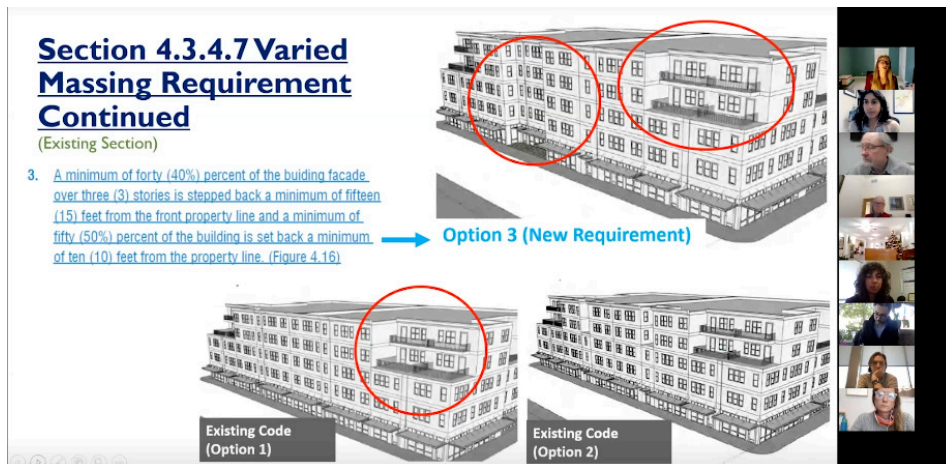


Key Points from December Outreach on Public Review Draft January 22, 2021

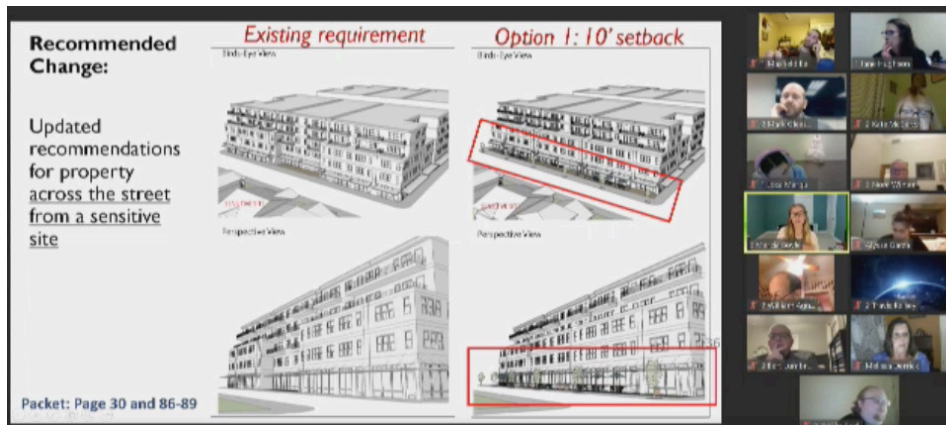
San Marcos Design Standards and Guidelines Update

This document summarizes key feedback collected on the Public Review Draft of the update to the design standards and guidelines. The draft Development Code (design standards) and Design Manual (design guidelines) were made available to the public in November 2020, and were sent directly to the project focus groups, Planning and Zoning Commissioners and City Councilmembers for their review and comment. After providing time for review of the drafts, the following meetings were held as opportunities to present, discuss and ask questions about the proposed recommendations:

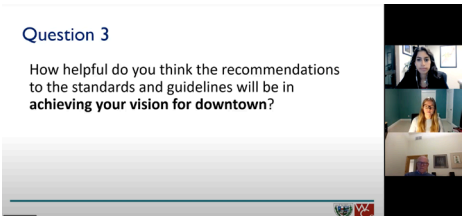
- Joint Focus Group Meeting - held December 8 via Zoom
- Community Workshop - held December 9 via Zoom
- Joint Planning and Zoning Commission/City Council Workshop - held December 10 via Zoom
- Online Community Survey - available December 11 - 22 via SurveyMonkey



A screenshot from the joint Focus Group meeting shows one design topic that was discussed. Models accompanied the proposed recommendations, where appropriate, to help visualize the change and spark conversation among the group.



