

## Union Street Precinct



Edwardian villas on the south side of Alleyne Avenue.



Victorian and Edwardian timber housing on the south side of Barkly Avenue.



Victorian timber cottages on the north side of Barkly Avenue.



Victorian brick cottages on the north side of Hume Street.



Victorian villas at 40 and 42 Lambeth Avenue.



Brick warehouse at 9 Meryl Street.



Edwardian and Victorian housing on the east side of Seymour Street.



Victorian timber villa at 21 Seymour Avenue.



Victorian timber villa pair at 17 and 19 Stanhope Street.



Edwardian brick warehouse at 5 to 7 Stuart Street.



Red-brick Edwardian villas at 10 and 12 Union Street.



Edwardian semi-detached red-brick cottages on Willis Street.



Merrimans' dairy 44 Union Street, c1912.

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## Location

Armadale, STONNINGTON CITY

## Municipality

STONNINGTON CITY

## Level of significance

Included in Heritage Overlay

## Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO377

## Heritage Listing

Stonnington City

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## Statement of Significance

Last updated on -

### *What is Significant?*

The Union Street Precinct is a residential area which initially developed as a brickmaking centre from the late 1850s. The construction of the railway through Armadale in 1879 was another important factor in the development of the precinct. The railway cut diagonally across the western edge of Union Street, creating an irregular group of blocks which - along with ad-hoc subdivision around the brick clay pits in the 1880s - would produce the unorthodox arrangement of streets that survive in the area today.

Residential development in the precinct was initially constrained by the large extent of the Union Street clay pits. Nonetheless, house building in the area intensified as the land boom reached its peak in the late 1880s. The precinct evolved during this period with higher density cottage groups on narrow streets and freestanding middle class villas on more generous allotments - the later type of development typically occurring closer to the shopping strips along Glenferrie Road and High Street although the often erratic and unplanned nature of 1880s subdivisions meant that both working class or artisan cottages were intermingled with the more substantial villas.

Development halted abruptly with the recession of the early 1890s and the closure of the brickworks, leaving large areas of the precinct vacant. The next major phase of development in the precinct took place during the

early 1900s and was spurred on the extension of the electric tram network along Glenferrie Road. Much of this new development took the form of middle class housing but also included modest cottages and a small number of factory buildings, reinforcing the mixed industrial/working class character of certain streets within the precinct. Development was largely complete to the present arrangement of streets, dwellings and allotments by the late 1910s. The area is highly intact to this c.1920 state with few relatively modern interventions and the greater part of its building stock demonstrating a high level of integrity to its original form.

Elements that contribute to the significance of the precinct include (but are not limited to):

- the Victorian-era houses and streetscapes including the detached brick and timber villas coexisting with more modest cottages housing and terrace rows of the period;
- the Edwardian houses and streetscapes developed through the early twentieth century and including fine examples of the 'Queen Anne' revival style;
- the utilitarian architectural character and red-brick materiality of Edwardian era industrial buildings;
- a selection of dwellings from the 1920s and 1930s which are generally sympathetic in terms of their architectural form, scale, and siting, and as such make useful contributions to the early character of the area;
- the predominantly single-storey nature of the precinct (the two-storey scale of the former Merriman's Dairy and the Edwardian factory buildings on Stuart Street provide an atypical, but historically important, variation from the scale of the precinct more generally);
- the open landscaped character of certain streetscapes in the precinct brought about through, low front fences, undeveloped front setbacks and mature street trees;
- the modest scale of built form and uniform pattern of small front and side setbacks within certain streetscapes including Barkly Avenue, Willis Street, Stuart Street and Stanhope Street;
- repetitive character of the building stock and the regularity of rhythm of the built form, particularly on Alleyne Avenue, Barkly Avenue and Willis Street;
- the extent to which original detailing survives. Nineteenth century buildings typically retain verandahs, polychrome brickwork and ornamental detailing. Edwardian buildings are generally of note for their ornate timber detailing;
- timber, face brick or render materiality and hipped or gabled roofscapes with chimneys and terracotta or slate tiles or plain corrugated galvanised steel cladding;
- low incidence of modern interventions such as parking provisions in front setbacks (particularly in areas such as Stuart, Stanhope and Willis Streets and Barkly Avenue, where few crossovers exist at all);
- the retention of sympathetic low front fences in most sections of the precinct;
- low incidence of visible first floor additions in most streetscapes;
- road layout and allotment patterns reflecting the ad-hoc process of subdivision in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century; and,
- bluestone kerbs, channels and laneways (to the extent that they survive).

