

A photograph of a two-story house with a stone pillar and concrete steps, overlaid with a semi-transparent orange rectangle containing text. The house has a tiled roof, a circular vent on the upper level, and a stone pillar next to a set of concrete steps. The text is white and centered on the orange overlay.

CHAPTER 1
DEMOGRAPHICS, LAND USE,
AND COMMUNITY
CHARACTER

1 DEMOGRAPHICS, LAND USE, AND COMMUNITY CHARACTER

This chapter addresses the community’s demographic patterns, land use context, and special community character and is intended to assist the General Plan Update process by providing a baseline of existing demographic and land use information to be used when formulating and considering amendments to the City’s long-term policy direction. The chapter is organized into:

- 1.1 Demographics
- 1.2 Land Use
- 1.3 Community Character

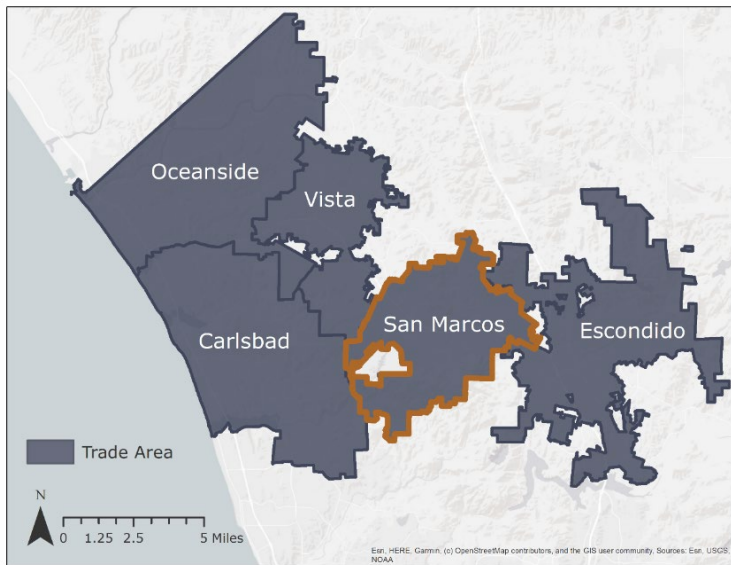
1.1 DEMOGRAPHICS

This section provides an overview of socio-economic trends such as demographics of the City’s residents and characteristics of jobs in the City. Overall, the City saw significant growth in both population and number of jobs from 2000 to 2018, although growth was faster in the first half of that period than in the second half. While household incomes have been on the rise in the City, many residents commute out, particularly to jobs in higher wage sectors. Accordingly, the City may want to look for opportunities to capture a greater proportion of Trade Area job growth in those sectors that are currently underrepresented in its job distribution. In particular, the City may look at the potential for its largest and fastest-growing industry sectors, education and healthcare, to attract complementary sectors and businesses that may provide jobs in line with the skill sets of City residents.

1.1.1 Geographic Focus

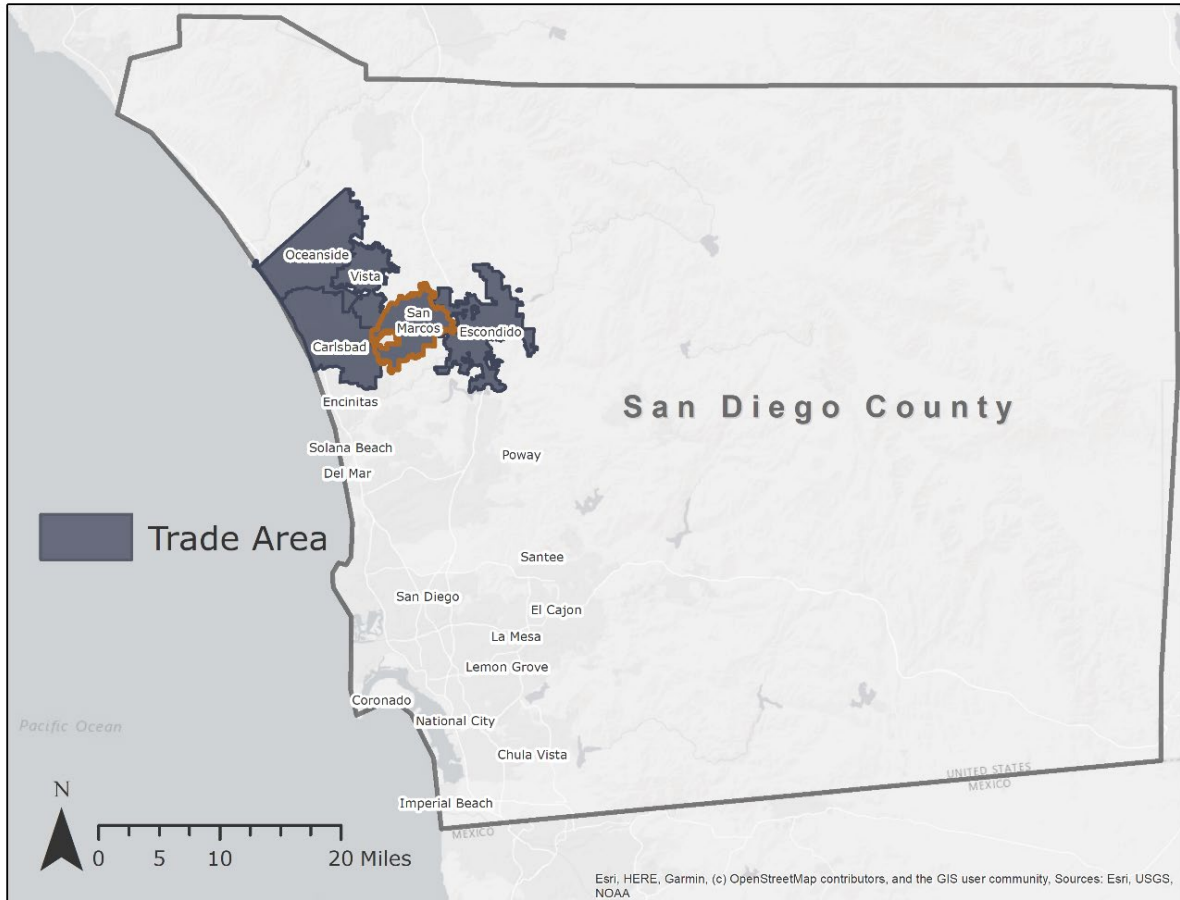
While this analysis focuses on data metrics for the City of San Marcos, it also provides data on other geographic areas for context and comparison purposes. In particular, a Trade Area is defined, which includes the cities of Carlsbad, Escondido, Oceanside, San Marcos, and Vista, shown in Figure 1-1.

Figure 1-1: Map of San Marcos Trade Area



Broader regional and even national trends will also play a role in the City’s evolution. Accordingly, this analysis includes data on San Diego County as a whole as a basis for illustrating key trends and performance indicators. The Trade Area’s geographic location relative to the County is shown in Figure 1-2.

Figure 1-2: Map of San Diego County and San Marcos Trade Area



1.1.2 Population and Household Characteristics

San Diego County is the second most-populous county in California and has seen over 15 percent growth since 2000. The Trade Area, which represents close to 20 percent of the County population, has grown even faster, as shown in Table 1-1. Meanwhile, growth in San Marcos has outpaced that of the Trade Area, with the City’s population growing 72 percent from 2000 and 2018. Most of that growth occurred between 2000 and 2010, but the City still grew by about 20 percent from 2010 to 2018.

The age profile of the study geographies has also been trending older over the past decade. The City’s 55 to 74 year-old population grew between 2010 and 2018, while most other age groups declined, including the prime working age cohort of 20 to 44 years (see Figure 1-3). While all study geographies have seen their median resident age tick up since 2010, San Marcos maintains a slightly younger age profile than the County overall with a median age of 34.4 years. This is partly attributable to a relatively high proportion of the population in the 20 years or younger cohort, suggesting many family households as well as college student households associated with the City’s higher education institutions. But the decline in young professionals (aged 20-34) in particular suggests that the City may not be retaining those institutions’ graduates.

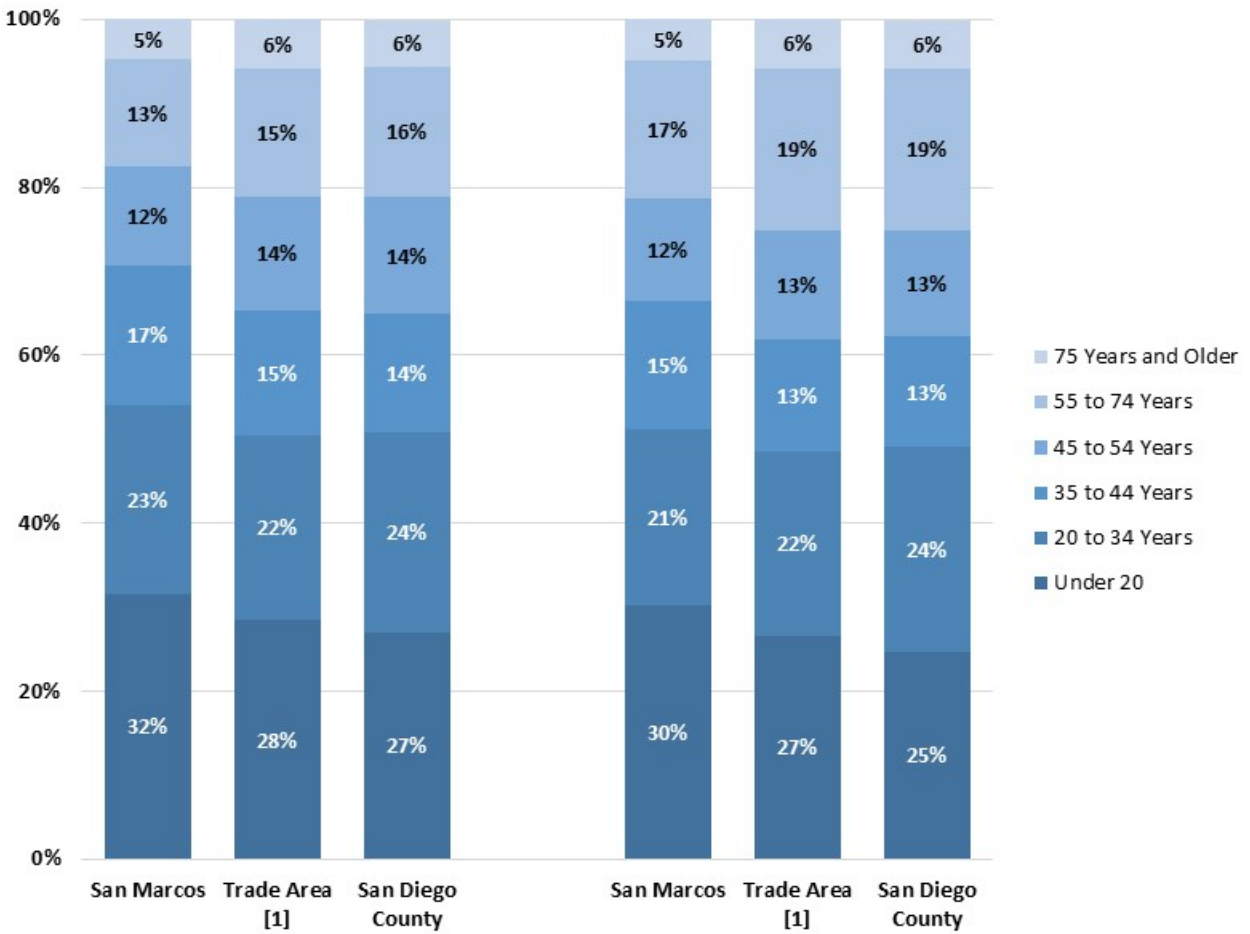
Table 1-1: Population and Household Trends, 2000-2018

