

::Summer::

**Downtown Historic Home Tour**  
**Something's Shakin' on Sackett Street**



The details on the door-knocker, above--the ring on her middle finger, the ruffles of the sleeve, the scalloped hinge--encourage you to take a closer look at the whole object. This Hand of Fatima door-knocker, that has lived on the front door of a home

for over a century now, was on the Downtown Historic Home Tour. At another angle, [it looks kind of moody](#). The Hand of Fatima is a universal symbol of protection, power, & strength dating back to ancient Mesopotamia. It's also believed to protect against negative energies & is a nicely protective talisman for pregnant women & newborn children. It also turns out to be a great place to start the Downtown [Historic Neighborhood Home Tour '24](#), too.

The door holding the hand, below, may be as old as the home, which dates back to 1918. The house also featured the original windows with leaded glass, original doors, wood trim, pocket doors & some original hardware.





**The Downtown Historic Home Tour '24.** The MetroABQ is an excellent place to live if you appreciate architecture. Our city has wonderful collections of buildings designed by creative architects of all stripes. Many of the styles are rather (Albu)quirky, so they feel like they should be here. To mention only a few, there's historic [adobe-built homes](#), classic [Bungalows](#), [Streamline Moderne](#), [Modern](#) & [Mid-Century Modern](#), [Post-Modern](#), & numerous Victorian contributions like the one above, found Downtown on the tour. The visual details is what makes these architectural gems stand out.

If Victorians & Craftsman Bungalows are some of your faves, then this year's Downtown Historic Homes Tour is your new friend. Started up again after a long covid hiatus, the '24 tour certainly didn't disappoint. It was all about the details: interesting little visual vignettes abounded from each of the 100+ year old houses.

Above is the recently renamed [El Cuervo ABQ Guest Rooms](#) building, which sits at the eastern edge of the [Fourth Ward Historic District](#); in another incarnation, it was called the [Mauger Estate B&B](#). It's almost 130 years old & clearly doesn't look its age. Below are some details that have endured, from the time when New Mexico was still a Territory. The dual oval windows are amazing- they hinge from the middle, opening the top in & the bottom out. The detailed brickwork on the red brick fireplace is also a treat for some lucky lodgers. [Here it is up close.](#)



Always, these tours present surprises--offering a very different vision than what you might expect. Above is a modern splash pool found in the backyard of one of the historic homes. I appreciate the glassed-in section, for two-way

underwater viewing.

Transoms are interesting relics not seen as much in the 21st century, now that electricity & air conditioning are universal. Back when, transom windows added natural light & airflow into the home. As they sit above the line of sight, they help maintain privacy. Three creative examples of original transom windows are below, all installed in 1912 & were made to open from the bottom up using metal hinges. Since then, one continues to be fully functional, while two have been sealed shut, yet still allowing light in.







**Wood details.** A good example is the decorative wood spindles, seen two images above, that separate the living area with the dining room. At another tour home, immediately above, a unique part of the fireplace mantel is a built-in double cabinet, consisting of two mirrored doors, one on each side of the central flue. The classic mirror moulding trim above that is actually holding up a mirror, instead of often-seen artwork.

**Window details.** You've got to love the prairie-style windows, below, unpainted after more than 100 years. They sit higher up the wall on the south side, leaving room for a

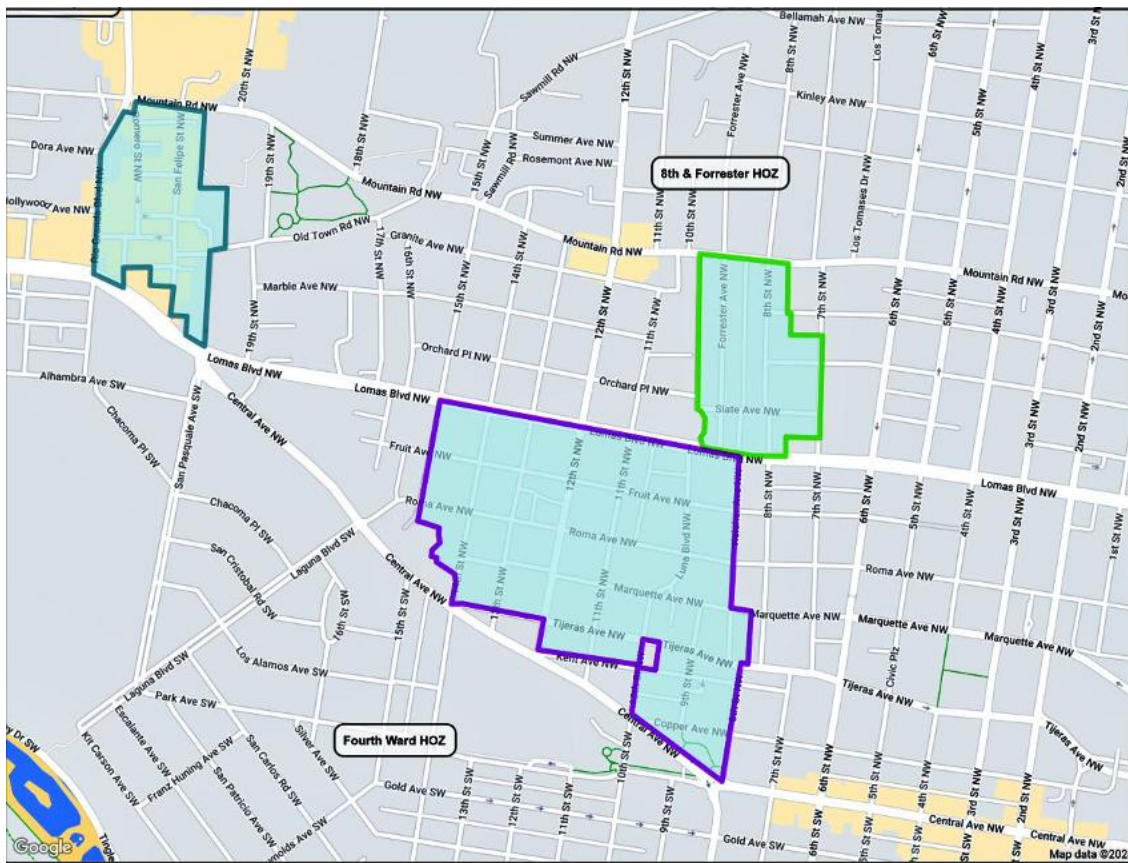
couch or cabinet underneath. Notice the almost ubiquitous mirror moulding above the windows, displaying artwork & more.



