

City Council & Planning Commission

Joint Workshop

January 30



C O D E S M T X

AGENDA

Introduction	10 Min.
Development Process	30 Min.
New Housing Types	30 Min.
Neighborhood Character	30 Min.
Break	10 Min.
Material Standards	30 Min.
Affordable Housing	30 Min.
Next Steps	5 Min.

What Have We Heard?



Key Considerations



Proposed Solutions

Existing Neighborhoods

#1 Don't provide any opportunities for incompatible developments in or adjacent to existing neighborhoods



01
Strong stable
neighborhoods
where new
development is
compatible.



02
Housing
choices to
serve all
residents.

03
Support and
promote
opportunities
for home
ownership.



04
Maintain and
improve existing
neighborhoods
with small
incremental
growth.



Developing a Solution



2014

During the Code Rodeo we heard that the code needed to address the problem of incompatible development in Existing Neighborhoods



2015

Preparing for the Neighborhood Character Studies gave us an opportunity to take the show on the road and hear from new people



During the Neighborhood Character Studies we learned what was most important about preserving Neighborhood Character



2016

The Think Tank acted as a sounding board along the way to bounce ideas and proposals for solutions



2017

As drafts are presented surveys were conducted asking "are we moving in the right direction"

02

Code SMTX Strategies



Designate Existing Neighborhoods

Existing Neighborhoods need to be geographically designated so that the development code can treat them differently

Establish Appropriate Scale

The scale of development is one of the most important elements of development standards. Our current code has no limit on scale.



No Case by Case Negotiations

Establish the basic rules for development now with this community established set of standards. These basic maximums on scale can't be deviated from.

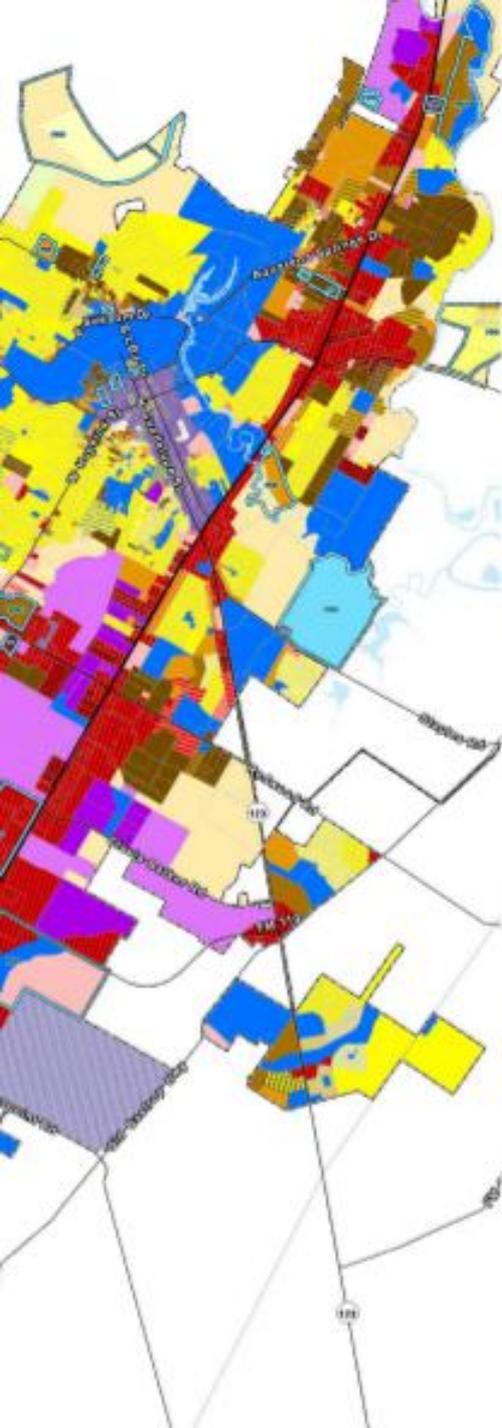


Zoning Strategy

No City Initiated Re-zoning

Remove the option to ask for incompatible zoning districts or PDD's

Replace old options with new ones that recognize a neighborhood scale of development while providing appropriate levels of flexibility



Development Process

Revisions to the Development Process chapter in Code SMTX were primarily made to clarify and simplify processes making the chapter more accessible to applicants and the public. Changes were also made to streamline processes in Intensity Zones and to provide for more holistic review, better criteria, and enhanced notification for requests that represent a deviation from the goals of the Comprehensive Plan.



