

Commercial Real Estate

Oakland school in contract to acquire Dufwin Theater as it looks to expand in Uptown




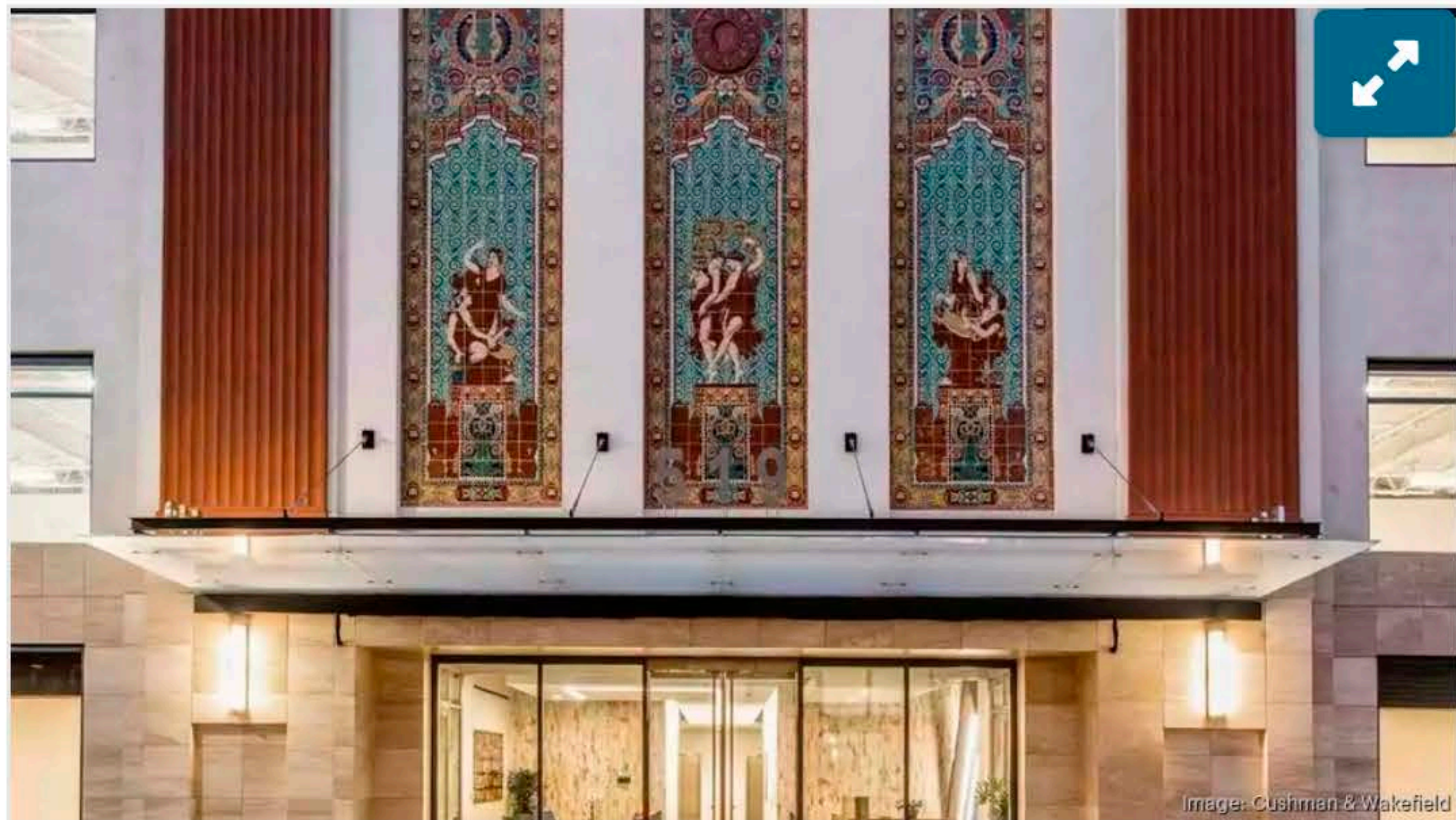








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The Dufwin Theater in Oakland has been for sale since it was seized by its lender in September.

CUSHMAN & WAKEFIELD



By [Hannah Kanik](#) – Reporter, San Francisco Business Times
Jun 25, 2025

Story Highlights

- Oakland School for the Arts near acquisition of former Dufwin Theater in Uptown.
- School has outgrown its home in Fox Theater and has been renting nearby spaces.
- Nearby park expected to be renovated and named after late alumnus Angus Cloud.

Oakland School for the Arts is expanding its footprint down Telegraph Avenue and into a second historic Uptown theater.



The Oakland-based arts school is in contract to acquire the Dufwin Theater, and plans to occupy three floors of the building in time for the upcoming school year, according to multiple people familiar with the matter.

