



TIMES FILE PHOTO

This is a Gold Coast view Quad-Citians have enjoyed for more than a century.

Preservationists score big win

Historic preservationists have taken it on the chin lately in the Quad-Cities. Along comes the American Planning Association to celebrate a success that might elude those who take our community's historic housing stock for granted.

This industry group of community planners elevated Davenport's Gold Coast/Hamburg district among 2011's 10 great U.S. neighborhoods.

It's a list that in the past has included Oak Park's Frank Lloyd Wright District and Seattle's Pike Place Market.

Those planners saw what observant Quad-Citians see in the Gold Coast every day: "Spectacular vistas, superb architecture... Bluffs overlooking the Mississippi River afford unsurpassed views of the water, Davenport's downtown, and the Illinois side of the Quad-Cities."

But they saw more.

"Gold Coast-Hamburg residents, among the city's most active, have earned a reputation for volunteerism and leadership. Their collective donation of thousands of volunteer hours, which led to the rescue of dozens of historic buildings, contributed to the area's selection."

The designation honors people as much as buildings or history. These neighbors put their time and money where their hearts reside, in Davenport's history. It's a rich, specific history of our community's German immigrants celebrating their successes with spectacular bluff-top mansions.

The neighborhood teetered on the edge of decay with those mansions devalued as chopped-up, low-rent tenements.

Until preservationists stepped in.

Their passion helped restore a collection of old buildings into a neighborhood.

You'll find century-old buildings everywhere in the Quad-Cities. Century-plus old neighborhoods are another matter entirely. That helps explain some preservationists' dogged opposition to see even one East Village home demolished.

The Gold Coast wouldn't merit a mention on any planner's list if the neighborhood had been dismantled one home at a time. Instead, determined Davenporters created a distinction worth celebrating here and nationally.

The American Planners Association thanked them with this honor. We thank them, too.