Category	2000	2010	2018	% Ch. '00-'18	% Ch. '10-'18
San Marcos					
Population	54,977	78,127	94,709	72%	21%
% of Trade Area	11%	14%	15%		
Households	18,111	25,621	29,171	61%	14%
% of Trade Area	10%	13%	14%		
Trade Area [1]					
Population	517,669	576,065	634,991	23%	10%
% of County	18%	19%	19%		
Households	178,814	197,088	210,733	18%	7%
% of County	18%	19%	19%		
San Diego County					
Population	2,813,833	3,022,468	3,302,833	17%	9%
Households	994,677	1,061,789	1,118,980	12%	5%

[1] Trade Area is the cities of Carlsbad, Escondido, Oceanside, San Marcos, and Vista

Source: U.S. Census; American Community Survey; Economic & Planning Systems

Figure 1-3: Age Distribution of Residents, 2010-2018



1.1.3 Household Income

While North County is home to some of the more affluent communities in San Diego County, median household incomes in the Trade Area are and have been in line with County incomes overall. Neither geography has seen growth in median household income in real (2018) dollars since 2010, although the Trade Area has seen a small decrease in its poverty rate, while the County’s poverty rate has ticked up slightly.

At the same time, the City has seen notable growth in median household incomes since 2010, as shown in Table 1-2. Whereas City households earned less overall than Trade Area or County households in 2010, by 2018 they were earning slightly more, representing a nearly ten percent increase in real (2018\$) income. This trend in household incomes aligns with findings related to median wages and distribution of job types among City residents, which are all trending towards higher earning potential, as discussed further in subsequent sections.

Table 1-2: Median Household Income, 2010-2018

Year	San Marcos	Trade Area [1]	San Diego County
Nominal Dollars [1]			
2010	\$58,897	\$63,006	\$63,069
2018	\$76,619	\$75,851	\$74,855
% Change '10-'18	30%	20%	19%
Real Dollars [1]			
2010	\$70,194	\$75,092	\$75,166
2018	\$76,619	\$75,851	\$74,855
% Change '10-'18	9%	1%	0%
Poverty Rate [3]			
2010	8.0%	8.5%	8.6%
2018	8.0%	8.2%	8.7%

[1] Nominal values represented in dollar value of given year; real values represented in 2018 dolla

[2] Trade Area is the cities of Carlsbad, Escondido, Oceanside, San Marcos, and Vista; median income shown represents weighted average of median incomes for included geographies.

[3] Poverty rate shown for the Trade Area is an average of the poverty rates for the included cities.

Source: U.S. Census; American Community Survey; Bureau of Labor Statistics; Economic & Planning Systems

1.1.4 Education

As detailed in Table 1-3, San Marcos has a well-educated working-age population. About 45 percent of all City residents over the age of 25 have an associate’s, bachelor’s or graduate degree, and the proportion of residents with associate’s and bachelor’s degrees specifically exceeds the Trade Area and County proportions.

Table 1-3: Educational Attainment (Population Aged 25 Years and Older)

Level of Education Completed (%)	San Marcos	Trade Area [1]	San Diego County
Less than High School	15.4%	15.0%	12.9%
High School Diploma or Equivalent	18.9%	19.6%	18.4%
Some College, No Degree	20.9%	22.8%	22.4%
Associate's Degree	8.9%	8.6%	8.2%
Bachelor's Degree	23.9%	21.6%	23.5%
Graduate or Professional Degree	12.0%	12.4%	14.7%

[1] Trade Area is the cities of Carlsbad, Escondido, Oceanside, San Marcos, and Vista

Source: U.S. Census; American Community Survey; Economic & Planning Systems

The City also has significant educational assets for residents of both the City and the region. San Marcos Unified School District has a 95 percent graduation rate and exceeds state averages in academic performance measures.¹ The City is also home to two large institutions of higher learning—California State University-San Marcos (CSUSM) and Palomar College—which together enroll almost 45,000 full-time and part-time students. This combination of a highly-educated population and strong educational resources is one that the City can leverage in attracting residents and employers.

1.1.5 Employment Status

As shown in Table 1-4, San Marcos has a labor force participation rate of 66 percent among residents aged 16 and older, and an unemployment rate of just 4.5 percent, slightly outperforming the Trade Area and County. The number of employed residents has also grown by nearly 45 percent since 2010, faster than the City’s population growth overall. A more detailed breakdown of resident employment by industry sector is provided in the subsequent section on economic trends.

¹ Data collected from the California School Dashboard district performance overviews (www.caschooldashboard.org).

Table 1-4: Resident Employment

Category	San Marcos	Trade Area [1]	San Diego County
Labor Force Participation	66.2%	65.9%	65.7%
Unemployment Rate	4.5%	5.1%	6.4%

[1] Trade Area is the cities of Carlsbad, Escondido, Oceanside, San Marcos, and Vista

Source: U.S. Census; American Community Survey; Economic & Planning Systems

1.1.6 Population Growth Projections

Looking forward, the San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) projects that San Marcos’s population will grow at a more moderate rate through 2040 compared to the previous 20 years (see Table 1-5).² While the City’s projected growth rate aligns with the County overall, it is faster than forecasts for the Trade Area, suggesting that the City is seen to have more growth potential than some of its neighbors.

It is important to note, however, that these projections, which are compiled using a number of sources including adopted plans, historical trends, and interviews with local jurisdictions, tend to be more accurate on a regional than local level. Consequently, projections for San Marcos should not be regarded as determinative. It is likely that through a combination of market changes, catalytic projects, updated land use direction in the General Plan, and other factors, San Marcos could capture either more or less of expected regional growth than what is forecasted by SANDAG.

Table 1-5: Population Growth Projections, 2020-2040

Population	San Marcos	Trade Area [1]	San Diego County
2020	98,915	657,412	3,435,713
2040	113,540	717,954	3,937,280
% Change from 2020 to 2040	15%	9%	15%

[1] Trade Area is the cities of Carlsbad, Escondido, Oceanside, San Marcos, and Vista

Source: SANDAG 2012-2050 Growth Forecast; Economic & Planning Systems

1.2 LAND USE

This section provides an overview of existing land use patterns, types and location of development in the City, and approved and pending projects within the Planning Area (i.e., the City and its

² SANDAG Series 13 growth forecasts for the San Diego region through 2050 were accepted by the SANDAG Board in 2013. SANDAG works extensively with cities in the region to develop subregional forecasts that reflect planned land use and development patterns and constraints. Further information on approach and methodology can be found on SANDAG’s website at www.sandag.org/index.asp?classid=12&subclassid=84&projectid=503&fuseaction=projects.detail

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Sphere of Influence). Existing land use conditions, including land uses by General Plan designation and assessed land uses, are also described. Figure 1-4 shows the San Marcos City Limits, and the General Plan Planning Area boundaries. The San Marcos General Plan currently includes the following goals and policies which guide land use decisions in San Marcos.

Element	Topic Area	Goal	Policy
Land Use and Community Design Element	Balanced and Compatible Land Uses	Goal LU-1: Achieve a balanced distribution and compatible mix of land uses to meet the present and future needs of all residents and the business community.	<p>Policy LU-1.1: Ensure that adjacent land uses complement one another by considering compatibility of activities, development patterns and architectural character elements and access to various mobility choices.</p> <p>Policy LU-1.2: Promote commercial uses that provide a solid economic base and employment opportunities.</p> <p>Policy LU-1.3: Diversify land uses by providing mixed use land uses in strategic locations within the City that place housing adjacent to employment.</p> <p>Policy LU-1.4: Maintain the natural integrity of open space preserves by ensuring development projects are sensitively integrated along the edges of preserved or protected areas.</p> <p>Policy LU-1.5: Provide for and retain a variety of complementary industrial uses that offer employment opportunities.</p> <p>Policy LU-1.6: Allow home offices, and other low-impact home businesses, that do not change the character of the residential unit or neighborhood and remain incidental to the primary residential use.</p> <p>Policy LU-1.7: Require the installation of a linear park amenity within Focus Area 2 on the designated open space when mixed use development occurs east of S. Rancho Santa Fe Road. The development of the neighborhood/linear park shall be installed by the property owner along Pawnee Street from Descanso Avenue to Linda Vista Drive.</p>
	High Quality and Sustainable Development	Goal LU-2: Promote development standards and land use patterns that encourage long-term environmental sustainability.	<p>Policy LU-2.1: Promote compact development patterns that reduce air pollution and automobile dependence and facilitate walking, bicycling, and transit use.</p> <p>Policy LU-2.2: Encourage new development to be sited to respond to climatic conditions, such as solar orientation, wind, and shading patterns.</p> <p>Policy LU-2.3: Require the incorporation of green building practices, technologies, and strategies into development projects per code standards.</p>

