

City of San Marcos | General Plan Update

Community Visioning Workshops Summary

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**SAN MARCOS
GENERAL PLAN
UPDATE**



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City of San Marcos

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1. OVERVIEW

General Plan Update

The City of San Marcos (City) has started preparing the San Marcos General Plan Update and Environmental Impact Report. The General Plan Update is guided by public input and lays out long-range goals and objectives for San Marcos' future growth. It is intended to present a vision for the future that serves the residents' economic, recreational, and community needs. The General Plan Update process began at the end of 2019 but was temporarily suspended from early-2020 to mid-2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The City relaunched the project in mid-2021.

Community Outreach

Community outreach and public input are fundamental to the General Plan Update. The purpose of community outreach and public participation is to ask San Marcos residents for meaningful and comprehensive feedback to make sure the General Plan Update presents a shared vision for the community. Guided by the Community Engagement Plan, the City conducted a series of Community Visioning Workshops. The first workshop focused on Vision and Values and was held in March 2020, before the City paused the project due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Once the General Plan Update was relaunched, the Community Visioning Workshop series was restarted, and the first workshop was largely repeated in October 2021. The second and third workshops were held in November and December 2021 and focused on Land Use and Community Design and Mobility, respectively. In addition to the interactive workshops, participants who were not able to attend in-person were encouraged to complete virtual surveys hosted in both English and Spanish.

This summary summarizes feedback from all of the Community Visioning Workshops and parallel virtual surveys. Approximately 240 participants attended the workshops. Feedback was provided through activities such as Post-it note brainstorming, mapping, and visioning exercises, interactive polling, and comment cards.

For the General Plan Update, the primary opportunities for public input to meaningfully inform the project team's work are:

1. Developing a General Plan Vision alongside the City and project team for the General Plan Update.
2. Identifying values, challenges, and opportunities relating to key community issues including transportation, land use, housing, infrastructure, community character, and services.
3. Providing input on land use alternatives and General Plan policies.
4. Providing input on the Environmental Impact Report.

Outreach Objectives

1. Conduct an open and transparent process based on International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) principles.
2. Engage the full spectrum of San Marcos community members, residents, business owners, landowners, and other stakeholders in the General Plan Update process.
3. Seek inclusion of diverse community voices.

4. Increase public understanding of the General Plan, its importance to San Marcos communities, and its role in shaping the future.

Advertisement

Information for all of the Community Visioning Workshops was posted on the San Marcos General Plan Update website (<https://sanmarcos.generalplan.org/>), advertised on the City of San Marcos Facebook page and other social media accounts, distributed through press releases, and sent in a bilingual direct mailer to every household and business in San Marcos (see Appendix A). Flyers were also made available at the San Marcos Street Fair, San Marcos Elementary Resource Fair, City public counters, and community housing resources.

Engagement

- Workshop information was shared with 37,087 households and businesses.
- Approximately 240 people attended the workshops.
 - Workshop 1 (2020): 62 attendees
 - Workshop 1 (2021): 68 attendees
 - Workshop 2: 65 attendees
 - Workshop 3: 45 attendees
- All workshops included Spanish translation services.

2. COMMUNITY VISIONING WORKSHOPS

Overview

The Community Visioning Workshops focused on Vision and Values, Land Use and Community Design, and Mobility. Each workshop was held in the evening and took place in various locations throughout San Marcos. Spanish translation was provided at each meeting. Each workshop included brainstorming or polling, small group breakout discussions, and mapping activities. Please refer to Table 1 below for the workshop topics, dates, and locations.

Table 1: Workshops Information		
Workshop	Date/Time	Location
Workshop 1 (2020) – Vision and Values	March 11, 2020, 6:00-8:00 p.m.	San Marcos Senior Activity Center 111 Richmar Avenue, San Marcos CA 92069
Workshop 1 (2021) – Vision and Values	October 25, 2021, 6:00-8:00 p.m.	San Marcos Senior Activity Center 111 Richmar Avenue, San Marcos CA 92069
Workshop 2 – Land Use and Community Design	November 16, 2021, 6:00-8:00 p.m.	San Elijo Recreation Center 1105 Elfin Forest Road, San Marcos CA 92078
Workshop 3 – Transportation	December 2, 2021, 6:00-8:00 p.m.	San Marcos Community Center 3 Civic Center Drive, San Marcos CA 92069

Workshop 1 – Vision and Values

The first workshop focused on Vision and Values and was first held in March 2020 as part of the original work effort; immediately following this workshop, the City placed the General Plan Update on a temporary hold due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Input from Workshop 1 (2020) can be found in Appendix B.

