

**CITY OF ST. THOMAS**

**BY-LAW NO. 138 - 2015**

A by-law to designate MCR Bridge over Kettle Creek, Sunset Drive Pt. Lot 45 in the City of St. Thomas, as a property of cultural heritage value or interest.

WHEREAS pursuant to the Ontario Heritage Act, R.S.O. 1990, as amended, the Council of a municipality may by by-law designate a property including buildings and structures thereon to be of cultural heritage value or interest;

AND WHEREAS notice of intention to designate the property known as MCR Bridge over Kettle Creek, Sunset Drive Pt. Lot 4, St. Thomas, Ontario, has been duly published and served, and no notice of objection has been received to such designation;


NOW THEREFORE THE COUNCIL OF THE CORPORATION OF THE CITY OF ST. THOMAS ENACTS AS FOLLOWS:

1. There is hereby designated as being of cultural heritage value or interest the property known as MCR Bridge over Kettle Creek, Sunset Drive Pt. Lot 4 in the City of St. Thomas, all of which is described in Schedule "A" attached hereto, for the reasons set out in Schedule "B" attached hereto.
2. The City Clerk is hereby authorized to cause a copy of this by-law to be registered upon the title of the property described in the aforementioned Schedule "A" in the proper Land Registry Office.
3. The City Clerk is hereby authorized to cause a copy of this by-law to be served upon the owner of the aforesaid property and upon the Ontario Heritage Trust and to cause notice of this by-law to be published in the St. Thomas Times-Journal.
5. This by-law shall take effect on the date of the final passing thereof.

Read a first and second time this 19th day of October, 2015.

Read a third time and finally passed this 19th day of October, 2015.

  
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Maria Konefal, City Clerk

  
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Heather Jackson, Mayor

Schedule "A"

Sunset Drive Part Lot 45, West limit of Pleasant Street, East limit of Munroe Avenue, being PINs 35156-0432, 35155-0149 and 35228-0003, City of St. Thomas, County of Elgin.



## Schedule "B"

### REASONS FOR DESIGNATION

**PROPERTY:** MCR BRIDGE OVER KETTLE CREEK  
**MUNICIPAL ADDRESS:** SUNSET DRIVE PT LOT 45

***Analysis for reasons for designation as provided by the Municipal Heritage Committee:***  
Ontario Regulation 9/06 made under The *Ontario Heritage Act* as it relates to the Criteria for Determining Cultural Heritage Value of Interest. Under this regulation, a property may be designated under Section 29 of the *Ontario Heritage Act* if it meets one or more of three criteria. In applying these criteria to the facts relating to the property it is possible to draw the following conclusions:

- 1) **The property has design value or physical value because it,**
  - i. **is a rare, unique, representative or early example of a style, type, expression, material or construction method,**
  - ii. **displays a high degree of craftsmanship or artistic merit, or**
  - iii. **demonstrates a high degree of technical or scientific achievement**

The engineering design of the MCR Bridge followed standard practice of the early 20th century. The use of materials, approach to structural design, and method of erection did not require novel solutions. The overall design consideration had been to build a structure that could handle the present and future volume and weight of railway traffic passing through St. Thomas. However, the local site conditions created design solutions that make the bridge distinctive. The short spans of the deck girders were dictated by the need to keep the earlier bridge in service during construction. The rising use of motor vehicle traffic required that better highway sightlines had to be built into one of the bridge piers. The significance of the three bridges built at this location has been commemorated with a plaque erected in 2000 by the Canadian Society for Civil Engineering.

The setting of the bridge within the Kettle Creek valley has created a very pronounced railway landscape that has been enhanced by its public accessibility. The alignment of Highway 4, and to a lesser extent Fingal Line, provides varied views and vistas of the structure and brings the public directly to the base of the bridge.

The following heritage attributes of the bridge contribute to its cultural heritage value:

- double track;
- short spans of the bridge deck;
- eight massive concrete piers;
- lattice steel highway bent;
- four small concrete approach piers;
- Fingal Road alignment;
- approach earthworks and road underpasses; and
- the stone retaining wall in Kettle Creek

**The property has historical value or associative value because it,**

- i. **has direct associations with a theme, event, belief, person, activity, organization or institution that is significant to a community,**
- ii. **yields, or has the potential to yield, information that contributes to an understanding of a community or culture, or**
- iii. **demonstrates or reflects the work or ideas of an architect, artist, builder, designer or theorist who is significant to a community.**

A Cultural Heritage Evaluation Report conducted for the City of St. Thomas by Golder Associates Limited in 2012 makes the following Statement of Cultural Heritage Value:



The MCR Bridge has cultural heritage value because of its association with the history of St. Thomas and the broader theme of the economic history of railways in Ontario. More specifically, it is a prominent landmark to the former importance of the railway industry to St. Thomas. Along with the former CSR station and the MCR shop building it is a key component of the city's railway heritage. In addition, the massive structure of the bridge is indicative of the large volume of traffic that the railway once carried and, by extension, of the economic importance of railways in the early 20th century. At the same time, the design built into the bridge to accommodate a new road alignment is indicative of the growing importance of motor vehicle traffic in the early 20th century. Finally, its location with the broad Kettle Creek valley creates a distinct and highly visible cultural landscape.

**The property has contextual value because it,**

- i. is important in defining, maintaining or supporting the character of an area,**
- ii. is physically, functionally, visually or historically linked to its surroundings, or**
- iii. is a landmark.**

#### **IMPACT ON THE COMMUNITY**

The physical layout of the City of St. Thomas has been strongly affected by the alignment of the bridge and rail line, which run east and west through the entire length of the community.

The location of the bridge at the intersection of Sunset Drive/Hwy 4, Final Line, Old Talbot Street and Kettle Creek has made it a highly visible and accessible part of the city's rail heritage and has consequently increased the public's awareness and attachment to it.

#### **ECONOMIC CONTRIBUTION**

At its height in the 1920s, the Michigan Central Railroad was St. Thomas' largest employer, with over 1,600 staff. Wages, which were provided in American funds, fueled house purchases, consumer spending in such department stores as Anderson's and Mickleborough's, and spending in the many other enterprises along Talbot St., the main thoroughfare of the community

#### **SOCIAL LIFE**

The MCR bridge was part of a larger rail complex, which, at its height, consisted of over 300 acres. Other buildings within this complex included the Michigan Central Station (now known as the Canada Southern Railway Station), the Freight House, which was shared with Canadian Pacific, the roundhouse, power house, original car shops building, etc. This complex was part of a North America wide rail network, which included the New York Central Railway and linked the economic centres of New York, Detroit, Buffalo and Chicago.

#### **CULTURAL LIFE**

The Michigan Central rail line provided a shortcut from the American destinations of New York and Chicago, via Buffalo, St. Thomas and Windsor/Detroit. St. Thomas, and many small communities along the line, benefited by cultural influences unavailable elsewhere in Ontario.

#### **SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS:**

A letter in support of the designation of the bridge by its current owners, On Track St. Thomas, notes that the structure is destined to be converted into Canada's first Elevated Park. The letter goes on to note that this re-purposing will maintain the visual and engineering integrity of the structure as a heritage asset, but specifically asks "that the designation by-law take into account the special conditions required in order to achieve the project goal of becoming Canada's first elevated park. This will include the replacement of railings and the addition of light standards for safety purposes. By definition, it will also mean conversion of the deck structure to one capable of supporting trees and vegetation as well as walkways and other public amenities"