Stabilizing
the Elkridge Assembly Rooms

One hundred fifty-five years standing.
The next hundred ahead of us.

Annual Members' Meeting
Monday, 15 June 2026 · 6:30 pm
6090 Lawyers Hill Road, Elkridge MD



The Elkridge Assembly Rooms, Lawyers Hill Road, February 2026

Why we're here

1870 to 1871.

Judge George Washington Dobbin gave neighbors land to build a hall as a deliberate gesture to heal a community split by the Civil War. The Elkridge Assembly Rooms opened in 1871 with a production of "The Rivals."

Since.

For 155 years the building has been a community gathering place. Wine tastings, lectures, parties, picnics, concerts, plays, dances have been continuous.

Newer programming.

In recent years the board has added art exhibits, Farm & Coffee Pop-Ups with local vendors, a Small Business Saturday market, and additional concerts. 2026 is on track for more than 1,000 visitors and 15+ events across the season.

Tonight.

We're asking the membership to back this stabilization, ideally funded by a Maryland Heritage Areas Authority grant we have applied for and matched dollar-for-dollar, so the building can host another hundred years of community gathering.



What we are saving

The stage and barrel-vaulted ceiling, looking south into the main room.

The building was designed by Washington architect Robert Stead, who lived two doors down on Lawyers Hill. The original Elkridge Assembly Rooms burned and was rebuilt to the same form. The interior is materially unaltered: rough heavy timbers, tongue and groove boards, jib windows that still open to French doors on summer nights.

Maryland Historic Trust calls it "of national significance" for its post-war healing purpose. It is a contributing resource within the Lawyers Hill Historic District, listed on the National Register in 1993.

Why we need to act

Documented by Fitzgerald's Heavy Timber Construction · Feb 2026



Rotted wood sills at the east entrance, interior. The white box is daylight where structure used to be.



Exterior west window at foundation level. Moss has colonized the lower courses of cedar shingle.



Crawlspace under the south stage wall, looking north. Bare earth, no vapor barrier.



A rotted post and sill at the foundation. Daylight and bare earth show through the gap.

Fitzgerald's diagnosis

Maryland-based timber-frame restoration firm, in business since 1992.

Wood sills	Selective removal; replace in white oak.
Stage framing (SE / SW)	Sister, block, or dutchman-splice.
Eastern deck	Reconstruct in historic proportions.
East stage door	Localized repair; mitigate moisture.
Site drainage (E / W)	Regrade; subsurface perimeter drain.
Gutters & downspouts	Reconnect to controlled discharge.
Shingle / flashing detail	Tighten transitions at openings.
North window shutter	Rehang; keep original hardware.

Root cause

Wood structural members bearing directly in soil and in moisture-prone conditions.

A structural assessment was first commissioned in 2008. Stabilization work then happened piecemeal as funds allowed, including foundation work in 2011, projects in 2015-16, and additional repairs in 2023. Those addressed urgent symptoms but did not lift the timber off the ground or solve site drainage. Moisture keeps wicking into the sills.

This project breaks the cycle: lift vulnerable timber out of contact with soil, give it a defined foundation, move water away from the building.

Scope of work, by project cost

Core stabilization and electrical, shown separately. Bar length is project cost for each item.

Item	*Description*	*Project total*	*Relative cost*
Core stabilization			
Framing	Repair sills and stage framing	$33,428	
Rigging	Support load-bearing walls during work	$19,605	
Cladding	T&G boards, cedar shingles at repair points	$16,074	
Concrete	Footers for south wall and deck piers	$10,280	
Demolition	Selective removal: walls, shingles, concrete	$9,882	
Site	Trenching, grading, subsurface drainage	$8,985	
Mobilization	Staging, haul-in, tear-down	$7,554	
Masonry	Block foundation and pier construction	$6,990	
Doors	Remove, install new sills, reinstall (3)	$3,303	
Paint	Touch up: doors, window, shutters	$3,196	
Milling	Rough-sawn boards and timbers	$3,122	
Gutters	Reconnect to drainage improvements	$1,215	
Windows	Rehang one pair of shutters	$1,167	
Core stabilization subtotal		**$124,801**	
Electrical (more optional, season-extension)			
Service	Main service upgrade 100A to 200A	$3,800	
Circuits	Dedicated circuits for heaters	$1,200	
Heaters	Four Bromic infrared heaters	$3,719	
Electrical subtotal		**$8,719**	
Total	Real cash cost (what we actually raise and spend)	**$133,520**	

The money

Contingent on receiving a Maryland Heritage Areas Authority grant award, matched dollar-for-dollar by other sources.

$68,437

Requested from MHAA, if awarded

~$65,082

Cash match we need to raise

~$133,520

Real cash project cost

The 1:1 match requirement is $68,437. About $3,356 of that is qualifying volunteer time, and donated materials can reduce the cash need further if usable. Grant application headline of $136,874 includes those in-kind credits.

