
Leongatha Civic & Commercial

Location

1-3 & 2-22 BAIR STREET, and 1-13 & 2-10 MCCARTIN STREET, LEONGATHA, SOUTH GIPPSLAND SHIRE

Municipality

SOUTH GIPPSLAND SHIRE

Level of significance

Recommended for Heritage Overlay

Heritage Listing

South Gippsland Shire

Statement of Significance

Last updated on - December 20, 2022

What is significant?

The Bair Street Commercial precinct comprising the buildings built from c.1895 to c.1940, at 1-5, 2-18 & 36-48 Bair Street and 2-10 McCartin Street is significant. Significant and Contributory buildings in the precinct include:

- Victorian and Interwar commercial buildings (1-5, 8-16 & 36-46 Bair St). These typically have rendered or brick parapets (some of which are stepped with shaped pediments), some with Victorian (8 Bair St) or Interwar Moderne (3-5, 44 Bair St) or Stripped Classical (40 Bair St) ornamentation and detailing. 8 Bair Street retains a post-supported verandah and the interwar shops have cantilevered awnings (3-5 and 44 Bair St are original), and 3 and 36-38 and 40 Bair Street retain early or original metal-framed shopfronts with recessed entries.
- The former Knight's Garage constructed in 1933 and extended in 1954. The 1933 building, set back from the street, has a rendered a capped parapet and is divided into three bays by brick pilasters surmounted by orbs. The central bay features an arched pediment with 'Knights Garage' in raised letters above a segmental arch opening with multi-pane glazing and a projecting hood mould supported by Tuscan columns. Other details include the arched window with leadlight highlights to the northern bay. The 1954 addition, set at the frontage, has similar detailing, and features tapestry brickwork.
- Two hotels. McCartins Commercial, built in 1891 and rebuilt in 1931, is a prominent corner building with a two level masonry verandah to Bair Street. Bairs Otago, which forms a 'bookend' on the next corner to the south, built in 1939, is in the Streamlined Moderne style with Art Deco detailing.
- The group of civic and community buildings along the north side of McCartin Street including the former Court House, Post Office, Memorial Hall & Council Offices, and Mechanics' Institute*.

All buildings within the precinct are Contributory. Non-original alterations and additions to the building are not significant.

*The former Court House, Post Office, Memorial Hall & Council Offices, and Mechanics' Institute are also of local significance and have individual citations with detailed descriptions (LE-MC-002, LE-MC-004, LE-MC-006, LE-MC-010).

How is it significant?

The Bair Street Commercial Precinct, in Leongatha, is of local historic, representative and aesthetic significance to South Gippsland Shire.

Why is it significant?

Historically, it is associated with the development Leongatha as the civic and commercial centre of Woorayl Shire during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, and demonstrates the prosperity and growth that occurred following the opening of the butter factory in 1905. The civic importance is demonstrated by the group comprising the former Court House, Post Office, Memorial Hall & Council Offices and Mechanics' Institute, which is without parallel in the Shire. The northern section of Bair Street is associated with the early development of the commercial centre, which commenced with the first Commercial and Otago Hotels and contains two of the earliest surviving shops in the at no. 8 and 16. The other buildings in this section and southern group in Bair Street demonstrates the redevelopment and expansion of the centre in the 1930s when several original buildings such as the two hotels were rebuilt or replaced and houses at the south end were replaced with new shops including the first arcades in South Gippsland. (Criterion A)

The former State Electricity Commission of Victoria office at 44 Bair Street is associated with the important statewide project to supply electricity to rural Victoria during the Interwar period. (Criterion A)

The shops at 8 and 16 Bair Street are rare examples of nineteenth century commercial buildings in Leongatha. (Criterion B)

It is a representative example of a commercial and civic centre comprised of two main stages of development prior to World War I, and during the Interwar period, set within a regular nineteenth century subdivision. The traditional grouping of the civic buildings along the north side of McCartin Street is of note. (Criterion D)

Russell Court at 36-38 Bair Street and Wightman's Centenary Buildings at 40 Bair Street are of representative significance as early arcade developments. (Criterion D)

