

Unser Trail/Mariposa Trail/Riverview Trail

Parking:

Parking along residential streets at south end of trail, accessed from Anderson Hill Ave. or Rio Clara Ave. off Unser Blvd. or near the intersection of Blake Rd. and Unser Blvd.

Lot at Alamosa Community Center, on Coors Blvd. between Bridge Blvd. and Central Ave.

At Petroglyphs National Monument lots at Rinconada Canyon (corner of St. Josephs and Unser Blvd.) and the park's visitor center (on Western Trails west of Unser Blvd.)

Parking lot at little Story Rock Park at northwest end of Tiwa Place NW.

At the northwest end of Atrisco Dr., as it curves up to Unser near Petra Pointe Rd.

At Mariposa Basin Park

On residential streets in the development called Rancho Sereno near the north end of the trail, including Butterfield Trail, where the trail meets the road.

Public transit (on ABQ Ride's bicycle-rack equipped buses):

Rapid Ride 766 route or regular route 66 to Unser Blvd. and Central Ave. and/or Route 198 to Dennis Chavez and Unser.

Rapid Ride 790 route to Eagle Ranch Rd. and Coors Blvd.

You'll find the beginning (or end) of this long trail that overlooks much of the West Side of Albuquerque



a mile up the hill west from the busy intersection of Coors Blvd. and Rio Bravo Blvd./Dennis Chaves Rd. (The same road is Rio Bravo east of Coors and Dennis Chavez to the west of that busy arterial.) Had there been a trail here 20 years ago, you would have seen a few hardy homesteads perched precariously on the sandy slopes, as development had its western border very close to Rio Bravo Blvd. In the intervening years, the "frontier" has advanced almost to the top of the hill – to the *ceja*, as the Spanish settlers called it – the

"eyebrow" of the Rio Grande. The beginning of this trail sits right along the east side of Unser Blvd.; at the moment this is written, the corner is barren, but developments are closing in. A mile west of this intersection, the Atrisco Heritage High School rises as the largest building nearby; its website, <https://aha-aps-nm.schoolloop.com>. The website gives a hint to the importance of this school in its neighborhood – for education of course, but also in health care, entertainment events in its large

auditorium/theater, and in maintaining the vibrant culture of the nearby populations. You'll learn more about those populations and their history as you follow this trail.

As you head north from here, you're not far from the center of the Atrisco Land Grant, awarded to a trusted soldier by the victorious re-conquistador and then governor, Diego de Vargas, after the reconquest of New Mexico in 1692. The reconquest in 1692, 12 years after the Pueblo Revolt had sent Spanish settlers packing south to El Paso, was largely peaceful. Nevertheless Vargas felt he owed a debt of gratitude to his victorious aides; Fernando Duran y Chaves was deeded some 50,000 acres on what is now Albuquerque's West Mesa, but before there was an Albuquerque.

The grant stretched from the Rio Grande to the western ceja (about 15 miles from east to west), and from near the present-day street Western Trail on the north to near the current street Pajarito Rd. (about 2 ½ miles south of the start of this trail), a distance of about ten miles. Initially, the western border of the Atrisco Land Grant was at the top of what is now called Nine-Mile Hill. The early inhabitants of Atrisco, called atrisqueños, were pasturing their flocks on the west side of the ceja before then; the addition of what had been initially the Rio Puerco Grant, made to Ana de Sandoval y



Improved house on part of the Atrisco Land Grant near the trail.

Manzanares in the 18th century, occurred in 1894 by action of the Federal Court of Private Land Claims; the consolidated grant occupied some 83,000 acres.

Early Spanish settlement on the grant was largely on the rich Rio Grande Valley land along the

river. The settlers grew wheat and corn, squash and potatoes, grapes and fruit and kept cattle and sheep. There were, of course, neither bicycles nor bicycle trails then; settlers relied entirely upon their horses for transportation. At the time the grant was made there were few or no Native Americans living within the grant borders, though history records the depredations of Apache raiders on many occasions, most notably in 1704. The founding of Albuquerque in 1706 put a few soldiers and another settlement in the way of the bands that came through Tijeras Canyon to prey on the small settlements of Albuquerque and Atrisco. No, the name of the town is not mis-spelled in this narrative: the first "r" was apparently dropped at the end of the 19th century by a railroad clerk, and the change persisted.

