
Rochester Elevator could be relocated to river trail

BY CECILIA OLECK

FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

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It's no longer the spot for replenishing supplies of animal feed, water softener or propane, but local history buffs hope the big red Rochester Elevator will become a stop for runners, walkers, bikers and in-line skaters along the Clinton River Trail.

For that to happen, the barn-like elevator will need a change of venue. Its current site on the corner of University Drive and Water Street is headed for redevelopment as a \$20-million retail and senior condominium project.

Parts of the elevator date to the late 1800s. For decades, it served as the place where local farmers' grain was measured and dumped into rail cars for shipping.

Members of the Rochester-Avon Historical Society, the group behind an effort to save the Rochester Elevator, would like to have the building relocated south of town, along the Clinton River Trail. There, it could serve as a resting point for trail users -- possibly with rest rooms and a concession stand -- and a gathering spot for the historical society and other community groups.

"So many of our buildings are being torn down now, and we really want to save this one if we can," said Liz Golding, a historical society member.

The Rochester City Council agreed to let the group use city-owned land, east of the Main Street Bridge between the trail and the Clinton River, as the elevator's new location, as long as the site has room for public access and fire equipment.

That shouldn't be a problem, said Greg Doyle, president of the historical society.

The idea of a resting place and gathering point for trail users fits in with the plan for the site, said Councilman David Katulic.

"Anything we've ever talked about in that location is a park use or recreation," Katulic said.

But the historical society has to come up with at least \$100,000 to pay for moving the 26-by-78-foot building. The group estimates it would cost \$500,000 more to turn the building into a usable gathering place.

And the clock is ticking.

Rochester-based Frank Rewold and Son, developer of the retail and senior condo project to be erected on the present Rochester Elevator site, gave the historical society until the end of the year to move the building.

"It is an enormous undertaking," Golding said.

The society is planning fund-raisers and asking for donations.

Local merchants are getting involved. Haig's of Rochester, a custom jewelry and antiques establishment, has said it will donate proceeds from an antiques appraisal event to the elevator effort.

The event will be Aug. 27, from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. at Haig's, 311 Main St.; verbal appraisals will cost \$5 per item.

The society says that the History Channel has shown interest in filming the move as part of "Mega Movers," a show that documents how outsize things are moved.

"It's just a matter of raising the money," Golding said. "Everybody is for it. We've just got to keep the interest."

Contact **CECILIA OLECK** at 248-351-3692 or oleck@freepress.com.

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Big move

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Looking for more information on the Rochester Elevator's fate?

The Rochester-Avon Historical Society has created a Web site for its Hold the Elevator campaign. It's at <http://holdelevator.net>.

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