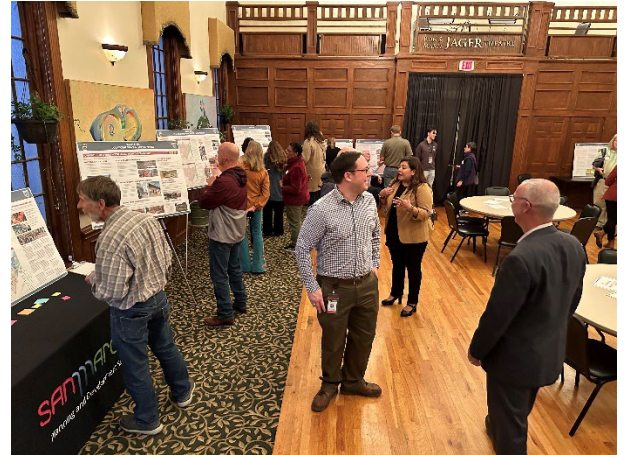


## Comprehensive Plan & Downtown Area Plan Open House | January 12, 2023

### Open House Summary

A Joint Open House on the **Vision SMTX Comprehensive Plan and Downtown Area Plan** was held on Wednesday, January 12, 2023, at the San Marcos Price Center. The event kicked off the Public Review period of the Draft Plans which were developed after numerous events and input from the community beginning in 2020. The event included approximately 50 attendees and the open house included two rooms. One room featured boards and activities highlighting the Comprehensive Plan, and the other with boards & activities on the Downtown Area Plan.

To capture feedback received, each station was equipped with space for any additional notes. Additionally, attendees were provided a comment card to tell us what they were most excited about within both plans as well as space for any additional comments. Attendees were encouraged to review and comment on the Draft Plans online through February 3 or provide comments within the paper take-home toolkit available at the event.



*Participants at the Open House event*

### Downtown Area Plan – Room Summary

Attendees had the opportunity to visit each of the 9 stations to provide feedback on specific topics. The station topics included:

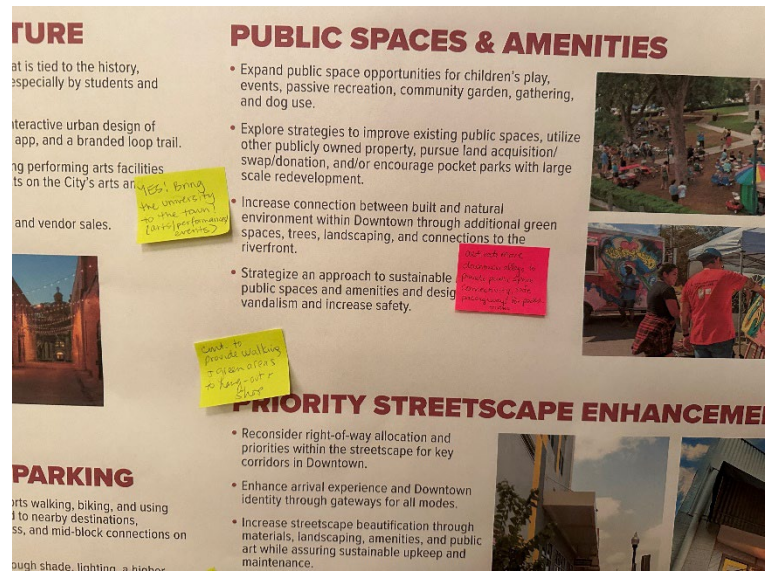
- Station 1: Project Overview / Opportunities
- Station 2: History, Art, & Culture
- Station 3: Downtown Housing Options
- Station 4: Small Business Support
- Station 5: Building Form and Infill Development
- Station 6: Public Space and Amenities
- Station 7: Multimodal Connectivity & Parking
- Station 8: Priority Streetscapes
- Station 9: Implementation



*Image from Downtown Room at Open House*

## Station 1: Opportunities

The opportunities board presented participants with the recommendations made by the community. Some of these opportunities included providing walking/green areas to hang out or shop at, activating downtown alleys to provide more connectivity and safety, adding more transportation options, and working with the university to improve downtown.

