

East End residents try to save old Cage Elementary

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Cynthia Cisneros

HOUSTON (KTRK) -- There's a fight to save Rufus Cage Elementary School in Houston's East End. The Houston Independent School District is considering selling it. There are people in the community who worry if that happens, the 100-year-old building will be demolished.

The old building is being used for storage by HISD, but time is running out. HISD says it has to sell because it needs the money to balance its budget. Residents say they understand the financial aspect, but hope it can be balanced with an historical aspect.

Joe Zepeda is part of Cage Elementary history. He was their last PTA president before the school closed in the mid-80s. A new Cage Elementary opened just down the street.

"I hate to see it torn down because it's been part of this community since the beginning," Zepeda said.

He has lived in this East End neighborhood nearly 50 years. His children graduated from Cage. An historic picture shows Cage opening in 1910, and you can see it's surrounded by farmland. The East End developed around the school.

"The land was given in 1894," Juliet Stipeche told us.

Stipeche is an HISD trustee. The district owns Cage and wants to sell it. Stipeche was able to get a 90-day reprieve to try and formulate a plan for Cage -- a way to transform the building without using HISD money.

"Now we actually have some people that have interest in the property, but our concern is that the interest is in the land, not necessarily in the building," Stipeche said.

That's where Jody Gillit believes she can make a difference. She's part of the newly-formed Historic Rufus Cage Educational Alliance to save Cage from being sold and demolished.

"We'd like to see the building saved and restored to be shared amongst the whole community, not to go into a private company or to be used for personal use, or even flattened," Gillet said.

The school board is scheduled to vote on whether or not to sell the property in August.

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