City of San Marcos

Workshop Agenda - Final

City Council/Planning & Zoning Commission

Thursday, June 25, 2020 | **6:30 PM** | **Joint City Council/P&Z Design Guideline Meeting**

Due to COVID-19 and as long as the State Disaster Declaration is in effect, this will be a virtual meeting. To view the meeting please go to www.sanmarcostx.gov/videos or watch on Grande channel 16 or Spectrum channel 10.

I. Call To Order

II. Roll Call

PRESENTATIONS

1. Receive a presentation from Staff and project consultants, Winter and Company, on the update to the downtown design guidelines; and provide direction to Staff.

III. Adjournment.

POSTED ON FRIDAY, JUNE 19, 2020 @ 12:00PM

TAMMY K. COOK, INTERIM CITY CLERK

Notice of Assistance at the Public Meetings

The City of San Marcos does not discriminate on the basis of disability in the admission or access to its services, programs, or activities. Individuals who require auxiliary aids and services for this meeting should contact the City of San Marcos ADA Coordinator at 512-393-8000 (voice) or call Texas Relay Service (TRS) by dialing 7-1-1. Requests can also be faxed to 855-461-6674 or sent by e-mail to ADArequest@sanmarcostx.gov

File #: ID#20-400, **Version:** 1

AGENDA CAPTION:
Receive a presentation from Staff and project consultants, Winter and Company, on the update to the downtown design guidelines; and provide direction to Staff.
Meeting date: June 25, 2020

Department: Planning and Development Services Department

Amount & Source of Funding
Funds Required: n/a
Account Number: n/a
Funds Available: n/a
Account Name: n/a

Fiscal Note:

Prior Council Action: n/a

City Council Strategic Initiative:

N/A

Comprehensive Plan Element (s):

☐ Economic Development - Choose an item.

☐ Environment & Resource Protection - Choose an item.

☒ Land Use - High Density Mixed Use Dev. & Infrastructure in the Activity Nodes & Intesity Zones (supporting walkability and integrated transit corridors)

☐ Neighborhoods & Housing - Choose an item.

☐ Parks, Public Spaces & Facilities - Choose an item.

☐ Transportation - Choose an item.

☐ Core Services

☐ Not Applicable

Master Plan:

Downtown Master Plan

Background Information:

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. As presented in 2012, the purpose of the design standards was "to enhance the effectiveness of the Smartcode in downtown by adding context-sensitive design standards, supplemented with design guidelines for special cases, and revising the signage standards for the downtown area." The standards and guidelines adopted in 2012 were carried over into the new San Marcos Development Code in 2018 and into Appendix A of the San Marcos Design Manual. 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 shall be tailored to various contexts within downtown. Key topics to be addressed include:

- 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.

Due to COVID-19, the project timeline has been adjusted to ensure participation in outreach efforts and to accommodate input virtually. In April, 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. An overview of key ideas from these meetings is included in the Council packet. In addition, 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 and an overview of results is included in the Council packet and will be discussed during the meeting presentation.

Additional information is included on the project webpage, including a FAQ to help explain architectural terms. A copy can be found in the Council packet and on the project webpage at:
www.sanmarcostx.gov/downtowndesign <http://www.sanmarcostx.gov/downtowndesign>.

Council Committee, Board/Commission Action:

n/a

Alternatives:

n/a

Recommendation:

n/a

City of San Marcos

Downtown Design Guidelines and Architectural Standards

City Council / Planning and Zoning Commission Joint Workshop

June 25, 2020

How to get involved

Questions during the meeting?

Email: planninginfo@sanmarcostx.gov

Learn more about the project, find the presentation, and learn about architectural design:

www.sanmarcostx.gov/downtowndesign

Meeting Participants

City Council members

- Mayor Jane Hughson
- Maxfield Baker
- Saul Gonzales
- Ed Mihalkanin
- Mark Rockeymoore
- Jocabed "Joca" Marquez
- Melissa Derrick

City Staff:

- Shannon Mattingly, Director of Planning and Development Services
- Amanda Hernandez, Development Services Manager
- Michael Ostrowski, Assistant Director
- Andrea Villalobos, Senior Planner

Planning & Zoning Commission members

- Chair, Mark Gleason
- Vice Chair, Travis Kelsey
- Mike Dillon
- Matthew Haverland
- Kate McCarty
- Betseygail Rand
- Gabrielle Moore
- William Agnew
- Griffin Spell

Winter & Company

- Noré Winter, Principal
- Marcia Boyle, Associate Planner/Designer

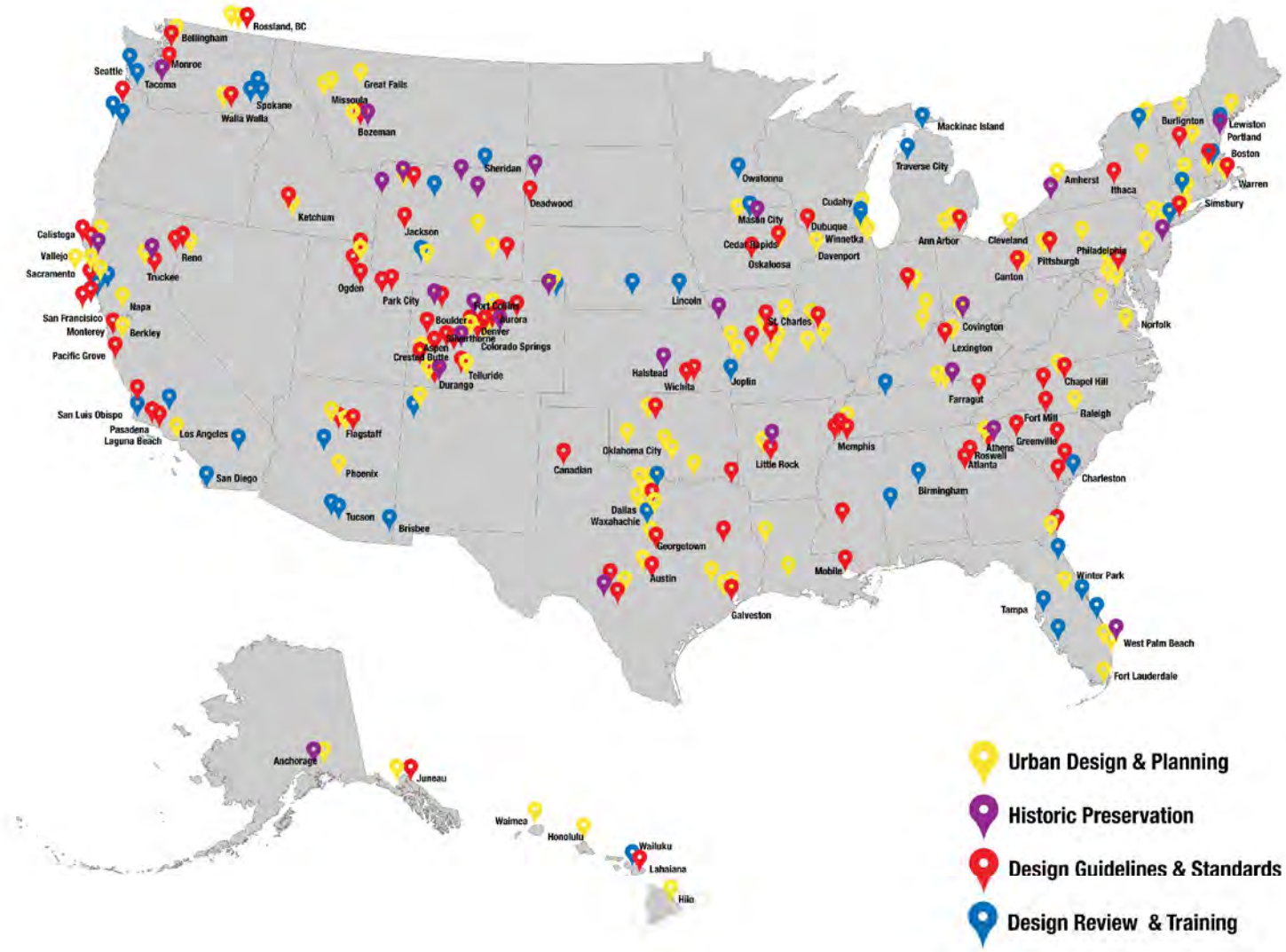
Meeting Objectives

1. Review the project background and scope
2. Present initial community feedback regarding design issues and successes
3. Explain initial approach for key design topics
4. Gather input from Council Members and Commissioners regarding the design topics and design contexts
5. Explain next steps for the project and the next opportunity for community input

Meeting Agenda

- Introductions
- Presentation
    - Project Background
    - Community input to date (focus group meetings, online survey)
    - Design topics
- Discussion questions
- Open discussion
- Next steps

Winter & Company

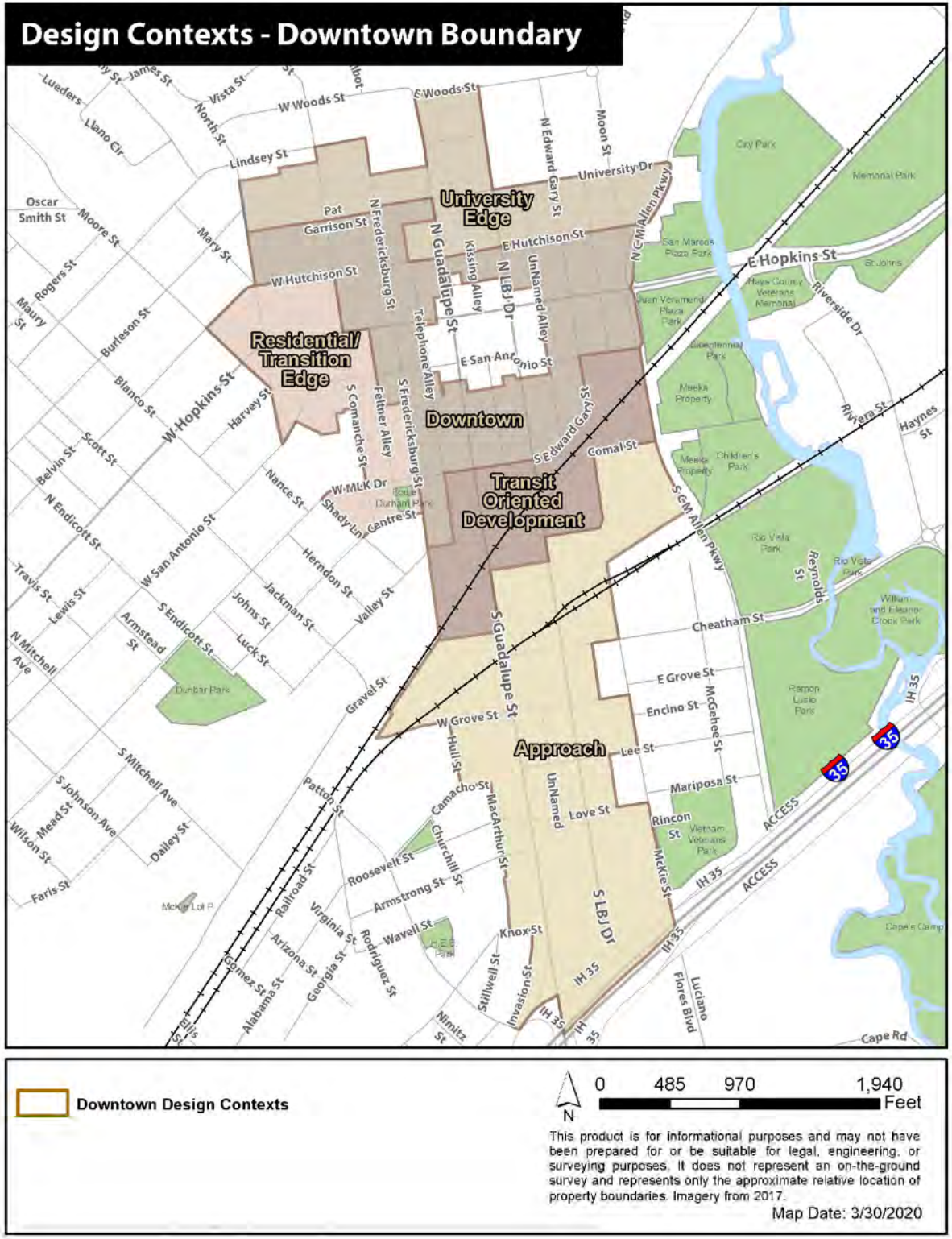


Project Background

2012

- Developed and adopted Downtown Design Guidelines and Architectural Standards
- Worked with the Smartcode
- Focus areas:
  - Context-sensitive design standards
  - Design guidelines for special cases
  - Revising signage standards for downtown

Design Contexts



Project Background

2018

- Standards carried over into new development code, and Appendix A of Design Manual

Standards and guidelines are currently used when reviewing new development in the downtown area

Update to Design Guidelines and Standards

Focus of 2020 update (as authorized by Council)

- Include new standards to address design issues identified by the community
- Incorporate new graphics to clearly illustrate the standards and guidelines
- Tailor standards and guidelines to various contexts within downtown

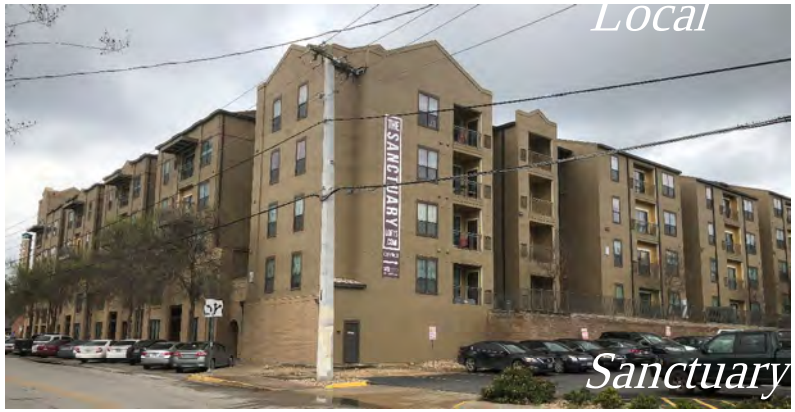
Update to Design Guidelines and Standards

Key topics to be addressed:

- Massing of larger buildings to promote compatibility with traditional downtown scale
- Articulation of facades
- Building materials
- Street level design that promotes a sense of place and activates the public realm
- Transitions from high density zones to sensitive edges

North St.

The Local

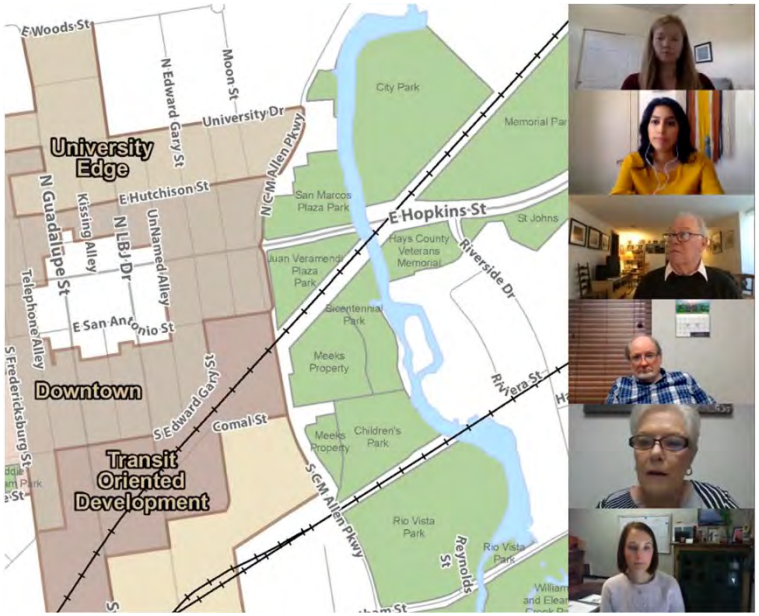


Sanctuary

Focus Group Feedback

3 meetings (April 15th, 16th)

- Heritage Preservation Commission and Heritage Association
- Main Street Advisory Board and Downtown Design Task Force
- Downtown Association Board



Focus Group Feedback: Big Ideas

- Design excellence
- Sense of place
- Four-sided design
- Visual continuity
- Balancing old and new
- Responding to “context”

Key Points from Focus Group Kickoff Meetings - April 2020

San Marcos Design Standards and Guidelines Update

This document summarizes key feedback from the kickoff Focus Group meetings held virtually on April 15th and 16th. After a short presentation of the project background and objectives, each group discussed a series of questions regarding strengths of and issues raised by recent development, the downtown design contexts, and the existing standards and guidelines documents. Historic preservation questions and questions regarding the public realm were addressed by the appropriate groups. Note that all questions focused on downtown San Marcos, defined by the design contexts map and stretching from I-35 to the University. The kickoff Focus Group meetings were held with the following groups:

- Heritage Preservation Commission and Heritage Association
- Main Street Advisory Board and Downtown Design Task Force
- Downtown Association Board

PART 1: THE BIG IDEAS

Design Excellence

Promoting excellence in design is a key objective. That is, projects should do more than simply meeting the minimums required by the standards.

- This can be expressed in intent statements in the standards and in the tone of the language used in the standards and guidelines themselves.

Sense of Place

Maintaining the distinct identity that is associated with downtown is important. This sets San Marcos apart from other communities in the region.
Factors that contribute to a sense of place are:

- Small scale buildings and their components, including storefronts, entries, signs and architectural details, that contribute to a changing scene as one walks along a downtown street
- The eclectic mix of architectural styles and building details
- The variety of businesses and other uses found downtown, especially those that are one-of-a-kind and convey the personality of the owners
- Street edges that invite pedestrian activity, with storefronts, seating areas and product displays
- Iconic landmarks and views that help orient people in the downtown

Four-sided Design

Projects are experienced from all sides and their designs should reflect this. It is especially important where a new project abuts a sensitive edge and along an alley.