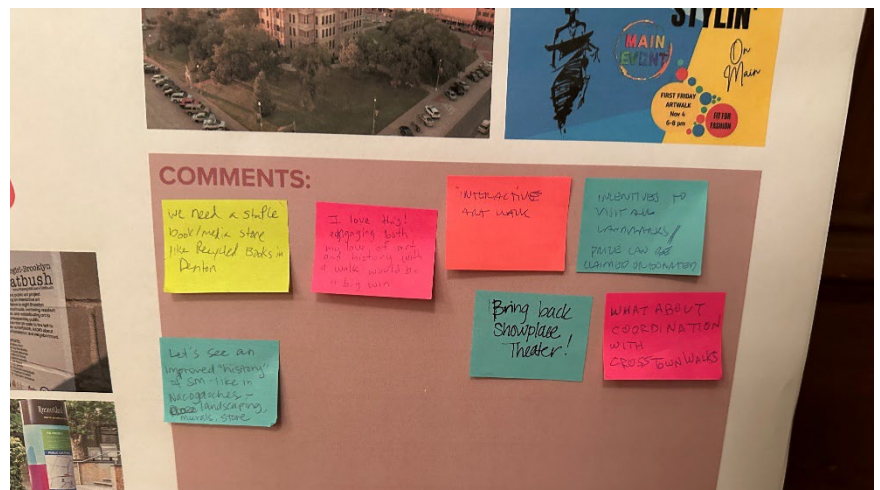


## Station 2: History, Arts, and Culture

Throughout the Downtown Area Plan process, the community has expressed that history, arts, and culture are not currently well identified or clearly connected today. The first station at the Open House presented the solutions related to connecting and showcasing culture downtown. Those who commented on the proposed solutions (i.e. art walk, history walk, cultural district) all reacted positively to the decision to move forward with them.

Residents supported the idea of an engaging and interactive art and history walk both downtown and, in the city, as well as a desire to incentivize the community to visit these historic landmarks. The community would also like to see local and historic businesses (Ex. Stonewall) supported by the city. Other comments included:

- Desire for a bookstore;
- Importance of historic preservation;
- Enact Historic financial incentives to restore and reactivate historic building storefronts. Expand the National Register and downtown Historic District footprint.





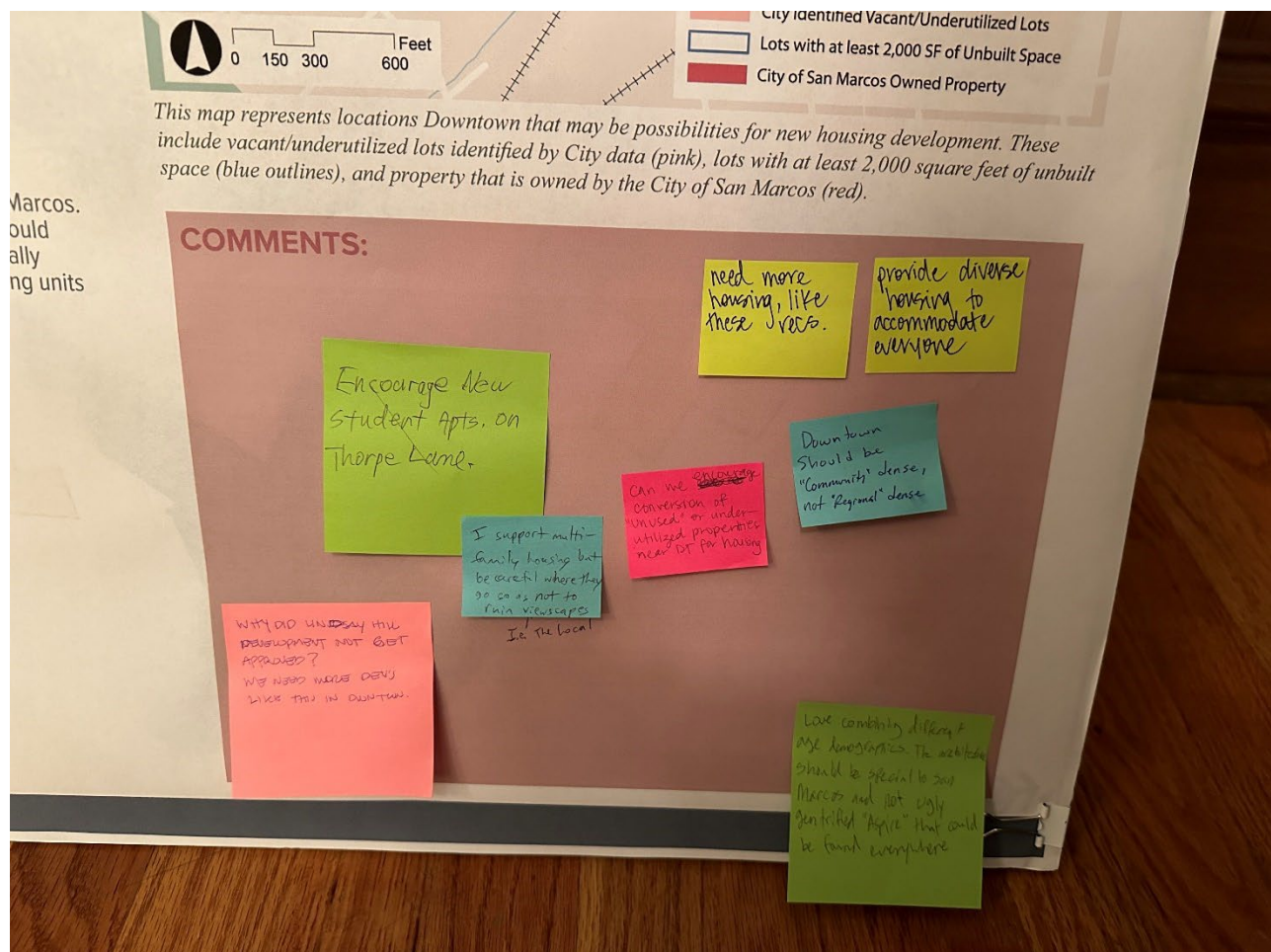


### Station 3: Downtown Housing Options

The second station focused on making downtown a better place to live and described strategies related to expanding downtown housing options, additional for-sale housing, removing development barriers, and providing transportation-related improvements and community amenities.