A screenshot from the joint City Council/Planning and Zoning Commission workshop shows how recommended changes were presented. Models illustrating the existing requirement were presented alongside models illustrating the proposed requirement in order to help participants visualize the change.

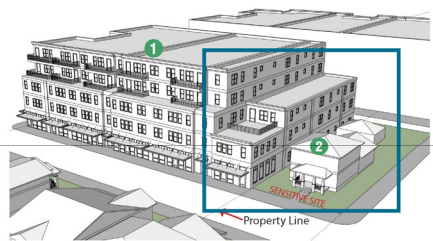


This screenshot from the Online Community Workshop shows one of the five polling questions that was asked during the event.



Recommendation Option B: This model illustrates the second option, where part of the building steps back away from the sensitive site after 2 stories. Note that the blue boxes highlight the key sections of the models to review this proposed requirement option.

Birds-Eye View



Perspective View



20. Do you agree that the 2 new proposed options will help protect sensitive sites adjacent to new development?

Agree Somewhat agree Neutral Somewhat disagree Disagree

Additional Comments (please specify your answer above)

21. Do you have any other comments, suggestions or questions regarding the recommendations or visuals for transitions for new development that is adjacent to a sensitive site?

Additional Comments (please specify your answer above)

A sample design page from the online survey shows the visual introduction to a topic, with the corresponding questions that followed.

The objective of this round of public outreach was to collect input on the draft documents prior to making edits for the final drafts. These meetings also provided an opportunity to update the community on the project process. The combination of “live” events (in a virtual format) and the online survey ensured that all community members had an opportunity to learn more about the recommendations to both documents, and provide feedback prior to moving into the final phases of the project.

The sections below provide a summary of the feedback heard during each of the meetings and the online community survey. This feedback will be considered in the edits to the documents, which will culminate in the final design standards (Development Code) and guidelines (Design Manual). These will be presented to the Planning and Zoning Commission and City Council for adoption, starting in February 2021.

Key Design Topics

The following design topics were discussed in multiple meetings during this round of outreach. The description summarizes the discussion and community’s hopes of what changes might occur between this draft and the final draft.

Historic Precedent

Many of the conversations about design topics covered in the documents circled back to the importance of the historic buildings in San Marcos. Participants expressed the importance of protecting historic resources and respecting historic precedent in new development. For some design topics, this meant more explicitly referencing historic buildings and the need to reflect the key characteristics in new development; however, for other design topics, participants noted the importance of drawing on historic character while allowing for creativity in new design. Providing flexibility for new design was specifically focused on proposed transparency and ground story height standards, which some participants hoped would be loosened in the final draft.

Focus on the Pedestrian Experience

Similar to the importance of reflecting and respecting historic precedent in new development was the topic of designing for the pedestrian. Participants in each meeting emphasized the importance of incorporating design elements that create an enjoyable pedestrian experience. This includes an appropriately scaled ground level, awnings and canopies to provide shade, storefronts and detailing that create visual interest, and spaces to sit and rest. While the public realm is not specifically addressed in this project, building elements that create an enjoyable pedestrian environment remain a key aspect, as participants emphasized.

Varied Massing

The mass - or general shape, form and size - of a new building, was also a common discussion point in all public meetings. In general, participants expressed their concern for how large and boxy recent new development has been, and the hope that the standards and guidelines will prevent this type of development in the future. Similar to comments in previous feedback, participants noted that new development should maintain the look and feel of the historic downtown, meaning larger buildings should be of an appropriate size as to not overwhelm historic buildings.

Expression Elements

Working hand in hand with the massing requirements, the expression elements (noted in previous summaries as “Articulation”), were discussed at length during most meetings. While the required number of expression elements increased in the draft documents from the existing requirements, participants felt that a higher requirement was still needed. Many suggested increasing the required number of expression elements on a primary facade from two to three. Participants also expressed interest in moving some of the Secondary Expression Elements reserved for Alternative Compliance to the Development Code, an idea that the consultants and staff explained would be explored, but may not be feasible due to the subjective nature.

