

BEST OLD HOUSE NEIGHBORHOODS 2009: NORTHEAST



By: Keith Pandolfi, Natalie Rodriguez, Chaeun Park, And Dana Schultz, *This Old House* online

SMYRNA, DELAWARE



Photo: Courtesy Smyrna Downtown Renaissance Association

The Houses

Many of the homes were built between the mid-19th and early-20th centuries, when merchants, businessmen, and tradesmen moved here to take advantage of this agricultural community's rail, road, and water access to larger markets. The homes exhibit both vernacular and high-style interpretations of popular architectural trends of the era, including Federal, Greek Revival, Italianate, Queen Anne, and Second Empire. Since this is a largely overlooked area, prices are relatively low. An 1858 Greek Revival in Smyrna was recently listed for \$207,000.

Why Buy Now?

Folks are flocking here to take advantage of Smyrna's low property and income taxes. (Bonus: There's no sales tax, either.) The town is a great option for families with commuting breadwinners, since it's close to Dover and Wilmington.

Driving by on Route 1 on their way to the Delaware beaches, many travelers think Smyrna is just a pit stop with a few fast-food joints and fueling stations. But venture further into Smyrna, and you'll discover a hidden small-town gem, with a newly revitalized Main Street surrounded by hundreds of old houses heavy on the square footage. Smyrna's the kind of place where the whole town comes out to watch a Pop Warner football game and attendance at the local high school's homecoming parade is practically mandatory. Residents include young families who love the schools and the safety, young professionals who commute to nearby Dover or Wilmington, and retirees who move here for the laughably low taxes. To relax, locals head to Lake Como to sit by the water or hop aboard their boats. Smyrna is also surrounded by pristine farmland and several national parks, so hikers, bikers, and kayakers have plenty of options.