Community input throughout the plan development highlighted that to make Downtown a better place to live improvements related to Transportation, Community Amenities, Additional Housing Options, Housing Affordability, and Homeownership are warranted.

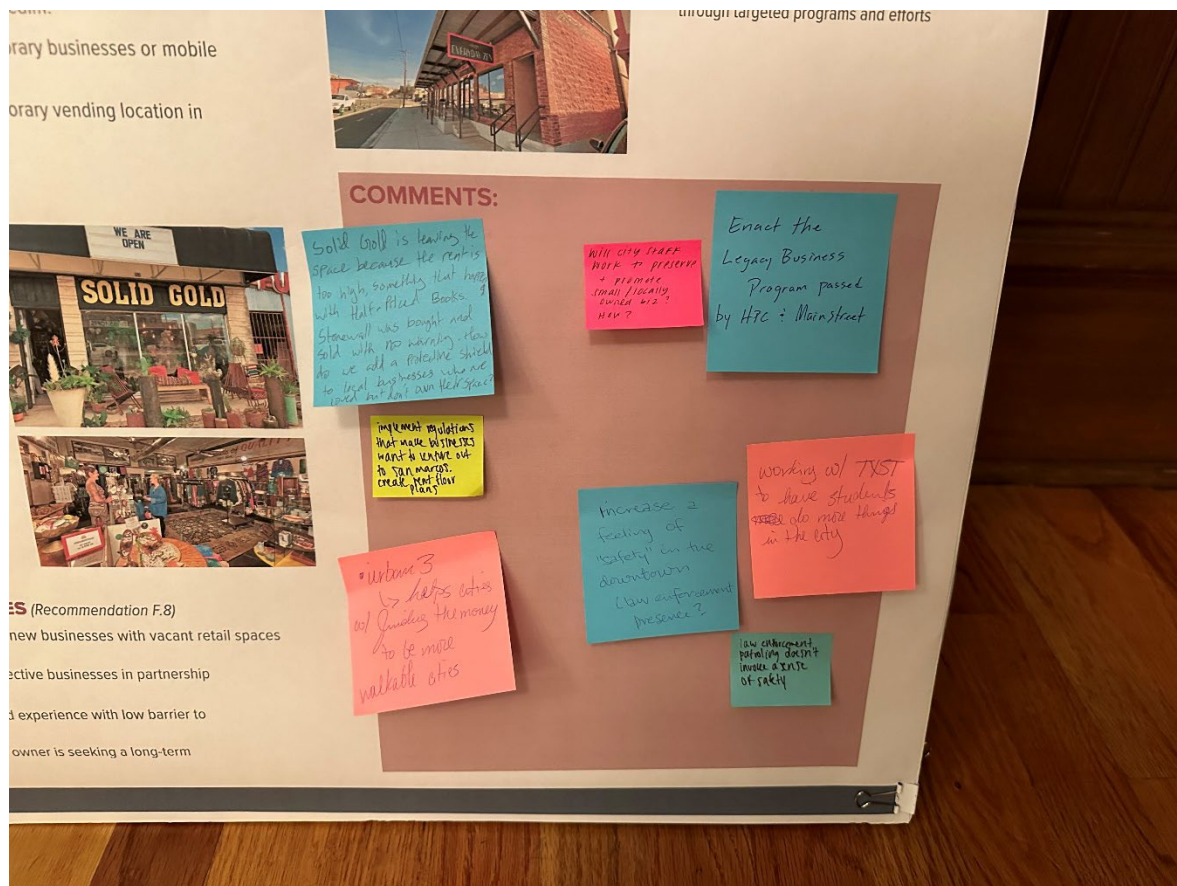
At this station, participants were shown the final overarching recommendations made by the city with the input of citizens. The community comments related to housing options were in favor of the changes proposed. One major note is that **housing for all demographics (students/residents) is desired**.



### Station 4: Small Business Support

This station had the purpose of providing attendees with information regarding the types of existing businesses Downtown and recommendations to help increase business diversity including creating a “How-to guide” for starting a small business Downtown, modification of licensing/permitting regulations, incubator spaces to support and provide services to new businesses, and offering shares leases or division of large spaces for short-term and flexible lease opportunities

Community members expressed concern about how rent is becoming too high for local businesses with cultural impact to stay afloat, along with questions about how the City of San Marcos can preserve and promote these businesses. Additionally, there was a comment about working with Texas State to help incentivize students to come downtown.





