City of
STONNINGTON

Medley Place Precinct

Prepared by: GJM Heritage (March 2025)

Address: Medley Place and Medley Street, South Yarra

Name:	Medley Place Precinct	**Review Date:**	June 2024
Place Type:	Residential Precinct	**Architect/Designer:**	Not known
Grading:	See grading table	**Builder:**	Not known
Extent of the Overlay:	See Figure 5	**Construction Date(s):**	1880s



Figure 1. 26-28 Medley Place, South Yarra



Figure 2. 28-32 Medley Place, South Yarra



Figure 3. 3 Medley Street

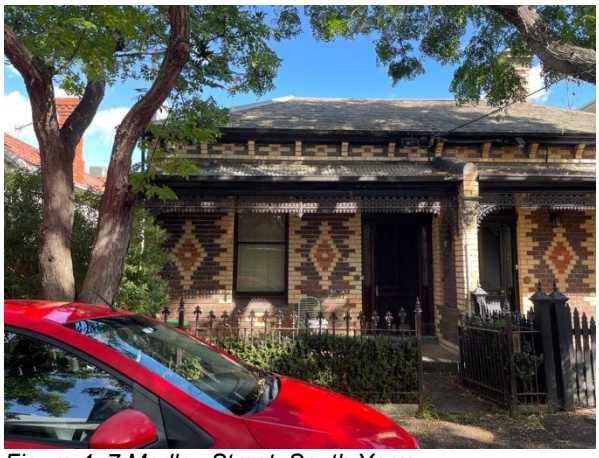


Figure 4. 7 Medley Street, South Yarra

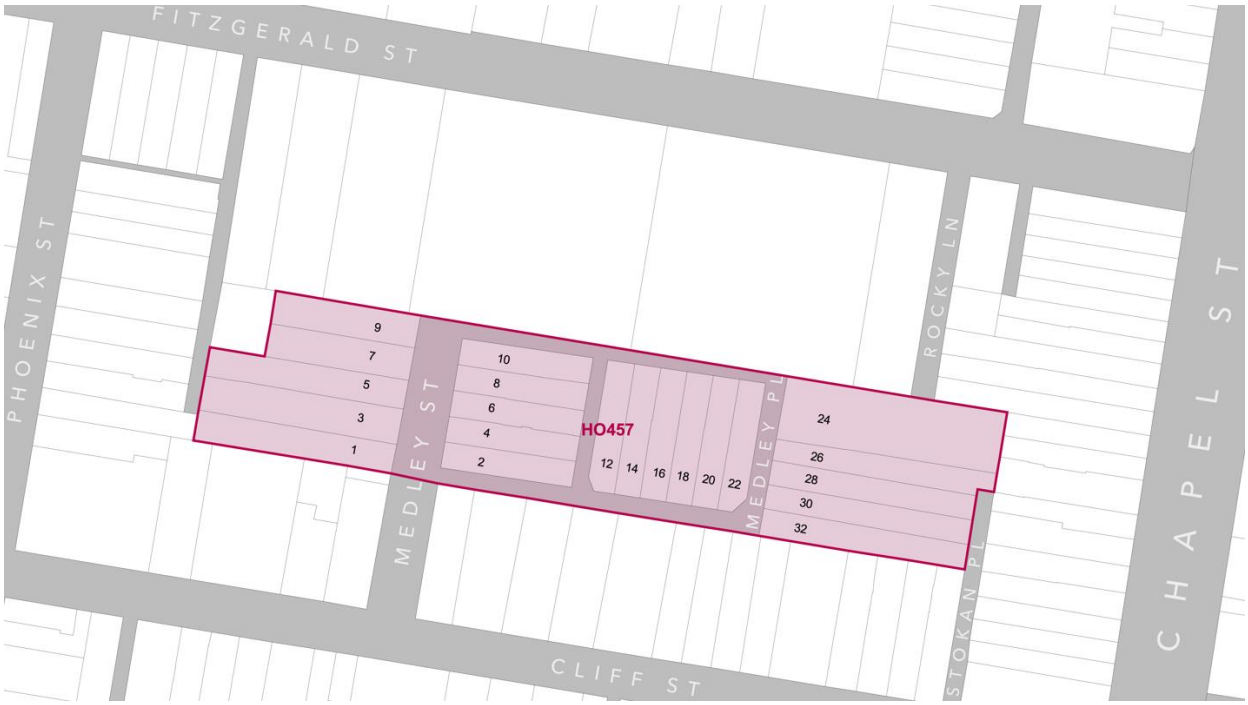


Figure 5. Medley Place Precinct, South Yarra (GJM Heritage, July 2024)

Statement of Significance

What is significant?

