



## Former V.M. Ybor eyesore now home to police bomb squad



PAUL LAMISON/STAFF

The 85-year-old V.M. Ybor building, 2611 N. 12th St., has become headquarters for the Tampa police bomb squad. The department's Thonotosassa-based horses can use an area at the site for breaks and to feed when on duty in the city.



By JOSH POLTILOVE | The Tampa Tribune

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TAMPA --

A vacant neighborhood eyesore has been drastically repaired, and now it's the new home to the Tampa Police Department's bomb squad and a resting place for the department's mounted patrol unit.

The 85-year-old V.M. Ybor building was deemed uninhabitable in early 2000. But last year the bomb squad partnered with IKEA Tampa and the nonprofit group 13 Ugly Men to rehabilitate the former Tampa Fire Rescue station at 2611 N. 12th St.

The building was repainted, its roof and floor were repaired and its plumbing was redone. The efforts, said Sgt. Jarrett Seal, helped a "rundown, dilapidated firehouse turn into a beautiful building."

The Bomb Operation Center's grand opening was announced today.

Few things are worse for neighborhood revitalization than an empty building, Police Chief Jane Castor said at the event. Now V.M. Ybor will have a building with a police presence 24 hours a day.

"This is just another asset for the V.M. Ybor neighborhood," Castor said.

Kim Headland, neighborhood association president, said the property is great for the neighborhood and a catalyst for further redevelopment.

Tampa's bomb squad, which responds to more than 200 bomb calls a year, had trained outside city limits and had materials stored at a warehouse. Now the items will be housed at the refurbished building and the squad will train there as well.

Horses for the mounted patrol unit are based in Thonotosassa. But when they patrol in Ybor City or downtown on Thursday, Friday or Saturday nights, they now can stop by a covered area behind the refurbished V.M. Ybor building for breaks and feed.

"It'll be a second home for our mounted patrol," Seal said.