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Savage wants its past back

Shira Kantor, Star Tribune
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One of Savage's oldest buildings isn't actually in Savage. But city leaders are hoping they will soon have it back.

The Savage Depot, a train station built in the late 1800s, was moved in 1974 from its original location north of Hwy. 13 between Princeton and Ottawa avenues to Historic Murphy's Landing, the interpretive village in Shakopee.

City leaders are beginning the process of restoring the Town Square parking lot directly across the highway from the former depot site, and they think there might be a place for the old depot there.

The lot, also known as the Dan Patch parking lot for the Dan Patch Liquor Store that was there until seven years ago, was turned over to the city years ago by the family of George Allen, who wanted to see it used for public purposes.

Bringing the depot back and restoring it as a coffee shop or a public meeting space would meet that objective, as well as help transform the lot into a community gathering place, city leaders say.

"I look at this as some kind of a project that the community can put their arms around," said Council Member Janet Williams.

Williams, who is a member of the Dan Patch Historical Society, said the society will lead a campaign to raise the estimated \$10,000 to \$12,000 needed to move the depot.

The Town Square lot has room for roughly 100 cars, and much of that area would remain open for parking. Only a small portion of the lot would be used for the depot, said city administrator Barry Stock. Also possible is a statue of Dan Patch, the famous early 20th century pacing horse owned by the businessman M.W. Savage, for whom the city is named.

The Three Rivers Park District owns the depot but has agreed to give it back to the city, Stock said.

The city hired a consultant to consider the needs of the lot itself, which has been without curbing, grading or landscaping for several years as the city waited on improvement plans for Hwy 13. A consultant will present recommendations for the lot at an April 18 meeting.

City leaders hope the depot can be moved in time to celebrate the 100-year anniversary of the race in which Dan Patch broke the world record for a mile, running it in 1 minute, 55 seconds. The record, set in 1906 at the Minnesota State Fair, was not beaten for 54 years.

"We don't really have any historical buildings left in town," Williams said. The city would benefit from the depot and its educational value to residents, he said.

"We have such a rich history here," Williams said. "People should know about it."

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