


## Fire-damaged school buildings sound

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EAGLE POINT — An engineering study commissioned by the Eagle Point School District indicates buildings at the old junior high that survived a fire six years ago are in good condition and could be reoccupied as an elementary school with about \$1.3 million in upgrades.

"The basic premise of the report is while the existing buildings aren't up to current code, they are well-built and maintained," said school board Chairman Jonathan Bilden. "It would be a shame not to use them in any future plans."

The school board ordered the \$7,500 study by Zbinden, Carter, Souders Engineers in Grants Pass to determine whether the remaining 22,000 square feet at the former junior high on East Main Street could be reused and incorporated into a design for a new elementary school.

The school district recently received \$12 million in a settlement with Great American Insurance Co. of New York for the losses at the junior high after fire broke out in August 2002.

The replacement junior high was built in 2004 at Reese Creek Road with bond funds. The school board decided to use the insurance proceeds to build an elementary school to replace Little Butte School on North Shasta Avenue, which has reached capacity at 500 students and needs space for another 100 pupils.

The insurance proceeds are insufficient to build an entire elementary school, so board members want to upgrade the remaining junior high buildings and add on to them to create an elementary campus.

Initial estimates by Portland architect John Weekes for the whole project are about \$12.9 million, said Dan Zaklan, schools finance director.

"Right now the estimate is a little north of what we have, and in the current economic situation we don't have the means to raise that amount," Bilden said. "We need to look at what the city will require to bring the school up to code and see whether maybe there is a scaled-down model of the design that would provide some savings."

The portion of the school that survived the fire includes a wing of classrooms built in 1966 and a gymnasium with an unknown construction date.

The existing space would need a seismic upgrade and roof improvements, the report indicated.

About 32,000 square feet of new construction would be needed to make up the rest of the elementary school, Zaklan said.

District officials hope to break ground on a new school as early as spring 2009.

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