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<p>Land Use and Community Design Element</p>			<p>Policy LU-2.4: Encourage retrofits of existing buildings to promote energy efficiency and indoor air quality.</p> <p>Policy LU-2.5: Promote landscaping (e.g., native, drought tolerant plants) that minimizes demands on water supply.</p> <p>Policy LU-2.6: Promote use of community gardens, farmers markets, and agricultural lands to provide locally-grown food.</p> <p>Policy LU-2.7: Promote the instillation of trees to reduce the urban heat-island effect and green infrastructure to reduce storm water runoff.</p>
	<p>Community Connections</p>	<p>Goal LU-3: Develop land use patterns that are compatible with and support a variety of mobility opportunities and choices.</p>	<p>Policy LU-3.1: Require that new development and redevelopment incorporate connections and reduce barriers between neighborhoods, transit corridors, and activity centers within the City.</p> <p>Policy LU-3.2: Promote street-oriented development, within mixed use areas with parking located behind or next to buildings rather than in front. Encourage commercial activities such as wide sidewalks and outdoor dining.</p> <p>Policy LU-3.3 Where feasible, consolidate inadequately sized land into parcels suitable for integrated development with improved pedestrian and vehicular circulation.</p> <p>Policy LU-3.4: Provide non-motorized (pedestrian and bicycle) access/circulation within, and to, mixed use centers to reduce reliance on the automobile.</p> <p>Policy LU-3.5: Provide an interconnected open space system that is accessible to the public, including pedestrian and equestrian links, bicycle paths, multiuse trails, recreation areas, and drainage-ways.</p> <p>Policy LU-3.6: Encourage the creation of live/work units to maintain business and living space under common ownership.</p> <p>Policy LU-3.7: Require new development to prepare traffic demand management programs.</p> <p>Policy LU-3.8: Require new development and discretionary actions to annex into a Congestion Management Community Facilities District.</p> <p>Policy LU-3.9: Review SANDAG’s Regional Transportation Plan/ Sustainable Communities Strategy each time the City reviews and updates its General Plan and any specific plan, strategy, and zoning, to ensure overall consistency among all</p>

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Land Use and Community Design Element			<p>of these plans and strategies, and allow for associated CEQA streamlining and eligibility for State transportation funding.</p> <p>Policy LU-3.10: Require new development/redevelopment in Focus Areas 1, 2 and 3 to provide neighborhood parks near conceptual “floating neighborhood park” locations identified in Figures 2-7, 2-8, 2-9, and 2-10. These parks are intended to provide a variety of recreational amenities and improve pedestrian connections for the future mixed use project and surrounding development.</p>
	Educational Hub	<p>Goal LU-4: Promote San Marcos as the educational center of North County while creating a greater synergy between the business community and its academic institutions.</p>	<p>Policy LU-4.1: Continue to encourage the development, expansion, and upgrade of higher education facilities such as Palomar Community College, California State University San Marcos, and private educational facilities.</p> <p>Policy LU-4.2: Support Palomar Community College, California State University San Marcos, and other higher education institutions in providing comprehensive adult education programs to promote opportunities for continuing education, job training, and career advancement.</p> <p>Policy LU-4.3: Promote the growth of research, development, and high tech businesses and organizations associated with California State University San Marcos to further develop the connection between academic innovation and community development and to identify new areas of growth for local businesses.</p> <p>Policy LU-4.4: Establish a “Business Park” zone that promotes the intent of the Business Park land use, and allows for attraction of highly technical businesses like green-tech and bio-medical industries.</p>
	A City of Distinct and Memorable Places	<p>Goal LU-5: Promote community design that produces a distinctive, high-quality built environment with forms and character that create memorable places and enrich community life.</p>	<p>Policy LU-5.1: Create unique mixed use districts with public spaces and vertical massing to create sense of place.</p> <p>Policy LU-5.2: Establish a “downtown” as a focal point for the San Marcos community and an attraction for North County.</p> <p>Policy LU-5.3: Use public landscaping, banners, and signage along streets, sidewalks, property frontages, and in public spaces to strengthen the City’s identity and create a unique sense of place.</p> <p>Policy LU-5.4: Require building and site design that respects the natural topography and iconic ridgelines that serve as the visual backdrop for San Marcos.</p>

<p>Land Use and Community Design Element</p>			<p>Policy LU-5.5: Encourage development of public spaces and plazas within commercial, mixed use, and residential projects that include fire and water features that can accommodate civic events and function as community gathering areas.</p> <p>Policy LU-5.6: Require a specific plan for strategic areas/properties that require high-quality design, orientation and development due to their location or visibility within the community.</p> <p>Policy LU-5.7: Architecture shall be enhanced with high-end building materials, varied roof lines, and decorative details.</p> <p>Policy LU-5.8: Ensure that automobile-oriented businesses have pedestrian-friendly exterior design.</p>
	<p>Economic Strength and Stability</p>	<p>Goal LU-6: Maintain a supportive business climate and a healthy, sustainable economy to retain and attract high quality businesses and create additional employment opportunities.</p>	<p>Policy LU-6.1: Pursue a variety of funding approaches, including grants, impact fees, assessments, and transportation funds to support public services, municipal programs, and capital investments that support City businesses.</p> <p>Policy LU-6.2: Encourage businesses and existing employers to remain and expand in San Marcos.</p> <p>Policy LU-6.3: Encourage and actively promote the location of clean, high tech, telecommunications, and research and development uses within designated industrial and business park areas. This is intended to provide jobs for highly skilled manufacturing and research/development employees, create local revenue sources, support other business sectors, and provide other benefits to local residents and the City.</p> <p>Policy LU-6.4: Encourage and support the renovation and reuse of under utilized or vacant parcels/buildings/ shopping centers.</p> <p>Policy LU-6.5: Support ongoing marketing efforts that encourage job growth and attract residents outside of the City to shop and visit San Marcos.</p> <p>Policy LU-6.6: Maintain an active presence in the business community and engage in outreach efforts with property owners, tenants, brokers, community stakeholders, and local residents to promote economic development and identify development opportunities.</p> <p>Policy LU-6.7: Promote development and revitalization of revenue-generating land uses in areas designated for commercial and industrial uses that will support business and employment growth.</p>

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Land Use and Community Design Element			<p>Policy LU-6.8: Protect the sales tax base in the commercial core and State Route 78 light industrial corridor by limiting non-retail uses, or offsetting lost sales tax by another beneficial action or measure, such as an in-lieu fee for loss of retail sales based on compatible retail uses in the area.</p> <p>Policy LU-6.9: Ensure high architectural standards and aesthetic design quality particularly for redevelopment along the State Route 78 corridor and within the commercial core of the community.</p> <p>Policy LU-6.10: Apply a Transitional Zoning category, as part of the comprehensive update to the Zoning Ordinance, to those industrial designated/zoned properties where there is a future nonindustrial land use designation per Figure 2-5. Each property shall ultimately be removed from this exhibit pending a rezone approval matching the adopted General Plan Land Use designation per Figure 2-5.</p>
	Growth Management and Adequate Provision of Urban Services	Goal LU-7: Direct and sustain growth and expansion in areas of San Marcos that can support a concentration of a variety of uses and are particularly suitable for multimodal transportation and infrastructure expansion and improvements. Goal LU-8: Ensure that existing and future development is adequately serviced by infrastructure and public services.	Policy LU-7.1: Support walkable, mixed use development along main transit and transportation corridors. Policy LU-7.2: Coordinate pedestrian, transit and infrastructure upgrades with infill and redevelopment opportunities. Policy LU-8.1: New development shall pay its fair share of required improvements to public facilities and services. Policy LU-8.2: Promote development timing that is guided by the adequacy of existing and/or expandable infrastructure, services, and facilities. Policy LU-8.3: Focus Capital Improvement Plan infrastructure improvements in areas needed to support more concentrated development and that is contiguous to existing development and available infrastructure.

<p>Land Use and Community Design Element</p>		<p>Goal LU-9: Community Facilities: Establish and maintain community facilities that enhance the quality of life for residents in San Marcos, such as community and senior centers.</p>	<p>Policy LU-9.1: Expand and improve City facilities and buildings as needed to meet the community’s needs, based on regular monitoring and evaluation of their condition and the needs of the community.</p>
		<p>Goal LU-10: Fire Protection, Emergency Services, and Law Enforcement: Provide effective, high-quality and responsive services.</p>	<p>Policy LU-10.1: Provide demand-based fire-fighting and emergency medical services infrastructure, equipment, and personnel to provide a high level of fire, emergency medical, and law enforcement service in San Marcos to meet existing and future demands.</p> <p>Policy LU-10.2: Work closely with the County of San Diego Sheriff’s Department to determine and meet the community needs for adequate personnel, equipment and state-of-the-art technology to effectively combat crime, and meet existing and projected service demands.</p>
		<p>Goal LU-11: Schools: Ensure all residents have access to high-quality education.</p>	<p>Policy LU-10.3: Continue to conduct Public Outreach and education regarding fire safety and crime prevention within San Marcos.</p> <p>Policy LU-11.1: Collaborate with the local public school district (SMUSD), private schools, and institutions of higher learning to ensure a range of traditional and distance-learning educational opportunities are provided in superior, accessible facilities that compliment the surrounding land uses.</p> <p>Policy LU-11.2: Work with San Marcos Unified School District and developers to ensure adequate school facilities are funded as required by State law and through developer mitigation agreements between the school district and the developer. The City shall require a “will serve” letter substantiating that the developer has paid fees to the satisfaction of the school district prior to issuance of building permits.</p>
		<p>Goal LU-12: Libraries: Provide library resources and services that meet the needs of the community.</p>	<p>Policy LU-12.1: Provide adequate library facilities and technological access that enhance San Marcos’s quality of life and create a civic environment with vast opportunities for self-learning and academic enrichment.</p>

