

GPAC MEMORANDUM

TO: San Marcos General Plan Advisory Committee (GPAC)

FROM: De Novo Planning Group

SUBJECT: General Plan Advisory Committee Conservation & Open Space, and Air Quality

DATE: May 19, 2022

The May 19, 2022 GPAC meeting will focus on the topics of Conservation, Open Space, and Air Quality. This meeting packet includes specific reading materials related to these topics. Both the Conservation and Open Space Elements are State-required elements of the General Plan, and both of these topics are addressed in the City's existing General Plan. The existing General Plan combines Conservation and Open Space into a single element. This is a very common approach in General Plan organization, and will likely be carried forward into the updated General Plan (but does not necessarily have to be). Conservation and Open Space are also discussed, to a lesser extent, in the Parks, Recreation, and Community Health Element. While the topic of Air Quality is not a specific requirement, it is typically addressed in the Conservation and Open Space Element, along with the topics of climate change, energy, and greenhouse gas emissions. Planning with Air Quality in mind is becoming more and more prominent as more state legislation has begun to regulate emissions and pollution more and more over the years.

REQUIRED READING

[Existing Conditions Report Conservation and Natural Resources](#)

[Current General Plan Conservation and Open Space Element](#)

[Current General Plan Parks, Recreation, and Community Health Element](#)

[City of San Marcos Climate Action Plan](#)

CONSERVATION & OPEN SPACE KEY ISSUES

State law requires the General Plan to include a Conservation Element, which addresses these topics:

- Natural habitats, including wetlands, waterways, riparian habitat, and special-status species habitat;
- Viewsheds and scenic resources
- Cultural and historical resources
- Water quality (in terms of habitat and water quality, not drinking water supplies)
- Air quality
- Energy resources/production

State law requires a General Plan to address open space issues, including the recognition of open space as a valuable resource for its own sake, the coordination of local policies with state and regional policies, and the use of open space to preserve environmentally sensitive natural areas and habitat. State Government Code Section 65560 defines open space lands as being essentially unimproved and devoted to the preservation of natural resources, managed production of resources, outdoor recreation, or public health and safety.

CONSERVATION & OPEN SPACE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- How should the City continue to plan for periods of drought, times of extreme heat, fire threats, and other impacts of climate change? Which hazards are you most concerned about/pose the greatest threat to the City? How important of a role do you think climate change planning should plan in the General Plan?
- Is protecting and conserving wildlife and plant life as important to the City as protecting and conserving land/space?
- Should the City play a larger role in promoting/implementing water conservation practices?
- Do you have greater access to regional open spaces, or to city parks? Do you utilize one more than the other? Do you utilize either space for recreational activity often?
- Do you have safe access to open spaces and parks? (i.e. flat sidewalks, streetlighting, ample parking, etc.)
- Should the City be willing to expand conservation efforts/ open space maintenance work/ public safety departments if the public wants to expand open spaces?
- What additional open space and recreational opportunities would you like to see in San Marcos? Are there special opportunities related to specific age groups (youth, seniors) that you'd like to see? Are certain age groups missing out (not given enough opportunities) on recreational open spaces due to lack of accessibility?

AIR QUALITY KEY ISSUES

While air quality itself does not require or warrant an official discussion by the Office of Planning and Research, it is expected to be addressed in the context of other State-mandated elements. While air pollution is a regional issue, local governments have an opportunity to address air quality issues through general plans, development ordinances, local circulation systems, transportation services, and other plans and programs. As such, they are uniquely positioned to contribute to the local air district's efforts to achieve and maintain compliance with state and federal air quality standards.

AIR QUALITY DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- How does the City view its role/obligation to addressing regional issues like air quality? Should San Marcos aim to be a leader/set the benchmark for regional goals and objectives or would the City prefer to be consistent with standard best practices as established by regional agencies and its neighbors?
- How could improving air quality impact other issues the City deals with, such as traffic, public health, and recreation?
- Do you notice poor air quality or smog in your day-to-day life?
- What indirect solutions should the City consider to improve air quality (i.e. expand public transportation to decrease amount of vehicles on the road or plant more trees within urban areas, etc.)?
- Do certain areas in the City typically have cleaner air than other parts?