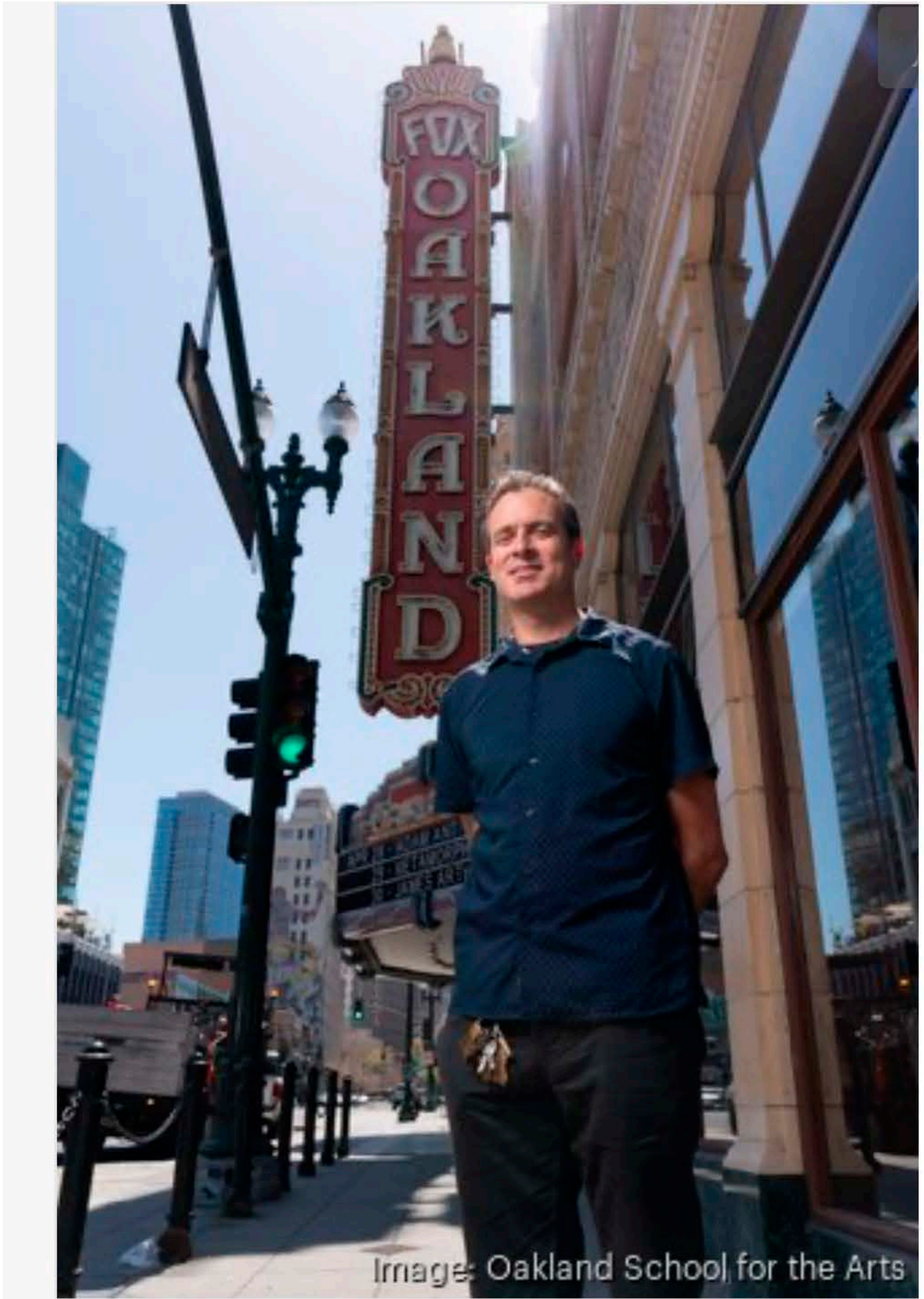
The former theater, at 519 17th Street, sits just a block away from the school's main campus at the Fox Theater, and would realize Executive Director Mike Oz's vision of [creating an arts corridor in Uptown Oakland](#) to bring energy to the area.

OSA has been in need of more classroom space for years, and has been renting out extra spaces across Uptown and downtown Oakland to make room for all its students. Oz told the Business Times last year that the school had been looking for a building nearby to expand its classrooms, noting that with so many buildings going back to their lenders and later selling at a fraction of the cost, [now is the time to strike](#).

OSA will occupy the Dufwin's basement, ground level and 5th level to start, as the theater's other floors need renovation work. The school negotiated a year-long escrow period, which is expected to close at the end of the academic year.

The school, whose alumni include Zendaya and Kehlani, will also open a storefront at the Fox Theater to host its radio station, merchandise store and record label, and create a community park named after alumni Angus Cloud, who died in 2023.

“Telegraph Avenue is one of the main arteries in downtown Oakland, and everyone knows the theater is here – not everyone realizes our school is in the building,” Oz told the Business Times last year. “We need to connect those dots... we want to create a corridor where when you drive by you see art, you see culture, you see the school, you see energy, positive downtown energy.”



Executive Director Mike Oz stands in front of Fox Theater.

OAKLAND SCHOOL FOR THE ARTS

Real estate services firm [CBRE listed the Dufwin Theater for sale](#) earlier this year, after it was seized by its lender in September 2024. The 63,214-square-foot property was a former movie theater turned office space that had ties to [disgraced Oakland investor Tom Henderson](#). Embarcadero Capital Partners [bought the property out of receivership](#) in 2016 for \$8.4 million and invested another \$10 million in extensive renovations on the property, renaming it 519 Uptown.

Last September, Embarcadero Capital's lender Ladder Capital Finance, acquired the property through a deed in lieu of foreclosure, records show. There was \$13.3 million in debt with interest at the time of the transaction.

Several Oakland office and residential buildings have gone back to their lenders or sold at a fraction of what their former owners paid as the city navigates through the market reset.

The city also owns the Fox Theater and recently extended OSA's below-market-rate lease to include the ground floor. The city also entered a temporary ground lease with the school to occupy a lot at 1911 Telegraph Ave., where it plans to build the park named after Cloud that could include a skate park, soccer pitch and basketball courts.

“We’re not only staying, but we’re doubling down,” Oz said earlier this year. “We’re wanting to help flip the narrative and lead by example.”

