High Street Houses and Shop Precinct

Heritage Place: High Street Houses and Shop Precinct	**HO Reference:** HO783
Address: 385-401 High Street, Prahran	**Citation status:** Final
	Date Updated: 5 April 2024
Designer: Unknown	**Year of Construction:** c.1890s (shop)
Builder: Unknown	1909-1910 (residences)



Photograph of 389-393 High Street, Prahran (source: City of Stonnington, 2024).



Location map and extent of the High Street Houses and Shop Precinct, Prahran

Heritage Group: Residential buildings **Heritage Type:** Residential precinct	**Key Theme:** Building suburbs / Retailing and hospitality **Key Sub-theme:** The end of an era – mansion estate subdivisions in the twentieth century / Serving local communities

Significance Level: Local

Controls:	☐	External paint controls	☐	Internal alteration controls	☐	Tree controls
	☐	Include on Victorian Heritage Register	☐	Incorporated Plans	☐	Outbuildings and fences not exempt
	■	Prohibited uses may be permitted (only to 385 High Street, Prahran*)	☐	Aboriginal Heritage Place	■	Solar energy system controls

**Note that prohibited uses allowed at 385 High Street, Prahran, specifically allowing for Shop, other than adult sex product shop, Dry cleaning agent, Department store, Laundromat, Restricted retail premises, Sex services premises, and Supermarket.*

Statement of Significance

What is significant?

The High Street Houses and Shop Precinct, comprising properties on High Street, Prahran, is significant.

The precinct is wholly characterised by contributory graded buildings.

Character elements that contribute to the significance of the precinct include:

- The consistent allotment pattern established by Victorian era subdivisions and subsequent development created by the group of Federation residences and Victorian commercial shop;
- The regularity and harmony of the semi-detached Federation residences, primarily characterised by front facing half-timbered gable ends, face red brickwork, gable roofs, some clad with terracotta tiling and/or topped with finials and ridge cappings, casement windows with timber frame and lead light glass, terracotta Marseille tiled roofs, exposed timber eaves supported by decorative timber brackets, red brick corbelled chimneys with chimney pots and porches;
- The contributory two-storey Victorian shop characterised by masonry construction, timber framed sash windows with extruded sills, a decorative parapet and ornamentation derived from Italianate sources, including moulded cornices, corbels and dentils; and
- The uniformity of allotments, scale, siting, setbacks and built forms across the precinct.

Later alterations and additions to the properties are not significant.

How is it significant?

The High Street Houses and Shop Precinct is of local historical and aesthetic significance to the City of Stonnington.

Why is it significant?

The High Street Houses and Shop Precinct is of historical significance as a group of buildings associated with two key phases of suburban development and consolidation in the municipality –late nineteenth century commercial development and early twentieth century residential development. The surviving Victorian era shop building, combined with the row of Federation era dwellings not only form a tangible link to the initial nineteenth century character changes that precipitated this area of Prahran's shift from sparsely developed paddocks to a densely populated suburb, but also highlights the subsequent phase of suburban consolidation in the Federation era following economic recovery from the 1890s recession. (Criterion A)

The High Street Houses and Shop Precinct is of aesthetic significance as an intact and visually harmonious streetscape characterised by semi-detached Federation style dwellings and a Victorian commercial shop. The residences demonstrate a high degree of cohesiveness through consistencies in built form, scale, setbacks, materials, fenestration, and detailing. These features, along with the substantially intact Victorian commercial shop, create a striking and uniform row of late nineteenth and early twentieth century buildings that form a picturesque entrance to Trinian Street and approach to the Victoria Gardens. (Criterion E)

