

ROCHESTER ELEVATOR PLANS STILL IN SIGHT, BUT ON HOLD

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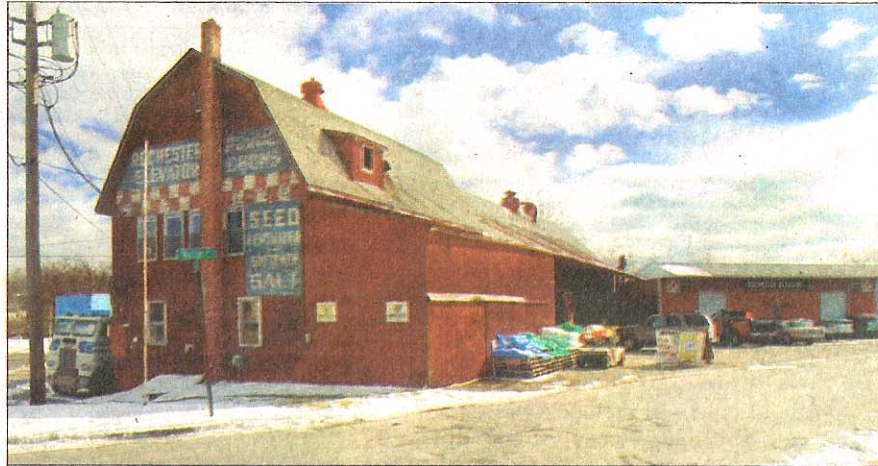
ROCHESTER — Plans to relocate the Rochester Elevator Barn have been put on hold for the better part of a year, but it's not been forgotten.

Since last summer, when the Rochester-Avon Historical Society was ready to move the barn to the Clinton River Trail, things have been at a near standstill after developer Roy Rewold and Sunrise Assisted Living pulled their plans to buy the property. The elevator was going to be moved so a \$20 million condominium complex for seniors could be built.

Some hold hope that city officials may consider purchasing the grain elevator, making it the centerpiece of a town square at University and Water streets, in conjunction with the Downtown Development Authority's East Area Design Study.

Although officials remain tight-lipped on the subject, discussing the matter only in closed sessions, Rochester City Councilman David Becker said that after plans were pulled last July, he saw a chance to keep the elevator on its current site.

"To me, that elevator is iconic of Rochester, and I don't use that phrase often," Becker said. "When I think of Rochester's history, the first thing that comes to mind is the elevator. If we could do this properly, it would be utterly beautiful for the



Plans for the Rochester Elevator Barn have been put on hold since developer Roy Rewold and Sunrise Assisted Living pulled their plans for a new condominium project last summer. Some hope that the city will purchase the property for a town square.

File photo by Deb Jacques

city."

Preliminary property comparisons with an alternate town square between University and East, Fourth and Water streets show it could be a better financial undertaking for the city, Becker said. The first proposal called for a town square one block west of the elevator's present site.

"In the master plan there is a suggestion of \$2 million to buy land for that part of the East Area Design Study gathering spot ... which was to be decided," Becker added. "I think (the elevator property) would be a lot cheaper."

President of the Rochester-Avon Historical Society Greg Doyle commended city officials for exploring the property as part of a town square. Whether the elevator is relocated or remains at its current site, it

could serve multiple purposes, providing meeting space and a stopping-off point for people who use the Clinton River Trail or the Paint Creek Trail, he said.

"I think that it can be adaptively reused. The building itself, in our opinion, has a lot of history as far as what it did and what it did for the community. It practically transformed the lives of people in this community."

The first sections of the elevator were built in 1872, connecting the Rochester community to Detroit through a freight rail line. Farmers no longer had to take their own grain to market, but merely brought their product to the building, had it weighed and sold it, leaving with money in hand.

Lawrence Smith, who runs a

feed store out of the building, owns the property.

"I can't really imagine a scenario where the building would be demolished," Doyle said. "Whoever's going to buy it will either say, 'Let's keep it on the site,' or 'It

needs to be moved.' We've secured the building. Whether it will stay on the site or be moved we don't know. But we're prepared to work with whoever buys it to put it to interactive use."

Doyle said that the historical society will continue its Hold the Elevator! Campaign, and any funds that were donated on behalf of the project will be held at the Greater Rochester Community Foundation. Their intent is to use the funds for the preservation of the elevator at some point in the future, he said.

"I do think it could be a really attractive building downtown," Doyle said. "It could be a real focal point and serve a really nice purpose."

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