

2026 STRATEGIC PLAN

APPROVED BY CITY COUNCIL _____

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN VISION STATEMENT

“San Marcos is a community of diverse and inclusive neighborhoods that protects and celebrates the river and other rich natural, historical and cultural assets; embraces its small-town feel, charm and quality of life; and leverages strategic development to continue building a sustainable community with enhanced access and opportunities for people and businesses.”

STRATEGIC GOALS

QUALITY OF LIFE & SENSE OF PLACE

Cultivate a community that promotes inclusivity, equity, and belonging; has a unique sense of place due to our distinct natural, historical, and cultural assets; and commits to a healthy quality of life for families of all types.

ECONOMIC VITALITY

Foster a vibrant economic climate for our community through new commercial and residential uses, education, workforce development, and support of new and existing businesses of all sizes.

PUBLIC SAFETY, CORE SERVICES & FISCAL EXCELLENCE

Deliver quality government services and improve community safety in a fiscally responsible manner with a professional workforce.

MOBILITY & CONNECTIVITY

Improve neighborhood and regional connectivity to provide a safe, convenient, and efficient multimodal system for goods, services, and people of all income levels and abilities to move throughout the City.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Advance responsible stewardship of the community’s natural, cultural, and historical resources through varied environmentally friendly policies and practices.

1. QUALITY OF LIFE & SENSE OF PLACE

Cultivate a community that promotes inclusivity, equity, and belonging; has a unique sense of place due to our distinct natural, historical, and

cultural assets; and commits to a healthy quality of life for families of all types.

A. COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING - Utilize the City's Comprehensive Plan and other master plans as our guiding principles for decision-making.

- i. Implement the Comprehensive Plan, focusing on the implementation of items prioritized by the Comprehensive Plan Oversight Committee and as authorized by City Council.
- ii. Ensure master plans align with the current Comprehensive Plan.

B. STRONG COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT - Engage residents and community partners to promote a sense of belonging.

- i. Cultivate relationships with community partners and neighborhood leaders to engage diverse populations.
- ii. Identify and nurture community champions to advocate for local initiatives, including identifying necessary accommodations for community members with disabilities.
- iii. Enhance presence in the community through new community engagement initiatives and leveraging the channels which can best reach the targeted audiences, including videos or town halls highlighting topics such as boards/commissions, economic development, and the budget.
- iv. Continue to identify and implement participatory budgeting initiatives that promote increased resident engagement both prior to and throughout the budget process, including town halls with virtual options.
- v. Ensure routine reporting depicting benefits of community partnerships, initiatives with a focus on measuring success and outcomes of efforts.

C. DOWNTOWN VITALITY - Continue investment in the Downtown area to preserve its unique and historical character, capitalize on opportunities for redevelopment, and make it a safe and inviting destination for people of all ages and backgrounds.

- i. Utilize the adopted Downtown Area Plan and prioritize other applicable projects.
- ii. Create, adopt, and implement the Historic Preservation Plan.
- iii. Continue developing methods and programs to address vacant and neglected buildings.

- iv. Work with the relevant committees and organizations (TIRZ #5 Board, Main Street Board, Downtown Association of San Marcos) to hold joint meetings to provide input and receive updates on projects in Downtown.

D. ARTS, CULTURE, AND SPECIAL EVENTS - Promote arts, culture, and special events as a driver to improve quality of life, increase tourism, and support local economic development.

- i. Improve aesthetics and public art within public spaces, corridors, and gateways to create a positive visual experience, instilling pride and creating a unique identity.
- ii. Develop and promote programs and activities to increase resident engagement and bring in outside visitors.
- iii. Support arts and culture projects and events to encourage new initiatives and take current ones to the next level.
- iv. Identify existing spaces, such as fences, retaining walls, and blank walls of public facilities, that can be enhanced with public art or interpretive materials.
- v. Incorporate public art and themed play elements in parks and playgrounds that reflect the stories and heritage of early residents, including Indigenous, Mexican American, Black, and other under-represented communities.

E. PARKS, OPEN SPACE, AND RECREATION - Provide an accessible, diverse, connected network of parks, open spaces, and recreation facilities to serve all ages, backgrounds, and abilities.

- i. Implement the recommendations included in the Parks and Open Space master plans.
- ii. Provide outdoor gathering places and parks for active and passive places for family activities, geared towards children.
- iii. Explore expanding partnerships with SMCISD to utilize facilities and continue exploring grant opportunities.