HERCON Criteria Assessment

A	*Importance to the course, or pattern of our cultural or natural history*	The High Street Houses and Shop Precinct is of historical significance as a group of buildings associated with two key phases of suburban development and consolidation in the municipality – late nineteenth century commercial development and early twentieth century residential development. The surviving Victorian era shop building, combined with the row of Federation era dwellings not only form a tangible link to the initial nineteenth century character changes that precipitated this area of Prahran's shift from sparsely developed paddocks to a densely populated suburb, but also highlights the subsequent phase of suburban consolidation in the era. following economic recovery from the 1890s recession.
B	*Possession of uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of our cultural or natural history*	This place does not meet this criterion.
C	*Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of our cultural or natural history*	This place does not meet this criterion.
D	*Important in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural or natural places or environments*	This place does not meet this criterion.
E	*Importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics*	The High Street Houses and Shop Precinct is of aesthetic significance as an intact and visually harmonious streetscape characterised by semi-detached Federation style dwellings and a Victorian commercial shop. The residences demonstrate a high degree of cohesiveness through consistencies in built form, scale, setbacks, materials, fenestration, and detailing. These features, along with the substantially intact Victorian commercial create a striking and uniform row of late nineteenth and early twentieth century buildings that form a picturesque entrance to Trinian Street and approach to the Victoria Gardens.

F	*Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period*	This place does not meet this 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 the continuing and developing cultural traditions*	This place does not meet this criterion.
H	*Special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in our history.*	This place does not meet this criterion.

Description

- ### Physical Analysis

The High Street Houses and Shop Precinct consists of a group of single-storey Federation era residences and a Victorian commercial building. The precinct is situated along the northern side of High Street, flanking the junction with Trinian Street. Victoria Gardens is located to the west of the group. The group of residences includes a semi-detached pair and freestanding residence to the west of Trinian Street, and two pairs of semi-detached residences along the eastern side. The junction streetscape includes bluestone and concrete kerbing, concrete guttering and bitumen laid footpaths.

The Victorian commercial building located at 385 High Street comprises the oldest structure within the group. The two-storey freestanding building consists of bagged brick laid with a stretcher bond. The ground level shopfront has been altered with a new glazed wall and a central entrance in a faux Classical style. A moulded cornice level course with end corbels demarcates the upper level with features a central pair of timber sash windows with a fixed top light, moulded extruded sill and flat hood mould. The upper level is topped with a flat parapet with a shaped and arched gable. The gable and parapet feature moulded cornices, corbels and dentils. The hipped roof is clad with corrugated sheet metal but remains obscured from view by the front and side parapets.

The residences east of Trinian Street include 395-397 and 399-401 High Street. The two pairs are identical in massing, form, façade arrangement and detailing. The face red brick residences are laid with a stretcher bond. The residences each present an open gable roof clad with corrugated sheet metal, terracotta crested ridge capping and rams horn finial with a separating parti wall to each pair. Each residence includes face red brick corbelled chimney with two terracotta chimneys pots. A portion of the roof at 397 High Street is clad with slate tiles, suggesting the original roof cladding of the group. Each pair presents a mirrored façade arrangement consisting of a recessed main entrance door and porch on the inner side of each residence. The main entrance consists of a timber door with glazing with sidelights and top lights, protected under a bullnosed awning clad with corrugated sheet metal.

The façades at 395-401 High Street presents a central triple casement window bank with an arched stained glass top light. The windows include a rendered sill and arched lintel with hood mould. Meanwhile, the pair at 395-397 High Street include a vermiculated keystone motif which is not present at 399-401 High Street. Rendered and vermiculated sill courses run across the façades at sill and lintel level. Slight differences are seen in the open gable roof form detailing. The open gable at 395-397 High Street is clad with painted weatherboard and a base course with a moulded floral pattern. The gable includes open timber strapwork and bargeboards with dentils. The gables at 399-401 High Street differ as a half-timbered and roughcast gable.

