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## Richardson-Kennedy House Transformation Underway...Uncovering Great 'Bones'

*Elmira Revitalization Trend Inspires Historic  
Jackson Richardson Buildings Re-Birth*

The stabilization of the historic Richardson-Kennedy House at 359 West Church Street and the renovation of the three Richardson Row Homes on Water Street are prime examples of the growing economic development and revitalization trend that is beginning to take shape in Elmira.

“Finally, the Richardson-Kennedy House transformation is underway - and it is uncovering magnificent bones,” states Beth Farr, Executive Director of the Near Westside Neighborhood Association (NWN) of Elmira. “Years in the making, this substantial historic preservation project is the result of a lot of dreams and hard work coming to fruition, and the confirmation that the grant money we received is being put to good use.”

In 2014 Historic Elmira, Inc. and NWN) were successful in obtaining a \$333,910 grant from the Southern Tier Regional Economic Development Council and New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation to facilitate the stabilization of the Richardson-Kennedy House. Kaye Newbury, David Klein and Beth Farr did the grant writing. Norb Miller Contracting of Dundee, NY was chosen as the general contractor for the project, which includes selective demolition that will bring the building down to the footprint of the original house.

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Although NRNA owns the property and is the direct grant recipient, Historic Elmira shares responsibility for its care and redevelopment, and provided the required 25 percent local match for the grant through fundraising. Historic Elmira had already invested more than \$60,000 for stabilization work that included patching the roof, removing mold and upgrading plumbing.

The Richardson Row Homes on Water Street are currently being renovated by Capriotti Properties, a local residential property development company who specializes in restoring Victorian architecture. “We are very proud and excited to return these historic row homes to their former glory,” states Jim Capriotti, owner of Capriotti Properties. “We are looking to be finished with the renovations late spring 2017.” He purchased the three abandoned buildings five years ago with the intention of renovating them into one and two bedroom apartments.

Jackson Richardson, President of the J. Richardson Boot and Shoe Company originally built all four homes in the 1870s. The J. Richardson Shoe Company was a vital part of Elmira’s economy in the late 19th century.

Mr. Richardson built his own house (the Richardson-Kennedy house) at the 359 West Church Street location in 1870. His factory was located at Market St. and Railroad Ave, near where the Clemens Center currently stands, where they produced over 1600 pairs of boots and shoes daily. Frederick H. Richardson, son, succeeded J. Richardson as president and remained there until the business failed in May of 1908.

Daniel Kennedy, president of the Kennedy Valve Co., owned the house from 1910 - 1958. In 1958, the house was purchased by Don Pauldine and converted into apartments, a beauty school and salon. The property changed hands two more times before Chemung County obtained it by foreclosure. A rear section known as the carriage house was severely damaged by an October 2007 fire, and the city demolished that portion of the structure in April 2009.

In May 2011, Elmira City Council accepted title to the property from the county and sold it to the Near Westside Neighborhood Association for \$1. After stabilization is completed, a developer is anticipated to take over and finish restoration of the building for a mixed-use combination of commercial and residential space.

The Row Houses were built by Richardson to house some of the boot company managers. They were built with shale brick furnished by J. Philip Weyer who manufactured bricks in his kilns on Newtown Creek. They were also one of the first structures in Elmira to have running water and artificial gas that furnished heat and light. Each building was built as several apartments. Each apartment has a rear porch with a river view.

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“It is exciting to see what good partnerships and community support can accomplish,” states Michael P. Hosey, Chairman of Historic Elmira. “This was truly a team effort, which will result in the preservation of an incredible historic building and get it back on the tax rolls. We are proud to be contributing to the revitalization trend that is really beginning to take shape here in Elmira.”

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#### **About Historic Elmira, Inc.**

Historic Elmira, Inc. is a non-profit organization founded in 2007, with a mission to champion historic preservation in the Elmira region by providing education, advocacy, collaboration, and facilitation in activities supporting preservation and enhancements of buildings and sites of historic significance. More information about Historic Elmira can be found at [www.HistoricElmira.org](http://www.HistoricElmira.org).

#### **About Near Westside Neighborhood Association**

The Association was first formed in 1977, by a group of West Gray Street residents who became alarmed by the deterioration of the neighborhood. The group was incorporated in 1978, to become Near Westside Neighborhood Association, Inc., (NWNNA) a non-profit organization.

Aided by Federal, State and Foundation funds, NWNNA offers a variety of programs for revitalization of the neighborhood including loans and grants programs for housing rehabilitation. NWNNA's membership includes property owners, tenants, business, and persons interested in the general welfare of the Near Westside and the City of Elmira. More information about NWNNA can be found at <http://www.nwnnainc.com>.

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## FACT SHEET

Current Richardson-Kennedy House renovation includes:

- Main roof rehabilitation
- Tower restoration
- South dormer restoration
- Demolition of non-historic additions

25% Match Breakdown (\$111,304):

- Historic Elmira raised in private donations: \$72,254
- Historic Elmira in-kind donations: \$14,050
- Nwana received CDBG grant from City of Elmira: \$25,000

Architects:

- Richardson-Kennedy House: Crawford & Stearns
- Richardson Row Houses: Johnson-Schmidt & Associates

NOTE: The Richardson Row Houses are included on Near Westside's 32<sup>nd</sup> Annual Holiday Home Tour, which will be held on December 4<sup>th</sup>. For more tour information, visit [www.nwnainc.com](http://www.nwnainc.com).