Demographics, Land Use, and Community Character

<p>Land Use and Community Design Element</p>		<p>Goal LU-13: Water Service and Supply: Manage and conserve domestic water resources by reducing water usage and waste on a per capita basis, to ensure an adequate water supply for existing and future residents.</p> <p>Goal LU-14: Wastewater: Ensure an adequate wastewater system for existing and future development.</p> <p>Goal LU-15: Flood Control and Storm Water Drainage Facilities: Ensure adequate flood control and storm water drainage is provided to the community.</p> <p>Goal LU-16: Solid Waste: Reduce the amount of waste material entering regional landfills with an efficient</p>	<p>Policy LU-12.2: Accommodate technology needs of the community and locate accessible technology in the library.</p> <p>Policy LU-13.1: Work closely with local and regional water providers to ensure high quality water supplies are available for the community.</p> <p>Policy LU-13.2: Actively promote water conservation programs aimed at reducing demand.</p> <p>Policy LU-13.3: Encourage exploration and use of deep underground wells to reduce reliance on treatable water.</p> <p>Policy LU-14.1: Work closely with local service providers to ensure an adequate wastewater system for existing and future development is in place.</p> <p>Policy LU-14.2: Ensure development approval is directly tied to commitments for the construction or improvement of primary water, wastewater, and circulation systems.</p> <p>Policy LU-15.1: Implement activities, practices, procedures, or facilities that avoid, prevent, or reduce pollution of the San Marcos Storm Water Conveyance System and Receiving Waters.</p> <p>Policy LU-15.2: Improve inadequate or undersized drainage/ flood control facilities to solve both small neighborhood and large regional drainage and flood control problems.</p> <p>Policy LU-15.3: Avoid, to the extent possible, development in floodplain and flood prone areas.</p> <p>Policy LU-15.4: Retain drainage courses in their natural condition, to the extent possible. Consider smaller-scale drainage improvements to protect the environment and avoid disturbing natural drainage courses; consider detention areas and raised building pads.</p>
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		<p>and innovative waste management program.</p> <p>Goal LU-17: Utilities and Communications: Encourage provision of power and communication systems that provide reliable, effective and efficient service for San Marcos.</p>	<p>Policy 16.1: Work closely with local service providers to ensure adequate solid waste disposal, collection, and recycling services.</p> <p>Policy 16.2: Increase recycling, composting, source reduction, and education efforts throughout the City to reduce the amount of solid waste requiring disposal at landfills.</p> <p>Policy LU-17.1: Coordinate with all communications and utility companies (electrical, gas, telephone, cable, satellite and future utilities) in the provision of services throughout the community and the installation and maintenance of facilities in their respective franchise areas.</p> <p>Policy LU-17.2: Require all new development and redevelopment to provide the technology to support multiple telecommunications facilities and providers such as multi-media products, wireless technologies, and satellite communications.</p> <p>Policy LU-17.3: The City shall prohibit above ground utility equipment within any of the pedestrian pathway and street frontage areas. All above ground utilities shall be placed either within; “wet closets” within the buildings, underground vaults, or behind buildings where they are not visible. The developer shall be responsible to contact the applicable utility agencies in advance to coordinate utilities prior to approval of the final street improvement plans for both public and private street frontages and prior to submittal of building permits.</p> <p>Policy LU-17.4: Require utility location to be shown on all site development plans at the time of development/ project application.</p>
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1.2.1 Existing Setting

This section describes the existing land use context in San Marcos, including its Specific Plans, current Land Use Designations, existing (on-the-ground) land uses, and ongoing projects in San Marcos and nearby communities.

General Plan

The City of San Marcos has a General Plan that was adopted in 2012. The General Plan is a planning document used to guide the city’s growth and development. The General Plan consists of numerous

elements and policies that work to shape the future changes in the City. The Land Use and Community Design Element in the existing San Marcos General Plan establishes the planned land use pattern for the City based on the community's vision and goals. Decision-makers and community members can look to the Land Use and Community Design Element to understand the type of development allowed across different locations within San Marcos.

Zoning Code

The City of San Marcos has a zoning code that is a code of regulations that outlines what land uses can exist in specific geographic areas. An interested party can utilize the zoning code to identify what types of uses are allowed on a certain property, or the size, dimensions, or density of development allowed within a parcel of land.

Specific Plan Areas

Specific plans are hybrid documents that act as a bridge between the General Plan and zoning regulations for future development of a particular area. Specific plans are tools that public agencies and developers use to achieve better specificity on the vision, development potential, and architectural style of a specific planning area. San Marcos has several major land use plans for specific planning areas (more than 80 in total) that oversee the development of their respective planning areas. These plans act as tools for implementing the goals and policies of the General Plan through the regulation of use, density, height, and other design standards to achieve the overall vision for the selected area. While not inclusive of all of the City's specific plans, listed below are some of the commonly referenced and largest specific plan documents with brief descriptions.

Heart of the City Specific Plan

The Heart of the City Specific Plan was developed in response to the establishment of California State University San Marcos with the objective of improving the regional image of San Marcos and making the City the educational center of North San Diego County. Another goal of the Specific Plan was to develop a mixed-use town center and City Hall site to serve, in conjunction with the university campus and surrounding development, as the community focal point.

The Specific Plan is important to the City and its residents because it emphasizes the establishment of an urban core and a true town center for the City. The Plan also encourages pedestrian mobility and mass transit alternatives via the SPRINTER light rail line. At buildout, the Specific Plan would provide for a range of between 2,624-3,845 dwelling units, with the majority consisting of "High Density Multi-Family Residential" (15-20 dwelling units per acre) clustered near CSUSM and adjacent business districts.

San Elijo Hills Specific Plan

The San Elijo Hills Specific Plan was developed to create a master-planned community in the hills of San Marcos – a residential community featuring a variety of housing types and densities with retail commercial shopping opportunities for community residents and others nearby. The Specific Plan has a maximum development potential of approximately 3,466 dwelling units at an overall maximum density of 1.75 dwelling units per acre. San Elijo Hills was designed to feel like a small town and is a walkable community with everyday essentials close at hand. The Specific Plan implemented a comprehensive design program, which guides the aesthetic values of San Elijo Hills including landform alterations, architecture, entries, and signage.

San Marcos Creek Specific Plan

The San Marcos Creek Specific Plan represents an effort to create a planning framework for future growth and redevelopment of approximately 214 acres along San Marcos Creek in central San Marcos. The Specific Plan, which was developed with a thorough analysis of environmental conditions and input from City decision-makers, landowners, neighbors, and the community-at-large, provides a comprehensive vision for the Creek District along with goals, policies, and development standards to guide future public and private actions relating to the area's development and conservation of open space and natural resources.

A "Design With Nature" approach to planning was the conceptual framework used to create the Specific Plan. The premise for this approach is that a systematic understanding of the environmental setting, including natural, cultural, social, and economic factors, is essential to creating truly sustainable human environments.

Santa Fe Hills (Paloma) Specific Plan

The Santa Fe Hills (Paloma) Specific Plan, formerly the Neighborhood One Specific Plan, was prepared in order to create a well-balanced, economically viable, and resource-sensitive community in the northwest portion of the City, adjacent to Palomar Community College. The Specific Plan was originally adopted in 1988 and has resulted in the development of primarily single-family residential land uses varying from 2-6 dwelling units per acre. The remaining land uses consist of an elementary school, parks, and open space. At buildout, 1,565 dwelling units were anticipated.

University District Specific Plan

The University District Specific Plan was adopted as a targeted update to a distinct district of the Heart of the City Specific Plan in a manner that renews its original objectives of a "university village" atmosphere. University District is located at the core of San Marcos, and is envisioned as an urban mixed-use center with a variety of housing types, as well as strong emphasis on pedestrian movement and mass transit. In keeping with the objectives of the original Heart of the City Specific Plan, the University District concept intends to "attract clean, campus-related and 'spin-off' development of a high design quality, while continuing to enhance the City's original vision of creating an authentic governmental, administrative, educational, and corporate downtown center."

Prominent themes addressed in the Specific Plan include: integrating Low Impact Development (LID) and sustainable design features; providing a range of residential unit types for students, faculty, families, and seniors; maintaining and enhancing the strong physical connections between the University District, CSUSM, Civic Center, San Marcos Creek, project parks, and the SPRINTER light rail line; and providing commercial and office uses along State Route 78 (SR-78).

Current San Marcos General Plan Land Use Designations

The City's General Plan Land Use Map (Figure 1-5) designates land uses within the Planning Area. Table 1-6 below summarizes land uses included in the General Plan. A description of each General Plan Land Use Designation is provided below. The land use classification system includes 25 land use designations. These land use designations identify the types and nature of development allowed in particular locations depicted on the Land Use Map.

Table 1-6: Current General Plan Land Use Designations

General Plan Designation	Within City Boundary		Within Sphere of Influence		Total Planning Area	
	Acres	% of Total Acres	Acres	% of Total Acres	Acres	% of Total Acres
Agriculture/Residential (AG)	1,406.7	9.0%	2,986.6	53.8%	4,393.3	20.8%
Hillside Residential 1 (HR1)	-	-	1,314.8	23.7%	1,314.8	6.2%
Hillside Residential 2 (HR2)	-	-	97.5	1.8%	97.5	0.5%
Rural Residential (RR)	-	-	2.2	<0.1%	2.2	<0.1%
Very Low Density Residential (VLDR)	1,108.4	7.1%	24.9	0.4%	1,133.3	5.4%
Low Density Residential (LDR)	769.2	4.9%	292.6	5.3%	1,061.8	5.0%
Low Medium Density Residential (LMDR)	128.4	0.8%	23.4	0.4%	151.8	0.7%
Medium Density Residential 1 (MDR1)	52.4	0.3%	52.0	0.9%	104.6	0.5%
Medium Density Residential 2 (MDR2)	214.9	1.4%	13.0	0.2%	227.9	1.1%
Medium High Density Residential (MHDR)	50.4	0.3%	-	-	50.4	0.2%
High Density Residential (HDR)	-	-	-	-	-	-
Mixed Use 1 (MU1)	107.8	0.7%	-	-	107.5	0.5%
Mixed Use 2 (MU2)	-	-	-	-	-	-
Mixed Use 3 (MU3)/SP (Nonresidential)	58.9	0.4%	-	-	58.9	0.3%
Mixed Use 4 (MU4)/SP (Nonresidential)	8.5	0.1%	-	-	8.5	<0.1%
Commercial (C)	279	1.8%	66.3	1.2%	345.3	1.6%
Neighborhood Commercial (NC)	19.3	0.1%	-	-	19.3	<0.1%
Office Professional (OP)	20.5	0.1%	33.5	0.6%	53.9	0.3%
Business Park (BP)	50.6	0.3%	-	-	50.6	0.2%
Light Industrial (LI)	405.3	2.6%	10.7	0.2%	416.0	2.0%
Industrial (I)	321.9	2.1%	-	-	321.9	1.5%
Public/Institutional (PI)	839	5.4%	8.32	0.1%	847.3	4.0%
Parks (P)	696.8	4.5%	-	-	696.8	3.3%
Open Space (OS)	2,793	17.9%	257.9	4.6%	3,050.8	14.4%
Specific Plan Area (SPA)	3,507.3	22.5%	69.43	1.2%	3,576.7	16.9%
Transportation/Utilities Related	2,765.2	17.7%	301.9	5.4%	3,067.2	14.5%
Total	15,603	100%	5,555	100%	21,158	100%

Source: City of San Marcos GIS Dataset; De Novo Planning Group 2020.