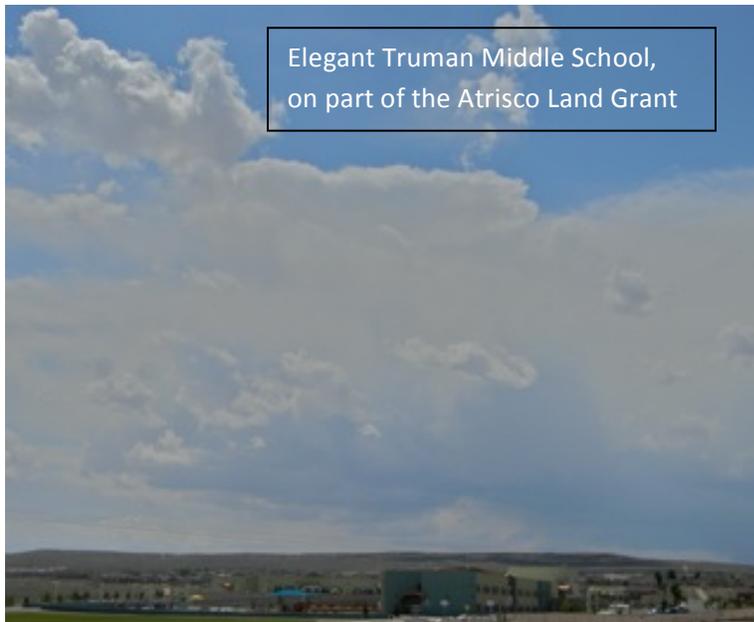
Atrisqueños were often at war among themselves regarding land sales and exchanges, boundaries and water rights. Initially the direct heirs of Duran y Chaves had attempted to keep the land within the family, though others soon joined family members in owning parts of the vast acreage. Thus what had been a private land grant in 1694 soon became a de facto community land grant, but court battles among inhabitants continued through the ensuing three centuries.

One source of conflict was land; another was sheep. Large sheep-owners often made use of the *partido* system, a type of sharecropping that applied to animal husbandry. The owners ceded care of large herds to *partidarios*, who agreed to pay back the original owners in ewes and rams, meat and wool. It's hard now to imagine the West Mesa covered with sheep, as there seems to be relatively little grass now, and a large part of the West Mesa – the eastern part of the Atrisco Grant – is largely filled with homes on small plots.

Land disputes have figured heavily in conflict among the residents of the grant since, whether during the Spanish period ending in 1821, the Mexican government of the next 25 years, or the American regime in the years following 1846, both before and after the Court of Private Land Claims adjudicated the grant in 1894. The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo of 1848 ended the Mexican-American War and addressed but did not fully settle the issue of the Spanish- and Mexican-era land grants.

Joseph Sánchez, the historian who has written the definitive history of the Atrisco Land Grant, “Between Two Rivers,” states that “The failure of the U.S. government to adjudicate titles and ownership of many Spanish and Mexican land grants in the nineteenth century has proved to be one of the most shameful affairs in American history.” Congress, perhaps realizing the extent to which the almost half century of delay had exerted hardship on those whose lives depended on the affected land, in 1891 created a Court of Private Land Claims, which ruled on claims from the Southwest, not including California. A large majority of the cases involved land in New Mexico.

In 1892, the Bernalillo County District Court created the Town of Atrisco; almost immediately, the



Elegant Truman Middle School,
on part of the Atrisco Land Grant

town's Board of Trustees became embroiled with the City of Albuquerque in litigation regarding land claimed by both jurisdictions. The Atlantic and Pacific Railroad Company, whose tracks had reached Albuquerque more than a decade before on the east side of the Rio Grande, entered the case along with the city. But the Court of Private Land Claims recognized the existence of the Atrisco Land Grant as a community land grant, and fixed its boundaries. Continued litigation delayed the final result, but in 1905, President Teddy Roosevelt finally signed the patent

approving the Court of Private Land Claims result. In its 13 years of existence, the Court of Private Land Claims confirmed fewer than half of the 290 claims it settled, and only 21 were confirmed for all of the land claimed. Atrisco was one of those 21; Joseph Sánchez suggests that the internal Atrisco court battles had prepared the atrisqueños well for the prolonged US court challenges.

