

A Century on NOB HILL

Albuquerque's Nob Hill neighborhood is a testament to vision. When the area, now one of the most vibrant walkable districts in the city, was conceived in 1916, it was a dusty mesa on the outskirts of town. Development in New Mexico's largest city had long huddled along the agricultural Rio Grande, near the railroad depot. But in the mid-1910s, developer "Colonel" D.K.B. Sellers conceptualized a suburb. As plans progressed, he spied the hill along Carlisle Boulevard climbing toward Lead Avenue, and it struck him as reminiscent of San Francisco's tony and elevated Nob Hill. He even

Albuquerque's coolest 'hood welcomes new kids to the block

BY ASHLEY M. BIGGERS

encouraged prospective residents to "move out of the low zone and up to the ozone," as one marketing pamphlet noted.

Between 1916 and 1926, developers platted four of the six sections of Nob Hill, expanding the neighborhood's popularity and its boundaries.

Central Avenue, Albuquerque's main thoroughfare, bisected the

neighborhood and became part of the Main Street of America when, in 1937, Route 66 was rerouted here. The realignment transformed the residential Nob Hill into a fast-growing commercial district as Route 66 hotels, restaurants, and shops took root.

Although economic recessions have periodically shuttered storefronts, a century later, Nob Hill retains much of its distinctive architecture—a mix of Southwestern, Mediterranean, Streamline Moderne, and others—while continuing to grow and change with the times. The following are a few of the neighborhood's hot spots that mix the historic with the modern.

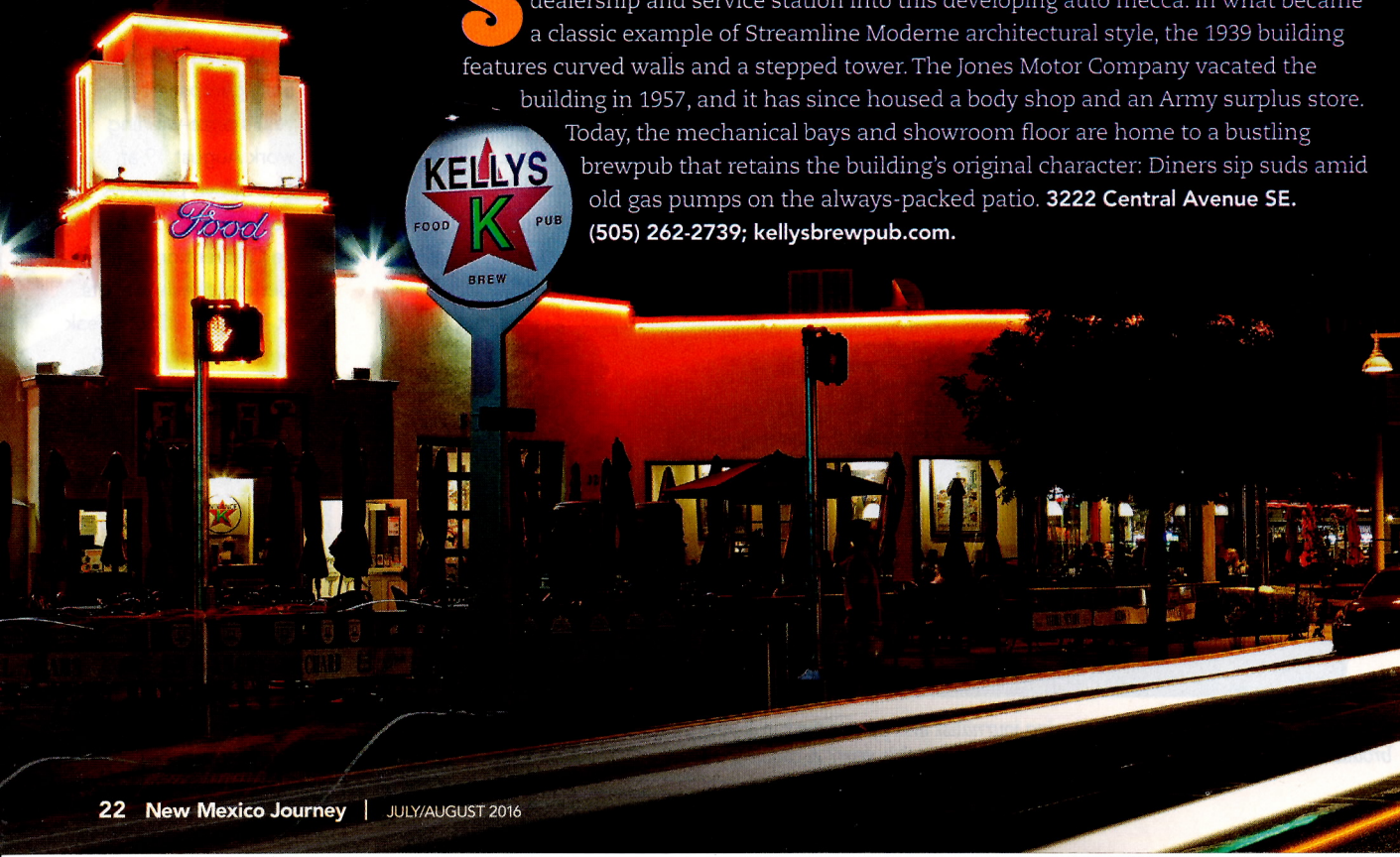
1939: Jones Motor Company

TODAY >>>

KELLYS BREW PUB

Shortly after Route 66 came through town, the Jones family moved its Ford dealership and service station into this developing auto mecca. In what became a classic example of Streamline Moderne architectural style, the 1939 building features curved walls and a stepped tower. The Jones Motor Company vacated the building in 1957, and it has since housed a body shop and an Army surplus store.