What We Heard



What We Heard in Summary

Enhance notification to surrounding property owners; Increase scrutiny on certain types of requests; streamline the process and limit the number of times and amount of time developments go through a public process

Enhance Notification



Expand the legal notification area.



Provide more time between notification and hearing



Include neighborhood organizations like CONA in the process

Increase Scrutiny



Property owner requested text amendments to the code



Comprehensive plan amendments and zoning changes in neighborhoods



Waivers associated with economic development incentives

Streamline Processes



Decrease the processing time for an application



Permit approvals should last for a longer period of time and be extended when needed



More requests should be handled administratively



What We Heard

PREDICTABILITY

Predictability means that property owners and the development community know what can be built in a certain area based on the code in place for that area. A predictable process is one that limits discretionary decisions to major land use changes where established criteria and plans are used to make decisions.

TRANSPARENCY and ACCESS

Not all neighborhoods have equal representation. The development process and decisions should be based on criteria and standards agreed upon by the community which are accurately represented in development codes and upheld in the development process. Where discretionary decisions are appropriate notification should be early and should be in multiple formats so that it is accessible to all.

Comprehensive Plan Objectives



"Revise development codes in Intensity Zones to allow and streamline the process for appropriate uses and densities."



"Update and improve notice requirements for zoning changes"



"Create clear criteria for zoning changes to apply to all cases"



"Expedite the entitlement process for high performance local or preferred -industry employers locating in the activity nodes or employment centers"



Proposed Strategies

Notifications



- Provide more information on the website that is automatically updated and accurate from initial submission.
- Require neighborhood meetings open to any and all neighborhood organizations or individuals and held by the developer to describe the project

Tools for Analysis



- The intent of each standard is included as well as criteria to analyze any alternative way to meet that standard.
- Guidance for where and when certain zoning districts should be used has been included based on the location and type of request.

New Housing Types

The inclusion of building types in the development code provides an opportunity to consolidate zoning districts and provide a mixture of housing or building types within a single zoning district. Standards such as lot sizes, and building scale can be controlled both by the zoning district and the building type regulation. For example, standards that are appropriate for a townhouse are different than standards for a duplex but they both may work within the same zoning district when the scale is controlled.



What We Heard



What We Heard in Summary

Accommodate the need for diverse housing for residents and families in existing neighborhoods. Diverse housing types are not appropriate in areas that are entirely single family detached housing. Diverse housing in Intensity Zones needs to be encouraged and better enabled by the zoning standards.

Intensity Zones



Provide more flexibility for smaller scale multi-family building types.



Decrease parking requirements and allow shared parking and other reductions in CD4



Maintain residential nature while allowing for small scale commercial

Existing Neighborhoods



Parking requirements should be higher in Existing Neighborhoods



Diverse housing should be limited to areas where a mixture of housing is already present



Concern that diverse housing will become student housing.

Mixed Use



Mixing commercial uses in residential areas should not be encouraged in existing neighborhoods.



Incorporating diverse residential uses into primarily commercial areas is more appropriate



Key Considerations

HOUSING CHOICE

Expanding housing choice for all residents is a key consideration for San Marcos. Housing options should be designed and constructed to accommodate a diverse population and be able to effectively transition over time. Regulating housing types is an effective tool in encouraging diverse housing available for residents with a variety of needs and interests. Regulations such as occupancy restrictions and rental registration are additional tools proposed to ensure that housing accommodates a diverse population.

MEDIUM DENSITY HOUSING

The new housing types proposed in Code SMTX encourage the creation of medium density residential development. Medium Density housing types are an important element of providing diverse and affordable housing options in a walkable setting. Medium Density residential housing is small in scale and fits in to a neighborhood as opposed to large multi-family developments that are typically separate from the surrounding neighborhood.

BARRIERS TO DIVERSE HOUSING

In order to encourage smaller-scale diverse housing options regulations should require small lot sizes and scale while allowing more of the lot to be covered by buildings. Parking standards, setbacks and impervious cover limits that are not designed to accommodate medium density residential housing create barriers to diverse housing.

Comprehensive Plan Objectives



"Revise zoning code to allow for more diverse housing types and mixed use development."



"Develop an affordable housing program"



"Diversified housing options to serve citizens with varying interests and needs."



