

Heritage Citation



Northgate Community Centre

Key details

Also known as	Northgate-Virginia School of Arts (former)
Addresses	At 34 Ridge Street, Northgate, Queensland 4013
Type of place	Hall
Period	Interwar 1919-1939
Style	California Bungalow
Lot plan	L1199_M31105
Key dates	Local Heritage Place Since — 1 January 2004 Date of Citation — June 2001
Construction	Roof: Corrugated iron; Walls: Timber
Criterion for listing	(A) Historical; (B) Rarity; (E) Aesthetic; (G) Social; (H) Historical association

History

Brisbane had been able to support its first School of Arts in 1849. The Mechanics Institutes and Schools of Art movement flourished in the later parts of the nineteenth century, aided by subscription and suitable injections of government funding. In Britain free municipal libraries were taking over the business of lending books, however local authorities in Australia were reluctant to bear the cost of public libraries, seemingly content to sporadically support existing institutions. Even though local government authorities in Queensland were enabled by act of parliament to develop municipal libraries from 1878, none did so. In the half century or so before World War I many city suburbs and country towns organised their own Mechanics' Institute or School of Arts, which usually provided free or subsidised library service and meeting hall facilities for the community.

After World War 1 communities such as those surrounding Northgate and Virginia were pre-disposed to expand the resources available to them, and a School of Arts committee was formed. This site, containing an area of 1 rood and 8 perches, was permanently reserved for the purpose of a School of Art in 1919. The Northgate-Virginia School of Arts was opened on 20 January 1922.

In June 1952 Council's E&C Committee considered a proposal by the Committee of the Northgate-Virginia School of Arts that Council take over the management and control of the affairs of that institution. The matter was deferred pending preparations of the budget for 1952-53. In May 1953, Council considered the proposal again. The request from the Management Committee was apparently the result of the recent resignation of the School of Arts librarian, the difficulty in securing suitable staff and general lack of interest in the affairs of the School of Arts.

When Council took over the building it was re-named the Northgate-Virginia District Municipal Library. It was remodelled in 1962 and by 1966 was functioning as a library with in excess of 10,000 books.

The site is now known as the Northgate Community Centre, and no longer supports a municipal library. The hall is regularly used as a gathering space for community groups and classes. Some local clubs lease small areas in the building.

Description

The Northgate Community Centre is a large timber-framed, iron-roofed building on the corner of Ridge and Scott Streets. The building's main entry is on Ridge Street, and features a gabled portico projecting from an open verandah across the width of the building. The use of paired verandah posts, with sections of solid chamferboard balustrade and vertical battened screens below the eaves create a semienclosed style of verandah that reflects the influence of the California Bungalow. Each end of the verandah is enclosed with timber shutters. A curved concrete ramp provides wheelchair and pram access to the portico, which is three steps above street level. From Ridge Street the site falls away, allowing a lower story to be built under the stage area of the hall.

The building comprises three main volumes - the entry wing (including the verandah); the hall (including a raised stage area); and an enclosed verandah with adjustable wooden louvres along the southern side of the hall. The hipped roof of the front wing intersects with the hall's main gable, with the top of the latter visible above the entrance gable.

The front section of the building is supported on a brick base wall to the perimeter and with timber stumps elsewhere. The hall section is wholly on timber stumps, battened on the outside perimeter. The small hall underneath the stage area of the building is used for minor meetings. A number of timber staircases provide

egress from the hall and stage areas. Except for some garden beds at the entry, the grounds consist largely of well-tended lawns. The interior features an honour board in the main hall.

Despite its size the Northgate Community Centre is visually integrated with the quiet residential neighbourhood. The front verandah provides a comfortably scaled transition between the street and the large, unadorned volume of the hall. The use of familiar building materials also reflects the surrounding domestic architecture.

A brief visual inspection of the building reveals it to be in generally good physical condition.

Although the Hall has undergone a series of minor modifications it is still intact. Detracting or insignificant elements are of a minor nature and include: the curved access ramp at the entry, various externally-mounted air conditioning units and a lean-to amenities extension on the building's lower southern side. The principal volumes of the building are significant and their integrity should not be compromised, for example through unsympathetic additions or the enclosure of the verandah.

Statement of significance

Relevant assessment criteria

This is a place of local heritage significance and meets one or more of the local heritage criteria under the Heritage planning scheme policy of the *Brisbane City Plan 2014*. It is significant because:

Historical

CRITERION A

The place is important in demonstrating the evolution or pattern of the city's or local area's history as a structure built as a community facility in the years immediately after World War I.

Rarity

CRITERION B

The place demonstrates rare, uncommon or endangered aspects of the city's or local area's cultural heritage as a former School of Arts library and hall.

Aesthetic

CRITERION E

The place is important because of its aesthetic significance

as a community structure that evokes the materials and features of the surrounding residential area and occupies a prominent corner site in the community.

Social

CRITERION G

The place has a strong or special association with the life or work of a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons

as a community hall it has a special association with diverse community groups in the Northgate-Virginia area over many years.

Historical association

CRITERION H

The place has a special association with the life or work of a particular person, group or organization of importance in the city's or local area's history

as a building commissioned by the School of Arts movement.

References

1. Brisbane City Council - City Assets Branch *Conservation Management Study* Stage 1 Report. November 2002
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Note: This citation has been prepared on the basis of evidence available at the time including an external examination of the building. The statement of significance is a summary of the most culturally important aspects of the property based on the available evidence, and may be re-assessed if further information becomes available. The purpose of this citation is to provide an informed evaluation for heritage registration and information. This does not negate the necessity for a thorough conservation study by a qualified practitioner, before any action is taken which may affect its heritage significance.

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