Where the match comes from (ranges, not certainties)

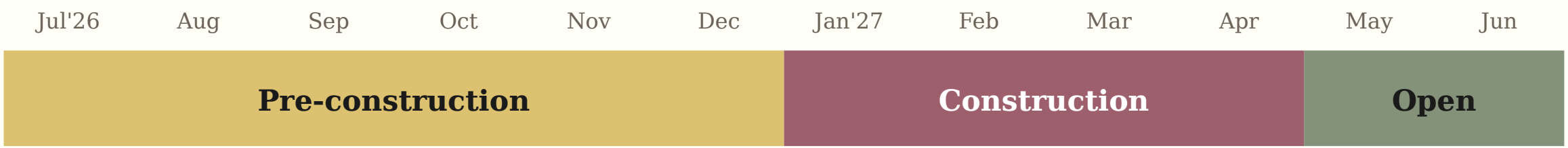
Fundraising	$20K to $65K
Reserves	$0 to $65K
Contractor	$0 to $20K



Dark band: minimum we expect to need. Light band: what is possible. Reserves can cover the full match if it comes to that, but we would rather not draw them down. Fundraising is the most actionable lever.

When the work happens

Construction occurs during the off-season. The 2026 calendar runs as planned; the building reopens the third Monday of April 2027.



Competitive bid process, contractor procurement, permitting, materials sourcing, fundraising. The 2026 calendar runs as planned.

Demolition, sill and framing repair, new foundation, drainage, deck rebuild, electrical work. The building is closed for this period.

Reopen the third Monday of April 2027. A full calendar of programming follows.

If the grant doesn't come through

Four paths we would explore. Likely it will be a combination.

---

1. **Continued discussions on interim, less expensive solutions with a variety of suppliers.**

   Bid alternative scope, or a phased subset, with additional contractors. Look at materials and methods that hold the line on cost without compromising historic-preservation standards.

2. **Reapply for a grant next year, with feedback on what to improve in our submission.**

   Use the MHAA review notes to strengthen the next application. That likely requires some interim stop-gap repairs in the meantime.

3. **Fundraise the full project privately. Although that is a massive amount to raise.**

   Larger individual gifts, foundation grants outside MHAA, corporate sponsors. Realistically, raising the full cash cost from a small community in a short window is a stretch.

4. **Take a loan from MHT and fundraise over a period of years to pay it back.**

   Maryland Historical Trust offers preservation loans for projects in National Register districts. Lower-interest, longer horizon; repayment structured alongside annual fundraising.

The project team

Project management, architecture, operations, education, finance, community engagement. All board roles volunteer.

Board project team

Debra Roth
President & Project Manager
25+ years program management; strategic planning.

Dustin Thacker, Assoc. AIA
Volunteer Architect
Principal, Unlikely Professionals. M.Arch, Pratt Institute.

Nessly Craig, Ph.D.
Project Advisor
Longtime Board Member. Retired Biology professor, UMBC.

Melonie Martiniano
Project Advisor
Board Secretary. RN; COO at a case management firm.

Burnet Chalmers
Project Advisor
Longtime contributor. Retired President, Milby Company.

Contractors & consultants

Fitzgerald's Heavy Timber Construction
Structural assessment, plans, conditions docs
Thurmont, MD; in business since 1992. Produced the full structural assessment, photographic documentation, and architectural plans this project is built on.

JEM Electrical Co.
Electrical scope
Woodbine, MD. 100A to 200A service, dedicated heating circuits, four Bromic infrared heaters.

Final contractor selection
Competitive bid process
The Elkridge Assembly Rooms will run a competitive bid process for the final construction contract, per MHAA grant requirements and standard preservation practice.

What happens if we wait



Two steel jack shores in the west foundation corner, temporarily carrying load the original structure no longer can. A stopgap, not a fix.

Decay continues. Timber bearing on damp soil keeps losing strength every winter. The longer we wait, the bigger the eventual scope.

Repair costs compound. Piecemeal repair has been our approach for two decades. It works, but it costs more in total than a single root-cause stabilization, and it does not address site drainage.

The historic district. The Elkridge Assembly Rooms is a contributing resource in the National Register Lawyers Hill Historic District. Deterioration of one contributor weakens the district's integrity for everyone on the hill.

How members can help

Give

Cash fundraising for the match is somewhere in $20,000 to $65,000, depending on whether the contractor contributes and how much we want to preserve reserves.

