

Identification and location

Name of place: **Yarraville Civic and Commercial Precinct**

Other Name

Address

bounded by

Part Melbourne to Williamstown railway, parts Ballarat, Birmingham, Simpson, Goulburn and Willis Streets

Yarraville

Place Identifier

22167

Heritage Overlay Number 2000

HA18A

Heritage Significance

Regional

Creation date(s)

1849-

Map (Melway)

Boundary description

Part of the Melbourne to Williamstown railway; parts of Ballarat , Anderson, Birmingham, Canterbury and Murray Streets, with emphasis on all original Edwardian-era and Victorian-era elements, including basalt pitched paving, asphalt footpaths, lot sizes and street patterns.

Local Government Area

City of Maribyrnong

Ownership Type

Private & Public

Description

Site Type: Shopping precinct

Physical Description

The general character of the Yarraville Civic and Commercial Precinct is one of Victorian and Edwardian era attached one and two storey cemented and face brick Edwardian and Victorian era shops with residences over. There are some individually significant inter-war examples and landmark buildings at corners and at the focus of vistas and the area is distinguished by the visual prominence of the railway station, stone paved station yards, Anderson St railway gates and signal box; the visual prominence of the vista north along Ballarat St to contributory Murray St buildings; and the visual prominence of the vista west along Anderson St to the railway gates and signal box. Streets were originally with asphalt footpaths and stone kerb and channel, with some surviving and all properties built to the street frontage. There is typically a parapeted and trabeated façade evocative of Italianate design influences and a near universal parapeted form with a repeating module determined by the Victorian-era shopfronts of 5-6m. Of the 507 places in the precinct as a whole 429 are contributory.

These commercial buildings are grouped around the major transport routes, including the railway, Ballarat, Stephen and Anderson Streets. This civic and commercial core is surrounded by one storey largely Victorian & Edwardian-era residential development.

The specific character of the civic-commercial core is defined by Stephen, Lennox, Murray, Ballarat and Anderson Streets. This extends via the railway station yard into Birmingham Street south with its miniature garden square fronting the station, the distinctive 1940s bus shelter and the notable St Georges Theatre. Mid-Victorian era structures exist in Stephen Street, with late Victorian buildings in Lennox and Murray, and combined Edwardian and late Victorian in Ballarat and Anderson Streets. Major buildings from the inter-war period include the Sun Cinema, National Bank and Railway Hotel.

The architectural content of Yarraville's civic-commercial core is still impressive, given the individually worthy designs, sometimes highlighted by the unusual street layout (i.e.. Ballarat Street vista to Murray). However many significant buildings have been altered (28 Murray Street) and among the general building stock, the usual verandah and shopfront replacement has occurred. Nevertheless, the Ballarat Street (to Anderson) and part of Murray Street provide a significant collection of architecturally notable and historically expressive sites.

Among the late 19th century elements in the precinct are the Salvation Army barracks (1887) and the altered but still recognisable fire station (c1895) both in Murray Street, and Punshon & Co.'s stores, at the Ballarat Anderson Streets' corner. The Yarraville Hall (later Lyric Theatre) is a major related development in the old Stephen St centre, outside of this precinct. The railway station (1893) provides a visual and cultural focus of the precinct, surrounded by its stone pitched goods yards.

The Edwardian-era structures include the State Savings Bank (1909), Gill's Drapery at the Ballarat and Anderson corner, the nearby Woods' Drapery (1917) with its corner tower rotunda and slightly removed from the centre, the St. George's Theatre (1913) in Birmingham Street. This theatre remains today as a termination of the vista across the railway yards from Murray St. The notable Sun Cinema of 1938 represents the minor inter-war phase, along with the rebuilt Railway Hotel.

Part of the 1859 township plan lies outside of the proposed heritage overlay HA18A where the existing building stock has been judged to be below the study threshold for adequate expression of the historical themes (see Volume 2) and satisfaction of the Australian Heritage Commission criteria. However the township plan itself is of significance as evoked by the street and subdivision pattern and street names which survive from its creation date.

Condition

fair (disturbed, reasonably preserved)

Integrity

partially intact/intrusions

Context

Framed and fed from an early date by the railway and linked commercially to the riverside factory complexes, the precinct has developed as a self-contained urban centre.

Threats:

Unrelated development, changes to original fabric and new signs, increased vehicle traffic.

