



FERNANDO SALAZAR The Wichita Eagle

Builders Inc. president Mike Garvey is the new owner of the Crown Uptown Theatre, which he plans to continue to use as a venue.

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# Builders Inc. leader buys Crown Uptown Theatre



BY CARRIE RENGERS  
The Wichita Eagle

For the second time in less than a year, **Mike Garvey** has bought a theater.

In November, the **Builders Inc.** president purchased the current **Mark Arts** building at 9112 E. Central in part for its theater.

Now he's bought the **Crown Uptown Theatre** in **College Hill**.

"We felt like there would be some good synergy with the current Mark Arts building as far as theaters go," Garvey says.

The Crown sold Wednesday for an undisclosed price.

"We are going to continue to use it as a venue," Garvey says. "We would like to get more acts in there, be it ... music, theater, dance (and) other things."

The sellers, **Crown Partners** - which includes **Scott and Lisa Ritchie**, **Ray and Diane Gans** and **Robert C. Park** - have

been operating the Crown as a venue. Their original intent was to operate it as a dinner theater, as it had been for years, but they said it was difficult to make that work financially.

"Scott and his group could have sold it to anybody, but he wanted to be a good steward, and he felt like we were the ones to do that, and we're very grateful to him for ... choosing us," Garvey says.

"We think it's a good thing for the neighborhood as well as the city to have another venue for people to go see things," he says. "We're trying to create an environment for kids and adults to be able to perform."

Garvey says the main focus right away will be to talk to promoters and others who can use the space.

He says there are "a lot of opportunities to bring people into Wichita and showcase not only the talent that's here but that Wichita really is a big city, and we get people like **Common**," who performed at **Riverfest** last week.

"But we have a lot of work to do," Garvey says. "Number one, to get people coming back to the Crown."

Also, he says, "She's old."

The building, which is at 3207 E. Douglas near the southeast corner of Douglas and Hillside, was built in 1929.

Garvey says Crown Partners "did a great job of making sure what you got when you went in there was as top notch as it could be," but he says he knows things from a real estate perspective that can improve the building.

**Bradley Tidemann** of **J.P. Weigand & Sons** handled the deal.

Garvey says he's been to the Crown only a few times for shows. That's different than his experience with the theater at Mark Arts.

"That's where I grew up is on that stage," Garvey says. "I just did a lot of kids shows and (went) to see a bunch of things."

With the Mark Arts purchase, Garvey says, he also thought it was simply a good site to have.

"At the end of the day, it was a real estate deal."

Garvey says that while the Crown deal is more about synergy between the two buildings, "We wouldn't have done it if it wasn't real estate."

He also likes the building.

"It's pretty cool," Garvey says. "It's a vaudeville house that's seen a lot of things over the years."