



Tuesday, August 30, 2005



Daniel Mears / The Detroit News

Rod Wilson of the Rochester-Avon Historical Society says some of the machinery was used to move grain to train cars outside. The old barn will move from East University and Water to an area near the Clinton River Trail.

## Rochester saves grain elevator

Historical society hopes to open the old red barn to community groups once it's moved to nearby site.

[By Shawn D. Lewis / The Detroit News](#)

**ROCHESTER** -- The old red barn just isn't what it

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used to be.

But soon the barn, saved from a wrecking ball, will be perched atop a vehicle and slowly transported to its new home on a vacant piece of property about a half-mile away. The barn, actually a grain elevator, will eventually be open to the public to view photos and relics of days past. Members of the Rochester-Avon Historical Society also are hoping to rent out space to help keep the elevator open.

"It is important to connect to our past to see where we're going," said Rochester-Avon Historical Society president Greg Doyle. "This was an agricultural community for years -- as was most of the nation at one time -- and Rochester began moving away from that in the 1950s. But the grain elevator was the hub of activity here, when farmers would line up for blocks waiting to sell their grain at the grain elevator."

The City Council voted unanimously to allow the barn to be moved from East University and Water to an area near the Clinton River Trail. Relocating the barn, building a new foundation and moving utility lines are expected to cost about \$140,000. A plan to renovate the barn and create meeting rooms for the Rochester-Avon Historical Society and to rent out to community groups, will cost about \$500,000.

The society also hopes to display artifacts from the days when the grain elevator was in operation. Developer Roy Rewold owns the property where the 125-year-old grain elevator now stands. He's donating the elevator to the society, which will then have to move it. Rewold plans to build a \$20 million, four-story building with retail shops and senior condominiums on the property.

Jessica Henry, 20, of Clarkston is working with a group of students from Oakland University who study the area's past.

"I think it's very important to save the elevator because it is a special part of the community, and students from Oakland University and other schools can learn more about that community from visiting the elevator," she said.

Liz Golding, a Rochester resident and member of the Rochester-Avon Historical Society, said she hopes the grain elevator can eventually be utilized by her association and other groups.

"We will be holding our own meetings there, and we hope to open it up to other civic groups and others, so they, too, can rent space for their meetings," she said.

Golding said the historical society will be leasing the land where the elevator will be situated for \$1 a year. "The city had no plans for the property and it is a perfect piece of

To help

"Hold the elevator!" is the fund-raising arm of the Rochester-Avon Historical Society. The society is seeking donations to help with the move of the elevator. It will cost an estimated \$140,000 to move the elevator, and another \$500,000 to rehabilitate it. To learn more about supporting this effort, log onto

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land," she said. "It's as though it were made for us."

Others are taking note.

"The History channel heard about the move and wants to come film it," Golding said.

Mayor Karen Lewis proudly points out that Rochester is the oldest community in Oakland County.

"This elevator is in a lot of people's hearts. It's a part of their growing up," she said. "We have a lot of old buildings that have been redone and are viable businesses, like Lytle Pharmacy, Home Bakery and Paul Haig's jewelry store."

Since the elevator will be along the Clinton River Trail, the mayor said she hopes it eventually will become part of a historic walk.

"We've already got the Yates Cider Mill and Van Hoosen Farm nearby, so this could be part of a walk where people could learn about our history," she said.

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