The residences along the western side of Trinian Street present a similar massing and open gable form, albeit with simpler detailing. The semi-detached pair at 389-391 High Street present a similar arrangement to the semi-detached pairs at the eastern side of Trinian Street. Each residence includes a single corbelled chimney. The freestanding rendered residence at 393 presents a similar, albeit halved arrangement with an exposed parti wall. The central recessed entry porches are protected under the main roof, instead of a bullnosed awning seen at 395-401 High Street. The parti walls include vermiculated end corbels. Key differences within the group include the half timbered and roughcast gable with timber strapwork, the use of terracotta Marseilles tiles, and the lack of moulded detailing.

The residences all include rear extensions of various extents, including an upper floor addition at 389 High Street. However, this upper floor addition generally respects the massing and roof profile and remains largely obscured from view. The rear of the residences along the western side are used as parking, accessible off a laneway. The residences present a similar setback from High Street allowing for a narrow front yard. The street front boundaries are demarcated with a variety of front walls and fences. This includes contemporary rendered brick and timber fencing along the western side of Trinian Street, and a low timber picket fence on the eastern side.

The High Street Houses and Shop Precinct presents a highly cohesive row of attached Federation era residences owing to consistencies in massing, open gable form, roof profile, façade arrangement and fenestration. The residences on the eastern side of the street are comparatively more detailed and intact than the western side. While the residences include slight differences in detailing, they can be readily appreciated as a consistent group when viewed holistically. The Victorian era commercial building has undergone several phases of alterations, including the removal of the shopfront bay window. Other contemporary alterations include changes to the ground level shopfront and fenestration, as well as the introduction of a contemporary colour scheme. However, its retains its overall form, materials and detailing. The High Street Houses and Shop Precinct is in good condition and is of moderate to high integrity overall.

- ## Alterations and Additions

385 High Street:

- Removal of central projecting bay window.
- Addition of shopfront awning and subsequent removal.
- New contemporary shopfront glazing and entrance door.
- Two wall mounted brackets to the top of the shopfront (by 2016).

- Introduction of a contemporary dark colour scheme over an earlier white finish (by 2013).

389-393 High Street:

- Contemporary rendered tall piers with brick and timber fencing added.
- Residences overpainted.
- Timber elements painted black to various extents.
- Awning with timber brackets over the front window removed at 391 and 393 High Street.
- Contemporary second storey addition added to 389 High Street. The addition is largely sympathetic and remains obscured from view from the public domain.
- Two skylights added to 391 High Street.
- Skylight added to 393 High Street (2015).

395-401 High Street:

- Roofs reclad with corrugated sheet metal, replacing earlier slate cladding.
- Front boundary fence at 399 High Street removed and replaced with timber paling fence.
- Front boundary fence at 401 High Street removed and replaced with low brick fence.
- Contemporary colour scheme added to the rendered and timber trim elements at 395 and 399 High Street.

History

• Historical Context

The area presently known as Stonnington is the traditional home of the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung and Bunurong peoples of the East Kulin Nation. Formerly characterised by pre-contact plains, grassy woodland, and floodplains on the banks of the Yarra River (Birrarung), Gardiners Creek (Kooyong Koot) and Hawksburn Creek (now channelised), this once thriving habitat provided Traditional Owners access to a range of water, plant and animal resources integral to their way of life. The onset of colonialism not only saw the transformation of these landscapes, but also Woi wurrung and Bunurong displacement through violence and land dispossession, as is evident in the establishment of George Langhorne's Aboriginal Mission Station Reserve along the southern banks of the Yarra River in present day Prahran and Toorak. Operating under the guise of 'protection', this reserve ultimately became a focal point for segregation, dislocation, and colonial control of Aboriginal people's lives (Context Pty Ltd 2009, 31).

Despite decades of ongoing dispossession, the rich cultural heritage of Traditional Owners in Stonnington has an enduring presence to this day. Through continued resistance and the passing down of Indigenous knowledge, the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung and Bunurong people maintain an ongoing connection to, and care for Country.

