4 Davidson Street, SOUTH YARRA

4 Davidson Street South
Yarra

Location

4 Davidson Street, SOUTH YARRA VIC 3141 - Property No 30428

Municipality

STONNINGTON CITY

Level of significance

Incl in HO area not sig

Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO122

Heritage Listing

Stonnington City

Statement of Significance

Last updated on -

Part of the *Alexandra Avenue Area Precinct*

What is significant?

The Alexandra Avenue precinct is a residential area constructed on escarpments and swampy terrain made available through the reclamation of land along the Yarra bank and the subdivision of the Avoca Estate. The greater part of the graded buildings in the precinct are constructed to exotic designs by architect and developer

Howard R Lawson although a number of buildings by others, such as flats at 56 Darling Street and at 53 and 55 Alexandra Avenue and a small group of earlier dwellings in Domain Road also contribute to the character and significance of the area. The setting, arising from the land form and from plantings within the individual developments and along the Yarra Bank and Darling Gardens provides a dramatic context for the precinct. The whole development is without equal for the period in Melbourne.

Elements which contribute to the significance of the precinct include:

- The high degree of intactness of the early buildings to their c.1940 state. Building stock survives largely intact and the area is notable for the general absence of prominent additions and alterations. Original detailing typically survives throughout the area;

-The general uniformity of character achieved through consistent use of materials such as face brick or rendered wall surfaces with Marseilles or other tiled, pitched roofs;

-The range and quality of interwar buildings including blocks of flats. duplexes and interwar maisonettes coexisting with a smaller number of slightly earlier detached villas;

- The predominantly two and three-storey scale of built form within the precinct which allows the landmark Lawson buildings such as Beverley Hills and Stratton Heights to remain the pre-eminent developments in this locale;

- The landscaped settings derived from the Darling Gardens, the Yarra River bank environs and the undeveloped front and side setbacks to individual properties;

- The absence of prominent, modern car parking facilities in most sections of the precinct;

- The low numbers of prominent modern infill buildings.

How is it significant?

The Alexandra Avenue precinct is of local social, historical and aesthetic significance.

Why is it significant?

The Alexandra Avenue precinct is of local historical significance. Developed on difficult terrain above reclaimed sections of the Yarra bank (*2.1.3 Making Roads and Railways*) the area illustrates the earliest phases of the surge of apartment development which took place in Toorak and South Yarra following the subdivision of large Victorian-era properties in the early twentieth century.*(8.1.3 The end of an era - mansion estate subdivisions in the twentieth century).*This pattern of settlement transformed the built environment and social character of the area by replacing the spacious mansions of the wealthy with modest suburban villas and higher density, lower income housing*(Historic Theme: 8.6.2 Developing apartment living)*. The significance of the area is enhanced by its association with notable architect, Howard Lawson.

The Alexandra Avenue precinct is of aesthetic significance as a particularly intact and cohesive grouping of flats, many of which adopt a unique and exotic architectural character. Predominantly designed by Howard Lawson *(Historic Theme: 8.6.3 Architect designed apartments)*, the individual blocks of apartments vary in detailing and display divergent architectural influences including Bungalow, Spanish Mission and Modern styles. Nonetheless, they exhibit a high degree of consistency in terms of their overall form, materiality and character. Other buildings in the area such as the flats at 56 Darling Street and others at 53 and 55 Alexandra Avenue were not part of Lawson's oeuvre but, nonetheless, contribute to character and significance of the area. The theatrical setting arising from the topography and landscaped areas along the river and across the escarpment more generally contribute to the character and the aesthetic significance of the precinct.

The Alexandra Avenue precinct is of social significance for the extent to which it illustrates the introduction of new architectural typologies which changed the social mix of the area. The introduction of flats and apartments provided new forms of accommodation and additional freedom for families but particularly for single men and women *(Historic Theme: 8.6.2 Developing apartment living)*.

Heritage Study/Consultant	Stonnington - Prahran Conservation Study Identification of Buildings & Areas of Major Significance, Nigel Lewis & Associates, 1983;
Hermes Number	150279
Property Number	