

## **STATEMENT OF CULTURAL HERITAGE VALUE**

### **BRIEF DESCRIPTION**

ADDRESS: 46 Monsheen Drive  
LEGAL: PLAN RP5081 Part of Lot 5-6  
ROLL: 1928000432343000000

### **OVERVIEW**

The cultural heritage value of the property known as 46 Monsheen Drive meets the criteria set out by the *Ontario Heritage Act* under Province of Ontario Regulation 9/06 for the categories of design/physical, historical/associative and contextual value.

Building Name: nicknamed “the Television House”

Location: Lot 6, Con. 7

Style: Canadian regional variant of the 1950’s modern style

Community: Woodbridge

Project Name: Seneca Heights, a.k.a. Woodview Housing Development

### **ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION**

Designed by noted Canadian architect Jerome Markson and nicknamed “the Television House”, this property is a Canadian regional variant of the 1950s modernist style. This 2-storey building uses existing topography and landscaping to create a smooth transition between the house and its environment. The utilization of earth-tone materials also contributes to the effect. The placement of the building is also of interest: due to its unique siting deliberately facing south – whilst the lot is orientated east-west – there is a forced allowance for maximized sunlight to enter the home.

The building has a flat roof, large horizontal windows, and is set back from the street which allows it to be integrated into the green space of its surroundings. The cladding is primarily wide-band horizontal siding, that accentuates the built form’s elongated and flattened feel. This is further enhanced by the acute angles formed under the roof’s extruded supports and accentuated by angular windows flanking the main entry. The garage overall massing and intent remains evident and unaltered.

The subject property is important in defining, maintaining and supporting the mid-Century modernist Seneca Heights development, envisioned and realized by builder and land developer Jack Grant in the early 1950’s. Furthermore, the property is physically and visually linked to its location on the Humber River ravine.

### **HISTORICAL/ASSOCIATIVE VALUE:**

There is a combination of factors that contribute to the historical significance of the subject property. Based on its location on Lot 6, Concession 7, an 1851 map indicates that the owner was John Brown. He is the son of James Brown (d. 1854), who arrived from Pennsylvania, and was originally from Scotland. He married Hannah Burkholder in 1826, and later settled on the west half of Lot 5. The lot was a clergy reserve, and he would get it patented in 1842. John Brown not only established a sawmill nearby on the

flats of the Humber River, but he also purchased more property within the surrounding area, built a blacksmith shop and foundry, where small agricultural equipment was made for the Abell Agricultural Works. This little settlement became known as Brownsville. While an 1870's map of Woodbridge includes the location of Brownsville, it is understood that there were no other dwellings in the area except for the Browns house on the hillside. John Brown was also involved in the shaping of the community, as he served as a Councillor of Vaughan from 1858-1863. He would later become a Reeve of Richmond Hill from 1883-4, and a Superintendent of St. Mary's Anglican Church in Richmond Hill. While the property remained in the Brown family for many years, a 1918 map indicates that the lot had been divided into smaller parcels.

Post-World War II (post-war) brought major changes to Ontario communities, and around the world – and 46 Monsheen Drive is a representation of these changes. With soldiers returning home, there was a shift to create homes to suit a new domesticated lifestyle. Woodbridge saw a growth of its community, and new developments were created in response to the increasing need for new homes. By the 1950's the population of Woodbridge had tripled, most of which were immigrant families following the end of World War II. As a result, a total of 10 subdivisions were created in between 1951-1956. Contributing elements to this demand and growth were [1] the development of infrastructure (highways, and the subway), and [2] the automobile which created new opportunities for where people could live and work. New approaches to architectural styles and ideals were also reflected during this timeframe through the growth of modern architecture during the Modern Movement. *A Guide to Canadian Architectural Styles* describes Modernism, as it relates to architecture, as a break from the past and traditional forms, a lack of applied ornamentation, interested in new building materials, and spaces were meant to be designed efficiently to consider their function. The Seneca Heights Development (1955) in Woodbridge can be seen as a response to the need for more homes, as well as a reflection of the growing interest in modern design and living.

The property has the potential to yield information that contributes to the understanding of a community. The lot's farming history through John Brown and his family, to its transition to the home that was built in the 1950s, gives insight into how families and communities lived during particular times.

46 Monsheen Drive, also known as the "Television House," is an exemplary showpiece of both domestic style trends, and a response to the growing needs for familial homes outside of Toronto. The subject property can be seen as both evidence of the changing social needs, and a marking of architectural ideas during the post-war period. While many of the original buildings have been demolished, this existing building helps to signify the development of the Woodridge community. As such, the property also has associative value as it is representative work of prominent Canadian architect Jerome Markson.

## **CONTEXTUAL VALUE**

The subject property was designed by celebrated Canadian architect Jerome Markson, and it demonstrates and reflects his ideas. Markson took an individualistic approach to

his works and was open to the possibilities to address the unique needs of each project. This approach is made evident in his involvement in the Seneca Heights Project, which contained a mixture of single-family architect-designed custom homes, and six builder plans that home buyers could select from. Enlisted by the developer Jack Grant, three of the builder's plans were designed by Markson, while the other three were designed by his former teacher Michael Bach. When compared to other developments outside of Toronto, the aim was to attract upscale buyers. While the builder plans were meant to be affordable, Jerome Markson did not want to compromise on making them interesting just as much as the private commissions. Located on a wooded site that overlooked the Humber River, Markson used the combination of materials, the rooflines, and the configuration of the individual large lots to inform the character of the houses and create a sense of distinction between the properties. His plans for the homes also gave consideration for children; their play areas were clearly labeled, as he felt it was important that they had their own dedicated space within the planning of the home as well. Jerome Markson would later receive the 2022 RAIC Gold Medal. This award given by The Royal Architectural Institute of Canada is the highest honour in recognition of a significant and lasting contribution to Canadian architecture.

## **SUMMARY OF CULTURAL HERITAGE VALUE**

### **Physical/Design Value**

- pronounced horizontal banding siding boards
- oversized windows with ventilation sliders at the base
- recessed roofline supported on extruded rafters
- flanking walls encasing the building laterally

### **Associative Value**

- historically significant lot going back to 1842-to-1918 ownership
- development design in response to population growth
- development design in response to interest in building materials

### **Contextual Value**

- designed as unique buildings within a customized neighbourhood
- reactionary design and direction reflecting attitudes and lifestyles of the time
- 'genus loci' vernacular form dictating function
- consideration given to topography, inhabitation, and family unit

## **BIBLIOGRAPHY AND RESOURCES**

City of Vaughan Archives

A Guide to Canadian Architectural Styles (2003) by Shannon Ricketts, Leslie Maitland and Jacqueline Hucker; ISBN: 9781551115467

A History of Vaughan Township (1971) by G. Elmore Reamen, ISBN 0969220715

Toronto's Inclusive Modernity: The Architecture of Jerome Markson (2020) by Laura J. Miller (Author), George Baird (Foreword), Scott Norsworthy (Contributor); ISBN-13: 978-1773270012

NCHRP REPORT 723: A Model for Identifying and Evaluating the Historic Significance of Post-World War II Housing (2012) by Emily Pettis; ISBN 0309258537, 9780309258531

Woodbridge Heritage Conservation District Study and Plan

*What Is Modern Architecture, Anyway?*. <https://www.getty.edu/news/what-is-modern-architecture-anyway/>

*RAIC Gold Medal 2022 Recipient: Jerome Markson.* <https://raic.org/awards/raic-gold-medal-2022-recipient>

*Headliners in the 1960s, heritage homes now.* <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/real-estate/headliners-in-the-1960s-heritage-homes-now/article4403604/>