European settlement in what would become the suburb of Prahran grew gradually following the 1849-1850 Crown Land Sales, which saw the subdivision of land bounded by present day Toorak Road, Orrong Road, Dandenong Road and Punt Road into fifty-one allotments (Context Pty Ltd 2009, 39). George Langhorne, the Commissioner of an 1837 Aboriginal mission in the area south of the Yarra River around Punt Hill, called this area 'Pura-ra-ran', a compound of two Bunurong words believed to mean land partially surrounded by water (O'Callaghan 1922, 54). In 1840 the name was changed to Prahran for official use.

While higher ground overlooking the Yarra to the north of Prahran was quickly acquired and settled by the colonial elite following the 1840 Crown Land Sales, the majority of present-day Prahran, being of poorly drained low-lying land characterised by wetlands, was primarily purchased by land speculators. These areas were subsequently and re-sold for farming, industry and housing the working classes. The high level of natural deposits of alluvial clay in the area meant that pockets of low-lying land were used as brickyards (Context Pty Ltd 2009, 17). By 1856, the land encompassing Prahran was primarily characterised by a scattered series of timber and brick workers cottages set on narrow allotments to the west of Williams Road, while land to the east and south remained undeveloped or in use as paddocks (Surveyor-General's Department 1856). The area was also distinguished by its strong market garden character during this period, with much of the land awaiting development being used for cultivation during the 1850s and 1860s (Malone 1983, 12).

The area underwent a period of rapid change following the 1880s land boom, which spurred the replacement of many small, mid-nineteenth century cottages with more ornate, single-fronted Victorian and Edwardian style terraces that could house the influx of factory workers as part of the area's growing brick manufacturing, food processing and textiles industries around Chapel Street and Commercial Road. Additionally, upper-middle class enclaves and mansion estates in the formerly undeveloped area of eastern Prahran were also developed to house the wealthy settling adjacent to the suburb of Armadale (Malone 2000, 20). Comprising higher ground with no major drainage problems, this area attracted comparably wealthier residents (Malone 2003, 1). These transformations were also compounded by the construction of impressively detailed shops along Chapel Street, solidifying the strip as a popular retail and commercial centre by the late nineteenth century (Allom Lovell 2000, 45).

Pockets of the suburb continued to be used as a centre for small-scale manufacturing into the early- and mid-twentieth centuries. Although business restructuring and trade liberalisation in the late twentieth century ultimately resulted in the closure and demolition of many of these factories, built remnants of this era can be seen at the c.1910 Former Kia-ora Cordial factory chimney at 181-187 High Street, Prahran and at the former milliner factory at Grattan Street, Prahran (Context Pty Ltd 2009, 95). Today, Prahran's working-class history is best represented through the relatively modest late nineteenth and early twentieth century single fronted cottages and dwellings that dominate the suburb's building stock. Meanwhile, traces of late nineteenth century middle-class residential development are best seen in the grand Victorian dwellings adjacent to Armadale along Grandview Grove.

- ## Place History

The land on which the High Street Houses and Shop Precinct presently sits formed part of Crown Portion 44 during the 1849-50 Crown Land Sales (Surveyor-General's Department 1849). Consisting of 34.5 acres of land bounded by present day Malvern Road, Williams Road, High Street and the north-south line of Lelia Street, the Lot was purchased as an investment property for land speculator R. A. Balbirnie (Malone 2001, 2). In contrast to the flood prone adjacent areas to the west, Lot 44 was naturally well drained. Known as Balbirnie's Paddock, the Lot was portioned off and re-sold in 1851. While several buildings were subsequently erected the area surrounding the subject site following further subdivisions, including the Wesleyan Church and Sunday School Hall and several dwellings along present day Trinian

Street, the land that would later become the High Street Houses and Shop Precinct remained vacant and was still known as Balbirnie's Paddock (Surveyor-General's Department 1856) (see Figure 1).