The Vision and Values workshop was repeated on October 25, 2021, from 6:00-8:00 p.m. at the San Marcos Senior Activity Center. The focus of this workshop was to provide information on the General Plan Update and gather input from residents on what they value in San Marcos, what they see as challenges, and their visions for the future.

A total of 68 residents attended and provided comments, questions, and visions for San Marcos. The workshop was held in English with Spanish translations available through a translator using headsets.

The workshop was conducted in an interactive format that included a presentation, three activities, and a discussion. As participants entered the workshop, they signed in and provided contact information for future communications then sat in groups at tables. The workshop opened with an introduction of the project team, an overview of the General Plan Update and outreach process, and ways participants could provide input. The project team then facilitated three activities followed by a discussion. All input received during Workshop 1 (2021) can be found in Appendix C.

Workshop Objectives

- 1. Increase public understanding of the General Plan, its importance to San Marcos communities, and its role in shaping the future.**
- 2. Learn about community assets and challenges in San Marcos and how community members envision San Marcos in 20 years.**
- 3. Gather meaningful community input, ideas, and feedback to shape the vision, alternatives, and policies included in the General Plan Update.**

Workshop Activities

Activity 1: Assets and Challenges

This activity enabled participants to identify assets and challenges in the city of San Marcos. Post-it notes were placed on tables throughout the room and two boards titled “Community Assets” and “Potential Challenges” were placed near the front of the room. Participants were asked to identify one idea or word per Post-it note. The project team then placed the notes on the appropriate board and reported back on key themes to the larger group.

For Activity 1, participants were prompted with the following questions:

- What Are Community Assets in San Marcos?**
 - What are your favorite things about your City?**
 - Why did you move here and why do you stay?**
 - What do you value most?**
 - What are important aspects of the neighborhood’s culture and traditions?**

- **What Are Potential Challenges of San Marcos?**
 - **What are the biggest challenges in the City today?**
 - **What obstacles are currently facing the neighborhood?**

Participants identified the following key assets and challenges:

Key Assets

- **Parks, greenspace, trails, and open space throughout the City**
- **Retail and restaurants**
- **Education, from preschool to college**
- **Sense of community, from local relationships to neighborhood design**

Key Challenges

- **Neighborhood traffic and freeway access**
- **Accommodate for population growth**
- **Focus on growth planning and development that maintains neighborhood character**
- **Economic development, including jobs and workforce development**

Activity 2: Visions

For Activity 2, participants gathered in groups of 5-6 people at each table. The project team asked participants to think about what they would like to see in San Marcos in the future. Each table identified a recorder to take notes on a flipchart, and participants brainstormed key themes, words, and phrases to describe how they envision San Marcos in 20 years.

The following visioning themes emerged from this activity:

- **Diverse economic opportunities, including balance of housing, business, and recreation**
- **Focus on community, diversity, equity, and safety**
- **Diverse housing opportunities (affordable housing for younger generations and senior living)**
- **Transit-oriented development that is accessible**
- **Preserve and maintain parks and open spaces**

Activity 3: Community Mapping

For Activity 3, large maps of San Marcos were placed on each table in addition to blue, red, and green markers. Participants used blue markers to identify areas that should be preserved and protected, red markers to highlight areas that need special attention, and green markets to identify important roadways and corridors. Refer to Appendix C for all exhibits from this Community Mapping activity.

