

Oak Hill Historic District

Take a stroll through the Oak Hill Historic District, just south of downtown Fort Dodge and you'll likely feel you've just wandered through a portal and back in time.

The large, stately homes located there were built between the Civil War and World War I by prominent Fort Dodge businessmen, industrialists and bankers who helped develop the young town.

The development of Oak Hill was in three major phases (pre-1880, 1880-1885, and 1890-1910) and reflected major stages of growth in the town.

Just by their presence, the houses speak volumes of those prosperous times of gracious living, when day-to-day life was simpler and entertaining was elegant — usually thanks to servants.

Although modern street and traffic patterns have brought about minor changes in the area, its generous lawns, noble trees and solid residences remain a timeless part of Fort Dodge.

The Oak Hill neighborhood is between Second Avenue South and Fourth Avenue South. Eighth Street is its western boundary; 13th Street is the eastern boundary. The entire neighborhood was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1977.

In addition, all of the structures in that area are also listed on the register.

The Blanden Memorial Art Museum



— the first permanent art facility in Iowa
— is the only building in the district that is not a private residence.

In 1999, the Fort Dodge City Council passed a zoning ordinance to prevent property owners in the neighborhood from turning the big houses into apartments.

However, nonprofit groups are allowed to have up to three apartments in the upper floors of the buildings. That clause was added to allow the Fort Dodge Women's Club to keep the three apartments in its building at 915 Second Ave. S.