The Medley Place Precinct, an 1880s residential subdivision containing a collection of modestly-scaled Victorian and Edwardian-era houses.

The precinct includes:

- Medley Place (nos. 12-32 even only)
- Medley Street (nos. 1-10)

Elements which contribute to the significance of the precinct include:

- Single-storey single-fronted brick houses and one double-fronted timber house dating from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries
- Polychromatic brickwork construction (some overpainted)
- Predominantly corrugated metal-clad roofs
- Rows of terraces with visible continuous roof forms
- Verandahs to principal elevations with decorative cast-iron friezes and brackets or timber fretwork
- Principal elevations with front door opening and single timber-framed sash window
- Front gable ends to three early twentieth century houses finished with roughcast render with large vents and decorative timber strapping
- Prominent brick or rendered brick chimneys with corbelled capping
- Precinct layout with narrow streets, pedestrian access only to Nos 12-22 Medley Lane, and open area to the east of Medley Place (former public space).

Later front fences, overpainting of brickwork and rear additions do not contribute to the significance of the precinct.

How is it significant?

The Medley Place Precinct, South Yarra, is of local historical, representative and aesthetic significance.

Why is it significant?

The Medley Place Precinct, South Yarra has strong associations with the development of South Yarra in the boom-years of the 1880s and early 1890s, when rapid and uncoordinated speculative development occurred, producing irregular subdivisions with dense streetscapes of modestly-scaled workers' housing. As a highly intact precinct of modestly-scaled houses constructed in the Victorian and Edwardian-style, the Medley Place Precinct clearly illustrates this important phase of development in the City of Stonnington (Criterion A).

The Medley Place Precinct is a cohesive collection of highly intact, representative examples of modestly-scaled Victorian and Edwardian-style houses. The houses in the precinct display typical features of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, including polychromatic brick or timber construction, hipped or gabled roofs clad in corrugated iron, front verandahs with decorative cast iron or timber fretwork, front gable ends finished with roughcast render with large vents and decorative timber strapping, timber-framed sash windows and corbelled brick or rendered chimneys (Criterion D).

The Medley Place Precinct forms a highly unified group of modestly-scaled residences dating to the Victorian and Edwardian periods. The high degree of consistency in plan forms, setbacks, materials and detailing of the buildings creates – in combination with the continuous roof forms and distinctive subdivision pattern – creates a precinct of distinctive aesthetic character (Criterion E).

Historical Context

This place is associated with the following historic theme(s) taken from the *Stonnington Thematic Environmental History* (2009):

3 Settling the land

- 3.3.3 Speculation and land boomers - subdivision from 1880 onwards

- 3.3.4 Uncontrolled and unplanned development

8 Building suburbs

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

Place History

The following history is drawn from the Medley Place Precinct Heritage Precinct Citation, prepared by John Statham in 2011.

The land included in the Medley Place Precinct was first offered for sale as part of the early Crown land sales in 1849 and 1850. The large tract of land, bounded by Punt Road to the west, Gardiners (now Toorak) Road to the north, Chapel Street to the east and Commercial Road to the south, was divided into three long rectangular blocks, each of about 52 acres, and purchased by Peter Davis, a real estate agent (Figure 6). While the land benefited from having frontages to four major roads, its development potential was limited by a large swamp occupying the central section and extending south to Commercial Road. Davis quickly sold the higher ground to the north, typically offering blocks of 6-10 acres for sale. The Chapel Street frontage comprised 10 such allotments, seven of which were sold by August 1849.

