

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is Heritage?

Heritage consists of the places and objects that we have inherited from the past and want to pass on to future generations. It defines us as a community: who we are and where we have come from. In other words it is "the things we want to keep".

Heritage suggests 'keeping' aspects of the built and natural environment for future generations, those places which are of such value that "they enrich people's lives, often providing a deep and inspirational connection to community and landscape, to the past and lived experience. They are historical records that are tangible expressions of Australian identity and experience." (Illustrated Burra Charter, 2004, p.10.)

The protection of that heritage through legislative provisions is part of that recognition. Heritage Significance is embodied in the place itself, in the whole of the building, and is defined in terms of the aesthetic, historic, scientific, social or spiritual value for past, present or future generations.

What is Character?

Character refers to a place's streetscape aesthetic and appeal.

Neighbourhood character is essentially the combination of the public and private domains. It is what we see and experience from the street where the different elements, for example the size of verges, street trees, setbacks and the scale and bulk of the buildings, all combine to form the character of that particular area. Every property, public place or piece of infrastructure makes a contribution, whether large or small. It is the cumulative impact of all these contributions that establishes neighbourhood character.

What is the Difference between Heritage and Character?

As noted in State Planning Policy 3.5 Historic Heritage Conservation it is important to distinguish between 'historic heritage significance' and 'urban character'. Areas of 'historic heritage significance' are select areas with special qualities embodied in the built form, will generally be quite rare within a locality and will have some form of underlying aesthetic, social, scientific or historic cultural heritage value. The retention (i.e. prohibition of demolition) of contributory buildings is important to protect areas of historic heritage significance.

Urban character can essentially be identified by the built form and age of an area and its relationship with the surrounding streetscape, open space, land use and activity. Different combinations of these factors help create local distinctiveness and character.

What is heritage listing?

Local Heritage Survey (not legally binding)

A Local Heritage Survey (LHS) identifies local heritage places in a systematic manner and provides base cultural and historic information for the community and local authority. Heritage Surveys can assist local governments to develop local conservation policies and provide information about local heritage required under Planning and Development (Local Planning Schemes) Regulations 2015.

Heritage List (legally binding)

Places and heritage areas on an LHS that are identified as having exceptional (category 1) or considerable significance (category 2) to the locality are usually included on a Heritage List affording them legal protection. At this level of heritage listing Council is able to refuse demolition on heritage grounds.

State Register of Heritage Places (legally binding)

Some places and heritage areas within a local government area may also be assessed by the Heritage Council of WA for inclusion on the State Register of Heritage Places providing legal protection under the Heritage Act 2018. These places are significant at a Statewide level.

National Heritage and UNESCO World Heritage Listing

There is also a National Heritage List as well as the UNESCO World Heritage List for places of National and Global cultural heritage significance.

How is a place identified as having cultural heritage significance?

The Heritage Act 2018 defines cultural heritage significance as:

“aesthetic, historic, scientific, social or spiritual value for individuals or groups within Western Australia. Cultural heritage significance may be embodied in a place itself and in any of its fabric, setting, use, associations, meanings, records, related places and related objects. A place may have diverse values for different individuals or groups.”

How do I know if my property is heritage listed?

To determine whether your place is listed on the Shire of Northam Local Heritage Survey (formerly Municipal Heritage Inventory) or Heritage List you can search the property details by following the links provided below or contact the Shire's Planning Services Department on 9622 6100.

Can I develop my heritage listed property?

Yes you can. Heritage listing does not mean that a property cannot be changed, in fact some works ensure a place is appropriate for contemporary use, however, each application is assessed on its own merit. The Shire of Northam needs to approve works involving significant changes to any building whether it is heritage listed or not.

Does heritage listing affect ownership or access?

No, heritage listing does not affect ownership or access. Places remain the sole property of the owner, and the owner's rights remain the same as with non heritage listed places.

Does heritage listing impact on property values?

Various studies in Australia and internationally, show heritage listing has no effect on property values due in most cases. Like any property, its value will be affected by a range of factors including size, location, trends in the real estate market cycle and the quality and maintenance of the property.

Who should I contact for more information?

You can contact the Shire of Northam Planning Department on 9622 6100.