



[New Search](#) [Return to results](#) [Printer Friendly](#)

Rochester Post (MI)

Historical Society plans painting day for Rochester Elevator

JENNIFER S. MCDONALD C & G Staff Writer

Published: May 21, 2009

ROCHESTER - A Rochester icon that's almost 130 years old will get a much needed facelift June 6, after the Rochester-Avon Historical Society and members of the community come together to make the elevator "shine."

Plans to paint and restore the Rochester Elevator, located at Water and East University streets, will commence at 10 a.m., Rochester-Avon Historical Society President Rod Wilson said.

"Plans are to put the finishing coat of paint on the elevator," Wilson said. "Our main goal is just to preserve it."

Lawrence Smith, who currently owns the elevator, has formed a partnership with the Historical Society with the hope of maintaining the structure.

The goal is to rehabilitate the building and reuse it adaptively, until a buyer for the property can be found, Wilson added. Plans include restoring the original grain equipment and enclosing it in Plexiglas for the community to see.

"We would love to see the building stay where it's at. It was built at that location for a reason, and there's a lot of things we could do adaptively to use the elevator," Wilson said. "But if it requires moving it one day, we could do that also."

After the property spent years on the market, Sunrise proposed a 100-unit senior independent living condominium development in 2005. Plans were made by the Rochester-Avon Historical Society to move the elevator to a piece of property near the Clinton River Trail, south of the Main Street bridge. But days before the sale was final, Sunrise unexpectedly pulled out of the deal.

Smith was shocked, and since then hasn't been able to recover financially, he has said. A blight hearing before City Council was held about the elevator property on Oct. 13, 2008. Among the city's complaints were holes in the roof, broken windows, missing paint and piles of debris.

"We're dealing with a historical site here," Smith had said. "I hoped we could agree on something that is historically relevant and prudent to the situation here. There are things I'd like to do also."

That's when the Rochester-Avon Historical Society offered to help, calling the restoration project "Make the Elevator Shine."

According to Brian Dunphy, vice president of the Rochester-Avon Historical Society and chairman of the Rochester Hills Historic Districts Commission, the society currently has a few thousand dollars left over from the Save the Elevator campaign, which will be used to help spruce up the property.

"It's a really important project for the community. (The elevator is) obviously a long-standing feature of downtown Rochester, yet certainly played a tangible significance in our city's agricultural past," Dunphy said. "It's something that could really be a huge asset."

While the sale of the property fell through and plans to move the elevator dissolved several years ago, Dunphy remains hopeful that Rochester can use the elevator.

"The Historical Society feels very strongly that the building needs to be preserved," Dunphy said. "Whether the building gets moved or remains where it is, it still needs to be preserved. No matter who owns the elevator, the community owns the heritage. That's really what we think the issue is all about."

Those that wish to help June 6, just have to show up, Wilson said. A barbeque will be held during the event, which will also take place during the dedication of the Rochester River Walk signage. In case of rain, the project will be postponed until June 13.

Workers will help paint the building - red with white trim.

Other cosmetic improvements include replacing face boards and windows, and restoring the elevator's awning, Wilson said, which hangs across the building's west side.

"People know where this building is. It's an icon," Wilson said. "It just needs to have a shine put back on it."

To donate, contact Wilson at (248) 651-6178 or mail donations to RAHS, P. O. Box 80783, Rochester, MI 48308.

You can reach Staff Writer Jennifer S. McDonald at jmcdonald@candgnews.com or at (586)279-1112.

Caption:Residents of the community will be able to help "shine" the Rochester Elevator June 6 with an event coordinated by the Rochester-Avon Historical Society. Workers will help paint the building - red with white trim. File photo by David Schreiber .