However, the twentieth century saw an unhappy continuance of the court battles among some of the grant's inhabitants. In 1967, some of the Atrisco land grant heirs incorporated as Westland Development Company and took possession of the land, and the Town of Atrisco ceased to exist. Other land grant heirs formed an Atrisco Land Rights Council in opposition. For almost 30 contentious years, Westland held title to the land, but in a hotly contested decision of 2006, sold it to a California corporation, SunCal. SunCal's Westland subdivision, which had a grand plan for a major planned community on the West Side, was declared bankrupt in 2010, and its assets on the West Mesa of the Rio Grande were acquired by one of its chief creditors, a branch of Barclay's Bank.

A recent development is the founding of the Town of Atrisco Grant-Merced, authorized by the 2011 New Mexico State Legislature. Jesus (Jesse) Anzures, one of the new town's trustees and its treasurer, noted that in 2012, the new town was occupied by some 90,000 people, only a minority of whom were eligible by heredity to be actual town members. The mid-twentieth century estimate of heirs of Don Fernando and other early settlers was about 6000, descendants of the original 200 families who settled in the Duran y Chavez Grant in the 17th and 18th centuries. Mr. Anzures estimated that there were 5500 heirs living on grant land in 2012, with a total of 10,000 in the Albuquerque metropolitan area and 35,000 throughout the country. For more information, go to [http:// www.atriscolandgrant.com/](http://www.atriscolandgrant.com/) or <http://www.atriscoheritagefoundation.org>,

The new town is a curious entity, having no power of taxation and needing to coordinate its activities with the overlapping jurisdictions of the City of Albuquerque and Bernalillo County. Mr. Anzures wanted to make it clear that other inhabitants of the grant's area were welcome, and would be entitled to use the common lands that Atrisco Grant – Merced is seeking to keep intact. The town also hoped to perpetuate the cultural values of the early Spanish settlers, and declared its intention to mobilize Grant heirs and residents to clean up the land, some of which has been used as dumping grounds for centuries. Most recently, a large portion of the Atrisco Land Grant has been discussed as the site for an enormous housing and commercial development named Santolina. The often-contentious discussion was ongoing as of this writing in June 2019; proponents cite economic benefits, while opponents are concerned about sprawl and lack of water resources.

Heading north on the bicycle trail, you soon (at 0.7 miles) cross two storm control drains of



Amole Detention Basin, with Manzano Mountains behind.

concrete: the Sacate Diversion Channel drains an arroyo coming from the southwest, and the Amole Arroyo crosses the bike trail almost immediately afterwards, from the northwest. Both channels would empty any water they might be carrying into the Amole Detention Basin, to the right down a very short



segment of trail to the east at the Amole Arroyo underpass. This is the first of four very large dams you'll pass along this route – the others are Ladera Dam/Golf Course, Mariposa Dam/Park, and Piedras Marcadas Dam – to impound flood waters coming off the escarpment to the west; all four are usually dry and used for other purposes almost all of the time. Here the Amole Arroyo is finished in a rippling, textured brown concrete, unlike most of the flat gray concrete used elsewhere in the city. The Amole Arroyo (amole is the Spanish word for the soap-root plant, not related to guac-amole) itself is accompanied to the northwest by another bike trail, which continues northwest along the paved arroyo formed by the confluence of Amole Arroyo and Snow Vista Channel; that bike trail continues northwest along Snow Vista Channel across Snow Vista Blvd. to near Central Ave. and then continues in fits and starts until reaching the Westland North community at the far west part of the city, just north of Interstate-40; a brief summary of its course follows:

Descend into the bottom of the Amole Arroyo on the paved trail. To the east is the Amole Detention Basin, a massive bathtub, usually empty, waiting for someone to toss a football or hit a golf ball as long as the arroyos leading into it are devoid of water. To the west, the paved trail rises alongside the arroyo after passing under Unser Blvd. Watch for Truman Middle School and then the Westgate Heights Community Center shortly afterwards, on your right across the arroyo before you get to Benavides Rd. There, at Benavides, cross to the west side of Snow Vista Blvd. to continue along the Snow Vista Arroyo. You'll be on the edge of the arroyo until just south of Central Ave., but the trail stops abruptly, so turn right (east) on Tower Rd. to get back down to 98th St. (the continuation of Snow Vista Blvd.). Continue north on 98th Street, over Interstate-40; be careful here, since cars are speeding and there is little or no shoulder or bike lane. On the north side of I-40, the bike trail resumes along the east side of 98th, which has morphed again into Arroyo Vista Blvd. Just north of I-40 is also the start of the I-40 Trail, described in its own article. Continue alongside Arroyo Vista until you reach Tierra Pintada, just below the high school sports fields, Nusenda Stadium. You and the trail will turn right down Tierra Pintada, past new housing developments down the hill to Unser Blvd. again.

