

# Schiller Court invites stroll down nostalgia lane

## *Pedestrian walkway completed; historic building renovation underway*

ELMHURST — It wouldn't be surprising for a pedestrian peering into the window of 115 Schiller Court to try the door. After all, Honey Girl Women's Clothing looks really tempting -- kind of vintage and welcoming. The same goes for neighboring Hesse's Mens Wear at number 111. But the doors won't open -- and not just because it's outside of regular business hours.

Those stores closed years ago, but they got a second lease on life when Tivoli Enterprises, the new owners of 109 W. Schiller, decided to transform the facade of the vintage building into what to all appearances is a series of charming entrances to row houses and retail stores.

"We couldn't stand the idea of people looking at a blank brick wall as they traveled down the walkway between York and Addison," said Willis Johnson, president of Tivoli Enterprises, referring to the south wall of the former Elks Club.

Honey Girl and Hesse's became part of the plan when Johnson invited wife Shirley to choose the street level storefronts for the facade. Shirley had worked at Honey Girl in

the '50s, and recalled Hesse's as being a well-regarded retailer for men. The counters, merchandise and fixtures visible inside the shop vitrines are achieved through a specially-created film applied to the windows; ditto the "stairway" that seems to ascend to the nonexistent second floor apartments at number 113.

Local architect Jeff Budgell of Architect Studios came up with the idea of real-life materials being used to create the charming, authentic-feeling facade. Jeff prepared renderings and plans to transform the south wall into what by all appearances are two storefronts and three distinct residences.

"It has the feeling of a narrow street like you'd find in a village in Europe," he said.

The recently-completed facade evokes an authentic yet nostalgic feeling, enhanced by the use of genuine materials such as real doors and shutters, fresh plantings in the wooden flower boxes, lights that work, banners that flap in the breeze, and actual glass windows that can open. Holiday decorations echo those found in Elmhurst's public streets.

"Nothing is 'faux' in terms

of the materials we used," said Johnson, bringing to this endeavor the same commitment to quality and authenticity evidenced in the celebrated and beautifully renovated York Theatre, located just to the north, and other landmark movie houses owned by the company.

Citing the Schiller Court project as a successful example of a public/private partnership, he points out that the City of Elmhurst provided the funding for upgrading the lane itself -- "the paving stones, the benches, the street lamps." He anticipates an official ribbon cutting in the spring.

"The reaction to the new look of the walkway has been spectacular," he said.

Johnson points out that you CAN enter the building -- the main entrance is located at number 109, under a red canopy. He acquired the building last year in a vertical subdivision with the building owner, who retained the ground floor York Street frontage currently leased to Citibank.

"This is a beautiful building that dates back to the 1920's," said Johnson. "Since acquiring it, we've completed

many improvements, including new exit stairs, sprinklers, fire alarm, rewiring the entire building, and lots of demolition work and cleaning." The elevator is being installed this month. Next, the entrance lobby is slated to be completely renovated, with new drywall, tile flooring and impressive chandeliers --

all in keeping with the building's historic architecture.

Now people who are considering leasing space in the building don't have to use their imaginations quite so much, according to Johnson.

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photo provided

**Schiller Court getting new face**  
The transformation of Schiller Court, located at 109 W. Schiller, into a series of entrances to row houses and retail stores is underway in Elmhurst.

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He points out the approximately 6,200 square feet of space on the second floor, previously used by the Elks for dining, bar and auditorium areas. The space is now clean and wide open, with unique architectural details including the 18-foot tin-and-wood beamed

ceilings and leaded glass windows readily apparent. Vintage 1920's wood paneling visible under the paint and a renovated fireplace that once again works are other attractive features of the space, which Johnson thinks is perfect for a themed restaurant, sports bar, brew pub or such.

The garden-level space of

approximately 1,700 square feet is reached by the elevator or stairs off the lobby. With 17-foot ceilings, it also offers possibilities for dining or retail, among other potential uses.

"We would like our building to attract tenants who will bring more people to the area and contribute to its nightlife," said Johnson, who is Vice President

of the Elmhurst City Centre Board of Directors and a member of the Elmhurst Chamber of Commerce. "We are really pleased with our renovation so far."