**Modern details.** Modern elements are incorporated in this historic home's back yard, above, with raw steel planters bordering the modern trex deck, along with steel edging; it's a good juxtaposition.

**Space details.** Most homes 100+ years ago were not built with large closets, or extra rooms to support a work-from-home office. There was potential space to expand in some of them, usually by reclaiming the unused attic into livable space, as one tour house had done. Another way to optimize space is converting the garage--usually only 20'x12' back then--into a living area. A home on the tour did just that, seen in the image below, by turning the garage into an artist studio, with windows & a ductless heating/cooling system.





### Downtown Historic Districts Map

Three of the four designated historic Downtown neighborhoods are depicted above: the Old Town Historic District is in the top left; 8th & Forrester is to the east, & the large Fourth Ward Historic District, deep blue on the map, takes up the middle & is where the historic tour takes place, every other year.

In alternating years, the [Huning Highlands Historic District](#) sponsors the tour, which tends to feature its fabulous Victorians. The tours both coincide with Mother's Day, in case you feel like buying your mother an historic home for her special day.

A map of [all historic Districts in the MetroABQ](#) is [here](#).



**Bungalow-style.** The home above was one of the tour participants & is a classic Craftsman Bungalow, with decorative beams under the gables. The porch is still a porch, as the numerous owners over the last 100 years decided not to incorporate it into the interior squarefootage, as many often do.



### **The Hesselden House**

The home I looked forward to the most wound up not opening to the public that day. The Hesselden House, above, is a three-story, red sandstone Italianate-style duplex, the 1st duplex built in the MetroABQ, featuring a rare mansard roof. The benefit of that type of roof--a steep pitch on the four sides with a flat-ish roof on top--was that it turned unusable attic space into a livable extra floor. Built in 1882, just as the railroad had made its way into New Mexico, it still stands today, one of the few surviving stone buildings in the city.

The architectural details make it difficult to turn away: gabled dormer windows with polychrome blue & burgundy Queen Ann trim, blue supporting brackets on light orange soffits, & although there is no discernible pattern to the placement of the red sandstones, they seem to start out smaller & become larger the further up the structure you look. The chimney alone stands out for its sheer four-story tallness & detailed brickwork--see the image above & detailed close-up below.

Standing in the shadow of the 142 year old building & taking it all in, even though I didn't go in, was an excellent conclusion to the '24 Downtown Historic Home Tour.





### **Something Shakin on Sackett Street**

"Don't tell me this town ain't got no heart, you just gotta poke around..."

~Robert Hunter with the Grateful Dead





### [Fruit Ave Sidewalk Gallery, aka Sackett Street](#)

When Downtown for any reason--the Historic Homes Tour in this case--I try to walk or drive past the [Sackett Street Sidewalk Gallery](#) on Fruit Ave. For the five+ years I've known about it, there's been a rotating public abstract sculpture garden lining the block, between Luna Blvd & Keleher Ave. From his website, it seems the artist has been embellishing the area with his sculptures for a bit longer.

Local Burqueño [Joe Forrest Sackett](#) is the prolific artist behind the sculptures. Neighbors on the block allow him to install pieces in front of their houses in the parkway, on both sides of the street, for the public to enjoy. That's a pretty sweet relationship.

From [Sackett's site](#): "*I discovered the wondrous flexibility & adaptability of steel as a medium of artistic expression. Infinitely forgiving, steel lends itself to improvisation. I like that. My work is hard to characterize. I don't like to make the same thing twice, but there are recognizable themes.*"

Above is a great piece--here's [another angle](#). Below are but a few of the current crop of sculptures found on Downtown's Sackett Street. They're great additions to an already interesting area, & always open to the public...I'm thrilled to own a Sackett Sculpture. It was generously gifted to me by excellent clients who learned about the [Sackett Sculptures in 2019](#).





Walking the blocks beyond Sackett Street, you catch glimpses of other patron neighbors, displaying some of his work--there's a Sackett Mailbox (similar to "Rural Delivery") around the corner; & don't miss the red tower on the 4th block of 12th st NW, seen just below. There are others-- you just gotta poke around.



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