History

It is apparent from an examination of the development of the Maribyrnong study area, that the transport routes that were opened up during the 1850s seem to have been an incentive for private developers to market estates or private villages.

The (soon to be built) Williamstown railway line was a selling point at Yarraville as was the Ballarat Road at Braybrook and Maidstone. Often developers carved land up into tiny allotments, very few of which were probably actually built upon during the 1850s or soon after. Some remnants of these old street configurations can still be made out at Braybrook and Maidstone, while the township of Yarraville still retains the streets that were laid out in the 1850s {Barnard, 2000}.

Allotments in the Township of Yarraville were first offered for sale at a grand fete, picnic and land sale in April 1859. The township was centred around the Williamstown railway line (mostly to the west of it), although Yarraville station was not opened until 1872. Streets (were) named after Victorian goldfields, possibly to attract goldminers as buyers. The township was a rectangular grid of streets between Somerville Road and Newcastle Street and Fehon and Ballarat Streets and presumably some sales of allotments were made at the first sale for soon another advertising bill was showing a plan of 'remaining allotments for sale at the township of Yarraville. By 1879 there were 200 houses at Yarraville. It was the opening of the railway station in 1872 and the siting of a number of industries further east along the river in the 1870s and 1880s which probably helped to attract workers to the township and the commercial development which occurred in Anderson and Ballarat Streets in the 1880s {Barnard, 2000 }.

The 'Township of Yarraville' was an 1855 private subdivision of the 78 acre CA 2/8, originally granted to architect James Gill. Auctioneer, C.J. Henningham, of Bourke Street west, was the selling agent and reputedly landed his customers by steamer at a quarryman's jetty on the Maribyrnong River and brought them overland to the site. His sale plan showed the river lapping at the eastern perimeter of his 'town' while the Stony Creek threatened to broach his property on the south: it was surrounded by flowing streams. However there was no deceit about the future position of the Williamstown railway (1859) but the station shown was not to materialise until c1872 and at a different location. A later seller of the estate, architect-surveyor, Henry Biers noted on his sale plan that a deputation had sought a station and that such a facility would bring owners within 10 minutes of the city.

The obelisk shown on the sale plan at the corner of Blackwood and Ballarat Streets (as well as the flagstaff at the Simpson Street corner), made Ballarat Street the principal street of the town. In fact such an obelisk apparently did exist, mounted on a granite base, and stood for a time in the Cuming Gardens. Anderson Street, as the only street shown with a level-crossing, was the principal east-west street, with no other streets able to cross the town, north-south or east-west.

The sale-bill also cited the town's attributes:

'the land is high and dry (despite the rivers), commanding the most picturesque views of Melbourne, Collingwood, Emerald Hill, Sandridge, Windsor, St. Kilda, Williamstown, the Bay and Shipping, as well as the country inland for many miles.

The ground is good garden soil, there is a never failing creek of fresh water... and the finest building stone...'

Most lots measured either 20 by 70 feet (north-south) or 20 by 80 feet (east-west), none had rear lanes for night soil collection. This was changed by later resubdivision. Some of the lots already had proud owners. Names like Duncan, Moyes, Williams, Grey, McHardy and Nesbitt were shown on some of the plans, along with some buildings which mostly straddled double blocks owned by Steele, Dixon, Hampson and Tapscott. Like many of the subdivisions created immediately after the gold rush, it presumably aimed to house the returning diggers and towards this end the use of gold field towns as street names was an inspired idea.

A gazetteer entry for Yarraville in 1879 noted that the riverside industries had established themselves and their workers set up homes, coinciding with the arrival of the railway station. The population was around 600 and the house-count 200. Earlier in the 1870s, twelve of the sixteen tradesmen cited for Yarraville in Melbourne directories were still directly linked with the stone industry, with later directories revealing the diversification of industry in the area.

The 1877 borough plan showed residential subdivisions of the former Crown Portions 3 and 1 which adjoined the 'town' and it was CP1 which possessed the most buildings with a concentration in Stephen Street. Yarraville 'town' appeared to be all but deserted.

The 1894 MMBW plan showed the obverse situation, with extensive commercial development in Anderson Street and some in Ballarat Street. Elsewhere, generally residential development existed (i.e. Albert, Castlemaine, Blanche, Ovens, Simpson, Ballarat south, Newcastle and Norfolk Streets) except for residual commercial centres around the Schild, Lennox and Simpson Streets' corners made with Stephen Street. W. P. Smith's former licensed grocery (1875), at 97 Stephen Street, is an example of the early commercial nodes in Stephen Street.

