



Port Phillip Heritage Review

Volume I – Version 26

October 2018



6.33 Albert Park Residential Precinct – Ho442

Existing Designations:

Heritage Council Register:	nil
National Estate Register:	nil
National Trust Register:	nil

Previous Heritage Studies:

Conservation Study 1975:	Precincts 9, 10, 11, 16, 17, 18, 26 (part), 27, 28 and 29
Conservation Study 1987:	UC1: Precinct D
Heritage Review 2000:	Heritage Overlay 3 (part)

6.33.1 History

Kearney’s 1855 map of Melbourne, which depicts existing and proposed development in the city and inner suburbs at that time, indicates that the land between the Emerald Hill settlement and the foreshore was not only virtually undeveloped at that time, but that further development was evidently not being considered. Nothing was shown between the southern boundary of the settlement – a sinuous roadway then known as Nelson Place (now Nelson Road) - and the elongated salt-water lagoon just across the municipal boundary in Sandridge. Although the principal thoroughfares of Bridport Street and Albert Road (then known as Beach Road) both extended all the way to the beach at that time, the land between them was vacant save for the dotted outline of a subdivision along the ocean frontage. The only structures depicted on Kearney’s map were a gun emplacement at the end of Beach Road (then recently constructed to defend the bay, and thus the entire colony, from perceived naval attack) and a post at the end of Bridport Street, which marked the municipal boundary.²⁶⁵

There was evidently little further development over the next decade, as Hodgkinson’s 1864 map of Albert Park depicts a virtually identical scenario. The original foreshore battery, erected in 1855, had been supplemented by two more gun emplacements, completed in 1860.²⁶⁶ Cox’s map of South Melbourne, prepared in 1866, shows a few small buildings in fenced enclosures along the foreshore (also associated with military occupation) but no sign of the seaside subdivision shown on the 1855 map, nor indeed of the Bridport Street and Beach Road extensions. This low-lying land remained isolated for some time, separated from Sandridge by the salt-water lagoon, and from Emerald Hill by the new St Kilda railway line, which had opened in 1857. The future settlement of this area was initially facilitated by the withdrawal of military forces from the foreshore barracks in 1870, and by the demolition of the gun emplacements over the next few years.²⁶⁷ The first development in the area took place in 1872, when, as noted by Allom Lovell Sanderson, “the South Melbourne Gas Company secured a six acre site for its works in the swampland adjoining the municipality boundary between South and Port Melbourne.”²⁶⁸

²⁶⁵ S Priestley, *South Melbourne*, p 90.

²⁶⁶ S Priestley, *South Melbourne*, p 90.

²⁶⁷ S Priestley, *South Melbourne*, p 90. The foreshore battery at South Melbourne were superseded by a new gun emplacements erected at the heads, and also by the arrival of the ironclad warship *Cerberus* in 1871.

²⁶⁸ Allom Lovell Sanderson, 3/16.

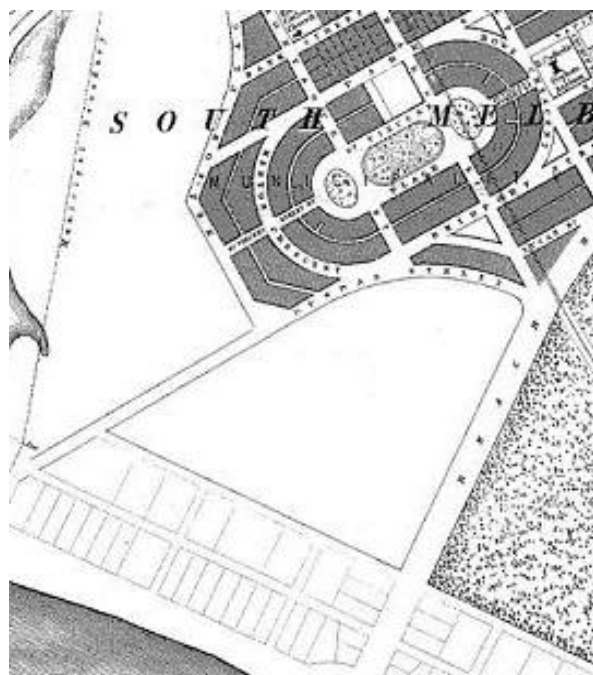


Figure 6.33-1 – Detail of Kearney Map (1855) showing the limited development of this area, south of Emerald Hill