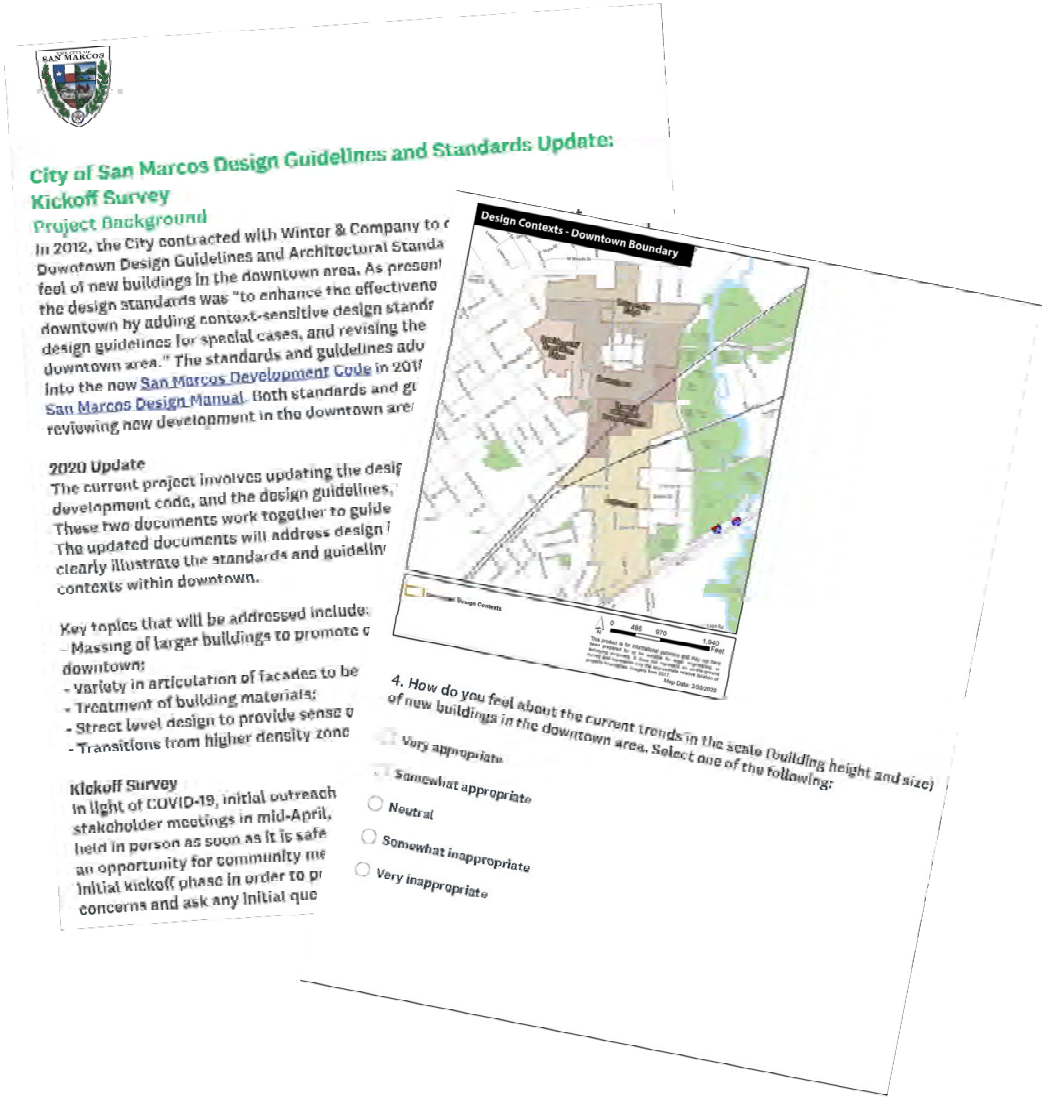
- This is a concept that can be addressed in the design standards and guidelines. It may include:
  - Considering how varied massing is expressed throughout a project, not only along the street frontage
  - Addressing ground level design in alleys
  - Promoting creative use of outdoor spaces to activate the street

Focus Group Feedback: Detailed Observations

- Buildings are too long and monolithic
- Parking – opinions ranging from too much parking to too little parking to parking not in the right locations
- Scale of new buildings is too large, out of scale with existing buildings
- Views of the skyline are obstructed by new buildings
- Outdoor dining spaces crucial

Online Survey Results

- SurveyMonkey
- Open for approximately one month
- English and Spanish
- 549 responses
- Outreach:
  - Social Media
  - Press Releases
  - Webpage
  - Focus groups
  - Downtown permit contacts



City of San Marcos Design Guidelines and Standards Update:
Kickoff Survey

Project Background

In 2012, the City contracted with Winter & Company to
Downtown Design Guidelines and Architectural Standa
feel of new buildings in the downtown area. As present
the design standards was "to enhance the effectivene
downtown by adding context-sensitive design standr
design guidelines for special cases, and revising the
downtown area." The standards and guidelines adv
into the new San Marcos Development Code in 201
San Marcos Design Manual. Both standards and gu
reviewing new development in the downtown are

2020 Update

The current project involves updating the desig
development code, and the design guidelines,
These two documents work together to guide
The updated documents will address design
clearly illustrate the standards and guidelin
contexts within downtown.

Key topics that will be addressed include:
- Massing of larger buildings to promote c
downtown;
- variety in articulation of facades to be
- Treatment of building materials;
- Street level design to provide sense o
- Transitions from higher density zone

Kickoff Survey

In light of COVID-19, initial outreach
stakeholder meetings in mid-April,
held in person as soon as it is safe
an opportunity for community me
initial kickoff phase in order to p
concerns and ask any initial que

Design Contexts - Downtown Boundary

4. How do you feel about the current trends in the scale (building height and size) of new buildings in the downtown area. Select one of the following:

- Very appropriate
- Somewhat appropriate
- Neutral
- Somewhat inappropriate
- Very inappropriate

Questions 1 & 2

Name

- Answered by 249 participants

Email

- Answered by 179 participants

City of San Marcos Design Guidelines and Standards Update: Kickoff Survey
Demographics

1. Name (Optional)

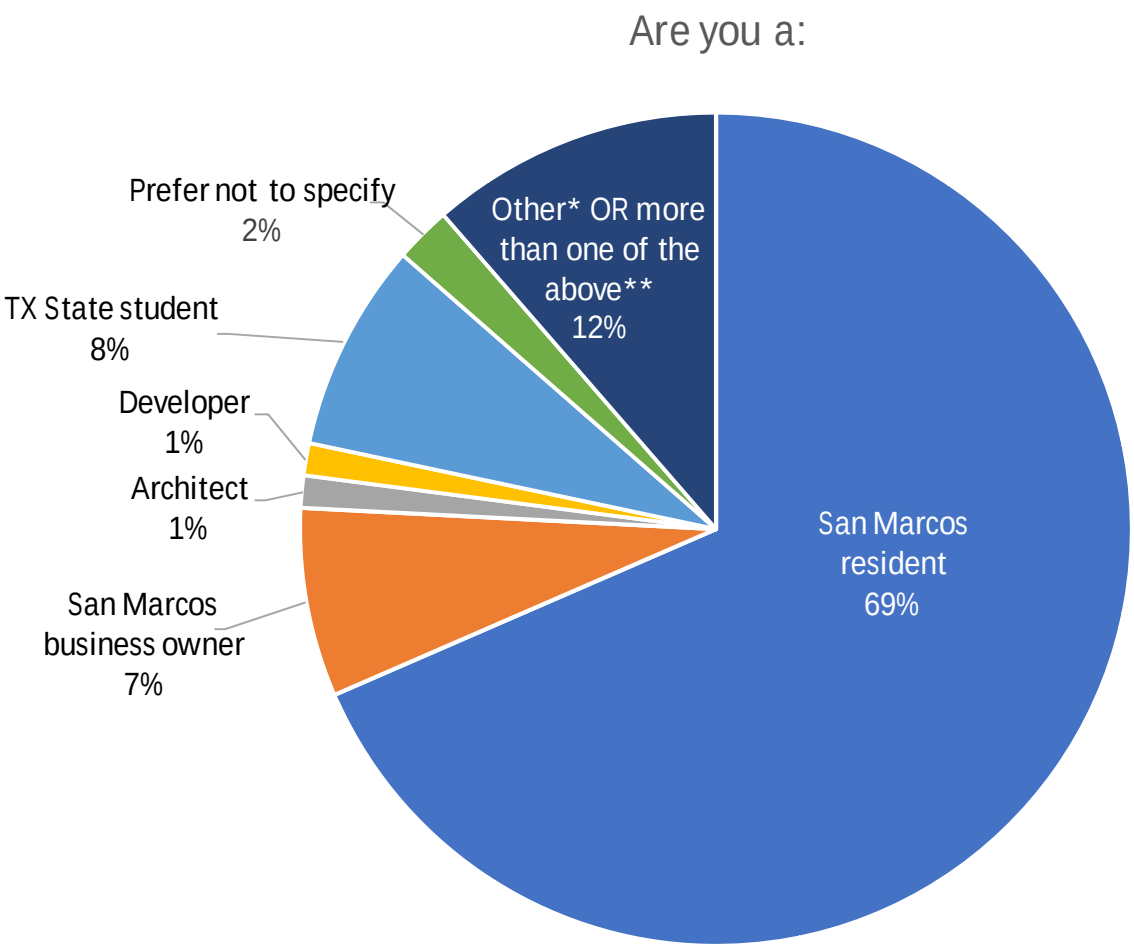
2. Email (optional; please record your email if you'd like to be added to a project mailing list to be notified about upcoming participation opportunities)

* 3. Are you a:

- San Marcos resident
- San Marcos business owner
- Architect
- Developer
- TX State student
- Prefer not to specify
- Other OR more than one of the above

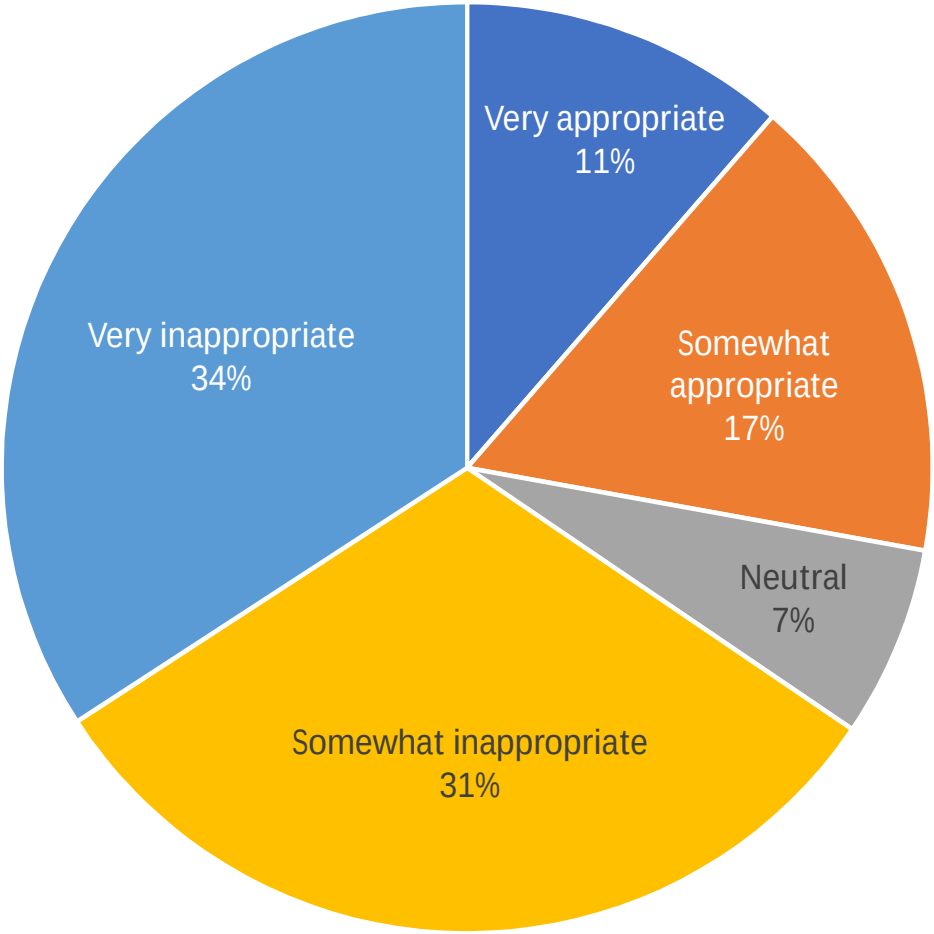
If you marked "Other OR more than one of the above," please specify:

Question 3: Demographics



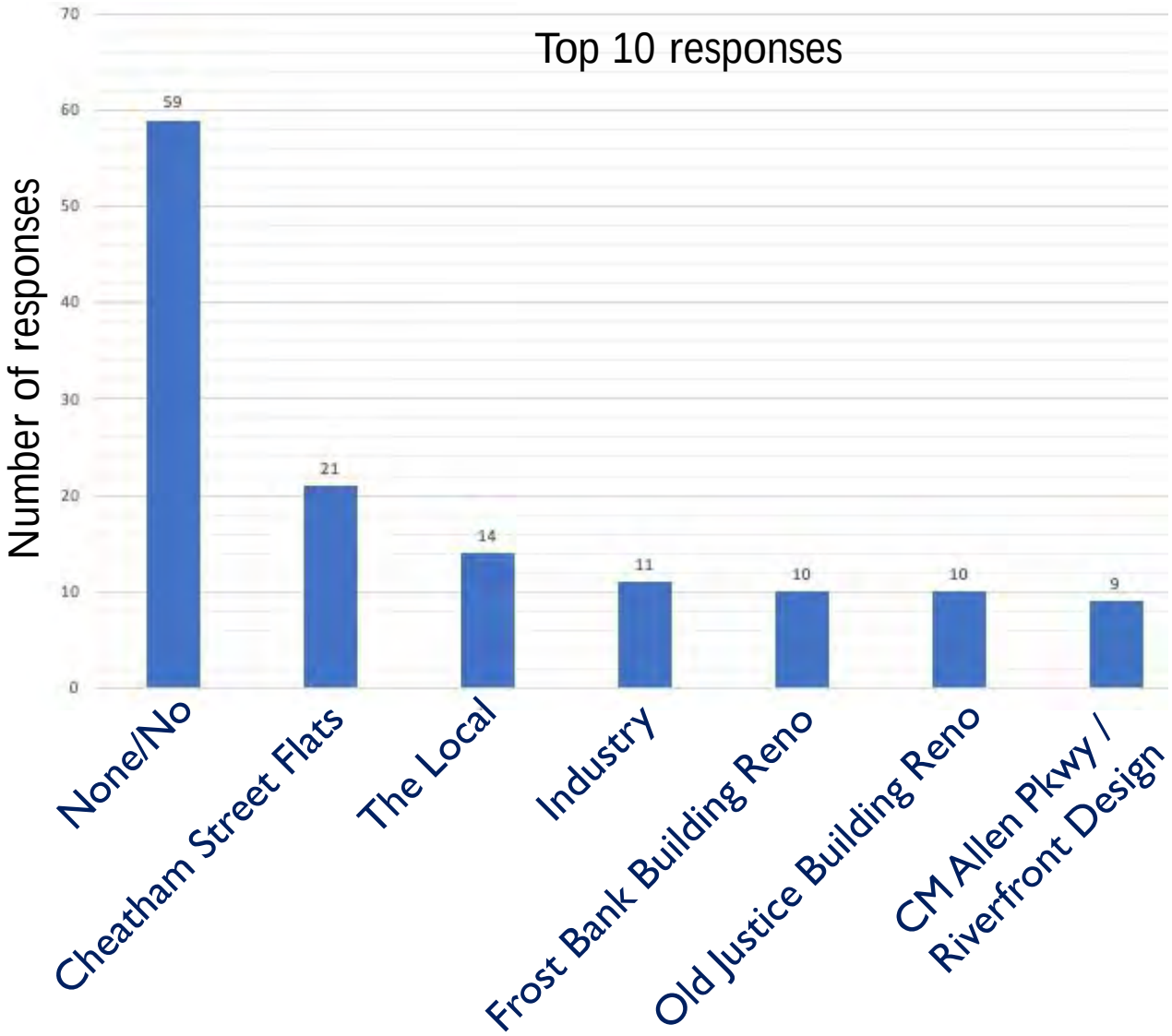
Question 4: Current Trends

How do you feel about the current trends in the scale of new buildings in the downtown area?