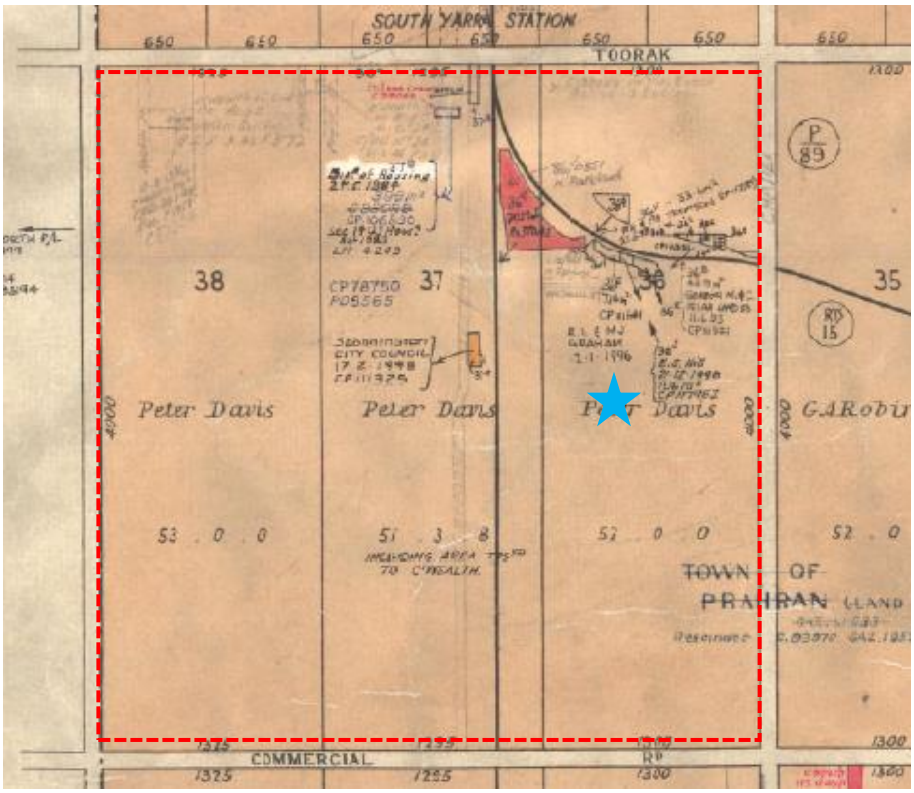


Figure 6. Detail of parish plan, showing lots purchased by Peter Davis with later notations; plan dates to c1880. Approximate location precinct indicated by blue star (Source: Public Record Office Victoria)

Kearney's map of Melbourne and suburbs, dating to 1855, indicates that the streets comprising the precinct had not been laid out by this time (Figure 7). Arthur Street, Fitzgerald Street, Cliff Street and Grosvenor Street were established on allotments in the eastern sections of Davis' purchase the following year. These streets commenced at Chapel Street and extended westwards, terminating at Phoenix Street, which ran along the eastern edge of the swamp.

