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PRESS RELEASE

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CITY ATTORNEY SECURES SETTLEMENT WITH CLEAR, ENFORCEABLE PLAN TO END YEARS OF BLIGHT AT CALIFORNIA THEATRE

SAN DIEGO – City Attorney Heather Ferbert announced the successful resolution of a civil enforcement action against the property owner of the long-abandoned California Theatre in Downtown San Diego. The settlement delivers a clear timeline and enforceable plan to finally address one of the City’s most notorious problem properties — a building that for years endangered public safety, drained city resources, and stood as a scar on the heart of downtown.

Under the agreement, the owner must either sell the California Theatre site or move forward with demolition of the structures on a firm timeline. By August 30, 2025, the property must be formally listed and actively marketed for sale. The owner then has until December 31, 2026, to make best efforts to finalize the sale of the property. If the sale fails to close by that date, the owner will have 90 days to obtain permits for the controlled demolition of the structures, including asbestos abatement and other required safety measures.

“This long-neglected property has been a danger and a drain on our community for far too long,” said City Attorney Heather Ferbert. **“With this settlement, the owner faces a clear choice: sell the property or demolish the unsafe structures. Either way, San Diegans will finally see action at the California Theatre site. I’m especially proud that this case was prosecuted by our new Housing Protection and Civil Code Compliance Unit (HPU), which exists to take on exactly these kinds of cases — vacant, and unsafe properties that undermine entire neighborhoods. This resolution shows the power of accountability and delivers real results for the community.”**

If the owners fail to comply with the terms of the settlement, up to \$1 million in civil penalties may be imposed immediately. This financial accountability, combined with clear deadlines, gives a clear statement by the City that for the first time in decades the status quo cannot continue. The City has established real consequences and a clear plan that guarantees progress will be made, either through a change in ownership or through demolition of the unsafe structures.

“For decades, the California Theatre has blighted downtown and been a barrier to achieving the progress desired by residents and local businesses. This settlement delivers real accountability and a clear path to resolving the unacceptable conditions at the site,” said Mayor Todd Gloria. **“I’m grateful to the City Attorney and her Housing Protection and Civil Code Compliance Unit for their diligent work to secure this outcome, which moves us closer to realizing the tremendous potential of this property and its role in revitalizing the Civic Center area.”**

“The old California Theatre is across the street from Civic Center Plaza, and the City Attorney’s resolution of this matter contributes to the area’s revitalization,” said Councilmember Stephen Whitburn, who represents Downtown. **“Regardless of whether the building is sold or demolished, it will be a step toward redeveloping this vacant property, which is a win for Downtown.”**

The settlement also requires the owner to reimburse the City for its investigative costs and continue to comply with existing court orders requiring 24-hour fire watch and security guard patrols, boarding and securing all building openings, and maintaining perimeter fencing around the site at Third Avenue, Fourth Avenue, C Street, and the north parking lot.

Ferbert added, **“This is about delivering for the community. For the first time in decades, the California Theatre site has a clear timeline and enforceable plan for resolution. This sends a strong message: properties in San Diego cannot sit vacant, unsecured, and unsafe without consequences. The California Theatre has stood as a problem for years, but this outcome paves the way for accountability, safety, and renewal.”**

The case was prosecuted by the City Attorney’s Housing Protection and Civil Code Compliance Unit (HPU). The judgment resolves the case against all Defendants including the property owner Caydon San Diego Property, LLC.

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