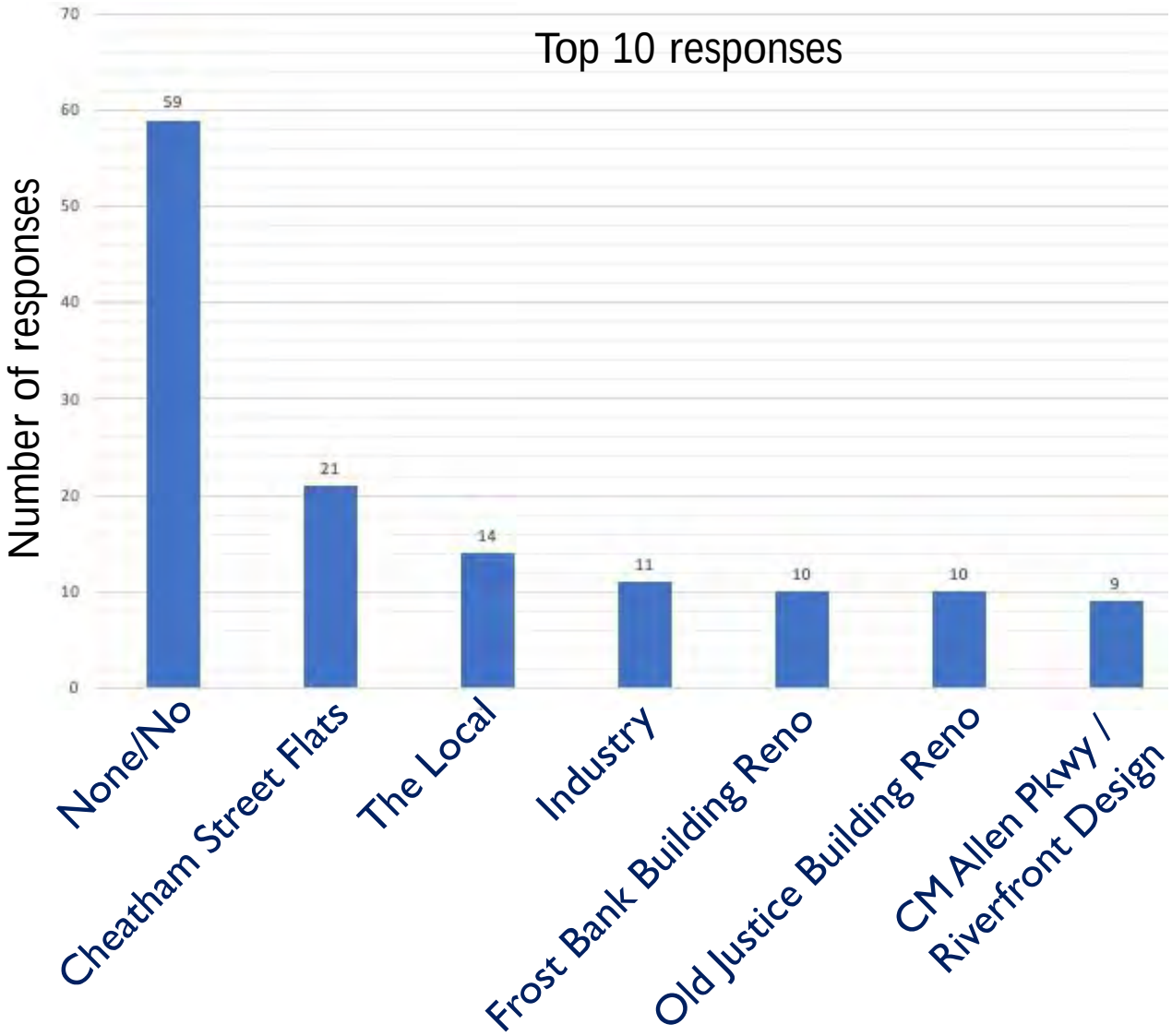
Question 5: Successful Projects

What recent development projects downtown have had successful designs?



Question 5: cont.

What recent development projects downtown have had successful designs?

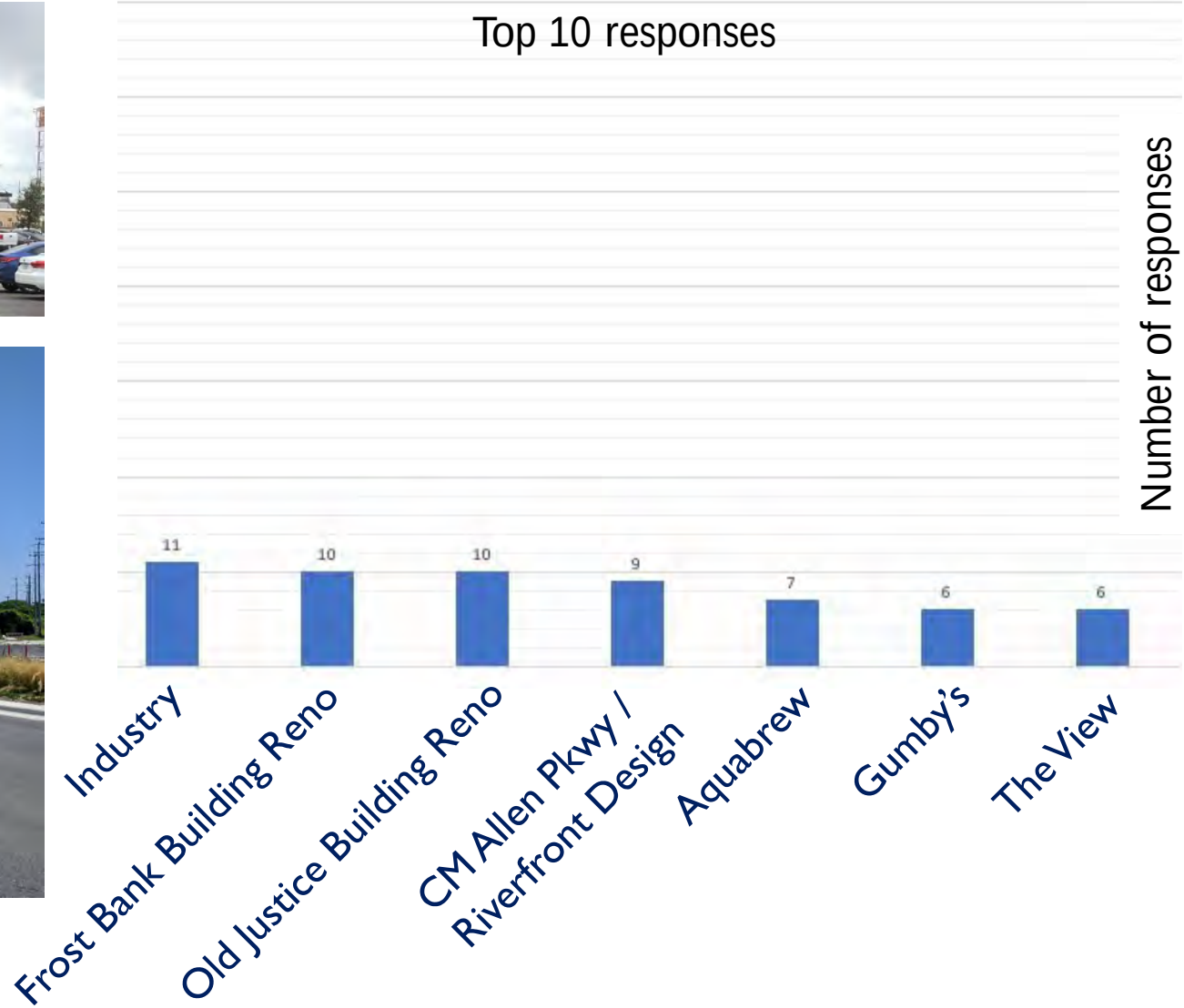


Question 5: cont.

What recent development projects downtown have had successful designs?

Old Justice Building

CM Allen Parkway



Question 5: cont.

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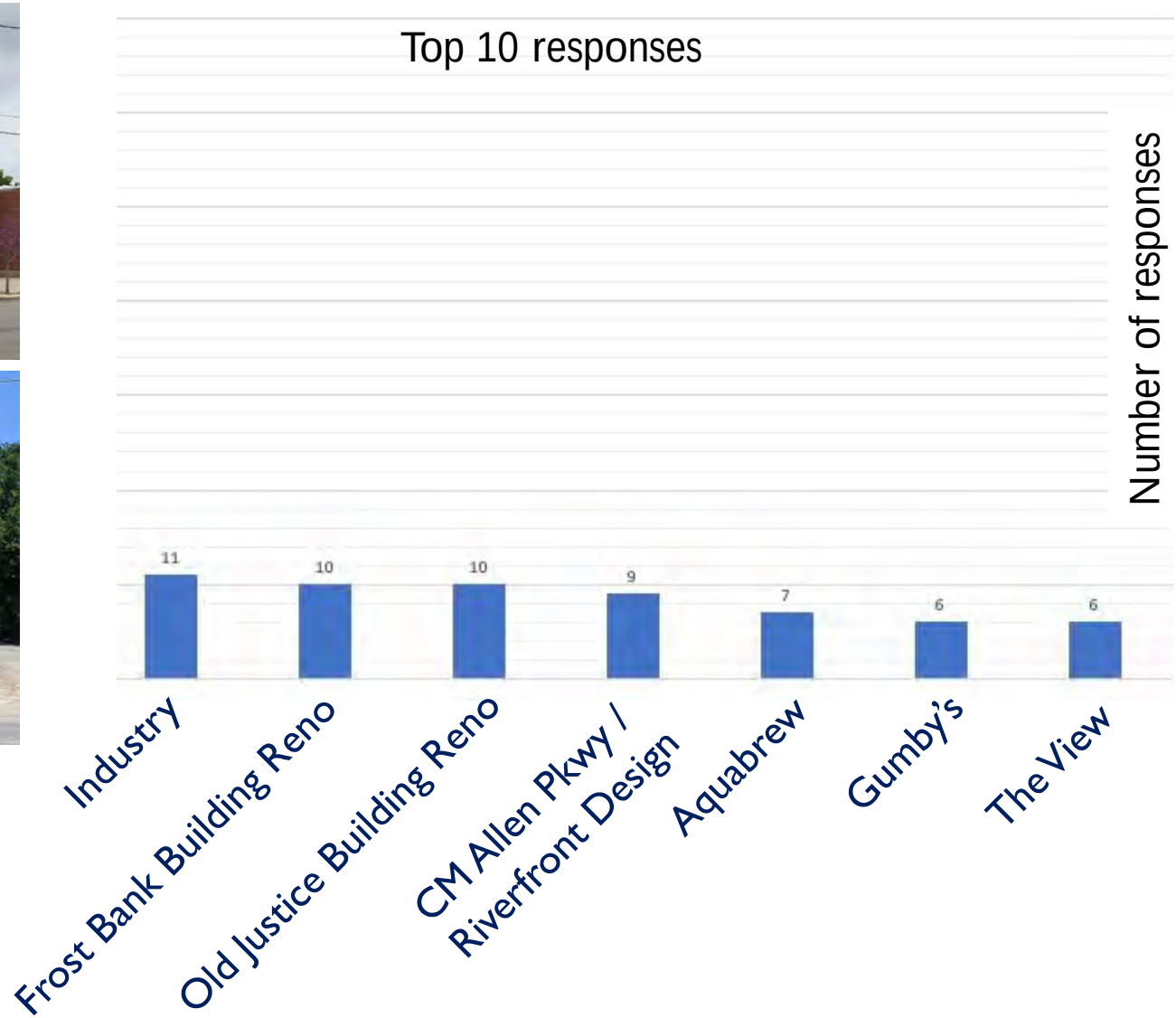
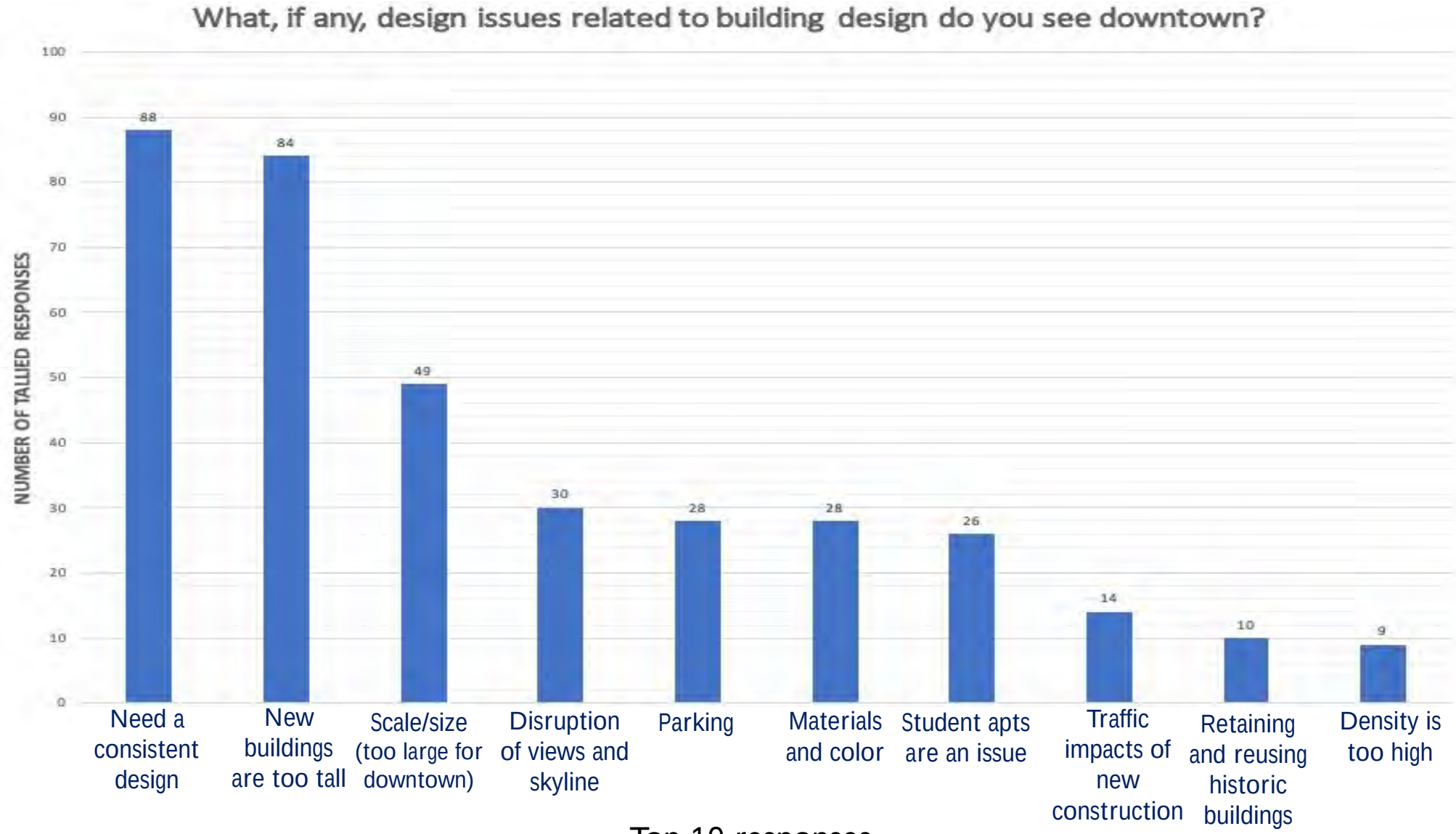
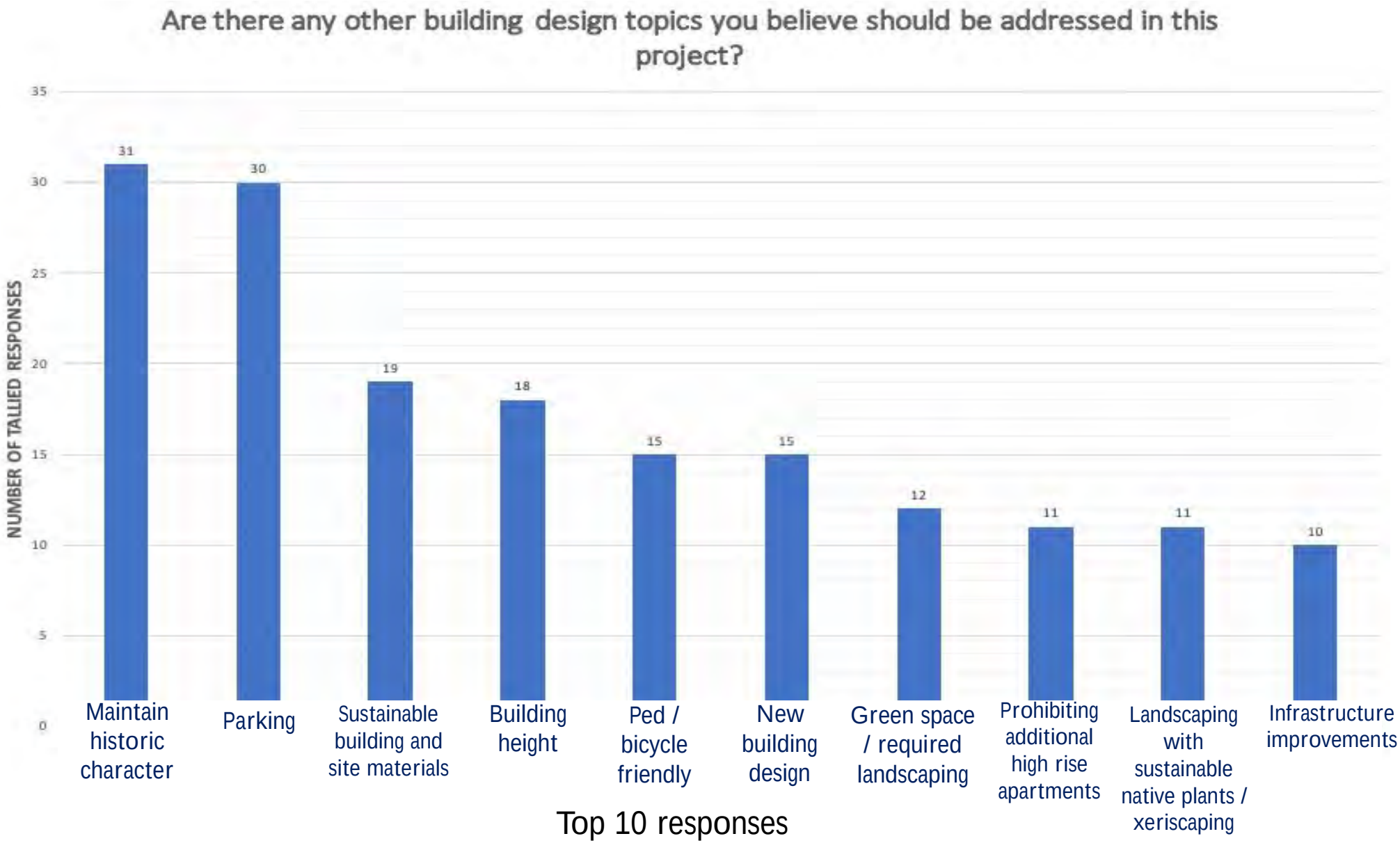


