

City of San Marcos | General Plan Update

Joint GPAC/CC Meeting on Land Use Alternatives

June 16, 2022, 6:00-8:30 p.m.

Attendees

City Council Members

- Mayor Rebecca Jones
- Deputy Mayor Sharon Jenkins
- María Nuñez
- Randy Walton

GPAC Appointees and Alternates

- Dennis Astl
- Kelly Batten
- Ramona Finnila
- Erin Garcia
- Arcela Nunez-Alvarez
- Jim Pennock
- Jay Petrek
- Ed Philbrick
- Joyce Sensmeier
- Matt Simmons
- Mike Strong
- Glen Winn
- Leon Wyden

City Staff

- Jack Griffin, City Manager
- Beth Herzog, Administrative Services Manager
- Isaac Etchamendy, Director of Development Services / City Engineer
- Joe Farace, Planning Division Director

Consultant Team

- Amanda Tropiano, De Novo Planning Group
- Courtney Marchi, De Novo Planning Group
- Jenna Tourjé-Maldonado, Kearns & West
- Mina Brown, Kearns & West
- Mariana Lopez (translator)

1. Call to Order

Mayor Rebecca Jones called the joint GPAC-City Council meeting to order.

2. Consultant Presentation

Amanda Tropiano, De Novo Planning Group, presented information about the land use alternatives that were detailed in the Land Use Alternatives Report. These two alternatives would accommodate different levels of growth in San Marcos. Alternative 1 – Activity Nodes would focus growth in more limited areas of the city (“activity nodes”) while Alternative 2 – Corridors would also facilitate growth along corridors between those areas. Both alternatives utilize new, consolidated land use designations that Ms. Tropiano reviewed. She also showed how the land use alternatives responded to property owner requests for land use designation changes on their properties. As shown in the presentation, the alternatives would provide different levels of development potential in terms of the number of residential units and jobs, nonresidential square feet of development, and the resulting population. Ms. Tropiano also outlined projections of vehicle trips and fiscal impacts from the two alternatives. Finally, she described community engagement efforts around the land use alternatives, and feedback received through those efforts. This summary included an overview of community comments received via two online surveys, at two open houses, and at a Planning Commission workshop held in early June. As part of the review of the online survey input, Ms. Tropiano reviewed parcel-specific input received by the community, including numerous public comments provided on a specific property (referred to as the “Briggs Property”) in the City’s Laurel Neighborhood, located at W San Marcos Blvd. and Viewpoint Drive. As part of the presentation, Ms. Tropiano notes that based on the public input provided to-date, Staff recommends that this property maintain its current General Plan designation of Very Low Density Residential (VLDR). Additional input received on specific parcels will be evaluated as part of the preparation of the Citywide benchmark plan that will be studied in the Environmental Impact Report.

3. Public Comment Opportunity #1

Thirteen members of the public spoke. All but one speaker spoke against a potential change to the land use designation on a particular property in the City’s Laurel Neighborhood (the “Briggs Property”). These speakers all requested that the current General Plan designation of Very Low Density Residential be maintained for this property. The following points were brought up in public comments about the proposed density increase on the Briggs property in the Laurel neighborhood:

- Drivers take shortcuts through Laurel neighborhood due to traffic backups at San Marcos Blvd and Rancho Santa Fe Rd; speed bumps have been installed due to this issue.
- Proposed high density development could increase traffic on Lake Ridge Dr and Viewpoint Dr which already has traffic, dangerous turns, speeding.
- Traffic endangers kids and dogs in the street.
- Instead of high density residential, consider agricultural / educational designation for the property or creating a park that can serve as a gathering place.
- The neighborhood has limited ingress/egress.
- Evacuation during fires may be difficult, as it was in the Twin Oaks Fire.
- San Marcos High School students park in front of neighborhood homes, and school traffic is an issue.
- Cul-de-sacs in Laurel neighborhood are difficult for fire engines.