(source: Map Collection, State Library of Victoria)

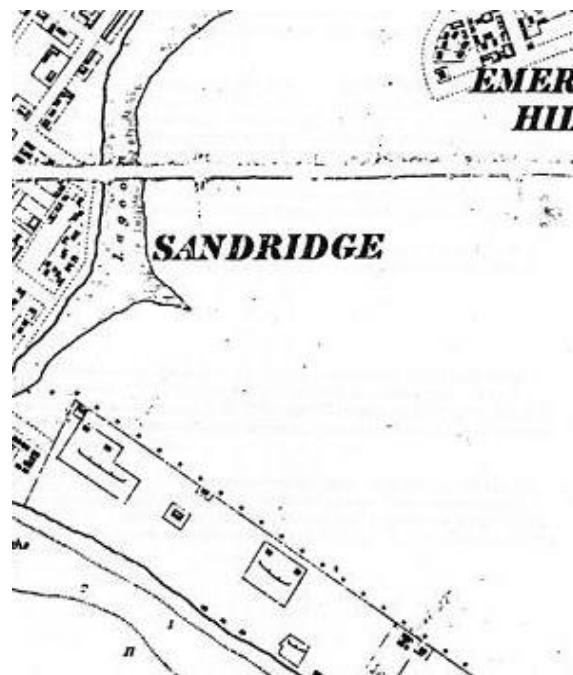


Figure 6.33-2 – Detail of Cox Map (1866), showing that little had changed by that time; note military barracks near beach

(source: Map Collection, State Library of Victoria)

Residential settlement began slowly and gradually, initially spurred by the belated development of St Vincent Place. This distinctive subdivision, with its curved crescents and central public reserve, had been proposed in 1854 as an extension to the Emerald Hill town plan but was not formally subdivided until the 1860s. As the first houses finally appeared there from the late 1860s, residential development inevitably began to spread further south and east into the hitherto undeveloped parts of what is now Albert Park. Dundas Place, and the adjacent portion of Bridport Street (west of Ferrars Street) both appear for the first time in the Sands & McDougall Directory in 1870, followed, one year later, by Cardigan Place. The east side of Nelson Road, which marked the edge of the Emerald Hill township, had developed steadily from the mid-1850s, but the west side is not recorded in the directories until 1874. There were only three residents there at that time, but this number had increased to twelve by 1875. Two years later, the new Star & Garter Hotel opened at the end of the block, on the Dorcas Street corner. Development soon spread even further west, with Mountain Street and Pickles Street making their initial appearances in directories in 1878, followed by Greig Street in 1880.

Further to the south, the low-lying land was being gradually reclaimed, prompting a boom of residential settlement from the early 1880s. The Sands & McDougall Directory for 1884 recorded many new streets for the first time, including Barrett Street, Danks Street, Foote Street, Glover Street, Graham Street, Iffla Street, Page Street, Richardson Street and Withers Street. These were followed by Lyell Street, Tribe Street and St Vincent Street West in 1885, by Reed Street in 1887 and by Henderson Street in 1888. Nearer to the beach, a large tract of land bounded by Danks Street, Kerferd Road, Ashworth Street and Bleak House was subject to speculative development in two stages. The first stage (1890) carved up the land east of Phillipson Street into 26 new residential allotments, followed a year later by a further eighteen lots to the west.²⁶⁹

²⁶⁹ Lodged Plans No 3406 (declared 18 December 1891) and 4194 (declared 30 October 1890).