- www.elkridgeassemblyrooms.org, where Venmo and PayPal are linked
- Venmo handle: @Elkridge_Assembly_Rooms
- Checks: Elkridge Assembly Rooms, Inc., 6090 Lawyers Hill Rd, Elkridge MD 21075

Help

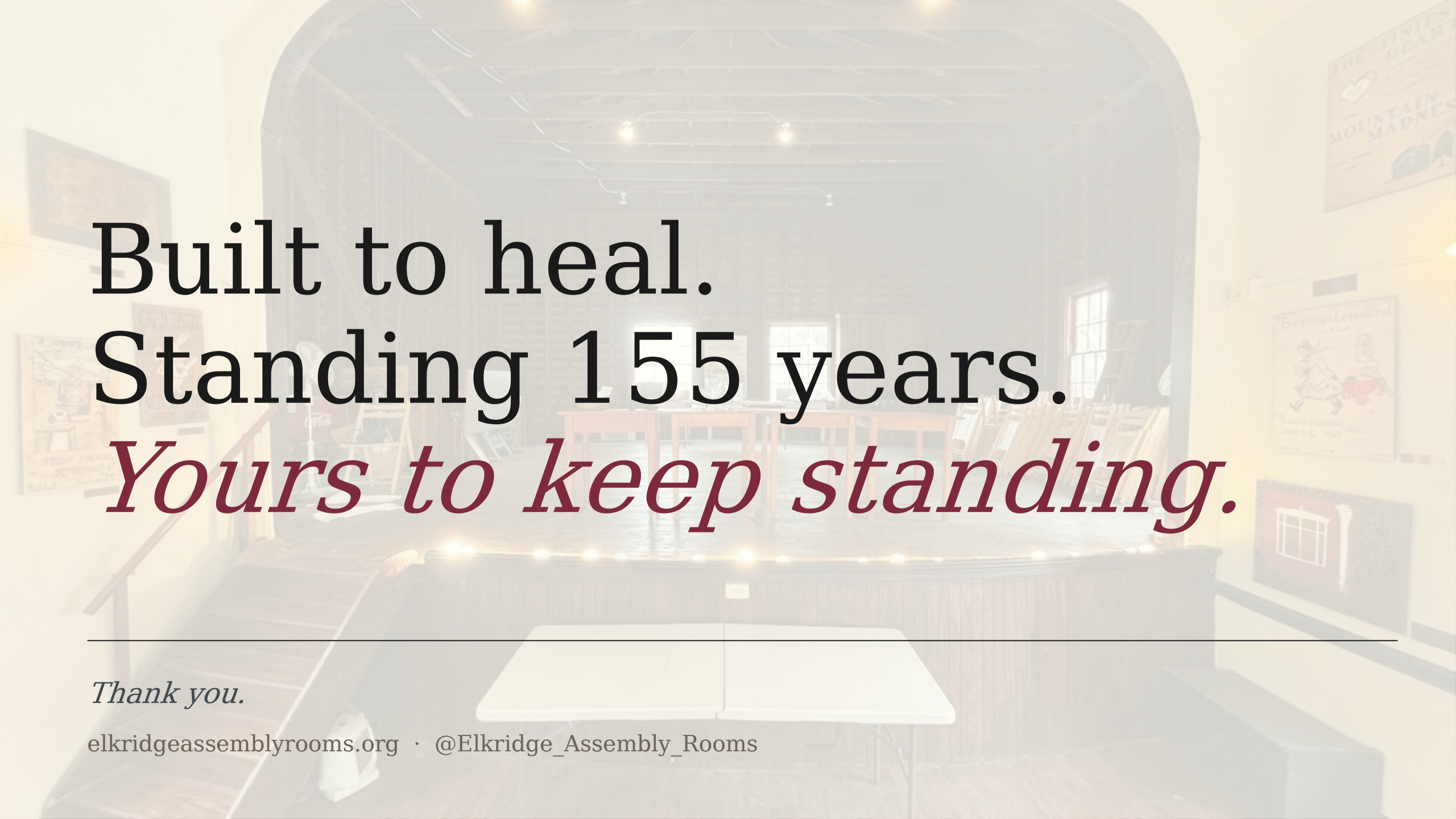
Two project-specific places where extra hands meaningfully change the outcome.

- Fundraising: outreach, follow-up, asks to people who care about historic buildings
- Construction oversight, Dec 2026 through early April 2027
- Materials donation: rough-sawn timber or cedar shingles, if you happen to have any (subject to contractor approval)

Show up

Money is the most direct impact, but a full house at our events builds the donor and member base that makes the next ten years possible.

- Farm & Coffee Pop-Ups across the 2026 season
- Concerts, several scheduled this year
- Art exhibits including The Birds & The Bees (Alicia Thacker)
- July 4th Picnic with hayride and lawn games
- Small Business Saturday market



Built to heal.
Standing 155 years.
Yours to keep standing.

Thank you.

elkridgeassemblyrooms.org · @Elkridge_Assembly_Rooms