F. NEIGHBORHOOD PRESERVATION AND ENHANCEMENT - Protect and enhance the natural, cultural, and historic resources of all neighborhoods through programs, improvements, stabilization, intentional growth, and compatible development.

- i. Create, adopt, and implement the Historic Preservation Plan and Neighborhood Area Plans.
- ii. Develop and promote ways to engage neighborhoods to increase community identity and pride in their neighborhood.
- iii. Work with residents for neighborhood revitalization and safety.
- iv. Continue partnering with nonprofit organizations or establishing a volunteer maintenance crew who could be available to assist in repairing properties when the owner is experiencing hardship.

G. HOUSING AFFORDABILITY - Facilitate safe and affordable housing for all, including those experiencing or who are at risk of homelessness or displacement.

- i. Update Housing Data and Adopt Strategic Housing Action Plan.
- ii. Continue implementation of the recommendations from the Homeless Needs Assessment.
- iii. Develop and implement strategies and protections to ensure the provision of safe and affordable housing through collaboration with residents. This includes finalizing a Tenant's Bill of Rights ordinance, continuing the contract with Texas RioGrande Legal Aid, dedicated staffing, and a commission.
- iv. Identify and implement additional methods to provide affordable, durable housing and assess current programs.
- v. Update the Affordable Workforce Housing Policy.
- vi. Explore opportunities to incorporate affordability standards in an updated Public Improvement District (PID) Policy and research other methods to implement those standards.

2. ECONOMIC VITALITY

Foster a vibrant economic climate for our community through new commercial and residential uses, education, workforce development, and support of new and existing businesses of all sizes.

A. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT POLICY - Encourage the development of a diverse economy through technical and financial assistance to businesses that invest in the community to enhance the lives of our residents.

- i. Review and revise the Economic Development Policy. Develop and implement labor standards, safe working conditions, and equitable economic opportunities for all workers on projects seeking city incentives; including but not limited to, wages that meet or exceed the wage established in the City's economic development policies, with annual adjustments to reflect cost of living and ensuring compliance.
- ii. Explore menu of economic development options, with an emphasis on attracting kid-friendly spaces.
- iii. Continue efforts to utilize existing and new in-house resources through financial reductions in contracted services for economic development programs and services.

B. BUSINESS COMMUNITY - Actively support and attract diversified business activity, including local and emerging small businesses, to thrive and expand in our community.

- i. Increase exposure of local businesses.
- ii. Continue assisting emerging and existing small businesses, including non-traditional, through retention and expansion activities, including grant assistance, business counseling, and technical support.

C. SAN MARCOS AS A DESTINATION - Expand and support responsible tourism programs to promote local commerce.

- i. Identify promotional opportunities with area stakeholders to highlight City attractions.
- ii. Identify areas needing enhancement for a cohesive visual look for the City, including within corridors and gateways.
- iii. Use consistent messaging to promote unique and vibrant experiences to enhance economic impact.

D. EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT - Facilitate opportunities for job training and educational programming through partnerships.

- i. Work with community partners on outreach for job fairs and other employment opportunities.
- ii. Identify challenges and unmet needs in the business community that are impacted by workforce development, including off-site opportunities.
- iii. Determine where to invest City funding and facilities to mitigate workforce training gaps and barriers that have been identified, including childcare, second chance hiring, industry training, and certification opportunities.
- iv. Continue establishing partnerships with local schools, colleges, universities including Texas State, nonprofits, and agencies to support community-driven workforce development, aligning educational initiatives with the needs and values of the community.
- v. Develop a comprehensive Child Care Action Plan to address affordability, availability, quality, equity, service gaps, and potential incentives, including options outside

traditional business hours, with a focus on leveraging existing partnerships and completing as much of the plan as feasible within current City resources and staff capacity.

E. RESPONSIBLE GROWTH - Diversify and deliberately expand for a prosperous economy and strategically grow the tax base, reducing the burden on existing taxpayers.

- i. Actively participate in the recruitment and retention of businesses in San Marcos utilizing the Economic Development San Marcos (EDSM) board and City Council to vet potential incentives.
- ii. Prioritize strategic economic development, especially during periods of fiscal constraint, to increase city revenues, protect core services, ensure long-term fiscal resilience, and disseminate information to the public regarding community benefits.

