

ADOPTED: _____



COMPREHENSIVE PLAN







SAN MARCOS

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

SMTX  VISION

M I G



Downtown San Marcos

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A COMMUNITY- BASED VISION



The Vision SMTX Comprehensive Plan is a visionary policy document intended to guide the growth and transformation of the City for the next 20-30 years. It is based on community input and feedback and includes the community's vision for a variety of areas that influence how San Marcos grows in the years ahead. Two years of community conversations informed the Plan's recommendations, and the success of the plan should be attributed to the unwavering dedication of those residents that participated in the planning process.

The policies, projects, and programs in this Plan will shape the future of the places where residents live, work, shop, and play by preserving what's important to the community and guiding investments that help make San Marcos a vibrant and unique city for all."

INTRODUCTION

The City of San Marcos is located along the I-35 corridor between Austin and San Antonio, one of the fastest growing regions in the United States. While contributing to rapid growth, the interstate geographically divides the City in eastern and western halves and creates an overall connectivity challenge for the community. The nature of highway-oriented development also creates a distinct juxtaposition with the more historic and walkable parts of San Marcos.

The eastern half of San Marcos currently includes major existing and new residential neighborhoods as well as schools and major employers. However, there are many large tracts of land in this area which are rapidly developing. The western half of San Marcos contains the original Downtown core of the City, the traditional activity and population center of the community. Despite the rapid growth in other parts of San Marcos, the Downtown area remains a major activity center relying on its many assets, including a walkable street and block pattern; small storefronts; adjacency to Texas State University, the fifth largest university in the state of Texas; proximity to six well-preserved historic districts; and proximity to the San Marcos Springs, the San Marcos River, and a series of riverfront parks. Due to the location of San Marcos at the heart of the Texas Innovation Corridor and presence of Texas State University, the City is expected to continue growing at a relatively rapid rate. The eastern half of the city is less developed but expect to experience significant growth in the near future.

The Vision SMTX Comprehensive Plan is a vision and policy document intended to guide the growth and evolution of the City for the next 20-30 years. It includes the community's vision for topics such as housing, transportation, arts and culture, land use, economic development, parks, community character, and others.

The policies, projects, and programs in this Plan aim to help shape the future of the places where residents live, work, shop, and play by preserving what's important to the community and guiding investments that help make San Marcos a vibrant and unique city for all. As such, the Comprehensive Plan rewrite included significant public engagement to obtain input from the public, stakeholders, and organizations in San Marcos throughout the planning process.



Kissing Alley, 121 E
Hopkins Street

HISTORY OF SAN MARCOS

The first census of Hays County, the 1850 Federal Census, listed 387 individuals “in or about” San Marcos. Based on the 2022 Census Estimates, the city’s population is approximately 72,000 in 2023. The population grew by approximately 50% between the 2010 US Census and the 2020 US Census from 44,894 residents to 67,553. San Marcos lies at the heart of one of the fastest growing regions in the country and the US Census named Hays County as the fastest growing county in the U.S. with 53% growth from 2010-2020. San Marcos was named fastest growing city in the United States several times during the last decade. Understanding how and why San Marcos has grown over time and why it has grown so quickly in recent years is significant in determining how it will grow in the future.

Archaeological evidence indicates that people have inhabited the area around San Marcos Springs for over 12,000 years. Fertile soils, a constant water supply, and abundant game provided the setting for what is likely the oldest continually occupied site in North America. Artifacts discovered at San Marcos Springs indicate that the Clovis culture Native Americans were the first inhabitants of the area. They were followed in later years by the Tonkawa, Lipan, Apache, and Comanche Native Americans. Native American tribes and Spanish settlers still struggled for control of the area at the turn of the 19th century; long after Spanish explorer Alfonso De Leon had named the San Marcos River on April 25, 1689 (Saint



Kissing Alley, 121 E Hopkins Street

Mark’s Day). The City of San Marcos was founded in 1844 by General Edward Burleson, and the original San Marcos streets were laid out seven years later. The permanence of the town was secured with the extension of the International and Great Northern Railroads through San Marcos in 1880, and the charter of Southwest Texas State Normal School (now Texas State University) in 1899. Five years later, the San Marcos Baptist Academy began operation on what is now the western end of the Texas State University campus.

The tourism industry began in 1928 with the construction of the Spring Lake Hotel by A. B. Rogers near the headwaters of the San Marcos River. The first glass bottom boat, designed to give visitors a chance to “view the beautiful marine garden” in Spring Lake, began operation in 1947. Texas State University’s acquisition



Bird's Eye View of Downtown San Marcos (1881)

of Aquarena Springs in 1994 marked a shift in emphasis from a “theme park” to the study of water and the environment. In the early 1990s, the Tanger Outlet Mall and San Marcos Factory Outlet Mall (now Prime Outlets) became another major draw for tourism. Enrollment at Texas State University now exceeds 38,000 students.

The City of San Marcos is situated in a unique natural setting. The Blackland Prairie lies to the east and the Edwards Plateau (commonly known as the Texas Hill Country) to the west. The San Marcos River originating from the San Marcos Springs runs through the city and joins with the Blanco River southeast of the city. The Springs are home to several threatened or endangered species.

COMMUNITY PROFILE

The jurisdictional setting of the City of San Marcos includes City Limits and Extraterritorial Jurisdictions (ETJ), Municipal Utility Districts (MUD) and other special districts. The jurisdictional setting also includes areas covered by Certificates of Convenience and Necessity (CCN). The planning process helps to direct where growth takes place within the jurisdictional setting. Cities can grow through infill and redevelopment, through the orderly request for extension of utilities in the ETJ followed by annexation, or through MUDs

Demographic, income, employment and housing data for the City of San Marcos was gathered from the 2010 and 2020 Census, American Community Survey 2017-2021 five-year estimates, City of San Marcos, Greater San Marcos Partnership, the State of Texas, and other sources.

The 2017-2021 American Community Survey estimates the median household income of San Marcos at \$42,500 in 2021. The citywide unemployment rate in August of 2020 was 6.9 percent according to the American Community Surveys. This dropped to an estimated 3.6 percent as of August 2022.

Retail services have continued to make up the largest proportion of employment in San Marcos, accounting for 21.5 percent of all jobs within the city. The next largest employment sectors in San Marcos include Hotels and Food Service (17.9%), Educational Services (14.4%), Health Care and Social Assistance (8.9%), Manufacturing (5.5%), and Construction (5.4%).

The largest industries by employment in Hays County are Education, Retail Trade, Hotel/Restaurant, Health Care, Manufacturing/Distribution and Construction. The fastest growing industries in the County from 2000 to 2019 were Hotel/Restaurant (6,335 new jobs), Retail Trade (5,904 new jobs), Education (4,162 new jobs), Construction (3,836 new jobs), and Health Care (3,678 new jobs).

Nearly one-fifth of residents commute to Austin and approximately five percent of residents commute to San Antonio. In all, approximately 68 percent of residents commute out of the city for work, which is nearly double the percent of residents that did so 20 years ago.

According to the 2017-2021 American Community Survey estimates, the total number of households in the city was 25,732. Of those, the American Community Survey estimates that 26.2% percent of these were owner-occupied. The same data source indicates that the average persons per household is 2.29. The percent of persons aged 25 years and older with a high school diploma or higher is 90.5% and the percent of persons 25 years and older with a Bachelor's degree or higher is 34.8%. Approximately 41% of residents identify as Hispanic or Latino. Over 28% of San Marcos residents 5 years or older speak a language other than English at home.

According to the Greater San Marcos Partnership, the population of the region within a one-hour drive of San Marcos is more than 4 million people and Hays County was the fastest growing county from 2010 to 2020 with a population of 100,000 or more in the United States. Hays County experienced 53 percent growth from 2010



City of San Marcos line workers.

The top 10 employers according to the Greater San Marcos Partnership are:

1. Amazon Fulfillment (5,000 employees)
2. Texas State University (3,730 employees)
3. San Marcos Premium Outlets (1,600 employees)
4. San Marcos Tanger Outlets (1,540 employees)
5. San Marcos Consolidated Independent School District (1,400 employees)
6. Hays County (885 employees)
7. City of San Marcos (758 employees)
8. HEB Distribution Center (750 employees)
9. Central Texas Medical Center (675 employees)
10. CFAN (460 employees)

to 2020 (83,960 residents to 241,067 residents). As of 2020, Hays County had 82,767 households and 89,176 housing units. Comal County immediately south also experienced 49 percent growth from 2010 to 2020, contributing to the I-35 corridor from San Antonio to Austin being named the fastest growing region in the country.

San Marcos accounts for approximately 30 percent of the total Hays County population and has captured nearly 27 percent of the population growth in the County since 2000. Because of this high capture rate, San Marcos has grown at a faster rate than the County over the past two decades (55% vs. 45%). The average household size of San Marcos (2.26 people per household) is less than Hays County (2.75 people per household).

According to the San Marcos Consolidated School District (SMCISD) Fall 2022 District Demographics Update (School District Strategies), the 15-year average district growth rate is 1 percent. District enrollment increased by 3.4 percent from Fall 2021 to Fall 2022 with a net growth of 277 students. Growth over the past year represents the largest percentage increase since 2013-2014 and the highest actual growth in students during the past 15 years. Increases in growth stem from new housing construction in San Marcos. The majority of new home construction between Fall 2021 to Fall 2022 is occurring in the Rodriguez, Hernandez, and Bowie Elementary school zones as well as the Miller Middle School zone. Within this time period, the district's median new home price was a record \$368,104.

The district student yield is an average of 0.49 students per single family home with new home subdivisions producing an average of 0.34 students per home. Apartments in the district produce an average yield of 0.14 enrolled students per apartment unit.

Moderate scenario growth projections for the district are estimated at 2 percent annual growth through 2032.



Booth at the Arts Squared Arts Market, Downtown Courthouse Square.

68%

of residents
commute out of
San Marcos for work

Nearly **1.5**
residents commute
to Austin

Almost
DOUBLE
from 20 years ago

3.6%

Estimated Citywide
Unemployment rate

Nearly

35%

Have a Bachelor's
degree or higher

2.26

Average
household
size

25,732

Households
in San
Marcos

26%

Of houses are
owner
occupied

\$42,500

Median household income



41%
of Residents identify
as Hispanic or Latino

28%

Over
of residents
Speak a language other than English at home

FASTEST GROWING INDUSTRIES

1. HOTEL/RESTAURANT
2. RETAIL TRADE
3. EDUCATION
4. CONSTRUCTION
5. HEALTHCARE

WHY CITIES PLAN

A comprehensive plan is a tool that allows a city to anticipate changes and to guide those changes in an effective, orderly manner that is consistent with the desires of the community. It directs future development, maps and analyzes neighborhoods and sensitive areas to be protected, and promotes efficient growth of the city. A successful comprehensive plan analyzes trends and alternatives of growth patterns and directs developments in areas where it is most suitable based on existing land uses, available infrastructure and environmental factors. Conversely, a comprehensive plan can also contain strategies for adapting to and/or reversing population and economic declines.

A comprehensive plan, if properly utilized, acts as a tool for managing and directing growth, lends predictability to developers by illustrating the types of development desired throughout the city and locates existing and proposed infrastructure. With input from the community during the comprehensive planning process, the document serves as the record of the city's long-range vision. Constant change is the most important reason to plan. A comprehensive plan with extensive community input allows a community's residents to determine what factors will guide development decisions and gives them the opportunity to decide the future of their city.

PLANNING IN TEXAS

In 1997, the Texas Legislature added Chapter 213 to the Local Government Code allowing cities in Texas the option to develop and adopt comprehensive plans. The Code establishes that the plans must consider land use, transportation and public facilities, and distinguishes between land use plans and zoning regulations. The regulations allow the city to define the relationship between the plan and any ordinances and development codes. This also leaves cities with creative freedom to determine the level of detail of the contents in the plan.

Comprehensive plans across the state include topics such as environmental constraints, demographic projections, infrastructure data, and housing in addition to the required land use and transportation topics. Some cities choose to develop more specialized plans to address a particular issue they are facing. Strategic Plans take a more immediate approach and identify short-term actions to achieve long term goals. Capital Improvements Plans (CIP) guide the use of the city's budget.

PLANNING IN SAN MARCOS

The City of San Marcos is required through its City Charter to maintain a master plan to guide development in the city. Article VII, Section 7.03 states: “The master plan for the City of San Marcos shall be used to guide the growth and development of the city.

The master plan shall be adopted by ordinance. The city council will endeavor to ensure that city ordinances governing growth and development are consistent with the goals and policies contained in the master plan; however, land use maps and descriptions contained in the master plan do not constitute zoning, and do not entitle any property owner to any change in zoning.”

Currently, the City of San Marcos is operating under the Vision San Marcos: A River Runs Through Us Comprehensive Plan which was originally adopted on April 16, 2013. Although it has only been approximately ten years since the current Comprehensive Plan was written, many changes have occurred within the city; populations, land area, and the number of students at Texas State University have all continued to increase. In addition, advances in technology and social consciousness surrounding sustainability, resiliency, and equity provide a new context for planning. The global COVID-19 pandemic and intense regional growth have also impacted how we live, work, and play as a society. Encouraging an inclusive and equitable future for existing and future residents of San Marcos requires a new plan that engages new and old voices in meaningful conversations about potential futures and their tradeoffs.



“Dianne” mermaid sculpture by Morgan Harberle Egan, Price Center, 222 W San Antonio St.

THE PLANNING PROCESS

The City staff and consultant planning team have been collecting input from the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee (CPSC), community, and focus groups on developing the draft vision, goals, and guiding principles which are foundational components for Vision SMTX. These components helped set the stage for the draft Preferred Growth Scenario Map created through this project along with creating strategies and action items for the ten planning elements.

Next, more detailed recommendations and strategies for the planning elements and a series of Place Types were derived from the combinations of high-level land use and land use intensity included in the Preferred Growth Scenario Map. The Area Plan development process then began while the planning team worked on a strategic implementation strategy for the Comprehensive Plan. The last phase of the planning process included writing, refining, and revising the Vision SMTX Comprehensive Plan, which was refined in February 2023 based on input and feedback from the community, staff, and leadership. Additional details on the community engagement process can be found in the Appendix.



HOW TO USE THIS PLAN

The Vision SMTX Comprehensive Plan (Plan) is intended to be a user-friendly plan to guide city staff, elected and appointed officials, the private development community, and the general public. The Plan is organized into five major sections and followed by a series of technical appendices.

SECTION 1: A COMMUNITY-BASED PLAN

This section provides an overview of historical growth and factors driving that growth, especially in more recent years. It also provides an overview of the planning process which was utilized in the creation of this document.

SECTION 2: OUR VISION FOR EQUITABLE AND COMPATIBLE GROWTH

The community's updated vision is introduced in the second section of the plan. It is accompanied by a set of Guiding Principles that were used throughout the planning process to guide decision making and weigh trade-offs. Section 2 also includes a set of goals, policies, and considerations for each of the Planning Elements that support and help to achieve the Vision and Guiding Principles.

SECTION 3: PREFERRED GROWTH SCENARIO

The third section of the Plan builds on the land use intensity matrix developed as part of the Vision San Marcos: A River Runs Through Us Comprehensive Plan. This section includes many of those key concepts with the introduction of overlays and Place Types. Place Types are a combination of high-level land use and land use intensity that help to communicate desired development qualities and patterns across San Marcos.

SECTION 4: AREA PLANS

The fourth section of the Plan provides an overview of the Area Planning approach and discusses the approach to developing and updating Regional Center plans, as well as Neighborhood Area Plans. The section concludes with a summary of the Fiscal Analysis and an overview of each of the areas included in this initial round of Area Planning.

SECTION 5: IMPLEMENTATION

The last main section of the Plan begins with an overview of the City's overall planning approach. The section then goes on to identify suggested updates to other San Marcos plans to ensure they are aligned with the Comprehensive Plan. The section concludes with a discussion of organizational capacity and coordination, as well as a summary of the metrics for tracking success.

APPENDIXES

- Summary of Community Engagement;
- Place Type Graphics;
- Goals and Considerations;
- Key Findings from the Fiscal Impact Analysis;
- Methodology for Overlays; and
- Comparison of the Preferred Scenario to the Trends Scenario.

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OUR VISION FOR EQUITABLE AND COMPATIBLE GROWTH



Vision SMTX is a community-based Comprehensive Plan for San Marcos. As part of the planning process, the community's vision for the city was reviewed and paired with a set of guiding principles. The vision and guiding principles informed the Policy Framework that follows, as well as the recommendations included throughout the rest of this document.

Using values articulated by the community throughout the early part of the planning process, a vision statement was drafted for San Marcos looking out to 2050. The community vision was created to help inform the guiding principles, goals, policies, and other recommendations included in this Plan.

INTRODUCTION

In order to create a Comprehensive Plan that is successful and meaningful, the values of the community must be central to the process and outcomes. This understanding has been at the heart of the Vision SMTX Comprehensive Plan process. Building on previous engagement efforts, the Plan's inclusive process focused on hearing from as many voices as possible by providing a variety of opportunities for people to engage with the planning team and a variety of materials. What was learned from the community led to the development of a new community vision and guiding principles that were informed by community input and dialogue. The vision and guiding principles are supported by a set of goals, policies, and considerations that are within Planning Elements. Planning Elements are various topics critical to address when shaping the future of San Marcos and striving for the highest quality of living for all residents.