The table above displays the parcel specific acreage for land uses within the City of San Marcos and the Planning Area. As evident in the table, there are 21,158 acres of land (33.06 square miles) within the Planning Area. Of the designated land uses, the largest land use designation within the Planning Area is Agriculture/Residential (AG), with 4,393 acres of land designated for this development.

It should be noted that there are multiple Specific Plan Areas (SPAs) within San Marcos that are regulated by Specific Plans relevant to that plan area (over 80 total). For a majority of these Specific Plan Areas there are no underlying land use designations; instead, all requirements are outlined within the corresponding Specific Plan. Therefore, the acreage of these undesignated SPAs is identified within Table 1-6 and Figure 1-5 (General Plan Land Use Map) as “Specific Plan Area” acreage. Figure 1-6 illustrates the Specific Plan areas. In some instances, land within the SPAs does fall into an underlying land use designation. For the purposes of this report, when a SPA and land use designation overlap occurs, the underlying land use designation takes precedent and all acreage is assigned to the land use designation category rather than the SPA category. The San Elijo Hills Specific Plan is one such area that contains underlying designations for some of the land (e.g., open space and parks). In the table above, the acreage for these underlying designated parcels within the San Elijo Hills Specific Plan area were incorporated into their assigned underlying land use areas rather than being incorporated into the total acreage for the San Elijo Hills Specific Plan.

Agricultural/Residential (AG): Agricultural uses as the primary use. Agricultural uses include greenhouses, wholesale nurseries, and agricultural crops. Raising poultry, cattle, birds, small animals, horses, and bovine animals is permitted. Agricultural tourism activities may also be allowed. This designation allows a maximum density of 0.125–1.0 dwelling units (du) per parcel based on location and slope.

Hillside Residential 1 (HR1): Single-family homes on larger lots in hillside areas as the primary use with the objective of preserving the hillside. Agricultural uses include trees, flower and vegetable gardens, and other horticultural stock. Horses and certain combinations of poultry and bovine animals are permitted. This designation allows a maximum density of 0.05–0.25 du/acre, depending on slope.

Hillside Residential 2 (HR2): Single-family homes in hillside areas as the primary use with the objective of preserving the hillside. Agricultural uses include trees, flower and vegetable gardens, and other horticultural stock. Horses and certain combinations of poultry and bovine animals are permitted. This designation allows a maximum density of 0.25–0.5 du/acre, depending on slope.

Rural Residential (RR): Single-family homes and limited agricultural uses. Agricultural uses include flower and vegetable gardens, fruit trees, and horticultural stock. This designation allows a maximum density of 1.0–2.0 du/ac.

Very Low Density Residential (VLDR): Conventional single-family residential development characterized by individual single-family homes constructed in subdivisions, or by custom units built on individual lots. This designation allows a maximum density of 2.1–4.0 du/ac.

Low Density Residential (LDR): Single-family and duplex residential development including detached condominiums, clustered homes, and courtyard housing. Mobile home parks are also allowed. This designation allows a maximum density of 4.1–8.0 du/ac.

Low Medium Density Residential (LMDR): Row homes, townhomes, and multi-family (apartments and condominiums), and duplex units. Small-lot single-family homes with alley access and unique design features are included. Mobile home parks are allowed as consistent with zoning. This designation allows a maximum density of 8.1–12.0 du/ac.

Medium Density Residential 1 (MDR1): Row homes, townhomes, and multi-family (apartments and condominiums) units. This designation allows a maximum density of 12.1–15.0 du/ac.

Medium Density Residential 2 (MDR2): Row homes, townhomes, and multi-family (apartments and condominiums) units. This designation allows a maximum density of 15.1–20.0 du/ac.

Medium High Density Residential (MHDR): Multi-family units (apartments and condominiums), row homes, and townhomes. This designation allows a maximum density of 20.1–30.0 du/ac.

High Density Residential (HDR): Multi-story, multi-family (apartments and condominiums) developments with either surface or structured parking, typically found along or near major transportation corridors within walking distance of commercial centers and transit services. This designation allows a maximum density of 30.1–45.0 du/ac. *(Note that no land within the Planning Area is currently designated as HDR.)*

Mixed Use 1 (MU1): A wide variety of commercial, office, civic, and residential uses integrated as a cohesive development. These uses may be mixed “vertically” (on separate floors of a building) or “horizontally” (in separate buildings) on a single site or on adjacent parcels. Structured parking may be necessary to accommodate maximum allowable densities, and shared parking arrangements may be allowed consistent with the nature of the mixed uses. To maintain a pedestrian scale and orientation, retail and other active uses are encouraged at street level. The maximum intensity of development is a floor area ratio (FAR) of 1.75 and 20.1–30.0 du/ac.

Mixed Use 2 (MU2): A wide variety of commercial, office, civic, and residential uses integrated as a cohesive development. These uses may be mixed “vertically” (on separate floors of a building) or “horizontally” (in separate buildings) on a single site or on adjacent parcels. Structured parking may be necessary to accommodate maximum allowable densities, and shared parking arrangements may be allowed consistent with the nature of the mixed uses. To maintain a pedestrian scale and orientation, retail and other active uses shall be located at street level. The maximum intensity of development is a FAR of 2.25 and 30.1–45.0 du/ac. *(Note that no land within the Planning Area is currently designated as MU2.)*

Mixed Use 3 (MU3) (Nonresidential): Provides for a variety of commercial and office uses integrated as a cohesive development. These uses may be mixed “vertically” (on separate floors of a building) or “horizontally” (on a single site or adjacent parcels). Structured parking, while not required to achieve the maximum FAR, may be allowed. Shared parking arrangements may also be allowed consistent with the nature of mixed uses. Typical uses include retail, commercial services, administrative and office uses, institutional and government uses, business support and financial uses, restaurants, and health care facilities. To maintain a pedestrian scale and orientation, retail and other active services are encouraged at street level. This designation does not allow residential uses. A Specific Plan is required for development. The maximum intensity of development is a FAR of 1.50.

Mixed Use 4 (MU4) (Nonresidential): Provides for a variety of commercial, office professional, and business park uses integrated as a cohesive development. These uses may be mixed “vertically” (on separate floors of a building) or “horizontally” (on a single site or adjacent parcels). Structured parking may be necessary and/or shared parking arrangements may be allowed consistent with the nature of mixed uses. Typical uses include commercial retail, commercial

services, office, and business park uses. Retail and other active services are encouraged at street level. This designation does not allow residential uses. A Specific Plan is required for development. The maximum intensity of development is a FAR of 1.50.

Commercial (C): Commercial areas where a wide range of retail activities, services, and offices are permitted. Typical uses include general retail, markets, commercial services, restaurants, hardware, home improvements centers, financial institutions, lodging, and commercial recreation. The maximum intensity of development is a FAR of 0.70.

Neighborhood Commercial (NC): General retail, markets, commercial services, offices, and restaurants designed to serve primarily the needs of surrounding neighborhood and residential areas. The maximum intensity of development is a FAR of 0.30.

Office Professional (OP): Office-based working environments for administrative and professional offices and necessary support uses. Typical uses include administrative and professional offices, supporting retail and service functions, and health care facilities. The maximum intensity of development is a FAR of 1.50.

Business Park (BP): Employee-intensive uses including research and development, “clean” industry, technology centers, offices, administrative uses, supporting retail, and industrial support services. The maximum intensity of development is a FAR of 1.20.

Light Industrial (LI): Light manufacturing, processing, assembly, wholesale, office, and research and development laboratories, all within enclosed buildings with limited outdoor storage, in freestanding or campus-style industrial development. Supporting uses, such as office, limited retail, and business services, are also allowed. The maximum intensity of development is a FAR of 0.60.

Industrial (I): Manufacturing, assembly, processing, and distribution of goods. Warehousing and wholesale activities associated with industrial operations, and small-scale support retail, service commercial, and office uses may also be established. Allows outdoor storage as part of industrial operations and, in limited circumstances, without buildings on-site. The maximum intensity of development is a FAR of 0.50.

Public/Institutional (PI): Facilities built and maintained for public use such as academic facilities, institutional uses, community service facilities, water and sewer facilities, detention and drainage facilities, cemeteries, police and fire stations, and other government buildings and property. This designation may include privately owned facilities built and maintained for public use. The maximum intensity of development is a FAR of 3.0.

Parks (P): Active and passive public or privately owned parks. Park lands are for outdoor and indoor recreation including playing fields, playgrounds, community centers, small accessory buildings, and other appropriate recreational uses. Community gardens may be considered for some parks.

Open Space (OS): Undeveloped lands, visually significant open lands, trails, utility corridors, water areas, and wildlife habitat. Land designated as open space is intended to remain undeveloped in the future.

Specific Plan Area (SPA): Applied to areas where a Specific Plan has been adopted by the City. A Specific Plan is a detailed plan for the development of a particular area and may contain residential, commercial, industrial, public, and/or open space uses. Detailed land use regulations are contained within each adopted Specific Plan document. The maximum allowable density/intensity of development varies by location.

Existing Land Use Patterns (On-the-Ground)

When discussing land use, it is important to distinguish between planned land uses and existing land uses that reflect existing on-the-ground development. The current General Plan land use designations identify the long-term planned use of land, but do not necessarily present a complete picture of existing land uses. The San Diego County Assessor's office maintains a database of existing "on-the-ground" land uses on individual parcels, including the number of dwelling units and related improvements such as non-residential building square footage. However, it should be noted that the San Diego County Assessor data does not always accurately reflect existing on-the-ground conditions.

Figure 1-7 shows a map of existing on-the-ground land uses in the Planning Area. As evident from the map, San Marcos is dominated by single-family housing, open space, and rural lands, generally in line with the planned land uses depicted on its General Plan Land Use Map. Other residential uses, including manufactured homes and multi-family housing developments, exist in the Planning Area but are less prevalent than single-family developments. Commercial and industrial uses are primarily located near the SR-78 corridor.

Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA)

California General Plan law requires each city and county to have adequate land zoned to accommodate its fair share of the regional housing need. The share is known as the Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) and is based on a Regional Housing Needs Plan (RHNP) developed by councils of government. SANDAG is the lead agency for developing the RHNP for the area that includes San Diego County and the City of San Marcos. As part of its planning efforts, SANDAG must allocate housing units within the region consistent with the development pattern included in the 2050 Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy (2050 RTP/SCS).

San Marcos' fair share of the adopted RHNP for the RHNA for 2021-2029 is 3,116 units, as summarized in Table 1-7. The City of San Marcos is not required to ensure that there is adequate development to accommodate the RHNA; however, the City must ensure that land is available for housing development and that unnecessary development constraints have been removed. The City's Housing Element, adopted in July 2021, provides for the accommodation of the 2021-2029 RHNA. This serves as the baseline for the General Plan Update.

Table 1-7: 2021-2029 Regional Housing Needs Allocation

City	Number of Very Low-Income Households	Number of Low-Income Households	Number of Moderate-Income Households	Number of Above Moderate-Income Households	Total
San Marcos	728	530	542	1,316	3,116

Source: City of San Marcos Housing Element, 2021.

1.2.2 Pending and Recently Approved and Completed Projects in San Marcos

Table 1-9 provides a sampling of San Marcos’ pending or recently completed projects. At the writing of this report, 54 major development projects were identified on the City’s website.

Table 1-9: Pending and Recently Completed Development Projects

Project Name	Location	Description	Status
Artis Senior Living	North side of San Elijo Road, east of Rancho Santa Fe Road	Specific Plan Amendment and Site Development Plan request to develop a 39,951 sf residential care facility for Alzheimer’s and memory care on a 2.18-ac property in the University Commons (Old Creek Ranch) SPA	Approved
Brookfield Residential Multi-Family (MU-4)	Twin Oaks Valley Road	Specific Plan Amendment, General Plan Amendment, Tentative Subdivision Map, and Multi-family Site Development Plan to allow for the construction of 220 residential condominium units on 23.22 ac	Under construction
Discovery Village South	Discovery Street	General Plan Amendment, Specific Plan, Tentative Subdivision Map and Development Agreement to construct 230 residential units on 38 vacant acres	Under construction
Hunter Industries	0 Opal Street	67,657 square foot, two-story light industrial/office building	Planning application in process
Kaiser Permanente Hospital	400 Craven Road	Site Development Plan for a 428,500 sf, 7-story, 206-bed hospital, including a 26,000 sf central power plant in the Heart of the City Specific Plan Area-Hospital Complex (SPA-HC) Zone	Under construction

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Pacifica San Marcos	S. Rancho Santa Fe Road	Three-story, mixed-use development with approximately 5,000 sf commercial/retail space on the ground floor and 31 residential units on the upper floors	Approved
San Marcos Highlands	Las Posas Road	Specific Plan Amendment, Tentative Map, Pre-Zone, and General Plan Amendment to build a 187-unit single-family residential community and open space on 265 ac within the San Marcos Highlands SPA, plus an additional 27.5 ac of contiguous open space	Under construction
The Sunrise Project	Barham Drive, West of Myers Avenue	Pre-Zone, General Plan Amendment, Multi-Family Site Development Plan, Tentative Subdivision Map, Specific Plan, Conditional Use Permit, and Grading Variance to change the land use from Light Industrial, Single-family, and Mobilehome Park to Multi-family Residential, to allow construction of 193 multi-family dwelling units with passive and recreational open space on 14.4-acres	Under construction
Urban Villages San Marcos, LLC - Block 3 Student Housing	Northeast corner of Barham Drive and June Way	Site Development Plan to construct a 95,713 sf student housing development consisting of 36-units and 342 beds	Approved

Source: Major Development Projects, City of San Marcos Website, February 2021.

1.2.3 Pending and Recently Approved and Completed Projects in Surrounding Jurisdictions

Table 1-10 lists recently completed, approved, or pending projects near San Marcos in the adjacent cities of Vista, Carlsbad, and Escondido, and neighboring unincorporated San Diego County. The projects identified in Table 1-10 were selected based on proximity to the Planning Area and relative scale of the project.

Table 1-10: Surrounding Jurisdictions Pending and Recently Completed Development Projects

Project Name	Location	Description	Status
Projects Under Review			
Green Oak Ranch	Vista – West end of Green Oak Road, west of Sycamore Avenue	Site Development Plan to demolish up to 15 existing structures and construct a 14,750 sf multi-purpose building and three 5,040 sf residential buildings	Pending Review
Vista Palomar	Vista – 2100 W. San Marcos Blvd	General Plan Amendment, Zone Change, Special Use Permit, and Site Development Plan for 191 condominium units and a 100-room hotel on 17.2 ac	Under Construction
Marja Acres	Carlsbad – 4901 El Camino Real	Density Bonus development w/ 248 townhomes, 46 senior units, 10,000 sf of retail/restaurant uses, w/ community recreation areas on 20.65 ac	Pending
North County Plaza Mixed-Use Redevelopment	Carlsbad – 1810 Marron Rd	Mixed-use project involving demo of 46,000 sf of existing commercial bldgs. and replacement w/ 272 apartment units plus replacement of 6,810 sf of retail shops	Pending
Safari Highlands Ranch	Escondido – North of San Diego Zoo Safari Park	Specific Plan for 550 SFR lots on 1,100 ac	Under Review
Wismer – Felicita Hotels	Escondido – Felicita Rd	140-unit hotel, 80-unit extended stay hotel, 120-bed assisted living facility and gas station on 6.9 ac	Incomplete; In Redesign

Sources: City of Vista Website, City of Carlsbad Website, City of Escondido Website, 2020.

1.2.4 Land Uses Surrounding the City of San Marcos

The City of San Marcos is surrounded by several local jurisdictions including the cities of Vista, Carlsbad, Escondido, and unincorporated San Diego County. The following land uses are identified along common boundaries and areas near San Marcos:

City of Vista

- Low Density Residential (LD)
- Medium Density Residential (MD)
- Medium High Density Residential (MHD)
- High Density Residential (HD)
- Mixed Use (MU)
- General Commercial (GC)
- Research Light Industrial (RLI)

City of Carlsbad

- Residential 0-4 du/ac (R-4)
- Residential 4-8 du/ac (R-8)
- Residential 8-15 du/ac (R-15)
- Community Facilities (CF)
- Open Space (OS)

City of Escondido

- Estate I: 1 du/1,2,4,20 acres
- Estate II: 1 du/.5,1,20 acres
- Suburban: Up to 3.3 du/acre
- Urban I: Up to 5.5 du/acre
- Planned Commercial
- Light Industrial
- Specific Plan Area

Unincorporated San Diego County (Lake San Marcos SOI)

- Village Residential (VR-24)
- Village Residential (VR-10.9)
- Village Residential (VR-7.3)
- Village Residential (VR-4.3)
- Village Residential (VR-2)
- Semi-Rural Residential (SR-1)
- Semi-Rural Residential (SR-2)
- Semi-Rural Residential (SR-10)
- General Commercial
- Office Professional
- Public/Semi-Public Facilities

Unincorporated San Diego County (North/Twin Oaks SOI)

- Semi-Rural Residential (SR-2)
- Semi-Rural Residential (SR-4)
- Semi-Rural Residential (SR-10)
- Rural Lands (RL-20)
- Rural Commercial
- Office Professional
- Public/Semi-Public Facilities

Other Unincorporated San Diego County

- Village Residential (VR-7.3)
- Village Residential (VR-4.3)
- Village Residential (VR-2.9)
- Semi-Rural Residential (SR-1)
- Semi-Rural Residential (SR-2)
- Semi-Rural Residential (SR-4)
- Semi-Rural Residential (SR-10)
- Rural Lands (RL-20)
- Open Space (Conservation)

1.2.5 References

The primary sources of data referenced for this section are the following:

City of Carlsbad, 2015. City of Carlsbad General Plan. Accessed February 2020.

City of Escondido, 2012. City of Escondido General Plan. Accessed February 2020.

City of San Marcos, 2012. City of San Marcos General Plan. Includes Housing Element adopted June 2013.

City of Vista, 2012. City of Vista General Plan. Accessed February 2020.

Governor's Office of Planning and Research 2017 General Plan Guidelines. Available at: <http://www.opr.ca.gov/planning/general-plan/>

San Diego County, 2011. San Diego County General Plan. Accessed February 2020.

San Diego County, 2020. Parcel Data provided by the County Assessor's Office, February 2020.

1.3 COMMUNITY CHARACTER

The community character of the San Marcos Planning Area is defined by its special natural environment, family-friendly residential atmosphere, and its position as an educational hub in North San Diego County. People are attached to their communities through the look and feel of a place; some of these qualities or attributes are tangible while others are intangible. The City's General Plan will consider the character of San Marcos and identify goals and policies to maintain the City's high quality of life while looking towards the needs of future generations. Some key considerations related to the formation of San Marcos' community character include its elevation/topography, the history and quality of its residential neighborhoods (including its Specific Plan Areas), and its visual resources. The first two of these topics are described below, while the City's visual resources, considered a "natural resource" for the City of San Marcos, are described in more detail in Section 5.0 (Conservation and Natural Resources).