3. PUBLIC SAFETY, CORE SERVICES & FISCAL EXCELLENCE

Deliver quality government services and improve community safety in a fiscally responsible manner with a professional workforce.

A. COMMUNITY SAFETY - Collaborate to prioritize and enhance public safety services while building resiliency and trust within our community.

- i. Optimize staffing, training, and deployment of public safety resources to ensure effective service delivery within available capacity.
- ii. Regularly evaluate staffing levels, compensation structures, workload distribution, and organizational capacity to ensure public safety departments remain effective, sustainable, and responsive within existing resource constraints.
- iii. Partner with residents and key stakeholders to design and establish an office focusing on underlying factors contributing to crime, such as poverty, lack of education, and limited access to mental health services, through a holistic approach, proactive solutions, community-driven initiatives, and adjusting staffing to support these initiatives effectively.
- iv. Align service levels with community priorities and available resources to support long-term sustainability.
- v. Optimize the use of technology to improve community safety. Establish clear guidelines and protections governing the use of technology to ensure transparency, accountability, and respect for the personal privacy of the public.
- vi. Expand programs and partnerships that engage the community and strengthen community trust; including employing strategies for reaching diverse populations, addressing mental health, and exploring community-based intervention methods to improve community safety.

- vii. Enhance emergency management through the city's infrastructure by increasing all-hazards and disaster preparedness, response and recovery through coordination and local partnerships and intergovernmental cooperation. Coordinate local social service agencies to assist as they are able.

- viii. Partner with Texas State University to develop interlocal cooperation and coordination protocols for UPD participation in law-enforcement efforts to promote transparency, accountability, consistency, and community trust, with a goal comparable to City standards where applicable, while maintaining existing emergency mutual-aid collaboration throughout the process.

B. CORE GOVERNMENT SERVICES - Ensure operations are funded for the delivery of high-quality customer experiences and community-focused programs and services.

- i. Responsibly plan for and deploy resources and staff using best practices, needs assessments, and fiscal modeling.

- ii. Prioritize process improvements that enhance efficiency, effectiveness, and responsible use of limited public resources.

- iii. Develop a comprehensive community resource guide for the public, with an established process for routine review and updates to ensure information is still correct, links are functional, and services reflect any changes. Utilize community partners to help disseminate and ensure information is accurate.

- iv. Ensure city-provided assistance programs and city-operated portals and systems are easily accessible, navigable, and user-friendly.

- v. Continue exploring cost-sharing agreements with Texas State University as applicable, including but not limited to the agreement supporting current downtown law enforcement efforts with Texas State University Police Department.

- vi. Determine opportunities to better align City billing practices with common payment periods (the 1st and 15th of the month), including consideration of an extended grace period to support timely payments.

C. FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT - Use strategic financial decision making to meet our community's existing and future needs.

- i. Create a fiscal analysis tool based on the Comprehensive Plan to evaluate fiscal sustainability associated with growth, including impacts of Texas State University.

- ii. Continue debt management in a financially prudent and strategic manner and take advantage of market conditions when present.
- iii. Pursue grant funding opportunities for applicable projects, including CIP.
- iv. Assess social service funding levels.

D. WORKFORCE RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION - Invest in the recruitment and retention of an adequately staffed, skilled, and professional workforce.

- i. Continue implementation of the Compensation Philosophy.
- ii. Improve our competitiveness as an employer to attract, hire and retain a diverse and highly skilled workforce.
- iii. Develop employees' skills through education and training.
- iv. Design strategies for succession planning at various levels of the organization to maintain direction and management.

E. SUPPORT SERVICES - Provide necessary resources to internal service departments to support reliable, consistent, and effective city operations.

- i. Establish and employ streamlined policy and governance processes that align support services with customer expectations and mission requirements.
- ii. Ensure efficient and effective performance of core business functions, enterprise services and data management.

F. INFRASTRUCTURE MANAGEMENT - Dedicate the financial and staffing resources necessary for capital improvement project planning, construction, operations, and maintenance.

- i. Develop and implement the CIP.
- ii. Invest necessary resources, including in the use of technology and equipment, to maintain and extend the life of the City's infrastructure.

4. MOBILITY & CONNECTIVITY

Improve neighborhood and regional connectivity to provide a safe, convenient, and efficient multimodal system for goods, services, and people of all income levels and abilities to move throughout the City.

A. MULTIMODAL TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM - Develop a diverse transportation system to improve multimodal connectivity and capacity by implementing the Transportation Master Plan.