Families walking along N CM Allen Parkway.

COMMUNITY VISION

San Marcos is a community of diverse and inclusive neighborhoods that protects and celebrates the San Marcos River and other rich natural, historical and cultural assets; embraces its small-town feel, charm and quality of life; and leverages strategic development to continue building a sustainable community with enhanced access and opportunities for people and businesses.

Using values articulated by the community throughout the early part of the planning process, a vision statement was drafted for San Marcos looking out to 2050. The community vision was created to help inform the guiding principles, goals, policies, area plans, and other recommendations included in this Plan. The vision statement describes how the community pictures their city in the future. This vision also establishes the basis for the Preferred Growth Scenario and associated Place Types.

This thriving city nurtures the innovation and technology economy that blossomed over the past decade while facilitating equitable growth opportunities that promote diversity and preserve the genuine character of San Marcos.

The Vision SMTX Comprehensive Plan builds on the past while considering future needs to create a sustainable, and resilient, and inclusive city comprising complete neighborhoods that provide equitable and people-focused development and amenities for the community.

The San Marcos River is an important community amenity and natural asset in the City. Responsible growth that minimizes environmental impacts to the river and other natural resources is fundamental to keeping San Marcos a thriving and sustainable community.



“Life Lessons” mural by George Lundeen, Children’s Park, 205 S CM Allen Parkway

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The Comprehensive Plan process utilizes a set of guiding principles to navigate and narrow the vast range of options facing the community. The guiding principles presented below were drafted based on community and stakeholder input received during the visioning process. While the guiding principles are distinct in concept, the issues they address are cross-cutting. As such, potential benefits and tradeoffs across the guiding principles should be taken into consideration.



City Staff and resident at a Vision SMTX outreach booth at the San Marcos Farmers Market.



Sustainable and Resilient

San Marcos strives to promote and balance economic and environmental resiliency, and social sustainability for current residents and future generations.



Equitable, Diverse and Inclusive

San Marcos strives to maintain and create opportunity, choice and a sense of belonging for all residents, regardless of age, race/color, religious beliefs, sexual orientation and gender identity, ethnicity, ability, income, education, or political affiliation.



Unique and Complete

San Marcos strives to improve access to employment and essential goods and services throughout San Marcos while respecting individual preferences and protecting the unique character of existing neighborhoods and places.



Supported and Connected

San Marcos strives to ensure that existing and new development throughout the community has sufficient infrastructure and access to critical amenities to support and connect residents, employees and visitors now and in the future through multiple modes of transportation.



Strategic and Complementary

San Marcos strives to ensure that new development adds to the greater whole of the community and that the long-term impacts of development are considered in short-term decision making.

POLICY FRAMEWORK OVERVIEW:

Element Goals, Policies and Considerations

The Vision SMTX Comprehensive Plan’s Policy Framework:

1. Builds upon the community vision and guiding principles.
2. Operationalizes the community’s priorities of improving access, better distributing the costs and benefits for growth, and creating asset-based and culturally rich places.
3. Builds on existing policy guidance provided by the previous Comprehensive Plan and other plans and studies prepared for San Marcos.
4. Establishes new policy direction for the City that will require partnerships and collaboration across departments, organizations, public, private, and non-profit sectors, and the broader community.

For each of the 23 Goals introduced, the Policy Framework includes a set of policy statements and defines success through a set of Considerations.

The next table defines each of the Policy Framework components in more detail. For each component, the question answered and a short description is accompanied with direction on how that component is intended to be used.

Policy Framework Overview			
Framework Component	Question Answered	Description	How Used
Goal	What do we want to accomplish?	Top 23 critical community goals organized under ten planning elements (some are combined)	Used to communicate the highest priorities for the community; articulate key plan messaging; and provide structure for policies and considerations
Policy	How can we reach our goals?	Statements that identify the specific intent of the policy direction	Articulates specific direction, actions and strategies for achieving a goal/s; provides guidance for CIP and budgeting processes; guides departmental decision making
Consideration	How will we know if we're successful?	Metrics for measuring progress of implementing each Goal (must be measurable)	Used for annual reporting on plan implementation progress and used as a community dashboard for reporting on Plan progress

ARTS AND CULTURE

San Marcos has a diversity of artistic and cultural assets. Whether through continued collaboration or new policies, a critical component in the community's future is the continued advancement of an artistic and cultural identity.

Downtown offers multiple venues within a short walk of the adjacent neighborhoods. Additionally, the Texas State University campus has public art, as well as live performance venues and galleries. These spaces provide areas where residents can engage and enrich their lives.

Community events also attract many out-of-town visitors and are an economic asset to the community. As San Marcos' population changes and grows, it is important for the city to continue to invest in public art and cultural facilities. Investment in spaces, facilities, improved transportation access, and supportive infrastructure that enable the continuation and expansion of arts, culture, and events should be a priority in the future.



"Dive into the Divine" mural by Morgan Haberle Egan at 142 N LBJ Drive.



GOALS AND POLICIES

Goal AC-1: Foster arts and culture citywide to provide enrichment and education opportunities for all residents

Policies

- AC-1.1 Support existing creative establishments and facilitate the creation of a visual and performance arts and cultural center/district.
- AC-1.2 Identify the need and opportunities for new arts and culture related facilities such as libraries, museums, and community theaters.
- AC-1.3 Update the Art in Public Places program and identify priority locations.
- AC-1.4 Approach arts and culture programming and funding with an equity lens to help underserved communities and organizations.
- AC-1.5 Develop a wayfinding and interpretive system for artistic, historic, and cultural resources.
- AC-1.6 Expand the library system and promote equitable access to services through mobile libraries and other tactics.
- AC-1.7 Leverage arts and culture assets for economic development through both tourism and local business growth.
- AC-1.8 Identify, inventory, and prioritize public and private arts and cultural resources for protection and enhancement.
- AC-1.9 Improve and enhance communication, marketing, and promotion of arts and culture programs.

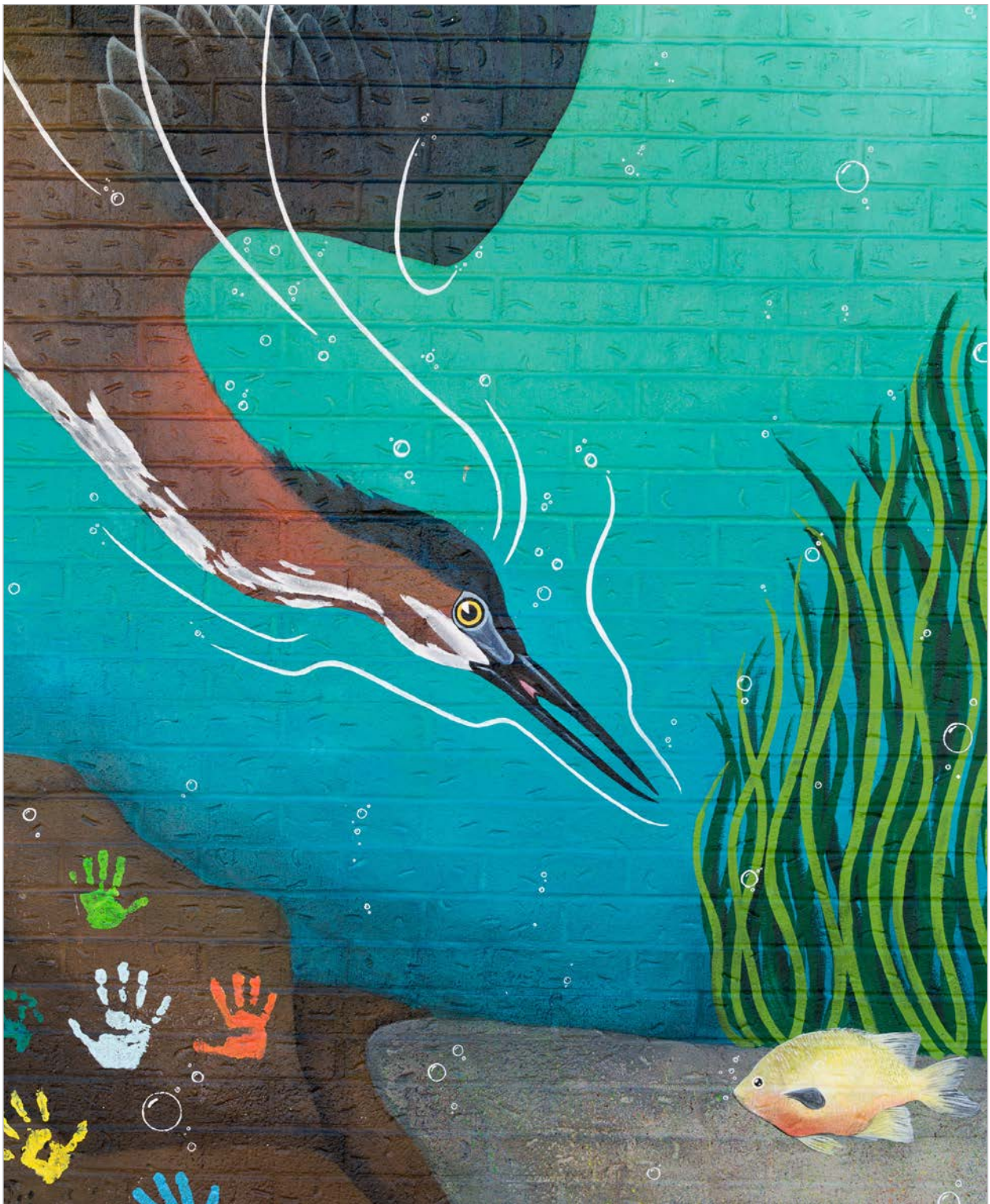
Goal AC-2: Strengthen the local network of arts and culture organizations and establish a dedicated funding stream

Policies

- AC-2.1 Implement the recommendations of the 2022 Arts Master Plan and update the Arts Master Plan Implementation Strategy at least every three years.
- AC-2.2 Develop a strategy for arts and culture funding and investment tied to new funding sources.
- AC-2.3 Improve coordination and collaboration among local arts and culture organizations and public agencies to support effective and efficient funding, programming, and promotion.
- AC-2.4 Establish one or more new City staff positions for arts and culture administration, programming, and outreach.

CONSIDERATIONS

- Number of arts and culture-related City programs and events
- Attendance at arts and culture events
- Participation in arts and culture programming
- Use of dedicated funding streams/ levels
- Economic impact of arts and culture
- Resident and visitor survey data (quantitative and qualitative), including:
 - Awareness of programs and events
 - Perception of San Marcos arts and culture
 - Feedback on programs and events
 - Artist housing needs



"Enchanted Waters" mural by Mabel Sirup, Children's Park, 205 S CM Allen Parkway

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

San Marcos has a strong economy as well as strong growth opportunities. It is therefore important for the City to support its existing local employers and small businesses, as well as existing growth sectors, while also attracting new businesses to grow and diversify its employment base. San Marcos is situated in the heart of the Texas Innovation Corridor as named by the Greater San Marcos Partnership.

San Marcos' economy is driven by retail services, accommodations and food service, education, and health care. These sectors account for nearly two-thirds of jobs in San Marcos, as well as a large portion of employment growth in recent years.

The economic landscape is changing rapidly, both locally and nationally, and it will be important for San Marcos to anticipate trends, be proactive in responding to changes, and take advantage of positive developments. This is especially critical for retail, one of San Marcos' most important employment and economic sectors.



Buildings along E Hopkins Street in Downtown San Marcos



GOALS AND POLICIES

Goal ECD-1: Leverage local assets, including university, business, historic, natural, and arts and cultural resources, to provide economic opportunities at all income and educational levels

Policies

- ECD-1.1 Support local businesses to encourage job creation and capital investment.
- ECD-1.2 Create opportunities for local companies to procure contracts with governmental agencies and educational institutions.
- ECD-1.3 Increase opportunities for graduating students to work and live in San Marcos.
- ECD-1.4 Coordinate with schools and workforce development programs to expand the talent pool for growing and target industries.

Goal ECD-2: Strategically grow the San Marcos economy with targeted strategies and investments that attract talent, support local businesses, and create vibrant commercial centers

Policies

- ECD-2.1 Protect and promote land uses that support target industries, support diversification of the City's tax base, and enhance economic development by using tools such as intentional infrastructure planning, recruitment, and the land use entitlement process.
- ECD-2.2 Create incentive packages to support entrepreneurs, target industries, and growing industry sectors.
- ECD-2.3 Support job creation for all education and income levels.
- ECD-2.4 Review incentive policies with consideration of current economic development strategy as conditions change.
- ECD-2.5 Address childcare as an essential component of economic development, such as evaluating land use allowances for childcare facilities, childcare as an economic incentive criteria, or expansion of city-sponsored children activities and camps.
- ECD-2.6 Support housing, living wages, high quality training programs, anti-displacement policies and other affordability methods as an essential component of economic development.
- ECD-2.7 Evaluate the feasibility of locating a new City Hall in Downtown.

Goal ECD-3: Ensure City economic development strategies and programs are aligned with local policies and priorities and position San Marcos to be regionally competitive

Policies

- ECD-3.1 Regularly assess and update target industries and collaborate with all educational institutions to support workforce development for specific industry needs.
- ECD-3.2 Leverage the Greater San Marcos Partnership “Texas Innovation Corridor” identity to attract investment and new employment opportunities.
- ECD-3.3 Plan for commercial land and employment centers consistent with the Preferred Scenario Map, including Class A office, industrial, and other uses to attract target industries.
- ECD-3.4 Evaluate existing process for reviewing and scoring prospects for incentives as conditions change.
- ECD-3.4 Develop partnerships to create transit connections between the community and major airports in nearby cities; and improve connections between the community and the San Marcos Regional Airport through enhanced transit, road, and utility infrastructure.
- ECD-3.5 Continue to coordinate with the Greater San Marcos Partnership and educational institutions.

CONSIDERATIONS

- Jobs-housing balance
- Student retention rate
- Unemployment / employment rates
- Employment opportunities at or above a living wage
- Incomes compared to housing affordability levels
- Percent of San Marcos residents who also work in the city
- Job vacancies in target industries, by income level, and compared to regional data
- Workforce development program placements
- Median household income
- Vacant commercial space in employment centers including Downtown



Old Main at Texas State University

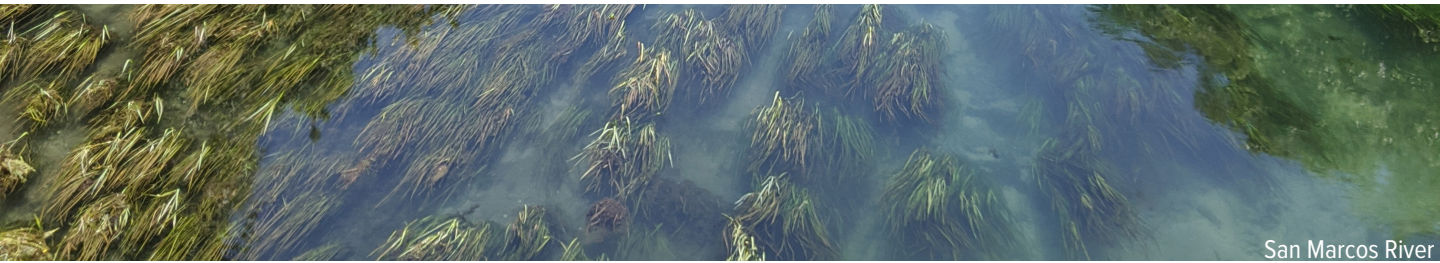
ENVIRONMENTAL AND RESOURCE PROTECTION

There is a wealth of natural resources in San Marcos that warrant environmental protection practices, including rivers, watersheds, and endangered habitats. The impact of development on the environment can be positive or negative – Sustainable and protective practices will ensure these resources are maintained as San Marcos continues to grow and develop.

The widely accepted definition of sustainable development is “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the resources needed for future generations.”

A sustainable community:

- Utilizes land development methods that minimize impacts to the natural environment (Environmental Sustainability);
- Uses its resources and assets to provide long-term economic benefits (Economic Sustainability); and
- Seeks to provide benefits, opportunities, and services to all members of the community (Social Sustainability).



San Marcos River

GOALS AND POLICIES

Goal ENV-1: Protect, restore, and conserve open spaces and natural systems (particularly waterways, floodplains, watersheds, karst, and recharge features) as growth and development occur

Policies

- ENV-1.1 Incentivize development in targeted areas based on the Preferred Scenario Map with adequate drainage, water quality, and green infrastructure to accommodate growth.
- ENV-1.2 Establish or update green infrastructure policies, standards, and guidelines and adopt conservation guidelines.
- ENV-1.3 Establish or strengthen best practices for resource protection and preservation in the development process.
- ENV-1.4 Evaluate San Marcos River use and access and help mitigate impacts of recreation to the river and connected waterways.
- ENV-1.5 Establish riparian buffer zones for resource protection of rivers, creeks, retention ponds, and flood mitigation areas.
- ENV-1.6 Enforce the preservation of trees and native habitats.
- ENV-1.7 Mitigate erosion along riverbanks through habitat protection and ecological restoration. Protect and restore sensitive natural areas and habitats.
- ENV-1.8 Incorporate greenway and trails system within new developments that connect to the larger City and regional trail network.
- ENV-1.9 Continue to advance the implementation of the Habitat Conservation Plan, including endangered species and protections associated with river recreation.
- ENV-1.10 Establish goals to minimize water use in each sub-watershed.

