

# Yesterday & Today: West Valley Art Museum



The original home of the Sun Cities Museum of Art in Surprise is now home to the Salvation Army.

## Community art museum was a community effort spearheaded by art lovers in Sun City and Sun City West

The West Valley Museum of Art, which today is located at Peoria City Hall, was originally created by several Sun Cities residents intent on creating the first freestanding professional art museum in a retirement community.

The Sun Cities Art Museum, its original name when it incorporated in 1980, was initially to be built at the corner of Thunderbird Boulevard and Emerald Drive in Sun City (later the site of Sun City Stadium). That land was eventually traded for property in Surprise -- between Sun City and Sun City West -- near what was originally intended to be an Arizona State University westside campus.

The facility opened in 1984 and was later expanded. For many years, it sat as the only structure constructed between Sun City and Coyote Lakes, and clearly visible from Bell Road. Its prominence led to the City of Surprise renaming the street as "Avenue of the Arts."

The building was later changed to the Sun Cities Museum of Art, and eventually West Valley Museum of Art to reflect the interests of the larger, West Valley audience.

The museum faced mounting financial challenges and was forced to close in 2009 and move to Peoria in 2010. Most of its valued collection has been preserved



The Sun Cities Museum of Art was originally to be located on the northwest corner of 111th Avenue and Thunderbird Road in Sun City. Groundbreaking ceremonies were held, but plans were scrapped and the location was moved.

and can be seen in exhibits on display at Peoria City Hall.

Today, the building at 17420 N. Avenue of the Arts is home to the Sun Cities West Valley Corps of the Salvation Army.