

MetroABQ Real Estate Newsletter

Including Rio Rancho, Corrales, Placitas, Atrisco Valley, Los Lunas & the East Mountains.

January

El Vado Rehabilitation: The Historic Motel Complex Reimagined

Shops, restaurants, Mid-Century designed motel rooms & event spaces

&

Unexpected Mile-Hi Street Art Mural @Uptown



The [El Vado Motel](#) began life in 1937 as a motor lodge for Route 66/Mother Road travelers. Over the ensuing years it's gone from a thriving destination stop, to a dingy, dilapidated motel, to a derelict vacant chain-linked eyesore about to be razed. The now-historic, classic Spanish Pueblo Revival-style motel was worth saving.

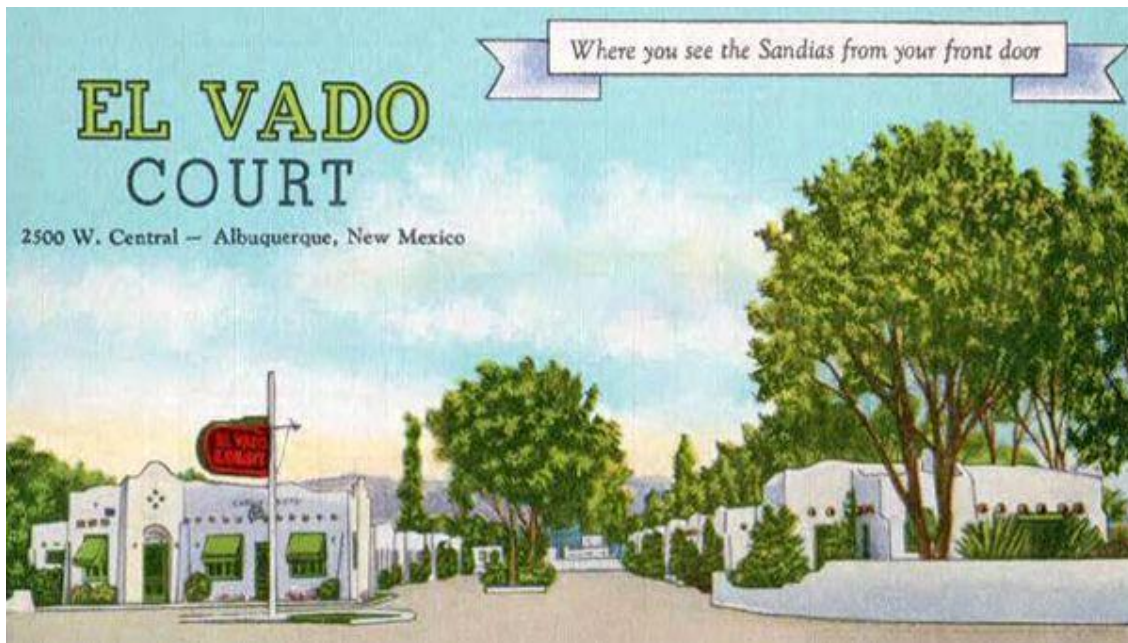
Nice for the MetroABQ, El Vado has re-emerged stronger than ever--a perfect local destination. Opening last July, it was transformed into a restaurant/brewery/shops/lodging/events center, with concerts in the courtyard during the summer. Overnight

accommodations are available in part of the original motel. The motel sits along Central Ave, in the Old Town area & across the street sits the [ABQ BioPark](#) complex, housing the Aquarium & Botanic Gardens.

Built by an Irish immigrant when the new Route 66 was being planned, he called it El Vado, 'the ford' in Spanish, for its location near the crossing on the Rio Grande where Bridge Street is today. The motel was designed in the [Spanish Pueblo Revival style](#). Purposeful irregularities give the motel the look of the nearby Pueblos. These include curvilinear & straight parapets, irregular massing, varying buttresses, & exposed wooden roof beams. When the motel opened in 1937, the local business journal *Albuquerque Progress* described the units as "swanky tile cabin suites."

From [LegendsofAmerica.com](#): "The motel consisted of 32 units, some of which were interspersed with covered carports, arranged in two parallel, one-story buildings facing a parking courtyard. When the motel opened, gas pumps were located along Central Avenue in front of the motel office. A flashy neon sign topped by an American Indian wearing a colorful headdress welcomed travelers on Route 66." Below is the El Vado Motel Sign & an El Vado postcard.





"For years, the El Vado retained a high degree of historic integrity because it was largely unaltered since its original construction. Route 66 historian David Kammer described the motel as "one of the best examples of a largely unaltered pre-World War II tourist courts remaining along Route 66 in New Mexico." Alterations over the years included the removal of the gas pumps in front of the motel office, the addition of a swimming pool & the painting of Southwest Indian designs on the façade. The El Vado's relatively unaltered appearance coupled with its spatial arrangement, remaining carports, & use of Spanish Pueblo Revival style conveyed a strong sense of the property's era. The El Vado is historically significant for its association with automobile tourism along Route 66; its role as an auto court in defining the MetroABQ's growth, appearance, & image; & its picturesque architectural style designed to attract tourism & immerse travelers in the exoticism & mystique of the Southwest. It was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1993."