Goal ENV-2: Ensure adaptability and resilience to natural, climate, and other unexpected events to protect human life and natural resources

Policies

- ENV-2.1 Develop a regional water detention, quality, flood mitigation, and stormwater strategy that includes a fee structure.
- ENV-2.2 Implement Climate Action, Safety, and Hazard Master Plan strategies that mitigate the impacts of climate change and natural disasters.
- ENV-2.3 Establish resilient and sustainable approaches to ensure a supply of safe groundwater and surface water, including water reuse and reclaim practices to prevent depletion of groundwater sources and minimize impact on regional water systems.

Goal ENV-3: Facilitate reduced energy use, water consumption, and waste production and encourage green building practices

Policies

- ENV-3.1 Promote the use of re-claimed water within new developments.
- ENV-3.2 Facilitate opportunities for education and outreach centered around the benefits of recycling, water conservation, energy conservation, etc.
- ENV-3.3 Establish Green Building standards that use a rating system for features, such as green roofs, water treatment and reuse, and energy efficiency.
- ENV-3.4 Encourage developers to implement green building practices, and conservation-style development.
- ENV-3.5 Promote the fiscal benefits of conservation and green building for residents, property owners, and developers.



William and Eleanor Crook River Park, 420 Riverside Dr



Wildflowers at the San Marcos Discovery Center, 430 Riverside Dr

CONSIDERATIONS

Indicators of success can be obtained by measuring and assessing changes in the following parameters for each sub-watershed:

- Percent impervious cover per subwatershed with quarterly update reports
- Potable water use
- Proportion of open space to population
- Per capita and citywide energy use
- Proportion of new open spaces and parks to new developed land
- Area of urban tree canopy
- Water quality and pollutants data (rivers, etc.)
- Endangered and threatened species protection measures
- Amount of recreational uses of natural spaces
- Flood mitigation



San Marcos River

HOUSING + NEIGHBORHOODS



Redpoint San Marcos, 650 River Rd



House on W San Antonio Street

San Marcos can continue to provide diverse housing choices and a variety of neighborhoods that support a high quality of life and enhance and maintain the small-town feel of the community.

As San Marcos grows and expands, the City must encourage continued investment in the traditional core neighborhoods while always keeping in mind that they must be protected from inconsistent infill development. Investment in the form of new housing stock, parks, public spaces, multimodal, and transit infrastructure can help preserve the quality and value of these areas. New developments in existing neighborhoods and along existing corridors need to be compatible with the surrounding context as per the Area Plans and Neighborhood Character Studies, applicable.

San Marcos should strive for an appropriate mixture of housing types, commercial developments, and mixed-use places to enhance existing areas and create new livable neighborhoods. New neighborhoods with access to parks and integrated trail networks and a range of other amenities for all ages can help promote healthy and active lifestyles for all residents.

New neighborhood parks, commercial amenities, trails, and bike paths are all investments that can be incorporated into existing areas based on Area Plans, as applicable, to increase the quality of life of residents. Creative development in new areas is encouraged and offers the opportunity to create more inclusive and equitable spaces that accommodate residents of varying incomes, housing types, transportation needs, ages, and ability levels.

Strategic infill development that is compatible with the adjacent corridors and neighborhoods can enhance areas by infusing new commercial, employment, residential, and recreation opportunities that help make more complete and vibrant places. Revitalization of a neighborhood should not mean that the long-term residents are forced from their homes with no options or choice to remain.



GOALS AND POLICIES

Goal HN-1: Ensure that San Marcos neighborhoods provide safe, affordable, and healthy homes and environments for residents

Policies

- HN-1.1 Update, review, and adopt a Housing Action Plan.
- HN-1.2 Partner with community and business organizations to promote and inform/educate residents about resources for homeownership, residential upgrades, maintenance, and code enforcement.
- HN-1.3 Address the housing needs of those who are homeless, transitioning out of homelessness, and at risk of homelessness.
- HN-1.4 Partner with Texas State University to routinely address student growth projections in order to plan effectively for the implications of student/faculty/staff housing needs (housing location, types, and transportation needs).



House on W Hopkins Street

Goal HN-2: Promote diverse housing choices and attainability at all affordability levels to accommodate household size, preference, and characteristics over residents' life spans

Policies

- HN-2.1 Create, evaluate, and implement tools to incentivize affordable housing and expand resources available for both Affordable (subsidized) housing development and to achieve overall housing affordability in the community, while ensuring quality and sustainable building practices.
- HN-2.2 Encourage and consider incentivizing diverse housing types.
- HN-2.3 Consider encouraging all neighborhood centers identified on the Preferred Scenario Map to allow for multiple diverse housing types.
- HN-2.4 Support programs and resources to prevent displacement of existing neighborhood residents.
- HN-2.5 Strengthen programs and resources for first-time homebuyers.
- HN-2.6 Explore tools that will allow residents to downsize and/or age in place.
- HN-2.7 Promote programs and enhance resources to protect renters and support affordable, safe, and stable rental housing options.
- HN-2.8 Promote programs and provide education on tenant rights and responsibilities.

Goal HN-3: Protect and enhance the natural, cultural, and historic resources of all San Marcos communities through neighborhood stabilization, thoughtful growth, and compatible development

Policies

- HN-3.1 Implement transition zones, buffers, and other tools to ensure compatibility between buildings and neighborhoods.
- HN-3.2 Maintain the quality of existing neighborhoods by encouraging reinvestment, conservation, and enhancement of existing housing stock.
- HN-3.3 Adopt a Preservation Plan to guide the protection, preservation, rehabilitation, and adaptive reuse of existing historic residences and resources, and the historic and cultural resources of minority communities.
- HN-3.4 Encourage tools and strategies to promote long-term affordability, such as community land trusts, land banks, shared equity models and developer agreements.

Goal HN-4: Create walkable “15-minute” neighborhoods that provide easy access to essential services and amenities in both new and existing neighborhoods

Policies

- HN-4.1 Consider housing in mixed use centers identified on the Preferred Scenario Map with close proximity to schools, employment centers, transit, recreational opportunities, and other community resources.
- HN-4.2 Evaluate parking standards for multifamily housing.
- HN-4.3 Coordinate land use and transportation planning with proposed developments to ensure safe and convenient connections to sidewalk, bike lane, and transit networks from residential neighborhoods.

CONSIDERATIONS

- Number of permits and certificates of occupancy by unit size, type and location
- Jobs to housing balance
- Number of affordable (subsidized) and senior units
- Tenancy rates (proportion of owner-occupied versus rental units)
- Periodic update of Housing Needs Assessments
- Vacancy rates of rental units
- Proportion of homes within a 15-minute walk of basic services and amenities (e.g., grocery, pharmacy, parks, etc.)
- Number of new residential units created through infill development
- Number of new housing units built by category/type
- Cause for denied applications related to housing and certificates of appropriateness

LAND USE + COMMUNITY DESIGN AND CHARACTER

Land Use + Community Design and Character refers to the way in which different kinds of uses and amenities, their location, and the way they are designed can contribute to the look and feel of San Marcos. In particular, the provision and location of different kinds of housing and businesses in San Marcos are an important part of achieving the community's vision. San Marcos offers a wide variety of neighborhoods and areas of town including Historic Districts, single-family, variations of multifamily, mixed use, and rural neighborhoods. The proximity of these neighborhoods to a variety of businesses, parks, or other amenities also differs. While change is inevitable, new growth and land uses in San Marcos should be strategic.

As growth occurs, the potential inclusion of new housing types, parks, and other assets throughout San Marcos can provide the community with options on where to live based on their needs as well as recreation or basic amenities to support their needs and desires. Where an adopted Area Plan exists, land uses in the neighborhood or area should be guided by the Area Plan. In many cases, infill development provides the opportunity to make existing areas of San Marcos more complete by accommodating the needs of a diverse population and providing options for existing residents to potentially move into different housing types while also remaining in their neighborhoods.

Aging neighborhoods could benefit from restoration and adaptive reuse of significant neighborhood structures because reuse of existing buildings supports sustainability goals and helps to maintain neighborhood character. Conversion of some residential structures at key intersections into supportive and compatible commercial or retail uses may enhance the neighborhood and provide needed amenities without detracting from the character that defines that neighborhood. Additionally, the integration of green spaces, public spaces, and unique design elements helps create identity, encourage resident interactions, and build a sense of community. Area Plans and Neighborhood Character Studies should provide guidance regarding conversion of residential structures. While compatible and strategic infill development can create more complete and equitable neighborhoods, only a portion of San Marcos' future growth will be in existing areas.

To protect and preserve San Marcos' rural and natural lands, new development should be strategic and located where infrastructure and amenities can be easily planned for and provided as well as maintained fiscally.



GOALS AND POLICIES

Goal LU-1: Accommodate future growth throughout the City, with higher densities in mixed-use, compact, connected neighborhood centers consistent with the Preferred Scenario Map

Policies

- LU-1.1 Update the Land Development Code to implement the Preferred Scenario Map.
- LU-1.2 Plan a large mixed-use center east of Interstate 35 and other mixed-use centers to locate businesses and services near residences.
- LU-1.3 Discourage sprawl by facilitating mixed-use development in appropriate locations, clustering development, and encouraging a mix of housing types.
- LU-1.4 Develop a program to identify and prioritize brownfield (potentially contaminated sites) and greyfield (underutilized sites with high impervious cover) sites in the city and ETJ for redevelopment.

Goal LU-2: New developments should provide safe and convenient access to nearby goods and services

Policies

- LU-2.1 Consider a mix of land uses in neighborhood centers using Area Plans and Neighborhood Character Studies to guide this process.
- LU-2.2 Require all new developments to dedicate adequate public right-of-way or access easements to accommodate all modes of transportation. Ensure creek buffers accommodate alternative modes of transportation that are designed to preserve the natural characteristics of the area.
- LU-2.3 Provide multimodal connectivity to and within new neighborhoods and developments.
- LU-2.4 Encourage health care facilities, medical offices, clinics, and pharmacies to locate in city and neighborhood centers.
- LU-2.5 Set aside areas for high quality public spaces during the development process for community and ecological benefit.

Goal LU-3: Establish a set of tools and programs to direct and manage growth consistent with community goals

Policies

- LU-3.1 Conduct Character Studies for priority areas.
- LU-3.2 Evaluate the fiscal impacts of various development types to ensure fiscal health for the City.
- LU-3.3 Encourage a variety of diverse housing types, including, but not limited to attached single-family homes, micro homes, manufactured homes, and multifamily developments. Area Plans and Neighborhood Character Studies should guide this process, as applicable.
- LU-3.4 Establish parking standards that balance mobility and economic needs with best practices for compact, mixed-use development and sustainability goals.
- LU-3.5 Establish or strengthen design standards to ensure compatible development, densities, and transitions.
- LU-3.6 Ensure adequate City staff and resource levels to manage implementation of the Comprehensive Plan and Preferred Scenario Map.
- LU-3.7 Create a tool to analyze the “fiscal sustainability”, defined as the long-term public cost obligations and fiscal productivity, of new development proposals.
- LU-3.8 Protect the pattern and character of existing neighborhoods by requiring new infill development to have complementary building forms and site features.

Goal LU-4: Institutionalize and/or incentivize land use policies, development practices, and conservation design elements that protect or improve the natural environment as the City grows

Policies

- LU-4.1 Establish conservation development guidelines, green infrastructure practices, and compact development.
- LU-4.2 Encourage clustered development to protect open space, provide recreation amenities, minimize impervious surfaces, and reduce flooding.
- LU-4.3 Develop standards in the Land Development Code and Stormwater Technical manuals for dense housing in new areas of growth and activity centers to preserve land for community and ecological benefit.
- LU-4.4 Adopt standards for impervious cover limits for all of the city and extra-territorial jurisdiction to minimize flooding.
- LU-4.5 Develop a Green Infrastructure Master Plan for the city and extra-territorial jurisdiction to integrate in with new land development, existing neighborhoods, and downtown to minimize flooding.

CONSIDERATIONS

- Share of households within a 15-minute walk, bike ride, vehicle trip, or transit trip of mixed-use neighborhood centers
- Number of developments using conservation design, low-impact development, and green building practices
- Surface water quality and pollutants (rivers, etc.)
- Fiscal sustainability of city as growth occurs
- Location of growth as it relates to the Preferred Scenario Map



Mixed use building on W Hopkins Street (top left)

Buildings on S LBJ Drive in Downtown San Marcos (top right)

North Street Curry Shop, 216 North Street(bottom)

PARKS & PUBLIC SPACE + HEALTH, SAFETY & WELLNESS

San Marcos has a robust system of parks, open space areas, and trails. By enhancing access and expanding opportunities for active and healthy living, San Marcos will continue to be a highly desirable community that promotes and achieves high levels of resident well-being, satisfaction, and quality of life.

Active residents of all ages are the basis of a healthy and thriving community. Policies and programs that increase access to active transportation, parks and open space, recreation activities, healthy foods, and healthcare services all enhance overall community health and wellness. While San Marcos has a robust parks system, certain areas of the community do not have easy access to these resources. While it is not always feasible to provide sidewalk access to all amenities in dispersed areas, trail networks and multi-use paths that use drainage ways could be utilized to provide enhanced connections between parks, open spaces, schools, and neighborhoods.

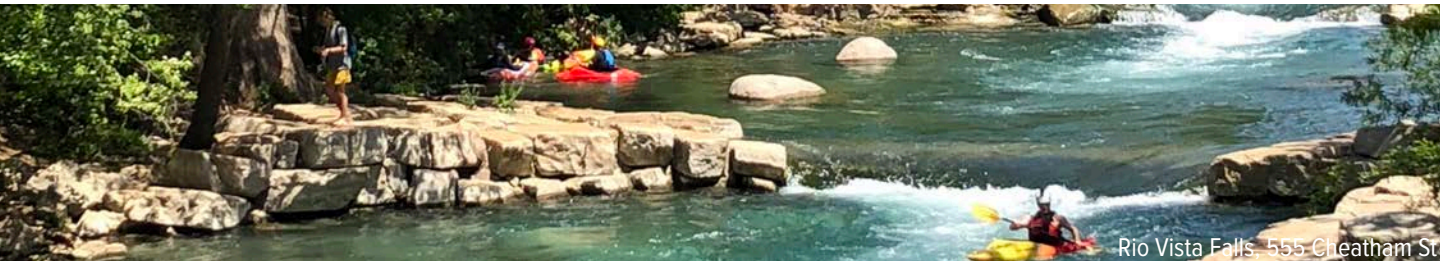
Planning for and providing infrastructure and services is one of the most important responsibilities of a municipality. Residents need to be secure in the knowledge that they can rely on quality emergency, community, and public safety services for current populations and that proper plans are developed to provide for future growth.



Schulle Canyon Natural Area, 100 Ridgewood Ln



Rio Vista Splash Pad, 555 Cheatham St



GOALS AND POLICIES

Goal PPS-1: Provide an accessible, diverse connected network of parks, open spaces, and recreation facilities to serve the entire San Marcos community

Policies

- PPS-1.1 Create a Greenways Master Plan to improve pedestrian and bicycle access and connections between parks, open spaces and recreation facilities.
- PPS-1.2 Implement a signage, wayfinding and interpretation system to improve access to and information about parks, recreation facilities, and open spaces.
- PPS-1.3 Enhance online information to include transparency about parks and recreation facilities, programs, and bond spending.
- PPS-1.4 Promote the design and programming of facilities and parks that provide multi-generational amenities, adequate shade and heat relief features, and access to water.
- PPS-1.5 Ensure access to parks for residents across the city, particularly east of IH-35 or where park access is currently limited.
- PPS-1.6 Ensure programs and facilities remain affordable to all residents.
- PPS-1.7 Conduct regular outreach on community priorities and update the Parks Master Plan Action Plan accordingly.
- PPS-1.8 Create a community-driven rubric for new connections and existing maintenance of sidewalks and ensure the Sidewalk Plan is reviewed by City Council and the community every five years.

Goal PPS-2: Ensure stewardship of the rivers, aquifers, and other sensitive lands and natural resources while providing outdoor recreation opportunities

Policies

- PPS-2.1 Prioritize native plants and low-maintenance materials and design of parks, greenways, and facilities.
- PPS-2.2 Create an Urban Forest Management Plan to protect and enhance the city's tree canopy.
- PPS-2.3 Locate parks, open spaces, and natural areas to protect and benefit the aquifer.
- PPS-2.4 Prioritize acquiring land in the re-charge zone and sensitive aquifer areas.

Goal PPS-3: Balance investments in maintenance, operations, and upgrades of existing parks and open spaces with conservation and protection of open spaces and acquiring new land and facilities

Policies

- PPS-3.1 Create and implement a policy that ensures adequate resources are identified to develop and maintain parks and public spaces.
- PPS-3.2 Update Park impact fees for developers to ensure a fair and sustainable revenue source for parks.
- PPS-3.3 Establish a park amenities schedule for a maintenance, repair, and replacement program of both public parkland and privately-owned public parks and open spaces.
- PPS-3.4 Plan for recreation, protection, and conservation of the river south of downtown and east of IH-35.



