

GPAC MEMORANDUM

TO: San Marcos General Plan Advisory Committee (GPAC)

FROM: De Novo Planning Group

SUBJECT: General Plan Advisory Committee Noise, Safety, & Public Facilities and Services Discussion

DATE: December 16, 2021

The December 16, 2021 GPAC meeting will focus on the topics of noise, safety, and public facilities and services. This meeting packet includes specific reading materials related to these topics. The Noise and Safety Elements are both required elements in the City's General Plan, whereas the Public Facilities and Services is an optional topic area that the City has chosen to include. The City does not currently have a stand-alone Public Facilities and Services Element (which could also be called a Community Services Element), however this topic is generally addressed as part of the Land Use and Community Design Element, and to some extent the City's Parks, Recreation and Community Health Element. It should be noted that while the Safety Element is mandated to discuss climate change with regard to public safety, the topic of climate change will be further addressed in the Environmental Justice discussion.

REQUIRED READING

[Existing Conditions Report 3 Community Services](#)

[Existing Conditions Report 4 Hazards, Safety, & Noise](#)

[Current General Plan Safety Element](#)

[Current General Plan Noise Element](#)

[Current General Plan Land Use & Community Design Element](#)

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

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

NOISE BACKGROUND

In accordance with State regulations, the purpose of the Noise Element is to limit the exposure of communities to excessive noise levels. The Noise Element must address noise from roadways, airports, and major stationary sources. It must also identify maximum allowable noise exposure levels to noise-sensitive land uses such as hospitals, schools, churches, residences, and sensitive habitat areas. The City's Municipal Code provides the City's specific noise standards for different types of activities and locations.

The City's existing Noise Ordinance (Chapter 10.24 of the San Marcos Municipal Code) prohibits loud, annoying, or unnecessary noises. It provides definition for and examples of prohibited noise sources but

does not establish numeric noise thresholds for transportation related (e.g., vehicle, railroad, aircraft traffic) or non-transportation related (e.g., air conditioner units, loading docks, construction) noise sources. Construction activities are limited to Monday through Friday before 7:00 a.m. and after 6:00.

p.m., or on Saturdays before 8:00 a.m. or after 5:00 p.m. The table on the following page lists several examples of the noise levels associated with common situations (found in the Current General Plan Noise Element).

-TABLE 1: TYPICAL NOISE LEVELS

Common Outdoor Activities	Noise Level (dBA)	Common Indoor Activities
	110	Rock Band
Jet Fly-over at 1,000 ft	100	
Gas lawn mower at 3 ft	90	
Diesel truck at 50 ft (50 mph)	80	Food blender at 3 ft
Gas lawn mower at 100 ft	70	Vacuum cleaner at 10 ft
Heavy traffic at 300 ft	60	Normal speech at 3 ft
Quiet urban daytime	50	Dishwasher in next room
Quiet Urban Nighttime	40	Large conference room
Quiet Suburban Nighttime	30	Library
Quiet Rural Nighttime	20	Bedroom at night
	10	Broadcast/recording studio
Lowest threshold of human hearing	0	Lowest threshold of human hearing
Source: City of San Marcos General Plan Noise Element, <i>Table 7-2 Typical Noise Levels</i>		

NOISE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What types of measures should the City implement to reduce noise exposure to sensitive receptors? (land use patterns? Physical sound buffers?)
- What is the loudest, or most consistent noise source you hear in your day-to-day life?
- Are some types of community noise nuisances acceptable (i.e. festivals, concerts, community events etc.)? Should the City continue to endorse and support such events?
- Are there specific areas within San Marcos where louder noise sources are acceptable than others (i.e. bars, event spaces, commercial districts, industrial work spaces, transportation hubs)?
- Should the City focus more on reducing stationary or mobile noise sources?
- Should minimizing noise pollution be prioritized over City design/appearance/aesthetic?
- What are some ways the City can reduce traffic noise? Especially at peak traffic noise hours?

SAFETY BACKGROUND

In accordance with State regulations, the Safety Element must address hazardous materials, fire hazards, flood hazards, seismic/geologic hazards, landslides, emergency management coordination, and climate change adaptation. Please note that fire protection and law enforcement services will officially be addressed later as part of the Public Services discussion, however, we understand that the two topics are extremely intertwined. The discussion and inclusion of climate change into the Safety Element is a recent update.

Safety Discussion Questions:

- What do you think is the City's weakest spot in terms of public health and safety?
- Should the City/General Plan place a larger emphasis on emergency response than it currently does?
- How can the City better prepare for climate-related hazards (extreme heat events, drought, increased flooding, sea level rise, etc.)?
- How should the City address open space conservation while also prioritizing fire safety, as open spaces are a large fuel source for wildfires?
- How should the City combat over heating? (Minimize Urban Heat Islands, Incorporate more urban greenery, Use heat reflecting building material, Create/prioritize public cooling zones (i.e. shaded plazas or air conditioned public buildings), Focus on providing public transportation as to help reduce heat produced from automobiles?)
- How are you currently receiving Fire Department information and how would you like to receive information in the future?

PUBLIC SERVICES & UTILITIES BACKGROUND

As noted above, the inclusion of public services and facilities in the General Plan is optional (i.e., not mandated by State planning law). The City of San Marcos has elected to include these important planning topics in the General Plan Update. These topics are currently addressed in the General Plan's Land Use and Community Design and Safety Elements. Public Services and Facilities include fire protection, law enforcement, schools, civic services and libraries. Utilities includes water supplies, wastewater services (sewer), and drainage infrastructure.

PUBLIC SERVICES & UTILITIES DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Are there enough public facilities/services for all community members?
- Are utilities functioning at level of the price they cost?
- Regarding Public Services & Utilities (drainage, sewer, water services), are there areas of the City that need focused attention in terms of capital improvement planning?
- Do you think the City (residents and/or infrastructure) is prepared to handle a natural hazard event such as a wildfire or inland flooding?