Why should you take this 6.5 mile detour (staying along the Unser Trail from the Amole Arroyo to Unser and Tierra Pintada would be just 5.1 miles)? You get some wonderful views of the Sandia and Manzano Mountains, especially as you descend Tierra Pintada; however, otherwise, the view is mostly of the backyard fences of new housing developments, as it is along the parallel stretch of Unser Blvd.

Another rather similar view awaits you if you choose the 1.6-mile Amole del Norte Trail that parallels the Unser Trail between Blake and Sage Roads a few blocks east of Unser. The concrete-lined flood-control arroyo has been extensively graffitied, and just as extensively painted over. The Amole del Norte Trail passes pretty Mountain View Park where you get – a fine mountain view – and a fine place to eat lunch.

The Unser Trail, though, passes the Amole Arroyo over a bridge, heading north. At about 1.0 miles, you'll come across one of the older houses that pioneered out here on the West Mesa – several small

outbuildings covered with patchwork corrugated steel sheathing look a little out of place among the more recently built and close-packed homes. Shortly afterwards, the trail crosses Blake Road.

At 2.1 miles, Arenal Rd., an old South Valley street, meets Unser from the east; west of here the road is called Sapphire St. and heads west a short distance to one of the few parks in this section of Albuquerque/Atrisco Grant-Merced, Western Heights Park. Other major West Mesa streets crossed are Sage Road, at 2.4, Tower Road at 2.9, and Bridge Blvd. at 3.4 miles. Taking Bridge east half a mile gets you very close to the Alamosa Community Center, with its library and clinic.

Then you reach the Mother Road, old US-66, Central Avenue, itself, at 3.8 miles, which dates to 1937. Both Central and Unser around this corner have seen much recent commercial development, with Central lined by a number of small motels, gas stations, restaurants and other small businesses as the road ascends Nine Mile Hill to meet Interstate-40 at the top. At the intersection itself, you will find a city bus transportation center, two large medical clinics, and an architecture award-winning new branch library, replete with books, computers, many study rooms and even a fireplace in a comfortable reading space. The bus transportation center currently serves as the west terminus of the Albuquerque Rapid Transit (ART), limited stop 766 and 777 bus lines, which from here head east along Central to Louisiana Blvd. and then north to the Uptown Shopping Center or to Tramway and Central. Like all of

Albuquerque's buses, the articulated buses sport bike racks.

The new Mother Road, I-40, is crossed at 5.0 miles, after passing Bluewater Rd. (4.2 miles) with its fine view of the largest three of Albuquerque's chain of volcanoes (named JA, Vulcan, and Black, and all protected within the Petroglyph National Monument), and Los Volcanes Rd. (4.5 miles).

From the overpass over I-40, fine views of the Sandias and Manzanos to the east and the volcanoes to the northwest are accompanied by the roar of heavy traffic on the busy Interstate. Just north of the overpass, bear right to cross the highway exit to Unser to continue north on the Unser Trail. Just beyond this intersection, you'll also encounter the crossing of the I-40 Bike Trail (see that trail's description).



The Sandia Mountains from the Unser overpass over I-40.

During the next mile, you'll cross three waterways, all usually dry like those you passed south of Central. The first of these flows east alongside I-40; any water in this only partly-paved arroyo would keep going east alongside the freeway until it fell into the Rio Grande near the freeway bridge. The other two join to empty into a large flood control basin, the

Ladera Golf Course Dam. Of course, the Ladera Golf Course is mostly grass, holes and pins and rarely water, though if water did accumulate there, it too would reach the river a couple of miles to the north through the San Antonio Arroyo.

Past Ouray Rd., the west side of Unser is composed of the lava on the sides of a steep incline down from the top of the mesa; this is the southeast corner of Petroglyph National Monument.



Ladera Golf Course, unflooded

Across Unser at St. Joseph's Ave. (7.5 miles) is the parking lot for Rinconada Canyon, one of the most popular sections of Petroglyphs National Monument for viewing the volcanic rock and hundreds of centuries-old images. Trail signs in the parking lot direct you to a 2.2-mile loop hike alongside the petroglyph-studded basalt rocks at the edge of the canyon's escarpment.

