

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

Five wide-crowned mature plane trees (*Platanus orientalis*) in Stephen Street, north of Somerville Road which appear contemporary with much of the Edwardian-era housing fronting the street: two specimens outside a nursing home numbers 36-50, one near each of numbers 54, 62 and 64 Stephen Street.

The *Platanus* genus of 6 species of large, vigorous, wide-crowned, deciduous trees from Eurasia, North America and Mexico contains some of the world's largest deciduous shade trees for dry-summer climates, many of which are widely used as street trees. The trees are called planes or plane trees in some countries, sycamores in others. The most conspicuous feature is the flaking, mottled bark, which is shed in winter. The 5-lobed leaves are large and maple-like, and the brown seed balls hang in clusters on the trees in winter. The flowers are insignificant { *Botanica* }.

Condition

Integrity

Context

Late Victorian-era and mainly Edwardian-era housing front the street.

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, David Matthews, 1933 report on street trees 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 { VPRO}.

The MMBW Detail Plan of this area from the mid 1890s shows no street trees but the 1945 aerial view shows established rows: the planting appears to have occurred early in the 20th century. The 1909 publication, `Footscray's First Fifty Years' shows semi-mature street trees near 80 Stephen St, indicating that they had been planted around 1900 or earlier.

Thematic context

Australian Principal Theme	Developing cultural institutions and ways of life	
PAHT Subtheme	Creating public landscape	Local Theme(s) Developing Local Government

Cultural Significance

These five plane street trees are significant to the City of Maribyrnong:

- as a remnant of the early 20th century street tree planting regime, parallel with the renewed prosperity of the area in the Edwardian-era (Criterion A4)
- as a remnant of a street tree planting program which was once widespread but has been severely reduced over time within the City (Criterion B2).

Comparative Examples:

Other isolated examples can be found in Nicholson Street and elsewhere in Stephen Street.

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 trees at the place;
- to conserve and enhance the visual relationship between trees at the place;
- to conserve and enhance the public view of these trees;
- to ensure that new plantings or elements within the place are visually recessive and related to the trees; and
- to further research the detailed origins of the tree rows and maintain the link with history, via promotion and publication of the findings.

Australian Heritage Commission Criteria

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.

Historic Places - Significant Trees in the City of Maribyrnong

remnant of the early 20th century street tree planting regime, parallel with the renewed prosperity of the area,

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.

remnant of the early 20th century street tree planting regime which was once widespread but has been severely reduced over time 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
City of Maribyrnong collection: 1931 aerial
Landinfo aerial 1945 images
`Footscray's First Fifty Years' 1909: 135
Footscray Council committee minutes (VPRO) VPRS 005337

Data recording

Assessed By:

Assessed Date:

Historic Places - Significant Trees in the City of Maribyrnong