While there was variation across each group, participants identified the following:

- **Areas to be Preserved/Protected: Open space conservation areas and historic, low-density neighborhoods to retain existing neighborhood characteristics**
- **Areas that Need Special Attention: Areas along major corridors, including San Marcos Boulevard and Rancho Santa Fe Road**

- **Important Roadways: San Marcos Boulevard, Twin Oaks Valley Road, Mission Road, and Rancho Santa Fe Road**

Figure 1 below provides an overview of areas identified by participants during the mapping activity.

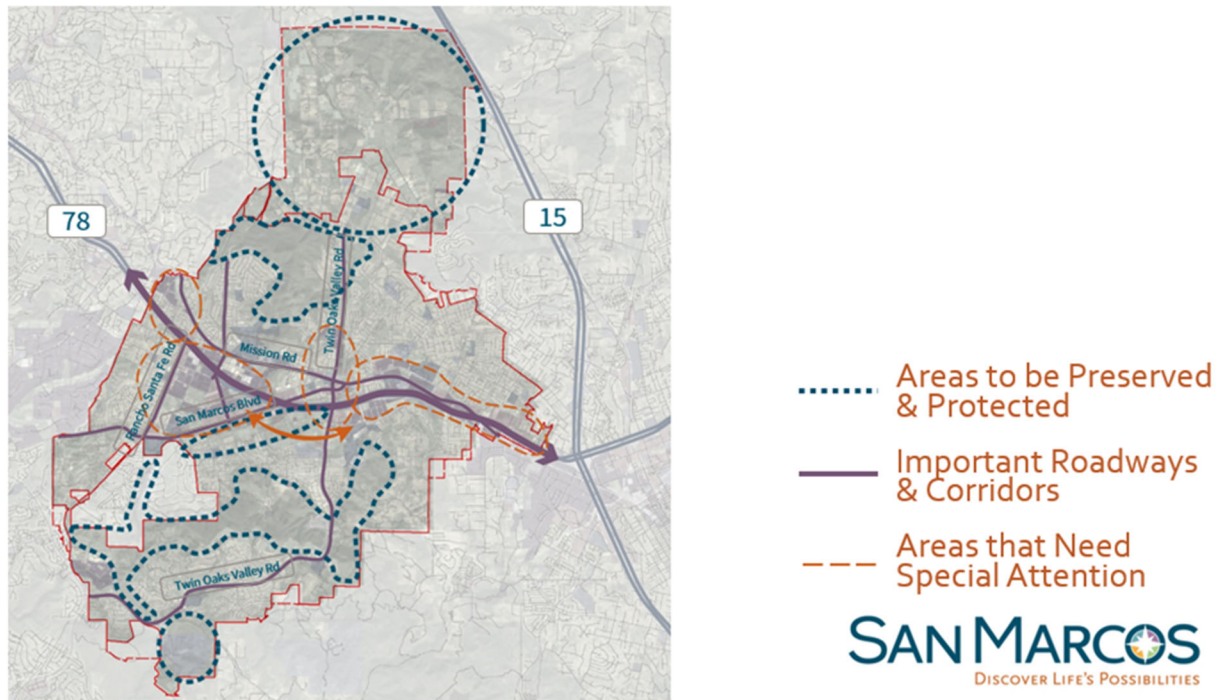


Figure 1: Synthesis of Workshop 1 Community Mapping

Workshop 2 – Land Use and Community Design

The second workshop was held on November 16, 2021, from 6:00 – 8:00 p.m. at the San Elijo Recreation Center. The focus of this workshop was to provide information on the General Plan Update and engage residents on land use and community design in San Marcos.

A total of 65 residents attended and provided comments, questions, and recommendations for land use and community design in San Marcos. The workshop was held in English with Spanish translations available through a translator using headsets.

The workshop was conducted in an interactive format that included a presentation, three activities, and a discussion. As participants entered the workshop, they signed in and provided contact information for future communications then sat in groups at tables. The workshop opened with an introduction of the project team, an overview of the General Plan Update and outreach process, and ways participants could provide input. The project team then facilitated three activities followed by a discussion. All input received during Workshop 2 can be found in Appendix D.

