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Councilman has intriguing plan

David Becker's vision doesn't always mesh with his colleagues on the Rochester City Council, but a new concept he's floating for the east side of the downtown business district sounds worthy of some serious discussion and shouldn't be casually dismissed.

In a nutshell, Becker envisions redeveloping property along Water Street, where the Rochester grain elevator has long operated, into a focal point for the city.

He forecasts preservation of the landmark barn-like building on the site, along with a new park and bolstered by private-sector restaurants or shops.

Becker calls it Elevator Square and believes it maintains the city's character while magnifying its appeal.

Although Becker hasn't formally presented his concept publicly, he has tried gauging the pulse of his peers on the city council. If his vision is to be realized, officials would have to agree to purchase the property, which would cost a significant sum.

It's too soon to tell where all this is headed -- maybe nowhere -- but at first glance, the idea is intriguing. We hope city leaders give Becker's Elevator Square proposal a good look, evaluating what's favorable and what's flawed, and proceeding from there.

The concept is certainly bold, but not beyond reach. If the powers that be keep an open mind to the possibilities and not just the pitfalls, there's some real promise here.

Becker's vision aligns with the city's notion of expanding the traditional downtown area and creating a town square, which are covered in the Rochester East Area Design Study, a report delivered to the city's Downtown Development Authority earlier this year.

Becker believes his location for a town square is superior to the site consultants identified in their study because it wouldn't affect property owners who may not want to be displaced. The Rochester Elevator land is already on the market and ripe for rebirth.

Again, it's too soon to say where Becker's Elevator Square proposal will lead to. It has potential, but politics will decide whether it's possible. At the very least, the idea deserves meaningful discussion.