Continue along Unser to Western Trail and Unser (8.4 miles), where you'll see the corner of Chaparral Elementary School and its large

playground. West of Unser, Western Trail twists to the north to the visitor center of Petroglyphs



Petroglyph National Monument visitor center

National Monument, where helpful rangers and volunteers are available 362 days per year to direct you to the Monument's many attractions.

The Petroglyph National Monument is one of Albuquerque's treasures. Though the monument's lava itself is prehistoric and the petroglyphs pecked into that rock are largely pre-Columbian, the monument itself

dates only to 1990. Forward-looking Albuquerqueans foresaw the encroachment of "civilization" on this area, and, during the 1970s and 1980s, worked unceasingly toward preservation of the land and its remarkable collection of rock images. Leaders of the decades-long process, including activists Ruth Eisenberg and Ike Eastvold, received an early victory when, in 1977, developer D.W. Falls, whose "Volcano Cliffs" housing units came close to the lava, gave a hilly tract, studded with lava and

petroglyphs, to the city of Albuquerque to be preserved. Called Boca Negra (black mouth) Park, this part of what is now the monument sits about two miles north of the Monument's visitor center (a brief detour off the trail we'll be taking) and is the only part of the park to have a small entrance fee. Steep, paved Mesa Point Trail from the parking lot at the base of the cliff leads you to some 100 petroglyphs among the lava on the 74 acres that Fall deeded to the city; two shorter trails off the same loop take you to see other petroglyphs along the cliff's lower slope.

In 1990, a bill introduced into Congress by New Mexico's then-Senator (and previously Albuquerque city councilor) Pete Domenici, enabled creation of the Petroglyph National Monument. Land acquisition began, aided by purchases by the City and by the State of New Mexico. An early acquisition was the adobe dwelling in which the Monument's visitor center now stands – acquired from Dr. Sophie Aberle, an anthropologist and physician who studied Pueblo life, culture and health, and whom the Monument honored in her former home on her 100th birthday, three months before her death in 1996. The visitor center offers a very small museum, information, sales of books and other objects related to the petroglyphs and the parks of the Southwest, and an excellent movie about the people who pecked out the petroglyphs and their descendants, but there



are no trails taking off right from there.

The Monument now covers 7239 acres, far more than little Boca Negra City Park before 1990. Parts of the park's holdings, like Rinconada Canyon, are full of petroglyphs – there are estimated to be more than 20,000 within the Monument's borders. The Monument also contains a large portion of Albuquerque's chain of volcanoes and the gradually-sloping plains separating them from the escarpment covered by the volcanoes' product, the lava. To the north and east, the Monument also encompasses the Piedras Marcadas ("painted rocks") pueblo ruin – we'll get there near the end of this ride. Both Boca Negra and Piedras Marcadas are managed by the City of Albuquerque through an agreement with the National Park Service, which manages the remainder. The City also buffers parts of the Monument by owning strategically located land adjoining the Monument at several edges.

Prior to creation of the Monument, the land now within its boundaries had been used for several purposes, including recreation and raising livestock, as a bombing range and shooting targets. There are still sandy roads within the Monument's boundaries that only slowly return to the vegetation of the surrounding land, itself much changed from when tall grasses covered the area. Many high desert plants and animals are easy to see along the trails and roads within the Petroglyph Monument: the Monument's website, at <https://www.nps.gov/petr/learn/nature/plants.htm>, is a fine source of information about many of the more common plants found here. Animals also abound; walking toward the volcanoes or along the trail at Rinconada Canyon, you're likely to see a skulking coyote, plenty of skittish jackrabbits, numerous small birds and the occasional hawk and even bald eagle. Infrequent

rattlesnakes are present too, so be careful; harmless but half-foot-long millipedes are frequently encountered residents.



Many of the neighboring Pueblo tribes have been willing to share this land with those of us who have come more recently, although Monument land near the rocks adorned with their ancestors' images are still used in ceremonies by groups from Cochiti, Sandia, Santa Ana, Zia, and Jemez Pueblos. The Park Service works closely with these tribal groups to treat the petroglyphs and their surroundings with the respect due to religious objects. Neither the Park Service nor the tribes were able to stop construction of a four-lane highway, a piece of Unser Blvd. north of where we are now; the road went through, destroying hundreds of petroglyphs. Recently, the Park

Service, in consultation with the tribes, promulgated a new Visitor Management Plan, which sets out cautious new trail development to occur within the park, and shields it to some extent from further encroachment.