### Station 5: Building Form and Infill Development

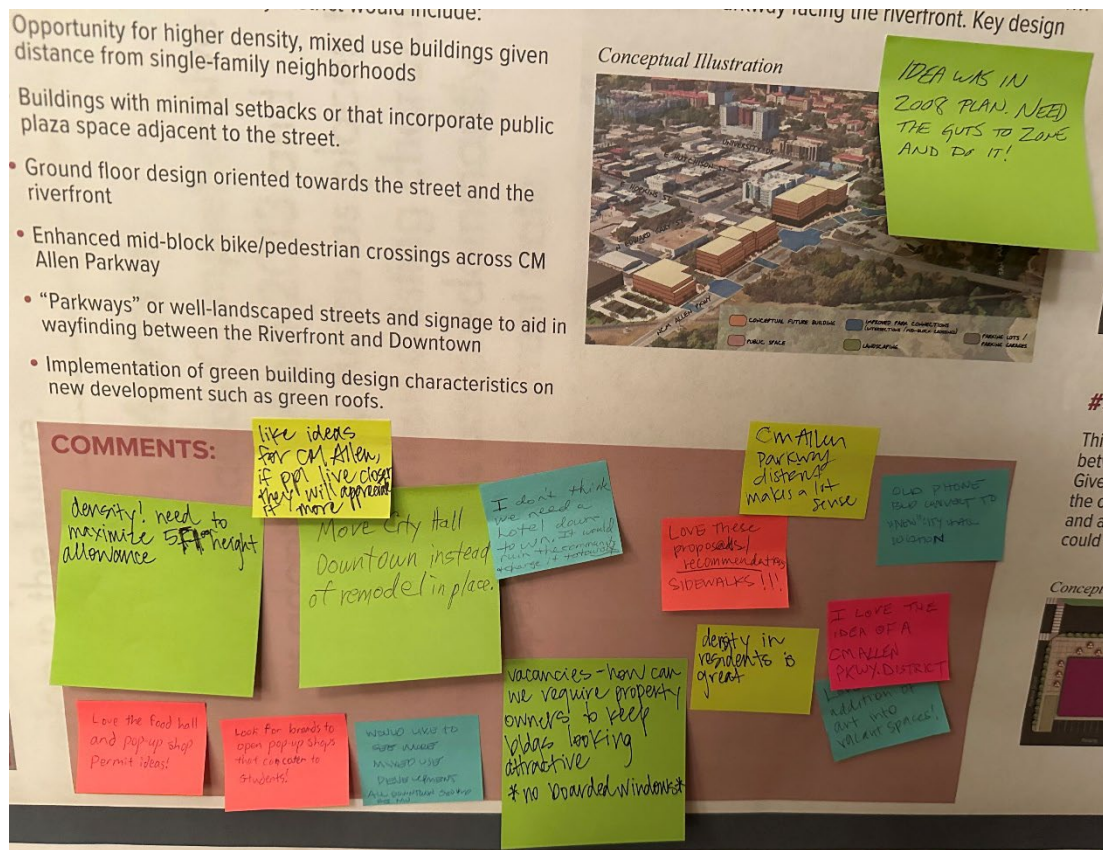
At this station, attendees were provided with information on possible ideas for new development and infill development. Topics throughout the station were:

- Enhancing the CM Allen Parkway District
- Potential Downtown Hotel
- Attracting desired developed at the following locations:
  - Missing Middle Housing (200 S Guadalupe)
  - Open-Air Marketplace/Food Hall (101 E MLK Dr)
  - Vertical Mixed-Use (312 E Hopkins)

The downtown hotel proposal continued to see support from participants, however, some expressed concerns over downtown becoming like “downtown San Antonio” and becoming a touristy area were the main pain points. Participants heavily support the CM Allen Parkway District. Members of the community also expressed the desire for a mixed-use downtown as well as moving City Hall downtown.

Other comments pertaining to Building Form and Infill Development included:

- “Concerns about vacancies creating unattractive buildings”;
- “Need to maximize 5 story height allowance”;
- “Restore old first Baptist Church”.



