

Old hotels give new life to downtown

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Mural sign for Hotel McCoy (Source: Hotel McCoy)

By Bud Foster

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TUCSON, AZ (Tucson News Now) - Downtown Tucson is seeing a rebirth of old hotels, restaurants and office space, all repackaged for the future.

The Silverbell Inn was designed in 1967 and built in 1970. It was a popular hotel just off of Interstate 10 and 29th Street, but years of neglect took its toll and the hotel fell into serious disrepair.

Enter Caterpillar.

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As the new \$53 million Surface Mining Corporate Headquarters gets ready to open in spring 2019 at Congress and I-10, it is creating opportunities for those with an imagination.

One of those, Nicole Dahl, the creative designer and general manager of The Hotel McCoy, who, along with a group of California investors has created a one-of-a-kind hotel in Tucson.

"This is a really special concept," she said. "This is Tucson here."

The hotel retains its retro, mid-century architecture but combined with the modern amenities travelers have come to expect.

"Why invest millions of dollars into making another high rise when there's already a beautiful building with beautiful bones right here that could be renovated," she said. "I think the bones of the building are beautiful, the arches, the expanded beams."

Everything about the new hotel screams Tucson, especially the art.

"Every single piece of art here was done by a Tucson artist," Dahl said. "And that was really our only stipulation that it has to be a Tucson artist."

Art hangs from just about every corner of the office, the hospitality and meeting areas, as well as the rooms themselves.

The artists, of course, sell their works and all of the profits go to the artist, there is no cut for the house. An unusual agreement but one which has artists clamoring to get their work displayed here.

But what's most noticeable are the murals, a Tucson tradition.

"We're Tucson's hotel so we decided let's do the mural thing and let's do it all the way," she said. "Every place where there's wall space has a mural, or will have a mural."



Mural at Hotel McCoy (Source: Hotel McCoy)

The hotel opened 40 of its 93 rooms but hopes to have all of them open by the time they hold the grand opening Saturday, Oct. 13.

The pool has been redone, the furniture, all mid century and all local, there is a place for yoga and even for outdoor concerts and movies.

Dahl traveled for business for years and while she appreciates the finer qualities of the big chain hotels, it was always hard to find local flavor unless she went out specifically to find it.

Here, with the McCoy, she's hoping the business travelers, who don't have a lot of time to travel about, will find the flavor of Tucson in the hotel.

All the food, beer, coffees, wines and other amenities are strictly Tucson.

Even all the parking spots have been named for famous Tucsonans like Steve Kerr, or attractions, like Mount Lemmon.

There's even a 'Hey Dude' parking space.

"It was my favorite show when I was growing up," Dahl said.

In the final analysis, it's a business and "Yes we're here to make money and be successful," she said. "But if people have good outcome and people have happy memories, it's a win-win-win all around."

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