

Sixth Avenue Liquor Store

Address: 1188 Sixth Avenue
Date of Construction: 1949
Other Names: Bridget Moran Place

Heritage Register Classification:
Commercial Building
Date added to Heritage Register:
December 3, 2007



STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

DESCRIPTION

The Sixth Avenue Liquor Store consists of the south- and west-facing façades of the original BC Government liquor store that operated at 1188 Sixth Avenue, at the northeast corner of Sixth Avenue and Dominion Street, from 1949 to 1986. The façades are a designated municipal heritage site under Heritage Designation By-Law No. 4894, 1987. They are currently part of the Bridget Moran Place residential shelter, which has been operating on the site since 2000.

HERITAGE VALUE

The original building was constructed in November 1949 for use as a BC Government Liquor store. The liquor store operated at this location until it was sold by the BC Government in 1986.

Architecture/Aesthetic:

From an aesthetic perspective, the building façade represents the standard design used for several provincial government liquor stores built in the late 1940s and 1950s. The design incorporates elements of the “Moderne” architectural style that became popular in the 1930s. (The Moderne style is often interpreted as Art Deco, but it is a distinct style. It emphasizes curving forms and horizontal lines, whereas Art Deco stresses sharp edges and vertical lines).

The building façade retains several distinct Moderne design elements. The exterior is primarily stucco and features metal trim along the roofline. The glass-block windows – originally selected to prevent minors from looking into the building from the street – were at the time considered an ultra-modern feature. The streamlined (curved) corners of the entryway, stainless steel doors, decorative ceramic tiling along the south-facing façade, and zig-zagged and stepped parapets also distinguish the building architecturally.

The building’s walls are constructed of poured concrete. At the time of its construction, the liquor store was one of only three poured concrete structures in Prince George.

Historical/Social:

The original structure was one large room, approximately 40' by 100', featuring 1,600 square feet of retail space in the front, warehouse space in the rear, and no basement.

At the time of its construction, the liquor store's location on Sixth Avenue was in line with a province-wide policy to move liquor stores off main city streets. The store continuously operated as Prince George's only government liquor store until 1986, when it was replaced by a larger-volume warehouse-style liquor store at the corner of Victoria Street and 20th Avenue.

On April 6, 1987, the City of Prince George designated the following portions of the building's exterior as a municipal heritage site under Heritage Designation By-Law No. 4894, 1987:

- 13 linear metres of the south façade fronting on Sixth Avenue, and
- southerly 10 linear metres of the west façade fronting on Dominion Street.

The façades became the City's first designated municipal heritage site.

In the years following 1986, the building served as a community centre and a headquarters for the Prince George Multicultural Society, among other uses. Its condition slowly deteriorated.

In 2000, the Action Society Against Poverty purchased the run-down building and renovated it, amid controversy, for use as a residential shelter. (Two downtown hotels had been demolished, displacing low-income residents). During renovation, the protected south- and west-facing façades were retained, and the glass blocks, metal doors, tiles, metal trim and other character-defining elements were rehabilitated back to their original condition. The remaining external and internal walls were demolished to build the three-story, 28-unit residence and 10-bed emergency shelter that stands behind the façade today.

The building has become a leading example of heritage preservation in the City of Prince George. It has weathered multiple owners, controversy, degraded condition, rehabilitation and repurposing. It still stands in its original location and retains its character-defining elements.

CHARACTER-DEFINING ELEMENTS

The following elements define the heritage value of this site and should be retained during any site renovation:

- Poured concrete walls, dimensions as specified in Heritage Designation By-Law No. 4894, 1987.
- Glass-block windows on south façade (rehabilitated in 2000). Blocks are 8" by 8" square and 4" thick.
- Stucco exterior (rehabilitated in 2000).
- Stainless steel front doors (rehabilitated in 2000).
- Streamlined (curved) entry way.
- Black tile along the south façade (rehabilitated in 2000). Tile on the walls is 4" by 4" glazed ceramic; tile on the entryway floor is 1" by 1" or smaller unglazed mosaic tile.
- Zig-zag and stepped parapets with shiny metal trim to outline a false front (rehabilitated in 2000).
- Moderne-inspired architectural design.

IMAGES



1949 photo – south (front) and west (side) elevations. (Photo: *The Exploration Place, N993.11.1.627.5*)



2005 photo – restored south façade, with Bridget Moran Shelter standing behind. (Photo: *Prince George Heritage Commission*)

OTHER INFORMATION

- **Architect:** Wilfred Hargreaves
- **Builder:**
 - **Original building:** Dezell Construction Co. Ltd.
 - **2000 renovation and restoration:** Terra Housing
- **Legal description:** Parcel B (Lots 12-14), Block 165, District Lot 343, Cariboo District, Plan 1268.
- **Level of Heritage Recognition:** Heritage Designation

Additional resources:

- *Hotels, Hoteliers and Liquor Stores: The story behind a Prince George heritage building* by J. Kent Sedgewick (book)

SOS prepared by Caroline Ross (Prince George Heritage Commission), with files from the Prince George Heritage Commission, March 2016.