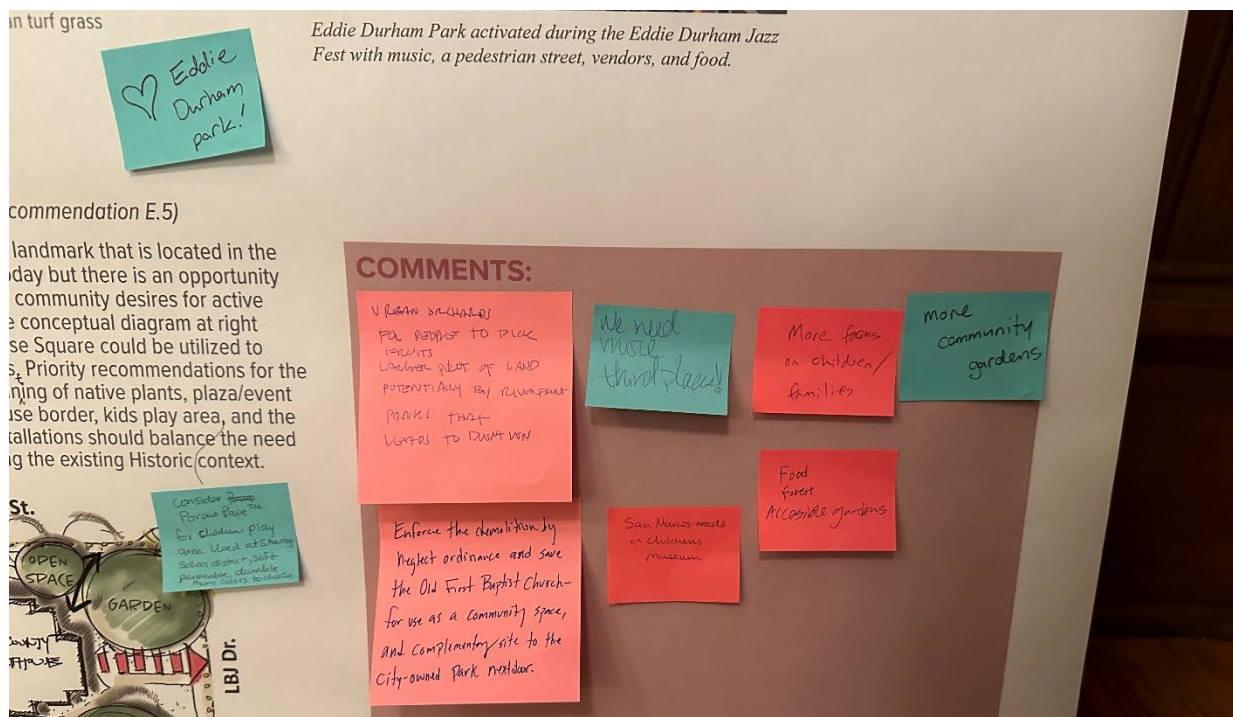
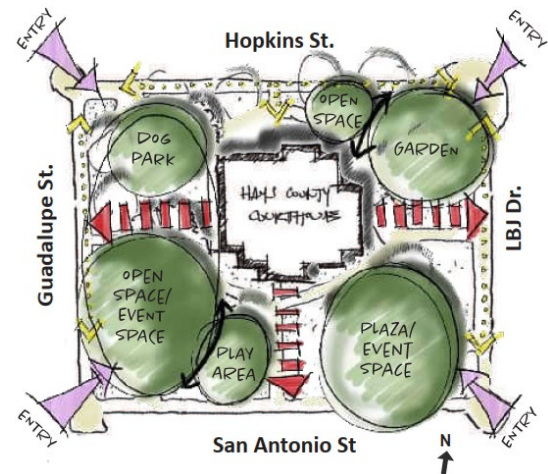
### Station 6: Public Space and Amenities+

This station presented community ideas to enhance and create new downtown parks/public spaces that are a **place for everyone**. The station provided creating connections from Downtown to the riverfront parks, adding more pocket parks/plazas, and technical implementations such as permeable pavements and Low Impact Development (LID) like rain gardens throughout downtown.

Participants were largely in favor of the changes proposed by this plan, and had some more ideas for public spaces and amenities. These ideas include focusing on children and familial activities for downtown, urban orchards and community gardens, and setting up the first Baptist Church as a community space.

Some miscellaneous comments include;

- “Develop updated urban tree standards for large planting hole, soil volume, watering”;
- “replace multiple dumpsters with system of compactors. Could be paid for by city + charge as a waste p/u fee to businesses”;
- “Can we use Nature Center to help fill this need? Connection w/ new cross town path”
- “Pocket parks are cool, benches, more protected lanes like that on Guadalupe. The narrow unprotected and disconnected lane on LBJ is not utilized or particularly safe. Create more transit presence to promote its use.”