1.3.1 Elevation

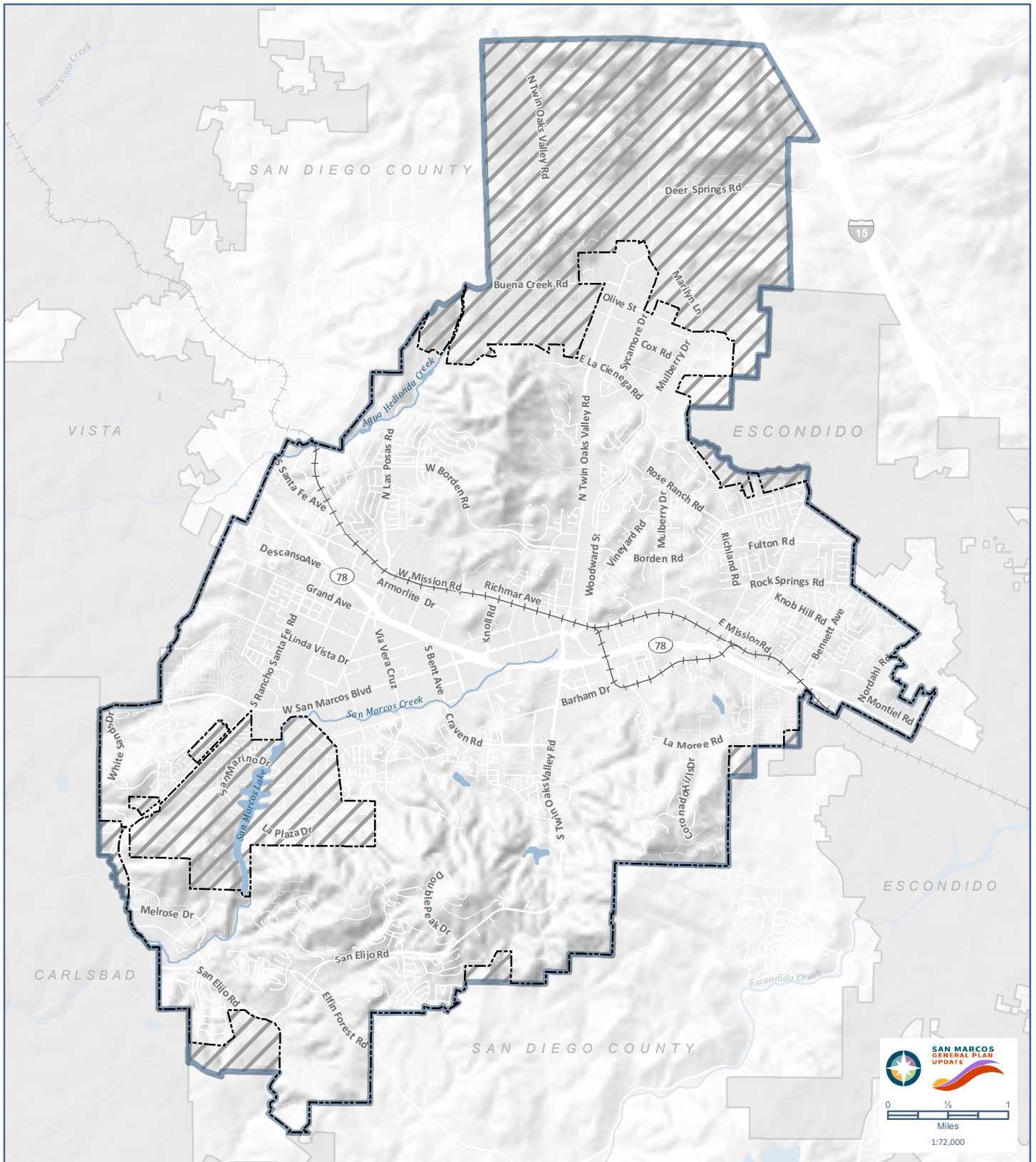
The elevation in the Planning Area (which includes the unincorporated County areas within the City's Sphere of Influence) traverses almost 1,200 feet, from a low point in the Lake San Marcos community (in unincorporated San Diego County in the City's Sphere of Influence) of 510 feet above sea level and rising to 1,688 feet towards Frank's Peak. This environment creates beautiful views to the mountains and ocean throughout the community. However, San Marcos' unique and undulating topography can pose challenges when ensuring that land uses are planned in a safe manner and viewsheds are preserved. Careful attention must be paid to preserving and protecting the surrounding natural environment and recognizing the opportunities that come with changing elevations and slopes. These qualities can also make walking and biking along certain steep routes difficult, a topic which is discussed in greater detail in Section 2.0 (Transportation and Circulation).

1.3.2 Residential Areas and Specific Plan Areas

The Planning Area is primarily a residential community with well-established neighborhoods. San Marcos is home to a number of Specific Plan Areas which significantly shape the City's existing land use pattern and built environment through their own individual community design, monumentation, architecture, and amenities.

1.3.3 Age of Structures

Most of the City's housing stock was developed between 1980 and 2009, with the oldest homes being located primarily on the east side of the City, north of SR-78. Data from the 2018 American Community Survey (ACS) indicates the highest percentage of units were built between 2000 and 2009 (21.8%). Newer homes were built later as residential development moved up and away from SR-78, both north and south, as easier access was provided primarily by Twin Oaks Valley Road. The relatively young age of San Marcos' housing stock indicates that overall housing conditions are good; however, older housing units are more likely to be in need of repair, as well as focused maintenance and neighborhood enhancement goals, policies, and implementation strategies.



LEGEND

- City of San Marcos
- Planning Area/Sphere of Influence
- Areas within the Planning Area/Sphere of Influence
- Neighboring City
- Unincorporated San Diego County
- + Lake or Pond
- ~ Creek
- Railroad

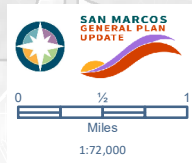
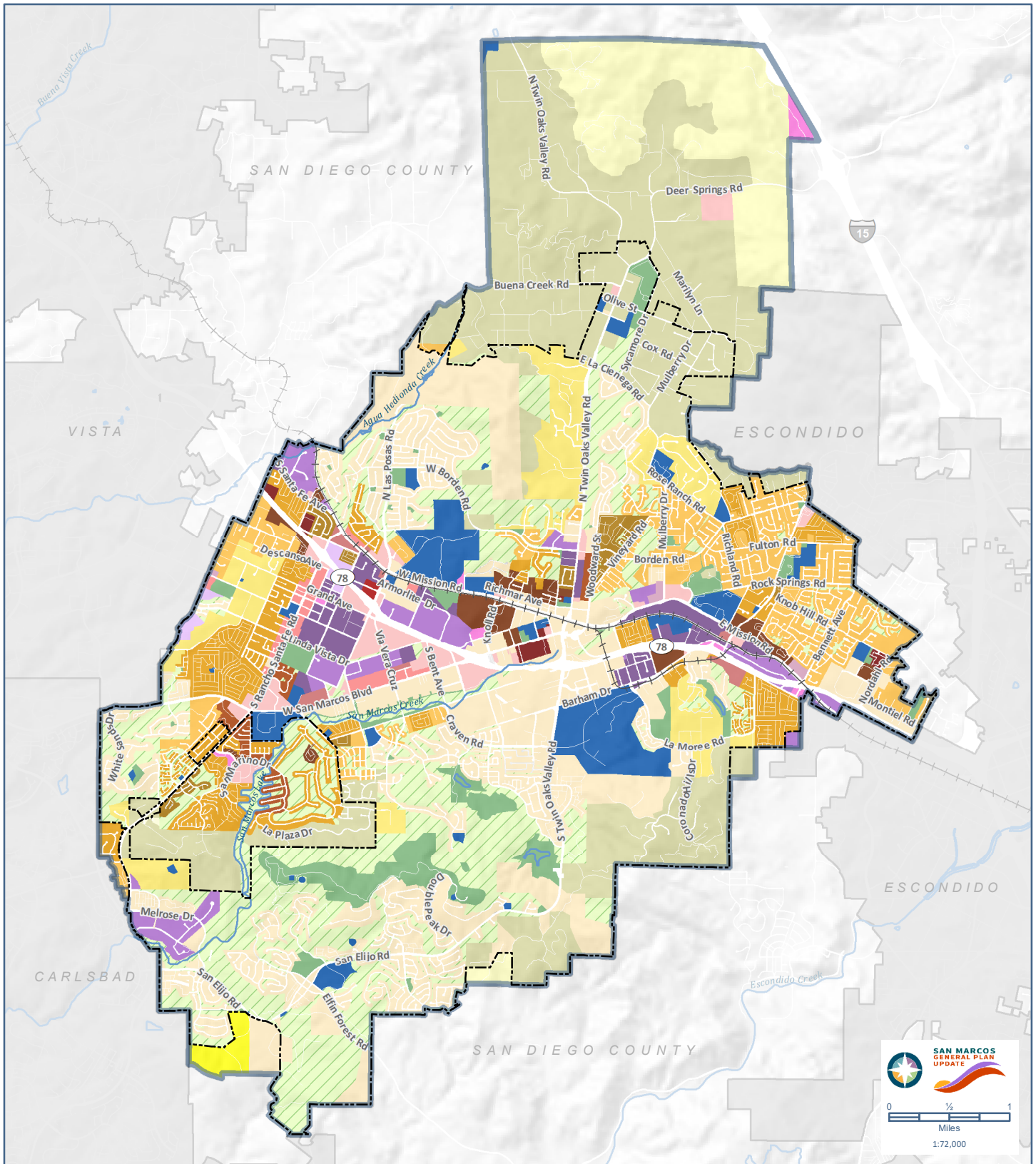
FIGURE 1.4.

**PLANNING AREA
MAP**

Data sources: SANGIS; CalAtlas. Map date: April 14, 2020.