- i. Maintain and coordinate the thoroughfare plan within the transportation master plan with CIP projects.
- ii. Implement multimodal Transportation Master Plan recommendations, including the western loop.
- iii. Continue researching innovative methods, including on-demand service and micro-transit, to provide residents access to basic needs within 5-10 minutes and increase multimodal transportation options, participation, and use.

B. BICYCLE, SIDEWALK AND TRAIL SYSTEMS - Increase the accessibility and connectivity of bicycle, sidewalk, and trail systems between parks, river areas, downtown, schools, businesses, services, and residential neighborhoods.

- i. Maintain and coordinate the bike & greenways plan within the transportation master plan with CIP projects and explore including a connected trail system around the community.
- ii. Integrate and connect all modes of multimodal travel.
- iii. Evaluate emerging transportation opportunities for last/first mile connectivity
- iv. Explore partnerships, including Texas State, to establish a free bicycle program.
- v. Invest in and maintain existing multimodal facilities.

C. TRANSPORTATION AND TRAFFIC OPERATIONS - Increase the safety, convenience, and reliability of the transportation system, including investment in technology and maintenance.

- i. Coordinate with Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (CAMPO) to ensure specific San Marcos projects are identified in the Safe Streets for All program.

- ii. Invest in the use of technology and other innovative solutions to increase the safety and efficiency of the existing roadway system and capacity, including mitigating barriers such as railroad crossings.
- iii. Invest in traffic equipment, operations, and maintenance.

D. PUBLIC TRANSIT - Prioritize the resources necessary to achieve a seamless, coordinated public transit system through partnerships and implementation of the Transit Master Plan.

- i. Continue partnership with the University for coordinated public transit system.
- ii. Leverage grant funds to replace aging transit fleet with safer, more efficient vehicles.
- iii. Identify and implement short-term Transit Master Plan recommendations.
- iv. Expand bus shelter and seating options.

5. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Advance responsible stewardship of the community's natural, cultural, and historical resources through varied environmentally friendly policies and practices.

A. ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP - Set the standard by demonstrating responsible stewardship of the environment, including our rivers, aquifers, and other sensitive features.

- i. Incorporate green stormwater and water/ energy conservation infrastructure on CIP projects.

- ii. Ensure that applicable City staff is equipped and trained to readily identify and respond to releases (i.e. sewer discharges, chemical spills, etc.) that may cause negative impacts to rivers and aquifers.
- iii. Incorporate environmental stewardship into new and existing City facilities and master plans.
- iv. Develop and promote programs that protect and promote environmental stewardship, including the implementation of a single use beverage container ban on and near the San Marcos River.
- v. Employ strategies to combat air pollution to mitigate health risks to residents.
- vi. Increase communication and education about water rebate programs.
- vii. Explore harmonization of drought stages across the region.

B. ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY GROWTH - Promote environmental protections and sustainable building practices through codes and processes.

- i. Utilize the Preferred Scenario Map to guide growth in the community.
- ii. Pursue strategies for water education and enforcement.
- iii. Incorporate concepts from the currently adopted Comprehensive Plan into the Stormwater Technical Manual and the Land Development Code.
- iv. Pursue policy guidelines for any large-scale facilities that address energy consumption, greenhouse gas emissions, water usage, noise, and landscape impacts as part of development review and permit approvals. (For future consideration pending staff report)
- v. Initiate development of an environmental framework for evaluating large scale technology and industrial facilities that incorporates energy efficiency, water conservation, emissions mitigation, and other sustainable building practices into City codes and permitting processes. (For future consideration pending staff report)

C. RESILIENT INFRASTRUCTURE - Incorporate resiliency into existing and future City infrastructure planning, construction, operations, and maintenance.

- i. Incorporate and anticipate future needs of the City into CIP Projects to mitigate future risks.

- ii. Continue to develop and maintain Emergency Operations and Emergency Preparedness Plans.
- iii. Reinvest in City facilities to improve facility security and resiliency.

D. ENVIRONMENTAL PROGRAMS - Promote innovative programs and educate residents about environmental resiliency.

- i. Continue participation and implementation of the Edwards Aquifer Habitat Conservation Plan.
- ii. Explore and implement proactive measures to educate residents and city departments on water conservation strategies.
- iii. Seek out opportunities to secure grant funding and build partnerships to develop environmental education programs and implement environmental improvement projects.