

Identification and location

Name of place:

Other Name

Address

Place Identifier

Heritage Significance

Creation date(s) **Map (Melway)**

Boundary description

Local Government Area

Ownership Type

Description

Site Type:

Physical Description

One mature elm in the street at Somerville Road corner, near a new medium density development. The street has both early and reset basalt kerb and channel (3 pitch), the kerb being approximately 5m from the building line. Other immature trees in the street include hakeas.

The Ulmus genus comprises 20 or so species of trees and shrubs which occur naturally in temperate regions of the northern hemisphere. During the 1920s and 1930s, and again in the 1960s and 1970s, elm trees in Europe and North America were devastated by Dutch elm disease, caused by the fungus *Ophiostoma ulmi*, which is transmitted by the elm bark beetle. Except for a few East Asian species, they are deciduous, turning yellow in fall (autumn). The leaves are usually alternate, one-sided at the base, with prominent, parallel, lateral veins and regularly toothed margins; the small, disc-like fruits have a membranous wing and are carried in clusters. Most elms are large limbed with furrowed grey bark and high, domed crowns {Botanica}'.

Condition

Integrity

Context

In an Edwardian-era residential area

Threats:

Pruning for added and existing service lines, removal with maturity, new crossovers, carparking, root compaction, adjoining development.

History

An observer writing in the 'Williamstown Chronicle' of 1880 noted of Footscray that, 20 years before, there had been 'scarcely a tree to be seen and the place looked as bare as an earthen pot'. Since that time street tree planting (mainly elms by observation of surviving trees) had shown its value although the writer noted an unwarranted pause in municipal planting. { FHS newsletter }

The Parks & Gardens Curator's (David Matthews) report on street trees, in 1933, noted many complaints about suckering of the root system of elms and poplars (silver poplars). He also noted that the Oriental plane ('Platanus orientalis') had been extensively used. This tree was subject to the Plane Tree Disease and troubled by borer along with the elms. These trees had been planted for over twenty years and Matthews observed that, had the varieties selected proved more suitable, the streets would have been furnished with well grown trees and would have been giving pleasure instead of annoyance to the ratepayers. He was forced to conclude that elms, poplars and planes were unsuitable but that surviving trees should be preserved for as long as possible until they could be replaced.

This report was the turning point in street tree planting policy and the result of the maturity of the trees planted in the late Victorian-era and Edwardian-era, plus the spreading network of overhead wires. New electric street lighting was being obscured by tree canopies- the canopies and the trees under them had to go. An aerial view taken by Charles Daniel Pratt, photographer, around the 1930s-40s shows mature tree avenues in Cowper, Bunbury, and Whitewall Streets and Moreland Road. Another aerial view of 1931 shows the same. The 1945 aerial views show many street trees in Footscray and Yarraville. Most of these trees have gone.

The MMBW Detail Plans of this area (1895) do not show these trees but 1945 the street trees are well established here: planting must have occurred early in the 20th century, prior to the onset of overhead wires and the Curator's change in tree policy in 1933..

Surviving mature early 20th century street trees in the former Footscray municipality today also include elms in Stephen and Bunbury Streets, and Ballarat Road.

Thematic context

Australian Principal Theme Developing cultural institutions and ways of life

PAHT Subtheme

Local Theme(s)

Cultural Significance

This elm street tree is significant to the City of Maribyrnong:

- as a remnant of the early 20th century street tree planting regime and the associated Edwardian-era prosperity in the City (Criterion A4);
- as a remnant of once widespread but now severely reduced street tree planting within the City (Criterion B2).

Comparative Examples:

Elms of a greater size can also be seen at 31-33 Somerville Rd and at the Hyde Street Primary School with comparable size examples in Stephen Street and Ballarat Road, as street trees.

Recommendations

- Heritage Victoria Register
- Register of the National Estate:
- National Trust Register:
- Other Heritage Listings
- Planning Scheme Protection
- External Paint Controls Apply?:
- Internal Alteration Controls Apply?:
- Tree Controls Apply?:
- Included on the Victorian Heritage Register under the Act:
- Are there Outbuildings or Fences not Exempt?:
- Prohibited Uses may be Permitted

Recommendations:

The following management objectives have been drawn from the Statement of Significance:

- to conserve and enhance the listed tree at the place and related elements such as the basalt kerb and channel where enhancement includes replacement of missing original components in the planting scheme;
- to conserve and enhance the public view of the tree;
- to ensure that new plantings or elements near the tree are visually recessive and related; and
- to further research the detailed origins of the tree and maintain the link with its history via promotion and publication of the findings.

Australian Heritage Commission Criteria

Historic Places - Significant Trees in the City of Maribyrnong

A4 Importance for their association with events, developments or cultural phases which have had a significant role in the human occupation and evolution of the nation, state, region or community.

as a remnant of the early 20th century street tree planting regime and the associated Edwardian-era prosperity in the City

B2 Importance in demonstrating a distinctive way of life, custom, process, land-use, function or design no longer practiced, in danger of being lost, or of exceptional interest.

rare remnant of once widespread but now severely reduced street tree planting within the City

historical significanc architectural significan social significance scientific significanc

Documentation

References

'Botanica' CD Rom 1997 (Beaver Multimedia P/L, Random House Australia)
Butler, 1989. City of Footscray Urban Conservation Study
MMBW Detail Plans, State Library of Victoria;
Footscray Council committee minutes (VPRO) VPRS 005337

Data recording

Assessed By:

Assessed Date:

Historic Places - Significant Trees in the City of Maribyrnong

