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Tuesday, February 20, 2007



Charles V. Tines / The Detroit News

"I believe the cheapest and best place (for a town square) is where the elevator is," says Councilman David Becker. Sections of the building date to 1872.

Rochester

Barn may give city square deal

Local officials discuss the possibility of buying historic grain elevator as a potential anchor site to host events.

Catherine Jun / The Detroit News

ROCHESTER -- Though city officials are still in preliminary talks over the idea of purchasing the Rochester Elevator, the talk is turning to dollars and cents.

Since Councilman David Becker suggested the city purchase the grain elevator late last year, city officials and the owner have considered the possibility of making the red barn-like building at University and Water streets the center piece of a town square.

Officials are keeping mum on the nature of the talks, discussing the matter only in closed sessions, citing possible land acquisition. But Becker said preliminary property comparisons with a proposed alternate town square site -- between University, and East, Fourth and Water streets -- show the elevator could be a better buy.

"I believe the cheapest and best place (for a town square) is where the elevator is," he said.

The historic building's fate has been in limbo since the summer. The Rochester/Avon Historical Society had been scheduled to move the barn to the Clinton River Trail to make way for a \$20 million condominium complex for seniors.

But when the developer, Roy Rewold and Sunrise Senior Living, pulled their proposal to buy the property, relocation plans screeched to a halt.

Becker then proposed the city buy the elevator and incorporate it into a proposed square to host city events. The council has yet to formally approve the town square plans.

Councilman Jeffrey Cuthbertson said he was uneasy about the city paying the cost of the elevator and building a square.

"Commercial real estate downtown is not cheap," Cuthbertson said. "We're not at any point where we'd be considering active steps towards it."

The property has been on the market for several years. Lawrence Smith, who runs a feed store in the building, declined comment.

The building, more than a century old, serves as a reminder of the area's agricultural history, said Greg Doyle, president of the historical society.

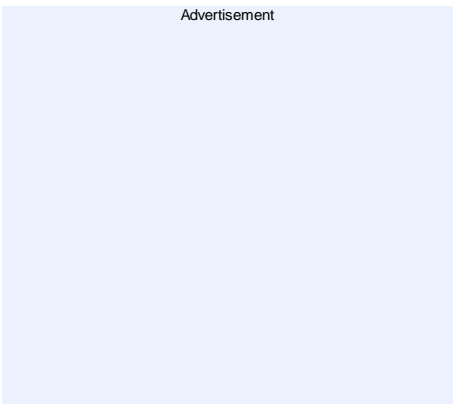
The first sections of the building were erected in 1872 soon after a freight rail line connected the community to Detroit. Local farmers brought their grain to the building, where it was weighed and purchased, then shipped to market in Detroit.

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Councilman Jeffrey Cuthbertson is concerned about the cost of purchasing the site at University and Water streets as well as the overall price of a town square project. [See full image](#)

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