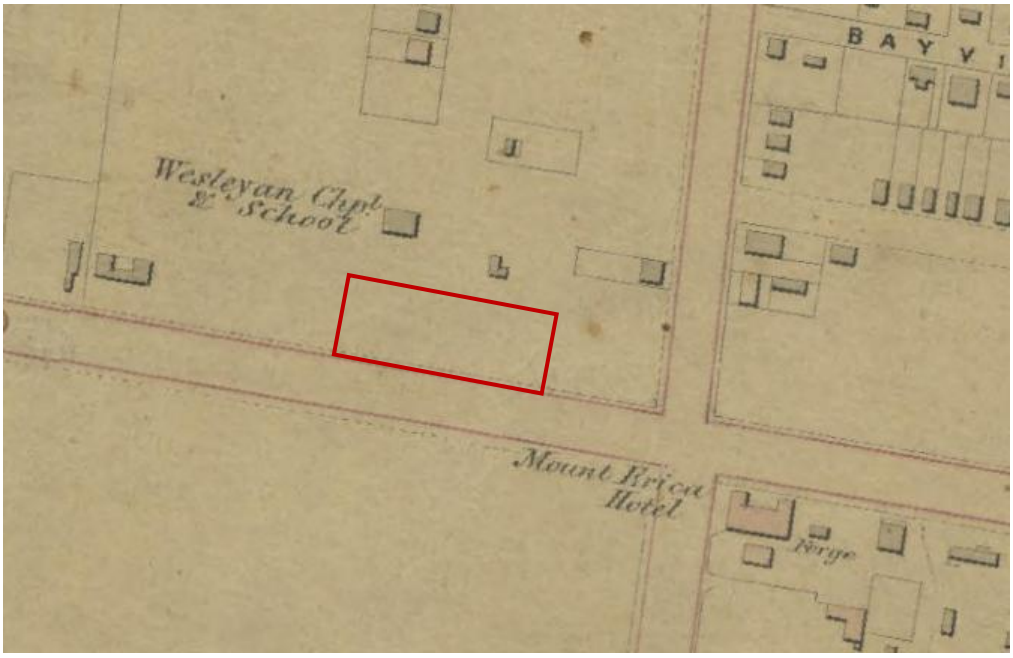


Figure 1. 1856 map showing approximate location of the High Street Houses and Shop Precinct in red (then vacant) scattered development in surrounding area. *Source*: Public Record Office Victoria.

While the subject site's surrounds, including Trinian Street, Lewisham Road and the west of High Street were subdivided and developed upon throughout the 1880s boom period, the High Street Houses and Shop Precinct was still vacant in 1896 (MMBW 1896; see Figure 2). The exception to this was the site of present day 385 High Street, Prahran (then numbered 387-391 High Street), which featured a two-storey semi-detached commercial terrace building distinguished by a projecting bay window to the shopfront (now removed) (MMBW 1896; Sands and McDougall 1900; Landata 1951) (see Figure 2 to Figure 3).