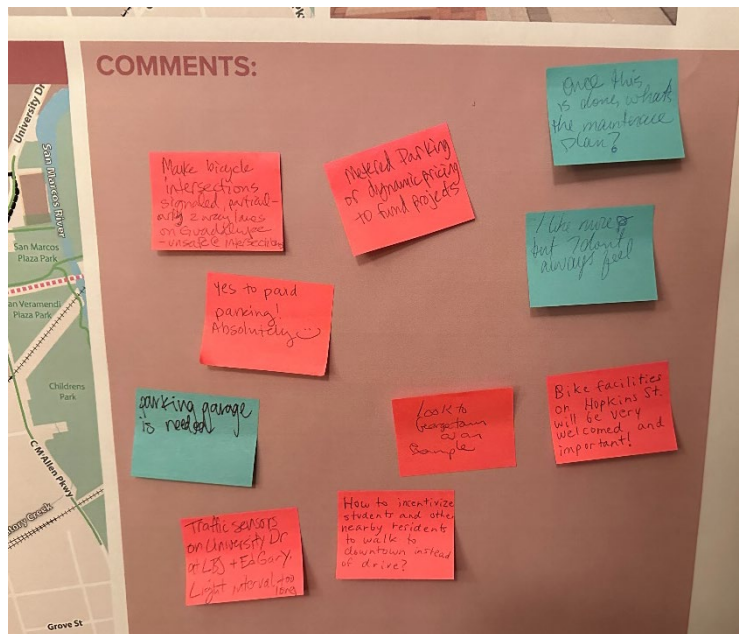


## Station 7: Multimodal Connectivity and Parking

This station presented recommendations for:

- Additional transit stops and amenities downtown;
- Converting existing alleys into green alleys with landscaping, water quality, and pedestrian improvements such as seating and lighting;
- Improved bike/ped connections downtown;
- Parking availability and options.

Participants favored the changes shown, particularly paid parking. The community also noted that there needed to be more parking in general, and that bicycle intersections needed to be signaled (partial 2-way lanes on Guadalupe are unsafe at intersection).



## Station 8: Priority Streetscapes

This station focused on recommendations to create a welcoming downtown by creating:

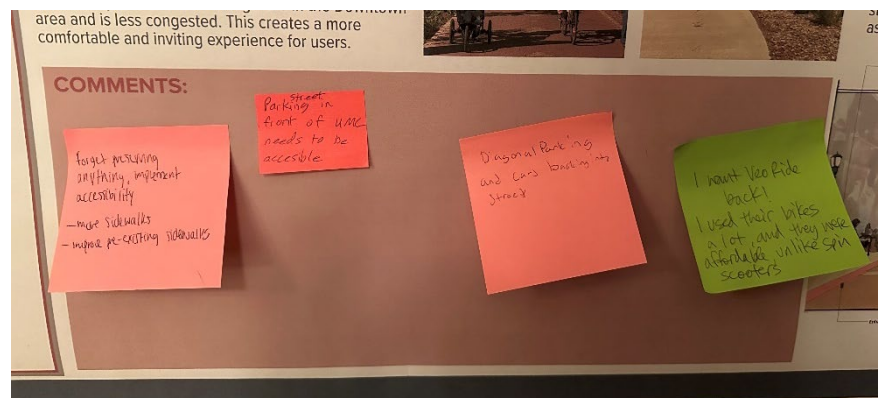
- Creating Downtown Gateways
- Flexible/Festival Streets
- Shared Streets
- And improving design of downtown streets

ALL participants were in favor of the idea of flexible/festival streets. One participant suggested that “the concept could bring people together and change (improve) the perception of our community!”

Community members wanted sustainable solutions to our streetscapes downtown, including green infrastructure for stormwater management in alley ways as well as electric scooters. Accessibility was a priority as well, with one member saying that the diagonal parking spots downtown make it difficult to park and leave.

One participant said that there are two massively important issues;

- **Comanche St & San Antonio St / San Antonio St & LBJ Dr Intersections**







## Additional Comments

Additional comments included the below themes as indicated by quotes from the comment cards:

- *"I am excited about the cultural trust bc sm has a lot of history that I don't think people know about. All the history in the springs! I like the hotel idea. Thank you for doing these at time that people actually have time. I love adding businesses that will be good for the city (more taxes) but maybe shy away from long names look for good businesses like union and (?)"*
- *"Love recommendation B.8! The local is the biggest disaster to ever come downtown."*
- *"Idea was in 2008 plan. Need the guts to zone and do it!"*
- *"Enact Historic financial incentives to restore and reactivate historic building storefronts. Expand the National Register and downtown Historic District footprint"*
- *"Adopt the legacy business program drafted by the Historic Preservation Commission and Main Street Advisory Board"*
- *"Vacancies – how can we require property owners to keep bldgs looking attractive \*no boarded windows\*"*
- *"I don't think we need a hotel downtown, It would ruin the community + change it to tourists"*
- *"move city hall downtown instead of remodel in place"*
- *"Like ideas for CM Allen if people live closer they will appreciate it more"*
- *"Will city staff work to preserve + promote small/locally owned biz? How?"*
- *"Solid Gold is leaving the space because the rent is too high, something that happened with Half-Priced books. Stonewall was bought and sold with no warning. How do we add a protective shield to local businesses who are loved but don't own their space?"*
- *"Let's see an improved 'history' pf SM – like in Nacogdoches – landscaping, murals, store"*
- *"I love this! Engaging both my love of art and history with a walk would be a big win"*
- *"Yes! Bring the university to the town! (arts/performing events)"*
- *"I support multi-family housing but be careful where they go so as not to ruin viewscapes"*
- *"Restore old first baptist church. Concerned about streetscape enhancements - wanting to protect specific cultural landscapes, and historic character and assets/resources. Please include the downtown design guidelines. Enact the legacy business program passed by HPC + mainstreet."*
- *"It would be a mistake to put a hotel downtown. Hotels ruined San Antonio's downtown "community areas" and made them all about tourists."*
- *"I love the importance of community in San Marcos, I think local businesses and local art/cultural city history should be pursued to keep prioritizing that special environment. I love the owners of don's japanese kitchen and walk from alchemy records. Those relationships are why im staying in san marcos."*



