

**CITY OF MEDICINE HAT
FIRST STREET MUNICIPAL HISTORIC AREA**

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

1. Description of Heritage Resource

The First Street Municipal Historic Area is one of the oldest residential districts in Medicine Hat and is located immediately west of downtown along the first street running south of and parallel to the South Saskatchewan River. The boundaries include the publicly-owned area with views of the homes on both sides of First Street, from Fourth Avenue SE to the western end of the Harlow Tangle which fronts on First Street SW (i.e. immediately east of Chinook Drive intersection). Formerly known as “Esplanade”, it is a tree-lined street of mainly single-family houses in an evolving mix of ages and styles, ranging in age from the late 1800s to the present, and well set back from the street with wide boulevards and mature landscaping. The canopy of mature trees in the boulevard that forms an arch over the roadway and changes colour with the season. This area includes one Registered Historic Resource, one Provincial Historic Resource as well as candidates for municipal designation due to architectural and historical interest.

2. Heritage Values:

The First Street Municipal Historic Area is significant to the City of Medicine Hat for its embodiment of a broad range of aesthetic, historical, and social values.

The First Street Municipal Historic Area is significant for its aesthetics: the variety of size and style of single family homes, some quite majestic, others modest, visible from the street; the view of the mature landscaping and wide boulevards in front of the homes; the picturesque vistas of the South Saskatchewan River and Finlay Bridge; the larger lot sizes; and the range of mainly traditional building materials, particularly brick, stucco and wood siding apparent from the street and sidewalk.

The area is also known for its cultural and historic values. First Street SE and SW west of downtown was historically known as the Esplanade. This was the neighbourhood where many of the city’s early citizens chose to build. Backing onto the river, Esplanade was the city’s first street with tree-lined boulevards along which grand homes were intermixed with more modest residences. Construction began as early as 1886 and redevelopment has continued to the present.

In terms of social value, the street creates an impressive entrance to the downtown from the west; provides a beautiful walkway under a canopy of trees with a sidewalk separated from the street by a boulevard; provides views of the river valley and natural vegetation of city’s fringe in the Harlow Tangle. The dignified character of the Esplanade remains due to the profusion of trees, boulevards, spacious lawns and mature landscaping, deeper than normal residential setbacks from the street and architectural variety.

3. Character Defining Elements

The heritage values of the First Street Municipal Historic Area are expressed in character-defining elements such as:

- tree canopy of mainly elms and ash trees arching over the street
- boulevards between the street and the sidewalk
- natural vegetation on the river bank and in the natural areas

2013-07-31

Rev. 2014-10-23

Rev. 2014-11-20