

Identification and location

Name of place: Elm & plane street trees

Other Name 'Ulmus sp.', 'Platanus orientalis'

Address 080-98 nr Stephen Street

Yarraville

Place Identifier 21697

Heritage Significance City

Creation date(s) 1890-1912c

Map (Melway) 42B8

Boundary description The trees and sufficient land around each to allow for root zone and canopy protection, nominally 1m beyond the drip line, root zone or canopy perimeter which ever is the greatest.

Local Government Area City of Maribyrnong

Ownership Type Public

Description

Site Type: Trees, street

Physical Description

Seven street trees in Stephen Street, south of Somerville Road which appear contemporary with much of the Victorian-era and Edwardian-era housing fronting the street. Mature but poorly pruned elm ('Ulmus sp.') street trees near numbers 80, 82, 83, 84, 93, 98 Stephen Street and a plane ('Platanus orientalis') street tree near number 87.

The 20 or so species in the Elm ('Ulmus sp.') genus of trees and shrubs 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}'.

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

good (partially disturbed, well preserved)

Integrity

substantially intact/some intrusions

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'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 Whitehall 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 Plan (DP 167) of this area from the mid 1890s shows no street trees. In 1912 Council approved the planting of 20 street trees in Gavan Street, 24 in Stephen Street, 20 in Moreland Street, and 36 in Cowper Street. 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. It is assumed that the planting occurred early in the 20th century.

Thematic context

Australian Principal Theme

PAHT Subtheme

Local Theme(s)

Cultural Significance

These seven elm and plane street trees are significant to the City of Maribyrnong:

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

Comparative Examples:

Surviving comparable size street trees in the former Footscray municipality today also include elms in Stephen and Bunbury Streets, in Nicholson Street and a section of Ballarat Road. Elms of a greater size can also be seen at 31-33 Somerville Road and at the Hyde Street Primary School.

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:

Historic Places - Significant Trees in the City of Maribyrnong

- 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.

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 significant architectural significant social significance scientific significant

Documentation

References

`Botanica' CD Rom 1997 (Beaver Multimedia P/L, Random House Australia)
 Butler, 1989. City of Footscray Urban Conservation Study
 State Library of Victoria MMBW plan collection
 City of Maribyrnong collection: 1931 aerial
 Landinfo aerial 1945 images
 `Footscray's First Fifty Years' 1909: 135
 Footscray Council committee minutes (VPRO) VPRS 005337;
 MMBW plans, State Library of Victoria.

Data recording

Assessed By:

Assessed Date:

Historic Places - Significant Trees in the City of Maribyrnong