## Vision SMTX Comprehensive Plan – Room Summary

Attendees had the opportunity to visit each of the 7 stations to learn about key highlights of the plan and provide input. All written comments received from the community at the various stations is summarized below. The station topics included:

- Station 1: About the Project
- Station 2: Vision & Guiding Principles
- Station 3: Planning Elements
- Station 4: Preferred Scenario Map & Place Types
- Station 5: Area Planning
- Station 6: Implementation
- Station 7: How to Review the Plan



### Station 3: Planning Elements

The community expressed a desire to create the quality and diversity of playgrounds in neighborhood parks. In addition, the community expressed that more accessibility is needed with regards to transportation, specifically the desire to have more bus routes, more stops, and having the time-tables available and accessible. Some community members expressed confusion about what “bike facilities” entails which stresses the need for more clear education on the types of facilities and their benefits.

Additional comments expressed support for walkable neighborhoods, incentivizing garage apartments, duplexes, and condos, and also that broadband choice in neighborhoods should be encouraged to foster access and competition for internet.

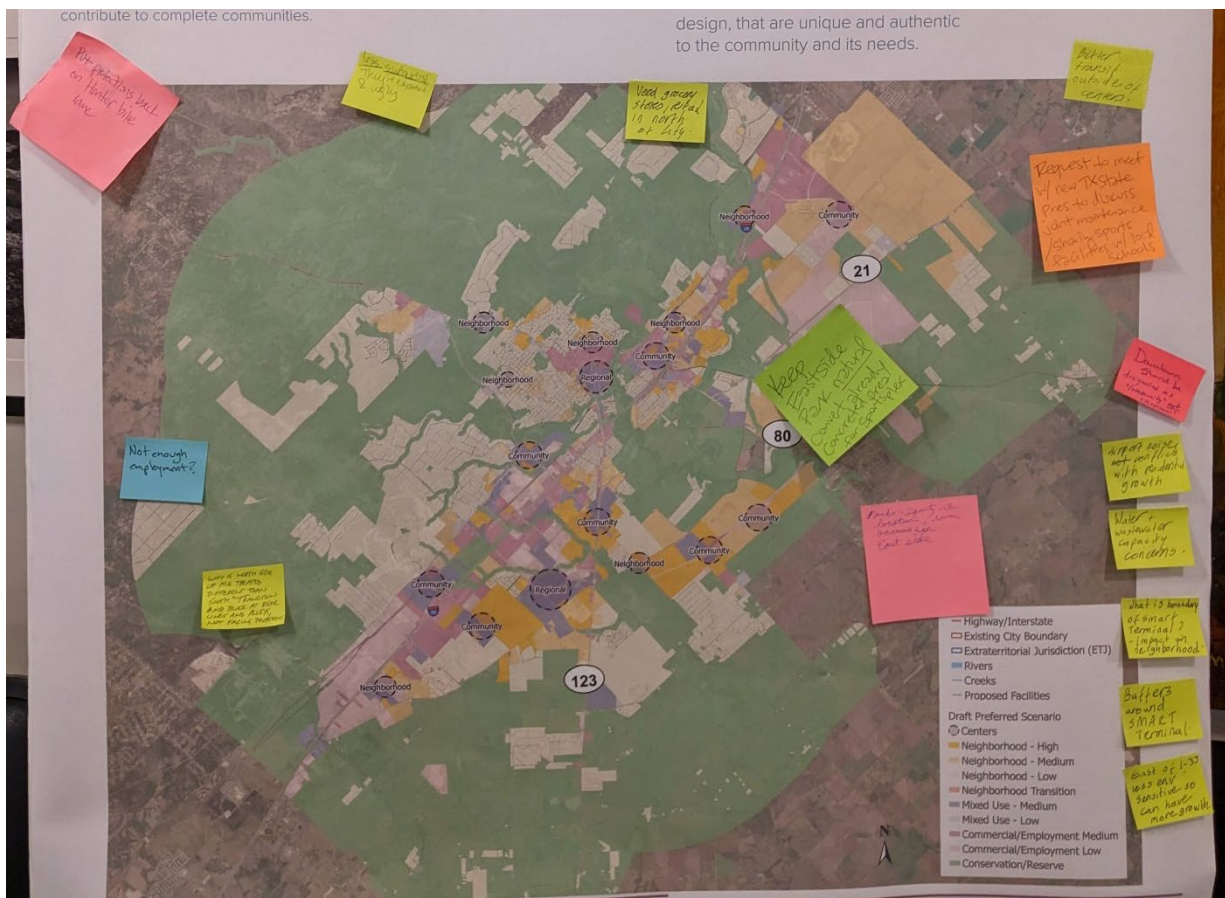
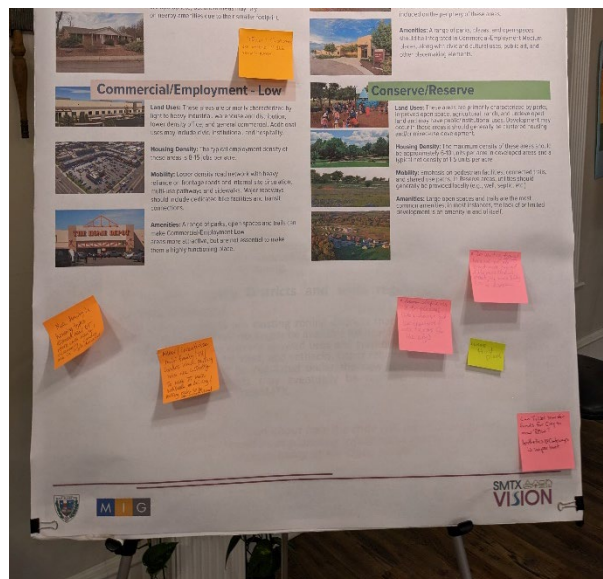