The motel was bought & sold a couple of times. In 2005, with business falling off, the property was sold to a local developer who planned to tear it down & build luxury townhouses. However, Route 66 enthusiasts & historic preservationists lobbied to save the old auto court; the city stepped in & took it over, with plans to refurbish the

site into a mixed-use development that included a community food court, amphitheater, boutique motel & a small event center."

Unfortunately the Metro & the state were soon suffering through the Great Recession & many improvement projects were put on hold. The image directly above, taken in 2011 by [Roland Penttila](#), shows that the weeds & litter were barely being kept in check, & the doors & windows were still boarded-up.

The image below is a peak into the reimagined El Vado Motel private guest courtyard area, with an open-air pool & shaded places to relax or work. Notice the [undulating parapets](#), like waves connecting the rooms to each other. Below that is the front facade of the motel, with interesting wavy parapets & the four diamond holes above the inset lobby door arch. The lobby is the next image below--comfortable contemporary design in an historic building.





By 2018, the motel had undergone an \$18 million upgrade drawing from private &

public funds. Now the historic El Vado Motel is open once again. The 22-room motel features Mid-Century hand-made furnishings & one of a kind local artwork. Besides the ABQ BioPark as a neighbor, the [Rio Grande Bosque](#) & Tingley Beach are nearby; the motel is steps from the ABQ Country Club Golf Course, two blocks from Old Town shops & a short city bus trip almost anywhere else along the Rt 66/Mother Road corridor.

Two of the offerings--[Zendo Coffee](#) & the El Vado Taproom--have indoor dining spaces for use when ordering from any of the restaurants.

We ordered from Buen Provecho & found seats inside the [El Vado Taproom](#). The taproom, directly below, is part of the main Motel lobby/guest area & is rich in 1930's Pueblo Revival style, replete with viga beams, nichos & an arched kiva fireplace. The walls of the taproom are adorned with a very unique Rt 66/Mother Road map created from license plates, below, that follows Route 66 from it's beginning in Chicago, through the MetroABQ, finally ending in Los Angeles.

Back to [Buen Provecho](#), "a purveyor of fine Costa Rican dining along with a variety of Latin American dishes & desserts." They brought the meals, tracking us down in the taproom, where we had ordered a craft-brewed beer to compliment the spicy Latin American meal. There is plenty of shaded outdoor seating, but mid-winter it was pretty cold, so inside the taproom is a great alternative. Buen Provecho's food was very good--& the Ropa Vieja was fantastic!

Below is the El Vado Taproom bar & lounge, plus two images of the unique & extensive Rt. 66/Mother Road mural map, which adorns the walls the length of the bar & lounge rooms. Even further below are a few of the shops in the complex, all selling local products.

The El Vado is worth a stop by, especially to see what a classic Spanish Pueblo Revival motor court looked like 92 years ago...it looks almost the same today.







southwest
cactus



BUSH
HOLLAR
SANTAL
SANTAL
SANTAL
SANTAL

OPEN
TODAY
10:00 AM - 6:00 PM



The Colossal Mile Hi Uptown Hummingbird

This expansive mural adorns an apartment complex in the Mile Hi District, a thin stretch of commercial neighborhood on either side of San Pedro, near Uptown. "**Flutter**" faces east, toward San Pedro Blvd, & the convergence of numerous bike routes--the Haines & Zimmerman Trails, & the San Pedro & Indian School bike paths, part of the Metro's over [400 miles of bike trails](#). A few neighborhoods converge here, too & across San Pedro sits the entrance to the Tom Bolock Urban Forest Park, a green ribbon that runs adjacent to I-40. It has a large dog park & connects, under Louisiana Blvd, to the 12-acre Jerry Cline Park. On the west side of **Flutter** is another city greenspace, the almost 4-acre Alvarado Park sits a few blocks west of the mural, & is home to the Alvarado Park/[Mile Hi Farmers Market](#), beginning again this April.

Back to the hummingbird: it's a destination piece--massive, taking over most of a block. **Flutter** is painted on a concrete block wall, segmented into seven vertical sections, running the length of the building. With a few clicks, it was easy to find

that [Cloudface](#), the artist who created the mural, is nicely prolific. More can be found about him at [Muros ABQ](#), a site documenting mural work in the MetroABQ--they also have a fantastic, ever-expanding [map of mural](#) locations throughout the city. Also, Mural Fest, in its third year, helps artists create many of the murals. Images of them can also be [found here](#).



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