Question 6



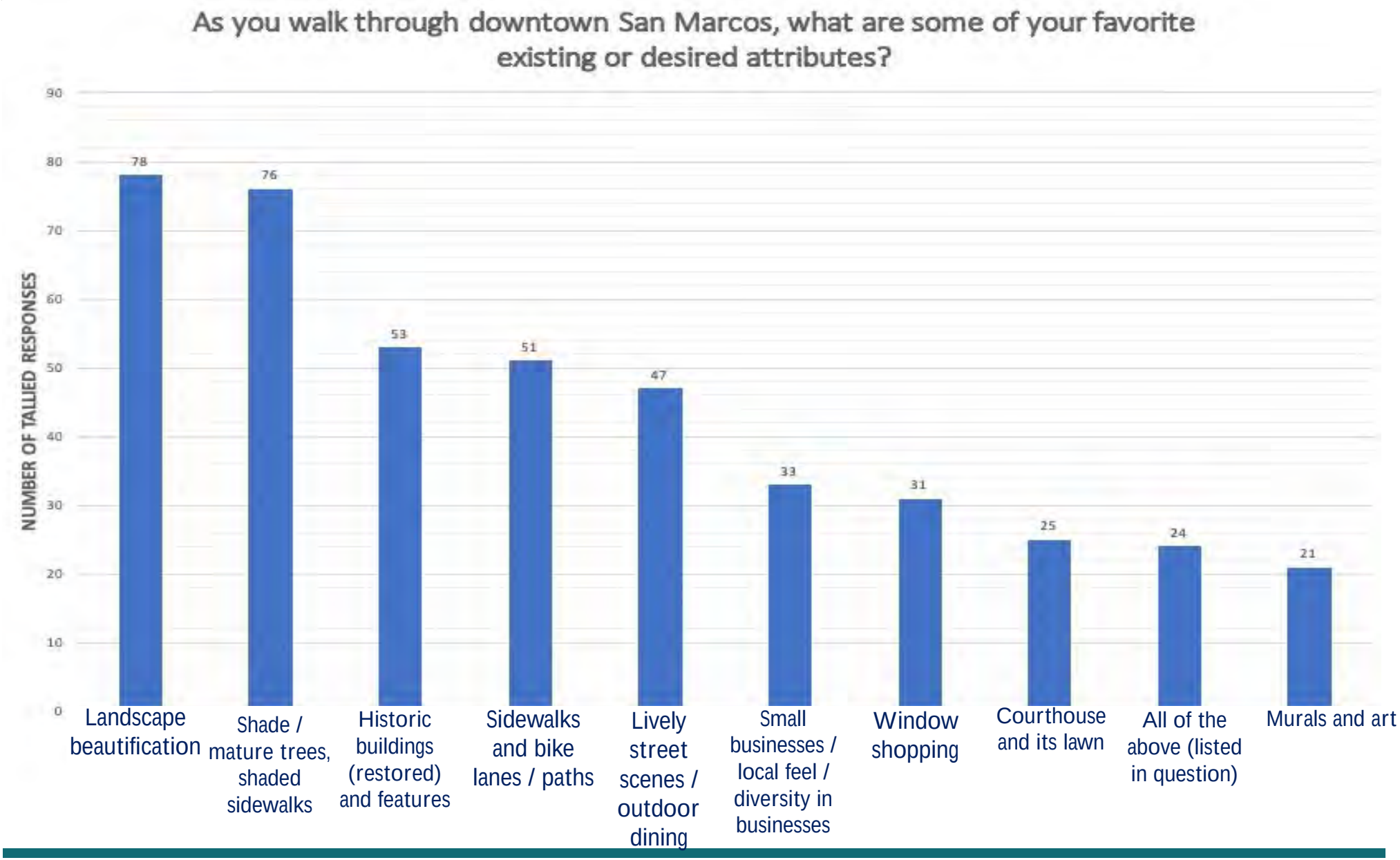
Top 10 responses

Question 7



Top 10 responses

Question 8


As you walk through downtown San Marcos, what are some of your favorite existing or desired attributes?
NUMBER OF TALLIED RESPONSES
90
80
70
60
50
40
30
20
10
0
78
76
53
51
47
33
31
25
24
21
Landscape beautification
Shade / mature trees, shaded sidewalks
Historic buildings (restored) and features
Sidewalks and bike lanes / paths
Lively street scenes / outdoor dining
Small businesses / local feel / diversity in businesses
Window shopping
Courthouse and its lawn
All of the above (listed in question)
Murals and art

Summary of Community Input To-Date

Similar big ideas from focus groups and online survey

- Visual continuity and designs that are compatible with one another
- Preserving and reusing historic buildings, and designing new buildings to be compatible with historic buildings
- Maintaining the San Marcos identity and character
- Addressing key topics including height, views, materials, sustainability, parking

Design Topics & Analysis

Design Topic: Massing

Existing Analysis

- Existing guidelines are brief and high level
- Existing standards provide some additional detail but focus only on varied upper floor massing

Section A.1.4.3 Varied Upper Floor Massing Requirement.

A. **Specific to CD-5D.** Buildings in CD-5D are typically three stories or less in height. In most cases a range of building heights occur across a single block face. As the desired density increase is incorporated, it is important that new, taller structures not dominate the street front. Taller buildings should vary upper floor massing to provide variety in building height as perceived from the street and to maintain a sense of pedestrian scale at the sidewalk. If an alternative to the varied upper floor massing requirements is requested, the building shall exceed the minimum requirements of the blank wall area outlined in section 4.3.5.3 of the Land Development Code by adding additional Expression Tools and Building Elements.

Section A.1.4.4 Building Mass and Articuation.

A. **Specific to CD-5D.** Traditional development patterns create a rhythm along the street by the repetition of similar building widths and vertical proportions. Variations in massing and building articulation should be expressed throughout a new structure, resulting in a composition of building modules that relate to the scale of traditional buildings.

1. Provide horizontal expression at lower floor heights to establish a sense of scale.
2. Provide vertical articulation in a larger building mass to establish a sense of scale.
3. Maintain established development patterns created by the repetition of similar building widths along the street.

7. The additional stories provide an opportunity to add public parking in or adjacent to the downtown;
8. The additional stories provide an opportunity to include on-site publicly accessible open space in excess of the open space required under Section 3.10.1.2.
9. If located in the CD-5D district, the additional stories are located in a preferred area for height in the downtown design guidelines; and
10. The project proposes architectural elements that mitigate any effects on adjacent properties or the pedestrian experience from the street level.

Section 4.3.4.6 Varied Upper Floor Massing Requirement

A. **Applicability.** The varied upper floor massing requirements apply to buildings in the CD-5D district that meet the following criteria:

1. The building is over three (3) stories in height; and
2. The building has a frontage greater than sixty (60) feet in width.

B. **Intent.** The intent of the varied upper floor massing requirements is to:

1. Encourage and enhance the variety in building heights that exists in downtown San Marcos that help to define the character of the area; and
2. Ensure that new development continues the tradition of height variation, expressing and supporting human scale and architectural diversity in the area.

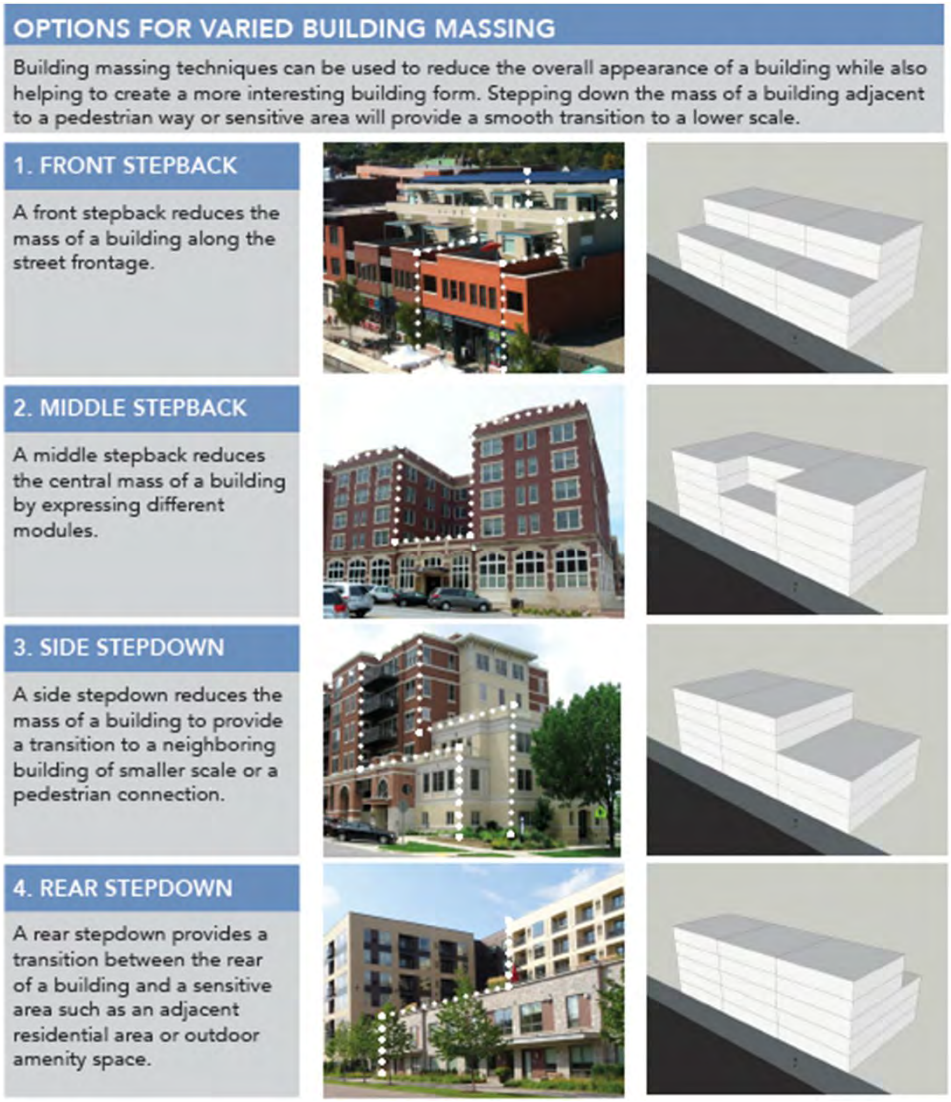
C. **General Standards.** The varied upper floor massing requirements can be achieved through the selection of one of the following alternatives:

1. A minimum of forty (40%) percent of the building facade over three (3) stories in height shall be set back a minimum of twenty (20) feet from the front building wall.
2. A minimum of fifty (50%) percent of the building facade over three (3) stories in height shall be set back a minimum of fifteen (15) feet from the front building wall.

Design Topic: Massing

Potential Updates

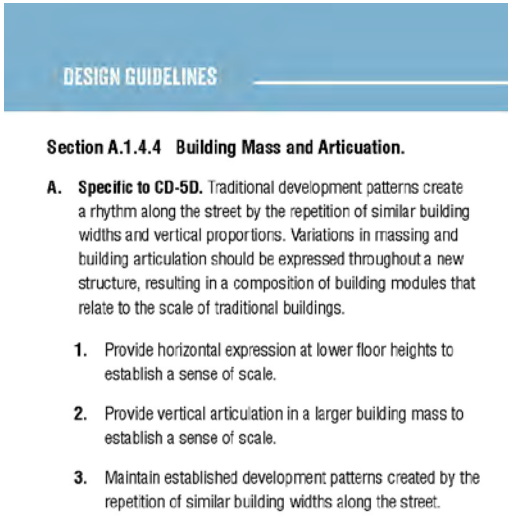
- Updated standards and guidelines will provide additional information and examples of how to apply varied building massing options
- Massing options will include options beyond varied upper floor massing



Design Topic: Articulation

Existing Analysis

- Existing guidelines are brief and do not provide visual examples on how to accomplish the expression types
- Existing standards expand on the expression tools noted in the guidelines but are limited in how to articulate

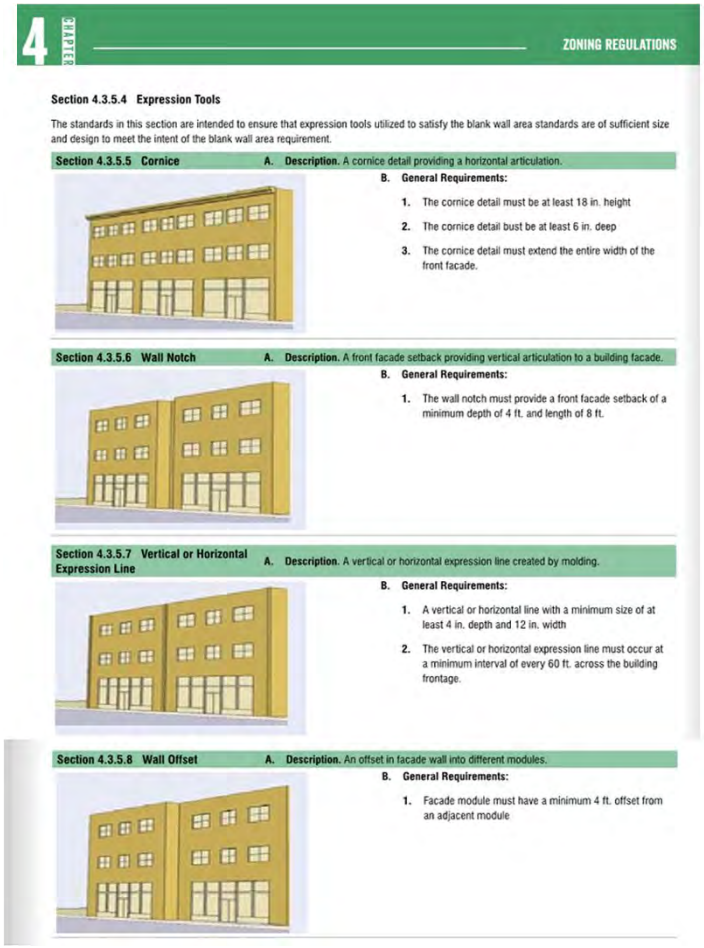


DESIGN GUIDELINES

Section A.1.4.4 Building Mass and Articuation.

A. **Specific to CD-5D.** Traditional development patterns create a rhythm along the street by the repetition of similar building widths and vertical proportions. Variations in massing and building articulation should be expressed throughout a new structure, resulting in a composition of building modules that relate to the scale of traditional buildings.

1. Provide horizontal expression at lower floor heights to establish a sense of scale.
2. Provide vertical articulation in a larger building mass to establish a sense of scale.
3. Maintain established development patterns created by the repetition of similar building widths along the street.



4 CHAPTER — ZONING REGULATIONS

Section 4.3.5.4 Expression Tools

The standards in this section are intended to ensure that expression tools utilized to satisfy the blank wall area standards are of sufficient size and design to meet the intent of the blank wall area requirement.

Section 4.3.5.5 Cornice

A. **Description.** A cornice detail providing a horizontal articulation.

B. **General Requirements:**

1. The cornice detail must be at least 18 in. height
2. The cornice detail bust be at least 6 in. deep
3. The cornice detail must extend the entire width of the front facade.

Section 4.3.5.6 Wall Notch

A. **Description.** A front facade setback providing vertical articulation to a building facade.

B. **General Requirements:**

1. The wall notch must provide a front facade setback of a minimum depth of 4 ft. and length of 8 ft.

Section 4.3.5.7 Vertical or Horizontal Expression Line

A. **Description.** A vertical or horizontal expression line created by molding.

B. **General Requirements:**

1. A vertical or horizontal line with a minimum size of at least 4 in. depth and 12 in. width
2. The vertical or horizontal expression line must occur at a minimum interval of every 60 ft. across the building frontage.

Section 4.3.5.8 Wall Offset

A. **Description.** An offset in facade wall into different modules.

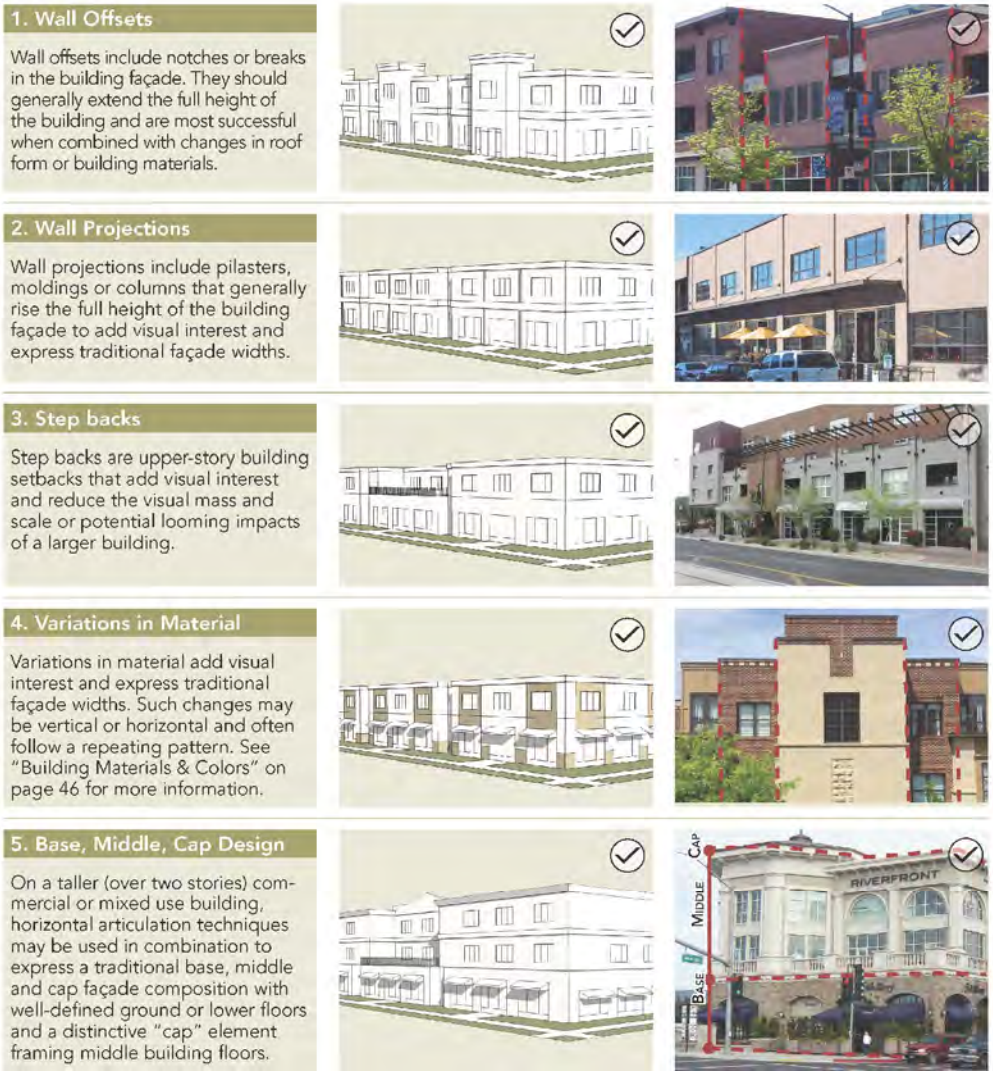
B. **General Requirements:**

1. Facade module must have a minimum 4 ft. offset from an adjacent module

Design Topic: Articulation

Potential Updates

- Updated standards and guidelines will expand on the existing list of expression tools and provide further examples in how to effectively and authentically articulate a building



Design Topic: Articulation

FIGURE 12: Building Articulation Methods (Part 1)

Façade Articulation Methods

A1 Accent Lines

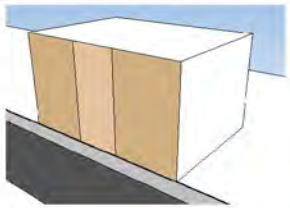
Accent lines include vertical and horizontal expression lines on a building wall. An accent line often projects slightly from the face of a building wall.

