

87-42

Ottawa, Ontario
National Research Council Laboratories
100 Sussex Drive

HERITAGE CHARACTER STATEMENT

The National Research Council Laboratory Building was constructed in 1930-32. The custodian is Public Works and Government Services Canada. See FHBRO Building Report 87-42.

Reasons for Designation

The National Research Council Laboratory Building was designated Classified for its historical associations, its architectural merit and its site qualities.

Built to accommodate the National Research Council, the building marks that organization's transition from a volunteer coordinating body to an active research institute, and signifies government recognition of the value of such research as a basis for economic planning in the twentieth century. A well executed example of the Beaux-Arts style, the building provides flexible, multiple laboratory space with accommodation for support facilities and special research needs.

Although construction of this complex pre-dates the development of Sussex Drive as an official ceremonial route, it integrates well with the post 1950 institutional character of its setting. The adjacent heat plant/power house complements this character.

Character Defining Elements

The heritage value of the National Research Council Laboratory Building resides in the features of its Beaux-Arts design, in the quality of its materials at both the interior and exterior, in its interior spatial organization, and in the formal character of its setting.

The Beaux-Arts classicism of the design is expressed in the symmetry and horizontal emphasis of the elevations, and in classical elements such as the entrance pavilions, the Roman Doric columns, the pediments and entablature. The overall effect of monumentality is emphasized by the great length of the facade and by the execution in sandstone and granite. The massing of the building and the organization of its facades should not be altered.

The fine lines of the multi-paned steel casement windows, commonly used in Beaux-Arts buildings, add texture and interest to the facades. They have been upgraded by adding an interior storm such that the original windows were not altered. The original windows should continue to receive repair and painting as required.

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National Research Council Laboratories (Continued)

In keeping with Beaux-Arts planning principles, the overall shape of the Laboratory Building is a squared figure eight, designed around two interior courtyards. Removal of the temporary building in the interior courtyards would restore the intended character of this arrangement.

The interior plan was designed in accordance with Beaux-Arts principles of symmetry and axially, with two types of space: public space for formal greeting, meeting, consultation and display, and working space to house laboratories and support facilities. While the latter was left deliberately flexible to meet the special and changing requirements of ongoing scientific research, the public areas were consciously formal and often symbolic in design. The entrance and main hallway, the auditorium, the President's office and boardroom, the library reading room and the basement exhibition halls comprise the public areas of the building. They are characterized by the richness of their materials, including Travertine walls and coffered and painted ceilings. Finishes and details merit careful preservation; any repair should be done in consultation with a conservation professional.

In contrast, the design of the working areas of the laboratory building is characterized by utilitarianism and attention to safety. Space in work areas was left deliberately flexible, with architectural features practical and often industrial in quality.

Both public spaces and work spaces clearly retain the original design intent interiors of plan, function, materials and details. These qualities must be maintained. Given the specialized overall purpose for which the building was designed, retention of the scientific research function, rather than conversion to office accommodation, would ensure maximum preservation of original materials and layout.

The National Research Council Laboratory Building is the focus of a large, well-landscaped site. Today this park-like setting has attained an increased importance as the building is located on Ottawa's official ceremonial route, Sussex Drive. Modifications which would alter this formal manicured character should be resisted. The adjacent heat plant/power house is compatible in scale, design and materials and merits preservation as part of the ensemble.

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Revised

For further guidance, please refer to the *FHBRO Code of Practice*.