Today, the mechanical bays and showroom floor are home to a bustling brewpub that retains the building's original character: Diners sip suds amid old gas pumps on the always-packed patio. **3222 Central Avenue SE. (505) 262-2739; kellysbrewpub.com.**





1947: Nob Hill Business Center

TODAY >>> NOB HILL BUSINESS CENTER

The Nob Hill Business Center is synonymous with the neighborhood, in no small part due to the large Nob Hill sign erected above it. Designed by architect Louis Hesselden, the shopping center was the first automobile-oriented strip mall in the city. Like the Jones Motor Company building, the center reflects a Streamline Moderne style that echoes the sleek design of vintage automobiles. Over the decades, the center has housed a dentist office, shops, and a grocery store. La Montañita Co-op is the standard-bearer of the neighborhood grocer today. Mariposa Gallery, a showcase for contemporary crafts, has held down its corner spot since 1974. It features mostly Albuquerque artists, including Marcia Sednek, who sculpts miniature dresses out of upcycled materials—one even uses cheese graters. Scalo Northern Italian Grill is another neighborhood landmark. It has served globally inspired bistro fare since the 1980s; these days, it's also popular for live music from bands such as Le Chat Lunatique. **3500 Central Avenue SE.**

HOME TO:

Mariposa Gallery
(505) 268-6828;
mariposa-gallery.com.

La Montañita Co-op
(505) 265-4631;
lamontanita.coop.

Scalo (505) 255-8781;
scalonobhill.com.

And more...



1940s: Berg Auto Supply

**TODAY >>> EMPIRE
BOARD GAME LIBRARY**

The brick front of the former auto supply store was at one point given a new curvilinear façade and whitewashed during its evolution into the Empire Board Game Library. At this recent neighborhood addition, some 700 board games can be checked out for family game night at the library—it's one of the few nightspots that doesn't serve alcohol and welcomes all ages. Instead, players can fuel up on locally roasted Agapao coffee and glazed goodies from Rebel Donuts. **3503 Central Avenue NE. (505) 232-4263; empiregamelibrary.com.**

1936: Monte Vista Fire Station

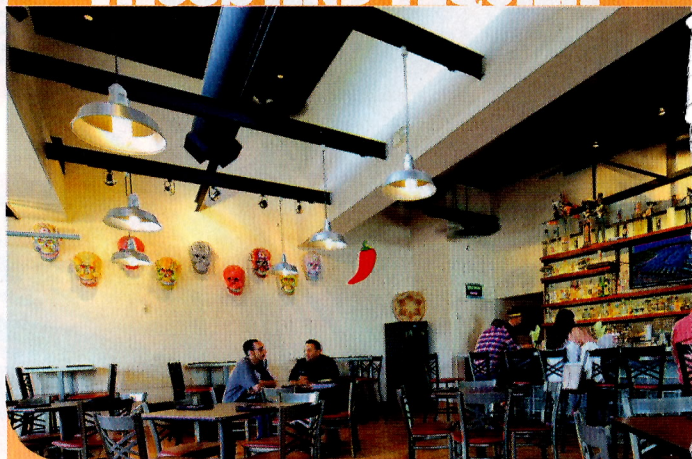
**TODAY >>> MONTE VISTA FIRE STATION
RESTAURANT AND BAR**

Constructed with Works Progress Administration funds, this Spanish Revival-style building features a three-story tower (handy for drying fire hoses) and 14-foot-tall doors that could be opened quickly when firefighters were called. Placed on the National Register of Historic Places, the building found a second life about 30 years ago when proprietors opened this laid-back restaurant and offered a nod to the building's origins by incorporating the fire station's name and many architectural elements. The second-story loft is now a tavern, and those huge doors lead to one of three patios. The restaurant is just as popular for its live music as for its bacon-wrapped jalapeños and New Mexico green-chile egg rolls. **3201 Central Avenue NE. (505) 255-2424; themontevistafirestation.com.**



1938: Dr Pepper Bottling Plant

**TODAY >>> ZACATECAS
TACOS AND TEQUILA**



The high-ceilinged industrial space on Central Avenue at Amherst Drive once was a bottling plant that stocked soda fountains at businesses along Route 66. Today, the royal-blue building houses the 2013 James Beard Award semifinalist for Best New Restaurant. Created by chef Mark Kiffin, the mastermind behind The Compound in Santa Fe, Zacatecas serves Mexican-inspired tacos and design-your-own margaritas with tequila exclusively from our neighbor to the south.

3423 Central Avenue NE. (505) 255-8226; zacatecastacos.com.

Ashley M. Biggers is an Albuquerque-based writer.

Summer of 66

During **Route 66 Summerfest**, which this year is July 16, a mile of the historic Mother Road is closed to car traffic so festival-goers can enjoy live music, a classic-car show, food trucks, a beer- and wine-garden, and shopping. For more information, call (505) 923-0759 or visit route66central.com.

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for more about
Route 66.

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