Welcome to downtown Albuquerque and the marked trail connecting the plazas of Downtown and Old Town. These public plazas, built more than 250 years apart, represent Albuquerque as a tiny 18th-century settlement and as the burgeoning city it has become. Walking from plaza to plaza reveals an Albuquerque that can hardly be enjoyed from inside a car or bus. See the historic neighborhoods and buildings, public art, and distinctive design. Step lively and mind the traffic—you’re in for a treat and some exercise.

Your trailhead was built on two downtown blocks in 1972. Downtown grew alongside the Santa Fe Railroad, which arrived locally in 1880 on its way west. Before Civic Plaza’s construction, an important highway ran through here. New Mexico Route 1, later the first local alignment of Route 66 and US 85, passed north-south through this space along Fourth Street. Now that ex-roadway is a promenade joining Marquette and Tierras Avenues north and south of Civic Plaza. But you’re headed west—read on.

Now a bed-and-breakfast inn, the house was in sorry shape when listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1984. Its eventual renovation restored many features of the house including the open front porch, which had been walled and stuffed.

William Lyon house
501 Roma NW

Dr. Lyon supervised construction of its first adobe rooms in 1892 while corresponding with his fiancée, Corie Bowman of Mesilla Park in southern New Mexico. His pre-nuptial letters cover topics from house- and garden progress to the relationship between theology and the theory of evolution.

Whitmer-Mckinnon house
504 Luna Boulevard NW

This Tudor Revival Style house of 1909 is Albuquerque’s earliest documented architectural design by a woman. Daughter of an English-born architect, Kate Nichols married Amado Chavez, a lawyer, politician, and New Mexico’s first superintendent of public instruction. She designed and supervised construction of the house, then drafted more detailed plans, completing the picture.

Kate nichols chaves house
507 Fern NW

Built in 1912 for Mr. and Mrs. Roy Stamm, this bungalow’s details reflect the Arts and Crafts movement of the day. New Mexico attained statehood in 1912. Mr. Stamm prospered in the wholesale fruit business and found adventure in early airplane, ballooning, and automobiles. His articles for New Mexico Magazine praised fishing, skiing, and camping. The title of his autobiography, For Me, The Sun, affirms his love of New Mexico’s climate.

Our Old Town trailhead was built in 1882, when few houses stood between Old Town and the rail line to the east at New Albuquerque, this was an imposing duplex. Inside, two-story-rooms shared a central stair leading to a surprisingly spacious attic. An 1886 bird’s-eye view of Albuquerque shows the house with a windmill behind. Home to the University Institute for some of the 1890s and then the Hesselden family, the house was rented later as apartments. Its sandstone walls are rare in Albuquerque, as is the mansard roof. It is now a residence and bed- and-breakfast inn.
This eclectic delight in stucco and red and green tile recalls the state question of New Mexico – “Red or green?”, as in which kind of chile do you prefer on your enchiladas?

**SCULPTURE/SEATING,**

Federico Armijo designed the artwork across Lomas from this trail. It was funded by the city’s 1% for Arts program and installed as Lomas was rebuilt and landscaped in 1983.

**COUSE OF ACEQUIA MADRE DE ALBUQUERQUE (CROSSES LOMAS BETWEEN 17TH AND 19TH)**

The “mutter ditch” of the local irrigation system no longer flows through here, an area marked by parking lots and other non-agricultural features. Part of an irrigation system older than the United States government, this ditch is a memory while others still trace parts of the Rio Grande valley. The Acequia Madre watered gardens, orchards, and powered grist mills such as La Molina de Rafael Duran, a 1706 Spanish settlement and 1880 railroad boomtown were called a century ago.

**1803 LOMAS NW (ACROSS LOMAS FROM TRAIL)**

This old house of low, irregular profile hints at its wall material—adobe bricks. Sun-baked and laid with mud mortar, adobe walls can be straight or wavy but they nearly always have “soft” edges. An adobe house this sculptural is usually intentionally so.

**Las Mesas” Bus Stop (ACROSS LOMAS FROM TRAIL)**

This house’s adobe accents, heavy timber porch, and mix of desert and alpine plantings add up to rural southwestern charm, another hint of what lies ahead in Old Town.

**CROSS LOMAS BOULEVARD at San Pasquale traffic signal, CROSS SAN PASQUALE and go west along the north side of Old Town**

Imagine a massive stone building on this bare site, its front entry and pyramid-topped tower facing where you stand. It was the Bernallillo County Courthouse built in 1886. Vacated when the County seat moved downtown in the 1930s, it housed the San Felipe School until its demolition in 1959.

**CROSS SAN FELIPE STREET and follow it north to the Old Town Plaza**

The portal shades the sidewalk at the corner of San Felipe and South Plaza. Across San Felipe Street stands the Ambrosio Armijo House, now La Placita Dining Rooms. These Armijo houses have marked a plaza’s southeastern entry since their construction between 1880 and 1885. In those years New Albuquerque was booming 13 miles eastward. That new town and this old one eventually became one city, but not officially until 1949.

**OLD TOWN PLAZA**

Here is the historic heart of Albuquerque, where the pace slows and pedestrians find refuge from fast traffic. Old Town’s official beginning was April 25, 1706, when Francisco Cervantes y Valdez, Spanish Governor of New Mexico, certified the founding of the Villa of Albuquerque (note original spelling). Spain’s Laws of the Indies, in effect at the time, required setting a plaza at the center of any villa. This plaza fronts the San Felipe Nen Church complex, the dominant historic buildings in Old Town. Built in 1793, the church has seen many additions and alterations, some delightfully decorative. For example, the two-carpet Gothic, wooden steeples and belfries went on in 1861-62. As at downtown Albuquerque’s Civic Plaza, an important road once ran through the Old Town Plaza. El Camino Real de Tierra Adentro, the Royal Road of the Interior Lands, connected New Mexico’s Spanish capitals, San Gabriel and later, Santa Fe, with Mexico City. From 1598 until the opening of the Santa Fe Trail in 1821, El Camino Real was the main route into New Mexico for people, animals, and goods from distant places. Now El Camino Real is a National Historic Trail designated by the U.S. government, and its importance becomes better known as time passes. Pass some time in Old Town and enjoy yourself! Shops, galleries, restaurants and cafes await you along Old Town’s byways. Several public museums line Mountain Road nearby. For further guidance find the Visitor Center in Plaza Don Luis, the shopping complex westward, across Romero Street, from San Felipe Church.

**RETURNING DOWNTOWN Walk back for twice the exercise or...**

**STOP BY A ALBUQUERQUE CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU**

**VISITORS INFORMATION CENTERS Stop by a Albuquerque Convention & Visitors Bureau information center for a variety of visitor information materials, including calendars of events and brochures describing local and out-of-town dining tours.**

**ALBUQUERQUE VISITORS INFORMATION: 800-284-2282 www.visitabq.org**