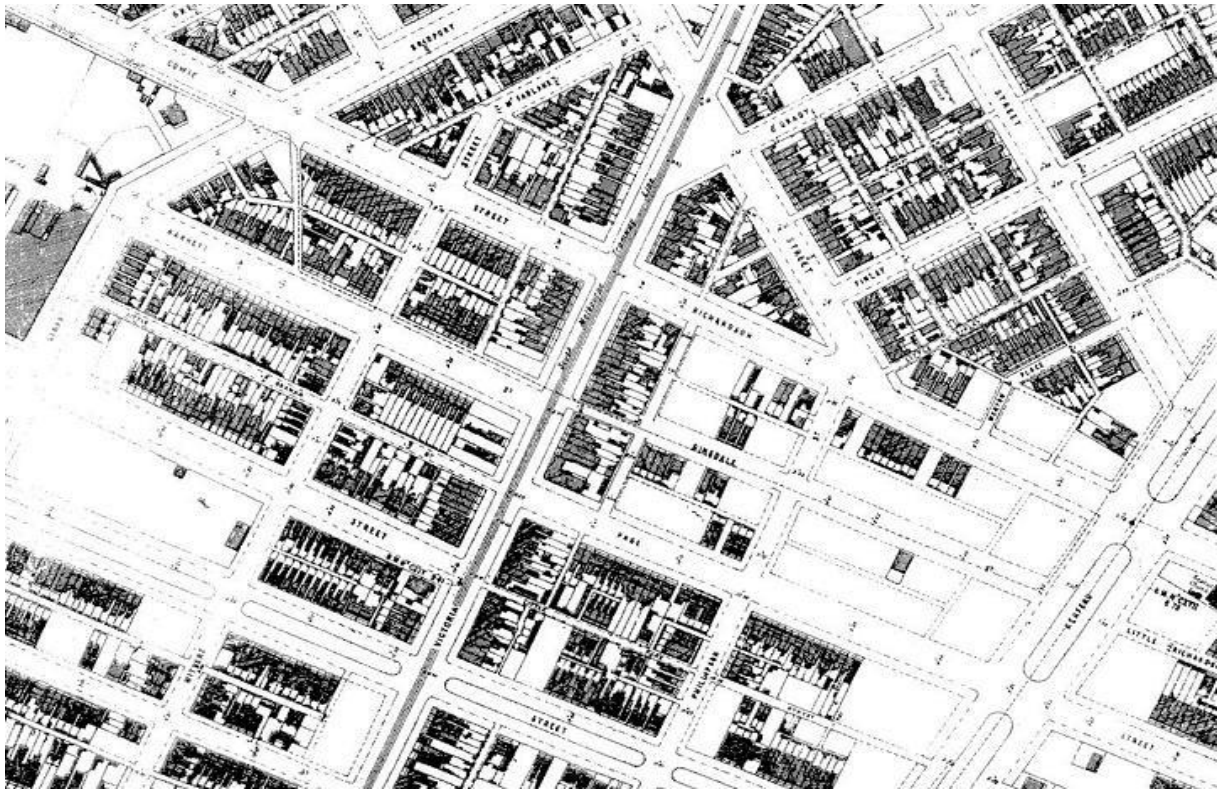


Figure 6.33–3 – Detail of MMBW Map (1895), showing Victoria Avenue in centre; note relatively dense residential development, gasworks at extreme left, and vacant land (including Dinsdale Street) along Kerferd Road side.

(source: Map Collection, Education Resource Centre, University of Melbourne)

Typically, this residential boom was accompanied by an expansion of associated community facilities. More hotels appeared, most notably the three-storeyed Hotel Victoria on the prominent corner of Beaconsfield Parade and Kerferd Road (1887). One year earlier, a Carmelite priory – the first in Melbourne – had been established on Beaconsfield Parade (now the Kilbride Centre at No 52).



Figure 6.33–4 – 1940’s Postcard showing west side of Kerferd Road/Terrace House, Victoria Avenue, Albert Park, 1889

(source; Port Phillip City Collection)

A few more Protestant churches appeared during this period, including the Presbyterian Church near the corner of Merton and O’Grady Streets (c.1885) and the Wesleyan Methodist Church at the junction of Bridport Street and Cardigan Place (1890). As noted by Allom Lovell Sanderson, further

residential expansion during this period was prompted by the opening of the Victoria Avenue tramline in 1890.²⁷⁰