Workshop Objectives

- 1. Increase public understanding of the General Plan, its importance to San Marcos communities, and its role in shaping the future.**
- 2. Learn from community members about the priority areas for development, preferred types of development, and solutions to priorities related to housing in San Marcos.**
- 3. Gather meaningful community input, ideas, and feedback to shape the vision, alternatives, and policies included in the General Plan Update.**

Workshop Activities

Activity 1: Polling

Activity 1 used Poll Everywhere, an interactive online polling platform, to ask participants questions about housing and land use in their community. The questions were projected on a screen in the room and participants responded using their phones. The responses were displayed on the screen in real-time which facilitated the report back after each question and discussion. Poll Everywhere results from Workshop 2 are included in Appendix D.

Participants were asked for input on the relevancy of land use and community design goals outlined in the City's current General Plan adopted in 2012. The goals are listed below:

- 1. Achieve a balanced distribution and compatible mix of land uses to meet the present and future needs of all residents and the business community**
- 2. Promote development standards and land use patterns that encourage long-term environmental sustainability**
- 3. Develop land use patterns that are compatible with and support a variety of mobility opportunities and choices**
- 4. Promote San Marcos as the educational center of North County while creating greater synergy between the business community and its academic institutions**
- 5. Promote community design that produces a distinctive, high-quality built environment with forms and character that create memorable places and enrich community life**
- 6. Maintain a supportive business climate and a healthy, sustainable economy to retain and attract high-quality businesses and create additional employment opportunities**
- 7. Direct and sustain growth and expansion in areas of San Marcos that can support a concentration of a variety of uses and are particularly suitable for multimodal transportation and infrastructure expansion and improvements**

Participants were also asked a series of questions on development focal areas, priorities, and preferences (see Appendix D). After each question, the project team reported back to the larger group and discussed the responses.

Key Themes

- Most participants agree that the goal of promoting development standards and land use patterns that encourage long-term environmental sustainability is still very relevant.**
- Most participants agree that the goal to promote community design that produces a distinctive, high-quality built environment with forms and character that create memorable places and enrich community life is still very relevant.**

- Approximately half of the participants noted that the goal to promote San Marcos as the educational center of North County while creating greater synergy between the business community and its academic institutions is still very relevant, while half noted the goal as still relevant but could be refined.

Activity 2: Visual Preferences (Dot Polling)

For Activity 2, boards with different development types were placed around the room, and participants were given 24 dot stickers to place on images of development types they can envision in San Marcos. Development types included Medium Density Residential; High-Density Residential; Student Housing/Young Professional; Residential/Retail Mixed-use; Retail; Office/Commercial Mixed-use; Office; Flexible Industrial & Tech; Research & Development; Public Facility; Streetscape; Plaza/Parklet; Pocket Park; and Trails.

Key Themes

A total of 968 dots were used in this activity. While Trails, Plaza/Parklet, Streetscapes, and Pocket Parks were identified as top priorities for participants, the following types were identified as the most important land use categories:

1. Public Facility: 84
2. Medium Density Residential: 63
3. Residential/Retail Mixed-Use: 59
4. High-Density Residential: 52

Activity 3: Community Mapping

For Activity 3, participants gathered in small groups and reviewed two maps of focus areas in San Marcos (Transit Corridor Character Map and San Marcos City Core Map), placing land use stickers on locations on the maps. After the activity, the project team reported back on key themes identified by participants to the larger group.

In total, there were 180 stickers placed on the San Marcos City Core Map. Listed below are the total number of stickers for each development type that were placed on the map:

- Streetscape: 33
- Pocket Park: 27
- Trails: 21
- Student Housing: 14
- Retail: 12
- Residential/Commercial Mixed Use: 10
- Office/Commercial: 9
- Medium Density Residential: 9
- Public Facility: 7
- High Density: 7
- Research & Development: 6
- Plaza/Parklet: 6
- Office: 4
- Flexible Industrial & Tech: 4

- **Other: 11**

The maps identified different areas within the San Marcos City Core Area (University District, Civic Core Area, San Marcos Creek District, Palomar College, and Richmar). The land use and design categories are broken down by each area below:

- A total of 40 stickers were placed on the University District. The top responses were Pocket Park (6), Streetscape (5), and Student Housing (5).
- A total of 27 stickers were placed within the Civic Core Area. The top responses were Student Housing (6), Trails (5), and Streetscape (5).
- A total of 24 stickers were placed on the San Marcos Creek District. The top responses included Streetscape (9), Residential/Commercial Mixed Use (5), and Pocket Park (4).
- A total of 19 stickers were placed on the area surrounding Palomar College. The top categories included Retail (4), Residential/Commercial Mixed Use (3), Plaza/Parklet (2), Trails (2), and Pocket Park (2).
- A total of 17 stickers were placed in the Richmar area. The top categories included Streetscape (4), Pocket Park (2), and Retail (2).

The area of CSU San Marcos received the smallest number of stickers (5 stickers). Areas on the map that were not labeled received 48 stickers. The development types that received the most stickers in the unlabeled areas are Streetscape (9), Pocket Park (4), High-Density Residential (4), and Other (9).

All mapping responses from Workshop 2 are provided in Appendix D.

Workshop 3 – Mobility

The third workshop was held on December 2, 2021, from 6:00 – 8:00 p.m. at the San Marcos Recreation Center. The focus of this workshop was to provide information on the General Plan Update and engage residents on mobility in San Marcos.

A total of 45 residents attended and provided comments, questions, and input on mobility in San Marcos. The workshop was held in English with Spanish translations available through a translator using headsets.

The workshop was conducted in an interactive format that included a presentation, two activities, and a discussion. As participants entered the workshop, they signed in and provided contact information for future communications then sat in groups at tables. The workshop opened with an introduction of the project team, an overview of the General Plan and outreach process, and ways participants could provide input. The project team then facilitated two activities followed by a discussion. All input received during Workshop 3 can be found in Appendix E.

Workshop Objectives

1. Increase public understanding of the General Plan, its importance to San Marcos communities, and its role in shaping the future.
2. Learn from community members about the forms of transportation they take the most, why they use the forms of transportation they do, how they would commute if provided

with transportation-related services, and what transportation issues are most important to them.

3. Gather meaningful community input, ideas, and feedback to shape the vision, alternatives, and policies included in the General Plan Update.

Workshop Activities

Activity 1: Polling

Activity 1 used Poll Everywhere, an interactive online platform, to ask participants questions about mobility in their community. The questions were projected on a screen in the room and participants responded using their phones. The responses were displayed on the screen in real-time which facilitated the report back after each question and discussion. Handouts of the polling questions were provided to participants who did not bring cell phones.

Participants were asked the following questions about mobility in San Marcos:

1. How frequently do you bicycle, including for exercise, commuting, or other reasons?
2. What type of biking improvements or enhancements in the city would encourage you to ride your bicycle more?
3. How often do you use transit (bus or light rail)?
4. What type of improvements to transit service or facilities in the city would encourage you to ride transit more often?
5. How would you rate traffic congestion in the city during the morning and evening commute hours?
6. Are there times of the day you avoid driving due to traffic congestion?
7. Are there areas of the city you avoid driving due to traffic congestion?

Key Themes

- Most participants do not bicycle (including for exercise, commuting, or other reasons).
- Most participants noted that off-street bike path improvements or enhancements would encourage them to ride their bicycles more.
- Most participants do not use transit.
- Most participants noted that more routes and stops would encourage them to ride transit more often.
- Most participants responded that traffic congestion is “very bad” during the morning and evening hours.

Activity 2: Community Mapping

For Activity 2, participants gathered in small groups to mark up a transit map of San Marcos (see Appendix E) and were asked to identify the following:

- Areas where bicycle improvements and/or pedestrian improvements should be implemented
- Areas where transit improvements (such as shuttles) should be implemented
- Areas that could benefit from vehicle and congestion improvements

After the activity, each table reported back on the top areas identified on their maps. The top areas and ideas that could benefit from improvements that were identified by several groups were the following:

- Barham Drive, 78, Nordahl Road;
- Congestion on all major roads – could use bicycle, pedestrian, and transit improvements; and
- Shuttle loop around town.

