

WEST SIDE SUN NEWS

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EDITORIAL

Variety starring in restoration role

It could cost \$5 million to \$8 million, but the venerable Variety Theater seems assured of getting a new lease on life.

City Council approved legislation earlier this month authorizing a \$170,000 loan to the Friends of the Historic Variety Theater. The funds will be used to purchase property across from the theater for a parking lot. The loan inches the theater restoration project even closer to reality.

Ward 19 Councilwoman Dona Brady, who recalls walking to the Lorain Avenue theater as a child to enjoy movies, wants to see the building restored and returned to use as a neighborhood arts and cultural center. She said corporate events, graduations, live theater, cultural workshops and movies could be featured at the historic, 1,980-seat venue.

Plans are moving along and at least one more nearby building could be razed to provide even more needed

parking. Officials said an architect for the project could be chosen by the end of the month.

The plans are creating ripples of excitement in the West 117th Street area. On Monday, a contract was signed with an Elyria firm to recreate a new marquee and vertical sign for the theater using historic photos as references.

Westtown Community Development Corp. received grant money to help defray the cost of the new marquee. About \$20,000 in private donations are also earmarked for the project, which ties into the master plan for Lorain Avenue.

It's exciting to see all the activity in the West 117th Street area. The recently opened Target store and a new Giant Eagle now under construction are even more signals that the area is rebounding. And with the Variety spruced up, the neighborhood will have a restored jewel to enjoy.