

in Martin Street should be removed and there should be no street trees planted adjacent to the Gardens,

- vi on the other side of the road from the Gardens, the row of *Sorbus aucuparia*, European Ash, in Kennedy Street should be retained and should be the model for street tree planting in the other streets,
- vii traditional paving and guttering should continue to be used,
- ix a strict policy of minimal signage be followed,
- ix no non-residential uses should be allowed to compromise the essentially residential character of the area,
- x wherever possible the intrusion of powerlines should be minimised if they cannot be removed,
- xi the views out of the area should be enhanced by appropriate planting.

5.2.3 UC1 Area C Gray Street Commercial (Level 2)

Description

The character of the Gray Street Commercial area is dominated by the strict street grid. Its main axis is Gray Street which soon took precedence in a commercial sense over the lower lying Lonsdale Street. It has remained the centre of Hamilton ever since. It had been almost completely built up by the 1900s, certainly to the street frontages but was not nearly so developed at the rear of the sites, access from the main streets being limited. This means that even now there are large areas, mostly devoted to carparking, behind the facades in Gray, Thompson, Lonsdale, Brown and Cox Streets.

Since the 1900s there has been steady redevelopment with a particularly important legacy surviving in the buildings from the 1930s. The most important change was prompted by the Council in the 1960s and is now generally regretted by everyone. The Council adopted a policy of removing post-supported verandahs. The early views of Hamilton which survive in photographs show clearly how important they were in creating the character of the commercial streets. It is important to distinguish

between the original post-supported verandahs in front of buildings constructed before the First World War and the "authentic" cantilevered verandahs of the building constructed in the thirties and later.

The next phase of re-development was the cladding of the 1980s. There are many buildings surviving, probably quite intact, behind new parapets and first floors faced with sheet steel used as a cheap way to modernise them. The other important change to have occurred over the years is the modernization of shop fronts. Each of the streets still enjoys a healthy variety of periods and therefore styles but many of the original shopfronts have been replaced by inappropriate alternatives. There are other superficial changes to buildings all of which can be attributed to the desire to modernize.

The early photographs show that there were no trees in Gray and Thompson Streets originally. The streets then were unmade and either dusty or muddy depending on the season. The gutters were wide spoon drains and were built up with bluestone pitchers. Paving seems to have varied but one photograph taken outside the Victoria Hotel shows bluestone flags on the gutter half of the footpath area. The other half beside the buildings must have been unsealed. It has been said that concrete flags were laid at one time. Asphalt would have been used at a later stage and was probably the material which was replaced by the present brick paving.

The new brick paving is now everywhere in the Gray Street Commercial area. It serves to unify the area. While its advantages were clear when it was first laid down some of its disadvantages are now revealing themselves especially the bad wear-and-tear. The paving is matched by brick planter boxes in Gray Street which are filled with low shrubs. These are generally well maintained and successful. There are *Platinus X acerifolius*, Planes, in the roadway which are in good condition and contribute significantly to the quality of the streetscape. They provide much needed shade, a restful atmosphere and a sense of scale. They continue the traditional planting of the residential parts of Gray Street. Elsewhere in the Gray Street Commercial area the plantings, *Pittosporum eugenoides* 'Variegata', are in tubs and are not successful.

More than any other area in Hamilton the Gray Street Commercial area is filled with street furniture. Much of it seems necessary for our late twentieth century

lifestyle centred, as it is, on the motor car. Even though there is a fashion to remove cars and pedestrianise commercial areas, their presence does provide not just access but also a sense of vitality and even competition with the pedestrians. The key is to establish a balance or an equal chance - usually by handicapping the car.

The municipal buildings form a small sub-group within the area. The street is planted with *Platanus X acerfolius*, Planes, which create a special atmosphere with their dappled light. One of the most serious losses to the Gray Street Commercial area was the demolition, more or less without real reason, of the first Town Hall in Gray Street next door to the Post Office. This left a gap in the streetscape which must be filled. It is rarely appropriate to reconstruct buildings but in this case, considering the sensitivity of the adjacent buildings and the excellent records which survive, reconstruction is a valid option. (288) Such a reconstruction could be flexible in its internal disposition.