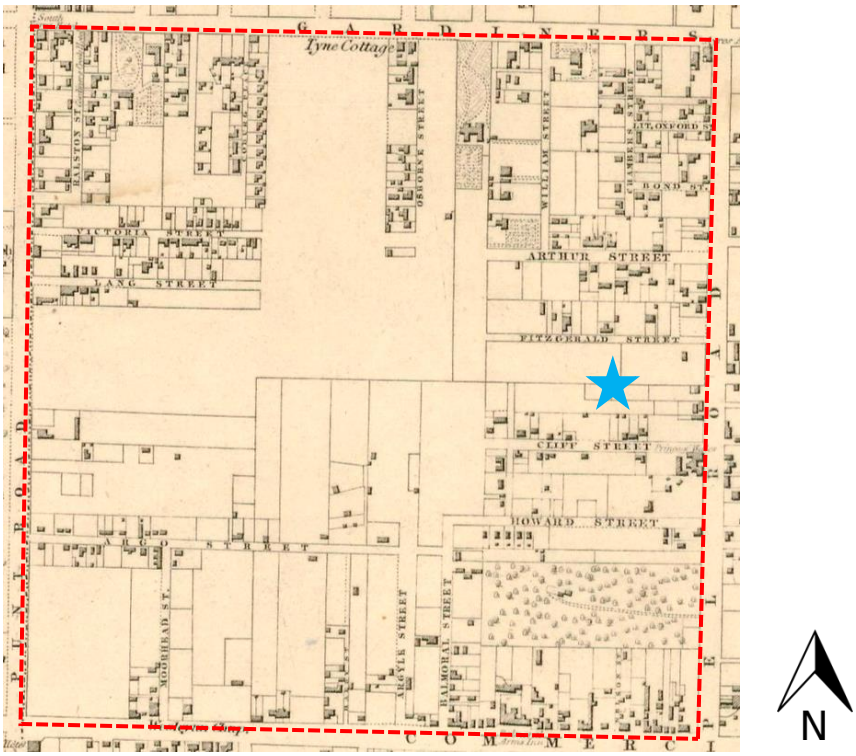


Figure 7. Detail of plan of Melbourne and its suburbs, compiled by James Kearney, 1855; the approximate location of Medley Street and Medley Place is indicated by blue star (Source: State Library of Victoria)

From 1876, the Sands and McDougall Street Directory lists a right-of-way (ROW) running north-south off Cliff Street, providing access to three dwellings to the rear of the Cliff Street frontage. An 1883 subdivision plan indicates that this ROW was originally known as William's Place (Figure 8). Formal subdivision of the area commenced around this time and by 1886, the area had adopted its current layout and the ROW was now known as Williams Street. The subdivision incorporated several notable planning devices including a small public square, known as Williams Square, which is visible in an 1896 Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works (MMBW) Plan (Figure 9). *Ad hoc* planning arrangements were not uncommon in this section of the municipality during the boom of the 1880s. No planning laws (beyond those associated with fire prevention) were in place and properties were developed in whatever manner their owners saw fit.

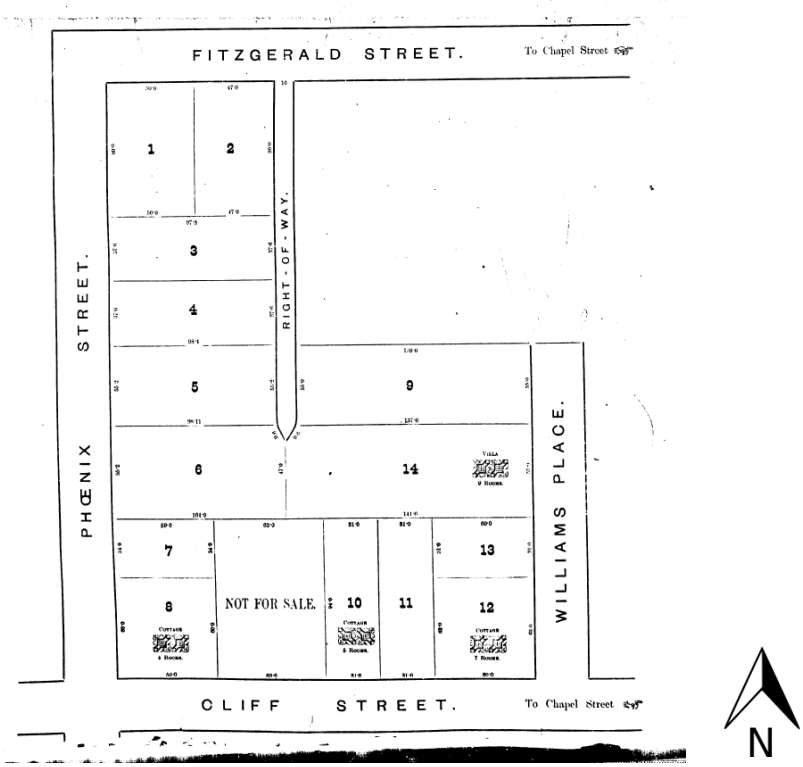


Figure 8. Plan showing subdivision of part of the Medley Place Precinct, 1883 (Source: Stonnington History Centre)