Children's Park, 205 S CM Allen Parkway

Goal PPS-4: Provide reliable emergency, community and public safety services**Policies**

- PPS-4.1 Ensure emergency, police, and fire services meet or exceed the level of service needs as the population grows.
- PPS-4.2 Encourage the location of health and community service providers in mixed-use neighborhood centers.
- PPS-4.3 Create and regularly update / maintain a fire and police station location plan which identifies the appropriate locations for future fire, emergency and police stations based on response times.
- PPS-4.4 Ensure transparency of bond fund expenditures by reporting to the public on fiscal allocations.

CONSIDERATIONS

- Parks Master Plan Actions completed or underway
- Level of service standards for emergency services
- Number of parks, open spaces and facilities connected to a trail or greenway
- Resident access to parks and open spaces
- Park maintenance funding level and staffing

TRANSPORTATION

An integrated multimodal transportation network will provide San Marcos with safe and inviting pedestrian, bicycle, vehicular, and transit connections that will advance resident access and promote a more inclusive and equitable city and region.

Transportation facilitates trade, travel, and social interaction. A city's thoroughfare system forms one of the most visible and permanent elements of the community. It establishes the framework for community growth and development that, along with the land use, establishes a physical and permanent expression of long-range public policy. This element's goals and policies align with recent and current planning efforts to provide a balanced transportation system and examine methods to expand the system to offer further choices for travel.

To accommodate and plan for the change and growth in San Marcos over the next 5-10 years, the City's Transportation Master Plan should be updated, as appropriate, to incorporate the projected growth pattern reflected in the Preferred Growth Scenario and the below goals and policies.



Cycle Track along Guadalupe Street



Spin Scooters at the San Marcos Plaza Park (top)



City staff installing new downtown street signs. (bottom)



GOALS AND POLICIES

Goal TR-1: Develop a robust, balanced, multi-modal transportation system that provides safe, comfortable, and convenient mobility options for people of all abilities

Policies

- TR-1.1 Update the 2018 Transportation Plan to be consistent with the Preferred Scenario Map and address current transportation issues.
- TR-1.2 Review and update the Complete Streets policies, standards, and guidelines.
- TR-1.3 Plan and design Complete Streets in, around, and to new developments, redevelopments, subdivisions, the University, Downtown, and other high-density residential areas.
- TR-1.4 Coordinate with local and regional agencies to meet the goals of this plan.
- TR-1.5 Use transportation modeling and analysis to inform decision-making and garner community support.

Goal TR-2: Create a multi-modal, well-connected, and efficient transportation network that minimizes congestion, energy use, and climate pollutants

Policies

- TR-2.1 Improve transit coverage, frequency, and marketing throughout the city and to adjacent cities, with emphasis on serving places where people live, work and access basic services as well as major employment areas.
- TR-2.2 Evaluate the need for a City staff position to manage Transportation Demand Management programs to encourage active transportation, transit, and services such as rideshare and park and ride systems.
- TR-2.3 Identify, promote, and incentivize “first and last mile” solutions to better connect people to their destinations.
- TR-2.4 Incorporate the Sidewalk Master Plan into other mobility initiatives and plans and review/update as needed.
- TR-2.5 Create a community-driven rubric for new connections and existing maintenance of sidewalks and ensure the Sidewalk Plan is reviewed by City Council and the community every five years.
- TR-2.6 Continue to plan for and invest in bicycle infrastructure including protected bike lanes, off-street paths, and end of trip facilities.
- TR-2.7 Improve transit stops and related amenities including shade, shelter, signage, wayfinding, seating, route and schedule information, and safety improvements.



Bicyclists riding on a shared use path in City Park.

Goal TR-3: Coordinate land use and transportation planning to support a healthy economy, viable transit systems, and healthy neighborhoods

Policies

- TR-3.1 Ensure a well-integrated, connected transportation network that includes a hierarchy of roadways appropriate for adjacent land uses and development types.
- TR-3.2 Prioritize filling gaps in existing transportation infrastructure (e.g., sidewalks, Americans with Disabilities Act upgrades) consistent with area plans, needs assessments, and local priorities.
- TR-3.3 Incorporate local arts and culture into transportation infrastructure such as transit centers and stops.
- TR-3.4 Incorporate Vision Zero goals and objectives into transportation plans, programs, and projects.
- TR-3.5 Establish/ update green infrastructure policies, standards, and guidelines for roadways.
- TR-3.6 Evaluate and update parking policies, code requirements, and/or management plans.
- TR-3.7 Develop and implement a parking fee structure for high-demand areas.
- TR-3.8 Ensure safe crossing options under I-35 corridor and other major arterials/high traffic roadways to connect neighborhoods and residents.

CONSIDERATIONS

- Mode share
- Congestion
- Miles of continuous pedestrian / bike infrastructure
- Crashes and injuries
- Transit ridership and frequency
- Number of Transportation Management Plan actions implemented
- Share of homes within a 15-minute walk of a transit stop
- Improved “walk score” grades

PREFERRED GROWTH SCENARIO



The Preferred Growth Scenario directs future development in San Marcos. Vision SMTX builds on the community's previous Preferred Growth Scenario, but also adjusts to the development of the past decade, new community ideas, and national best practices.

INTRODUCTION

Many in our community expressed the desire for access to basic needs as well as amenities such as parks, shops, restaurants, trails, and community spaces near where they live. Most notably, people from all over San Marcos identified the need to provide better access to goods and services for those living and working on the east side of IH-35. In addition, many participants cited examples of newer neighborhoods east and west of IH-35 that lack sufficient amenities and services within a reasonable distance.



Families walking along N CM Allen Parkway.

COMPLETE PLACES & COMPONENTS OF DEVELOPMENT

Complete Communities consist of a variety of places that provide opportunities for people to live, work, and play. Many areas in San Marcos today are single use. For example, some residential neighborhoods have no nearby goods and services, or employment areas. In these areas, residents may have to travel farther and longer than they would prefer to access all of their needs. This contributes to demand on the roadway network, potential traffic congestion and environmental impacts, and could contribute to a higher cost of living for households. It also means that those who are not able to drive, bike, or use transit may not have their needs met. With these potential impacts in mind, an incomplete community includes few or poorly distributed amenities and services that may have an inequitable impact on transportation, health, quality of life, the environment on residents or areas of San Marcos.

By locating a variety of places near each other, communities can benefit from the proximity of complementary uses. Examples include homes adjacent to opportunities to shop and dine, or employment centers close to commercial areas where people can access services after work. A Complete Community should include a variety of amenities and benefits within each place. This means embedding high-quality parks, open space, pedestrian and bicycle facilities, parking, and

other community benefits within each place that make up a neighborhood or area of the city.

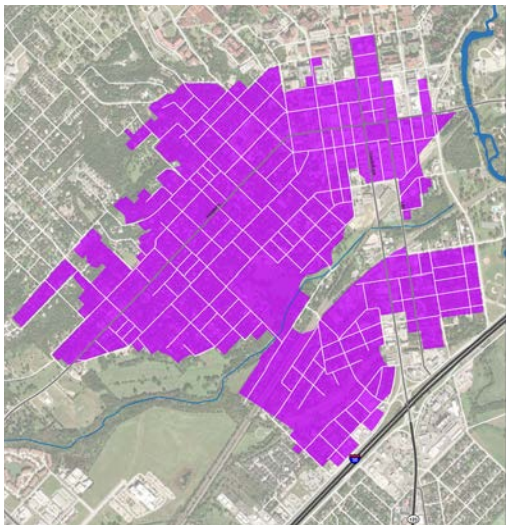


City staff walking along W Hopkins Street.

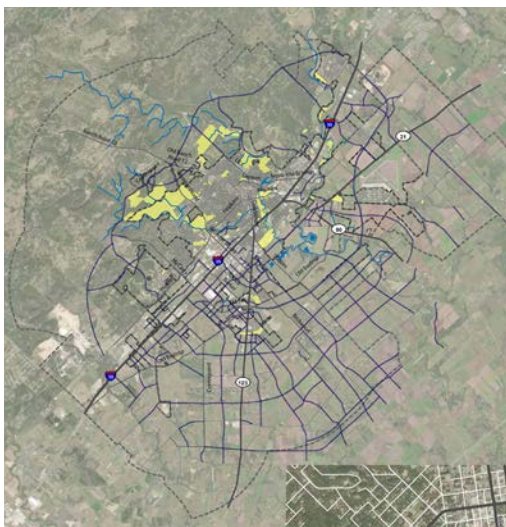
Many of San Marcos' original neighborhoods, especially those closest to Downtown, benefit from access to shops, restaurants, cultural amenities, employment opportunities, civic offerings, and recreation. The streets are well connected and for the most part, daily needs can be obtained on foot, by bike, or by car. New development can benefit from modeling and drawing inspiration from the treasured Historic character of these neighborhoods.

COMMUNITY PRIORITIES AND OVERLAYS

Residents expressed a strong desire to minimize the impacts of new development on established neighborhoods, historic, cultural, and environmental assets. As a result, the data from the previous Comprehensive Plan's land use suitability map was updated and reorganized to better understand and more explicitly illustrate the various assets and constraints that must be considered when planning for future growth and development. Prior to drafting any detailed growth scenarios, it was important to identify those areas with historical, cultural, and environmental assets. The result was three distinct overlays that influenced the allocation of employment and housing, as well as the composition and assignment of various high level land uses and land use intensities (described in the next sections).



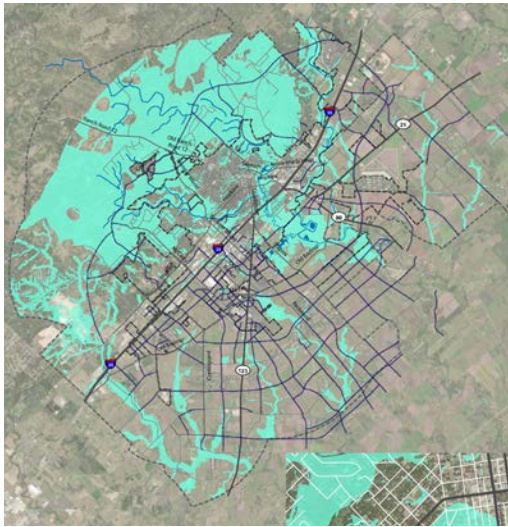
Historic Resource Overlay: The My Historic SMTX Resources Survey was utilized to help shape the overlay. A contiguous area was created that included all properties ranked medium and high priority in the Historic Resource Survey. For the scenario mapping and modeling exercise, jobs and housing were only allocated to vacant parcels within the Historic Resources Overlay. In addition, the assignment of high-level land uses and land use intensities largely reflected what already exists today.



Cultural Resource Overlay: To help inform the boundaries for the Cultural Resource Overlay, the Cultural Resource data layers from the prior Land Use Suitability map were used. These did not include Historic Districts as those were included in the Historic Resource Overlay. Items that were included in the overlay were city parks, fish hatcheries, and cemeteries. As such, no housing or jobs were allocated to any area mapped within the Cultural Resource Overlay.

Historic Resource Overlay map (top)

Cultural Resource Overlay map (bottom)



Environmental Overlay map

Environmental Overlay: For the Environmental Overlay, updated portions of the City’s Land Use Suitability Map (LUS) were utilized. The input layers included in the LUS were related to:

- The Edwards Aquifer;
- Endangered and Threatened Species;
- Floodplains;
- Priority Watersheds;
- Sensitive Feature Protection Cone;
- Steep Slopes;
- Erosive Soils;
- Vegetation;
- Water Quality Zone and Buffer Zone; and
- The River Corridor Protection Zone

These inputs were used to recalculate environmentally constrained areas on a scale of 1 to 5 with 1 being the least constrained and 5 being the most constrained. The Environmental Overlay includes all areas scoring a 5 within the City Limits and all areas scoring a 4 or 5 outside the City Limits, but within the Extraterritorial Jurisdiction (ETJ). For scenario planning, a maximum of 50% of areas within the environmental overlay were “developed” with allocations of housing and jobs. In addition, high level land use and land use intensity were assigned strategically to minimize the amount of land within the overlays necessary to accommodate projected development.

HIGH-LEVEL LAND USE

The scenario planning process utilized a simplified set of high-level land uses in an attempt to strike a balance between providing direction and flexibility for future land use. High level land use is intended to provide a certain degree of clarity and certainty for the community, developers, property owners, staff, and decision makers without being overly prescriptive. The four high-level land use categories used to articulate future land use in the detailed scenario planning process and in the preferred growth scenario include:

- **Neighborhood:** The Neighborhood high-level land use category includes existing and new areas of the community that are primarily, but not exclusively residential in nature. While the majority of these areas should focus on housing, the Neighborhood High-level land use category may also include strategically located commercial, cultural, and recreational uses.
- **Mixed Use:** The Mixed Use high-level land use category includes existing and new areas of San Marcos that are characterized by a horizontal or vertical integration of multiple uses in close proximity to each other. These areas are envisioned to include a combination of residential, commercial, cultural, and recreational uses. Sometimes these uses will be stacked within individual buildings, but often they will be located adjacent to one another with building use seamlessly changing from one structure to the next.
- **Commercial/Employment:** The Commercial/Employment high-level land use category includes single use commercial areas, light industrial, heavy industrial, manufacturing and distribution, and a variety of campus uses (civic, educational, medical, and office). Similar to the above categories, commercial/employment areas benefit from some integration of cultural and recreational uses.
- **Conservation/Reserve:** The Conservation/Reserve high-level land use category includes larger parks, open spaces, natural areas, and agricultural areas, or compact residential development that minimizes the use of land by clustering housing to preserve open space. These areas are intended to

include minimal development.

INTENSITY

The other major factor that informed the scenario planning process and the resulting place type designations (described in the next section) is land use intensity. Land use intensity is paired with high-level land use designations to provide a certain level of direction related to the characteristics of development beyond the use of a building or property. Land use intensity provides general direction for the density and form of development.

- **Low Intensity:** Low Intensity areas are generally lower in scale and have a lower proportion of the land area covered by buildings. In the case of Neighborhoods, this is generally reflected in detached and attached single family. For Mixed-Use areas, Low Intensity is generally reflected in one to two story development that is usually horizontally mixed. In Commercial/Employment areas, Low Intensity is usually reflected in larger separation between buildings with larger footprints. Low intensity areas that require parking normally rely on on-street parking and/or off-street surface parking lots.
- **Medium Intensity:** Medium Intensity areas typically have taller buildings in closer proximity to each other than Low Intensity areas. In neighborhoods, the Medium Intensity largely includes small to medium scale attached homes and multifamily residential products. In Mixed Use and Commercial/Employment areas, Medium Intensity typically includes 3-5 story development in a more urban format with buildings near or attached to each other. Parking in Medium Intensity areas is typically a combination of on-street parking, smaller off-street surface parking lots, and some parking structures.
- **High Intensity:** High intensity areas are intended to reflect the tallest and/or most closely situated development. High Intensity areas include the most development per acre. The result in residential areas are taller buildings that typically require elevators and are closely situated to each other. Community input gathered through the scenario planning process resulted in the High Intensity designation only being applied to the Neighborhood high-level land use designation. The maximum land use intensity of Mixed Use and

PLACE TYPES

Most comprehensive planning documents provide direction for future growth through only a land use map. Future land use, which informs parcel-based zoning, does not give guidance on the aspects of place like building form, streets, multi-modal facilities and connections, and open space. The Vision SMTX Comprehensive Plan introduces Place Types, which provide direction beyond land use at the parcel level. A Place Type assesses a place more holistically and at a larger scale, incorporating guidance for land use, transportation, layout, design, and more. A place typology defines a set of places that are unique and authentic to the community and its needs. Utilizing combinations of High-Level Land Use and Intensity, a set of Place Types was developed through the planning process, including:

- **Neighborhood Low**
- **Neighborhood Medium**
- **Neighborhood High**
- **Neighborhood Transition**
- **Mixed Use Low**
- **Mixed Use Medium**
- **Commercial/Employment Low**
- **Commercial/Employment Medium**
- **Conserve/Reserve**

Note: Mixed Use High and Commercial/Employment High Place Types are not included because the high-level land use and intensity are not appropriate for San Marcos.

COMPONENTS OF PLACE TYPES

Each of the Place Types is depicted and described in the following section. Before presenting each, it is important to understand the organization and approach to articulating the unique combinations of high-level land use and land use intensity that comprise the Place Types.

Overview: Each Place Type includes an overall objective and description. The overview also includes characteristics related to land use, built form, mobility, and amenities. The completion of Area plans and Neighborhood Character Studies may not support or recommend some types of infill development.

Place Type Characteristics: The description of each Place Type concludes with a table more clearly delineating the key characteristics and parameters of the place in several important categories.