History

Hamilton was the first inland town in the Western District to hold land sales. Soon after the drawing-up of a first 1850 Township plan (289), land in what is now Hamilton's main commercial area, was subdivided and sold. Blocks along Lonsdale, Kennedy, Cox and Thompson Streets were sold in 1851 and along Gray and Brown Streets were sold in 1852. (290) Hamilton developed as the main service centre for the agricultural and pastoral industries of the Western District region and, from an early date, a commercial centre was formed, clustered around Gray Street. In 1859 there were already some stores, a local newspaper (forerunner to the *Hamilton Spectator*), saddlers, watchmakers, bakers, butchers, plumbers, blacksmiths, a wood yard, an auctioneer and several hotels. (291) There were also three doctors, two solicitors and a chemist, Dr William Stevenson, whose 1866 or earlier house, 'Lynwood' survives at 30 Gray Street. (292)

288 The original drawings are held by the Hamilton Historical Society and many photographs show the building.

289 *Plan of the Town of Hamilton, 1850* Featr 5U, C.P.O. Melbourne.

290 Garden, p 39.

291 *Ibid.*, p 58.

292 *Ibid.*

The area became the location of many shops and offices, of some notable banks, municipal government offices, a 1961 Regional Library and Art Gallery, and of an early church, the Free Presbyterian Church (1857) in Brown Street

Surviving examples of 19th century commercial buildings in the area include the 1876 Post Office at 57 Gray Street; George Gill's chemist's shop at 152 Gray Street, which forms a striking contrast with the Moderne style Robson's Pharmacy at 160 Grey Street. Nearby, at 138 Gray Street, stands the former Thompson's Stores, a two-storey bluestone building constructed c1872 on the site of the famous Thomson's Iron Store. The National Australia Bank at 131 Gray Street (the former C.B.C) constructed in 1867, one of Hamilton's most notable commercial buildings, is a splendid example of the work of A.L. Smith, whose office designed a number of buildings for the Colonial Bank and the Bank of Victoria. (293)

Important 20th century buildings in Hamilton's commercial centre include the former Miller's Department Store at 121 Gray Street, a skilful remodelling of an earlier structure by the firm Seabrooke and Fildes, and the Regional Library and Art Gallery (1961) in Brown Street, the latter housing one of the richest and most unusual collections for a provincial Victorian gallery.

Statement of Significance

The Gray Street Commercial area is of regional significance both for its architecture and its historical association. It has almost always been the centre of Hamilton and therefore the Hamilton district. It has seen all the changes the City has been through in its history. The streets, and especially Gray Street, have a remarkable collection of buildings from the later nineteenth century and the 1930s.

Recommendations

To conserve and enhance the special character of the Gray Street Commercial area it is recommended that:

- i post-supported verandahs be reinstated according to the age of the building and based on the photographic evidence available,
- ii the cladding which disguises the original facades be removed,
- iii replace, in the long term, brick paving with either bluestone flags, concrete flags or asphalt (hot mix),
- iv extend the street tree planting of Gray Street into neighbouring streets,
- v review the emphasis placed on access to Gray Street by car from the rear of the shopping centre and refocus the vitality of the area,
- vi review the pedestrian links between Gray Street and the carparks,
- vii reconstruct the original Town Hall.

5.2.4 UC1 Area D Hospital Hill (Level 3)

Description

The other hill in Hamilton, this area focuses on the Hamilton Hospital at its crest and on the Catholic Church, the Uniting Church and the Masonic Temple where it joins the Melville Oval area. The area is roughly triangular. Its main axis is Lonsdale Street. The area includes Bree Park. The western boundary is Alexandra Parade and the eastern boundary is the railway line.

Generally the quality of the housing stock is less than that of Church Hill but still good with some very good individual buildings, the best typically being on the brow of the hill. The Federation house at 138 Lonsdale Street is the most distinctive in the area and its tower acts as a landmark. The fully planted garden consists of a range of mature woody shrubs. The garden at St Mary's Convent at 23 Dinwoodie Street is typical of the post Second World War Period with a special formality which