
Brunswick Street Precinct



Brunswick Street
Precinct.JPG

Location

Brunswick Street FITZROY, YARRA CITY

Municipality

YARRA CITY

Level of significance

Included in Heritage Overlay

Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO311

Heritage Listing

Yarra City

Statement of Significance

Last updated on - January 1, 2014

Precinct Statement of Significance

Component streets include:

Alexandra Parade,

Brunswick Street,

Johnston Street,

What is significant?

The Brunswick Street Heritage Overlay Area was among the first of Fitzroy's streets to develop commercially, including parts of Crown Allotments 49, 70, 71, 83 and 84, sold from 1839. During the 1840s, small shopkeepers located in Brunswick Street to provide local residents with building materials, food and clothing.⁽¹⁹⁾ By 1854, subdivision was near completed and according to one source, 'shops rivalling those in Bourke-street, Melbourne, were to be found in Brunswick-street'.

The 1860s-1870s was a period of consolidation in Brunswick Street, as the rude structures of the early decades were replaced with more substantial premises. A cable tram (since electrified) aided Brunswick Street development from the late 1880s.

The highly significant three-storey shop row (236-252 Brunswick St, 1888) designed by John Beswicke joined other similarly scaled late Victorian-era commercial buildings including Moran & Cato Merchants (277-285, 1897-), and the Fitzroy Post Office (296). Banks joined hotels as among the key historical buildings in the street including the Union Bank, the Bank of Victoria and the London Chartered Bank, typically located on prominent corner sites.

Aided by the North Fitzroy cable-tram service started in 1886, development of the street, and its architectural character, was virtually complete by the turn of the century, with a number of the original buildings being replaced in the Edwardian-era.

After the Second War, there was a high concentration of migrant occupation and small-scale industrial use of many of the shops in the mid 20th century. This low intensity use helped to preserve the buildings, including a high proportion of 19th century shop fronts.

The street developed from the late 1970s as one of Melbourne's best-known and popular strip of bohemian cafes, bars, restaurants, hotels, bookshops and other boutiques. This era also meant replacement of many of the corner banks with new buildings. However the greatest loss in the street was the development of the Atherton Gardens Estate by Housing Commission of Victoria when shop rows and an early stone church, between King William and Gertrude Streets, were demolished. Four twenty-storey residential towers were built in their place in 1970-1972.

This part of Brunswick Street was classified by the National Trust of Australia (Vic) in recognition of both its early and recent history (20).

Main significant period

The Brunswick Street Heritage Overlay Area, Fitzroy is a predominantly 19th and early 20th century commercial strip and includes the following key characteristics.

Contributory elements

Contributory elements include (but not exclusively) typically one, two-storey, and some three-storey Victorian and Edwardian-era shops and residences:

- . Many with living accommodation over or at the rear of the shops,
- . Configured as continuous building rows with no front or side boundary setbacks;
- . Some architecturally distinctive and individually significant building designs;
- . Typically parapeted in form with concealed pitched roofs and some use of corner tower motifs;
- . Typically with vertically oriented rectangular openings, symmetrically arranged, to the upper level facades;
- . Typically with stuccoed facades having ornamentation and trabeation (generally of around 6m wide module) derived from Italian Renaissance architecture but also with some bluestone random stonework, and face brick for early Victorian-era (bichrome, polychrome) and Edwardian-era (pressed red brick);
- . Limited use of upper level verandahs or loggias for residential use;

. Once typically with extensive post-supported street verandahs, timber and iron construction, with some cantilever awnings for 20th century buildings;

. Once typically with large display windows at ground level, with recessed tiled or stone paved entries, with many remaining (for example 57-63 Brunswick St), also some metal framed (brass, copper) shopfronts for early 20th century buildings (for example Edwardian-era shopfront at 181-185 Brunswick St);

Contributory elements also include:

. Well preserved inter-war buildings and original early shop fronts, metal framed;

. Architecturally significant buildings that express a range of key development periods in the City;

. Tramlines; and

. Traditional street elements such as bluestone pitcher crossings, kerbs, and gutters, cast-iron grates, and asphalt footpaths.

(Note that the former Fitzroy Town Hall complex is not in this Heritage Overlay Area).

How is it significant?

HO311 Brunswick Street Heritage Overlay Area, Fitzroy is **socially, aesthetically and historically** significant to the City of Yarra (National Estate Register [NER] Criteria G1, E1, A4)

Why is it significant?

Brunswick Street Heritage Overlay Area, Fitzroy is significant:

. As one of the first north-south thoroughfares through Fitzroy, dating from the 1840s, with simply detailed buildings from the 1850s-1860s;

. For its expression of the effects of the Melbourne Building Act (1849), that enforced the use of fireproof construction, determining early building was predominantly masonry rather than timber, and contributing to the survival of an unusually high number of early commercial buildings;

. As an important commercial precinct in Fitzroy particularly expressive of the late 19th and early 20th centuries when its influence extended throughout Melbourne, that includes:

- continuity and high integrity of upper level facades to their construction dates and use of a consistent facade module that promotes visual unity;

- some well preserved early shopfronts from the Victorian to the inter-war period;

- good and distinctive examples of Victorian and Edwardian-era architectural styles and ornamentation as evocative of the street's premier role in Fitzroy;

- architecturally significant examples of shop buildings from the 1920s and 1930s that relate well to the dominant Victorian-era and Edwardian-era scale and character;

- tramlines evocative of the first cable tramway and traditional street elements such as bluestone kerbs, pitched crossings, gutters and asphalt footpaths;

. For the contribution of individually significant or well preserved buildings that express a range of the City's key development periods;

. For the view of St. Patrick's Cathedral as taken from within Brunswick Street's length, one of the most significant urban vistas in Melbourne; and

. For the street's recognition by the National Trust of Australia (Vic) for its special character within the Melbourne historic context.

References

19R Howe. 'Fitzroy History. Outline of Early Section-To 1851, Fitzroy History'. Outlines, Local History Collection, Fitzroy Library. p 4.

20 See National Trust of Australia (Vic) file B7089: all pre WW2 buildings

Heritage Study/Consultant	Yarra - City of Yarra Review of Heritage Overlay Areas, Graeme Butler & Associates, 2007; Yarra - City of Yarra Heritage Review, Allom Lovell & Associates, 1998; Yarra - Fitzroy Urban Conservation Study, Allom Lovell & Associates, 1992; Yarra - South Fitzroy Conservation Study, Jacobs Lewis Vines, 1979;
Other Names	Brunswick Street Precinct, Fitzroy,
Hermes Number	73427
Property Number	

Physical Description 1

commercial structures (hotels, shops, etc), late 20th century by the overlay of artistic signs and street elements, bluestone street elements, view of St Patrick's Cathedral, profile corner sites

Physical Description 2

late nineteenth and early twentieth century commercial and retail buildings; early street and allotment layouts; original bluestone kerbs and guttering, tram line; view of St. Patrick's Cathedral; late 20th century overlay of artistic signs and street elements; evidence of Melbourne Building Act, 1849;

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/>