

# Police and fire departments search for new building sites

■ Measure 20-31 would provide the funds needed to relocate the departments by raising property taxes

By Andrew Adams  
Oregon Daily Emerald

A \$36.6 million bond measure in the May 16 primary election that would finance new downtown police and fire stations is being described as necessary monies by the city, but too costly by its detractors.

The police and fire departments currently share the bottom level of the 37-year-old City Hall, a location measure supporters say is too cramped and not built to withstand an earthquake.

If approved, Measure 20-31 would relocate both departments and cost the average Eugene homeowner about \$65 more each year in property taxes starting in 2002.

A task force created by the city to address the issue determined the most cost-effective approach to solving the problem would be to build new stations rather than renovate the existing ones.

Rita Molina, a University law student who served on the task force, described the current offices of the police department as "hideous," and said the best option for the city is to build a new site rather than improve the old one.

"If you renovate the current location you don't solve the problem of a lack of adequate space," she said.

According to information released by the city manager's office based on an architectural survey, the police department's current office space of 50,000 square feet is 25,000 less than what is actually needed. In the next 20 years,

25,000 more square feet will be needed to accommodate population growth.

The Eugene Fire Department needs 5,000 square feet now and 9,000 more for the future, according to the survey.

A strong proponent for the measure and a member of the Eugene Police Commission, John Brown said that despite the project's high cost, the police and fire departments' needs are something that the city of Eugene can not ignore and must solve now.

"Granted it does hurt and granted you could do it cheaper," he said, "but then you're just passing the problem along to the next generation."

No sites have been chosen for the new stations, but Brown said that the city already

owns two properties downtown that could be used.

Fire department spokesman Glen Potter said the department's small downtown station meets Eugene's needs, but as the city grows, a new station will be needed and earthquake safety is a real concern.

"We don't want to have our quarters in a building that is unreliable in an earthquake," he said.

Critics of the measure, however, don't think building two new stations at a cost of \$36.6 million is a sensible solution. They would prefer to see the city renovate the current sites and move some of the

## Measure 20-31

Measure 20-31 would finance the construction of new police and fire stations downtown to replace stations currently located in City Hall. The \$36.6 million bond measure would cost Eugene residents an average of \$65 more each year in property taxes.

Supporters claim police and fire departments need to get out of City Hall as it is vulnerable to earthquakes and is too small for the stations' growing needs.

Opponents claim the measure is too costly and that other options, such as renovating the current sites or relocating to existing buildings, have not been sufficiently explored.

police and fire services into other office buildings.

Arthur Shapiro, co-author of a statement in the voters' pamphlet opposing the measure, said that because the city provided no other options to solve the police and fire departments' problems and because it did not hold public meetings about the issue, he could not support the measure.

"I have nothing against the police and fire departments, but I do have some issues against a city council that has no public meetings," he said, adding not having the meetings was a "dereliction of their duty as elected officers."

This is the first in a series of articles the Emerald will publish profiling local and state ballot measures and candidates during the weeks leading into the May 16 Eugene primary election.



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