the relocation of students to the Gordon McGregor School over a mile away.¹⁹ Many parents were unsatisfied with the arrangement as young students would have to travel long distances away from their homes in the Pillette Village area.¹⁹ This was coupled by the fact that the area surrounding the Gordon McGregor School was heavily unpopulated and underdeveloped, as evident in the fire insurance maps above. However, the increase from 490 to over 1,327 students in 1934 serves as sufficient indication of the valuable educational support the Gordon McGregor School provided as subsequent development occurred throughout the neighborhood.

The residential neighborhood is now characterized by its low-density single-detached dwellings. However, the school property was the first development in the neighbourhood and is visually distinguished from the surroundings. The Gordon McGregor building is a long-standing and significant landmark in the neighbourhood.

Heritage Attributes:

Exterior attributes that contribute to the design/physical value of Gordon McGregor School:

- 1924 and 1927 two-story plus basement building constructed with elements of Art Deco architectural style
- Generous landscape setback to school building (on west from Alexis Road)
- Elongated rectangular massing with sleek, streamlined design and minimal decoration
- Variegated red brick facade constructed in common bond with stone parapet, base stone and stone banding
- Northwest portions feature:
 - o Stepped front concrete stairs at front entrance flanked by masonry side walls
 - o Originally featuring triple set decorated carved wooden doors with scones, and stone panel inscription with the words "Gordon McGregor" and "ad. School. 1924".
 - o Two distinguishable low-relief medallions on the same stone banding, one with a symbol of two keys crossing and one with a symbol of a tree
 - o Shield and sword crest merging into the horizontal decorative stone banding on the facade
 - o Originally peaked parapet now stepped parapet roof capped with stone/concrete, with back building block featuring flat roof
 - o Tall squared brick chimney with chamfered corners at back
- Decorative stone banding throughout school building, with low relief medallion designs below the roofline on the north and west elevations
- Stone surrounds around the windows spanning first and second floors on the north, west and south elevations, emphasizing the building's verticality

- Brick panel featuring variety of header and stretcher brickwork found between the floors of the windows
- Variety of window openings: Original windows were hung windows in triple sets at the west elevation
- East entrances with stones inscribed 'Boys' and 'Girls' between window bays
- Stone sills and Header, stretcher, soldier and rowlock brickwork emphasizing openings on the east elevation
- Tree-lined landscape character along west property line

Attributes that contribute to the historical or associative value of Gordon McGregor School:

- School was built in honour of Gordon McGregor, founder of the Ford Motor Company of Canada who contributed to the establishment of Windsor.
- Addressed demands for public education as families joined the local workforce in shops and factories
- The largest school in Ford City in addition to being the largest Elementary Educational Institution in the Windsor Region during 1927
- Direct association with the rapid growth of the Ford City area
- Direct association with the history of public elementary schools in the Ford City area
- Early (1924) and long-time service (92 years) to former Ford City (East Windsor) and Sandwich East community as a public elementary school
- Oldest remaining former public elementary school building in Ford City
- Remnant of the early phases of the former Ford City's development and the growing demands for public educational space

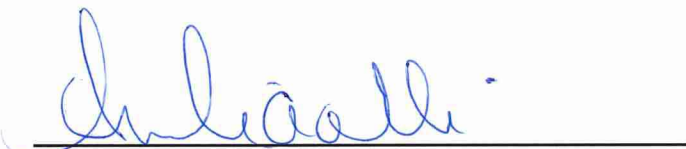
- Designed by locally significant architects Nichols & Sheppard, with Nichols, Sheppard, and Masson responsible for the addition in 1927

Attributes that contribute to the contextual value of Gordon McGregor School:

- Located in proximity of the Ford Motor Windsor Engine Plant that employed many workers while the school addressed needs for education as more families moved into the neighbourhood
- Provided public education to young students in the immediate neighbourhood
- Contributed to the development of residences and construction of paved roads in the area
- Longstanding landmark in the neighbourhood

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 consider the objection and make a decision whether or not to withdraw the notice of intention to designate the property within 90 days after the end of the 30-day period of publication of this notice.

DATED at Windsor, Ontario this 13th day of March, 2024
Anna Ciacelli, Deputy City Clerk



Anna Ciacelli
Deputy City Clerk

AC/lh

Received

MAR 18 2024

Ontario Heritage Trust