Between the dates depicted by these two maps was the development of the railway station and yards to serve the new industries and a consequent shift of the commercial area towards it. East of the railway, six businesses were in Anderson Street, in 1885, while some 14 were listed on the western side only of Stephen Street. By 1895, some 30 businesses were in Anderson Street east, compared with 16 in Stephen Street.

Among the late 19th century improvements in the centre were the Railway Hotel (1891 renovation), the Salvation Army barracks (1887) and the fire station (c1895) both in Murray Street, and Punshon & Co.'s stores, at the Ballarat and Anderson Streets' corner. The Yarraville Hall (later Lyric Theatre) was another major development just outside of the centre. Major owners included Edmund Greenwood, James Harris, George Yewers, T.G. Lewis and H.J. Proctor. The railway station was rebuilt in 1893.

Once relocated near the railway station, the commercial and civic centre developed to its peak, coinciding with the new State Savings Bank (1909), Gill's Drapery at the Ballarat and Anderson corner, and slightly removed from the centre, the St. George's Theatre (1913) in Birmingham Street.

Yarraville Railway Station was also augmented in this era. By 1917, the renowned Woods' Drapery had replace Gill's in Anderson Street where the corner tower rotunda housed a local band whose musical accompaniment soothed late Saturday night shoppers. It was here that 'Passion' Pianto purchased the fine clothes that earned him a reputation as the Beau Brummell of Yarraville.

The arrival of the Sun Cinema in 1938 marked another minor development surge, along with the rebuilding of the Railway Hotel. Before that, major buildings included the National Bank on the opposite corner. All were either prominent in scale or prominently sited.

Thematic context

Australian Principal Theme	Developing local, regional and national economies	
PAHT Subtheme	Marketing & retailing	Local Theme(s) Village and township reserves

Cultural Significance

The Yarraville Civic and Commercial precinct is significant to the Western Region of Melbourne because:

- of the architecturally regionally significant commercial streetscapes centred around Anderson and Ballarat Streets which include individually significant places such as the Sun Cinema and the State Savings Bank, as well as significant vistas such as the view north along Ballarat Street to Murray Street, the major corner sites such as the corner of Anderson and Ballarat Streets and the distinctive scale of narrow commercial streets flanked by two storey development (Criteria

E1, F1);

- it is expressive of two major development periods in the City's history (Victorian-era, Edwardian-era), with all of the elements which make up an urban area from these periods, such as the transport hub and associated entertainment, civic and commercial buildings close to the station, which still express the dominant Edwardian and Victorian-eras, expressed by:

- Victorian and Edwardian era attached, generally two storey cemented and face brick Edwardian and Victorian era shops and residences over,
- some individually significant inter-war examples and landmark buildings at corners and at the focus of vistas,
- visual prominence of the railway station, stone paved station yards, Anderson Street railway gates and signal box,
- visual prominence of the vista north along Ballarat Street to contributory Murray Street buildings,
- visual prominence of the vista west along Anderson Street to the railway gates and signal box,
- visual prominence of the vista west along Murray Street to the St Georges Theatre,
- visual prominence of the vista north along Birmingham Street to the railway station and St Georges Theatre,
- some surviving early asphalt footpaths and stone kerb and channel,
- siting to the street frontage,
- typically a parapeted and trabeated façade evocative of Italianate design influences,
- near universal parapeted form; and
- a repeating module determined by the Victorian-era shopfronts of 5-6m typical expressed by wall piers (Criteria A3, A4);

- of the early underlying street, subdivision pattern and street names (1859 plan of Yarraville Township) which derive from one of the early private town surveys in the Colony of Victoria and the oldest known private township plan to be created and sold within the City (Criterion A4); and

- the Yarraville commercial and civic centre has been gathering place for Yarraville residents over a long period of the City's history and as such is still recognised as a community centre, with many of the community's public structures, despite fluctuations in prosperity of the area (Criterion G1).

Comparative Examples:

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 boundaries of the existing Heritage Overlay HA16 in the City of Maribyrnong Planning Scheme should be adjusted to the revised boundaries (refer map) to reflect the civic and commercial core of the former heritage overlay.