Petroglyph National Monument is a large open space on the edge of a large city, but unlike the Presidio in San Francisco, Grant's Tomb in New York, or the Washington Monument, which are all also parts of the National Park System, it would be easy to consider this a wholly natural spot (except when near that road cut or when jets zoom overhead). The human-made features of the Petroglyph National Monument, the 300 to 800-year old petroglyphs themselves, are a special benefit for those of us living in Albuquerque, and so are the natural features of this park.

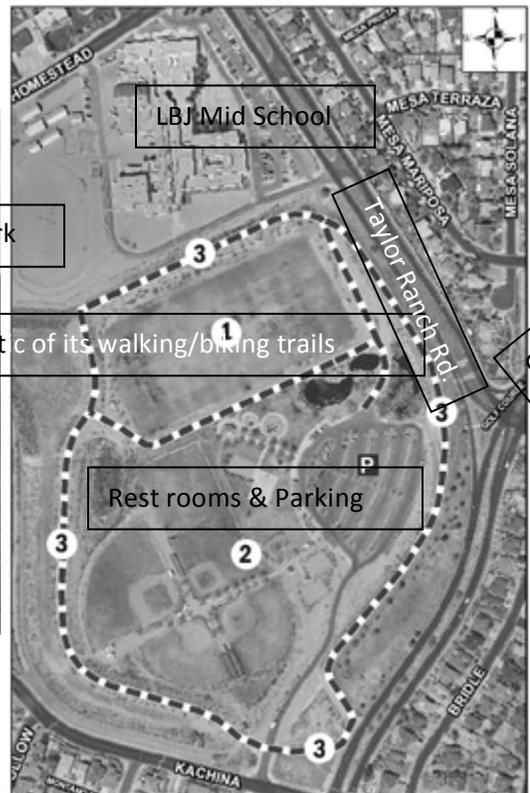
Not far beyond the visitor center, at 9.0 miles, you'll find tiny, grassy Story Rock Park with playground equipment and a parking lot at the end of Tiwa Place NW, just east of where Unser crosses the San Antonio Arroyo. On the north side of this channel, turn east; although the Unser Trail continues north a few blocks more to Dellyne Ave. Crossing Dellyne Ave. on the main trail, you will now follow the Mariposa portion of this route for a few hundred yards down the channel beyond the park, and then veer to the northeast to come alongside the large, grassy Mariposa Diversion Channel. When you reach this channel, look to the right to the junction of the Mariposa and the San Antonio Diversion Channels to form the San Antonio Arroyo, which winds down the hill to the Rio Grande. (I do not recommend traveling west down the San Antonio Arroyo to Coors Blvd. or beyond; I have tried it and found it arduous, unrewarding, and filled with those ubiquitous thorny pests, the goatheads.)

Proceeding north on the Mariposa Diversion Channel, you cross Dellyne Ave. (9.4 miles) and Montaña Rd. (10.0 miles) before you reach the Don Newton Taylor Ranch Community Center, adjoining the Sierra Vista (outdoor) Swimming Pool, a short distance beyond Montaña. This section of Montaña Blvd. has a wide bike lane on either side, and is part of the routing for the Paseo de la Mesa tour described in another of the tours on this website.

The bike trail comes to an apparent end at Kachina St. (10.4 miles), with a high berm ahead of you and no sign as to what to do next. But turn right on Kachina, and then left almost immediately again to enter large, pretty Mariposa Basin Park. This large depression, encircled by a berm that in turn is topped by a paved bicycle/pedestrian path surrounding the park, is a city park but also a detention basin that would capture flood waters coming down the arroyos that feed it from the west, the Boca Negra and Mariposa Arroyos. You can start uphill on bike trails along either one of these arroyos at the west end of the park, but they end at San Ildefonso Dr. and Mojave St., respectively, in less than one mile. Mariposa Basin Park is considered the center of the Taylor Ranch neighborhood, according to the neighborhood association's web site, trna.org. The park contains bicyclist-friendly water fountains and restrooms, and also



