



Here's another winner of our 2011 Best Old-House Neighborhoods contest



A DIVERSITY OF STYLES

A brick Italianate with a clay tile roof (LEFT) and a pristine Tudor (BELOW) are two examples of the historic houses here. Students from nearby Calvin College help maintain a local park (BOTTOM).

Heritage Hill, Grand Rapids, Michigan

- > Houses dating back to 1844
- > A thriving college town
- > Great for gardeners

THE NEIGHBORHOOD One of the largest National Historic Districts in the country, and adjacent to downtown Grand Rapids, Heritage Hill is a leafy urban neighborhood known for its array of architectural styles, from Tudor Revivals to a couple of Frank Lloyd Wright-designed Prairie-style homes. Many houses here were almost lost because of some ill-conceived urban-renewal plans in the 1960s. Fortunately, residents fought back, sparing their neighborhood from the bulldozer and introducing streetscape improvements and block-watch programs that helped give this community a new sense of pride. That pride continues to this day, thanks to an annual house tour, which takes place May 21 and 22. Along with houses, manicured gardens are celebrated here, especially in late July, when a public garden tour gives owners a chance to show off their horticultural skills.

THE HOUSES The 1,300 homes here include Italianates, Queen Annes, Greek Revivals, and Colonial Revivals,

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among others. Mansions in need of a lot of TLC sell for around \$200,000, but if you seek something more turnkey, a restored three-bedroom 1886 Folk Victorian was recently listed for about \$170,000.

WHY BUY HERE? Home to several colleges and universities, including Grand Valley State and Kendall College of Art and Design, Grand Rapids is a young city with a strong arts and culture component. In Heritage Hill, you can grab the former castle of a lumber baron or wealthy judge, and walk to work in the city's center, for what amounts to pocket change in other places.

—GILLIAN BARTH