- **Primary Land Uses:** Primary land uses summarize the main uses that will be found in each Place Type. This section also provides some insight as to how those uses may benefit those living, working and visiting that place.
- **Secondary Land Uses:** Secondary land uses provide a list of additional land uses that are appropriate within this type of place, but in lower numbers, smaller concentrations, and less frequency overall.
- **Mobility Characteristics:** Mobility characteristics describe how people travel to and within Place Types. This category includes guidance for the street network, pedestrian and bicycle facilities, transit facilities, and access for each Place Type.
- **Parking:** This characteristic describes the main approaches to automobile parking in each Place Type.
- **Parks and Open Space:** Parks and open space characteristics describe the types of active and passive recreation spaces typically located within a Place Type, including private open space, public open space, parks, greenways, and natural or preservation areas. Parks and open space also often include “placemaking” elements which may include amenities and physical attributes that make the park a desirable place to visit.
- **Desirable Transitions:** This characteristic identifies the other Place Types that tend to accommodate the most appropriate and desirable land use and built form transitions from
- **Fiscal Considerations:** The fiscal considerations briefly summarize the fiscal implications of each place type at a high level, comparing costs associated with developing and serving a particular type of place to the expected revenues that would likely be generated by that place.

Existing and Proposed Models: Located within the Appendix is a graphic depiction of the types of places that exist today in San Marcos and a similar illustration of the aspirational expression of the Place Type. While much of the growth in housing units and employment will be accommodated with new development, it was important to explore how existing places can improve to better achieve the vision and goals of the Plan.

Place Type Highlights: Located within the Appendix, the Existing and Proposed models are followed with an annotated version of the proposed Place Type highlighting key features and relationships. While it is highly unlikely that any development will look just like the proposed Place Type illustration, the graphic depictions should be used as a guide and inspiration to achieve the larger and more nuanced objectives and intent for each type of place.



San Marcos Farmers Market along E San Antonio Street

PLACE TYPE GRAPHICS ARE LOCATED IN THE APPENDIX



NEIGHBORHOOD LOW

To recognize existing neighborhoods which are primarily single family detached housing and maintaining their character. In new neighborhoods, more creative application of diverse housing types is encouraged.

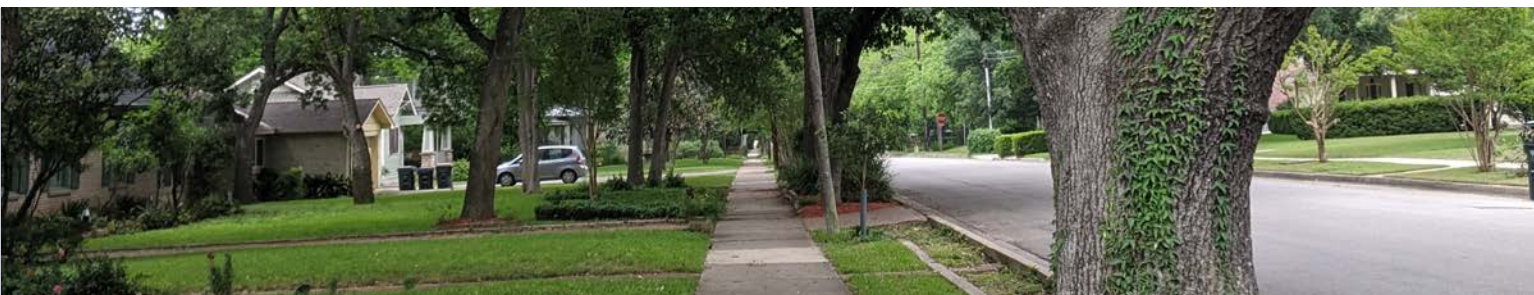
The Neighborhood Low Place Type includes primarily detached single-family housing, however, many existing neighborhoods in San Marcos include a mix of additional building types, including townhomes, duplexes, and accessory dwelling units. To achieve many of the goals expressed by the community related to high quality environmental assets and open spaces and the desire for a more connected community, Neighborhood Low places should consider integrating additional housing options, multimodal transportation connections, a small degree of commercial development within or nearby, recreational opportunities, and water quality features. In existing neighborhoods, land uses within Neighborhood Low should be consistent in scale, bulk, massing, and character of predominant building forms in the area. Adopted Area Plans, as applicable, will provide guidance for new development, if proposed. Within new areas, Neighborhood Low places are encouraged to have creativity and flexibility in design and provide a mix of land uses.

Land Use: Primarily detached single-family residential, perhaps with ADUs, attached single-family residential, small-scale commercial, and civic/cultural uses.

Built Form: Generally, 1-2 story development set back from the street with side and back yards. Some Neighborhood Low-Existing areas may have alleys with garages in the rear of housing. The typical density of these areas is 3-7 units per acre.

Mobility: A well-connected network of local streets providing strong linkages within the Place Type and to surrounding areas with transit on key corridors.

Amenities: Parks (with integrated stormwater features), trails, public art, and small-scale civic facilities.



Primary Land Uses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Detached Single-Family Residential
Secondary Land Uses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attached Single-Family Residential and Multiplexes (ex: duplex, triplex) Accessory Dwelling Units Small-Scale Commercial Public/Institutional Parks
Mobility Characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lower density road network, primarily local streets Sidewalks and/or multi-use pathways and shared streets Transit connections typically on larger key corridors in or around neighborhood
Parking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Primarily self parked in garages, carports and driveways Also on-street
Parks and Open Space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Neighborhood Parks as an organizing element of development Pockets Parks to provide small-scale recreational opportunities closer to more residents Trails and Greenways to provide transportation and recreational opportunities connecting to and through the area Common Open Space with integrated stormwater features, passive recreation amenities, and/or gathering spaces
Desirable Transitions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Neighborhood Low - New Neighborhood Transition Neighborhood-Medium Mixed Use Low Conserve/Reserve
Fiscal Considerations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Highest cost to serve (per new person) of all Place Types; generates largest increase in new streets to maintain Greater cost to serve if located far from existing fire stations, outside of Hays County, or outside existing water and sewer service areas

Overlay Characteristics/Considerations	
Historic Resource	Adaptive reuse, additions and new development should be contextually sensitive
Environmental	Clustered and Low Impact Development with impervious cover limited to 0-50% of land area depending on proximity to protected water features and the Edwards Aquifer
Cultural Resource	No Development



NEIGHBORHOOD MEDIUM

To recognize existing neighborhoods which are primarily attached single family and multi-family housing and to guide the development of new medium density neighborhoods that are connected to amenities, goods, and services.

The Neighborhood Medium Place Type includes a combination of townhomes, smaller apartment and condominium buildings, accessory dwelling units (ADUs), and some mixed use commercial development. While some Neighborhood Medium places may be auto-oriented, they should better integrate connectivity to surrounding areas, water quality features and other amenities. Neighborhood Medium should be integrated with and complement the larger community areas where they are located. Neighborhood Medium areas should be highly walkable with well-designed circulation and ground floors that engage with the streets and development nearby, as well as enhance the pedestrian experience.

Land Use: Primarily attached single-family residential development, low to medium- scale multifamily residential, with some mixed use commercial.

Built Form: Generally, 2-5 story development that is ideally oriented to the surrounding streets with minimal setbacks, but some Neighborhood Medium may be set back from major roads; the typical density of these areas is 6-12 units per acre.

Mobility: Connections to surrounding areas; with a well-connected network of walkable, local streets, with internally focused pathways and private shared access drives with transit provided on key corridors.

Amenities: Parks (with integrated stormwater features), public art, civic facilities



Primary Land Uses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attached Single-Family Residential Low to Medium-Scale Multifamily Residential
Secondary Land Uses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public/Institutional; Parks and Open Space; Small to Medium Scale Commercial Mixed Use Commercial
Mobility Characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Medium density road network, primarily collector and local streets Sidewalks Dedicated bike facilities on higher order streets Transit connections on collectors and on larger key corridors in or around neighborhood
Parking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Primarily self parked in garages, carports and driveways Small off-street parking lots Small structured parking Also on-street where feasible
Parks and Open Space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Neighborhood Parks to provide active and passive recreation opportunities for nearby residents Community Parks to provide recreational opportunities, as well as integrated stormwater features Pockets Parks and Plazas to help activate smaller spaces and provide opportunities for placemaking elements Trails and Greenways to provide transportation and recreational opportunities connecting to and through the area Common Open Space with integrated stormwater features and green infrastructure, flood mitigation, passive recreation amenities, and/or gathering spaces
Desirable Transitions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mixed Use Medium Mixed Use Low Commercial/Employment Medium Neighborhood Low Neighborhood Transition
Fiscal Consideration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Higher housing diversity and density generally reduces cost to serve; location of development can vary impact significantly Greater cost to serve if located far from existing fire stations, outside of Hays County, or outside existing water and sewer service areas

Overlay Characteristics/Considerations

Historic Resource	N/A
Environmental	Clustered and Low Impact Development with impervious cover limited to 0-50% of land area depending on proximity to protected water features and the Edwards Aquifer
Cultural Resource	No Development



NEIGHBORHOOD HIGH

To guide the development of moderate to higher intensity housing types to meet a range of housing needs in proximity to medium and high intensity mixed use centers. Adequate transportation facilities are required to connect residents to jobs and services.

The Neighborhood High Place Type represents the highest intensity version of residential development envisioned for San Marcos. With mostly medium to higher-scale apartments and condominiums and some townhomes, this neighborhood type concentrates a large number of residents in a smaller geography. As such, Neighborhood High areas should include some mixed use commercial on ground floors and be in close proximity to concentrations of other mixed use and commercial development, as well as civic and recreational amenities. Development should be largely urban in format and character with buildings that create pleasant streetscapes, include engaging and pedestrian-oriented ground floors, and include primarily structured parking.

Land Use: Primarily medium to higher-scale multifamily residential and attached single-family residential with mixed use commercial.

Built Form: Generally 4-5 story development that is oriented to the surrounding streets with minimal setbacks; parking tends to be structured with some smaller off-street parking lots; the typical density of these areas is 12+ units per acre.

Mobility: A well-connected network of streets accommodating all modes of transportation with a combination of dedicated and shared facilities.

Amenities: A full range of parks with integrated stormwater elements and features for residents and visitors, public art, civic facilities.



Primary Land Uses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medium to Higher-Scale Multifamily • Attached Single-Family
Secondary Land Uses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public/Institutional • Parks and Open Space • Mixed Use Commercial
Mobility Characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High density road network, with full complement of street types • Wide sidewalks with landscape strips between streets and dedicated bike facilities throughout • Transit stops throughout with connections at mobility hubs (transfer stops)
Parking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primarily structured parking and small dispersed off-street parking lots • Also on-street parking on most streets
Parks and Open Space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Parks to provide recreational opportunities, as well as integrated stormwater features • Regional Parks to locate a large number of residents close to major amenities and make higher density apartments and condominiums more attractive • Community-Scaled Plazas to create social gathering spaces for formal and informal events and programming • Pockets Parks and Plazas to help activate smaller spaces and provide opportunities for placemaking elements • Trails and Greenways to provide transportation and recreational opportunities connecting to and through the area
Desirable Transitions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mixed Use Medium • Commercial/Employment Medium • Neighborhood Medium
Fiscal Considerations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most efficient Place Type in terms of infrastructure demand for housing; generates highest concentration of potential service needs • Greater cost to serve if located far from existing fire stations, outside of Hays County, or outside existing water and sewer service areas

Overlay Characteristics/Considerations

Historic Resource	New development not identified for these areas
Environmental	N/A
Cultural Resource	No Development



NEIGHBORHOOD TRANSITION

To provide appropriate transitions between mixed use, non-residential place types and neighborhood place types. Transitions should be achieved in the form of both use and built form.

The Neighborhood Transition Place Type is intended to provide a more gradual transition to Neighborhood Medium and Neighborhood Low areas in terms of development form and land use. The Place Type borrows elements from the adjoining neighborhoods to provide more desirable adjacencies for people living near more intense and/or active areas.

Land Use: One or more of small-scale commercial uses, mixed use, live-work (where a resident has a designated work space in the same structure as their residence), and townhomes or multiplexes.

Built Form: Typically 2-4 stories depending on whether the transition is to Neighborhood Low or Neighborhood Medium. Buildings are taller and more closely engaged with the adjacent roadways closer to the higher intensity place and shorter with larger setbacks closer to lower intensity neighborhoods; the typical density of these areas is 6-12 units per acres.

Mobility: Transition areas are typically long and narrow and often located along collectors and arterials; streets should accommodate all modes of transportation with amenities for bikes and transit.

Amenities: A wide range of parks and other amenities are appropriate, but these areas may rely on nearby amenities due to their smaller footprint



Primary Land Uses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small-Scale Commercial • Mixed Use • Live-Work • Attached Single Family
Secondary Land Uses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small Scale Office • Public/Institutional • Parks and Open Space
Mobility Characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medium density road network, primarily collector and local streets • Wide sidewalks • Dedicated bike facilities on higher order streets • Transit connections on collectors and on periphery
Parking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primarily on-street and small off-street parking lot • Some self-parked in garages, carports and driveways
Parks and Open Space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neighborhood Parks to provide active and passive recreation opportunities for nearby residents • Community Parks to provide recreational opportunities, as well as integrated stormwater features • Pockets Parks and Plazas to help activate smaller spaces and provide opportunities for placemaking elements • Trails and Greenways to provide transportation and recreational opportunities connecting to and through the area • Common Open Space with integrated stormwater features, passive recreation amenities, and/or gathering spaces
Desirable Transitions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neighborhood Low • Neighborhood Medium • Mixed Use Low • Mixed Use Medium
Fiscal Considerations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited future development potential within transition locations • Fiscal impact dependent on uses and intensity of development

Overlay Characteristics/Considerations

Historic Resource	Focused on the perimeter of areas with Historic/Traditional Overlay and between Lower Density Neighborhood and Other Place Types
Environmental	Focused between Lower Density Neighborhood and Other Place Types
Cultural Resource	No Development



MIXED USE LOW

These areas are characterized by smaller commercial centers that are walkable and typically in or near neighborhoods so residents have convenient, safe, and equitable access to services. They should be distributed throughout the city, such as along corridors and near major intersections.

The Mixed Use Low Place Type is intended to provide smaller concentrations of shops, restaurants, and neighborhood-oriented services to serve nearby neighborhoods of various intensities. The mix of uses may also include housing next to or integrated with commercial uses. The footprint of mixed use low places can vary from a single intersection to a neighborhood-serving main street. Mixed use low places may also include traditional shopping centers that are smaller in scale and adapted to include a variety of uses (and potentially housing) that are attractive to nearby residents.

Land Use: Primarily smaller scale commercial and mixed use development, sometimes with residential condominiums or apartments above the ground floor; also, townhomes and multiplexes may be intermixed with commercial and mixed land uses.

Built Form: Typically 2-4 stories, but sometimes lower scale at a single story; the height, orientation of buildings, and mix of uses is often determined by the surrounding context and character of adjacent roadways; the typical density is 8-15 housing units per acre and 10 jobs per acre with some housing included.

Mobility: More urban or integrated Mixed Use Low places are typically situated along or at an intersection of roads with a reasonable amount of multi-modal traffic; older shopping centers that have evolved into Mixed Use Low places typically are set back from the street and provide off-street surface parking.

Amenities: Due to their scale, smaller amenities are typically integrated into the place or immediately adjacent. Small parks, plazas, and public art can help establish a sense of place and strengthen identity.



Primary Land Uses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small to Medium-Scale General Commercial and Mixed Use Development • Upper Story Residential Condos or Apartments • Single Family Attached Housing
Secondary Land Uses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small Scale Office • Live-Work • Parks and Open Space • Public/Institutional
Mobility Characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Typically along an arterial or collector street or central intersection • Mobility hub/s with transit connections embedded along or within • Sidewalks along, within and connecting to • Bike facilities typically connecting and parallel to
Parking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primarily on-street and small off-street parking lots (shared parking highly encouraged) • Some self-parked in in garages, carports and driveways
Parks and Open Space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neighborhood Parks to provide active and passive recreation opportunities for nearby residents • Community Parks to provide recreational opportunities, as well as integrated stormwater features • Pockets Parks and Plazas to create seating and dining opportunities, activate smaller spaces, and provide opportunities for placemaking elements.
Desirable Transitions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neighborhood Medium • Neighborhood Low • Neighborhood Transition • Mixed Use Medium • Commercial/Employment Low • Commercial/Employment Medium
Fiscal Considerations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generates greatest net positive impact (per acre and per new person) • Limited potential for growth in this Place Type

Overlay Characteristics/Considerations

Historic Resource	New development unlikely and only along arterials and collector roadways
Environmental	Consider limiting size to approximately 5 acres
Cultural Resource	No Development



MIXED USE MEDIUM

These areas are characterized by a mix of commercial and residential uses in a well-connected and walkable place.

Mixed Use Medium places include higher intensity places with a mix of housing, employment, shopping, dining, and entertainment which are highly walkable and bikeable with good access by transit and driving. Mixed Use Medium places distributed throughout the community will provide opportunities for people to live, work and play in or near their neighborhoods.

Parking structures allow for less horizontal space dedicated to surface parking. Waterways/drainage areas and street frontages are better utilized with building facades along the street edge, trails, and public spaces.

Land Use: Medium to higher intensity mixed use, multifamily and hospitality development; typically including a strong residential component above retail or office uses, but sometimes include office above retail as well.

Built Form: Typically 3-5 stories with buildings situated closely together and engaging the street to create a series of active ground floor spaces and storefronts; depending on the location, parking will primarily be on-street or in parking structures, but some small off-street parking lots may exist; the typical density is 12+ dwelling units per acre and 25 jobs per acre.