"Create a regulatory framework that will encourage residential development downtown"

Proposed Strategies



Place-Based Zoning



- Zoning districts are created based on the character of the place. Different building types at different scales are designed to fit into that type of place.
- Providing different zoning districts for neighborhood areas and Intensity Zones allows those places to be regulated differently while both providing opportunities for Diverse Housing.

Building Types



- Building types work as both a regulatory tool and as guidance to encourage diverse housing and medium density housing over large multi-family development.

Neighborhood Character

Establishing and retaining the character of a place is one of the purposes of zoning. Building types, building size, lot size, setbacks, streets and use are all different elements that make-up the character of a place. Retaining character means that the elements of new development are consistent with existing development. Transitions between different Comprehensive Planning Areas, different zoning districts, or even between building types internal to a district are other important elements of retaining the character of a place. Code SMTX is proposing transitional tools in each of these types of conditions.



What We Heard



What We Heard in Summary

Buffers and transitions from Comprehensive Plan Intensity Zones to Existing Neighborhood Areas should be larger and more meaningful. More needs to be done to encourage higher rates of home ownership in existing neighborhoods.

Home Ownership



Encourage the inclusion of condominiums as an allowable type.



Better management of the high rate of rental properties in existing neighborhoods.

Transitions and Buffers



Increase the buffers and transitions between high intensity areas and existing neighborhoods



I wish we could have stronger protection for current neighborhoods from developments like Bowie Tract and Lindsey Hill.



Key Considerations

TRANSITIONS

Transitioning from high intensity places to predominantly residential areas typically involves a series of step downs in zoning intensity. Appropriate transitions utilize a variety of tools including management of traffic circulation, building height step-downs, and buffers that include landscaping as a screening element.

INFILL DEVELOPMENT

In areas where several different housing types are utilized on various lot sizes, compatibility standards should be used to ensure a similar look and feel along the street frontage even as building types change. Compatibility standards are important to maintaining a certain character within an area.

Property Maintenance

The ratio of owner occupied to renter occupied housing can play a role in preserving neighborhood character and the maintenance and upkeep of a residential area. Development Codes can encourage owner occupancy within an area by requiring housing types that are on individual lots. In addition, strengthening enforcement mechanisms for rental properties and any shared spaces within a development are key to being able to enforce property maintenance codes.

Comprehensive Plan Objectives



"Review and update city ordinances regarding maintenance of property"



"Develop a process to enforce city codes related to property maintenance"



"Identify and create character index studies for neighborhoods inside and outside of intensity zones."



Proposed Strategies

Transitions from High Intensity Areas



- Height step downs and maximum lot sizes are required where high intensity zones meet existing residential properties
- Buffers are required where high intensity zones meet existing residential
- Traffic circulation patterns are regulated to minimize access to high intensity areas through existing residential neighborhoods.

Compatibility Standards



- Height step downs and setback averaging are required for infill development
- Street facing entrances and building widths are regulated for infill development in order to maintain the look and feel of a neighborhood from the street.

Use and Maintenance



- Owner Occupancy regulations are expanded to new building types in existing neighborhoods
- Rental registration is required for new building types within existing neighborhoods
- A permanent organization and funding source such as an HOA is required for the maintenance of any shared spaces.

Material Standards

Material standards are most effective in areas where there is an existing traditional style within a geographic area to be maintained or where regulations are use based and durability, attractiveness and quality of new buildings is important such as industrial, big box, or other heavy commercial uses. In addition, building materials and articulation become more important the larger the building or development is.



What We Heard



What We Heard in Summary

Standards should focus on prohibiting materials that don't meet durability or aesthetic goals, new building form standards, and new architectural standards. Singling out a limited list of permitted materials are not effective in ensuring quality development.

Building Scale



Material Standards are most effective for buildings over 3 - 4 stories tall.



Smaller commercial buildings intended to fit into a neighborhood should have materials similar to the surrounding buildings.

Design



Some of the worst buildings in San Marcos are made of permitted materials while some of the best buildings are not.



A shorter list of materials that are prohibited coupled with strong articulation standards provides more creativity and better buildings

Alternatives



Forming a board for the purposes of material standards would be too difficult and time intensive.



Review of alternative requests should include individuals with expertise such as an architect.



Key Considerations

TRADITIONAL MATERIALS

San Marcos does not have too many places that are defined by a particular building material. Downtown has a tradition of brick architecture around parts of the square but is also defined by the eclectic use of materials in other parts of downtown like LBJ dr. Historic residential buildings adjacent to downtown are traditionally wood. Some of these buildings have been converted to commercial uses over time. Infill development in these areas should draw from these traditional building materials in the area.