Examples include:

- Moldings
- Sills
- Cornices
- Canopies
- Spandrels

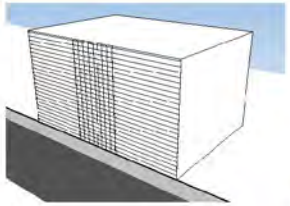
A2 Color Changes

Color changes include significant vertical or horizontal changes (15'-30' min) in color on a building wall.



A3 Material Changes

Material changes include significant vertical or horizontal changes (15'-30' min) in material on a building wall.



A4 Minor Wall Offsets

A minor wall offset is a vertical expression line created by notching a building wall for its full height. Minor wall offsets are typically 5 feet or less.

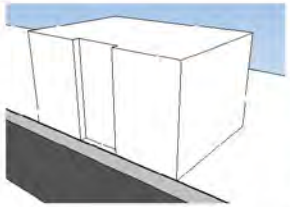
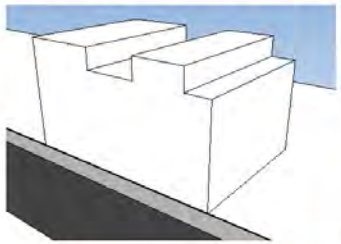


FIGURE 12: Building Articulation Methods (Part 2)

Massing Variation Methods

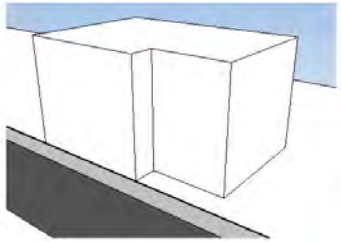
A5 Height Variation

A height variation is an actual reduction in the vertical height of a building of at least one floor. (Note that it is not the intent of this variation method to require multiple elevators)



A6 Increased Setbacks

An increased setback is similar to a minor wall offset, but with a larger dimension. It is established by providing a larger setback on a portion of a wall for its full height. Currently this method may require a variance in the MU-2 district.

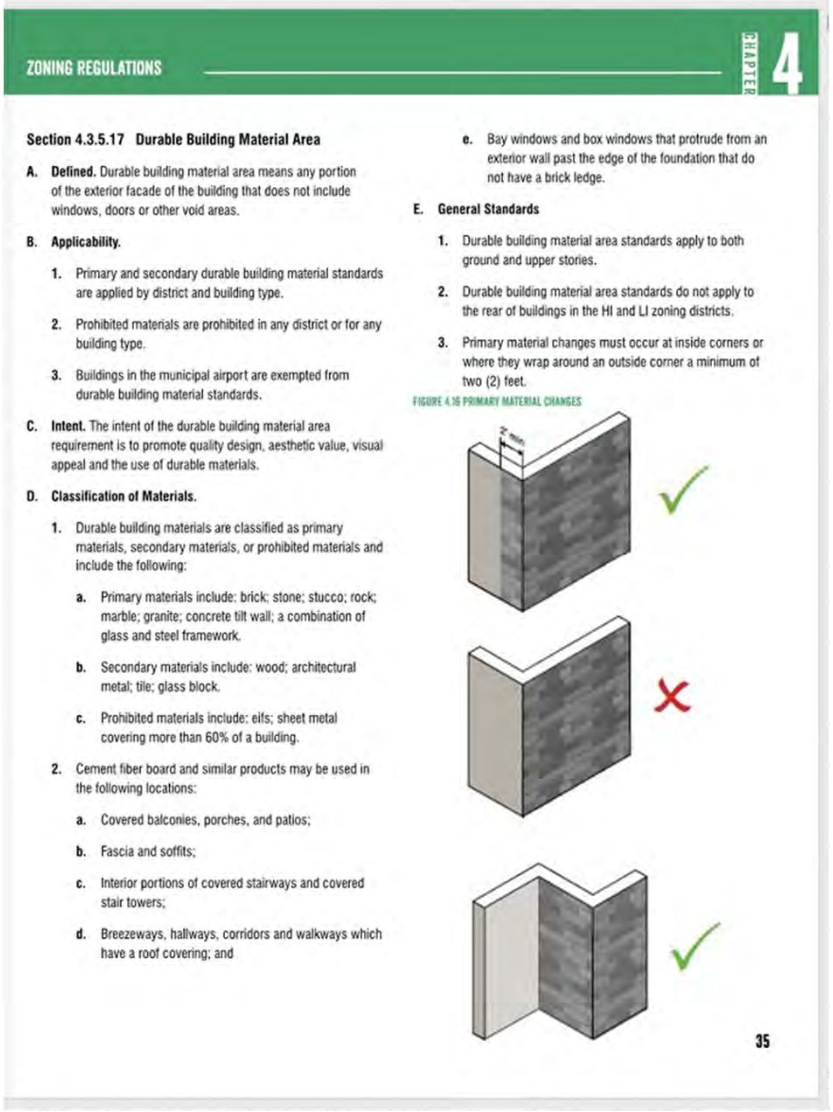


Seek authenticity in building articulation

Design Topic: Building Materials

Existing Analysis

- Materials are not currently addressed in the design guidelines
- Design standards provide some information but focus on the "durable building material area," not materials applied to the full building



ZONING REGULATIONS

CHAPTER 4

Section 4.3.5.17 Durable Building Material Area

A. Defined. Durable building material area means any portion of the exterior facade of the building that does not include windows, doors or other void areas.

B. Applicability.

1. Primary and secondary durable building material standards are applied by district and building type.
2. Prohibited materials are prohibited in any district or for any building type.
3. Buildings in the municipal airport are exempted from durable building material standards.

C. Intent. The intent of the durable building material area requirement is to promote quality design, aesthetic value, visual appeal and the use of durable materials.

D. Classification of Materials.

1. Durable building materials are classified as primary materials, secondary materials, or prohibited materials and include the following:
   a. Primary materials include: brick; stone; stucco; rock; marble; granite; concrete tilt wall; a combination of glass and steel framework.
   b. Secondary materials include: wood; architectural metal; tile; glass block.
   c. Prohibited materials include: eifs; sheet metal covering more than 60% of a building.
2. Cement fiber board and similar products may be used in the following locations:
   a. Covered balconies, porches, and patios;
   b. Fascia and soffits;
   c. Interior portions of covered stairways and covered stair towers;
   d. Breezeways, hallways, corridors and walkways which have a roof covering; and
   e. Bay windows and box windows that protrude from an exterior wall past the edge of the foundation that do not have a brick ledge.

E. General Standards

1. Durable building material area standards apply to both ground and upper stories.
2. Durable building material area standards do not apply to the rear of buildings in the HI and LI zoning districts.
3. Primary material changes must occur at inside corners or where they wrap around an outside corner a minimum of two (2) feet.

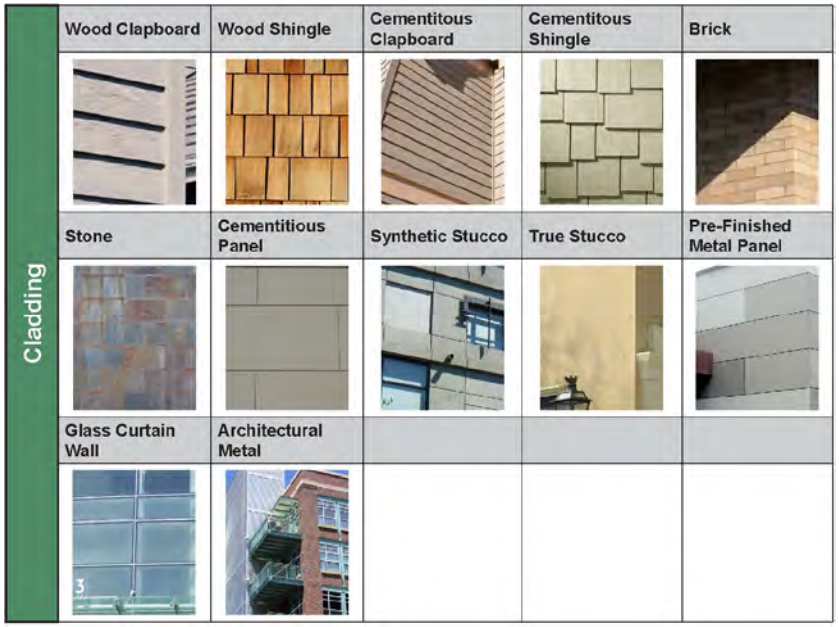
FIGURE 4.16 PRIMARY MATERIAL CHANGES

35

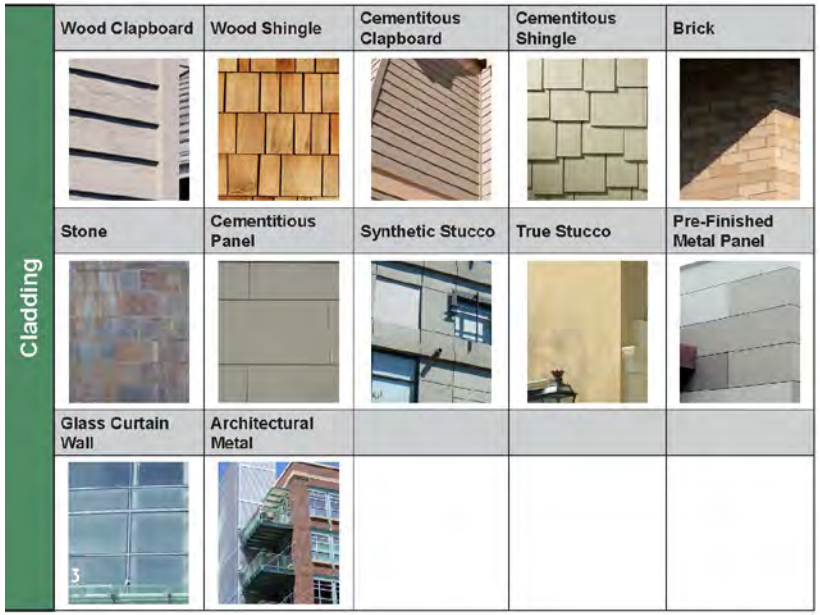
Design Topic: Building Materials

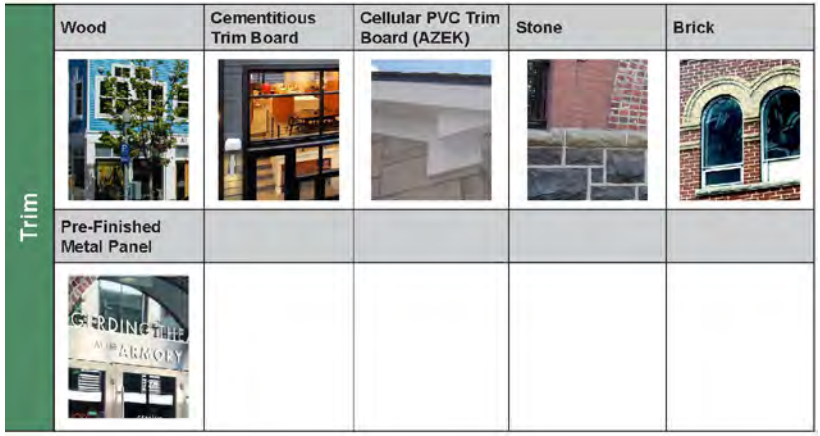
Potential Updates

- Updated standards and guidelines will discuss types of materials and their applicability in new design



A pictorial glossary of materials

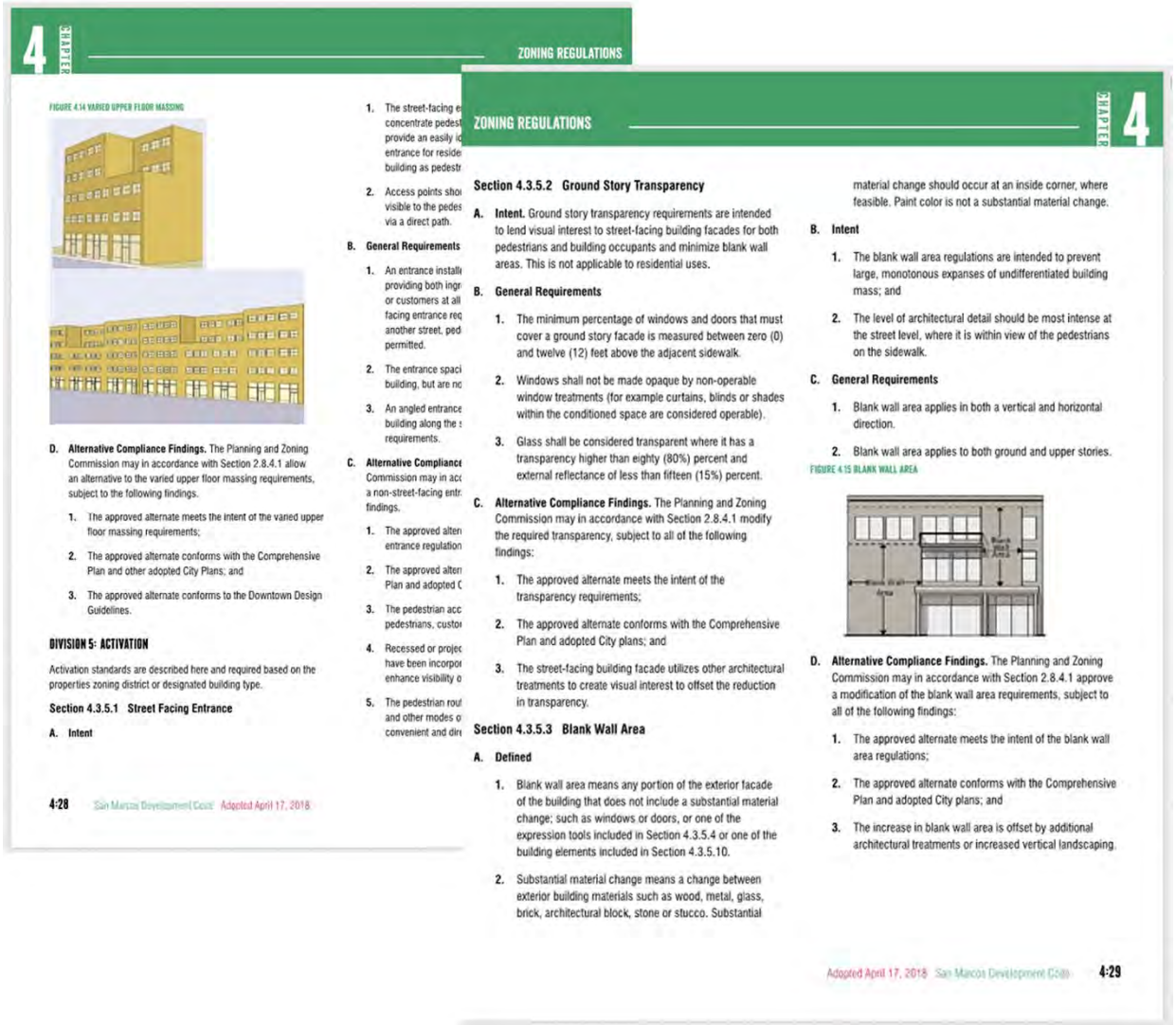




Design Topic: Street Level Design

Existing Analysis

- Existing guidelines include elements of street level design, but do not address it specifically
- Existing standards provide information on some elements that contribute to street level activation



4 CHAPTER ZONING REGULATIONS

FIGURE 4.14 VARIED UPPER FLOOR MASSING

D. **Alternative Compliance Findings.** The Planning and Zoning Commission may in accordance with Section 2.8.4.1 allow an alternative to the varied upper floor massing requirements, subject to the following findings.

1. The approved alternate meets the intent of the varied upper floor massing requirements;
2. The approved alternate conforms with the Comprehensive Plan and other adopted City Plans; and
3. The approved alternate conforms to the Downtown Design Guidelines.

DIVISION 5: ACTIVATION

Activation standards are described here and required based on the properties zoning district or designated building type.

Section 4.3.5.1 Street Facing Entrance

A. **Intent**

1. The street-facing e concentrate pedest provide an easily id entrance for reside building as pedestr
2. Access points shou visible to the pedes via a direct path.

B. **General Requirements**

1. An entrance installe providing both ingr or customers at all facing entrance req another street, ped permitted.
2. The entrance spaci building, but are no
3. An angled entrance building along the s requirements.

C. **Alternative Compliance** Commission may in acc a non-street-facing entr findings.

1. The approved alter entrance regulation
2. The approved alter Plan and adopted C
3. The pedestrian acc pedestrians, custo
4. Recessed or projec have been incorpo enhance visibility o
5. The pedestrian rou and other modes o convenient and dir

4:28 San Marcos Development Code Adopted April 17, 2018

ZONING REGULATIONS CHAPTER 4

Section 4.3.5.2 Ground Story Transparency

A. **Intent.** Ground story transparency requirements are intended to lend visual interest to street-facing building facades for both pedestrians and building occupants and minimize blank wall areas. This is not applicable to residential uses.