Mobility: A well-connected network of streets that support multiple modes of transportation; streets and blocks are most typically organized in a grid pattern and walkability should be prioritized.

Amenities: A range of parks, plazas, and open spaces should be integrated in Mixed Use Medium places, along with civic and cultural uses, public art, and other placemaking elements.



Primary Land Uses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medium to Higher-Scale Mixed Use • Hospitality • Medium to Higher-Scale Multifamily
Secondary Land Uses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public/Institutional • Parks and Open Space • Mixed Use Commercial • Attached SF • Parks
Mobility Characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High density road network, with full complement of street types • Wide sidewalks and dedicated bike facilities throughout and connecting to nearby neighborhoods and other places • Transit connections at mobility hubs throughout
Parking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Structured parking and small off-street parking lots (shared parking highly encouraged) • On-street
Parks and Open Space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neighborhood Parks embedded within mixed use medium districts • Community Parks that are well connected to surrounding neighborhood streets • Pockets Parks and Plazas on irregularly shaped lots or to help with water quality • Trails and Greenways to connect neighborhoods to parks and to other neighborhoods • Common Open Space to provide water quality features and passive recreation opportunities
Desirable Transitions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neighborhood Medium • Neighborhood High • Neighborhood Transition • Mixed Use Low • Commercial/Employment Medium
Fiscal Considerations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generates most value and revenue per acre of all Place Types • Denser concentration and variety of uses also requires a greater level of service

Overlay Characteristics/Considerations

Historic Resource	N/A
Environmental	N/A
Cultural Resource	No Development



COMMERCIAL/ EMPLOYMENT LOW

To facilitate lower density, more auto-oriented retail, office, and industrial type uses.

Commercial/Employment Low places comprise much of the non-residential areas of San Marcos today. They tend to include a variety of industrial uses, distribution, auto-oriented retail, and dining options, as well as lower intensity, single use and standalone office uses, including civic, medical, and educational. New Commercial/Employment Low Areas should be focused on designated areas along or near highways.

Land Use: Primarily characterized by light to heavy industrial, warehouse and distribution, lower density office, and general commercial; additional uses may include civic, institutional, and hospitality.

Built Form: Typically 1-2 stories with buildings situated further from each other and further from the street than in most place types. Larger format retailers are often paired with strip commercial centers and/or pad development (smaller standalone buildings) located closer to the street, but still auto-oriented and frequently including a drive-through; industrial and distribution uses often include large outdoor storage areas; the typical employment density of these areas is 8-15 jobs per acre.

Mobility: Lower density road network with heavy reliance on frontage roads and internal site circulation, multi-use pathways and sidewalks. Major roadways should include dedicated bike facilities and transit connections.

Amenities: A range of parks, open spaces and trails can make Commercial/Employment Low areas more attractive, but are not essential to make them a highly functioning place.



Primary Land Uses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Light to Heavy Industrial • Warehouse and Distribution • Lower Density Office • Lower Density Retail
Secondary Land Uses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supportive Service Commercial (e.g., gas stations) • Civic Uses
Mobility Characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lower density road network with accommodations for large vehicles • Multi-use pathways and sidewalks • Dedicated bike facilities throughout • Transit connections at key nodes
Parking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primarily off-street parking lots (shared parking highly encouraged) • On-street in certain situations
Parks and Open Space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Parks to provide active and passive recreational opportunities for employees and residents nearby, as well as integrated stormwater features • Regional Parks to provide recreational opportunities and to potentially buffer these places from neighborhoods • Pocket Parks and Plazas to create places for outdoor seating and dining • Trails and Greenways to provide transportation and recreational opportunities connecting to and through the area • Common Open Space with integrated stormwater features and passive recreation amenities
Desirable Transitions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neighborhood Medium • Neighborhood High • Mixed Use Low • Mixed Use Medium • Commercial/Employment Medium • Conserve/Reserve
Fiscal Considerations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Place Type with greatest potential to capture employment growth • Lower density uses generate less efficient infrastructure investment, but value of non-residential development will vary fiscal impact • Impact on calls for service varies by use (e.g., retail more, industrial less)

Overlay Characteristics/Considerations

Historic Resource	N/A
Environmental	Consider Low Impact Development (LID) applying Best Management Practices (BMPs) and other best practices with overall development limited to approximately 50% of land area
Cultural Resource	No Development



COMMERCIAL/ EMPLOYMENT MEDIUM

To facilitate higher intensity commercial and employment opportunities that are better connected to each other and the surrounding development types.

Commercial/Employment Medium places are intended to accommodate better connected and more walkable office, commercial, retail, and hospitality uses. Development tends to be multistory and buildings tend to be organized in close proximity to each other to create small clusters of like uses. These clusters are often organized around a plaza, open space, or parking structure. Parks, trails, open space, and other amenities contribute to the sense of place and provide amenities for employees and visitors, as well as San Marcans living nearby.

Land Use: Primarily characterized by medium to higher-scale office and other commercial, as well as civic, educational, and medical campus uses; parks and open spaces should be integrated throughout; may include medium density light industrial-type uses as well.

Built Form: Typically 2-5 story buildings in close proximity to each other; parking is sometimes structured and usually located to the sides or rear of buildings; the typical density of these areas is 20-30 jobs per acre and 6-12 housing units per acre (when applicable).

Mobility: Medium density roadway network with sidewalks, dedicated bike facilities, and transit access should be included on the periphery of these areas.

Amenities: A range of parks, plazas, and open spaces should be integrated in Commercial/Employment Medium places, along with civic and cultural uses, public art, and other placemaking elements.



Primary Land Uses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medium to Higher-Scale Office and other Commercial • Public/Institutional (Civic, Educational, etc.) • Medical • Parks and Open Space
Secondary Land Uses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supportive Service Commercial • Minimal General Commercial • Medium to Higher Intensity Multifamily • Medium to Higher Intensity Mixed Use • Medium Intensity Light Industrial (maker spaces, such as roasters, brewers, and artisans) • Hospitality
Mobility Characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medium density road network, primarily collector and local streets • Sidewalks and multi-use pathways throughout and connecting to the area • Dedicated bike facilities on higher order streets • Transit connections on collectors and on periphery
Parking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Structured parking and small off-street parking lots (shared parking highly encouraged) • On-street
Parks and Open Space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Parks to provide active and passive recreational opportunities for employees and residents nearby, as well as integrated stormwater features • Regional Parks to provide recreational opportunities and to potentially buffer these places from neighborhoods • Pocket Parks and Plazas to create places for outdoor seating, dining, public art and other placemaking elements • Trails and Greenways to provide transportation and recreational opportunities connecting to and through the area • Common Open Space with integrated stormwater features and passive recreation amenities
Desirable Transitions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neighborhood Medium • Neighborhood High • Mixed Use Low • Mixed Use Medium • Commercial/Employment Medium
Fiscal Considerations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher density of employment uses offsets cost to serve and provide infrastructure compared to Commercial/Employment Low

Overlay Characteristics/Considerations

Historic Resource	N/A
Environmental	Consider Low Impact Development (LID) applying Best Management Practices (BMPs) and other best practices with overall development limited to approximately 50% of land area
Cultural Resource	No Development



CONSERVE/ RESERVE

To identify areas to conserve and reserve for future development as a means of focusing more intensive development in other areas of the community.

Development that does occur within conservation and reserve areas should be low impact to the natural environment by using a variety of development techniques and strategies.

The Conserve/Reserve Place Type was originally developed to identify areas where development would be discouraged over the life of the Comprehensive Plan. As community and stakeholder input and feedback were gathered, the conception of the place type evolved to also include guidance for when development may still occur within areas that are currently open space, farmland, or otherwise undeveloped. Development techniques and strategies to ensure San Marcos retains many of these assets and maintains a high environmental quality include Low Impact Development, clustered development, ranchettes, and small clusters of diverse housing in strategically located areas.

Land Use: These areas are primarily characterized by parks, improved open space, agricultural, ranch, and undeveloped land and may have public/institutional uses.

Built Form: While little to no development is often desired, typical development includes a diverse range of residential and some small amounts of 1-2 story mixed use, commercial and civic development; the maximum density of these areas should be approximately 6-10 units per acre in developed areas and a typical net density of 1-5 units per acre.

Mobility: Emphasis on pedestrian facilities, connected trails, and shared use paths. In Reserve areas, utilities should generally be provided locally (e.g., well, septic, etc.) or via city utilities if more compact development is proposed.

Amenities: Large open spaces and trails are the most common amenities; in most instances, the lack of or limited development is an amenity in and of itself and water naturally flows through vegetation before reaching creeks.



Primary Land Uses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parks • Improved Open Space • Agricultural, Ranch, and Undeveloped Land
Secondary Land Uses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public/Institutional • Potential Clustered Housing and/or Mixed-Use Development with large buffer zones around creeks
Mobility Characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited and should typically limit higher order streets • Heavy emphasis on pedestrian facilities, typically in the form of trails and pathways • May accommodate bikes on bike lanes or shared use paths • Transit connections typically on periphery • In developed areas, lower density road network, primarily local streets • Sidewalks and/or multi-use pathways and shared streets
Parking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primarily self parked in garages, carports and driveways • Supplemental on-street parking
Parks and Open Space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primarily Trails and Greenways to preserve the integrity of natural drainage corridors and provide transportation and recreational opportunities connecting to and through the area • Common Open Space with integrated stormwater features and passive recreation amenities • Neighborhood Parks to provide active and passive recreation opportunities for nearby residents, as well as integrated stormwater features
Desirable Transitions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neighborhood Low • Commercial/Employment Low
Fiscal Considerations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None or has potential to perform like a Neighborhood Low or Medium Place Type if a cluster-style development is pursued

Overlay Characteristics/Considerations

Historic Resource	No difference
Environmental	See above; Primarily clustered development and very low density ranch and ranchette style housing
Cultural Resource	No Development

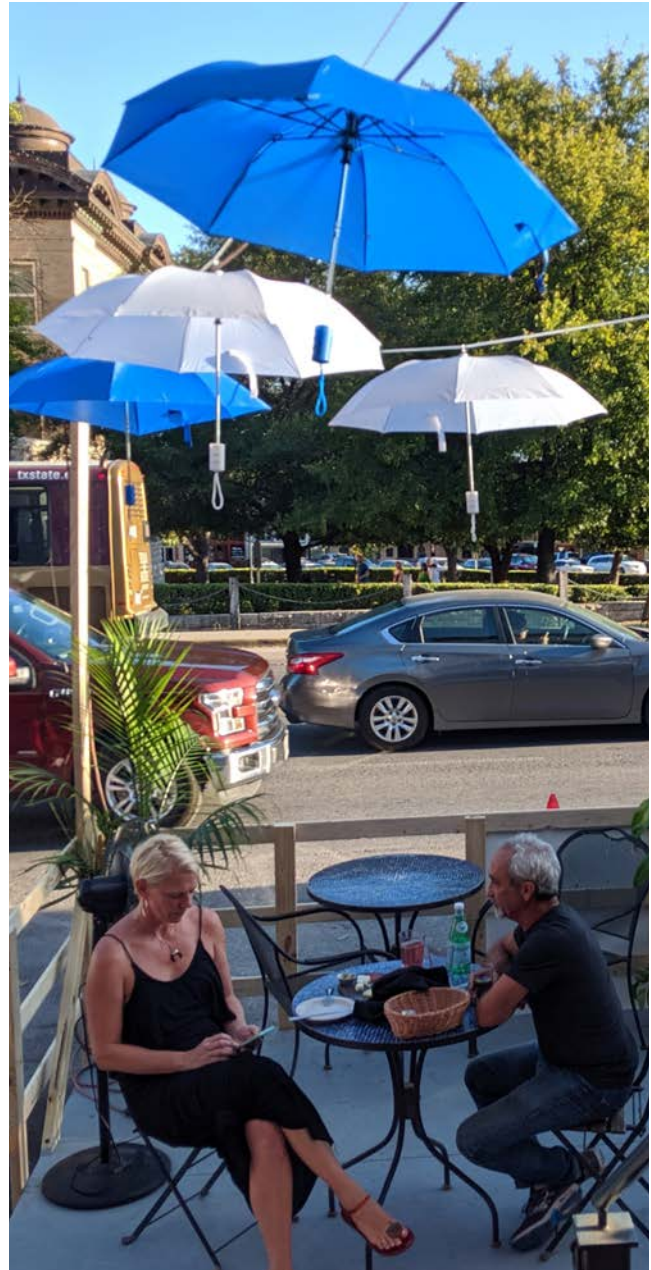


PREFERRED GROWTH SCENARIO

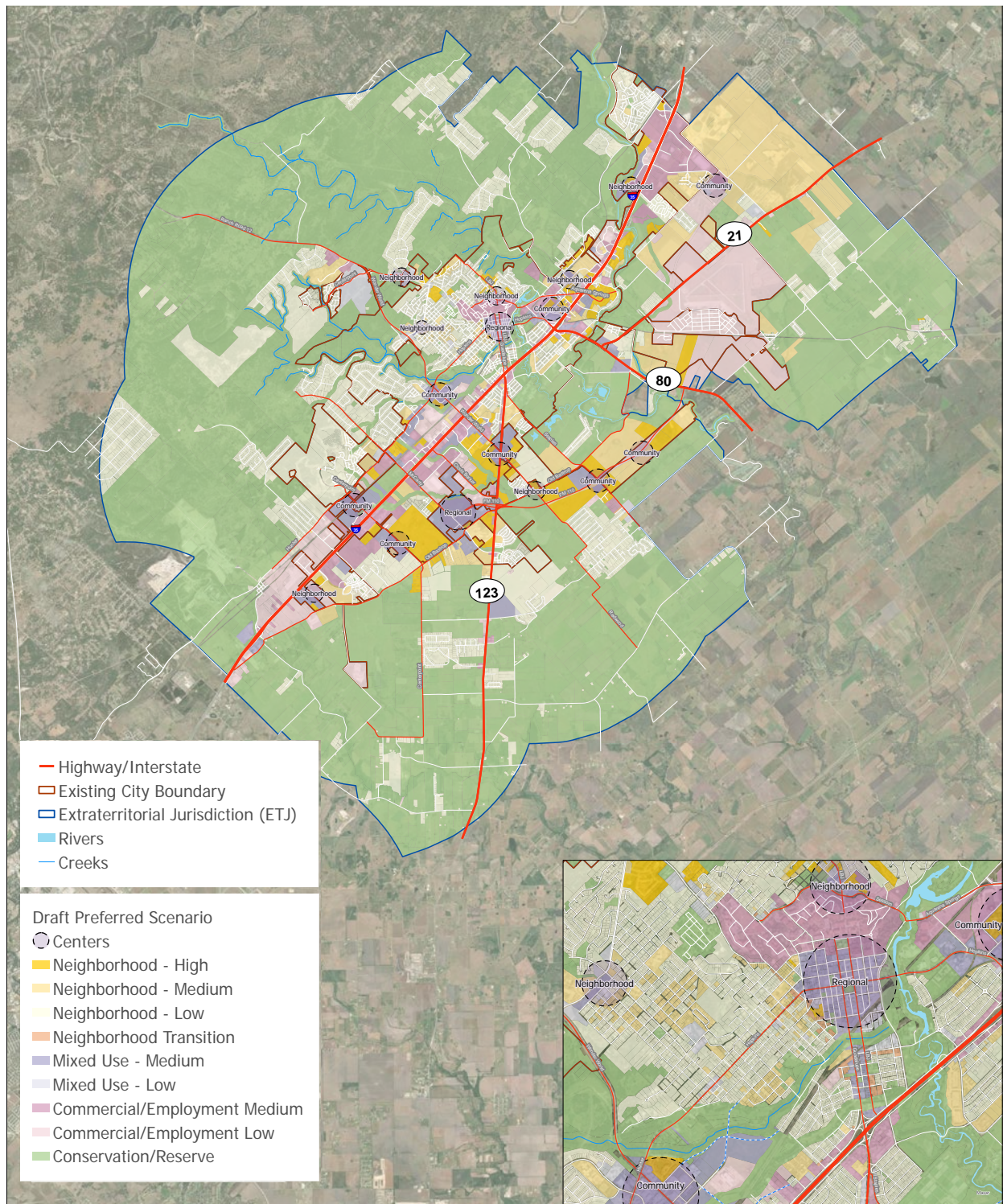
The Preferred Growth Scenario focuses new growth east of IH-35, along corridors, and provides better direction on land use while allowing flexibility. It minimizes the development of environmentally sensitive areas, and reduces the pressure of development in existing established neighborhoods and historic areas. The Preferred Growth Scenario is expected to require approximately 19,000 acres to accommodate the projected growth in housing units and employment through 2050.

The East Village is intended to provide access to amenities and services. The addition and enhancement of amenities and services in other parts of the city is achieved through the designation of multiple mixed use places and centers distributed throughout San Marcos.

The Preferred Growth Scenario is built on the goal of providing equitable access to amenities. Place Types promote a diverse mix of housing types with single family, townhomes, accessory dwelling units, courtyard apartments, duplexes, multi-family, etc. The further development of existing places and the addition of new places contribute to transit supportive development patterns and can support the creation of high-capacity transit corridors in the future.



