

Councilman sees historic Hulettts as draw for park

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Six years after they were dismantled, Cleveland's two remaining Hulettts sit in stacks of steel on Whiskey Island. But the historic ore unloaders have returned to the public radar with an ambitious plan to re-erect them by next spring.

Councilman Matt Zone wants to keep the 800-ton machines on Whiskey Island, but move them to nearby Wendy Park, south of the old Coast Guard station along the Cuyahoga River.

"It's dead space now," Zone said. "Nobody uses it."

The Hulettts are stored on property owned by the Cleveland-Cuyahoga County Port Authority. The move would clear space for Oglebay Norton, which leases the land, to expand its business.

The move could also provide a regional attraction for Wendy Park, which Cuyahoga County bought and opened to the public earlier this year.

"We need to create a critical mass, a reason to draw people there," Zone said.

On Friday, the port authority's board approved up to \$26,400 for three engineering and planning contracts to gauge the cost of moving and reassembling the Hulettts as opposed to scrapping them.

Zone has also asked the county for money to research the move.

Considered an engineering marvel, Hulettts dominated Cleveland's industrial landscape from 1912 to 1992.

Compared with shoveling by hand, the machines scooped ore from freighters lightning fast, and revolutionized shipping on the Great Lakes.

With the introduction of self-unloading ships, however, the Hulettts lapsed into historical, rather than practical, significance here.

Conrail, and later the port authority, faced an impassioned fight when they announced plans to remove the dormant Hulettts to clear dock space.

Two of the four Hulettts on Whiskey Island were scrapped in 2000, but two were saved. The port paid \$683,000 for the work and preservationists contributed \$272,000.

The preservationists agreed to move the machines in five years. When the deadline expired, they were given a year-long extension, which expired in January.

Other ideas for new locations have included Dock 32, beside a relocated Steamship William G. Mather and Canal Basin Park, as part of an extended Tow Path Trail.

Whiskey Island advocate Ed Hauser said he supports Zone's concept, but thinks there needs to be a communitywide discussion about location and fund-raising for the actual move and re-assembly.