B. **General Requirements**

1. The minimum percentage of windows and doors that must cover a ground story facade is measured between zero (0) and twelve (12) feet above the adjacent sidewalk.
2. Windows shall not be made opaque by non-operable window treatments (for example curtains, blinds or shades within the conditioned space are considered operable).
3. Glass shall be considered transparent where it has a transparency higher than eighty (80%) percent and external reflectance of less than fifteen (15%) percent.

C. **Alternative Compliance Findings.** The Planning and Zoning Commission may in accordance with Section 2.8.4.1 modify the required transparency, subject to all of the following findings:

1. The approved alternate meets the intent of the transparency requirements;
2. The approved alternate conforms with the Comprehensive Plan and adopted City plans; and
3. The street-facing building facade utilizes other architectural treatments to create visual interest to offset the reduction in transparency.

Section 4.3.5.3 Blank Wall Area

A. **Defined**

1. Blank wall area means any portion of the exterior facade of the building that does not include a substantial material change; such as windows or doors, or one of the expression tools included in Section 4.3.5.4 or one of the building elements included in Section 4.3.5.10.
2. Substantial material change means a change between exterior building materials such as wood, metal, glass, brick, architectural block, stone or stucco. Substantial material change should occur at an inside corner, where feasible. Paint color is not a substantial material change.

B. **Intent**

1. The blank wall area regulations are intended to prevent large, monotonous expanses of undifferentiated building mass; and
2. The level of architectural detail should be most intense at the street level, where it is within view of the pedestrians on the sidewalk.

C. **General Requirements**

1. Blank wall area applies in both a vertical and horizontal direction.
2. Blank wall area applies to both ground and upper stories.

FIGURE 4.15 BLANK WALL AREA

D. **Alternative Compliance Findings.** The Planning and Zoning Commission may in accordance with Section 2.8.4.1 approve a modification of the blank wall area requirements, subject to all of the following findings:

1. The approved alternate meets the intent of the blank wall area regulations;
2. The approved alternate conforms with the Comprehensive Plan and adopted City plans; and
3. The increase in blank wall area is offset by additional architectural treatments or increased vertical landscaping.

Adopted April 17, 2018 San Marcos Development Code 4:29

Design Topic: Street Level Design

Potential Updates

- Updated guidelines and standards will expand on current standards information and provide further options for how to activate a street level
  - Display windows
  - Display cases
  - Canopies and awnings
  - Wall art
  - Planters and landscaping

Design Topic: Transitions

Existing Analysis

- Existing guidelines include a section on where a neighborhood transition is needed

DESIGN GUIDELINES

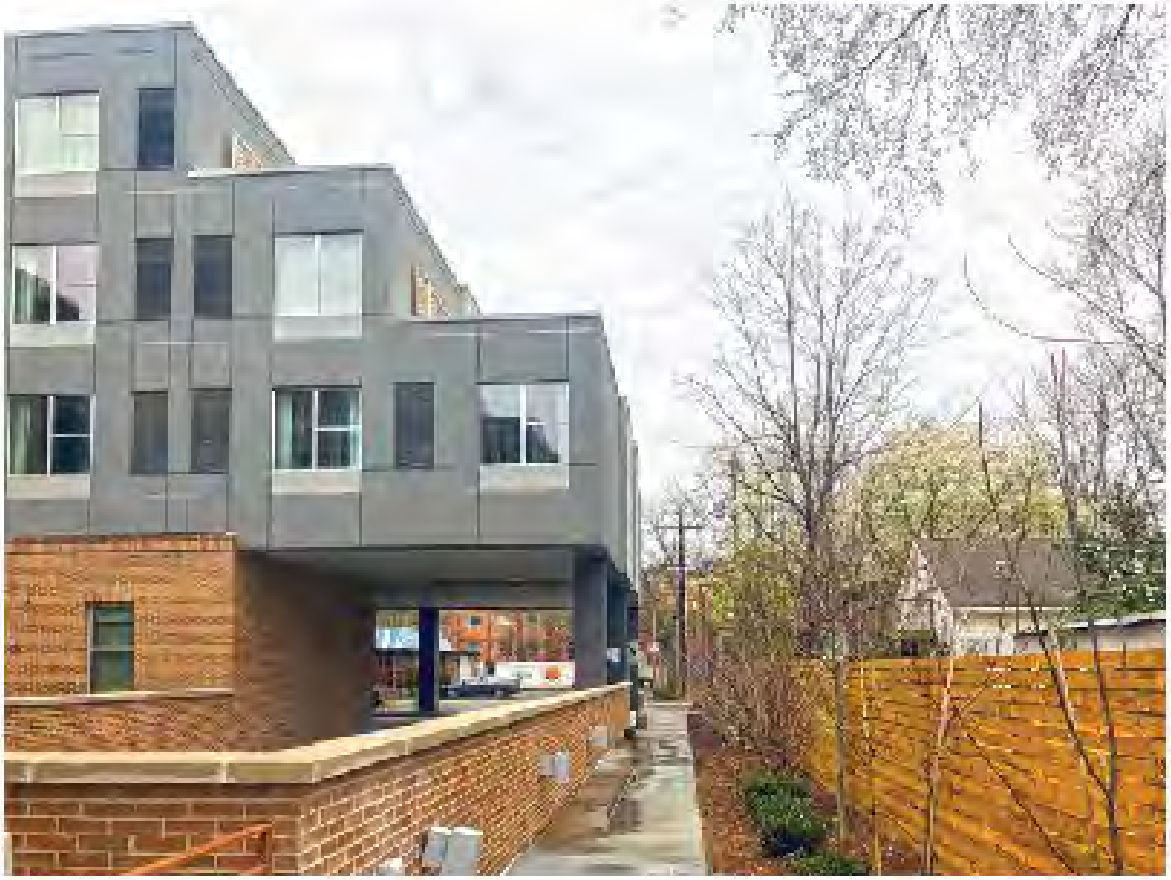
Section A.1.4.9 Neighborhood Transitions

A. Provide a compatible sense of scale along sensitive edges by using lower building heights for areas of a property adjacent to a sensitive site, conventional residential district, ND-3 or ND-3.5, or historic district.

Design Topic: Transitions

Potential Updates

- Updated design guidelines and standards will expand on the current design guidelines information to explain how to effectively transition along sensitive edges and to sensitive properties such as historic landmarks



Discussion Questions

Discussion Questions

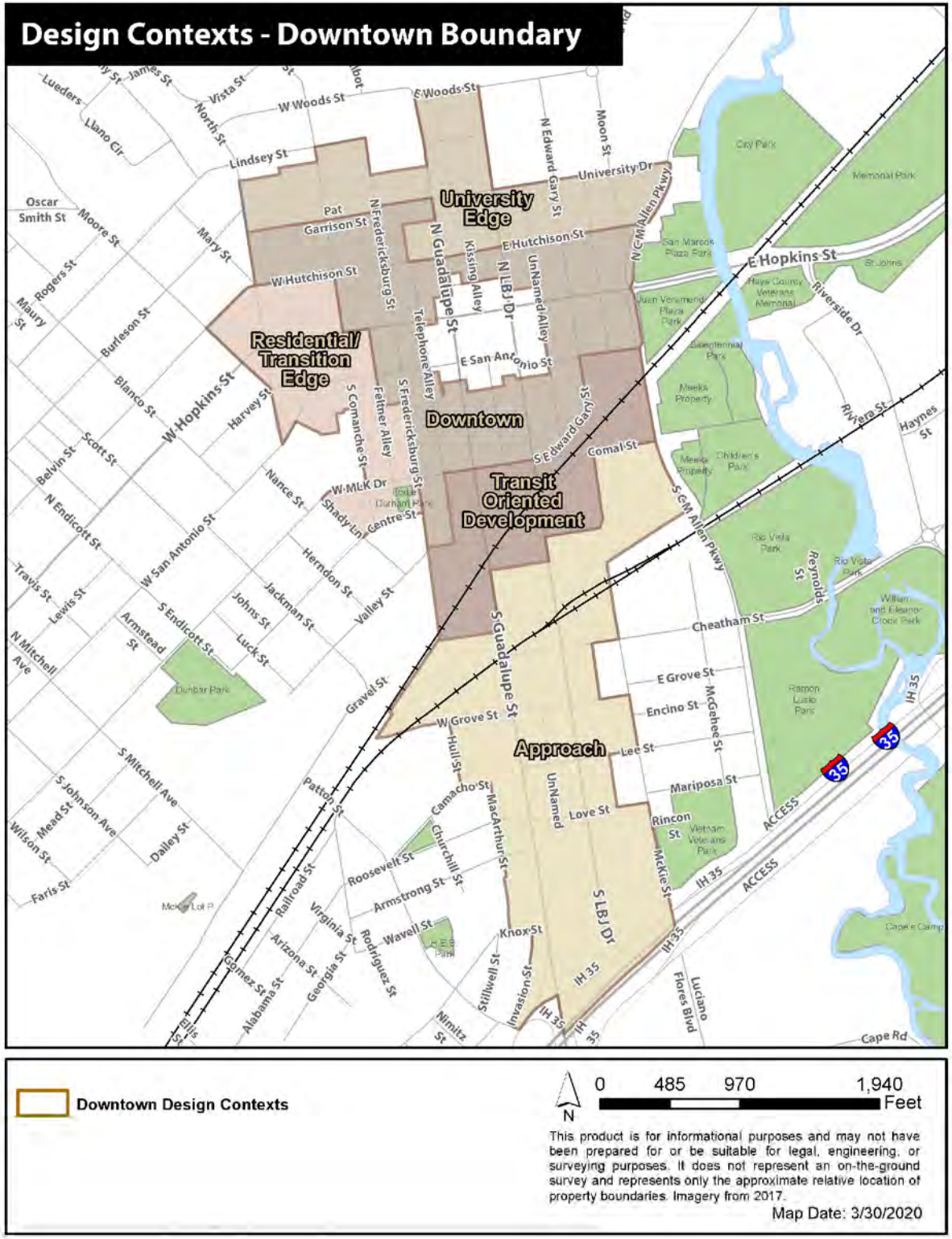
1. Would you propose any changes to the existing design context boundaries?

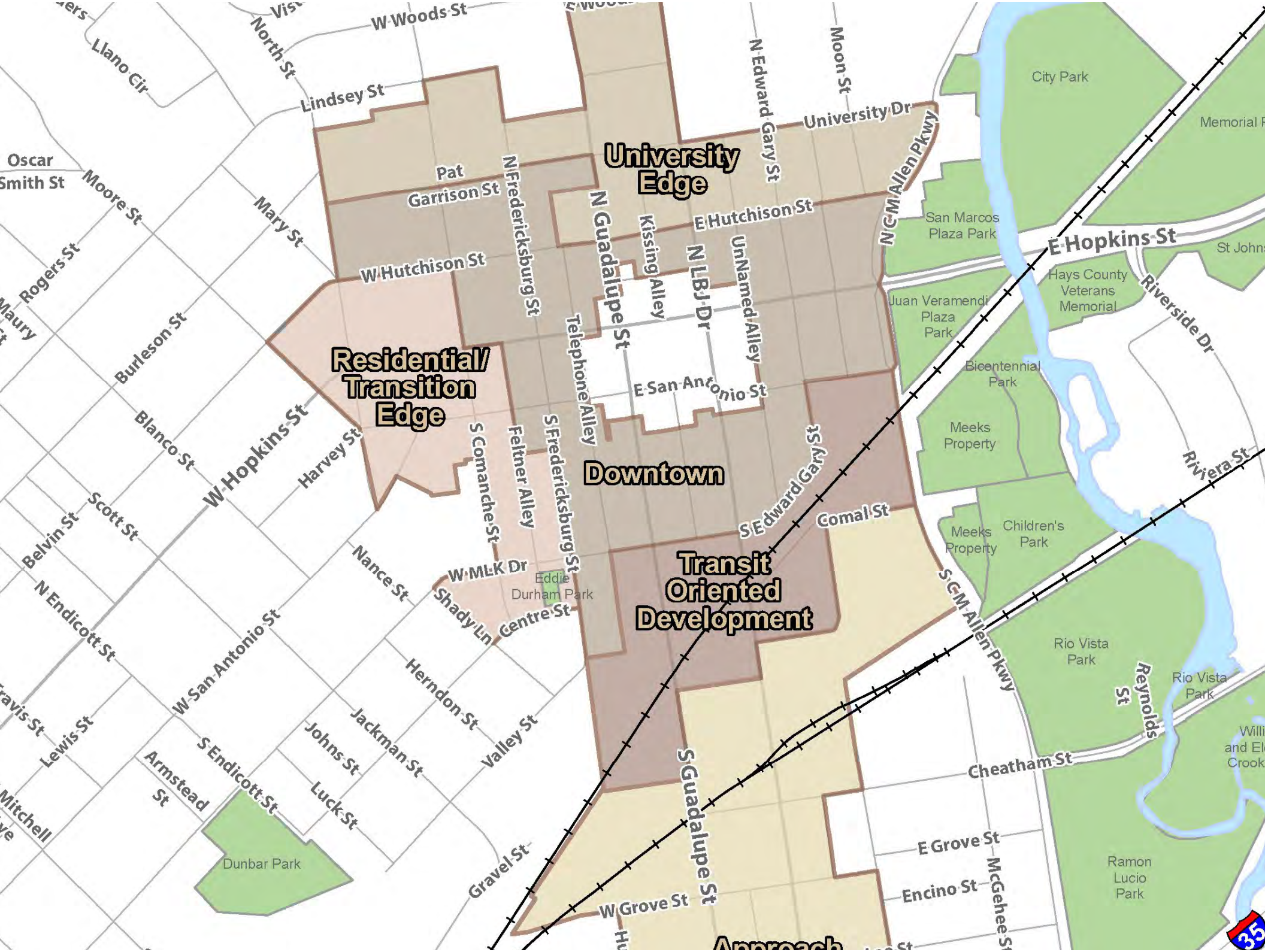
2. Within the design contexts, where would you consider focusing density and growth downtown?

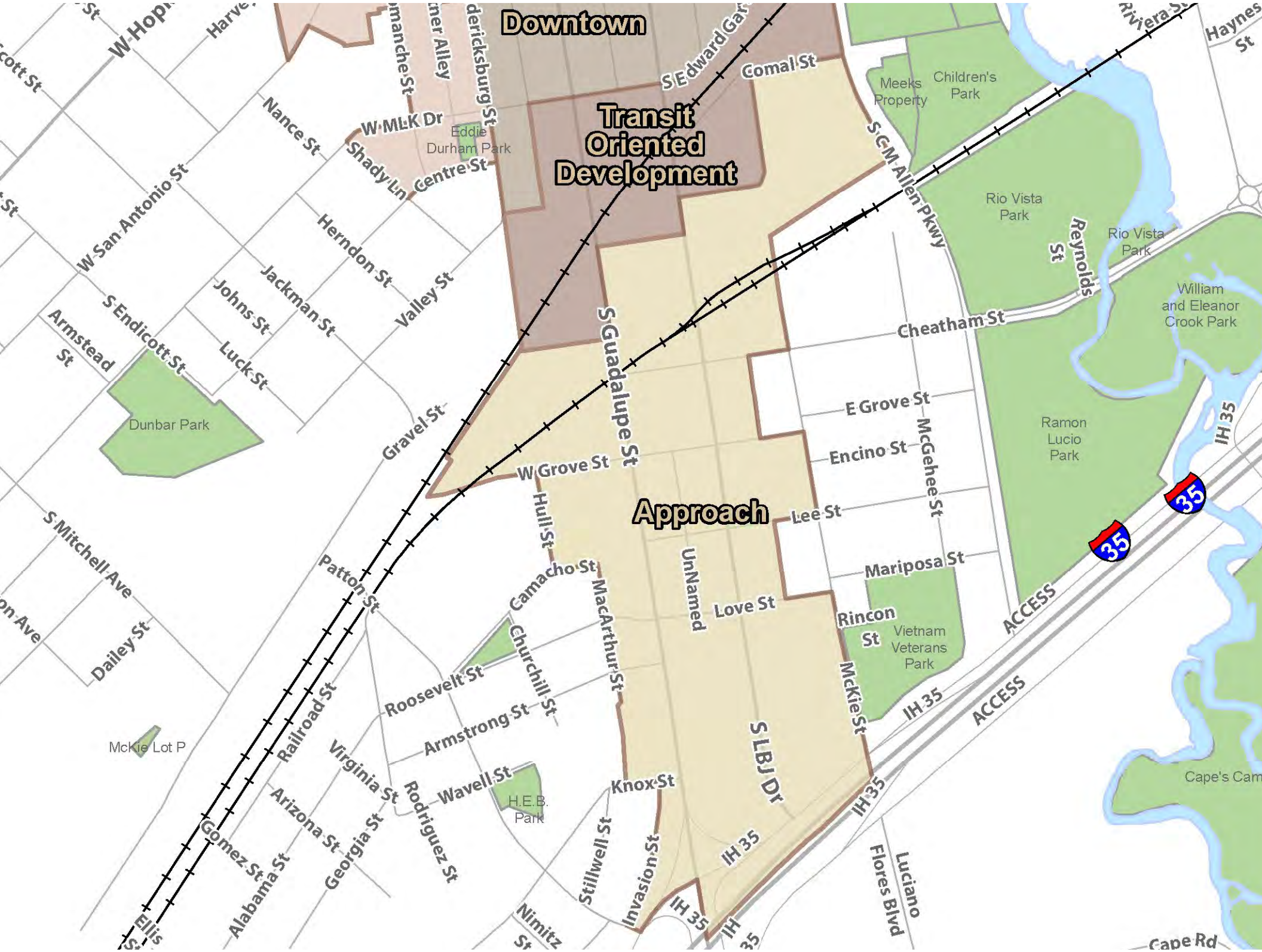
3. Where would you consider implementing a transition area (to residential neighborhoods) downtown?

4. Are there any other design topics you'd like to see addressed in this project? Or design topics that should be strengthened in the standards and guidelines in this project?