The following objectives have been drawn from the Statement of Significance where contributory places or elements are generally those which derive from the Edwardian & Victorian-eras including:

- Victorian and Edwardian era attached, generally two storey cemented and face brick Edwardian and Victorian era shops with residences over,
- some individually significant inter-war examples and landmark buildings at corners and at the focus of vistas,
- visual prominence of the railway station, stone paved station yards, Anderson Street railway gates and signal box;
- visual prominence of the vista north along Ballarat Street to contributory Murray Street buildings;
- visual prominence of the vista west along Anderson Street to the railway gates and signal box;
- visual prominence of the vista west along Murray Street to the St Georges Theatre; and
- visual prominence of the vista north along Birmingham Street to the railway station and St Georges Theatre
- some surviving early asphalt footpaths and stone kerb and channel;
- siting to the street frontage,
- typically a parapeted and trabeated façade evocative of Italianate design influences;
- near universal parapeted form; and
- a repeating module determined by the Victorian-era shopfronts of 5-6m typically expressed by wall piers; also
- an early underlying street, subdivision pattern and street names which derive from one of the early private town surveys in the Colony of Victoria.

It is recommended:

- to conserve and enhance the contributory elements in the precinct and individually significant places, as expressive of the two major development periods in the City's commercial building history, where elements include buildings, objects, landscape, land and street works and enhancement includes the reinstatement of missing original elements;
- to conserve and enhance the visual relationship between contributory elements in the precinct;
- to conserve and enhance the public view of these contributory elements;
- to conserve and enhance the inter-relationship of the residential, commercial and transport uses arising from the Edwardian & Victorian-eras;
- to conserve and enhance the prominence of key heritage places such as the former Post Office, the State Savings Bank, the Sun Theatre, St Georges Theatre, the Yarraville Railway Station complex and yards with the rest of the precinct;
- to conserve and enhance the commercial streetscapes and vistas within Ballarat and Anderson Streets;
- to conserve and enhance the community use of the commercial centre of the precinct;
- to conserve and enhance the amenity of the precinct to aid in its heritage conservation;
- to ensure that new elements within the precinct are recessive and related to the precinct's contributory elements in roof and plan form, external materials, front and side setbacks from property boundaries, and building bulk as viewed from public areas;
- to conserve and enhance the expression of the 1859 Yarraville Township plan including the street and subdivision pattern and street names;
- that Council investigate the preparation of a separate heritage overlay, with an incorporated plan which defines management objectives and permit exemptions for that part of the 1859 Yarraville Township survey which is outside of the proposed heritage overlay HA18, to protect the surviving parts of the plan (street names and alignments, surviving subdivision) and enhance its public perception; and
- that Council investigate the preparation of an incorporated plan for the proposed heritage overlay which (HA18) will embody the above objectives.

Australian Heritage Commission Criteria

A3 Importance in exhibiting unusual richness or diversity of flora, fauna, landscape or cultural features.

The precinct has all of the elements which make up an urban area from the major growth periods, such as the transport hub and associated entertainment, civic and commercial buildings close to the station, and the surrounding residential areas.

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.

the precinct is expressive of the three major development periods in the City's history (Victorian-era, Edwardian-era, inter-war).

Historic Places - Urban Conservation Areas & Individual Places in the former City of Footscray

E1 Importance for a community for aesthetic characteristics held in high esteem or otherwise valued by the community.

architecturally significant commercial streetscapes centred around Anderson and Ballarat Streets which include individually significant places such as the Sun Cinema and the State Savings Bank, as well as significant vistas such as the view north along Ballarat St to Murray St, the major corner sites such as the corner of Anderson and Ballarat Streets and the distinctive scale of narrow commercial streets flanked by two storey development.

F1 Importance for their technical, creative, design or artistic excellence, innovation or achievement.

architecturally significant commercial streetscapes centred around Anderson and Ballarat Streets which include individually significant places such as the Sun Cinema and the State Savings Bank, major corner sites such as the corner of Anderson and Ballarat Streets.

G1 Importance as places highly valued by a community for reasons of religious, spiritual, cultural, educational or social associations.