BUILDING FORM AND ARTICULATION

One element of building design that can have a substantial impact on the aesthetics of a building is the buildings form and articulation. Building articulation can be achieved through substantial changes in building materials or architectural elements like awnings, porches, window decorations, and building step backs. The more form and articulation standards that are incorporated into a buildings design the less important the building materials become.

BUILDING SCALE

The use of building materials becomes more important as the size of a building increases. As the size and massing of a building get's larger more area of a building is dominated by a single material and the durability and aesthetics of that material is more important.

Comprehensive Plan Objectives



"Create a sustainability plan to identify affordable and realistic sustainability practices to be encouraged"



"Establish Gateway Corridors as identified in the Downtown Master Plan and the Preferred Scenario:"



"Increase the amount of Class A office and industrial space that is attractive to target industries."



Proposed Strategies

Traditional Materials



- All Downtown Buildings have material standards
- Prohibited building materials have been incorporated for all developments including: eifs and metal sheet siding.

Building Form and Articulation



- All buildings located in use based districts where form standards are limited require material standards
- Form and articulation standards have taken the place of material standards for smaller building types.

Building Scale



- All buildings in the most intense districts have material standards.
- All apartment buildings have material standards.

Affordable Housing

Affordable Housing is generally construed to mean that a low or moderate income family can afford to buy or rent a decent quality dwelling without spending more than 30% of its income on shelter. Affordable housing is a complex issue that takes on many forms and levels of government intervention. Code SMTX is directly supporting affordable housing through development code incentives targeted at increasing density and buildable area on the lot. Code SMTX is indirectly supporting affordable housing by allowing for more housing to meet the housing demand and providing for more housing choice.



What We Heard

What We Heard in Summary

Supporting diverse housing types offered by the market for affordable housing may not be enough due to the fact that San Marcos is a college town. Diverse housing in a college town is often used as rental housing and if not managed correctly may further degrade a neighborhood. Affordable housing in or adjacent to existing neighborhoods should focus on opportunities for home ownership for all types of residents.



Garden court housing may be investor owned and poorly managed



Reducing parking can encourage affordable housing types.



How, given our history of neighborhoods being converted from owner occupied to rental units, do we develop a consensus that allows for a diversity of housing?



Provide explicitly affordable housing incentives.



Material standards work against the affordable housing goals.



How can developers and investors be a part of an increase in public transportation? Including Trains buses etc... Transportation = jobs = income = housing



Key Considerations

INTEGRATING AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Integrating affordable housing into the existing fabric of the city is a key factor in creating successful affordable housing opportunities. Transportation costs are closely linked to affordability and locating affordable housing where services are available is important. Affordable housing should be built at a smaller scale so that it can integrate and mix into existing neighborhoods seamlessly. This promotes a diverse neighborhood and higher quality of life for all residents.

HOUSING DEMAND

One of the primary cost drivers for housing is housing demand. Development Codes should entitle enough new housing in preferred locations and preferred types to meet the demand and provide the choices in housing to accommodate the increased population. When the demand for housing goes up the cost of housing follows.

INCENTIVES

Incentives for affordable housing should focus on those code requirements that create barriers to offering affordable housing including, minimum lot sizes, building sizes, parking requirements, building entitlements, and development fees. The period of affordability should be directly related to the degree of government intervention in the form of incentives.

Comprehensive Plan Objectives

-  "Revise zoning codes to allow for more diverse housing types and mixed use development."
-  "Update the infill housing program."
-  "Develop an affordable housing program."
-  "Review and update city ordinances regarding maintenance of property."
-  "Develop a process to enforce city codes related to property maintenance."



Proposed Strategies

Integrating Housing



- Criteria for Location Efficient Areas have been included as a requirement for affordable housing
- When affordable units are included within a development requirements for proportional dispersal of the units are included.

Property Maintenance



- Affordable housing has been limited to ownership opportunities within existing neighborhoods.
- Rental Registration and standards for the management of any shared spaces have been included

Incentives



- Proposed development incentives include density bonuses, additional stories and parking reductions.

Next Steps

Joint Workshop #2	February 8
Final Draft	March
Planning commission Recommendation	March
City Council First Reading	April
City Council Second Reading	April