Demographics, Land Use, and Community Character

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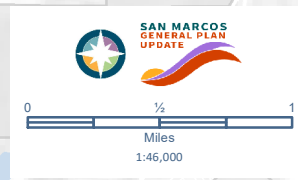
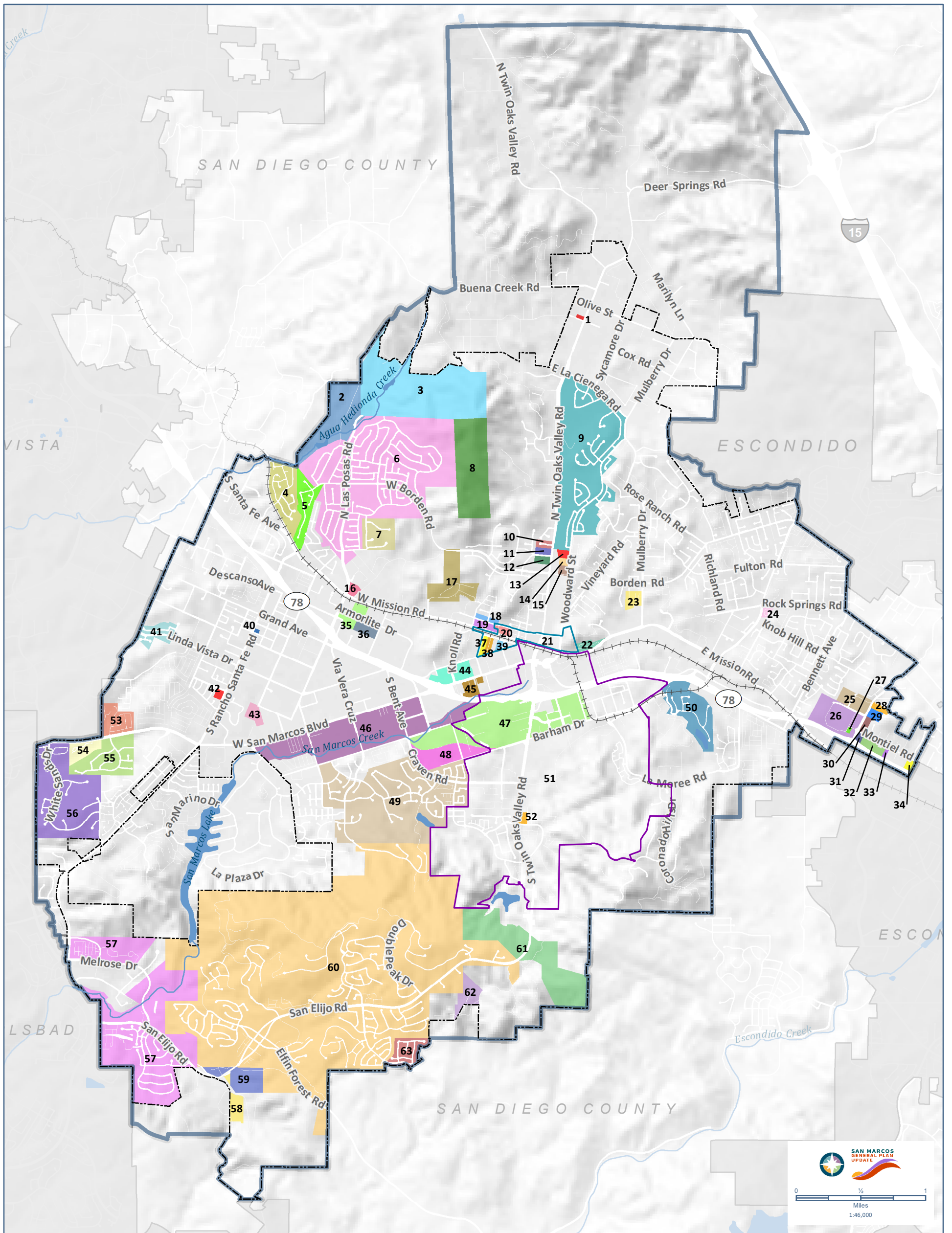
LEGEND

- | | | | |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| City of San Marcos | AG-Agricultural/Residential | MDR1-Medium Density Residential 1 | OP-Office Professional |
| Planning Area/
Sphere of Influence | COUNTY RR-County Rural Residential | MDR2-Medium Density Residential 2 | BP-Business Park |
| Lake or Pond | HR1-Hillside Residential 1 | MHDR-Medium High Density Residential | LI-Light Industrial |
| Creek | HR2-Hillside Residential 2 | MU1-Mixed Use 1 | PI-Public/Institutional |
| Railroad | RR-Rural Residential | MU3-Mixed Use 3 | P-Parks |
| | VLDR-Very Low Density Residential | MU4-Mixed Use 4 | OS-Open Space |
| | LDR-Low Density Residential | C-Commercial | SPA-Specific Plan Area |
| | LMDR-Low Medium Density Residential | NC-Neighborhood Commercial | |

FIGURE 1.5.
GENERAL PLAN
LAND USE

Data sources: City of San Marcos; SANGIS; CalAtlas. Map date: April 14, 2020.

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LEGEND

- | | | | | |
|---------------------------------------|----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| City of San Marcos | 1 Feed Store | 17 Vallecitos Ridge | 33 Montiel Corporate Center | 49 Discovery Hills |
| Planning Area/
Sphere of Influence | 2 Murai Specific Plan/Open Space | 18 Villa Serena Specific Plan | 34 North County Yamaha | 50 Walnut Hills II |
| Neighboring City | 3 San Marcos Highlands | 19 Paseo De Oro | 35 Palomar Station | 51 Heart of the City |
| Unincorporated
San Diego County | 4 Rancho Santalina | 20 El Dorado II | 36 Marc San Marcos | 52 Campus Pointe II |
| Lake or Pond | 5 Loma Alta | 21 Richmar | 37 Westlake Village | 53 Las Brisas Pacificos |
| Creek | 6 Paloma (Santa Fe Hills) | 22 Mission 316 | 38 Parkview Homes | 54 Meadowlark Canyon |
| Railroad | 7 Palomar Heights | 23 Mulberry | 39 Autumn Terrace | 55 Laurels |
| | 8 Future SPA - Chang | 24 Starling | 40 Kragen | 56 Rancho Dorado |
| | 9 Twin Oaks Valley Ranch | 25 Rancho Vallecitos/Casa Vallecitos | 41 Arbor Ranch | 57 University Commons |
| | 10 Vidler Estates (Montessa) | 26 Nordahl Marketplace | 42 Rancho Santa Fe Village | 58 Lomas San Marcos |
| | 11 Schenker | 27 Vallecitos Town Center | 43 Future SPA-Markstein | 59 Limited Use .125 |
| | 12 SPA Industrial | 28 Richland Hills North | 44 Home Depot/Commerce Square | 60 San Elijo Hills |
| | 13 Woodward Senior Apartments | 29 Nordahl Med-Prof Office Building | 45 San Marcos RV Mall | 61 SPA 2 (White/Attebury) |
| | 14 Future SPA - Senior Housing | 30 San Marcos Plaza | 46 San Marcos Creek | 62 Future SPA-Questhaven 23 |
| | 15 Future SPA - Senior Housing | 31 Norman Hutchinson | 47 University District | 63 Venzano |
| | 16 Collucci/Mobile | 32 Red Rock | 48 Discovery Village | |

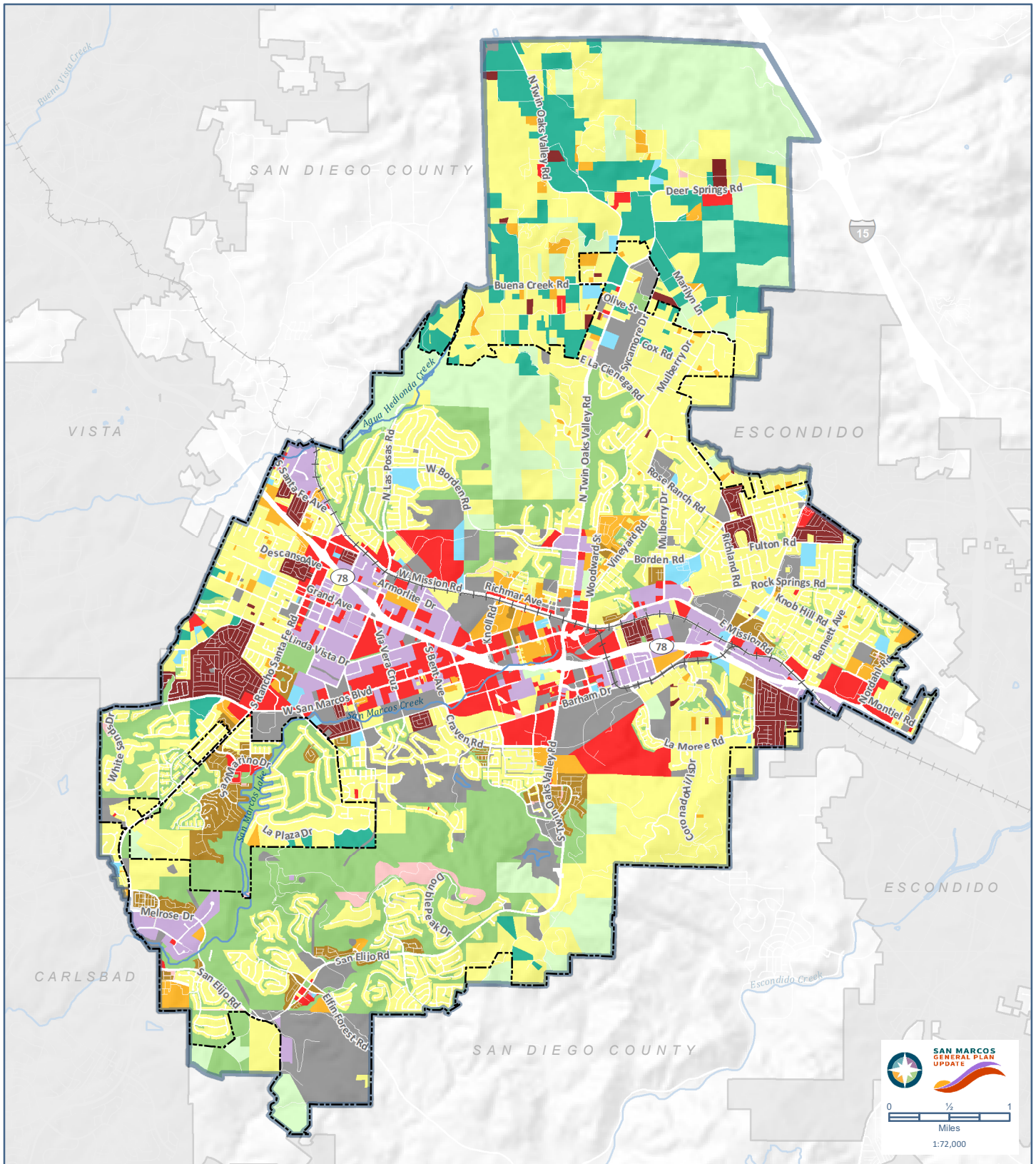
FIGURE 1.6.

**SPECIAL
PLAN
AREAS**

Data sources: City of San Marcos; SANGIS; CalAtlas. Map date: April 16, 2020.

Demographics, Land Use, and Community Character

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LEGEND

City of San Marcos	Rural Lands	Industrial
Planning Area/ Sphere of Influence	Residential	Irrigated Farm
Lake or Pond	Multiple	Co-op/Misc
Creek	Condominiums	Institutional
Railroad	Manufactured Homes	Recreational & Government
	Commercial	Unknown

FIGURE 1.7.
ASSESSED USES

Data sources: City of San Marcos; SANGIS; CalAtlas. Map date: April 14, 2020.

Demographics, Land Use, and Community Character

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