*How is it significant?*

The Union Street Precinct is of historical and aesthetic significance at a local level.

*Why is it significant?*

The Union Street precinct is of historical significance for its capacity to demonstrate the dramatic cycle of boom and bust created by the frenzy of land speculation in the 1880s (*Historic Theme: 3.3.5 Recovery and Infill*). This is illustrated by the way in which residential subdivisions laid out in the late nineteenth century were not fully developed until there was a renewed surge of building activity in the early 1900s.

The irregular layout of narrow and broad streets and relationship with the railway line illustrate the *ad hoc* nature of nineteenth century planning (*Historic Theme: 3.3.4 Uncontrolled and Unplanned Development*). The area also provides a vivid contrast between the modest standards of accommodation and amenity enjoyed by the Victorian working class and the more substantial, but polite, built form which underscores the middle class aspirations of Edwardian Malvern (*Historic Theme: 8.5.1 'Struggletown' - working class housing in the nineteenth and early twentieth century*). The larger dwellings in the precinct, typically in landscaped settings on generous allotments illustrate the desire for *rus in urbe* - city in the country - and life away from the crowded conditions of the inner city (*Historic Theme: 8.2.2 'Country in the city' - suburban development in Malvern before 1920*).

In addition, the Union Street Precinct is of historical significance for its associations with the brickmaking industry dating back to the late 1850s (*Historic Theme: 6.2.1 Brick and tile manufacturing*). Although the brickworks closed

down in the 1890s they continued to play an important role in the evolution of the surrounding urban landscape. In particular, the clay pits occupied a large area which limited the potential for residential subdivisions in the early 1880s and contributed to the ad-hoc street layout. The presence of the brickworks also provided further stimulus in the early twentieth century for factory development of a type rarely found in the suburban middle-class enclaves of Armadale and Malvern (*Historic Theme: 6.2.4 Other manufactured goods*).

The Union Street Precinct is aesthetically significant for its substantially intact collection of late-nineteenth and early twentieth century housing stock. This includes fine streetscapes of handsome Victorian and Edwardian villas and more modest cottages, often occurring side by side in a manner typical of 1880s subdivisions. The precinct also contains a number of streetscapes with a notably higher degree of consistency in terms of scale, form and period of construction. This includes the timber cottage streetscape on Barkly Avenue and adjacent Edwardian brick villa rows on Alleyne Avenue. The dramatic change in architectural character between these two streetscapes provides a particularly clear demonstration of the way in which the precinct was developed in two main stages in the Victorian and Edwardian periods. The villas in Alleyne Avenue are especially significant as they demonstrate a degree of architectural unity rarely found elsewhere in the municipality.

The precinct also contains a small number of dwellings which were built in the 1920s and 1930s. These are sympathetic to the key Victorian and Edwardian building stock in terms of their architectural form, scale, and siting, and as such make a valuable contribution to the early character of the precinct.

The overall intactness and diversity of the Victorian and Edwardian building stock, contrasting densities of development and ad-hoc planning make the precinct a rare and significant urban landscape within the City of Stonnington.

Heritage Study/Consultant	Stonnington - City of Stonnington Heritage Overlay Gap Study - Heritage Overlay Precincts Final Report, Bryce Raworth P/L, 2009;
Hermes Number	54884
Property Number	

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## Physical Description 1

The Union Street precinct is a large residential area, generally bound by the High Street and Glenferrie Road shopping strips to the north and east, the railway line to the west and Wattleree Road to the south. Streets within the precinct typically run in an east-west direction off Glenferrie Road or a north-south direction off High Street but become more irregular and ad-hoc in their layout closer to the railway cutting. Building stock predominately dates from the Victorian and Edwardian eras and includes substantial freestanding brick villas, modest semi-detached houses and timber cottages with a consistent single-storey character.

The wider streets in the precinct, including Lambeth Avenue and Seymour Street, were generally the focus of middle-class housing development in the 1880s land boom and retain a large number of freestanding single-storey villas from this period. The villas are of timber or brick construction, with many retaining original bichrome or polychrome face brickwork. The villas at 30 and 32 Lambeth Street stand out for their elegant arched verandahs. A number of Edwardian villas can be found interspersed among the rows of Victorian villas. Popularly known as Queen Anne Revival style, they typically have complex Marseilles-tiled gable roofs above red brick walls and ornate timber verandahs. The pair of red-brick villas at 30 and 32 Lambeth Avenue adopt a somewhat more unusual and rare hybrid design combining elements of both the Victorian Italianate and Queen Anne styles.