Temporary sidewalk café at Blue Dahlia Bistro,
107 E Hopkins Street



MIXED USE CENTERS

The Preferred Growth Scenario includes 17 mixed use centers distributed throughout the community. While several of these centers already exist, many are only partially developed, undeveloped, or single use commercial areas today. Three scales of mixed use centers were identified and mapped as a critical part of the Preferred Growth Scenario. Regional Centers, Community Centers, and Neighborhood Centers are described below.

Regional Centers: Regional Centers are large, high-density mixed-use areas, typically along transit corridors or major roadways, that provide access to goods, services, dining, offices, entertainment, and residential areas for regional residents and visitors. These areas are characterized by higher intensity commercial, residential, and mixed use development in a well-connected, walkable, and bikeable places. Regional Centers have unique offerings to the community and typically attract patrons from across the community and potentially the region. The primary Place Types comprising regional centers include Mixed Use Medium; Commercial/Employment Medium; Neighborhood Medium; Neighborhood High.

Two regional centers are included in the Preferred Growth Scenario and are briefly described below.

Downtown: The Downtown Regional Center is centered on the Hays County Historic Courthouse Square in Downtown San Marcos. Place types comprising the Downtown Regional Center include primarily Mixed Use Medium and Commercial/Employment Medium, with Neighborhood High and Mixed Use Low. There is a Downtown Area Plan to guide public and private investment over the next 10 years.

East Village: The East Village is located west of the interchange where SH-123 meets FM-110. The area currently includes rural homes, light industrial areas (including the City's Public Services Complex), some multifamily housing and the San Marcos High School. Place Types comprising the East Village Regional Center include Mixed Use Medium, Neighborhood High, and Commercial/Employment Medium.

Community Centers: Community Centers are mid-sized mixed-use areas, typically along transit corridors or major roadways, that provide access to goods, services, dining, entertainment, and residential housing. These areas are characterized by a mix of medium-intensity commercial and residential uses. Development is vertically and horizontally mixed. Community Centers typically attract patrons from multiple neighborhoods. The primary Place Types comprising community centers include Mixed Use Medium; Mixed Use Low; Commercial/Employment Medium; Neighborhood Medium; Neighborhood High; and Neighborhood Transition.

Eight community centers are included in the Preferred Growth Scenario and are briefly described below.

North of Airport (near the intersection of Harris Hill Road and Yarrington Road) is a Community Center envisioned to serve residents in the northern portion of San Marcos. The area is beginning to develop as a residential subdivision (Whisper and a few Municipal Utility Districts) and Commercial/Employment Low development. In the future, the North of Airport Community Center is envisioned as a combination of Commercial/Employment Low and Medium, Mixed Use Low, and Neighborhood Medium place types to serve the surrounding neighborhoods.

Midtown (west of IH-35 between Aquarena Springs Drive and Hopkins Street) is largely developed today with a mix of residential and commercial uses. The area also includes the Texas State University Football Stadium and the Track and Field Stadium. In the future, the Midtown Community Center is envisioned as a combination of Mixed Use Medium, Neighborhood High, and Commercial/Employment Medium. While the area is not expected to change significantly from its existing condition, there are several opportunities for infill development, redevelopment, and public infrastructure improvements to achieve the vision for the area as a highly walkable, bikeable, transit-focused, vibrant Community Center.

South End (east of the intersection of Wonder World Drive and Hunter Road) is already beginning to develop in a manner consistent with the community's vision for the area. The area includes a variety of commercial and residential developments that are consistent with the Preferred Growth Scenario. Place Types include Mixed Use Medium and Neighborhood High.

Medical District is located at the intersection of Wonder World Drive/Redwood Road and SH-123. Medical uses are primarily along Wonder World Drive west of SH-123. Multifamily housing also exists in the area. Place Types include Mixed Use Medium, Neighborhood High, and Commercial/Employment Medium

Northeast Highway 110 is a developing area along FM-110, including Whisper. Due to the environmental assets and constraints, the intensity of development will be low to medium. Place Types include Mixed Use Low and Neighborhood Medium.

Highway 110 and Staples Road is a largely undeveloped area along FM-110, including a small amount of commercial and residential development east of FM-110. Place Types include Commercial/Employment Low and Medium, Mixed Use Medium, and Neighborhood Medium.

Kissing Tree/West Centerpoint Drive has limited development today with expectations of growth in the future. Place Types include Mixed Use Medium, and Commercial/Employment Low and Medium.

East Centerpoint Drive is largely undeveloped today and will benefit from close proximity to the Tanger and Premium Outlets. Place Types include Mixed Use Medium, and Neighborhood Medium and High.



Downtown Outdoor Gallery, 111 E MLK Drive

Neighborhood Centers: Neighborhood Centers are small, walkable, mixed-use areas that provide convenient access to goods, services, and dining for nearby residents. These areas are characterized by smaller commercial centers typically embedded near neighborhoods so that residents have convenient, safe, and equitable access to services. The primary place types comprising neighborhood centers include Mixed Use Low; Neighborhood Medium; Commercial/Employment Low; and Neighborhood Transition.

Seven neighborhood centers are included in the Preferred Growth Scenario and are briefly described below.

Riverway Avenue and Cotter Avenue has minimal development today, with increased development in recent years. Existing uses include a multifamily apartment complex and two auto dealerships with nearby office and warehouse uses. Place Types include Commercial/Employment Medium, Mixed Use Medium, and Neighborhood High.

Mill Street and Uhland Road is an area that is mostly built out today with a combination of commercial, single-family residential, and multifamily residential uses. There are opportunities for infill and some strategic redevelopment. Place Types include Mixed Use Low and Medium, Neighborhood Low, Medium and High, and Neighborhood Transition.

North LBJ Drive and Sessom Drive includes commercial development and multifamily residential development today. Place Types include Mixed Use Low and Medium, Commercial/Employment Low, and Neighborhood Low, Medium and High. As part of the Vision SMTX effort, the community is developing a Neighborhood Area Plan for this area.

Old Ranch Road 12 at the intersection of Country Estates Drive is a collection of commercial and institutional uses. Place Types include Mixed Use Low surrounded by Conserve/ Reserve and Neighborhood Low with Neighborhood Medium and High nearby. As part of the Vision SMTX effort, the community is developing a Neighborhood Area Plan for this area.

Craddock Avenue/Bishop Street includes undeveloped land and a combination of single-family residential and multifamily residential. Place Types include Mixed Use Low and Medium surrounded by Neighborhood Low and Medium.

Old Bastrop Highway and Redwood Road is only partially developed. The area west of the Old Bastrop Highway and Redwood Road intersection has a small commercial use at the corner and a large single-family neighborhood nearby. Development is underway in the area. Place Types include Neighborhood High and Commercial/Employment Low surrounded by Neighborhood Low and High.

El Rio Street (Trace South) is an area at the south end of San Marcos just east of IH-35 that is undeveloped. Multifamily development is occurring just to the northeast and existing commercial and multifamily zoning exists the area. Place Types include Mixed Use Medium and Commercial/Employment Low surrounded by Neighborhood Medium and High.



Residents and visitors at the San Marcos Farmers Market.

RELATIONSHIP TO ZONING AND OTHER REGULATIONS

The Preferred Growth Scenario Map and Place Types do not explicitly address zoning. The Place Types section identifies desired land uses and a variety of other characteristics for each designation on the Preferred Growth Scenario Map. Both the map and the Place Type descriptions are generalized tools used to guide development and amendments to the City's Land Development Code. The Preferred Growth Scenario Map is not a zoning map. This fact is emphasized in Section 213.005 of the Texas Local Government Code: A map of a comprehensive plan shall contain the following clearly visible statement: "A comprehensive plan shall not constitute zoning regulations or establish zoning district boundaries".



San Antonio Street Historic District sign.

The purpose of planning is to anticipate and shape change in a way that provides opportunities for new development and redevelopment while preserving the community's historical, cultural, and environmental heritage. A comprehensive plan articulates the community's vision for the future. The single-family nature of traditional neighborhoods will be preserved while welcoming multiple types of housing in new developments. One of the questions in any zoning case should be, "Does this request comply with the comprehensive plan?" The plan's goals, Preferred Scenario Map, Areas Plans, Neighborhood Character Studies, and Place Types provide that guidance.

AREA PLANNING



Key elements of the Vision SMTX Comprehensive Plan are Area Plans. Area planning includes detailed conversations and recommendations for Regional Centers and selected Neighborhood Areas throughout the community. This section provides an overview of the Area Planning approach, as well as a summary of the areas being planned as part of the initial Vision SMTX process.

INTRODUCTION

Area Plans are an important part of the Vision SMTX Comprehensive Plan process. The Comprehensive Plan articulates a vision, guiding principles, goals, and considerations for the entire City. The Preferred Growth Scenario assigns Place Types to smaller areas throughout the community. The citywide guidance provided by the Plan does not address more localized needs within neighborhoods and smaller areas nearby. Place Types and their description of land use, mobility, and amenities establish additional direction for the types of improvements and investments appropriate in existing and new areas of the community. However, more localized discussions and recommendations regarding the selected areas are needed.

The *Vision San Marcos: A River Runs Through Us Comprehensive Plan* (Vision San Marcos) identified Neighborhood Character Studies as an important step to determine the types of projects that would be supported in existing neighborhoods (referred to as Areas of Stability in that document). According to Vision San Marcos, “neighborhood character studies will be conducted to ensure that each neighborhood maintains its existing character and follows development and redevelopment patterns desired by the residents. These studies will result in specific guidelines for each neighborhood, which are created by the public with technical and professional input from city staff. The DNA of the neighborhoods will be analyzed and recoded back into the regulations for each neighborhood.”

Although a relatively robust effort to develop Neighborhood Character Studies was started in summer 2014 and continued into 2015, the six Neighborhood Character Plans proposed through that process were never completed. Seven Area Plans are included in the Vision SMTX Comprehensive Plan planning process. While two of those Area Plans focus on higher intensity mixed use regional centers of Downtown and East Village, the remaining five focus on neighborhoods around San Marcos. The Neighborhood Character Studies promised in the Vision San Marcos are included as a major component of the five Area Plans focusing on neighborhoods. These Area Plans will have the same power and effect as Neighborhood Character Studies noted in the statement above from the Vision San Marcos 2013 Comprehensive Plan.

The process for four Area Plans began in 2022 and the remaining Area Plans will be completed in 2023. The first five neighborhood-focused Area Plans establish a template for community engagement, the approach to analysis, types of recommendations, and documentation that will be utilized in developing additional Area Plans, including Neighborhood Character Studies, in the coming years.

AREA PLAN APPROACH

TYPES OF AREA PLANS

The Area Planning approach includes two types of Area Plans. The first type is for the two Regional Centers of Downtown and East Village. Neighborhood Character Studies are focused on areas of the community with mainly Neighborhood place types assigned in the Preferred Growth Scenario. Neighborhood Area Plans should include geographies with Neighborhood Place Type designations. Planning can, and should, include other Place Types nearby to help ensure connectivity, compatibility, and a cohesive development pattern.

Regional Center Area Plans

The first type of Area Plans are being developed for the two Regional Centers identified in the Preferred Growth Scenario. Downtown San Marcos is the historic heart of the community. The existing Downtown Master Plan was adopted in 2008. There has been a significant amount of change in the Downtown Area. The focus of that Area Plan is to continue attracting investment of commercial uses while retaining the historic character and charm that make the area unique and memorable.



“Little Free Libraries” located on W San Antonio Street



“I Love Downtown SMTX” photo frame, San Marcos Courthouse Square

For the East Village, the Preferred Growth Scenario and associated modeling project a large amount of residential and employment growth in the area designated as a Regional Center and much of the area nearby. The approach to Regional Center Area Plans in San Marcos includes:

- Documentation of existing conditions, including assets and constraints
- Community engagement to provide input and feedback throughout the planning process
- Plans for higher intensity, mixed use centers in San Marcos
- Focus on land use, connectivity, public spaces, housing and employment
- Specific strategies and recommendations to promote walkability and placemaking
- Prioritization, phasing and other implementation strategies to help ensure that the community's visions for these areas become reality

Neighborhood Area Plans

Area plans for neighborhoods will generally include between one and three formal or informal neighborhoods and the Mixed Use and Commercial/Employment places that are embedded within or located on the edges of these areas. City Council provided direction indicating that each distinct neighborhood included in a Neighborhood Area will have its own Neighborhood Character Study as a means of recognizing and protecting the unique character of each individual neighborhood in San Marcos. The approach to Neighborhood Area Plans includes:

- Documentation of existing conditions, including assets and constraints
- Community engagement to provide input and feedback throughout the planning process
- Plans for areas that are primarily neighborhoods with some existing commercial, employment and/or mixed use development
- Inclusion of some adjacent neighborhood centers/commercial areas used by the neighborhood
- Focus on neighborhood character and identity with unique Neighborhood Character Studies for each unique neighborhood
- Direction for context-sensitive amenities, access, and appropriate infill
- Plans for smallest nodes of commercial and mixed use nestled within neighborhoods, as deemed desirable and appropriate by neighborhood residents
- Focus on identity, appropriate scale, transitions, and access
- Prioritization, phasing and other implementation strategies to help ensure that the community's visions for these areas become reality

THE KEY COMPONENTS OF AN AREA PLAN

While the format and organization of Regional Center Area Plans and Neighborhood Area Plans will differ to address the unique needs of these two types of areas, the major components of an Area Plan in San Marcos will be consistent. The following identifies the major components that will be included in Area Plans developed as part of the Vision SMTX planning process and moving forward.

Documentation of Area Identity and Existing Conditions

- Description of the area, its boundaries, and unique assets and constraints
- Summary of previous and concurrent planning efforts
- Economic snapshot of employment and market conditions
- Identification of additional unique goals for the Area, if applicable

Recommendations

- History, Art and Culture
- Transportation, Mobility and Connectivity
- Streetscapes
- Public Spaces and Amenities
- Housing
- Business Community
- Development, including Place Types and transition strategies

Neighborhood Character Studies and Recommendations (specific to Neighborhood Area Plans)

- Summarize character defining elements
- Identify tools and strategies to maintain desirable aspects of Neighborhood Character

Implementation

- Key Investments
- Prioritization of needed improvements
- Phasing strategy and CIP coordination
- Policy and Regulatory Recommendations

AREA PLAN PROCESS

Area Plans should protect and enhance the character of San Marcos' Downtown and neighborhoods. The Regional Center Plan for the East Village will provide specific direction for creating a new higher intensity growth area that will relieve development pressure neighborhoods. Area Plans are developed through resident driven engagement efforts and intended to provide detailed strategies for places, transportation, infrastructure and community facilities and amenities. Area Plans will build on resident and property owner knowledge and feedback to catalog and celebrate community character.

Area Plans will serve as a guide for potential development in existing neighborhoods and may include provisions to enhance the area while maintaining the character.

Area Plans should integrate previous neighborhood plans and studies, as well as recommendations from citywide system plans (e.g., Transportation Master Plan). The purpose of an Area Plan is to preserve the character of the city's neighborhoods and to develop actionable strategies for the city's neighborhoods at a manageable and implementable scale. In addition, developing a single plan that represents multiple neighborhoods (or single neighborhoods with larger footprints) is an effective way to identify issues for consideration of policy changes and funding priorities.

The planning process for Area Plans will generally range from six to nine months and should include a robust community engagement strategy. They should be updated approximately every 10-12 years. Criteria will take into account the area's proximity to regional centers; degree of change reflected in Future Place Type mapping; recent development pressures; existence and age of existing subarea plans; new large-scale development planned, underway or recently completed; new large scale infrastructure planned, underway or completed; and amount and type of public investments recently made in the area or nearby.

The community engagement strategy for Area Plans should include at least:

- One community survey or questionnaire,
- A series of community meetings,
- Additional meetings and/or pop-up engagement at community events to:
 - Educate residents, business owners, and property owners about the process,
 - Gather input on neighborhood character, assets, and challenges,
 - Solicit feedback on draft recommendations, interim deliverables, and the draft plan report.



Cheatham Street Bridge mural by Sarah Farah and Topher Sipes

IMPLEMENTATION



This section establishes parameters and priorities for implementation of the Vision SMTX Comprehensive Plan and includes recommendations for:

- An approach to coordinating planning,
- Key findings from a Fiscal Impact Analysis,
- A suggested approach to identifying and prioritizing public projects,
- Organizational considerations,
- A road map for tracking progress.

PLANNING APPROACH

The following sets forth an approach and hierarchy for guiding planning efforts. Upon adoption, the Vision SMTX Comprehensive Plan is the overarching policy document that directs the City’s long-range development efforts and the other plans critical to realizing the community’s vision and goals. The intent of this is to ensure that planning at all levels in San Marcos is completed in an efficient and effective manner with meaningful participation and buy-in from individual residents, neighborhoods, property owners, business owners, partner agencies, major institutions, and other key stakeholders. The four planning levels are summarized and described below:

Level	Plan Type	Example Plans
1	Comprehensive	Vision SMTX Comprehensive Plan
2	Citywide Master Plans	Arts Master Plan; Capital Improvements Plan, Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Consolidated Plan and Action Plans; Flood Protection Plan; Greenway and Trails Master Plan; Parks Master Plan, Stormwater Master Plan; Transit Plan; Transportation Master Plan; Wastewater Master Plan, Water Master Plan, etc.
3	Area	Airport Master Plan, Downtown Area Plan; East Village Area Plan; Dunbar/Heritage Neighborhoods Area Plan; Blanco Gardens Neighborhood Area Plan; North of Campus Neighborhood Area Plan; South of Downtown Neighborhood Area Plan; Ranch Road 12 Neighborhood Area Plan; future Neighborhood Area Plans, etc.
4	Specific	Corridor Study/Plan; Site Master Plan or Regulating Plan; Texas State University, Campus Master Plan; Concept Plans; Historic Resources Survey; Housing Plan (upon adoption); etc.

