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# Fountain Gate Estate

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## Location

Ashwood Court and Dawn Drive and Fauna Court and Flora Court and Fountain Drive and Greenridge Avenue and Highrise Court and Hollydene Court and Larkrise Court and Oakwood Court and Parklands Court and Patio Court and Pinelands Court and Prairie Court and

## Municipality

CASEY CITY

## Level of significance

Included in Heritage Overlay

## Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO162

## Heritage Listing

Casey City

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## Statement of Significance

Last updated on -

What is significant?

The Fountain Gate Estate, comprising the area bounded on the west by Tinks Road, by Sweet Gum Avenue on the east, by Prospect Hill Road on the north and Dawn Drive (parallel to the Princes Highway) to the south as laid out to a design by Robin Boyd and developed from 1960 onwards, at Narre Warren.

How is it significant?

Fountain Gate Estate is of local historic and aesthetic significance to the City of Casey.

Why is it significant?

Historically, Fountain Gate Estate precinct is significant as an innovative and imaginative housing development designed by Robin Boyd in collaboration with the developer Isador Magid, and involving four equally notable architectural firms in the provision of a suite of contemporary house designs. Fountain Gate is one of few Victorian examples of the Radburn design concept which separates traffic from open spaces and provides

communal ownership of extensive parklands, and this is probably the best realised example. The overall concept of an integrated residential, civic and commercial complex - essentially a new town for the car age - was the creation of Isador Magid, a man whose firm Overland Development Co. created many of Melbourne's later suburbs (Mountain Gate in Knox, Brandon Park, and many others). The 1950s industrial developments at Doveton sparked Magid's interest, leading to his long and continuing involvement in the shaping of this part of Narre Warren, and essentially in the creation of a location now identified with the formation of the new City of Berwick. (AHC criteria A4, D2 and H1)

Aesthetically, Fountain Gate Estate is significant for its unique and special character, which is derived from the overall design using the Radburn principles of vehicle and pedestrian separation to create large parklands and small cul-de-sac residential precincts. Notable elements include:

- The quality of the contemporary architect-designed suite of housing created for the estate, much of which remains substantially intact.
- The character of the streets created by garden and street plantings and the extension of the lawn to the kerb without the interruption of a footpath.
- The landscape quality of the parklands achieved by the use of specimen trees, now approaching their mature forms.

(AHC criteria E1 and F1)

Heritage Study/Consultant	Casey - Casey Heritage Study, Context Pty Ltd, 2004; Casey - Heritage of the City of Berwick, Context Pty Ltd, 1993;
Construction dates	1960,
Architect/Designer	Boyd, Robin,
Hermes Number	44212
Property Number	

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## Physical Description 1

Fountain Gate residential estate consists of a series of small cul-de-sacs built along four roads. The estate is bounded on the west by Tinks Road, by Sweet Gum Avenue on the east, by Prospect Hill Road on the north and Dawn Drive (parallel to the Princes Highway) to the south. The original plan provided for 196 allotments and a large site for a primary school (which has since been developed for housing).

Each cul-de-sac is separated from the next by parkland which links together into three large areas.

Display houses were built in key locations throughout the western part of the estate, the first part developed (1).

Boyd's Three Courts design is set directly at the end of Oakwood Court; a key element, the carport set almost on the street has been removed and replaced with garden, demonstrating the conflict between the designer's intentions and the public's preferences. Other examples remain more intact.

The estate was sold with a series of special conditions which included a design covenant preventing the building of any buildings other than the one to be used as a dwelling (apart from necessary outbuildings and garages) and requiring the dwelling to be built of brick or brick veneer. Fences of wooden palings or corrugated iron between an allotment and a road or reserve were not allowed. In practice an open fence using horizontal palings has been used consistently throughout the estate (perhaps reflecting a subsequent change in the covenant).

The important role of the Shire in the implementation of the design philosophy was expressed by Overland Construction Co. Pty Ltd in a letter to the Shire of Berwick in May 1967 which requested the Shire's co-operation in recognising the special conditions at the time of issuing permits (2).

The result is a subdivision of unusual quality. The main streets form gentle curves, fitting with the undulating landform. Front lawns roll down to the kerb, without the usual interruption of footpaths. The contemporary houses designed as display homes, or created by the same team of architects, stand out from the hipped and tiled roof forms of the houses which dominate. Street plantings vary but include eucalypts and melaleucas. The adjoining areas to the east of Sweet Gum Avenue were developed later, and express a different design approach. These later areas lack the large open space areas, but have adopted a 'no front fence' rule; footpaths are provided.

The overall landscaping of the reserves (and perhaps the roadways) was undertaken by E.H. Hammond, Landscape Contractors and Consultants of Box Hill. Eric Hammond is a highly regarded landscape contractor, working extensively with Edna Walling in the construction of gardens such as Mawarra (Sherbrooke) (3). His plan, approved in 1966 incorporated a mixture of eucalypt and exotic tree species (4).

The entry arch - a fountain - and the 'Hollywood-style' Fountain Gate sign on the Princes Highway, are the trademarks of the estate. The fountain, designed by Robin Boyd, is said to have operated only once, at the opening of the estate. Boyd's office completed several designs for the fountain, and some of these illustrations are held by the Council.

