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Oakland School for the Arts is 'doubling down' on Oakland with big expansion



Image: Oakland School for the Arts

Executive Director Mike Oz stands in front of Fox Theater.

OAKLAND SCHOOL FOR THE ARTS



By [Hannah Kanik](#) – Reporter, San Francisco Business Times
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The Oakland School for the Arts is expanding its presence in downtown Oakland in an effort to boost the school's visibility and flip the city's negative narrative.

The public charter school is working to buy a building downtown, expand its lease at the Fox Theater to include a storefront, and create a school and community park. Mike Oz, executive director at OSA told the Business Times that the school is betting on Oakland, and wants to create an arts corridor to bring energy back to the city.

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

The school, whose alumni include Zendaya, Kehlani, and Angus Cloud, is looking to acquire a 60,000 to 100,000-square-foot building downtown to be used for student classrooms. It is in the process of identifying a building within a block of the school's space at the Fox Theater, and hopes to make an offer within the next couple of months.

With so many buildings in Oakland going back to their lenders and [later selling at a fraction of the cost](#), Oz said now is the time to strike.

In the meantime, the school is looking to expand its footprint in the Fox Theater in downtown Oakland, where it currently leases 63,000 square feet, to make room for space to host its radio station, merchandise store and record label. The Emporium recently vacated its space at the corner of 18th and Telegraph Avenue and Oz said the high-visibility location would be a great way to establish OSA downtown.

“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 said. “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.”

The city owns the theater and confirmed it is working with OSA to extend the school's lease to include the first floor, totaling 4,503 square feet, which will go before the Economic Development Committee in the fall, and later seek City Council approval.

The school pays a below market rate of \$0.75 per square foot per month for its current space. OSA signed a three-year lease, set to expire in June 2026.

Last year, the school had also unveiled plans to build a park on a plot of city-owned land at 1911 Telegraph Ave, named after the late Angus Cloud, an actor and OSA alumni who died last year of an accidental overdose. The school is in the process of permitting and fundraising for the project, which would include a skate park, soccer pitch and basketball courts.

Oz said the school does not currently have any outdoor space, and this development could be used by the city in the evenings and summers. It is partnering with Oakland Roots and Soul Soccer Club on building the soccer pitch.

Several developments had been pitched on the city-owned acre lot, including a multifamily project from a development team comprising St. Louis developer McCormack Baron Salazar, Oakland nonprofit developer Oakland & The World Enterprises and San Francisco residential developer Strada LLC.

Oakland city staff confirmed that the development project is no longer active and the city is in a temporary lease with OSA to occupy the space, which could turn into a more long-term lease.

The city has owned the land at 1911 Telegraph Ave. since 2005 and initially selected developer Forest City to redevelop the property, though in 2011 in the aftermath of the 2007-2009 financial crisis, the developer elected to allow its agreement for the site to expire.

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2023 revenue

Rank	Prior Rank	Business name/Prior rank
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2	2	Swinerton
3	3	Del Monte Foods Inc.

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