The Fort Garry Municipality has a long history of Indigenous settlement. In the post-contact/fur trade era, much of the land was occupied and farmed by Métis families who also hunted buffalo and worked as freighters/shippers for the trading companies. It incorporated as the Rural Municipality of St. Vital in 1903 and the section west of the Red River incorporated as the Rural Municipality of Fort Garry in 1912- a community comprised mainly of sparsely settled market gardeners and other agricultural operations.

On July 27, 1971, the City of Winnipeg Act received Royal assent, incorporating the rural municipalities of Charleswood, Fort Garry, North Kildonan and Old Kildonan, Town of Tuxedo, and the cities of East Kildonan, West Kildonan, St. Vital, Transcona, St. Boniface, St. James-Assiniboine, Winnipeg and the Metropolitan Corporation of Greater Winnipeg into a unified City of Winnipeg, known as Unicity. The new City came into legal existence on January 1st, 1972.

Libraries in Fort Garry began with small personal collections and a circulating library operated by the community club. A temporary, municipally approved and supported library opened in 1956 while plans for a stand-alone library were being debated. The new structure, built to the south of the
municipal hall, officially opened in 1960.

The building is an excellent example of the International Style, popular in Winnipeg and throughout North America and Europe in the 1950s and 1960s. Notable elements of the style include hard, angular edges, severely plain surfaces, large areas of glass and square or rectangular modules, the style stressed material and proportionality over ornamentation. The use of glass and steel gave the style a “lightness” of appearance. Winnipeg has many fine late-1950s and 1960s examples of the style, designed by local architects who would gain national and international recognition for their work.

The reinforced concrete, concrete block and face brick library was designed by local architect George A. Stewart (1922-1944). A University of Manitoba graduate, Stewart also designed the St. Vital Library, 6 Fermor Avenue (1963 – List of Historical Resources) and the West Kildonan Library, 365 Jefferson Avenue (1967 – List of Historical Resources) as well as many other fine modernist style structures.

The additions on the southeast and northeast corners were designed to continue the architecture of the original building. In 2013, the front façade was severely altered with the replacement of all window units and removal of the briese soliel.

The original wood accenting at the ceiling remains intact, as does much of the original layout. One alteration was the 1966 enclosing of the original small, raised outdoor courtyard for “Story Hour” located in the southeast corner. A modest mezzanine level runs the width of the addition along the east wall.

The Fort Garry Public Library is another example of the modernization/expansion of civic services provided citizens in the post World War II era as populations and tax bases grew and old facilities reached the end of their usefulness or new services were demanded.
Elements of the building that would require approval if alterations were planned are:

A. Exterior:

i. The one-storey, stand-alone building with its west façade facing Pembina Highway, its south façade facing a small greenspace, its north façade facing a small paved area, and its east façade facing a parking lot and whose massing is formed by a combination of rectilinear blocks which include a lower projecting volume to the southwest that wraps around to the southeast, an intermediate recessed entrance pavilion, and a stepped-back higher volume in the northeast corner.

ii. The front (west) façade of the lower volume with its projecting masonry fins that frame regularly-spaced L-shaped windows and its flat roofline that cantilevers over the entrance sequence where it is supported by steel columns.

iii. The west-facing façade of the entrance pavilion with its large rectilinear window originally screened by a steel brise soliel (now removed) and subdivided into three structural bays with exposed wood beams capped by a projecting flat roof line that extends beyond the protruding masonry end wall.

iv. The west-facing façade of the higher volume with regularly-spaced clerestory windows and a long, thin window that continues to the main floor level.

v. The rear (east) façade that faces onto a parking lot with the small square window openings and clerestory windows flanked by masonry fins;

vi. The south façade with its projecting masonry fins that frame regularly-spaced L-shaped windows and that are capped by a projecting flat roofline with exposed wood beams; and

vii. The north façade that faces onto a paved area with its uninterrupted brick walls and projecting flat roof line.

B. Interior:

i. Wood beams and ceilings;

ii. Exposed brick walls;

iii. Volume of space of the main floor; and
iv. The clerestory openings in the walls that allow for the transmission of natural light between spaces.