



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Timothy M. Kennedy

Senator Kennedy, Preservation Buffalo Niagara Announce Preserve New York Grant Secured for Historic Preservation of Buffalo's Old First Ward

TIMOTHY M. KENNEDY October 3, 2013

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In March, Senator Kennedy announced the launch of efforts to secure Historic District designation for Buffalo's Old First Ward.

Preserve NY grant is major step forward that will allow Old First Ward to conduct full study into neighborhood's past – which will be used to secure Historic District designation and historic rehab tax credits.

Kennedy: Our ongoing pursuit of Historic District designation for the Old First Ward intertwines with progress at the city's waterfront and new efforts to make the grain elevators a destination.

BUFFALO, N.Y. – Senator Tim Kennedy, D-Buffalo, today announced key progress in the ongoing efforts to secure Historic District designation for Buffalo's Old First Ward neighborhood. With support from Senator Kennedy and Preservation Buffalo Niagara, the Old First Ward Community Association has been awarded a Preserve New York grant from the Preservation League of New York State to help fund a comprehensive study into the neighborhood's history and architecture.

In March, Senator Kennedy joined Laura Kelly, executive director of the Old First Ward Community Association, and neighborhood residents to [launch efforts to secure Historic District designation for the Old First Ward](#). Since then, they've teamed up with Preservation Buffalo Niagara – which successfully supported Elmwood West's pursuit of Historic District designation – to help drive the process forward.

A Preserve New York grant in the amount of \$8,000 will be directed to the Old First Ward Community Association to cover one-third of the total cost of a comprehensive historic analysis and neighborhood architectural study, which must be completed in order to secure historic designation from the NYS Historic Preservation Office. The Old First Ward Community Association has also secured several commitments for contributions, and will be getting their historic survey started as soon as they can in hopes of submitting its nomination for Historic District designation before the end of 2013.

“Buffalo's Old First Ward has a long, storied history, and I believe this neighborhood's future is just as promising,” said **Senator Kennedy**. “There is new energy and a renewed commitment to attract more attention to the water's edge and this historic neighborhood. Our ongoing pursuit of Historic District designation for the Old First Ward intertwines with the progress surging at the city's waterfront and the new efforts to make Buffalo's grain elevators a

recreational and cultural destination. With the support of Preservation Buffalo Niagara and the Preserve NY grant, we are brought even closer to securing historic designation for the Old First Ward – which I believe will be the key to unlocking this neighborhood’s unlimited potential and reconnecting us to our city’s industrial past. The Old First Ward could become one of the largest Historic Districts in the state and one of the only districts made famous not just for its residential structures, but also its industrial architecture.”

Tania G. Werbizky, Regional Director of Technical and Grant Programs for the Preservation League of New York State, said, “The Preservation League of New York State has been so impressed with the strength of Buffalo’s many historic neighborhoods and the dedication of the organizations that work on their behalf. The Old First Ward abounds with places of cultural significance, and the range of resources, from 19th century workers cottages to the majestic grain elevators, is particularly rich. We are certain that the findings of the survey will jump-start new revitalization efforts, result in the reuse of vacant buildings and be a source of pride to the community and the city.”

Laura Kelly, Executive Director of the Old First Ward Community Association and fierce advocate for the neighborhood, said, “We are thrilled the Preservation League of New York State has recognized the historic significance of the Old First Ward, and will be providing a Preserve NY grant to help us secure our Historic District designation. The Old First Ward has some of the oldest original workman’s housing in Buffalo and plays an important role in Buffalo’s rich industrial history. Designation as a historic preservation district will allow for residents to make needed improvements to aging homes, while still preserving the character of the houses and neighborhood. The Old First Ward Community Association has been extremely active in assisting residents with improvements to their homes, and we are excited to have the support of the Preserve NY grant as we continue our work with Senator Kennedy, Preservation Buffalo Niagara and our neighbors in getting this designation from New York State.”

Jason Wilson, Director of Operations at Preservation Buffalo Niagara said, “Preservation Buffalo Niagara is thrilled by the news of the recent grant award by the Preservation League to the Old First Ward Historic District initiative. The grant will allow this community-driven project to move forward and begin the first critical steps in establishing a National Register historic district in arguably one of the city’s oldest and most historic neighborhoods. Preservation Buffalo Niagara is excited to be working with the Old First Ward Community Association, Senator Kennedy’s office and the rest of the community on this amazing project.”

The Preserve New York Grant Program is made possible by the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Andrew Cuomo, Senator Kennedy and his colleagues the New York State Legislature.

The endorsement and support of Preservation Buffalo Niagara has already proven to be critically important to this long-term project. As the leading preservation group in the region, they have solid experience in securing Historic District designation for Buffalo neighborhoods. They have provided logistics support and expert assistance to the Old First Ward initiative.

If historic district designation is secured, most properties in the Old First Ward area will be eligible for historic rehabilitation tax credits – with the exception of those properties that have been dramatically altered from their original state or are relatively new builds. The vast majority of houses in the neighborhood were constructed before 1900 with most built between 1840 and 1890. These historic homes are well built for the most part, but are in need of updating and restoration.

The State Historic Preservation Office has previously expressed interest to Senator Kennedy’s office in expanding the state’s historic home preservation program to

neighborhoods that are populated by smaller homes and structures that reflect the state's industrial past.

Over the past few months and in the months ahead, the overall mission of applying for designation as a historic district will include several individual tasks such as surveying homes, assembling community partners, drafting documents and other undertakings. During the historic survey, the boundaries of the historic district will also be determined. These boundaries are likely to extend from the First Ward and into the Valley to indicate the historic significance and connections of the entire Buffalo River community. Some of this work has already been started by the UB students who completed an extensive, award-winning study of the Old First Ward neighborhood and surrounding industrial heritage district.

Senator Kennedy is encouraging interested residents, preservationists and local advocates to consider joining this cause. Anyone interested in being a part of this effort can contact Senator Kennedy's office at 716-826-2683 or via email at kennedy@nysenate.gov.

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Senator Timothy M. Kennedy represents the New York State Senate's 63rd District, which is comprised of the towns of Cheektowaga, the city of Lackawanna and nearly all of the city of Buffalo. More information is available at <http://kennedy.nysenate.gov>.