Level 1: The Comprehensive Plan is developed in collaboration with community members, departments across the City, elected and appointed officials, partner agencies, and other community partners. This plan is to provide the highest policy level guidance for future development and redevelopment, infrastructure improvements and other public investments, transportation and land use connections, and a host of factors contributing to quality of life, affordability, equity and sustainability.

Level 2: Citywide Master Plans direct specialized components of city planning and implementation such as transportation, infrastructure, economic development, parks and recreation, housing, natural resources, and sustainability. City-wide plans that address a specific system or topic should be brought into alignment with and support the vision, goals, policies, and place guidance in the Vision SMTX Comprehensive Plan as each plan is updated.

Master Plans build on the higher-level policy guidance and direction set in the Level 1 Comprehensive Plan and set more specific goals, objectives, policy direction and performance measures/metrics for a specific topic with consideration for the entire City.

Action Plans are guided by the Comprehensive Plan identify and prioritize a particular type of community investment or service. These plans involve analysis and typically the definition, mapping, and listing of specific projects as well as phasing and funding strategies.

As Master Plans are updated in the coming years, there are several ways to incorporate direction provided by the Comprehensive Plan Rewrite, including:

- Align with and prioritize the Plan’s vision, guiding principles, goals, and policies (Section 2 of the Plan)
- Utilize updated projections for population, housing units, and employment
- Base updated and new infrastructure investments on the Preferred Growth Scenario (Section 3 of the Plan)
- Develop tailored standards and guidelines for various areas of the community utilizing Place Types to inform organization and content (Section 3 of the Plan)
- Evaluate and prioritize specific projects and programs using the Plan’s considerations and metrics (Section 2 of the Plan)

In addition, Master Plans should evaluate, coordinate, and incorporate specific direction for topics provided by adopted Area Plans (see next).

Level 3: Area Plans provide detailed strategies and recommendations regarding land use, neighborhood character, other aspects of built form, transportation, infrastructure, parks, recreation, open space, and facilities for smaller geographies of the City. The purpose of Area Plans is to engage and unite neighborhoods to plan their own communities within a framework that use the resources available to ensure input and guidance from neighborhoods for specific localized recommendations. Area Plans will include Neighborhood Character Studies when applicable.

Level 4: Specific Plans address smaller scale, targeted geographies and are focused on implementation. They should be guided by higher order plans (Levels 1, 2, and 3 above), but generally focus on further conceptualizing, planning and sometimes designing a specific small geography. Prioritization of Specific Plan efforts should be guided by the Comprehensive Plan's Preferred Growth Scenario and associated Regional, Community, and Neighborhood Centers.

EXISTING REGULATIONS

The City Charter in summary states the Comprehensive Plan must be adopted by ordinance and used as a guide for growth and development as well as preservation of open space. The Comprehensive Plan is reviewed by the Planning and Zoning Commission who makes a recommendation to the City Council regarding adoption. City ordinances should be consistent with the plan. Review of the plan must be ongoing, and any changes must go through the public hearing process outlined in the Development Code.

Area Plans are considered part of the Comprehensive Plan, so those plans will also be reviewed by the Planning and Zoning Commission to make a recommendation to the City Council regarding adoption

RELATIONSHIP TO THE CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN

The Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) is a multi-year schedule for the construction or substantial renovation of public facilities such as city-owned buildings, utility expansion, drainage and stormwater projects, and multimodal infrastructure, including roads. It should be a link between the City's annual budget and the Comprehensive Plan. Aligning the CIP with the Preferred Growth Scenario is essential to the successful implementation of the Vision SMTX Comprehensive Plan.

Vision SMTX provides substantial direction for the future development of the CIP. In addition, the Comprehensive Plan lays out an updated and comprehensive set of goals the community wants to achieve in the next 20 years. The Comprehensive Plan also introduces Place Types and an updated Preferred Growth Scenario for considering where and how investments should be made to achieve desired land use patterns and to address disparities and inequities.

The City's approach to updating and adopting the CIP should:

- Reflect the vision for the community identified within the Comprehensive Plan's vision, guiding principles, and goals;
- Prioritize the implementation of the Plan's policies, Place Types, and the Preferred Growth Scenario; and
- Reference Area Plans as they are adopted to identify and prioritize public infrastructure and amenity improvements.

The CIP can integrate the Comprehensive Plan's recommendations in two major ways to help achieve the Plan's goals and considerations. First, the approach to identifying projects can be modified to align with direction provided by the Vision SMTX Comprehensive Plan and Area Plans as they are adopted. Second, the approach to prioritizing projects and funding the CIP can integrate the Comprehensive Plan and associated Area Plans through the development of new scoring criteria explicitly linked to policy guidance provided by these documents.



City staff talking to residents at a public outreach event.

ANNEXATION AND THE EXTRATERRITORIAL JURISDICTION (ETJ)

Annexation decisions should be policy driven and evaluated in terms of the annexation-related goals and policies of the Comprehensive Plan.

San Marcos' ETJ is the contiguous unincorporated land within a 3.5 mile radius extending from, and adjacent to the city limits that is not within another city's ETJ or city limits. The purpose of an ETJ is to allow cities to plan for growth in the area outside their corporate boundaries. The ETJ does this in two ways. First, there is a statutory prohibition against a municipality annexing into another city's ETJ or any privately owned property without the property owner's consent. Second, cities are authorized to enforce their subdivision regulations and infrastructure standards (and a very limited number of other regulations) in their ETJ. This ensures that development in the ETJ meets the city's development standards should future annexation occur.

Several of the Best Management Practices for Annexation include:

- ETJ management decisions should support implementation of the Comprehensive Plan; ETJ management decisions support the Comprehensive Plan by directing growth towards the appropriate high-level land use, intensity zone, and Place Types in the ETJ.
- Discretionary actions, including consent to the creation of Municipal Utility Districts (MUDs) and Public Improvement Districts (PIDs) in the ETJ or approval of development agreements should be evaluated in terms of their impact on implementation of the Comprehensive Plan.



Residents providing input at a Vision SMTX outreach booth.

KEY FISCAL CONSIDERATIONS

A fiscal impact analysis was completed to understand the impact of land use decisions on the City of San Marcos' long-term fiscal health. The fiscal impact analysis estimated the increase in revenues and expenditures expected to be generated by new development on an annual basis. The analysis primarily focused on the City's General Fund, which provides funding for major services such as police, fire, streets, and parks. The analysis also considered impacts on other major funds where applicable. The analysis estimated impacts in two ways.

First, the net fiscal impact of the development pattern envisioned in each Place Type was estimated. The analysis helped identify which Place Types were beneficial to the City's fiscal health and which locations within the City's extra-territorial jurisdiction (ETJ) are more costly to serve. The analysis illustrates the importance of a balanced land use plan that accommodates real estate market demands, but within land use patterns that are more cost effective to serve. The fiscal impact findings for each Place Type are provided in the Appendix for 2023.

The fiscal impact analysis found that the Preferred Growth Scenario produces a net positive annual impact on the City's General Fund (\$3.9 million annually, which is 3.9% of estimated total new annual expenditures). The Preferred Growth Scenario provides for a greater diversity of housing and potential for higher density/intensity employment uses. This growth pattern produces a more cost-effective built environment for the City to serve.

Lastly, the fiscal impact analysis identified major findings related to the location of growth that impact land use and future annexation decisions.

- The location of growth significantly impacts the effectiveness and cost of fire service. Fire service effectiveness is driven by response time to calls for service and the utilization of firefighter units and apparatus. Development that is far from existing fire stations (i.e., with a response time greater than four to six minutes) impacts response times and utilization of units. New development outside existing fire station service areas has a much greater cost to serve as it will generate the need for new stations and firefighter staffing.
- The location of growth also impacts police response as new developments are farther from the core of the city. Response times will be longer, and this generates the need for more districts and more officers. In addition, the City of San Marcos' ETJ is within four different counties (Caldwell, Comal, Guadalupe, and Hays). Growth that occurs in Caldwell, Comal, and Guadalupe counties within the San Marcos ETJ produces greater service costs than Hays County. This includes farther distances that may need to be traveled to coordinate or process incidents.
- Potential growth areas for the City of San Marcos, in some cases, are outside of existing water and sewer service areas for the City's water and wastewater utilities. New development in areas outside of existing utility service areas will generate requests for service even if the new development is not annexed into the San Marcos. If the City chooses to not expand its service boundaries to serve new development, it can create the potential for encroachment of neighboring districts or new, small-scale water and sewer districts to be formed. Encroachment from other districts can limit the City's influence on the direction and pattern of development. Small-scale districts, especially sewer districts, can create the risk for future failure of the small sewer system or inadequate standards that may impact the long-term quality of life for San Marcos residents. The expansion of the City's utility systems should follow the direction and pattern of growth prescribed in this Comprehensive Plan

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY AND COORDINATION

In order to implement the Vision SMTX Comprehensive Plan, it is important to understand the needs for short-term and ongoing organizational capacity and coordination.

STAFFING

Planning within San Marcos is led by the Planning and Development Services (P&DS) Department. There are several divisions that make up P&DS. These include Planning, Permitting, Building/Inspections, and Community Initiatives and Housing. Staff evaluates plans, tracks area needs, implements the Comprehensive Plan, and ensures compliance with applicable codes. The department also gives staff support and recommendations to the Planning and Zoning Commission, the Zoning Board of Adjustments, the Historic Preservation Commission, Construction Board of Appeals, Human Services Advisory Board, City Council, and additional various appointed committees and boards. The Planning Department's principal responsibilities are:

- Developing and maintaining a Comprehensive Master Plan and Land Development Code after recommendation by the Planning and Zoning Commission and adoption by the City Council;
- Reviewing applications and development plans to ensure code compliance and compatibility with zoning and land use designations; and
- Providing an information center to assist citizens on projects pertaining to their property, neighborhood and throughout the city
- Administering Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding, including Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) and Mitigation (CDBG-MIT) funding

In addition to ongoing development guidance and support, the Vision SMTX Plan outlines several initiatives and priorities that will need to be led by P&DS staff, including:

- Project management and coordination of Area Plans, including the seven plans being developed as part of the Comprehensive Plan process and additional Area Plans for other Neighborhood Areas;
- Coordination with other departments to ensure other plans, studies, and investments not led by P&DS are in alignment with and further the vision and goals of the Comprehensive Plan;
- Updates to the San Marcos Development Code to ensure alignment with the Comprehensive Plan's vision, goals and policies, the Preferred Growth Scenario, and the Place Types; and
- Updates to the San Marcos Design Manual and adoption/initiation of other programs, plans, or projects to ensure alignment with and provide additional detailed guidance for the Comprehensive Plan's vision, goals and policies, the Preferred Growth Scenario, Place Types, and recommendations included in Area Plans as they adopted.



Residents providing input at a Vision SMTX outreach booth.

As such, P&DS staffing should be evaluated to assess overall workload and responsibilities for the department and individual staff. Many of the additional tasks and projects outlined above may be achievable with existing staff, but effective and expedient implementation of the Comprehensive Plan may likely require reorganization of existing staff, the creation of new staff positions, and strategic hiring of consulting expertise.



City staff participating in the annual Float to Work Day

CROSS DEPARTMENT AND AGENCY COORDINATION

The success of the Vision SMTX process can in part be attributed to the fact that the Plan was not developed only by the P&DS Department. Nearly all City departments engaged in the Comprehensive Plan process in some way, and engagement and coordination with staff and leadership occurred throughout the process. In addition, stakeholder and organization engagement occurred throughout the planning process to help develop and review content.

Moving forward into Plan implementations, it will be important to continue collaborating across departments and agencies to ensure that resources are prioritized appropriately, collective impacts are realized, responsibilities are assigned appropriately, and the community's vision are represented in all local and regional discussions and decision-making.

IMPLEMENTATION OVERSIGHT

OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

The level of community engagement and cross-department and agency coordination that has occurred in the development of the Vision SMTX Comprehensive Plan can provide a strong foundation for ongoing collaboration for implementation efforts, leveraging available resources, ensuring maximum collective impact, and ensuring accountability. The Comprehensive Plan Oversight Committee appointed by City Council should include community representatives and, agencies and organizations that participated in crafting the plan. The Comprehensive Plan Oversight Committee should meet at least regularly, contribute to an annual reporting of implementation progress and evaluation metrics, serve as stewards of the Comprehensive Plan, and ensure future efforts are aligned with the Comprehensive Plan. Additional roles of the Comprehensive Plan Oversight Committee may include:

- Contributing to the measuring and reporting of considerations, metrics, and targets
- Sharing of process and content updates related to Master Plans; Area Plans; and Specific Plans
- Participating in Area Planning to ensure Area Plans are completed in a timely manner
- Coordinating programs recommended in the Comprehensive Plan or targeted at achieving Plan goals and considerations
- Identifying and/or discussing potential Plan amendment



Residents and stakeholders participating in a East Village committee meeting.



Residents providing input at a Vision SMTX outreach booth.

TRACKING PROGRESS

Each element of the Comprehensive Plan includes a set of measurable considerations. These considerations are intended to measure changes that are desired as a result of the goals and policies associated with each goal. A target metric will be identified and defined for each consideration including the data source and methodology for the measurement. P&DS will update annually the consideration measurements to track the success of the Plan. In addition, tracking of implementation by mapping and otherwise illustrating which major policies (from Section 2) and places (from Section 3) have been implemented.

The Oversight Committee will define the methodology for measurement and tracking of the considerations. The Committee should also provide direction on whom (e.g. which department, agency or organization) is responsible for tracking of each consideration. A compiled list of suggested considerations and metrics is provided in an Appendix. In addition, the City should establish an ongoing tool to analyze the “fiscal sustainability”, defined as the long-term public cost obligations and fiscal productivity, of new development proposals.



Greater Randolph Area Trail Riders (GRA-Trails) arriving in Downtown San Marcos

GLOSSARY OF TERMS



Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU)

A structure contained within or separate from the main structure on a single-family or two-family lot that contains separate living quarters, including cooking, sleeping, and bathroom facilities. An ADU can be a separate structure, or attached as in a garage apartment or garden apartment which includes a separate entrance.

Adaptive Reuse

The use of existing structures, often historic buildings, for new uses. For example, an early twentieth century bank building in the classical style may be renovated and used as a restaurant, or an old office building may be transformed into a hotel. The reuse of a building is often cheaper and generally more environmentally beneficial than tearing down and building a new building and can have significant aesthetic benefits.

Clustered Housing

A style of residential development where homes are grouped together on a development site, typically on smaller lots than allowed in typical single-family development, but with no change in maximum number of units. The clustering results in a larger amount of common undeveloped space that is usually retained as open space and used for recreational purposes.

Complete Community

A community with a variety of places in close proximity to each other that provide opportunities for people to live, work, and play and include high-quality parks, open space, pedestrian and bicycle facilities, parking, and other community benefits.

Equitable Growth

An approach to public and private investment that attempts to maximize community benefits for all residents and to distribute the costs and benefits (physical, financial, environmental, social, and cultural) of growth and change in San Marcos.

Fiscal Sustainability

The long-term public cost obligations and fiscal productivity, of new development proposals.

Green (Stormwater) Infrastructure

The use of measures that allow stormwater to be stored on site and slowly infiltrated into the ground, transpired by plants, or evaporated into the atmosphere, instead of immediately being transported through pipes, drains, and water treatment systems to water bodies or manufactured flood containment systems. Green stormwater infrastructure includes elements such as rain barrels, rain gardens, bioswales, permeable pavement, planting strips, tree lawns, and green roofs.

Historic Property

A district, site, building, structure or object significant in American history, architecture, engineering, archeology or culture at the national, state, or local level.

Considerations

Metrics for measuring progress toward implementing goals and/or policies.

Placemaking

Placemaking inspires people to collectively reimagine and reinvent public spaces. Strengthening the connection between people and the places they share, placemaking refers to a collaborative process by which we can shape our public realm in order to maximize shared value. More than just promoting better urban design, placemaking facilitates creative patterns of use, paying particular attention to the physical, cultural, and social identities that define a place and support its ongoing evolution.

Shared-Use Path

Off-road infrastructure, typically paved, that is designed as part of a transportation network serving persons walking or using micromobility devices such as bikes, e-bikes, wheelchairs, and scooters. A shared-use path may run adjacent to but separated from a street, or operate in a completely separate right-of-way. Shared-use paths serve users who are traveling for recreational, employment, or other purposes.

Sustainable Development

Development that minimizes environmental impacts and meets the needs of the present without compromising the resources needed for future generations.

Underserved Areas

A community in which the residents lack resources or the infrastructure (either public or private), leading to disparities in the ability to access health care, jobs, recreation, social services, housing, transportation services, food, retail, or other elements of daily life.

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John C. "Jack" Hays
1837-1883



