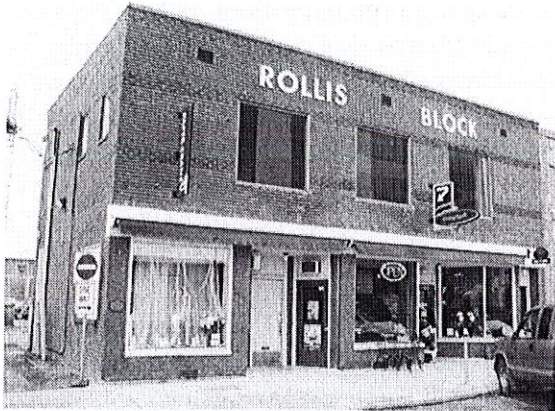


**Rollis Block**

**5007 Gaetz Avenue**



**Description of the Historic Place**

The two-storey Rollis Block is brick building with a flat roof, multiple recessed front entrances and three brick stringcourses on the second storey. It is located on Gaetz Avenue, a busy commercial thoroughfare in downtown Red Deer.

**Heritage Value**

The Rollis Block is significant for its association with the theme of post-war/oil-boom commercial development in downtown Red Deer, and for its modern commercial design.

The Rollis Block is significant for its association with the theme of post-war/oil-boom commercial development in downtown Red Deer. The discovery of oil in Leduc in 1947 signalled the beginning of the Alberta oil-boom and by the early 1950s oil extraction in the Red Deer area had begun in earnest. At the same time, the construction of the Fry-Cadbury and Chrysler warehouses and the Red Deer Brewery contributed to a shift in Red Deer's industrial character from distribution point to manufacturing centre. Local and highway road upgrades also had a positive impact on Red Deer's economy, as improved transportation meant that residents of nearby villages and hamlets had convenient year-round access to Red Deer's commercial district. The increase in population brought about by the expanding industrial sector and the influx of rural customers encouraged the expansion of Red Deer's commercial district. Construction on the Rollis Block began in 1949, in the midst of the post-war economic boom. Built by contractor Walter Sandquist, the Rollis Block replaced the 1891 North West Mounted Police (NWMP) stables building at this location. The new, modern building was seen by many as very progressive and reflective of the city's post-war economic prosperity. Once completed, the Rollis Block housed Rollis Agencies, a jewellery store and an appliance store on the first floor, and an Industrial Acceptance Company (IAC) on the second floor. Ron Gauthier opened a barbershop in the basement and remained in business at that location until he retired in 1979.

## *Statements of Significance for the Downtown Red Deer Legacy Year Project*

The Rollis Block is significant for its modern commercial design. Form follows function in this simple brick building, with retail space located on the main floor and office space on the second floor. The importance of functionality was especially evident during the construction of the building, which occurred in two phases so that the owner, realtor Rufus Joseph Rollis, could operate his business without interruption. When construction on the south section was complete, Rollis moved into it, the old NWMP building was demolished, and the north section of the current building was erected. The seam is still visible on the front façade, marking where the north and south halves of the building were joined. The Rollis Block is an important contributing element to Red Deer's historic downtown core, which is an eclectic mix of built heritage reflecting Red Deer's history. The Rollis Block's contribution to the downtown Red Deer streetscape was recognized when it received exterior rehabilitation as part of Red Deer's Alberta Main Street project.

### **Character Defining Elements**

The character defining elements as expressed in the form, massing, and materials of the 1949 two-storey Rollis Block include:

- The flat roof
- The red brick running bond cladding
- The three decorative brick ribbon bands on the front façade
- The multiple recessed front entrances
- The continuous concrete lintel between the first and second storeys with brick rowlock course above
- The original doors
- The three louvered vents below the roofline
- The brick seam on the front façade identifying the division between the south and north sections, which were built separately
- The pattern, style and construction of all original storefront windows
- The pattern, style and construction of the second storey window openings