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 its 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 65, passed north-south through this space along Fourth Street. Now that ex-roadway is a promenade along Fourth Street. Now that north-south through this space along the route.

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13 SCULPTURE/SEATING, LOMAS

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.

15 TURN LEFT at 14th & Lomas, go west along the south side of Lomas Boulevard

Federico Armiño 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.

17 COURSE OF ACEQUIA MADRE DE ALBUQUERQUE (ACROSS LOMAS BETWEEN 17TH AND 19TH)

The “mutter dich” 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 marker of the acequia’s role in the city’s past.

18 SCULPTURE/SEATING, LOMAS

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.

19 SAN FELIPE SCHOOL PLAYGROUND

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 1856. Vacated when the County seat moved downtown in the 1930s, it housed the San Felipe School until its demolition in 1959.

20 CROSS LOMAS BOULEVARD at San Pasquale traffic signal, CROSS SAN PASQUALE and go west along the north side of Lomas

The portal shades the sidewalk from the right. This is the old Plaza Road joining San Felipe Street with the north side of Lomas. Here is the historic heart of Albuquerque, where the pace slows and pedestrians find refuge from fast traffic.

21 CRISTOBAL ARMIJO HOUSE, SAN FELIPE & SOUTH PLAZA

This Old Town house is not so old—built in 1910-12 in what was then a modernistic form—the American Foursquare. It seems out of place in Old Town—the metal tile roof, flattened arch porch openings, and ceilings of omnately stamped metal evoke places far east of here. Charles Bottger, its builder, came to Albuquerque in hopes of improving his health, as did many during the early 20th century. To build his home Bottger demolished a 40-room adobe house—that of General Manuel Armijo. Three-time governor of New Mexico during its Mexican Period, 1821-1846.

22 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 Cuervo y Valdéz, Spanish Governor of New Mexico, certified the founding of the Villa of Alburquerque (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 Carpenter-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.

14 TURN RIGHT at Civic Plaza, the starting point of this trail. Even so, you’ll twice the exercise or...