Neighborhood Transitions Standards (Sensitive Sites)

Another frequent topic of discussion focused on the proposed standards to address new development adjacent to or across the street from a sensitive site. In general, participants supported the proposed standards, although many expressed the importance of having slightly more restrictive standards for new development adjacent to a sensitive site. Opinions regarding properties across the street from a sensitive site were not as strong, although participants provided good questions and suggestions to consider in tweaking the standards. Exploring how the standards are applied to new development across the street from a sensitive site was the focus of this scenario, as participants wanted to ensure that the standards are restrictive but fair in their application.

Rooftop Amenity Spaces

A topic that came up during this round of meetings, but had not previously, was that of rooftop amenity and deck spaces. While participants recognized the importance of taking advantage of outdoor space and the value it has to businesses, many were also concerned about the impact rooftop amenity spaces can have on historic buildings and surrounding neighborhoods. Participants concerned about the impact on historic buildings noted that rooftop amenity spaces should not be visible from the public realm in order to minimize negative impacts on the building. Other concerns about rooftop amenity spaces, such as excessive noise and light and their impacts on surrounding residential neighborhoods were also expressed. While noise and light were noted and will be important to address in the future, they will not be addressed during this project as the focus is on architectural standards and guidelines. Instead, the changes to rooftop amenity space standards will focus on ensuring these spaces are not “obtrusive” by adding regulations that address setbacks and railings.

Building Materials

Participants continued to emphasize the importance of an appropriate selection of building materials for new development. While they recognized the inability to regulate building materials outside of the Downtown Historic District and the Main Street District due to recent state law, they continued to express the need for detailed guidance on materials, hoping that developers will utilize the design guidelines and the suggested materials that are appropriate to each design context. With that strategy in mind, participants provided some edits to the design standards and guidelines language to more accurately reflect building materials appropriate for downtown San Marcos.

Views

In a couple meetings, participants brought up the topic of views. Although some information is provided in the design guidelines, participants expressed the hope that stricter regulations would be provided to protect important views

in and through downtown. This topic was discussed at length, but it was noted that a more in depth view study should be performed before providing any formal recommendations. While the final design standards and guidelines will not include additional information about views, a separate memo detailing the importance of an in-depth view study will be provided to City Council with the final draft of the design standards and guidelines.

Design Context Boundaries and Naming

Discussion regarding the five design contexts - the names, boundaries, and appropriate character of new development - has been a key topic throughout the project. During this particular set of meetings, participants confirmed the vision statements, but expressed concern over the naming conventions, specifically regarding “West Downtown” (formerly “Residential/Transition Edge”) and “South Downtown” (formerly “The Approach”). A variety of ideas for groups to consult to more accurately name these two areas were provided, and will be explored in the Downtown Plan project, which is also ongoing. In the meantime, these design context names will be switched back to their former titles. A few concerns about design context boundaries were also raised, primarily focusing on the University Edge and the West Downtown (Residential/Transition Edge.) These concerns will also be addressed through the Downtown Plan effort.

Other Discussion Topics

While the conversations at the virtual meetings and the feedback received through the online community survey focused primarily on the design topics described in the previous section, a few other topics were also discussed.

Enforcement

Discussion about the enforcement of the design standards and guidelines focused on the importance of ensuring new development abides by these regulations. A few participants raised questions about the idea of “corrective action” for development that does not meet these regulations. However, staff clarified that the standards and guidelines will only be applied to new development that is dated after these documents are adopted. Staff also provided a high-level explanation of the development review process, emphasizing its iterative nature. While not enforcement per se, the explanation of the review process provided insight as to how the design standards and guidelines would be utilized and required for new development.

Topics Outside Project Scope

In addition to the design topics addressed in the update to the design standards and guidelines, participants raised a variety of other topics that will not be addressed through this project, but are important to note. Some of these topics will be addressed in the Downtown Plan, which is part of the Comprehensive Plan process, while others will be addressed at a later date. These topics include:

- Landscaping standards (with regard to types of permitted plants and required planting areas)
- Noise and lighting restrictions (especially in regards to outdoor, rooftop, amenity spaces)
- View protection (as it is only addressed at a high-level in this project)
- Intensity of uses
- Parking
- Bicycle lanes and parking
- Outdoor seating requirements
- Low Impact Development (LID) requirements
- Handicap accessibility