## Station 4: Preferred Scenario Map & Place Types

The community expressed that they would love to see more mixed use in neighborhoods, positive feedback for neighborhood greenways, the desire to have walkability to essential services, particularly the mixed-use low place type, and excitement towards a “neighborhood cluster” as shown on the Neighborhood-Low place type.

In addition, the neighborhood-low place type included a comment that diversity, equity, inclusion, and affordability can be achieved by promoting inclusionary zoning. Additional comments around housing including the desire to have more density in housing types near downtown where there is more opportunity/ease of using other modes of transportation. There was support for duplexes and triplexes as an affordable option for residents.

Additional comments included the desire for more “third places” such as coffee shops or parks, and more aesthetic gateways.





## Comment Cards

When asked what attendees “are most excited about with the Comprehensive Plan”, a few responses included:

- “Addressing flooding/water qualities in neighborhoods alongside the steps being taken to allow further multi/family use zoning to accommodate city growth and community”
- More green space integrated with history and shopping and restaurants. Wide walking/biking areas
- I'm glad there are plans in place to sustainably accommodate San Marcos rapid growth! Development on east side of 35 is preferable as it is less environmentally fragile
- They will create a better environment for everyone specifically housing and land use. Most excited about is the environmental and resource protection.
- Love that there is thought towards a more cultural natural and historic future in San Marcos. I feel it isn't acknowledged enough and needs more of that enhancement.
- I am without a vehicle and having a future for residents to have easy and safe access will help prevent future crime from occurring.
- The planning for future growth of San Marcos. Very thorough plan
- To have a document to help decision makers invest and approve development appropriate to the desires of the citizens
- Part of the environment thing is no longer letting companies build in places that will not be viable in 10 years where ppl can't easily afford the (not very good) products because the prices are hiked
- Facilitate green building practices
- Historic preservation, infrastructure improvements, parks, greenspace protections, additions, improvements
- More balance and accessibility to the community.
- I like the focus on sustainability. My top priority would be to make our city bicycle and pedestrian friendly.
- I like the talk about density/housing types. Please implement it where auto use isn't necessary.
- 15 min walkable neighborhoods. Love the community clusters. Bus routes and bike routes. Shared family spaces that are trail oriented. I'm obsessed with the cottage clusters.

Additional comments included the below themes as indicated by quotes from the comment cards:

- *“Any way to protect businesses like stonewall and half price books? Really impressed with the vision the city has for this city and the practices it wants to implement. San Marcos has the potential to be an excellent example of an urbanist suburb especially if the reliable/frequent rail between San Antonio and Austin is ever constructed. Allow corner stores and parks and other amenities when single family is necessary.”*
- *“The nice idea that the environment will seek protection knowing how climate change affects everyone.”*
- *“Broadband competition”*
- *“Why so much conservation/reserve on the east side of 1-35. Growth should be encouraged east - NOT WEST.”*
- *“Downtown center should be “community” not “regional;” (aka high density). The natural character of the place/area is “medium density, mixed use, etc..” Concerned about infill development in and around downtown and surrounding areas - open spaces should be set aside for environmental protection, gateway/viewsheds preserved and, where infill occurs, compatible infill development allowed.”*
- *“Parking or lack thereof is the only reason why I don't visit downtown very often. Please put in some parking garages and downtown transit from parking.”*





- *"In discussions w/TXST, can you please negotiate a bike lane/shared use path on old RR12 along campus?"*
- *"I'm so excited about the further strides to make San Marcos community no matter it's growing size"*