

Notice of Intention issued XXXXXXXX

Hart Massey House, 400 Lansdowne Road

Description of Property

The Hart Massey House, 400 Lansdowne Road is a two-storey, detached, steel-framed house constructed in 1959. The property is located on the east side of Lansdowne Road along the western shore of McKay Lake in the Rockcliffe Park Heritage Conservation District in Ottawa. The property was designated as a National Historic Site of Canada in 2018 for its role as an iconic example of Modern architecture in Canada.

Cultural Heritage Value

The Hart Massey House has cultural heritage value as an iconic example of the Modern style of architecture in Canada, its artistic merit in exhibiting qualities of this style in the Canadian context, for its associations with award-winning architect, Hart Massey, and its importance in supporting the character of the Rockcliffe Park Heritage Conservation District.

The Hart Massey House has design value as a unique and iconic residential example of the International style of architecture, which was popular in the mid-20th century. The house reflects some of the purest qualities of this style in a distinctly Canadian context through its simple, unadorned design, construction methods and materials, and sensitive siting within its natural environment. Its artistic merit lies in its stripped-down, design and subordination to its surroundings, which are purposely informal in nature. Although defined by straight lines and precise geometry, the architectural expression of the house is an extension of the surrounding landscape, its large expanses of glass creating a continuity of indoor and outdoor space typical of the style.

The Massey House is directly associated with award-winning architect, Hart Massey, who designed the house as a residence for his family in 1959. The son of Governor General Vincent Massey, he is credited with designing many Modernist landmarks in Ottawa including several buildings at Carleton University's campus, the pavilions at Vincent Massey Park and the now-demolished Sir John Carling Building. Massey received numerous awards for his work including the 1964 Massey Medal for this house, then Canada's highest honour for architecture. The Hart Massey House also yields information that contributes to the understanding of the evolution of Rockcliffe Park, which underwent significant demographic, social and physical changes in the 1950s, yet retained the essential characteristics that define it as a Heritage Conservation District.

The Hart Massey House has contextual value in supporting the character of Rockcliffe Park, as it remains subordinate to its natural environment despite its distinct architectural design. Given its orientation towards the lake and its sensitivity to the natural environment, the house is a defining feature of the shoreline of McKay Lake.

Through its sensitive siting and use of large expanses of glass it is physically and visually connected to its surroundings, creating a juxtaposition of simple geometric forms in a picturesque landscape. The house is also a local and regional landmark.

Heritage Attributes

The key exterior elements that contribute to the design or physical value of 400 Lansdowne Road as an excellent residential example of the Modern style include its:

- Minimalist massing and rectilinear plan consisting of modular boxes, matte black steel structural columns, soffits and trim, opaque white wood cladding, glass walls and flat roof
- Orientation towards McKay Lake, entirely elevated above steep unaltered slopes, and supported by thin steel columns
- Low profile two-storey structure fitted unobtrusively into the landscape, comprised of rectangular upper storey, parallel to Lansdowne Road, extending beyond lower storey; and lower storey, below street level, with arm extending towards lake, perpendicular to the street
- Floor-to-ceiling windows with simple, narrow window frames
- Rear elevation with subtle fenestration facing Lansdowne Road, giving the appearance of an opaque wall
- Lower-storey front entry with red front door, accessed by a narrow walkway connected with a large deck open on three sides
- Simple minimalist black matte railings
- Integrated upper-storey garage with doors designed to be subtly hidden within the structure
- Row of uniform triangular skylights running along its roofline
- Simple black matte exterior light fixtures

The key interior elements that contribute to the design or physical value of 400 Lansdowne Road as an excellent residential example of the Modern style include its:

- Lower storey open plan layout, with black steel beams and interior partition walls that do not meet the ceiling
- Black matte steel circular staircase lit by a circular light well
- Black matte dumbwaiter mechanism on the upper storey
- Size and shape of interior light wells

The key exterior elements that contribute to the contextual value of 400 Lansdowne Road include its:

- Location on steep, unaltered sloping grades with natural riverstone beds beneath the house

- Wooded setting with large mature trees, shrubs, native plants and perennials
- Dry stone walls and related stone stairways
- Simple, informal gardens designed to flow down the slopes in a naturalistic way
- The view of the house from the eastern shore of McKay Lake