Visioning Workshops Virtual Surveys

To supplement the input received at the Community Visioning Workshops and to offer an online input opportunity for community members who were not able to attend in person, three virtual surveys were offered in both English and Spanish. The surveys were available online from January 31, 2022, through February 17, 2022, and were advertised on the San Marcos General Plan Update website, the City of San Marcos Facebook page, and other social media accounts. The City also issued a press release and coordinated with the School District to post information to the District’s website. Each survey included the same questions that were asked during the workshops. The following number of survey responses were received:

- Workshop 1 Survey: 55 total responses
- Workshop 2 Survey: 53 total responses
- Workshop 3 Survey: 51 total responses

The below sections summarize key themes from each of the surveys. The responses largely reflect the input received at the in-person Visioning Workshops and validate the feedback provided by community members as part of that process. All input received from the surveys can be found in Appendix F.

Workshop 1 – Vision and Values Survey Results

The Workshop 1 Survey was focused on Vision and Values. It was divided into two sections – Section 1: Assets and Challenges and Section 2: Visions.

Section 1 included questions on assets and challenges in San Marcos. Survey participants identified the following key assets and challenges:

Key Assets

- Parks, greenspace, trails, and open space throughout the City
- Retail and restaurants
- Education, from preschool to college
- Housing options and affordability

Key Challenges

- Neighborhood traffic and freeway access
- Focus on growth planning and development that maintains neighborhood character
- Schools becoming overcrowded
- Safety concerns from increasing theft and crime
- Maintaining open space

Section 2 included questions relating to visioning for the future of San Marcos. The following visioning themes emerged:

- Diverse economic opportunities, including balance of housing, business, and recreation
- Focus on community, diversity, equity, and safety
- More schools to accommodate overcrowding
- Transit-oriented development that is accessible and walkable
- Preserve and maintain parks and open spaces

Workshop 2 – Land Use and Community Design Survey Results

The Workshop 2 Survey was focused on Land Use and Community Design. It was divided into two sections – Section 1: General Plan Goals and Section 2: Community Design Preferences.

Section 1 included questions related to the relevance of the City’s current General Plan goals. The following themes emerged:

- Most participants agree that the goal of promoting development standards and land use patterns that encourage long-term environmental sustainability is still very relevant.
- Most participants agree that the goal to promote community design that produces a distinctive, high-quality built environment with forms and character that create memorable places and enrich community life is still very relevant.
- Most participants noted that the goal to promote San Marcos as the educational center of North County while creating greater synergy between the business community and its academic institutions is still very relevant, while half noted the goal as still relevant but could be refined.

Section 2 included images of different land use designations and building types. Participants identified the types of land uses they preferred in the City. A total of 1334 images were selected in this activity. While Trails, Plaza/Parklet, Streetscapes, and Pocket Parks were identified as top priorities for participants, the following types were identified as the most important land use categories:

1. Public Facility: 110
2. Medium Density Residential: 110
3. Flexible Industrial & Tech: 93
4. Student Housing & Office: 91
5. Commercial Mixed Use: 91

Workshop 3 – Mobility Survey Results

The Workshop 3 Survey was focused on mobility. It was divided into two sections – Section 1: Mobility Patterns and Section 2: Mobility Challenges and Opportunities.

Section 1 included questions relating to mobility and land use, from how often people bike and walk in San Marcos to what improvements or enhancements would encourage more transit usage. The following themes were identified by participants:

- **Most participants occasionally bicycle (including for exercise, commuting, or other reasons).**
- **Most participants noted that off-street bike path improvements or enhancements would encourage them to ride their bicycles more.**
- **Most participants do not use transit.**
- **Most participants noted that more routes, higher frequency of buses, and signage would encourage them to ride transit more often.**
- **Most participants responded that traffic congestion is “bad” during the morning and evening hours.**

Section 2 focused on identifying areas that could benefit from mobility improvements. The top areas and ideas that were identified were the following:

- **Congestion on all major roads – could use bicycle, pedestrian, and transit improvements;**
- **Discovery Street, Via Vera Cruz, Craven, San Marcos Blvd, Twin Oaks, Mission Avenue;**
and
- **Shuttle loop around town.**