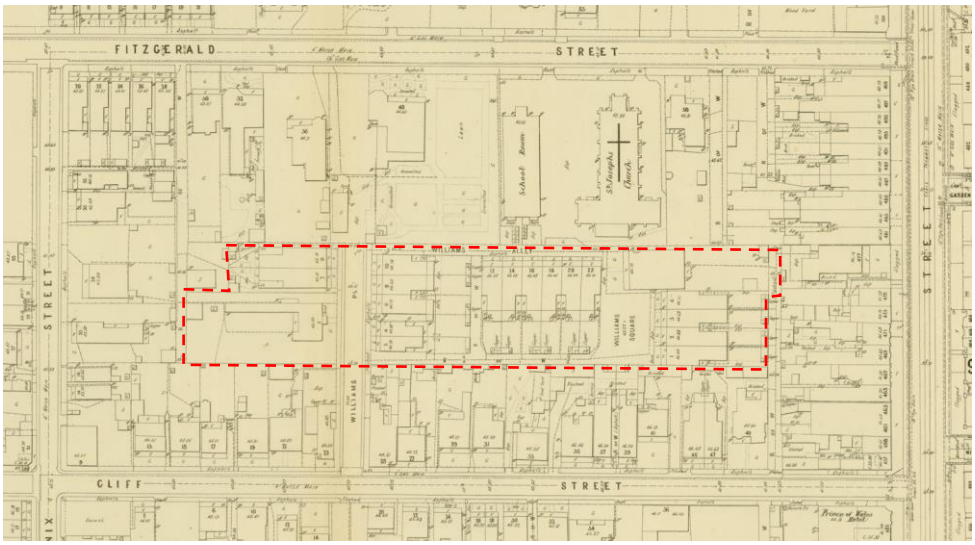


Figure 9. MMBW Detail Plan No 954, City of Prahran, 1895 showing Williams Street, Williams Alley and Williams Square – approximate boundary of precinct outlined (Source: State Library of Victoria)

In the northern section of the development, buildings were constructed along a narrow thoroughfare around half the width of a typical street. The layout appears to have anticipated that a complementary residential development would occur on the block to the north and that the road network established in Williams Street would be extended and completed as part of the development of the neighbouring site. This arrangement, in which streets straddle lot boundaries with costs shared between the two owners, was common in the development of early Prahran; however, this did not eventuate on this occasion. The Mission of South Yarra purchased the allotment to the north and the construction of St Joseph's Church began in March 1888, ending the potential for the construction of a full width William Street and fixed the form of this narrow accessway. It was subsequently known as Williams Alley.

In the early part of the twentieth century, Williams Place and Williams Alley became known as Medley Street. In the period after World War II, the nineteenth century differentiation between the wider and narrower sections of the street was reintroduced and they were subsequently known as Medley Street and Medley Place respectively. A 1945 aerial photograph shows the precinct in the mid-twentieth century (Figure 10).



Figure 10. Aerial photograph showing Medley Place Precinct, 1945, approximate boundary of precinct outlined (Source: Landata Victoria)

Description

The Medley Place Precinct is located to the south-west of the main intersection of Chapel Street and Toorak Road, South Yarra. It comprises 21 properties – ten (10) on the east and west sides of Medley Street and eleven (11) places on the north and east sides of Medley Place. Houses on the north side of Medley Place are orientated to the north with pedestrian access only to the front of the houses and a high red brick wall lining the north boundary of the path. Streets are narrow and a former public square to the east of Medley Place appears to have been incorporated within the properties to the east. All houses are located on rectangular sites and are typically setback from the street boundaries behind small front gardens.

The precinct consists of single-storey, single-fronted houses, predominantly of polychromatic brick construction (many overpainted). Rows of single-fronted brick terraces with visible continuous roof forms dominate the precinct with continuous hipped roof forms at 12-22 Medley Place (row of six), 26-32 Medley Place (row of four) and 7-9 Medley Street (pair); and a continuous gabled roof form at 6-8 Medley Street (row of three). No. 24 Medley Place also has a gabled roof. Roofs are predominantly clad with corrugated sheet metal (slate-clad at 7-9 Medley Street and tile-clad at 5 Medley Street) and dominant chimneys are of face brickwork or render finish with corbelled capping. Corrugated sheet metal-roofed verandahs extend across the principal elevations with decorative cast iron friezes and brackets. Principal elevations generally comprise a front door opening and adjacent single timber-framed sash window.