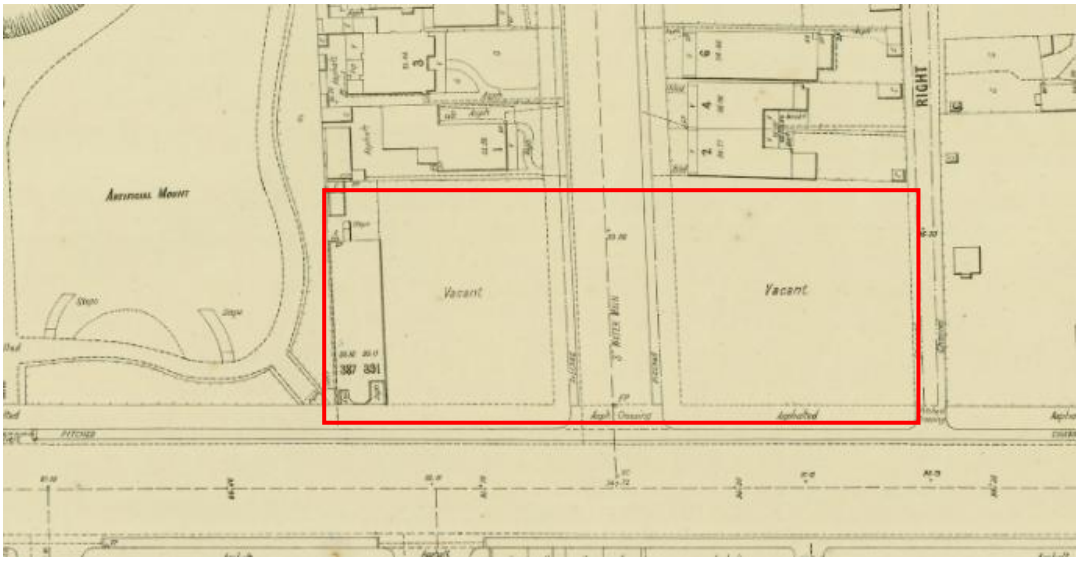


Figure 2. 1896 MMBW plan. 985 showing the site of the High Street Houses and Shop Precinct (then part of Langdale Estate) in red. Note the projecting bay window at 385 High Street, Prahran (then numbered 387-391 High Street). *Source*: State Library of Victoria.

The dwellings within the precinct were only developed in 1909-10 in the period following the 1890s economic crash (Prahran Rate Books, Prahran Ward; Sands and McDougall 1910). Although the three dwellings west of Trinian Street were developed in a group separate to the four dwellings east of Trinian Street, the group formed a harmonious row along High Street and adjacent to Victoria Gardens with consistencies in built form, materials and detailing.



Figure 3. 1951 aerial showing the High Street Houses and Shop Precinct in red. Note the awning at 385 High Street, Prahran that has since been removed.

Initial occupants at the residences from west to east included George Carroll, Jane Tupper, Wm. M Croft, A. D. Bell, Harold Heymanson, Herbert Clarke and Edwin Collings (Sands & McDougall). Meanwhile, the two-storey Victorian era terrace continued to operate as a commercial building, with estate agents E. H. and J. Davies occupying the site in 1910. Reflecting the economic recovery of the early twentieth century following the 1890s recession, the speed in which these residences were constructed spoke to a new period of growth and optimism. Notably, this group of dwellings within this precinct have survived intact against the pressures of interwar and postwar development. Today, they continue to be used as private residential properties.

Comparative Analysis

The High Street Houses and Shop Precinct comprises a highly intact and visually harmonious collection of semi-detached Federation style dwellings constructed in the early twentieth century economic recovery of the 1890s financial collapse, which precipitated a revival of residential development in Prahran that initially took off during the 1880s land boom. Developed in two groups between 1909-1910, the residences along this area of High Street are notable for their remarkable cohesion in terms of their form, scale, set back, roof profile and materiality. While developed at an earlier period, the two-storey Victorian commercial building at 385 High Street, Prahran also forms a cohesive bookend to the row of houses and shares with them similarities in materials and detailing.

Comparative examples include:

- **Fern Avenue Precinct, Windsor (HO132).** As with the nominated area, the Fern Avenue Precinct similarly comprises a small group of near identical Federation era dwellings characterised by open gables with half-timbering, face red brick, terracotta tiling and sympathetic low front fences. The buildings exhibit a high degree of intactness to their original states, however, as with the nominated area, a number of buildings have lost their original face red brick detailing due to overpainting. While the Fern Avenue Precinct is more substantial in scale than the nominated area, it ultimately lacks the High Street Houses and Shop Precinct's unique siting along a major thoroughfare adjacent to Victoria Gardens.
- **Vail Street Precinct, Prahran (HO152).** Developed between 1912 and 1915, the Vail Street Precinct comprises a fine collection of Federation era dwellings consistently characterised by half- timbered gables, face red brick and terracotta ridge capping and finials. It is larger in scale than the High Street Houses and Shop Precinct, and dwellings are generally more elaborate and demonstrate a greater degree of intactness to their original states. However, Vail Street Precinct is less visually harmonious overall owing to slight variations in form, detailing and arrangement across its dwellings. As with the Fern Avenue Precinct, it also lacks the High Street Houses and Shop Precinct's unique siting along a major thoroughfare adjacent to the Victoria Gardens.
- **Kelvin Grove Precinct, Prahran (HO139).** The Kelvin Grove Precinct compares to the High Street Houses and Shop Precinct as a small group of Edwardian and Federation style dwellings primarily developed during the early twentieth century. Although its housing stock is more elaborate than the study area due to their larger scale, timber fretwork and more complex roof forms, its cohesiveness is somewhat diminished by the presence of tall,

unsympathetic front fences. Unlike the nominated area, the buildings within Kelvin Grove Precinct feature greater variation in terms of form, detailing and arrangement.

Although a less elaborate and substantive group of Federation era dwellings, 389-401 High Street, Prahran is nevertheless set apart from comparable examples in the municipality due to its near identical forms, materials, detailing, siting and scale, sympathetic low front boundary fencing and high visibility along a main thoroughfare in the municipality. It consequently forms a particularly striking and uniform row of early twentieth century dwellings that form a picturesque entrance to Trinian Street and approach to the Victoria Gardens (HO153). It is also noted that while the dwellings at 389-393 have lost some of their original detailing and face brick finish, they have retained their original open gables with half-timbering, profiled chimneys, terracotta tiled roofs and ridge capping. While the building at 385 High Street differs as a two-storey commercial building dating from the Victorian era, it nevertheless forms a contributory element to the streetscape owing to consistencies in setbacks, materials and detailing.

Precinct Map



Grading Table

* S: Significant

C: Contributory

NC: Non-contributory

Refer to Heritage Victoria's Model brief for consultants (p.6) for explanation of designations.

Note: the Style/era column follows the architectural style categories set out in Heritage Victoria's HERMES Orion heritage database and does not necessarily reflect the date of construction. For details on construction era(s) where available, refer to the Place History section.

Street address	*Place type*	*Style/era*	*Grading*
385 High Street, Prahran	Commercial	Victorian Period (1851-1901)	C
389 High Street, Prahran	Residential	Federation/Edwardian Period (1902-c.1918)	C
391 High Street, Prahran	Residential	Federation/Edwardian Period (1902-c.1918)	C
393 High Street, Prahran	Residential	Federation/Edwardian Period (1902-c.1918)	C
395 High Street, Prahran	Residential	Federation/Edwardian Period (1902-c.1918)	C
397 High Street Prahran	Residential	Federation/Edwardian Period (1902-c.1918)	C
399 High Street, Prahran	Residential	Federation/Edwardian Period (1902-c.1918)	C
341 High Street, Prahran	Residential	Federation/Edwardian Period (1902-c.1918)	C

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Limitations

1. Access to all heritage places was limited to a visual inspection from the public domain. The interiors of buildings and inaccessible areas such as rear gardens were not accessed as part of this heritage study.
2. Condition and site modification assessment was limited to a visual inspection undertaken from the public domain as well as desktop resources.
3. The historical notes provided for this citation are not considered to be an exhaustive history of the site.

Images



385, 389, 391 and 393 High Street, Prahran.
Source: City of Stonnington, 2024.



389, 391 and 393 High Street, Prahran.
Source: City of Stonnington, 2024.



395-397 High Street, Prahran. *Source:* City of Stonnington, 2024.



399-401 High Street, Prahran. *Source:* City of Stonnington, 2024.



3915-401 High Street, Prahran. *Source:* City of Stonnington, 2024.

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