

GPAC MEMORANDUM

TO: San Marcos General Plan Advisory Committee (GPAC)
FROM: De Novo Planning Group
SUBJECT: General Plan Advisory Committee Land Use Discussion
DATE: January 6, 2022

The January 20, 2022 GPAC meeting will focus on establishing a set of land use priorities (i.e., guiding land use principles) and discussing how the priorities with the strongest levels of support should be implemented on the land use map. This GPAC discussion will build off of public feedback received during the Vision and Values outreach activities, which is currently being summarized and will be shared with the GPAC and community prior to our January 20, 2022 meeting.

Input received from the GPAC during this meeting will be used to help craft 2-3 different Land Use Maps (referred to as "Alternatives"), featuring different types and intensities of development within San Marcos, which will be the subject of detailed analysis in the pending Land Use Alternatives Report. As part of our January 20, 2022 meeting, the GPAC is not being asked to provide parcel-specific land use direction. Upon preparation of the Land Use Alternatives Report, the GPAC will be able to weigh-in on specific possible land use changes, and this detailed parcel-specific feedback will be shared as part of the public review process with Planning Commission and City Council. The activities facilitated as part of this meeting are intended to spur discussion, flesh out ideas worth exploring further, and to develop scenarios that will be studied in-depth as part of the Land Use Alternatives Report.

REQUIRED READING

[Existing Conditions Report Land Use and Community Character](#)

[Current General Plan Land Use and Community Character Element](#)

[California Office of Planning and Research Land Use Element Guidelines](#)

Note: A summary of public input received through the Visioning Workshops will be provided prior to the meeting.

LAND USE KEY ISSUES

Land uses are guided by the General Plan Land Use Map. The City's [Zoning Code](#) (Title 20 of the San Marcos Municipal Code) provides a greater level of specificity in identifying permitted land uses and associated development standards. Existing land use conditions in San Marcos are described in detail in Chapter 1 of the Existing Conditions Report and in the City's Current General Plan Land Use Element (see links above).

There are a range of potential benefits to growth that should be kept in mind and considered as potential changes to the Land Use Element and Map are contemplated. Some of the benefits of growth in San Marcos may include:

- Increasing opportunities for housing affordable to low- and moderate-income households. The City is required, through the Housing Element, to meet its obligations to provide a range of housing densities to meet the Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA).
- Providing a variety of housing opportunities that are desirable to a changing demographic. Groups growing the fastest nationwide include people in their mid-20s and empty nesters in their 50s. These groups may be likely to look for an alternative to lower-density, single-family housing for financial and quality of life reasons.
- Consolidation and reduction of resources. Increased densities may provide more efficient municipal services such as roads, water and sewer, utilities, and emergency services. Additionally, higher density developments typically reduce resource consumption including reductions in energy and water use.
- Preservation of open space areas.
- Increased alternative transportation options and use. In areas with higher density development more people tend to walk, bike, and utilize mass transit, which may benefit community health and wellness, and help ease local and regional traffic congestion.
- Increasing local employment opportunities. More local employment opportunities have the potential to increase the City's tax base, provide additional opportunities for San Marcos residents to work where they live, and provide high-paying jobs that can assist with attaining home-ownership.
- Spur investment in redevelopment and revitalization. By allowing higher development intensities in some areas of the City, private developers may be incentivized to redevelop buildings and areas of the City that are underutilized, aging, or in need of modernization or rehabilitation.
- Infrastructure improvements. New development is often required to implement a range of infrastructure improvements as part of the development approval process. These improvements could include constructing new sidewalks and bike lanes, improving intersections, paying parks fees or dedicating land for parks, upgrading water and sewer infrastructure, or improving local drainage infrastructure.
- Increased property tax and sales tax revenues. The City relies on property taxes and sales taxes as a key component of its revenue stream. New development in San Marcos can provide additional funding sources that can be used to provide a wide range of municipal services, including police protection, landscape maintenance and public-area beautification, roadway improvements, community events and activities, parks services, and other public amenities and services.

New growth also has the potential to result in impacts that are not desirable for the community. For example:

- Growth can lead to increases in local traffic volumes.
- Growth can place a strain on City infrastructure and result in the need for increased service levels.
- New development may be incompatible with existing uses in the vicinity.
- New development can change the look, feel, and character of areas in the City.

All of these issues should be considered as potential priorities are contemplated.

QUESTIONS ON THE CURRENT GENERAL PLAN FOR THE GPAC

1. Does the Current General Plan land use designation system represent the full spectrum of the types of uses you want to see in San Marcos? Is there anything missing? Should any new land use designations be created?
2. Do the densities and intensities accurately reflect your development preferences? Should there be fewer or more discrete categories or more categories (for example, different types of commercial intensities or mixed-use intensities) to reflect different types of development patterns?
3. Do you think the existing definitions for the land use designations are clear? Is there anything you would do or say differently to better express the community's vision?
4. Think back to the feedback you and other GPAC members provided during the mobility and economic development discussions (for example, encouraging active transportation, reducing congestion, improving public safety, addressing the inflow/outflow of workers, attracting higher-paying jobs to the City, supporting places of higher education, etc). Do the City's existing land use designations and land use map support these ideas? What could be done to support these priorities?