

GPAC MEMORANDUM

TO: San Marcos General Plan Advisory Committee (GPAC)

FROM: De Novo Planning Group

SUBJECT: General Plan Advisory Committee General Plan Vision and Guiding Principles

DATE: November 17, 2022

The November 17, 2022 GPAC meeting will focus on reviewing and refining a draft General Plan Vision Statement and Guiding Principles and the draft General Plan Structure/Topic Outline.

It is very common, and quite easy, to confuse the meaning of the myriad terms we use in developing a general plan. The primary terms—Vision, Values, Goals, Policies, and Implementation Actions—all have specific definitions, but are not always applied correctly. Frequently, we find goals and values appear interchangeably in a narrative, while implementation actions masquerade as policies. To avoid confusion and better clarify how the components of the San Marcos General Plan will operate, we have prepared the following overview.

Vision statements are aspirational. They describe the desired, positive future of a community, city, county or other geographic area created by conceiving important desired characteristics. A vision is an image of the future the community wishes to create; it provides a picture of how growth should occur in San Marcos over time—but it does not mandate how much growth should be accommodated. The vision should be a succinct description of “community values”. Community values, sometimes also referred to as “guiding principles”, are beliefs about basic considerations that should apply to whatever the city does. Examples of community values/guiding principles that are important to San Marcos could include: access to open space, business development, community character, etc.

Goals are statements of desired future conditions, regarding a particular topic in the community, toward which effort and use of resources are directed. For example, a goal related to land use may be:

“San Marcos has a spectrum of housing types and price ranges that match the jobs in the City so that residents can both live and work in the community.” Both the city government and the community (e.g., developers and builders) will need to devote resources to achieve this goal.

Policies are statements that guide decision-making and specify an intended level of public commitment on a subject. If you are faced with a decision on this subject, here is the policy you are to follow. For example, a policy related to mobility may be: “We require development and urban design that reduces reliance on the automobile and capitalizes on multi-modal transportation opportunities.” When a development project is being evaluated, here’s what should be considered in its design.

Implementation Actions are individual steps taken to implement one or more policies. Developing a park master plan, revising the Municipal Code, creating a commercial recycling program, installing bike racks and storage facilities, and administering a housing rehabilitation grant and loan program are all examples of discrete actions that support city policies.

DRAFT GENERAL PLAN VISION AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Based on the extensive input received from the community, the General Plan Advisory Committee, and the City's elected and appointed officials, the project team has prepared a Draft General Plan Vision Statement and Guiding Principles for the GPAC's review and input. It is not our intent to "wordsmith" every word choice or punctuation decision. Rather, we want to solicit the GPAC's input on the overall tone, key words/phrases, and style of the draft Vision and Principles.

- Does the Community Vision Statement and Guiding Principles accurately reflect community input?
- Does the Community Vision Statement and Guiding Principles accurately reflect the [Draft Proposed Land Use Map](#)?
- Are there any key phases that you feel especially embody the future of San Marcos?
- Are there any words or phrases that you feel do not present the vision of the community?
- Are the headers for the Guiding Principles clear and relevant?
- Is anything missing?

A word version of the document has been provided to GPAC members (with a [PDF available](#) online for the public) to help you collect your thoughts and record key suggestions for the GPAC and project team's consideration. Please review the material in advance, make notes as appropriate and be prepared to discuss your ideas at the meeting. We will review GPAC input as a group and modify the text in real time to arrive at an updated draft version that can receive a final edit and be presented to the Planning Commission and City Council.

In preparation for the discussion, please consider the "Guiding Themes" outlined in the City's [Current General Plan Introduction](#) (they start on Page 15). How has the City grown over the last 15 years compared to the themes described in the Current General Plan? Are there parts of these Themes that should continue to be reflected and are there things that should be said differently?

