Rochester
April 25, 2012

QR codes provide a glimpse into Rochester's past

QR codes to act as historical markers for buildings downtown, landmarks

By Mary Beth Almond
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ROCHESTER — Have you ever wondered about the historical significance of a building as you strolled along downtown Rochester?
Pedestrians now have that information at their fingertips, thanks to the new quick response code decals that will soon hang in the windows of the storefronts downtown, courtesy of the Rochester-Avon Historical Society.

The city's first historical QR code was unveiled during a ribbon-cutting ceremony April 19 at O'Connors Public House, which eventually plans to add the code to the back of its menu. For now, it hangs in the window of the storefront.

James Hopkins of the Rochester-Avon Historical Society said members are working with the Downtown Development Authority to get QR code decals up in the windows of the rest of the buildings downtown as soon as possible.

"We should be done very shortly," he said.

By simply scanning a QR code decal with a smartphone, anyone can quickly pull up information about historical sites throughout the Rochester area — including photos, architectural classification, historical significance and much more.

"These take you directly to the building that you are standing in front of, or inside of, and then you are able to pull up the information page, along with the historical pictures for that structure, and learn quite a bit about that building and its history," Hopkins said.

The information page comes directly from the Rochester-Avon Historical Society's new website, www.oaklandregionalhistoricsites.org, which went live last October. Sponsored and led by the Rochester-Avon Historical Society, the Oakland Regional Historic Sites website is a collaboration of various historical agencies of the greater Rochester area, including the Rochester-Avon Historical Society, the Rochester Hills Historic District Commission, the Rochester Historical Commission, the Oakland Township Historical Society, the Oakland Township Historic District Commission and the Orion Historical Society.

The Oakland Regional Historic Site's database is designed to be a one-stop resource for anyone interested in exploring a community's historic sites. It is also meant to encourage local history education and research, appreciation and support of local resources, and heritage tourism by increasing the awareness of historic properties.

Rochester City Manager Jaymes Vettranio said he and the other city staff are "really excited" about the QR codes and the new website.

"It's a great use of technology," he said. "The real goldmine of the project is the information on the website, which has informed members of the Planning Commission on variety of projects and assisted city staff in answering questions."

The database is also a great tool to help potential investors understand the history and buildings in the community, Vettraino added, and to promote historical tourism, therefore bringing more people to the city.

For more information, email admin@rochesteravonhistoricalsociety.org.

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