

# Urban Conservation Areas

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## Avoca and Caroline Streets Urban Conservation Area [Area 1.1]

### Extent

The Avoca and Caroline Streets Urban Conservation Area includes much of Avoca Street, the eastern side of Caroline Street and a small section of the western side of Caroline Street between Shipley Street and North Hampton Street. Part of the southern boundary abuts the Toorak Road Urban Conservation Area which extends north along Avoca Street to include Lee Terrace. The Alexandra Avenue Urban Conservation Area, which contains extensive examples of flat development from the 1920s and 30s, adjoins the Avoca and Caroline Streets Urban Conservation Area along Domain Road.

### History

This area has historical significance as one of the earliest in the City of Prahran to be sold in the first 1840 sale of Crown lands. Six South Yarra allotments between Punt Road and Chapel Street were among land sold at this time. These large allotments stretched from the Yarra River to Gardiner's Creek (now Toorak) Road.<sup>1</sup>

At an early date a few houses were constructed in the South Yarra area on elevated sites with river frontages, north of the future alignment of Domain Road. One was Yarra Bank, the home from 1843 of Major Alexander Davidson, who purchased Lot 1 (bounded by Punt Road and present-day Caroline Street) from Crown Grantee, R. H. Browne.<sup>2</sup> In 1870, this property contained a residence and 12 acres of garden,

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1. George Tibbits, *History of Prahran*, p.26. Map shows the area in June 1840  
2. RGO Search 320.

orchard and vineyard.<sup>3</sup> Yarra Bank no longer exists but another very early house, Avoca, built on Lot 2, remains in Avoca Street. It was the home from about 1848 of William Montgomery Bell, a wealthy merchant.<sup>4</sup>

Subdivision of these six early properties in the 1850s created housing allotments between Domain and Toorak Roads, leaving the earlier homes on large sites close to the river. These subdivisions featured wide streets and large allotments reflecting the affluence of the area. This was in contrast to the smaller residential allotments south of Toorak Road. Caroline Street was created as a result of Major Davidson's 1853 subdivision of Lot 1 and was named after his daughter.<sup>5</sup> Avoca Street was named after the Bell property.<sup>6</sup>

Some of South Yarra's earliest remaining houses were built in the 1850s in Caroline, Avoca, Murphy and Darling (earlier Prahran) Streets. Kearney's 1855 map shows at least portions of these homes. Notable South Yarra houses such as Richmond House (56 Avoca Street), Caroline House (75 Caroline Street) and 83 Caroline Street retain substantial sections from the 1850s.<sup>7</sup>

The area south of Domain Road was developed intensely in the 1860s and 1870s. By the 1890s there were clusters of domestic residences spread along the side streets with commercial premises along Toorak Road. There were both detached villas in garden settings and terrace housing in parts of Caroline and Avoca Streets.<sup>8</sup>

More recently, many of the older houses closer to Toorak Road have been replaced with modern flats in the 1950s and 1960s. However, this area is remarkable still for the number of architecturally and historically important early houses remaining from the early and late Victorian period, including detached houses and terrace housing. As well, there is some significant Edwardian and inter-war housing, similar in form and scale to the earlier developments.

## Description

In Avoca Street, a series of detached two storey Victorian villas remain on the crest of the hill. Some of these remain substantially intact. There are newer developments of a similar form and scale in this locality which predominantly date from the inter-war and post-war years. This continuity of form assists in creating the special character of this locality.

The lower section of Avoca Street towards Toorak Road has been substantially redeveloped for flats and housing dating from the post-war period.

Avoca Street lacks a unifying planting scheme having a mix of Ash, Elm and Brush Box trees, with some small Prunus as well. The street layout has been slightly altered with the building of a school crossing. The retention of sawn bluestone curb and guttering is a feature and one property retains a bluestone entry drive (No. 60 Avoca).

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3. Betty Malone. *The North-West Corner*.
  4. George Tibbits, *History of Prahran*, p.36
  5. RGO Search 320.
  6. Betty Malone. *The North-West Corner*.
  7. James Kearney, *Map of Melbourne and Its Suburbs*, 1855
  8. MMBW 1895 drainage plan

The vista north along Avoca Street from this grouping of Victorian houses is terminated by a grouping of inter-war buildings within the Alexandra Avenue Urban Conservation Area.

Caroline Street is quite different in character to Avoca Street, being slightly narrower in width and containing a strong avenue of large Plane trees. Their interlacing branches form a canopy enclosing the street. The trees are planted within the roadway, also providing a different character to the grassy verges of Avoca Street. In Caroline Street the roadway remains asphalt but the footpath and curbs and channels have been replaced with recent concrete.

Architecturally the character of Caroline Street is created by a series of terraces, in attached groupings, including 92 and 94, 62 to 68 (rank A2). The other feature of this street are the early detached, or semi-detached houses such as those at 63 and 65, 75, 76 and 78. Several of these properties were built in or retain substantial sections from the 1850s.

### **Heritage characteristics**

The key heritage characteristics of the Avoca and Caroline Streets Urban Conservation Area are:

- evidence of the early history of land subdivisions and development which is reflected in the street pattern and some remaining structures
- the consistent form and scale of groupings of buildings within the Area demonstrating aspects of nineteenth century residential styles
- the retention of traditional street materials in Avoca Street and along Domain Road
- the garden settings associated with many of the dwellings
- the magnificent avenue of Planes along Caroline Street.