The MMBW map of the area, prepared in 1895, indicates dense development throughout much of the precinct, with rows of small cottages and villas. There were relatively few vacant allotments still remaining in the precinct's north portion, but some occasionally large areas of undeveloped land south of Graham Street, and, more noticeably, between Phillipson Street and Kerferd Road. These, however, gradually filled out during the early twentieth century. According to the Sands & McDougall Directory, the first houses in the hitherto undeveloped block of Dinsdale Street (between Phillipson and Kerferd) were noted on the south side of the street in 1902. Five years later, there were three houses on the south side (Nos 32, 34 and 36) and another "four vacant houses" on the north side. By 1908, the block had fully developed, with twelve occupied houses on each side (designated as Nos 31 to 53 and 32 to 54). Similar development spread along the north side of Page Street, the west side of Kerferd Road, the south side of Ashworth Street and elsewhere. It has been suggested that the same developer or builder was responsible for all of these.

According to the MMBW map, there was also a few pockets of undeveloped land north of Moubray Street in the 1890s, including a large block on the corner of O'Grady and Merton streets (opposite the Presbyterian Church) and another along the south side of Little O'Grady Street. The latter was subsequently developed with a row of single-fronted brick cottages that were first recorded in the Sands & McDougall Directory in 1908. It has been said that these were built to accommodate workers at the nearby Morris Brothers Dairy, although electoral rolls reveal that the original residents comprised labourers, butchers, carters, carpenter and others – but not dairy employees. The dairy itself, which stood nearby at 370 Montague Street, was an existing facility that had been taken over by James Morris and his brothers around the turn of the century, complementing another depot that they had operated for some years at Bay Street, Port Melbourne.²⁷¹

By the early 1910s, the precinct had almost entirely filled out, and there was consequently little new residential development in the area during the inter-war years. A small number of bungalow-style dwellings were built on the few undeveloped allotments that remained. In one instance, a new house was erected at the rear of an existing Victorian villa on the corner of Moubray and Finlay streets. Curiously, while the inter-war period saw the nearby seaside suburbs of St Kilda and Elwood transformed by a boom of apartment development, very few examples of that type appeared in this part of Albert Park. One notable exception – perhaps not surprisingly erected on the site of an earlier Victorian dwelling – was Avenue Court at 64 Victoria Avenue, designed in 1934 by leading modern architect I G Anderson.²⁷² Two decades later, an entire row of nineteenth century dwellings in Victoria Avenue would be cleared for the construction of a much larger apartment development – the 17-storey Layfield Court, which formed part of the ambitious slum reclamation program carried out by the Housing Commission of Victoria during the 1960s.

6.33.2 Description

The Albert Park Residential Precinct, nominally bounded by Beaconsfield Parade, Pickles Street and Kerferd Road, comprises all the land between the original Emerald Hill township and the foreshore, which developed from the early 1870s. The central part of the St Vincent Place estate is not included, as this area is not only already covered by an existing heritage overlay (HO258) but is also on the Victorian Heritage Register. Neither of those existing listings, however, include the outer perimeter of the original St Vincent Place estate – that is, the contiguous portions of Park Street, Nelson Road and Cardigan Place – and these portions consequently been incorporated into the present Albert Park Residential Precinct.

²⁷⁰ Allom Lovell Sanderson 3/16.

²⁷¹ S Priestley, *South Melbourne*, p 106. See also *Sands & McDougall Directory*, 1900, 1901.

²⁷² National Trust of Australia (Victoria). Citation for *Avenue Court*, 64 Victoria Avenue, Albert Park.



Figure 6.33-5 – Typical row of single-fronted block-fronted Victorian cottages in St Vincent Street



Figure 6.33-6 – Double-fronted timber villas along Pickles Street. The low brick fence is not considered sympathetic.

The street layout within the precinct is irregular due to the merging of several discrete subdivision patterns. The southern end of the precinct, for example, has a conventional grid-like layout of streets running parallel and perpendicular to the foreshore, while the western part has streets in similar alignment to Pickles Street. The remaining part of the precinct has streets that follow the alignment of the adjacent St Vincent Place estate, which was laid out in 1855 (although not developed until the early 1870s). The three discrete geometries overlap between Moubray Street, Richardson Street and St Vincent Street, resulting in a number of triangular street blocks and others with acute corner sites. The streets themselves vary from major thoroughfares of generous width (eg Bridport Street, Victoria Street, Nelson Street and Beaconsfield Parade), to smaller cross streets (eg Barrett Street, Withers Street, Finlay Street) and the even narrower one-way streets (eg Little Vincent Street, Little Page Street and Dorcas Lane). Many streets retain original bluestone kerbs or gutters, and a number of laneways (and even some minor streets such as Little Page Street) retain bluestone pitching. The unusually wide bluestone spoon gutter along Kerferd Road, which was provided to assist in the drainage of swampy land in the area, is also a particularly notable feature.

