



**LOS ANGELES
CONSERVANCY**

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Preservation Groups Sue City of Los Angeles to Block Demolition of Historic Barry Building in Brentwood

Lawsuit challenges the City's unlawful approval to replace a designated Historic-Cultural Monument with a vacant dirt lot.

LOS ANGELES, CA, June 4, 2026— Angelenos for Historic Preservation (AHP) and the Los Angeles Conservancy have filed a lawsuit in Los Angeles Superior Court against the City of Los Angeles and applicant and owner 11973 San Vicente, LLC. (Case No. 26STCP01963)

The legal action seeks to overturn the City Council's recent approval to demolish Brentwood's iconic Barry Building (HCM # 887). The lawsuit challenges the City's disregard for environmental protections and local preservation laws, which were bypassed to allow a landmark building to be completely destroyed without any replacement project planned.

"By greenlighting this demolition, the City is establishing a perilous loophole that rewards intentional 'demolition by neglect,'" said Adrian Scott Fine, President and CEO of the Los Angeles Conservancy. "Allowing a developer to clear out tenants, ignore mandatory maintenance, and then use the resulting deterioration to claim preservation is 'infeasible' sets a dangerous precedent for every designated landmark in Los Angeles."

Key Issues Detailed in the Lawsuit

The lawsuit challenges the City's reliance on a manufactured financial crisis to justify the demolition. The developer claims preservation is economically infeasible based on an inflated, voluntary \$12.8 million to \$17.1 million reconstruction estimate, yet independent seismic experts verified that the legally mandated soft-story retrofit requires no full rebuild and costs only \$379,000. Furthermore, while the City Council relied on speculative future housing benefits to excuse the destruction, the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) explicitly leaves the site as a fenced-off, vacant lot, with the City refusing to require a single unit of actual housing to be built.

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The petition also contends the City violated the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) through improper project "piecemealing." The owner controls an assemblage of seven adjacent, cleared parcels, but the City refused to evaluate a viable compromise preservation alternative that integrates the historic Barry Building into a larger development across those commonly controlled properties. Additionally, the City unlawfully shut down mandatory Assembly Bill 52 tribal consultation with the Gabrieleno Band of Mission Indians - Kizh Nation over the tribe's strenuous objections, attempting to substitute reactive, post-certification voluntary conditions for true, good-faith environmental mitigation.

Architectural and Cultural Significance

Designed in 1951 by renowned architect Milton H. Caughey, the Barry Building is a rare surviving commercial masterpiece of California Modern architecture, featuring floating second-story pilotis, cantilevering curved staircases, and a central garden courtyard. The landmark is deeply tied to Brentwood's identity; its developer, David Barry, Jr., personally championed and planted the designated historic Coral Trees lining the San Vicente median (HCM # 148).

It also stands as part of an intact mid-century family legacy. Directly to the east, across a shared driveway, sits its companion "mini" building, which was also designed by Caughey and built in 1950 by another member of the Barry family. The stark contrast between the two properties forms a core part of the preservationists' argument: while the smaller 1950 building has been meticulously maintained, remains fully operational, and successfully houses several long-term businesses, its 1951 counterpart faces total eradication due to manufactured neglect.

For nearly half a century, the 1951 Barry Building served as an intellectual touchstone for West Los Angeles as the long-time home of Dutton's Brentwood Bookstore. Its courtyard regularly hosted daily readings and book signings attended by hundreds of prominent authors and public figures, cementing its place in Los Angeles cultural history.

About the Petitioners

Angelenos for Historic Preservation (AHP): An association of concerned citizens, residents, design professionals, and preservation advocates dedicated to the responsible stewardship, adaptive reuse, and legal protection of designated historic resources across the City of Los Angeles.

The Los Angeles Conservancy: A membership-based nonprofit organization working through advocacy and education to recognize, preserve, and revitalize the historic architectural and cultural resources of Los Angeles County. Established in 1978, the Conservancy is the largest local preservation group in the United States.

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Note to Editors: High-resolution historical images of the Barry Building and copies of the filed Verified Petition for Writ of Mandate (Case No. 26STCP01963) are available upon request.