- Development should not strain resources e.g. water supply, sewer lines, trash services, road maintenance.
- Incorporate more open space and trails throughout San Marcos.
- People who move to low-density areas don't expect the density to change.
- The City of Vista allowed a development project that was opposed by neighborhood residents.
- The Briggs property is not part of an activity node that would justify the density increase.
- High density is appropriate around mass transit.
- The Briggs property is not well maintained.
- Environmental impacts from development should be considered.
- Please engage residents more, for instance through focus groups.

The single speaker who did not address the Briggs Property commented on the property at Rancho Santa Fe Rd and Capalina Rd which is currently designated for commercial use. He advocated changing the designation to MU 45 or higher density residential.

4. Group Discussions

GPAC and City Council members were assigned to two groups for discussion, one on each side of the meeting room. Members of the public were invited to approach the discussion groups to listen, and were asked to refrain from making comments. Each group was provided with a set of large maps depicting the land use alternatives.

Group 1 Discussion

On the left side of the room (from the audience's perspective), in a discussion managed by representatives from De Novo, group participants brought up the following points:

- **General Points**
 - The overall population number for Alternative 2 feels too high, not an accurate representation of where San Marcos should be in 20 years.
 - Desire to not over-estimate/over-plan for residential development.
 - Alternative 1 is more in-line with expectations.
 - The Briggs property should remain the current General Plan designation of VLDR because it is outside of the focus areas and not consistent with the land use planning principle to focus new growth around activity centers and transit.
- **Specific Ideas**
 - New land use designations
 - There was support to consolidate land use designations to streamline development and improve implementation of mixed-use designations
 - Mixed opinion on the appropriateness of MU-75 (6-7 story buildings); some thought it was okay in limited areas, others thought 5-6 story maximum is more appropriate (maybe an MU-60)
 - Growth areas
 - Areas of change could be expected to include more area on the east side by the Civic Center

- Interest in partnering with major stakeholders like CSUSM to make sure that their development plans are taken into account
- Support for development at/around activity centers and transit lines to reduce potential impacts on existing residential neighborhoods to the extent possible

Group 2 Discussion

On the right side of the room (from the audience’s perspective), in a discussion managed by representatives from Kearns & West, group participants brought up the following points:

- **General Points**
 - The group felt that less growth was desirable (more like Alternative 2), but embraced specific ideas from Alternative 2.
 - Concerns about fast rate of growth and ability of infrastructure to keep up.
 - The group liked the idea of flexible land use designations.
 - More economic development is desirable, especially if it creates higher-quality jobs.
 - The Briggs property should stay Very Low Density Residential.
- **Specific Ideas**
 - Growth areas/opportunities:
 - Along 78
 - N Twin Oaks Valley Rd near La Cienega / Windy Way
 - Within triangle of Grand / W San Marcos / S Las Posas Rd
 - Pacific St commercial/industrial (ideas to consolidate parcels and allow some residential)
 - Bradley Park across from Grand Plaza (Linda Vista Dr & Las Posas)
 - Distribute some growth throughout city rather than concentrating everything in the already-dense core; increase access to open space in the core
 - Eastern area may be underutilized
 - Property at Rancho Santa Fe and Mission
 - Linda Vista area (closer to Via Vera Cruz near “Area of the Arts”)
 - Gateway enhancements:
 - Areas for improvement: Entry from Vista (potential transitional area), Twin Oaks design elements and enhancements
 - Could require public benefits with development to pay for improvements
 - Commercial areas look drab; improve roundabouts, walls
 - Downtown whimsical art is a good example
 - Transportation comments:
 - Work with North County Transit to provide improved service as San Marcos grows
 - Consider some nodes based on walking rather than transit
 - Harmonious uses and design:
 - Creek District and Restaurant Row should complement each other
 - Connect Las Posas to Discovery
 - Nodes should address uses and appearance
 - Mixed use is done well in San Elijo area and the Armorlite Dr transitional industrial area
 - Areas where industrial uses should be retained / protected:

- Storage and dairy south of E Mission Rd east of Twin Oaks
- Outdoor storage areas not appropriate for activity nodes

5. Public Comment Opportunity #2

There were no further public comments.