

City eyes land purchase to enhance San Pedro's downtown and historic theater

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The stubborn fire on Nov. 2, 2015, caused extensive damage at Crossfit WorldPort gym, adjacent the Warner Grand Theatre. (Photo by Chuck Bennett/Daily Breeze)

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When a fire destroyed a corner in downtown San Pedro two years ago, it left a large vacant lot next to the historic Warner Grand Theatre, one of the town's most treasured landmarks.

Now, the city of Los Angeles — which owns and has been working to revive the theater — is being asked to pursue a purchase of the 12,500-square-foot, wraparound lot at 490 W. Sixth St. that fronts both Pacific Avenue and Sixth Street. The purchase price is expected to be about \$1 million.

Though no plans are in place, the idea is to use the contiguous parcel to somehow build on and support the theater.

Los Angeles City Councilman Joe Buscaino, who represents the 15th District, submitted a motion with the request on Tuesday. He said the area is key to San Pedro's push to become an arts and entertainment hub.

“I know that the Warner Grand Theatre is the key to a successful and thriving downtown, and the centerpiece of our blossoming arts and entertainment district,” Buscaino said in a written statement.

The theater has sold out shows featuring A-list acts in recent years, he said, proving its potential.

“Acquiring this property will help position the city to leverage a public/private partnership and add those amenities like restrooms, food and beverage, ADA access and more event space to give greater value to the Warner Grand and giving new vibrancy to downtown San Pedro and its businesses,” Buscaino said.

No plan for the property, which is owned by Eric Eisenberg, exists yet, but should the city acquire it, the focus would be on companion uses that would enhance the theater’s potential.

The Nov. 2, 2015, fire that destroyed the storefronts that had been there since the 1920s and ’30s, began in the space at 524 S. Pacific Ave. occupied by Tree Lab L.A., a medical marijuana machine rental business. [Lawsuits](#) have followed in the aftermath blaming Eisenberg and Tree Lab for the blaze.