



Downtown is home to an impressive collection of buildings notable for their range in age, size, style, and use. This eclectic mix of architectural expression certainly would not be what it is without some of the historic buildings remaining in downtown.

For additional information on docent-led tours of downtown Des Moines architecture, visit iowaarchfoundation.org.

Saddlery Building (1) Constructed in four phases between 1878 and 1920, this classic with iron pillars is the largest example of commercial Italianate architecture in Des Moines.

Hotel Row (2) In the era of passenger rail travel, 4th Street from Walnut Street to the Rock Island Depot was home to as many as 13 hotels. All of the hotels are gone, but the names remain on a few, including the Hotel Randolph and Hotel Kirkwood. The Hawkeye Insurance Building (1868) on the east side of 4th is downtown's oldest remaining building.

Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific Depot (3) At the peak of train travel in the United States, more than 60 passenger trains arrived daily in Des Moines. The passenger depot (west of 4th) was built in 1910. The freight and shipping depot to the east was enclosed in 1929. This lone survivor of downtown's train depots has been converted into offices and a restaurant.

Polk County Courthouse (4) This is one of the city's most iconic and identifiable buildings. Proudfoot and Bird designed the building in 1895, and construction was completed in 1902. Each arched window on the second floor of the building is capped with a grotesque (carved face). There are 28 grotesques on the building – each one different.

Fleming Building (5) One of the first skyscrapers in Des Moines is also notable for its architect – Daniel Burnham, often called the father of the City Beautiful Movement. This building was completed in 1907 and was one of the first buildings in Iowa to use steel for the internal structure.

Equitable Building (6) Designed by Proudfoot Bird & Rawson, this was the tallest building in Iowa from its completion in 1923 until 1973. Be sure to notice the exterior stone carvings helping “hold up” the building just below the third floor.

City Hall (7) This was the third building constructed in the early 1900s under Des Moines' City Beautiful Plan. The city offices on the upper level were designed to show visibility and transparency in the local government. The World Food Prize Building, Polk County Administration Building, Des Moines Police Station, Federal Courthouse, and Argonne Armory are the other remaining buildings from the City Beautiful Plan.

World Food Prize Hall of Laureates (8) This Beaux Arts-style building served as the main branch of the Des Moines Public Library from 1903 to 2006. Renovation and restoration work was completed in 2012, and the building was reopened as the World Food Prize Hall of Laureates.

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