Design Contexts




University Edge
Residential/ Transition Edge
Downtown
Transit Oriented Development
Approach
W Woods St
Llano Cir
North St
Lindsey St
Oscar Smith St
Moore St
Mary St
Rogers St
Burleson St
Blanco St
W Hopkins St
Harvey St
Belvin St
Scott St
N Endicott St
W San Antonio St
Travis St
Lewis St
Mitchell St
Armstead St
S Endicott St
Dunbar Park
Johns St
Luck St
Jackman St
Herndon St
Valley St
Gravel St
Nance St
W MLK Dr
Shady Ln
Centre St
Eddie Durham Park
S Comanche St
Feltner Alley
S Fredericksburg St
Pat Garrison St
N Fredericksburg St
W Hutchison St
N Guadalupe St
Telephone Alley
Kissing Alley
E Hutchison St
N LBJ Dr
UnNamed Alley
E San Antonio St
N Edward Gary St
Moon St
University Dr
N CM Allen Pkwy
S Edward Gary St
Comal St
S CM Allen Pkwy
S Guadalupe St
W Grove St
E Grove St
Encino St
McGehee St
Cheatham St
Reynolds St
E Hopkins St
Riverside Dr
Riviera St
City Park
Memorial P
San Marcos Plaza Park
St John
Hays County Veterans Memorial
Juan Veramendi Plaza Park
Bicentennial Park
Meeks Property
Meeks Property
Children's Park
Rio Vista Park
Rio Vista Park
Ramon Lucio Park
Willi and El Crook
35


Downtown
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Comal St
Nance St
W MLK Dr
Eddie Durham Park
Shady Ln
Centre St
W San Antonio St
Herndon St
Jackman St
Johns St
Valley St
S Endicott St
Armstead St
Luck St
Dunbar Park
Gravel St
S Guadalupe St
W Grove St
Hull St
Patton St
S Mitchell Ave
Dailey St
Camacho St
MacArthur St
Churchill St
Roosevelt St
Armstrong St
Railroad St
Virginia St
Wavell St
Rodriguez St
Arizona St
Georgia St
Gomez St
Alabama St
Ellis St
McKie Lot P
H.E.B. Park
Knox St
Stillwell St
Invasion St
Nimitz St
UnNamed
Love St
S LBJ Dr
IH 35
McKie St
Rincon St
Vietnam Veterans Park
Mariposa St
Lee St
Encino St
E Grove St
McGehee St
Cheatham St
S C M Allen Pkwy
Meeks Property
Children's Park
Rio Vista Park
Reynolds St
Rio Vista Park
William and Eleanor Crook Park
Ramon Lucio Park
IH 35
ACCESS
ACCESS
Riviera St
Haynes St
Flores Blvd
Luciano
Cape's Cam
Cape Rd

Open Discussion

Next Steps

- Virtual community workshop: Thursday, July 23rd
- Upcoming deliverables
  - August: Outline for changes to the design standards and guidelines
  - Fall 2020: Draft 1 of changes to design standards and guidelines
- How to get involved:
  - Questions: planninginfo@sanmarcostx.gov
  - Webpage: www.sanmarcostx.gov/downtowndesign

Thank you!

Key Points from Focus Group Kickoff Meetings - April 2020

San Marcos Design Standards and Guidelines Update

This document summarizes key feedback from the kickoff Focus Group meetings held virtually on April 15th and 16th. After a short presentation of the project background and objectives, each group discussed a series of questions regarding strengths of and issues raised by recent development, the downtown design contexts, and the existing standards and guidelines documents. Historic preservation questions and questions regarding the public realm were addressed by the appropriate groups. Note that all questions focused on downtown San Marcos, defined by the design contexts map and stretching from I-35 to the University. The kickoff Focus Group meetings were held with the following groups:

- Heritage Preservation Commission and Heritage Association
- Main Street Advisory Board and Downtown Design Task Force
- Downtown Association Board

PART 1: THE BIG IDEAS

Design Excellence

Promoting excellence in design is a key objective. That is, projects should do more than simply meeting the minimums required by the standards.

* This can be expressed in intent statements in the standards and in the tone of the language used in the standards and guidelines themselves.

Sense of Place

Maintaining the distinct identity that is associated with downtown is important. This sets San Marcos apart from other communities in the region.
Factors that contribute to a sense of place are:

- Small scale buildings and their components, including storefronts, entries, signs and architectural details, that contribute to a changing scene as one walks along a downtown street
- The eclectic mix of architectural styles and building details
- The variety of businesses and other uses found downtown, especially those that are one-of-a-kind and convey the personality of the owners
- Street edges that invite pedestrian activity, with storefronts, seating areas and product displays
- Iconic landmarks and views that help orient people in the downtown

Four-sided Design

Projects are experienced from all sides and their designs should reflect this. It is especially important where a new project abuts a sensitive edge and along an alley.

* This is a concept that can be addressed in the design standards and guidelines. It may include:
    - » Considering how varied massing is expressed throughout a project, not only along the street frontage
    - » Addressing ground level design in alleys
    - » Promoting creative use of outdoor spaces to activate the street

Visual Continuity

Establishing a sense of continuity throughout downtown is important. To a degree, this is best established in the public realm, with a coordinated streetscape palette. However, new buildings also can contribute to this, by drawing upon design traditions. This does not mean that new buildings should copy historic styles, but rather learn from them.

* This concept could be expanded on in the design guidelines.

Balancing Old and New

A new building should fit with the old, while expressing its own time. "Fitting in" does not require that a new building copy a historic style. As an example, designing a building that is a full block in width and three stories tall, which is then capped with a Victorian cornice would not achieve this objective. On the other hand, a new building that simply contrasts with its context in the interest of standing out also will not fit. A new building should have sufficient features in common with design traditions to fit in without being imitative.

* This concept could be expanded upon in the design guidelines.

Responding to "context" is important.

A new project should respond to its context. Context may be considered at three levels of perception:

1. Nearby properties, especially those in the immediate block
2. The specific Design Context, which is an officially designated sub-area of the downtown
3. The character of downtown as a whole

* This concept is introduced in the Design Principles in the current Design Guidelines and could be expanded upon.

PART 2: MORE DETAILED OBSERVATIONS

Recent trends in development downtown

1. A decline in street level retail occupancy, which is a concern
    - » Consider other alternative uses.
    - » Also consider other alternative street level designs that activate the street.
2. Small scale adaptive reuse projects are occurring.
    - » These often have uses that activate the street (such as outdoor dining areas).
    - » They engage with the public realm (with landscaping on the site as well as providing seating areas).
    - » They are in scale with traditional character of downtown San Marcos.
    - » They typically are locally owned.
3. New mixed-use and residential projects are occurring.
    - » Many feel that these projects are out of scale and out of context.
    - » Some of these projects are more successful than others.
    - » Opinions vary about which ones are successful, and to what degree.

Understanding "change"

It is important to understand that downtown will continue to change, as infill and adaptive reuse projects continue. While there are genuine concerns about the compatibility of some recent developments, some negative reactions may simply be to the pace of change.

Variation in massing

Recent large-scale projects appear massive, even though they follow the design standards for varied massing. Those standards require some variation in building form, with the intent of dividing a project into modules that individually appear smaller in scale.

- This may be, in part, that the principles for varied massing are not well defined.
- Providing more detail in the standards about the interaction of different techniques to achieve variation in massing could help.

Articulation of facades

A concept related to varied massing is the use of articulation methods to visually divide a large wall surface into smaller modules.

* This could be expanded upon in the design standards and guidelines.

Transitions

There is much discussion about the concept of transitions, and how this applies to compatibility. An improvement project in the downtown should provide an appropriate transition along a sensitive edge. (This is addressed in the current design standards, but could be expanded upon.) A transition may be considered in these ways:

1. A sub-area that serves as a transition from a higher density area to one of lower density. This may include changes in uses, and the scale and intensity of buildings. Only one of the existing Design Contexts is of this type, the Residential Transition Context.
2. A Transition along the edge of an individual property where it abuts a more sensitive edge. This may occur along the edges of a historic district or an individual landmark building.

Engaging with the public realm

Assuring that projects actively engage the public realm is important. This may occur with active facades but also with outdoor spaces, including plazas and courtyards.

* The standards could be updated to more aggressively encourage creating outdoor spaces that are accessible by the public.

Greening downtown

Expanding the tree canopy is important. While this is a key element of the public realm, promoting outdoor spaces with trees in development projects also would help to achieve this objective.

* The standards could be updated to more aggressively encourage creating outdoor spaces that are planted with trees to provide shade.

Impacts on historic resources

New development should be respectful of abutting historic resources.

* The code addresses this, but could be expanded upon.

Parking

The need to provide parking is a major impact on the character of development downtown. It influences the drive to assemble parcels in order to provide efficient parking designs.

* This should be considered in updating the standards.

Building Materials

A key method of fitting with the character of downtown is to use materials that appear similar to those used traditionally.

- While state law limits regulating material choice, using similar materials may be encouraged as a method of meeting requirements for façade articulation.

Adaptive Reuse

Many of the recent projects that are considered assets are smaller ones that involved the adaptive reuse of existing buildings.

* The degree to which the design standards and guidelines facilitate adaptive reuse should be considered.

City of San Marcos Design Guidelines and Standards Update: Kickoff Survey

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. As presented in 2012, the purpose of the design standards was "to enhance the effectiveness of the Smartcode in downtown by adding context-sensitive design standards, supplemented with design guidelines for special cases, and revising the signage standards for the downtown area." The standards and guidelines adopted in 2012 were carried over into the new San Marcos Development Code in 2018 and into Appendix A of the San Marcos Design Manual. Both standards and guidelines are utilized when reviewing new development in the downtown area.

2020 Update

The current project involves updating the design standards, which are in the development code, and the design guidelines, which are in the design manual. These two documents work together to guide new development in San Marcos. The updated documents will address design issues and include new graphics to clearly illustrate the standards and guidelines, and will be tailored to various contexts within downtown.

Key topics that will be addressed include:
- 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.

Kickoff Survey

In light of COVID-19, initial outreach efforts for this project, including three stakeholder meetings in mid-April, will be held virtually. A public workshop will be held in person as soon as it is safe to do so. In the meantime, this survey provides an opportunity for community members to weigh in on the process during the initial kickoff phase in order to provide feedback about existing development, concerns and ask any initial questions. The survey will take approximately 10

minutes to complete. Thank you in advance for your participation!

City of San Marcos Design Guidelines and Standards Update: Kickoff Survey

Demographics

1. Name (Optional)

2. Email (optional; please record your email if you'd like to be added to a project mailing list to be notified about upcoming participation opportunities)

* 3. Are you a:

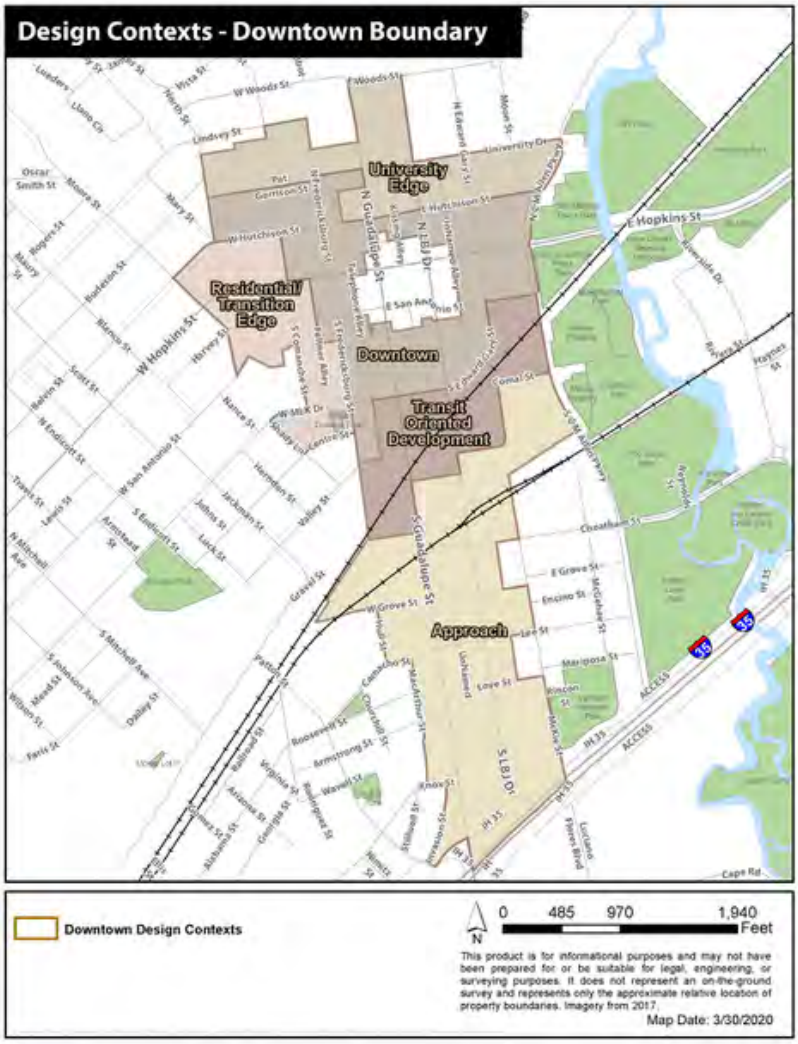
- San Marcos resident
- San Marcos business owner
- Architect
- Developer
- TX State student
- Prefer not to specify
- Other OR more than one of the above

If you marked "Other OR more than one of the above," please specify:

City of San Marcos Design Guidelines and Standards Update: Kickoff Survey

Survey Questions

The image below shows five design contexts, which together comprise "downtown." This map was created in 2012 and the district boundaries largely follow zoning. The white spot in the middle of the map is the Downtown Historic District, which uses a separate set of design guidelines than those that will be developed in this project. When answering the survey questions below, refer back to this map and remember that "downtown" refers to all of these design contexts, stretching from the University to I-35. There will be an opportunity to comment on the design context boundaries and the character of each context later in the project process.



4. How do you feel about the current trends in the scale (building height and size) of new buildings in the downtown area. Select one of the following:

- ◯ Very appropriate
- ◯ Somewhat appropriate
- ◯ Neutral
- ◯ Somewhat inappropriate
- ◯ Very inappropriate

5. What recent development projects downtown have had successful designs? Can you identify specific elements (such as building mass, a transition from a sensitive residential area, buildings materials, etc.) that made the design successful?

6. What, if any, design issues related to building design do you see in downtown?

7. The following topics will be addressed during this project:

- Massing and articulation of buildings
- Building materials
- Street level building design that activates the public realm
- Transitions from high density zones to abutting sensitive edges

Are there any other building design topics you believe should be addressed in this project?

8. As you walk through downtown San Marcos, what are some of your favorite existing or desired attributes? (ex: shaded sidewalks, lively street scene, saying hi to passersby, window shopping, landscape beautification, etc.)

City of San Marcos Design Guidelines and Standards Update: Kickoff Survey

Conclusion

Thank you for participating in the kickoff survey for the update of the Downtown Design Guidelines and Architectural Standards. We hope to see you at an in-person workshop early summer 2020! Please keep an eye the project webpage (www.sanmarcostx.gov/downtowndesign) for more information about the upcoming workshop.

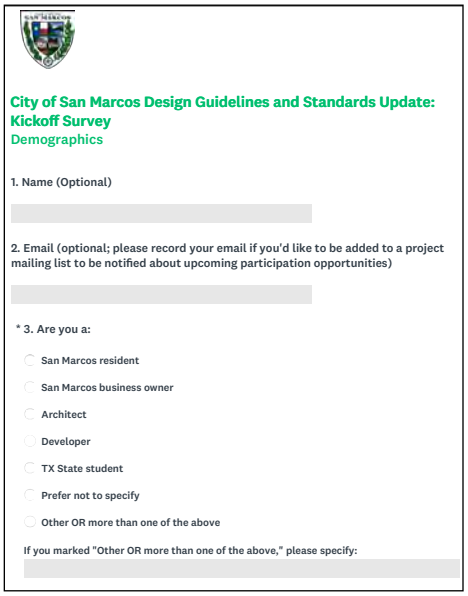
Online Survey Summary

San Marcos Design Standards and Guidelines Update

The City of San Marcos is engaged in an effort to update the design standards and guidelines. As part of these efforts, an online survey was designed to collect community feedback. This survey followed initial focus group meetings that were held in April. The goal of the survey was to provide an initial engagement opportunity for the community and collect feedback regarding design issues and successes downtown.

Two links to the survey were posted on the project webpage - one in English and one in Spanish - in order to increase accessibility. The survey opened on May 1 via SurveyMonkey and ran for approximately one month, closing on May 28. Over the course of these four weeks, 549 people responded to the surveys (546 on the English survey and three on the Spanish survey.)

This document summarizes the survey findings of the results collected. The following sections provide an explanation of each part of the survey and the answers provided by survey participants.



City of San Marcos Design Guidelines and Standards Update: Kickoff Survey

Demographics

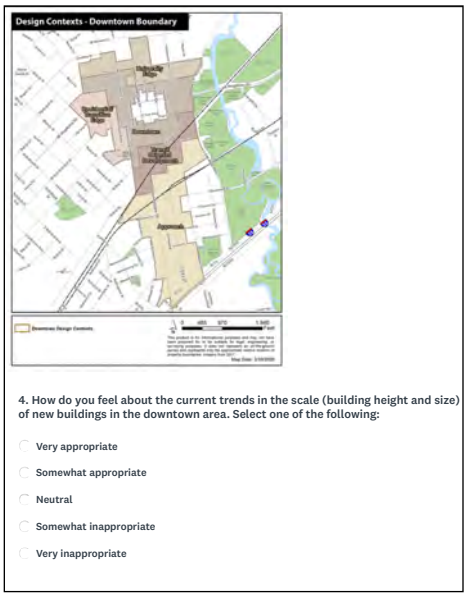
1. Name (Optional)

2. Email (optional; please record your email if you'd like to be added to a project mailing list to be notified about upcoming participation opportunities)

* 3. Are you a:

- San Marcos resident
- San Marcos business owner
- Architect
- Developer
- TX State student
- Prefer not to specify
- Other OR more than one of the above

If you marked "Other OR more than one of the above," please specify:



4. How do you feel about the current trends in the scale (building height and size) of new buildings in the downtown area. Select one of the following:

- Very appropriate
- Somewhat appropriate
- Neutral
- Somewhat inappropriate
- Very inappropriate

The two excerpts above illustrate a sample of the questions provided in the online survey. Following the demographic questions, the Design Contexts map provided context for the content questions that followed.