Aesthetically, it is an early twentieth century commercial precinct comprised of masonry shops with a variety of distinctive parapet treatments ranging from Victorian Italianate to Interwar Moderne, complemented by landmark hotel buildings and a notable group of civic buildings. (Criterion E)

The aesthetic qualities of the precinct are enhanced by:

- The landmark grouping of civic buildings along the north side of McCartin Street in a range of Federation and Interwar styles including Federation Freestyle, Federation Queen Anne, Federation Classical and Interwar Free Classical.
- Bairs Otago Hotel, which is a fine example of an Interwar hotel in the Streamlined Moderne style with Art Deco details. It displays typically strong horizontal elements in the facade and canopies, rounded corners, with vertical counterpoints of flag pole, rain heads and downpipes and an end bay with a central Art Deco style pier of full height brick that curves above the parapet. The cantilevered street canopy expresses the corner with a semi-circular end below a band of face brickwork containing the upper windows and a recessed upper verandah with a projecting balustrade and canopy. The original signage in Art Deco lettering is also of note.
- The shops at 8 Bair Street, which have a substantial and decorative rendered parapet with a central triangular pediment. The parapet is distinguished by its decorative solid plastering featuring four projecting piers, cornices with dentils, panels with raised moulding and bosses and the pediment surmounted by an acroterion.
- Elizabeth House, 3-5 Bair Street, which has a fine Streamlined Moderne parapet. This is rendered with brick capping and steps up to a central pediment with an Art Deco pier detail. Other details include 'Elizabeth House' in Chicago Style lettering flanked by 'speed lines'.
- The former Knight's Garage facade, which is the most architecturally accomplished Interwar garage in the Shire. It is notable for the fine and consistent detailing, which was carried through in the 1954 addition. The treatment of central bay of the 1933 building is note. A recent fire has damaged most of the interior details.

Heritage Study/Consultant	South Gippsland - South Gippsland Heritage Study, David Helms with Trevor Westmore, 2004;
Construction dates	1890,

Other Names	Bair Street Precinct,
Hermes Number	31582
Property Number	

Physical Description 1

The Leongatha Civic & Commercial heritage precinct includes the following properties: - 1-3 & 2-18 Bair Street (inclusive) - 1-13 & 2-10 McCartin Street (inclusive) The scale and quality of the buildings demonstrate the importance of this area as the commercial and civic heart of Leongatha. While it is particularly notable for the high proportion of buildings of individual aesthetic significance, all buildings contribute in some way to the significance of this area There are two distinct groups of buildings; the civic buildings on the northwest side of McCartin Street, and the commercial buildings on the opposite side of McCartin Street and in Bair Street.

The civic buildings on the northwest side of McCartin Street are designed in a range of Federation styles, with the exception of the former Shire Offices & Hall, which dates from the interwar period.

They are among the best examples of their style and type in the Shire and create a visually impressive and cohesive group that is unique in the Shire.

Commercial buildings represent either the first period of development from 1890-1900 such as the shops at 8 Bair Street, or the interwar period such as Edney's Garage, "Elizabeth House", "Killeen House", "Bair's Otago Hotel" and the former Goller's Saddlery. Some buildings, such as McCartin's Hotel and the former Thomas Ridgway store at 16 Bair Street, span both eras as they were originally constructed in the 1890s and then extensively altered in the interwar period.

The streetscape elements in the public domain are varied. Concrete is the predominant footpath and kerb & channel material, while paving bricks have been used as part of the traffic calming devices at the intersection of the two streets. There is some low semi-formal planting at the intersection, and Plane Trees have been planted in the median and the kerb extensions in McCartin Street, and there is a single specimen in the median of Bair Street, which otherwise has a narrow median with formal annual beds separated by lawn.

This place/object may be included in the Victorian Heritage Register pursuant to the Heritage Act 2017. Check the Victorian Heritage Database, selecting 'Heritage Victoria' as the place source.

For further details about Heritage Overlay places, contact the relevant local council or go to Planning Schemes Online <http://planningschemes.dpcd.vic.gov.au/>