DRAFT GENERAL PLAN STRUCTURE/TOPIC OUTLINE

Through this General Plan Update, one of the City's objectives was to refine the organization of the General Plan structure and topics to be more streamlined and user friendly. As a result, we have made recommendations for new element titles, order, and content (listed below) that are consistent with the requirements of State Law. Moving forward, the General Plan will follow this structure (and therefore the existing goals, policies and implementation actions that will be retained will need to be reorganized accordingly to match these topic areas).

The issues/topics listed below are intended to provide high-level guidance on the kinds of topics we anticipate addressing in each element. When we begin developing policies, it is likely that some new topics will emerge and some topics we've identified might go away or get consolidated. We might not end up with a specific goal or policy for each topic we've identified; rather, these topics represent the range of ideas that will most likely be addressed in the proposed element.

PROPOSED ELEMENTS

1. Land Use (required: Land Use)
2. Community Design (optional)
3. Resource Management (required: Open Space and Conservation elements included)
4. Environmental Justice (optional)
5. Mobility (required: Circulation)
6. Public Safety (required: Safety and Noise elements included)

7. Community Facilities (optional)
8. Economic Development (optional)
9. Fiscal Sustainability (optional)
10. Housing (required: Housing)

1. LAND USE

- + Balanced Distribution of Land Uses
- + Land Use Compatibility
- + Growth Management
- + Revitalization
- + Mixed-Use Nodes/Activity Centers
- + Places of higher education
- + Specific Plans
- + Sustainable Development

2. COMMUNITY CHARACTER

- + Image and Identity
- + Placemaking
- + Design Quality
- + Gateways
- + Streetscapes
- + Neighborhoods
- + Historic Resources
- + Cultural Resources

3. RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

- + Air quality, climate change, and energy
- + Cultural resources, including the important City's historic places and structures
- + Ecological and Biological resources
- + Energy and mineral resources
- + Open space areas and preserves
- + Parks and recreation facilities programs
- + Recreational trails
- + Scenic vistas and landforms
- + Conservation

4. ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

- + Pollution exposure and air quality
- + Access to public facilities
- + Healthy food access
- + Safe and sanitary homes
- + Physical activity
- + Civil engagement

5. MOBILITY

- + Local Roadway Network
- + Regional Connections
- + Pedestrian Facilities
- + Bicycle Facilities

- + Transit
- + Parking
- + Goods Movement (i.e., truck routes)
- + Congestion Management
- + Inter-jurisdictional Consistency
- + Traffic Generation in Neighboring Jurisdictions
- + Freeway Crossings and Access
- + Land Use and Transportation Planning
- + Traffic calming and safety

6. PUBLIC SAFETY

- + Natural geologic hazards
- + Flooding hazards
- + Fire hazards
- + Hazardous materials
- + Emergency preparedness/neighborhood safety
- + Climate change and resiliency planning
- + Noise (mobile, stationary, and neighborhood noise sources and sensitive receptors)

7. COMMUNITY FACILITIES

- + Water supply
- + Wastewater
- + Flood control
- + Recycling and Solid waste collection and disposal
- + Storm drainage and water quality
- + Police and fire protection
- + Lifelong learning
- + Civic services and functions
- + Public work maintenance
- + Health care
- + Child care
- + Libraries, cultural, and community facilities

8. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- + Economic Vitality of the Community
- + Business Development Opportunities
- + Retail Sector Growth and Competitiveness
- + Employment Opportunities and Related Development
- + Jobs-Housing Balance
- + Institutional Capacity
- + Regional Destinations
- + Local Destinations

9. FISCAL SUSTAINABILITY

- + Diversification of revenue sources
- + Cost recovery
- + Public/private partnerships
- + Balanced budgets
- + Reserve funds

- + Debt limitations
- + Financial asset management

10. HOUSING (NO EXPECTED CHANGES TO FORMAT OR CONTENT AT THIS TIME)

- + Development of Housing
- + Conservation of Housing Resources
- + Presentation of Existing Affordable Housing Stock
- + Improvement of Housing Opportunities and Accessibility
- + Fair Housing