Front gable-ends at the three early twentieth century houses are finished with roughcast render with large vents and decorative timber strapping. The precinct includes one timber house dating from the late nineteenth century at 24 Medley Place which has a steeply-pitched corrugated sheet metal-clad roof and a later central porch with decorative timber fretwork.

Front boundaries are lined with later fences, predominantly timber picket fences.

Key Features:

- Single-storey single-fronted brick houses and one double-fronted timber house dating from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries
- Polychromatic brickwork construction (some overpainted)
- Predominantly corrugated metal-clad roofs
- Rows of terraces with visible continuous roof forms
- Verandahs to principal elevations with decorative cast-iron friezes and brackets or timber fretwork
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- Precinct layout with narrow streets, pedestrian access only to Nos 12-22 Medley Lane, and open area to the east of Medley Place (former public space).



Figure 11. 12 Medley Place



Figure 12. 16 Medley Place



Figure 13. 20 Medley Place



Figure 14. 22 Medley Place



Figure 15. 24 Medley Place



Figure 16. 26 Medley Place



Figure 17. 26-32 Medley Place



Figure 18. 26-30 Medley Place



Figure 19. 30-32 Medley Place



Figure 20. 3 Medley Street



Figure 21. 4 Medley Street

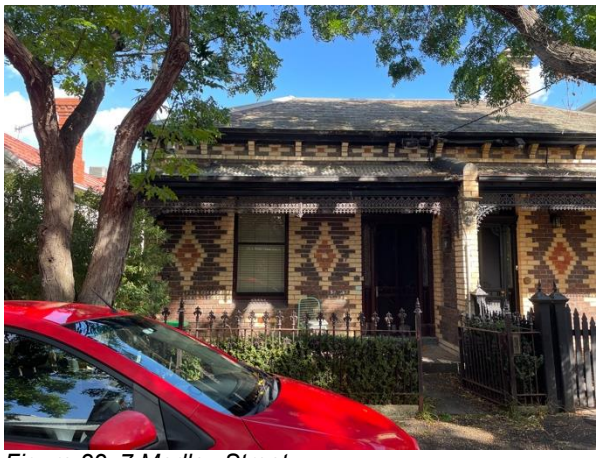


Figure 22. 7 Medley Street



Figure 23. 8 Medley Street



Figure 24. 7-9 Medley Street

Intactness and Integrity

The Medley Place Precinct remains highly intact to its period of construction and retains a high degree of integrity in fabric, form and detail. While the residences have undergone some minor alterations, including replacement of front fences, overpainting of brickwork and alterations to the rear of properties, these changes do not diminish the ability to understand and appreciate the place as a cohesive Victorian style residential precinct.

Assessment Against Criteria

Criteria referred to in *Planning Practice Note No. 1: Applying the Heritage Overlay* (Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, August 2018), modified for the local context.

CRITERION A: *Importance to the course or pattern of the City of Stonnington's cultural or natural history (historical significance).*

The Medley Place Precinct, South Yarra has strong associations with the development of South Yarra in the boom-years of the 1880s and early 1890s, when rapid and uncoordinated speculative development occurred, producing irregular subdivisions with dense streetscapes of modestly-scaled workers' housing. As a highly intact precinct of modestly-scaled houses constructed in the Victorian and Edwardian-style, the Medley Place Precinct clearly illustrates this important phase of development in the City of Stonnington.