Adjoining the residential area is the civic and shopping complex, also a result of the foresight of Isador Magid. The complex reflects a contemporary interpretation of a town centre, with its civic buildings, shops and recreation areas. Unlike older town centres, Fountain Gate is set in a landscape of rolling lawns and extensive carparks. There are no churches, and the schools are on the periphery. Some of the early plans showed a civic square, art gallery, pre-school, police and hall - elements not yet part of the development (4). The Civic Centre, built with the assistance of Magid (5), is a formal modern building, set partly into the slope, and appearing from different angles as a series of pavilions.

## NOTABLE HOUSES

The following houses date from the first stage in the Fountain Gate residential estate development, and represent the architectural ideals of those involved in the design of the estate. The information contained in the descriptions is based on the City of Berwick Valuation Cards and field work.

House, 5 Fountain Drive

Built c1966/67 and originally owned by Fountain Gardens P/L and Overland Construction P/L. Transferred into

private ownership in 1970. Described on the Valuation Card as a contemporary house, using a fawn coloured (concrete) brick and a shingle roof. One of a group of contemporary houses clustered at the entry to the estate.

#### House, 7 Fountain Drive

Built c1967/68, probably to the designs of Reg Grouse, one of the four architects involved in house designs for the estate. The first owners were Henry and Suzanne Bates. It is described on the Valuation Card as a contemporary brick veneer house with concrete tiled roof, with a garden courtyard in the centre of the house. One of a group of contemporary houses clustered at the entry to the estate.

#### House, 11 Fountain Drive

Built possibly as early as 1965, this house has a flat steel deck roof and is built of white painted bricks, the original finish. It was originally owned by Fountain Gardens P/L and Overland Construction P/L. One of a group of contemporary houses clustered at the entry to the estate.

#### House, 15 Fountain Drive

Built c1966/67 as one of the display houses on the estate. This is the Link House, designed by architect Reg Grouse, using white-painted brickwork and a low pitched concrete tiled roof. It was originally owned by Fountain Gardens P/L and was featured in *The Australian Home Beautiful* (October 1967). Attributes noted in this article include the relationship between indoor and outdoor living spaces, and the efficient system of natural cooling via hinged panels below the fixed windows. A copy of the design held by the City of Berwick shows the Link House, described simply as House No. 3 to be developed on Lot 40 Warren Lea Drive - the present site (7). It is one of the group of contemporary houses clustered at the entry to the estate.

#### House, 7 Green Ridge Avenue

Built c1966/67 as the Colonnade House, one of the estate's display houses. It was designed by the architects Daryl Jackson and Evan Walker. It was first owned by Fountain Gardens P/L, later being sold into private ownership. The Colonnade House was featured in *The Australian Home Beautiful* (October 1967), and externally remains substantially intact to its original design. The article noted the white painted brickwork, with the rooms designed to take advantage of available views. Its rectangular form is suited to narrow and corner sites (it is located on a corner site in the estate).

#### House, 2 Pinelands Court

Built prior to 1966 for J. and B. Harle and designed by Reg Grouse. Its pyramidal roof is of note. A copy of the drawing for this house held by the City of Berwick (Lot 28 Pinelands Court) is shown as having been prepared by Reg Grouse for the Overland Development Corporation (8).

#### House, 3 Pinelands Court

Built prior to 1968 (when the house was first sold), using fawn coloured concrete bricks (like 5 Fountain Drive). The first owners were P. and S. Jackson.

#### House, 9 Pinelands Court

Probably built c1966/67 for Fountain Gardens P/L and Overland Construction Co. A copy of the drawing for this

house held by the City of Berwick (Lot 32 Pinelands Court) is shown as having been prepared by Reg Grouse for the Overland Development Corporation (9). It is a contemporary design, using white-painted brick and steel deck roof.

#### House, 2 Oakwood Court

Another contemporary design using white painted brick veneer construction. May be a Grouse design. Its corner site shows the house to advantage. The first owners were F. and C. Sankijohanser.

#### House, 7 Oakwood Court

Built c1966/67, this is the Robin Boyd Three Courts design which served first as a display house in the estate. Located at the end of the court, the house would have been a dramatic feature. In *The Australian Home Beautiful* (October 1967) the house was described as having three external courts, that is screened outdoor living areas. Views across the parklands and to the courts were a feature. The courts were screened with 'reverse fixed timber planks', the type now common as fencing throughout the estate. The carport has been demolished.

#### House, Hollydene Court

Built before 1968, this contemporary house uses white painted brick and originally had a shingle roof. The first owners were D. and A. Broadbent.

#### House, 6 & 6A Prospect Hill Road

Overland Construction Co. was the original owner of this contemporary duplex. While a 'pair', in appearance it is a large house, the best example of contemporary design in this street, and the only example of a duplex on the estate. Like many of the contemporary houses built by Overland, it is brick veneer with steel deck roof.

## SOURCES

1. Plan entitled 'Princes Domain East', K. J. Noonon & Noonan Surveyors, 16.12.1965
2. Correspondence, 23 May 1967
3. P. Watts, *Historic Gardens of Victoria*, p. 158
4. Plans held by City of Berwick File Application S/1692.
5. The berwick Town Centre, plan by J. E. Moorre and C. Frank-Mas, 1976; Tonkins, Shaw and Evans plan, 1978.
6. *Business Review Weekly*, 29 March 1991.
7. File entitled 'Fountain gate architects house plans, Overland Development', and numbered 68/3/2/IE and

3.7365.330.93.

8. File 'Fountain gate architects house plans, Overland Development'.

9. File 'Fountain gate architects house plans, Overland Development'.

## **Physical Conditions**

Good

## **Intactness**

High

## **Historical Australian Themes**

Developing settlements, towns and cities

*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/>*