



# MEMO

**TO:** City Council  
**FROM:** Andrea Villalobos, AICP, CNU-A, Senior Planner – Planning and Development Services Department  
**DATE:** February 10, 2021  
**RE:** Downtown Design: Update to the Development Code and Design Manual

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## PROJECT BACKGROUND

In 2012, the City contracted with Winter & Company to develop and adopt Downtown Design Guidelines and Architectural Standards to regulate the look and feel of new buildings in the downtown area. The standards and guidelines adopted in 2012 were carried over into the new San Marcos Development Code and into Appendix A of the San Marcos Design Manual in 2018. Both standards and guidelines are utilized when reviewing new development in the downtown area.

In January, 2020, the San Marcos City Council provided direction to update the design standards and guidelines using the guidance of the previous consultants, Winter & Company. The update to the design standards and guidelines is intended to include new standards to address design issues, new graphics to clearly illustrate the standards and guidelines, and be tailored to various contexts within downtown. Key topics to be addressed included:

- Massing of larger buildings to promote compatibility with traditional scale of downtown;
- Variety in articulation of facades to be more in scale with design traditions;
- Treatment of building materials;
- Street level design to provide sense of place and activate the public realm; and
- Transitions from higher density zones to abutting sensitive edges.

## PAST PROJECT EVENTS

City staff and Winter and Company have hosted several events in order to better understand community feedback on downtown design. All meetings material, including “Big Key Ideas” from each event can be found on the project webpage at: [www.sanmarcostx.gov/downtowndesign](http://www.sanmarcostx.gov/downtowndesign).

### *INITIAL PROJECT DEVELOPMENT (SPRING – SUMMER 2020)*

- **April, Virtual Focus Group Meetings** – three focus group meetings were hosted with the Historic Preservation Commission and Heritage Association Officers, the Main Street Advisory Board and Downtown Design Committee, and the Downtown Association Board in order to gather initial thoughts for downtown design.
- **May, Kickoff Survey** – the City invited the community to participate in a Kickoff Survey to allow community members to weigh in on downtown design during the initial kickoff phase of the project. The survey took approximately 10 minutes to complete and was offered in both English and Spanish. Approximately 550 entries were received from the survey.
- **June 25, Virtual Joint Planning and Zoning Commission and City Council Workshop #1** – City staff and Winter and Company presented the project scope, initial community feedback received to date, initial approaches for key design topics that would be addressed in the project, and conducted a series of exercises to collect feedback from the Council and Commission about the future of downtown.
- **July 23, Virtual Community Workshop #1** – City staff and Winter and Company presented the project scope, initial community feedback received to date, initial approaches for key design topics that will be addressed in

the project, and conducted a series of exercises to collect feedback from the participants. The workshop was hosted via ZOOM and participants used interactive polling tools to provide feedback along with a post-workshop survey. A “Take-Home Toolkit” of the Workshop was also offered to the public as an alternative to the Virtual Workshop.

#### *PUBLIC DRAFT REVIEW (FALL – WINTER 2020)*

- **December 8, Virtual Joint Focus Group Meeting** – City staff and Winter and Company presented the Public Draft to the 3 focus groups indicated above in April and answered any initial questions, engaged in discussion about how the standards are applied, and received input from the participants on the draft standards and guidelines.
- **December 9, Virtual Community Workshop #2:** City staff and Winter and Company hosted a Virtual Community Workshop via ZOOM to present the Public Draft and conduct a series of exercises with the public to gather input and feedback. Participants answered polling questions and asked questions using a “Q&A” function and by speaking directly during the workshop. A “Take-Home Toolkit” of the Workshop was also offered to the public as an alternative to the Virtual Workshop and the recorded video of the workshop was included on the website.
- **December 10, Virtual Joint Planning and Zoning Commission and City Council Workshop #2:** City staff and Winter and Company presented the public draft recommendations to the standards and guidelines during a joint workshop. Staff gathered input from the councilmembers and commissioners through various discussion stopping points throughout the workshop. Thumbs up and thumbs down votes were also collected to gather consensus and provide direction to staff.
- **December Follow-up Survey:** Following the Virtual Community Workshop #2, a survey was sent to workshop participants and to the general public to further gather more detailed responses and input on the public draft. The survey included an embedded link of the recorded Workshop video so participants could listen to additional discussion.

#### **FINAL DRAFT FORMULATION**

Following the public review period of the Public Draft, all City Council, Planning Commission, Focus Group, and community input has been compiled and reviewed for additional potential changes to the proposed standards and guidelines. A Final Draft incorporating this input is included in this packet. The adoption schedule for the Final Draft is as follows:

- Planning and Zoning Commission public hearing, consideration, and recommendation – February 9, 2021
- City Council Work Session – February 16, 2021
- City Council Consideration (1<sup>st</sup> reading and public hearing) – March 2, 2021
- City Council Final Consideration (2<sup>nd</sup> Reading) – March 16, 2021

#### **PACKET SUMMARY**

Included in the packet are the following attachments:

- **Attachment A:** Project Memo
- **Attachment B:** Planning and Zoning Commission Amendments
- **Attachment C:** Summary of December Project Public Outreach and Feedback
- **Attachment D:** Public Draft Redlined Development Code (Design standards)
- **Attachment E:** Public Draft Redlined Design Manual (Design guidelines)
- **Attachment F:** Memo - Protecting Views to Significant Features
- **Attachment G:** Presentation