CRITERION B: *Possession of uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of the City of Stonnington's cultural or natural history (rarity).*

N/A

CRITERION C: *Possession to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of the City of Stonnington's cultural or natural history (research potential).*

N/A

CRITERION D: *Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of class of cultural or natural places or environments (representativeness).*

The Medley Place Precinct is a cohesive collection of highly intact, representative examples of modestly-scaled Victorian and Edwardian-style houses. The houses in the precinct display typical features of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, including polychromatic brick or timber construction, hipped or gabled roofs clad in corrugated iron, front verandahs with decorative cast-iron or timber fretwork, front gable ends finished with roughcast render with large vents and decorative timber strapping, timber-framed sash windows and corbelled brick or rendered chimneys.

CRITERION E: *Importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics (aesthetic significance).*

The Medley Place Precinct forms a highly unified group of modestly-scaled residences dating to the Victorian and Edwardian periods. The high degree of consistency in plan forms, setbacks, materials and detailing of the buildings creates – in combination with the continuous roof forms and distinctive subdivision pattern – creates a precinct of distinctive aesthetic character.

CRITERION F: *Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period.*

N/A

CRITERION G: *Strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons. This includes the significance of a place to Indigenous peoples as part of their continuing cultural traditions (social significance).*

N/A

CRITERION H: *Special association with the life or works of a period, or group of persons, of importance in the City of Stonnington's history (associative significance).*

N/A

Gradings and Recommendations

It is recommended that the St Joseph's Church Complex (50 & 54 Fitzgerald Street, South Yarra) be removed from the Medley Place Precinct (HO457) and be included in its own Heritage Overlay. Despite being geographically co-located, the residential precinct has a separate and distinct development history and architectural character to the church complex, and both are more appropriately managed through separate Heritage Overlays (see Figure 25).



Figure 25. Recommended changes to extent of HO457 – St Joseph's Church Complex to be included within a separate Heritage Overlay

KEY

DELETED

It is recommended that the residential properties remain in the Heritage Overlay as a Heritage Precinct known as *Medley Place Precinct* (HO457).

Recommendations for the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay (Clause 43.01) to the Stonnington Planning Scheme:

External paint controls *Is a permit required to paint an already painted surface?*	No
Internal alteration controls *Is a permit required for internal alterations?*	No
Tree controls *Is a permit required to remove a tree?*	No
Solar energy system controls *Solar energy system controls apply?*	Yes
Outbuildings and fences exemptions *Are there outbuildings or fences which are not exempt from notice and review?*	No
Victorian Heritage Register *Is this place included on the Victorian Heritage Register?*	No
Prohibited uses may be permitted *Can a permit be granted to use for a use which would otherwise be prohibited?*	No

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Aboriginal heritage place *Is the place an Aboriginal heritage place which is subject to the requirements of the* Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006?	No
Incorporated Plan *Does an incorporated plan apply to the site?*	No

Gradings of individual properties within the precinct are recommended as follows and as shown in Figure 26:

Number	Address	Grading
12	Medley Place	Contributory
14	Medley Place	Contributory
16	Medley Place	Contributory
18	Medley Place	Contributory
20	Medley Place	Contributory
22	Medley Place	Contributory
24	Medley Place	Contributory
26	Medley Place	Contributory
28	Medley Place	Contributory
30	Medley Place	Contributory
32	Medley Place	Contributory
1	Medley Street	Contributory
2	Medley Street	Contributory
3	Medley Street	Contributory
4	Medley Street	Contributory
5	Medley Street	Contributory
6	Medley Street	Contributory
7	Medley Street	Contributory
8	Medley Street	Contributory
9	Medley Street	Contributory
10	Medley Street	Contributory



Figure 26. Grading map.

Previous Assessments

Medley Place Precinct Heritage Precinct Citation, John Statham, 2011

Prahran Conservation Study, Nigel Lewis and Associates, 1983

References

Context Pty Ltd, *Stonnington Thematic Environmental History*, 2006.

Landata Victoria, Central Plan Office, Historical Aerial Photography, 1945.

Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works (MMBW) Detail Plan No 954, City of Prahran, 1895.

Nigel Lewis and Associates, *Prahran Conservation Study,* 1983.

Public Record Office Victoria (PROV), Parish and Township Plans collection.

State Library of Victoria, map collection.

Statham, John, *Medley Place Precinct Heritage Precinct Citation,* 2011.

Stonnington History Centre, subdivision plans.