Union Street was not intensively developed until the closure of the brickworks in the early 1900s. Consequently, it has a relatively small number of Victoria era dwellings. Most of these are typical of speculative builders' designs of the 1880s, with the exception of the attached brick cottage pair at 30 and 32 Union Street. This building has a

simple architectural character which suggests a c1870s construction date.

A consistent Edwardian streetscape of red-brick dwellings can be found at the western end of Union Street, where it runs parallel with the railway line. There is also a group of handsome brick villas on large allotments at the eastern end of Union Street, to which the tall red-brick walls of the Coldo Road tram depot form an imposing backdrop. The garden setting of the villas and canopy of mature deciduous street trees give Union Street an attractive verdant character.

The narrower streets in the precinct, including Hume, Stanhope and Willis Streets, are characterised by less grand housing stock on relatively small allotments. Stanhope Street has typical examples of Edwardian semi-detached cottages as well as a small Victorian terrace row of the type more commonly found in the inner suburbs of Melbourne. Similar brick cottages also survive on the north side of Hume Street. The matching pair of Victorian timber villas at 17 and 19 Stanhope Street are of some individual note for their canted front bays and unusually steep gabled roofs. Willis Street has a more uniform streetscape rhythm, created by rows of Edwardian semi-detached cottages with red-brick walls and symmetrical gable ended facades. The narrow, southern half of Stuart Street also retains a highly intact sequence of late-nineteenth and early twentieth century workers or artisan's cottages. The narrow width of the allotments and small side and front setbacks mean that frontages in these streets remain largely free of crossovers, driveways and garages, and this contributes to the early character of the area.

The cottages on Stuart Street are complimented by the red-brick Edwardian warehouse complex which survives substantially intact at 1-7 Stuart Street. Similar early twentieth century red-brick industrial buildings can be found at 14 Meryl Street and at the rear of 9 Meryl Street, behind a cluster of mature peppercorn trees.

Barkly Avenue is particularly striking in the consistency of its single-storey, weatherboard cottage character. Most of the dwellings were built in the 1880s on relatively narrow allotments with small front setbacks. A smaller number of Edwardian dwellings can also be found on Barkly Avenue interspersed among the Victorian housing stock. These typically occur as modest timber dwellings which reinforce the materiality, scale and setbacks of the neighbouring Victorian dwellings.

Alleyne Avenue forms the western extension to Barkly Avenue and marks an abrupt shift in architectural character. On both sides of Alleyne Avenue, there are rows of matching red-brick, single-storey villas dating from the early 1900s. All these villas were erected by the same builders with a near identical design and uniform setback, making this the most intact and homogenous streetscape within the Union Street precinct.

Llanest Avenue demonstrates a similar pattern of development to Barkly Avenue with Victorian development taking place at the eastern end and later Edwardian housing at the western end demonstrating the spread away from Glenferrie Road in the early twentieth century. The Edwardian housing stock at the western end of Llanest Street is characterised by timber construction, gabled roof forms and fine fretwork detailing.

The precinct also contains a smaller number of 1920s and 1930s dwellings. These were constructed after the key Edwardian and Victorian periods of development but nevertheless exhibit a scale, form and architectural character compatible with the earlier building stock. Amongst the interwar housing, the c1919 bungalow at 19 Alleyne Avenue stands out for its distinctive Japanese styling (this site is covered by an individual heritage overlay).

## **Historical Australian Themes**

The following themes are drawn from the *Stonnington Thematic Environmental History* (Context Pty Ltd, 2006, Addendum March 2009).

### 3.3.4 Uncontrolled and Unplanned Development

### 3.3.5 Recovery and Infill

### 6.2.1 Brick and tile manufacturing

### 6.2.4 Other manufactured goods

8.2.2 'Country in the city' - suburban development in Malvern before 1920

8.5.1 'Struggletown' - working class housing in the nineteenth and early twentieth century

## **Local Historical Themes**

3.3.5 Recovery and Infill 3.3.4 Uncontrolled and Unplanned Development 8.2.2 'Country in the city' - suburban development in Malvern before 1920 8.5.1 'Struggletown' - working class housing in the nineteenth and early twentieth century 6.2.4 Other manufactured goods 6.2.1 Brick and tile manufacturing

*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/>*