

Ottawa, Ontario  
The Geological Survey of Canada Building (GSC)  
601 Booth Street

**FINAL**

The Geological Survey of Canada Building was constructed in 1955-59. It was designed by the Toronto architectural firm of Allward and Gouinlock for the Department of Mines and Technical Surveys. The building is currently used for laboratory research, administration and storage. Natural Resources Canada (NRCan) is the custodian. See FHBRO Case File No. 92-45a.

### Reasons for Designation

The Geological Survey of Canada Building has been designated “Recognized” because of its historical associations, its architectural style and its environmental significance.

As part of the NRCan complex of buildings, the Geological Survey of Canada Building reflects the significant role of that department in the exploration and mapping of Canada and the development of the mining sector. The building testifies to the post-Second World War acceleration of mineral exploration and ore testing by the federal government. Built between 1955 and 1959, it was the first of a two-phase structure to be constructed which served to bring together the staff of the Geological Survey of Canada. The building is a reflection of the federal government’s recognition of the significance of the Survey’s activities and of the value of mining to the Canadian economy. The siting of the Booth Street complex is an example of the relocation of federal government offices out of the central core of Ottawa based on the recommendations of the Grçber plan.

This building is a good example of the International Style of architecture, which promoted clean lines, legible structure, an asymmetrically balanced composition and a building form which expresses internal functions. The International Style was widely used by the federal government during the period of unprecedented expansion in which this building was constructed.

The Administration Building contributes to the campus-like setting of the NRCan complex through its complementary massing and formal relationship with adjacent buildings. The landscaped open spaces between the buildings were part of the original design intent for the complex. This characteristic has been maintained and enhanced in the years since the building’s construction.

### Character Defining Elements

The heritage character of the Geological Survey of Canada Building resides in its massing, composition, materials, internal plan and finishes and site relationships. The building is L-shaped in plan, consisting of two flat-roofed seven-storey wings that are oriented on a north/south axis and an east/west axis respectively. These wings

Ottawa, Ontario  
The Geological Survey of Canada Building (GSC)  
601 Booth Street

**FINAL**

intersect at a prominent vertical stair/elevator shaft which is visible through a glass curtain wall. Connected to this spine-like shaft is the entrance pavilion, a one-storey volume consisting of horizontal and vertical slabs infilled with glazed panels. The transparency of the entrance pavilion contrasts with the larger opaque main wings of the building. The distinctive contrasting volumes, the asymmetrical massing of the building wings, and the interplay of glazed and solid surfaces are characteristic of the International Style and should be respected.

The Geological Survey of Canada Building is of steel frame construction, with brick veneer as the exterior finish material. Horizontal emphasis is provided by the ground floor wall finish of polished stone, as well as bands of cut stone which are used at sill and parapet level, and narrow strips of aluminum windows with solar shading projections (*brises-soleil*) which correspond to each storey. This horizontality, as well as the absence of decorative features, the broad expanses of blank wall, and the use of a limited range of sleek, hard-surfaced and high-quality materials like polished stone, steel and glass, contribute to this building's value as an example of International Style architecture and should be maintained.

The plan of 601 Booth Street is characterized by the linear arrangement of rooms and corridors and by the use of double-loaded corridors. The building also features interior partitions, many of which were designed to be moveable to permit maximum flexibility, which was an innovative practice in government buildings of the period. Continuing this approach would respect historic precedent. Interior finishes are typical of the style and the era: terrazzo floors in the hallways, and linoleum, tile and terrazzo in offices and laboratories. For any rehabilitation or upgrading work consideration should be given to continuing the characteristic choice of materials.

The setting of the Geological Survey of Canada Building is a landscaped campus formed by a group of buildings that are individually distinct in their detailing, yet form a cohesive unit. The open spaces were designed to complement and integrate the buildings and provide a transitional buffer zone for the surrounding properties. This character should be protected.

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