The Yarraville commercial and civic centre has been gathering place for Yarraville residents over a long period of the City's history and as such is still recognised as a community centre, with many of the community's public structures, despite fluctuations in prosperity of the area.

historical significant architectural significant social significance scientific significant

Documentation

References

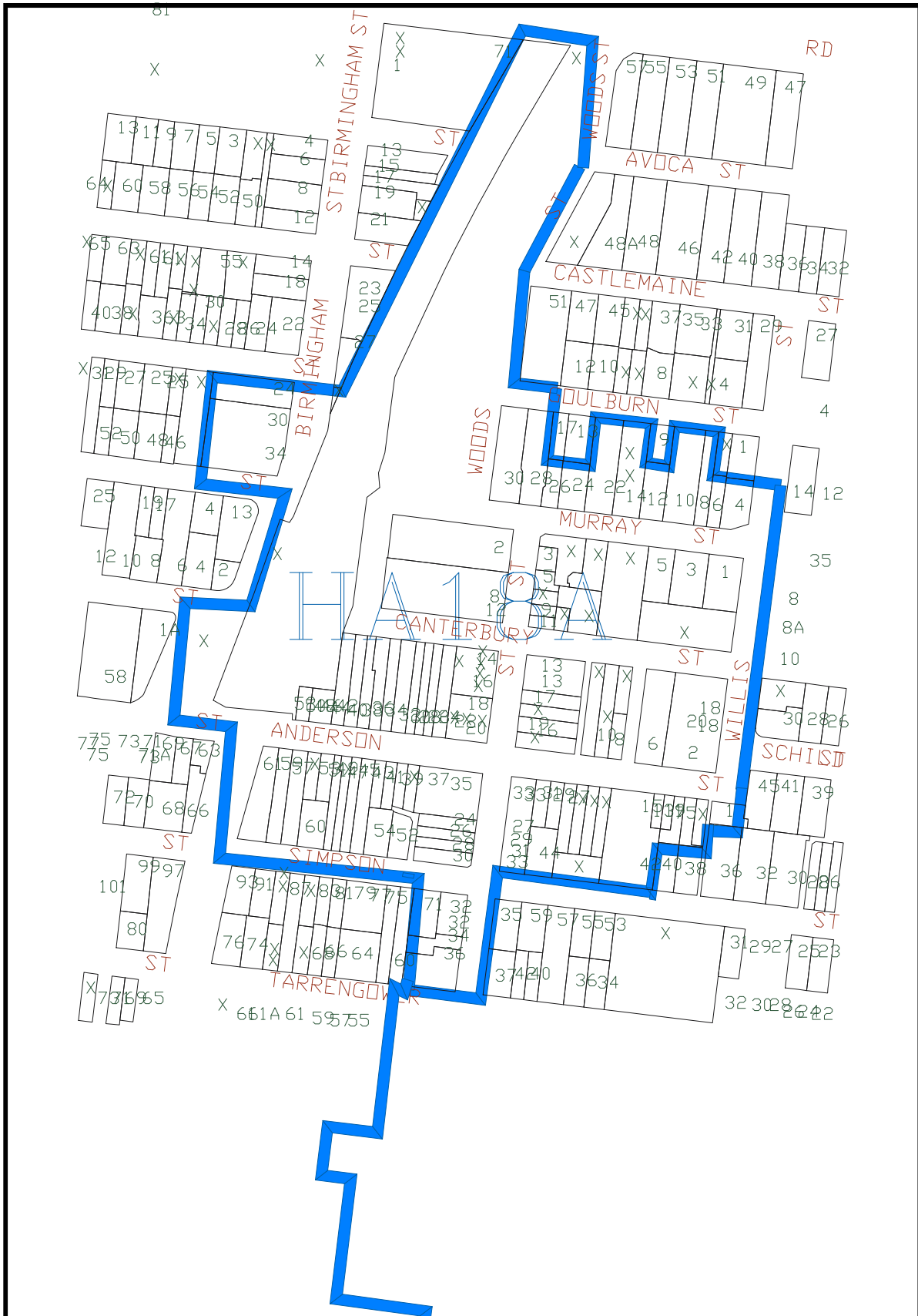
Barnard, (2000) Historic Places Review Environmental History , City of Maribyrnong
Lack, 1991. 'A History of Footscray';
Butler, 1989, City of Footscray Urban Conservation Study,

Data recording

Assessed By:

Assessed Date:

Historic Places - Urban Conservation Areas & Individual Places in the former City of Footscray



HA18A: Yarraville Civic and Commercial Precinct