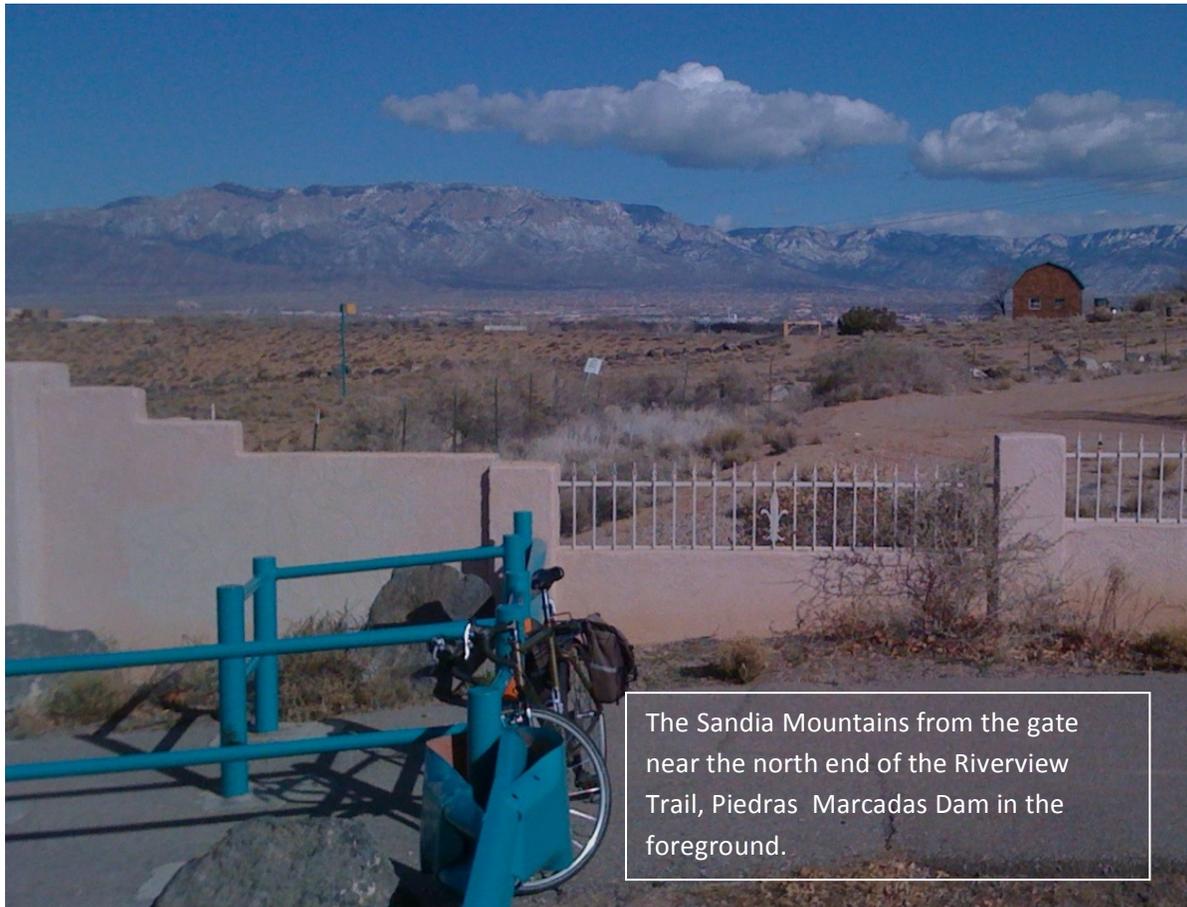
Mariposa Park
Mariposa Basin park, with a photo schematic of its walking/biking trails



baseball fields and volleyball and basketball courts, and picnic grounds. At the north end, the park sports a small pond and wetlands, well used by carp and ducks.

The berm trail along Taylor Ranch Road on the east edge of the park is the quickest way to continue along this route, though the berm trail is paved all around the park, and a short paved spur called the Boca Negra Trail heads west along the Atrisco Storm Drain almost to Boca Negra Canyon itself. To continue along our route, descend a path that heads down from the berm trail to the corner (10.7 miles) of Taylor Ranch Rd. (going northwest and south), Golf Course Rd. (going northeast), and La Orilla Rd. (going east), and progress diagonally across the confusing intersection to head northeast on the paved bike trail along the east side of Golf Course Rd. Here the trail, now called the Riverview Trail, continues along the grassy side of the roadway for 0.6 miles, and