The precinct, which was largely settled between the early 1870s and the late 1880s, is still dominated by nineteenth century housing, with some associated retail strip development along Bridport Street, the south side of Dundas Place, and the east side of Victoria Avenue (qv separate commercial precinct).

Much of the precinct remains strongly characterised by single-storey Victorian dwellings in the form of single-fronted cottages and double-fronted villas, variously of timber or brick construction. Single-fronted timber cottages proliferate throughout much of the precinct, defining the area's character as a nineteenth century working class suburb. The short streets to the western part of the precinct (eg Lyell, Iffla, Mountain and Tribe Streets, et al) consist almost entirely of such dwellings, with block-fronted facades and simple verandahs with cast iron columns and wrought iron lace friezes. They also proliferate in those streets closer to the beach (where land would have been cheaper), with some notable clusters in Ashworth Street, Danks Street, Graham Street and Reed Street. Little Page Street contains two interesting pairs of semi-detached single-fronted cottages with gable ends to the street, set back only by the width of their narrow verandahs.

The beachside streets also contain large numbers of single-fronted brick cottages, sometime in long rows of identical dwellings (eg 169-187 Danks Street). Single-fronted brick cottages tend to be less common in the precinct's north-west, although a few comparable rows exist such as Harlem Terrace, a row of nine rendered cottages at 21-37 Iffla Street, and Sandgate Terrace, a row of five in bichromatic brick at 54-62 Mountain Street. While the eastern part of the precinct (between

Bridport Street and Kerferd Road) is generally characterised by larger and grander Victorian residences, these are still interspersed with clusters of single-fronted brick cottages (eg 390-398 Montague Street). They are also found in larger numbers in the smaller north-south streets (eg Faussett Street) and, more prominently, in the east-west streets (eg Finlay Street, O'Grady Street and Little O'Grady Street). The last named street – another of those very narrow lane-like streets that permeate certain parts of the precinct – contains a fine row of gable-roofed cottages at Nos 3-19 that, notwithstanding their Victorian form, were actually erected as late as c.1908.

Larger double-fronted villas exist in generally smaller numbers throughout the precinct. Scattered example in timber construction can be found in the precinct's northeast, including some in Bridport Street West, Pickles Street, Dorcas Street (eg Nos 411 and 431 and elsewhere), Iffla Street (No 22), Mountain Street (eg Nos 21 and 35) and elsewhere. One extremely unusual double-fronted timber villa at 55 Greig Street had its block-fronted façade built right to the property line. Closer to the beach, a distinctive row of five double-fronted timber villas survives at 42-50 Little Page Street, set back from this narrow bluestone-pitched roadway only by the width of their narrow verandahs. In this part of the precinct, there are also some examples with asymmetrical frontages and canted bay windows in Withers Street (Nos 62-68) and Foote Street (eg Nos 55, 57). Double-fronted brick villas become more common as one heads further east. St Vincent Street, for example, contains a mix of single-fronted cottages in both timber and brick, plus some larger double-fronted brick villas.

The even larger and grander Victorian residences within the precinct tend to be concentrated on those streets that extend out from the St Vincent Place estate. Rows of double-storey terraced houses proliferate along Madden Street, Dundas Place, Montague Street and Merton Street. The last named street also has a pair of three-storeyed terraces (eg No 79-81), and an impressive row of thirteen double-storeyed terraces (on the north side, between Dundas Place and O'Grady Street) that is said to be the longest row of identical houses in South Melbourne – and perhaps even in the entire metropolitan area. By contrast, the smaller connecting streets, such as Finlay and O'Grady streets, are characterised by smaller single-storey villas and cottages – mostly of brick construction, but occasionally of timber.

