

## Firefighters get new meeting hall

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Mesa firefighters are getting a home of their own and [contributing](#) to downtown redevelopment at the same time.

The United Mesa Firefighters Association recently completed the purchase of a vacant building at 52 S. Center St. from Virginia Ikeda.

"For general day-to-day business and our monthly meetings, it's just perfect," said Bryan Jeffries, the association's president. "It kind of firms our presence as a stakeholder and a contributor to the [community](#)."

Most recently, the 1,900-square-foot building was occupied by an air conditioning repair shop, but it originally functioned as a doctor's office in the 1950s. It is across Center Street from the Mesa Arts Center.

The association has 640 members and represents Mesa, Gilbert, Salt River and Apache Junction firefighters.

Ikeda, president of the Symphony of the Southwest, said the symphony hopes to work closely with the association. The symphony's office is one door away at 56 S. Center St.

"I kind of regret having to sell the building," Ikeda said. She was hoping to reserve it for an arts-related purpose, but the symphony did not have enough money to buy it.

Jeffries said the association plans extensive renovations on the building, including a new façade. The association likely will move into the building in about two months.

"This is the first piece of property we've actually owned," he said. "I'm so excited. It's a big step for us."

The association hasn't had an actual office for years, Jeffries said. The previous office was in rented space at Mesa's Falcon Field, but was too far away from City Hall, where the association does most of its business.

Tom Verploegen, president of the Downtown Mesa Association, said the fire hall is a good interim use for the building, with an arts-related purpose a likely long-term use.

"It's a step up physically. It's a step up because it's being used," he said, with so many buildings vacant throughout the Valley because of the slump in the economy.

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