### **Analysis**

The extent of the area should be reduced to more accurately reflect the extent of the development remaining from the early to late nineteenth century. This would involve removing the properties south of the southern boundary of no. 36 Avoca Street.

The collection of buildings remaining in Avoca and Caroline Streets provides important historical evidence of the early and subsequent development patterns in the area.

### **Significance**

Avoca and Caroline Street Urban Conservation Area has significance as one of the earliest parts of the City of Prahran to be sold, the pattern of the streets and some of the housing demonstrating the aspects of the area's development during the 1840s and 1850s. The earliest housing and subdivisions that created Avoca and Caroline Streets and this part of Domain Road are associated with some of the City of Prahran's earliest houses, owned and occupied by notable colonists. The subsequent development from the 1850s through to the inter-war years, saw the creation of a

precinct characterised by two storey detached villas, providing a remarkable display of changing architectural styles, while respecting the character that started to be established in the 1850s. On the lower slopes towards Toorak Road the recent flats have created a very different form and character.

The landform, the plantings in Caroline Street and the bluestone kerb and guttering in Avoca Street are important elements that contribute to the streetscape qualities of the Area as well as demonstrating historical aspects of the street design.

## **Sources**

Kearney, James, *Map of Melbourne and Its Suburbs*, 1855.

Malone, Betty *The North-West Corner*, 1987.

MMBW 1895 drainage plan.

RGO Search 320.

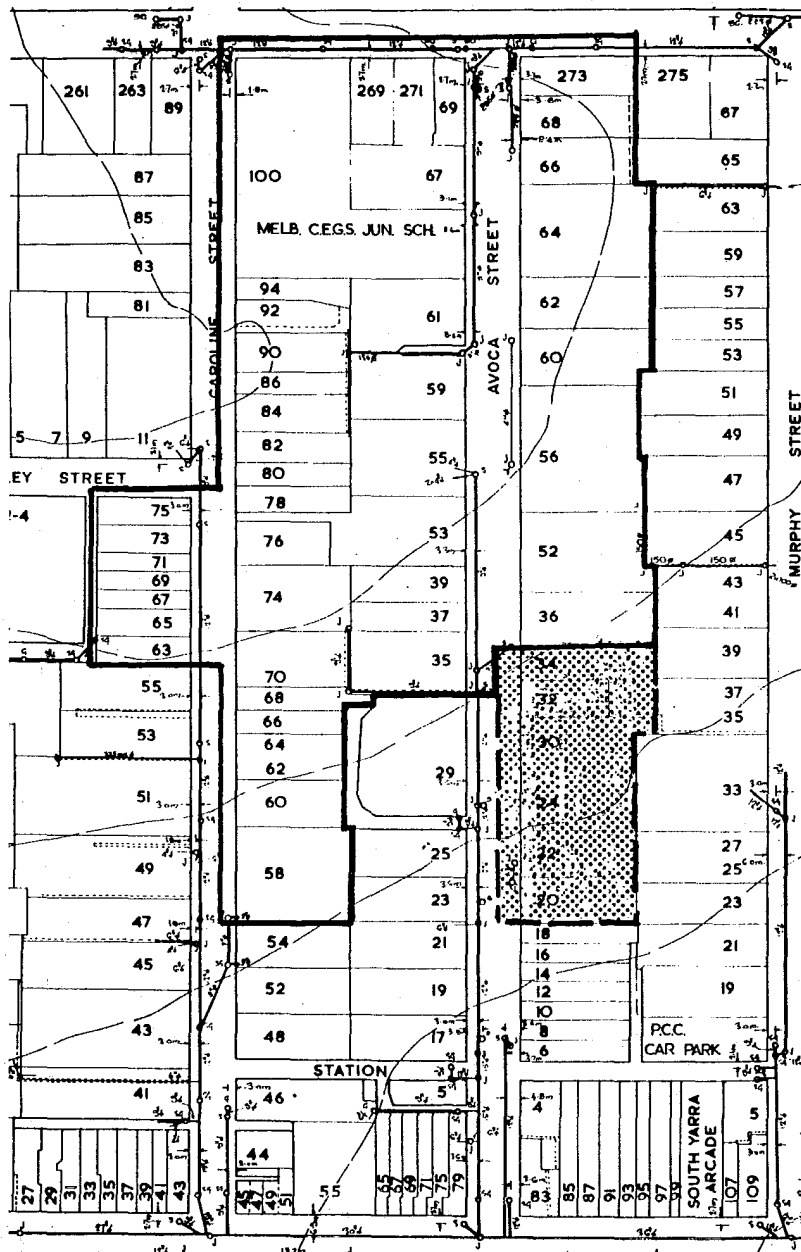
Tibbits, George, *History of Prahran*, p.26. Map shows the area in June 1840.

## **Recommendations**




1. Adopt the UC1 Area as exhibited with the exclusion of the (six) properties to the south of the southern boundary of no. 36 Avoca Street.

# Map

## Avoca and Caroline Streets Urban Conservation Area [Area 1.1]



### Legend

-  Recommended UC1 Area
-  Remove from UC1 Area proposed in Amendment L24
-  Possible future extension

NOTE: Where UC1 Area proposed in Am. L24 coincides with the Recommended UC1 Area, only the latter is shown.