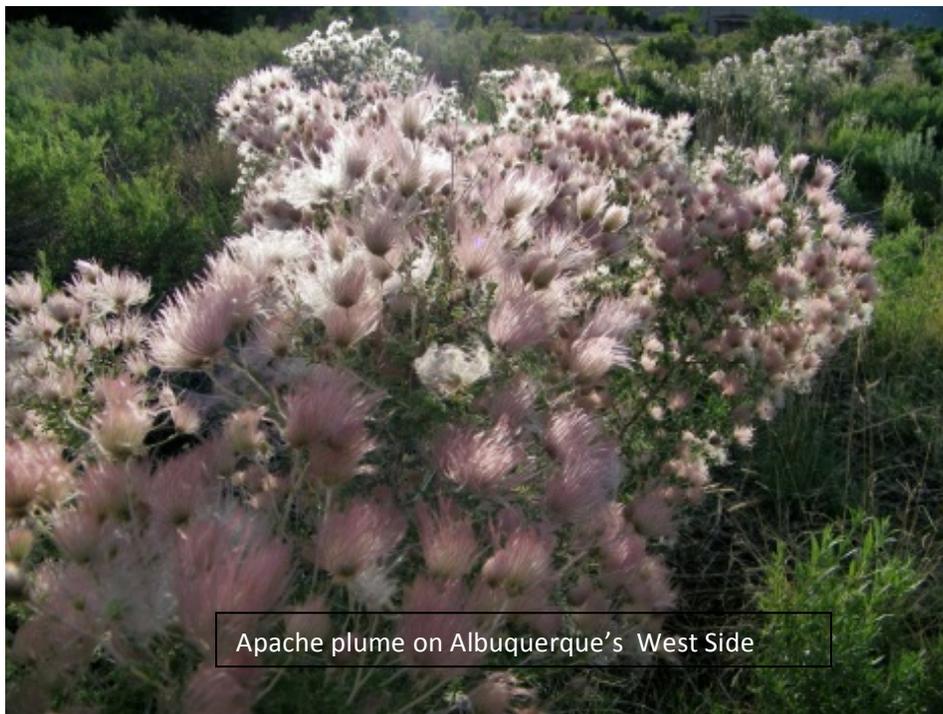
then plunges down to the northeast. Passing among large houses with fine views and past desert plants like the impressive apache plume shown below, the trail crosses several driveways along its way down the hill. It affords many beautiful glimpses of the Sandias along the way, and then reaches a gate at 12 miles. If you turn left, you'll quickly enter a housing development called Las Terrazas, but continue to the right (east) along a section of the trail completed in 2015 that takes you to another dam for storm water, called Piedras Marcadas (marked rocks), like the walking trails in the National Monument west of here, and the pueblo southeast of the dam. The trail ends at Eagle Rock Road just above Coors Blvd. The trail itself proceeds north across the top of the dam and then just below it across an open area and near a small playground to Eagle Ranch Road, which it meets at the trail's end, just west of busy Coors Blvd.



The Sandia Mountains from the gate near the north end of the Riverview Trail, Piedras Marcadas Dam in the foreground.

Coors has a good bike lane for those able to withstand concern over the heavy, fast-moving traffic. However, crossing Coors, you'll find a new bike trail parallel to that scary road. Half a mile north, either way, is the junction with Southwestern Polytechnic Institute Road, which leads to the Paseo del Norte bike trail, which crosses the Rio Grande and heads all the way to the Sandia foothills to the east. Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute describes itself as a "national Indian community college," with more than 120 tribes represented in its student body. Its pretty campus lies just south of Paseo del Norte and very near the Rio Grande.

Half a mile south of Eagle Rock and Coors, Albuquerque's lovely Open Space Visitor Center offers peace and quiet off busy Coors at the east end of Bosque Meadows Road. A sign and a large spiky piece of public art on the east side of Coors direct you to the center, hidden from view. It adjoins the grassy field that hides the ruins of Piedras Marcadas Pueblo, described in exhibits at the Open Space Visitor Center. The open fields to the east of the Visitor Center are home to many Canada geese and sandhill cranes during the winter. The pueblo itself is not much to see, left as it is buried below the surface of the land just north of the city's Open Space Visitor Center. What archeological work has been done on the pueblo without disturbing the peaceful surface, however, shows it to have been very large, and probably the site of battles between the Pueblo people and the Spanish explorer Francisco Vázquez de Coronado and his group of adventurers/conquistadores who invaded in 1540. Large deposits of iron-containing material detected below the surface probably signify the battles of that distant past.



Apache plume on Albuquerque's West Side

Revised 10/5/2020