Double-storey terraced houses can also be found in numbers along the major thoroughfares of Beaconsfield Parade, the west side of Nelson Road, and the west side of Victoria Avenue. These are less common elsewhere, particularly in the northeast of the precinct (eg double-storey terraces at 7 & 18 Lyell Street, and 433-437 Dorcas Street). Some of the larger double-storeyed Victorian residence near the beach incorporate rooftop towers, clearly intended to exploit ocean views. Examples include the terrace dwellings at 43 Withers Street and 73 Reed Street, and a larger double-fronted townhouse at 92 Danks Street.

As the precinct had virtually filled out before the turn of the century, there are relatively few examples of early twentieth century housing therein. A notable exception is the development of Dinsdale Street, which comprises rows of double-fronted Edwardian villas with asymmetrical facades. Similar but not entirely identical, these houses are expressed in the typical Queen Anne vocabulary of face red brick with hipped or gambrel roofs clad in slate or terracotta tile (some with ridge cresting), and porches with turned posts and timber slat friezes. Comparable but smaller pocket of Edwardian housing exists on the south side of nearby Ashworth Street, and along the prominent thoroughfares of Kerferd Road and Nelson Road. Otherwise, dwellings from that era tend to be represented by only a few isolated examples (eg villa at 64 Merton Street).

Inter-war houses are also uncommon, represented by such examples as the attic-storeyed bungalows at 60 Finlay Street and 18 Ashworth Street. A fine three-storeyed block of flats in the Moderne style, known as Avenue Court, stands at 64 Victoria Avenue, although atypical in the context of the precinct, is nevertheless of architectural and aesthetic interest in its own right as a fine example of the work of its architect, I G Anderson.



Figure 6.33–7 – A particularly fine row of double-storey rendered terrace houses in Montague Street



Figure 6.33–8 – Double-storey rendered townhouse in Danks Street, with Housing Commission flats looming behind

While retail development was concentrated on parts of Bridport Street, Cardigan Place, Dundas Place and Victoria Avenue, a number of other commercial buildings can be found throughout the precinct. These take the form of modest single-storey Victorian or Edwardian shopfronts (such as 13 Lyell Street) or larger double-storeyed residential shops (with a dwelling above), invariably in the ubiquitous form of corner stores with splayed entries (eg at 41 Lyell Street, and several others along Nelson Road). The precinct contains a number of grander non-residential buildings that provide evidence of the expansion of community facilities in the late nineteenth century, and remain today as prominent landmarks in the area. Ecclesiastical presence is dominated by two striking red brick churches, conspicuously sited on oddly-shaped acute-angled sites at either end of Bridport Street – the former Wesleyan Methodist Church at Cardigan Place, and the somewhat later Anglican Church at Madden Street. The former Presbyterian Church at 47 O’Grady Street, although smaller in scale, otherwise forms a distinctive element in the predominantly residential streetscape, as does the former Carmelite Priory (now Kilbride Centre) at 52 Beaconsfield Parade.

6.33.3 References

1. Kearney Map (1855)
2. Cox Map (1866)
3. MMBW Map (1895)
4. Sands & McDougall Directory (various)

6.33.4 Thematic Context

- Settlement, Growth & Change
 - The late Nineteenth Century Boom
- Ways of Life
 - South Melbourne

6.33.5 Comparative Analysis

The Albert Park Residential precinct represents a fine and notably particular extensive collection of late Victorian housing, mostly dating from the Boom period of the 1880s. Although there are many pockets of contemporaneous residential development throughout the municipality, these tend to vary considerably in both extent and variety.

The fine rows of double-storey terrace houses that dominate the edges of the precinct (ie Dundas Place to the east, Nelson Road to the north and Beaconsfield Parade to the south) have numerous counterparts elsewhere in the municipality. The most exceptional examples are those in the St Vincent Place development, including the smaller portion to the east of the railway line (ie Howe Crescent and Ferrars Place) as well as the larger one to the west (ie St Vincent Place proper). Other fine rows can be found elsewhere, such as Raglan Street (west of Clarendon Street) in South Melbourne, Inkerman Street (between Camden and Nelson streets) in Balaclava, and along Canterbury Road (west of Armstrong Street) and Kerferd Road in Middle Park. The rows of smaller single- and double-fronted villas that characterise the bulk of the Albert Park Precinct can also be compared to similar developments elsewhere. Notable streetscapes of modest single-fronted brick cottages include Thomson Street (west of Clarendon Street) in South Melbourne, and Richardson Street in Middle Park. Counterparts in timber abound in certain parts of Middle Park (eg Neville Street) and elsewhere, such as the particularly cohesive streetscape in Chusan Street, St Kilda East. All of these examples, however, tend to be relatively small-scaled areas in contrast to the more extensive development evident in the Albert Park precinct.

As an example of a cohesive development of late Victorian housing of various types, the Albert Park Precinct is most comparable to the nineteenth-century portions of Middle Park, and St Vincent Place (western portion) in Albert Park. The former, which also largely dates back to the early 1880s, has a similar mix of modest cottages, larger villas, double-storey terraces and freestanding townhouses. The same can also be said of St Vincent Place East in South Melbourne, albeit on a smaller and more concentrated scale. While certain parts of St Kilda (eg St Kilda Hill) also contain a range of late Victorian housing, this is invariably supplemented by a pervasive overlay of inter-war development, which imparts an entirely different character to the area.

6.33.6 Statement of Significance

What is Significant?

The Albert Park Residential Precinct, nominally bounded by Kerferd Road, Beaconsfield Parade, Pickles Street, Nelson Road and Bridport Street, covers the most intact portion of an area that largely developed from the mid 1870s to the early 1890s. Formerly occupied by low-lying land that was flood prone in parts and elsewhere occupied by a military battery, the area underwent little residential development until military presence with withdrawn and land reclamation commenced in the early 1880s. Today, it remains strongly characterised by late Victorian housing, which demonstrate a broad range of typologies: from the humblest single-fronted timber cottages through to larger villas in brick and timber, to grander double-storey brick terraces and townhouses.

How is It Significant?

The precinct is of historical, aesthetic and architectural significance to the City of Port Phillip.

Why is It Significant?

Historically, the precinct is significant as an early, ambitious and notable attempt to encourage residential development beyond the boundaries of the Emerald Hill township of 1852. The gradual expansion to the south, southeast and southwest of the original settlement, over several successive phases, is significantly demonstrated by the building stock itself. The prominent streets closest to Emerald Hill and St Vincent Place (such as Nelson Road, Cardigan Place, Dundas Place and Park Street) remain strongly characterised by 1870s development, while the more intensive development of the 1880s Boom period is more evident in the smaller streets to the south and south-west. The subsequent infill of Edwardian housing, most notably apparent in the precinct's south-eastern corner (between Phillipson Street and Kerferd Road), demonstrates the last significant phase of residential settlement in the precinct, concentrated in its outermost edges.

The predominantly residential character is enhanced by a number of contemporaneous non-residential buildings, such as churches, schools and shops, which provide evidence of the expansion of community facilities during the precinct's key phase period of development over the last three decades of the nineteenth century.

Aesthetically and architecturally, the precinct is significant for its fine collection of late Victorian dwellings. These demonstrate a range of typical housing types of the 1870s and '80s: modest single-storeyed cottages in both timber and brick (mostly concentrated in the south-east and south of the precinct) as well as grander villas, double-storeyed terraces and townhouses (mostly concentrated in the east of the precinct). Although these exist both as cohesive strips (eg single rows of terraces or cottages) and as more heterogenous streetscapes (with a mixture of dwelling types), they are nevertheless unified by their closely comparable dates and by their frequently consistent scale, form, materials and detailing. Considered collectively, the late nineteenth century housing in the Albert Park Residential Precinct represents one of the finest, more extensive and most varied collections of 1870s and 1880s dwellings in the City of Port Phillip.

6.33.7 Recommendations

Recommended for inclusion in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay Table in the Port Phillip Planning Scheme.

The preservation of original bluestone elements (including kerbing, guttering, spoon drains and pitching to laneways and crossovers) should also be encouraged.

6.33.8 Assessment

Simon Reeves, Heritage Alliance. Revised September 2008 and February 2009.