SURVEY COMPOSITION

The survey consisted of two sections - demographic questions and design questions. The demographic questions collected important information regarding the affiliation(s) with San Marcos held by each of the survey participants. These questions also allowed participants to enter their name and email address, if desired, in order to stay up-to-date with the project process.

The second set of questions in the survey asked participants their opinions about recent development and design characteristics in downtown San Marcos. There were five questions in this section of the survey. The first was a multiple choice question while the other four were open ended.

SURVEY RESULTS COMPILATION METHODOLOGY

After closing and downloading the raw data from the survey results, compilation of the results began. First, the responses from the Spanish survey link were added to those of the English survey link. The results from the multiple choice questions were updated to include the Spanish survey results and were turned into pie charts, which can be seen in the "Survey Questions" section below.

The data from the remaining questions was then tallied in order to visualize the common results. The answers from each question were tallied by one person for consistency in interpretation, although human error is still a factor. Each written response was read and examined for the common theme, which was entered into a spreadsheet. As the results from each survey question were read, the chart of tallies and common answers expanded. After the tally was complete, each question had over 50 answers, although many of the responses were only stated by one survey participant. In order to visualize the survey results in a concise way, graphics generated incorporate only the top ten (10) responses. The full compiled data is available upon request.

SURVEY QUESTIONS

The eight questions in the survey range in question format and response type. For each of the questions below, the question will be stated along with the number of participants that responded, the number that skipped the question and the top 10 answers provided, if applicable. The raw data and the tallied data spreadsheets are available upon request.

Question 1: Name

The first survey question was open ended and provided an opportunity for participants to record their name, if desired.

- Answered by 249 participants
- Skipped by 300 participants

Question 2: Email

Similar to the first question, the second offered participants an opportunity to provide an email address to receive future information about the project process. This question was also optional.

- Answered by 179 participants
- Skipped by 370 participants

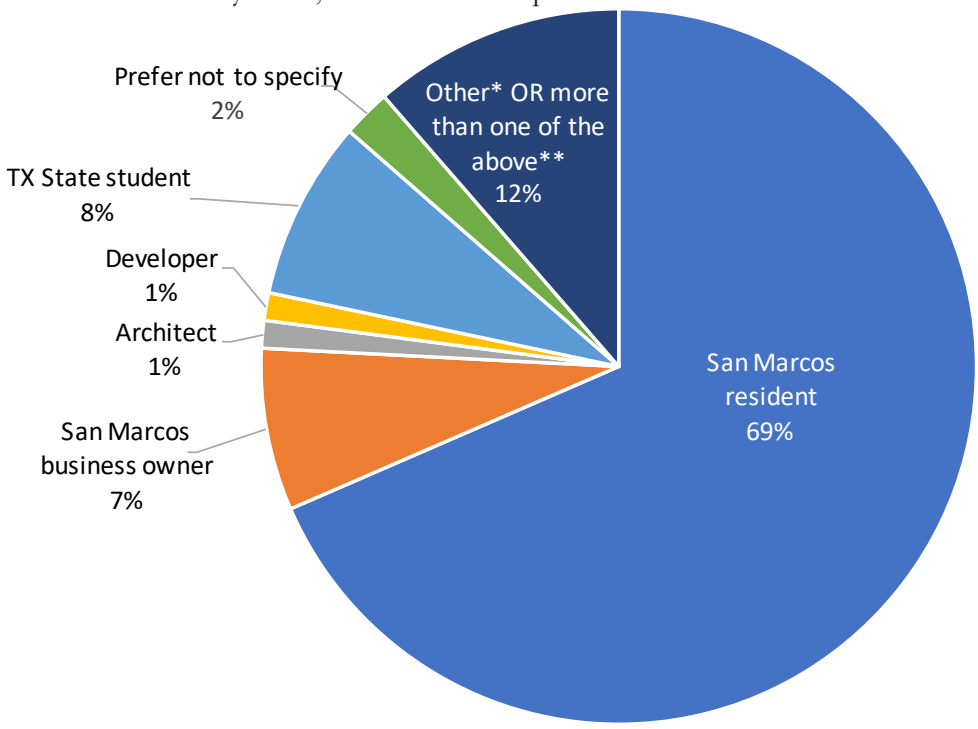
Question 3: Are you a:

Question 3 focused on demographics and asked participants about their role in the San Marcos community. This question had the best response rate of the entire survey:

- Answered by 549 participants
- Skipped by 0 participants

This was one of the two multiple choice questions in the survey, but the final answer option allowed participants to note that they fit into one or more of the available categories. Results show that over two-thirds of the participants are San Marcos residents, and many also have another affilitation including property owners, business owners and affilitation with Texas State. The final option also allowed participants to write-in a role that was not offered through one of the multiple choice answers. While the write-in responses are just calculated as part of the "Other" category shown in the pie chart below, the bullet list below notes a few of the most common write-in responses:

- Texas State alumni
- Property owner
- Work in San Marcos
- Live outside the city limits, but work and shop in San Marcos



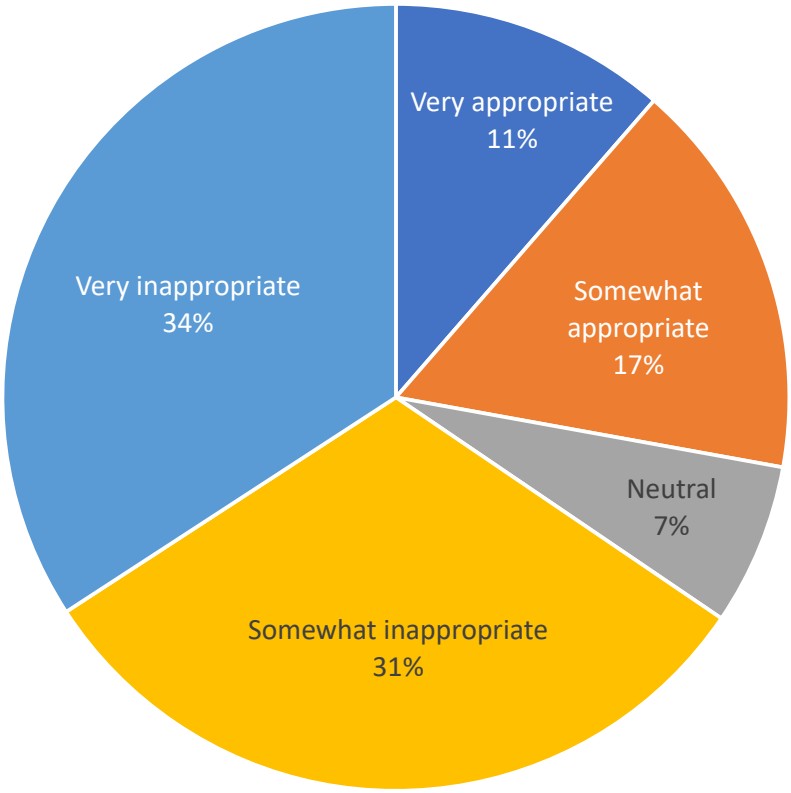
*The pie chart above illustrates answers to Question 3. *Refers to the list of "Other" responses added in by participants and ** refers to the fact that responses that indicated being part of two or more of the groups noted in the listed categories were added to those categories.*

Question 4: How do you feel about the current trends in the scale (building height and size) of new buildings in the downtown area? Select one of the following: very appropriate; somewhat appropriate; neutral; somewhat inappropriate; very inappropriate.

The second and final multiple choice question of the survey provided participants an opportunity to respond generally to the scale of new development downtown. While the response rate was not as high as question 3, this question was still answered by a majority of participants:

- Answered by 316 participants
- Skipped by 233 participants

As seen in the pie chart below, over 60% of respondents believe that the scale of new development downtown is either very inappropriate or somewhat inappropriate, compared to the 28% of respondents that indicated the scale is somewhat or very appropriate. This strong response indicates the need for rexamining the permitted scale of buildings downtown. While this question only provided a multiple choice answer option, the questions that follow expanded on this and related design topics, and provided an opportunity for participants to write in their own answers.



The pie chart above illustrates answers to the question "How do you feel about the current trends in the scale of new buildings in the downtown area? As seen through the results percentages, over 60% of respondents believe that the scale is inappropriate.

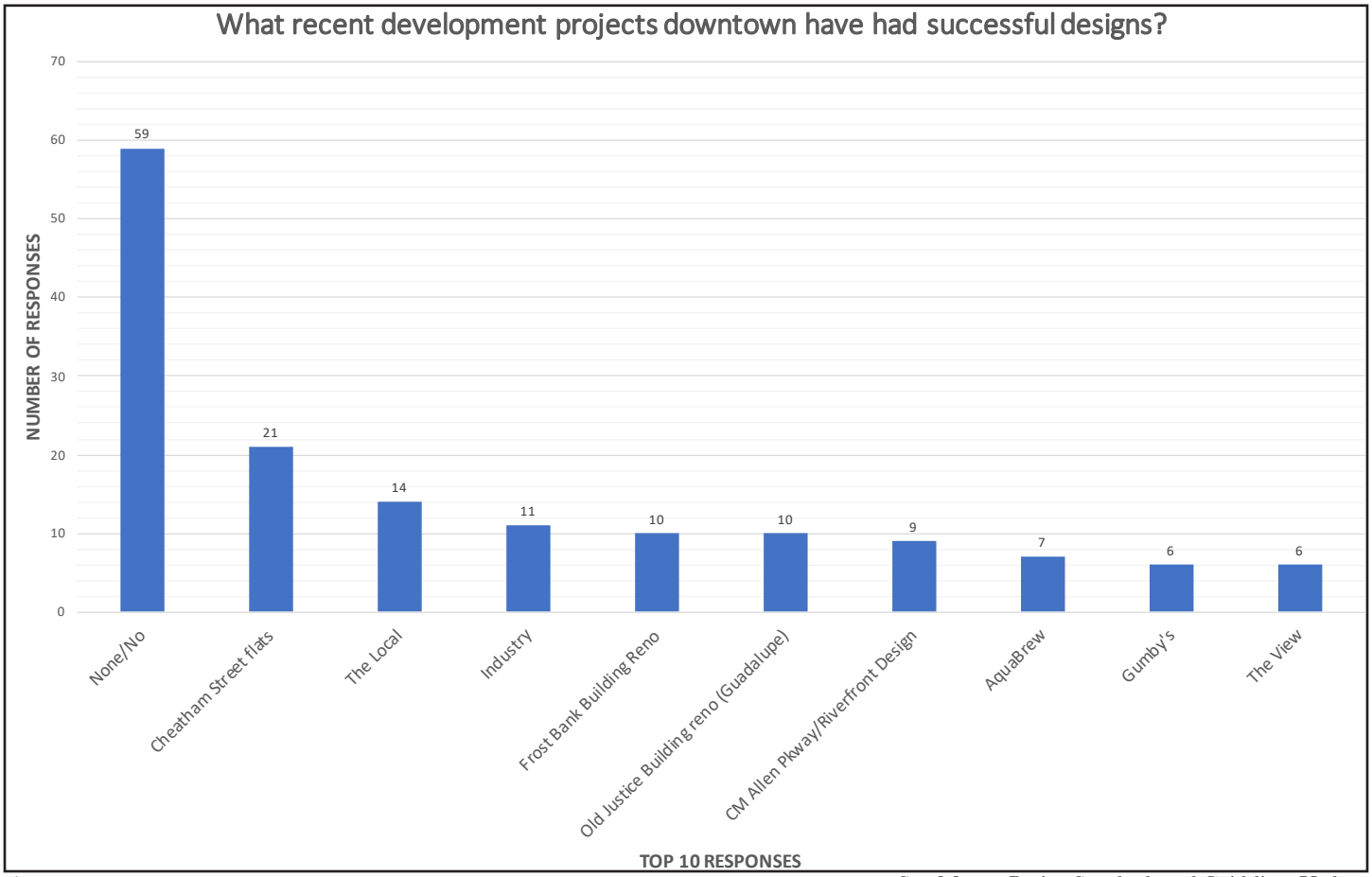
Question 5: What recent development projects downtown have had successful designs? Can you identify specific elements (such as building mass, a transition from a sensitive residential area, building materials, etc.) that made the design successful?

The first open ended question on the survey asked participants to think of recent development projects and businesses that have been successful in their design. Approximately half the survey participants responded to this question:

- Answered by 269 participants
- Skipped by 280 participants

Over 60 projects/locations were mentioned in the written responses, with the majority of responses receiving one or two votes. In compiling the responses, if someone mentioned more than one development project, each project received a tally. In order to create an easy to understand graphic of responses, the top 10 most common responses were included, as seen in the chart below. Also important to note is that the top response was "none", "no" or a similar response. However, this response can mean a few different things. "No" could refer to the respondent believing there are no recent successful new development projects, or it could also mean that they could not think of a project to name. "None" could mean the same, but most likely refers to respondents believing recent development projects are not successful. Some respondents whose vote contributed to this response category included additional notes. Common responses in these additional notes included:

- All too tall
- Too much density - density should be focused away from existing residential neighborhoods
- Too big and bulky
- Ruining the skyline



Question 6: What, if any, design issues related to building design do you see in downtown?

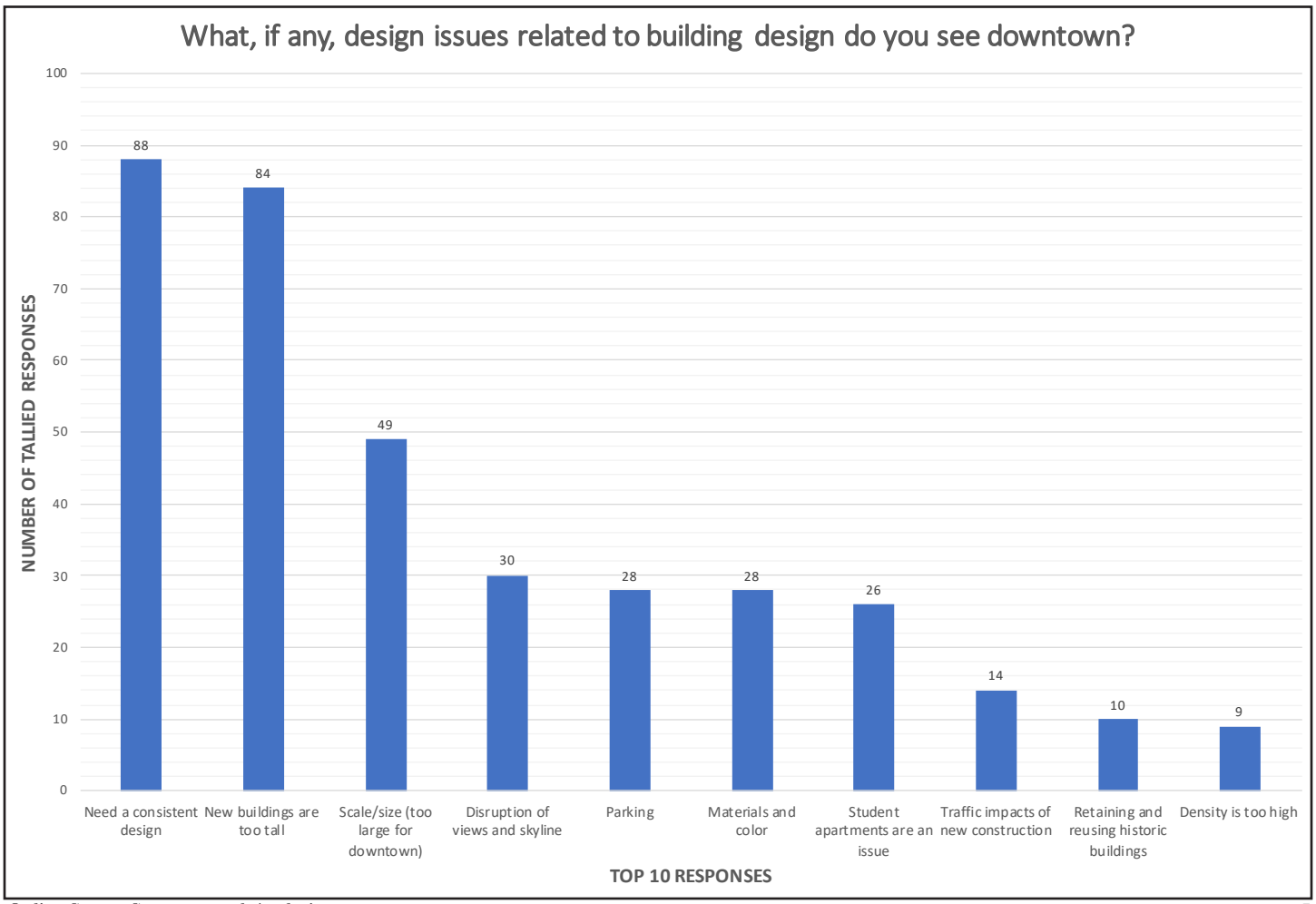
The second open-ended content question asked participants to consider design issues that have been raised by new development downtown. This question had a similar response rate to Question 5:

- Answered by 276 respondents
- Skipped by 273 respondents

The written responses were tallied for this question and two key design issues emerged:

- A more consistent design is needed in new buildings. This design should respect and be sensitive to historic resources, and should maintain the eclectic, small town character of San Marcos.
- New buildings are too tall.

While the other eight top responses shown in the chart below illustrate very common responses, an additional 34 responses that did not make the graph were also recorded. Two key topics - parking and height - were broken down into further categories based on the specificity of written responses. For instance, responses that addressed parking often noted that there was not enough parking or that the parking is not in the right places. A few responses also mentioned that there is too much parking. Height was broken down into a maximum of 3 or 4 stories and a maximum of 2 stories. While these more detailed categories were also tallied, the high level topics were also included in the tallied responses as not all responses included specific comments and instead just wrote "height is too tall" or "parking."

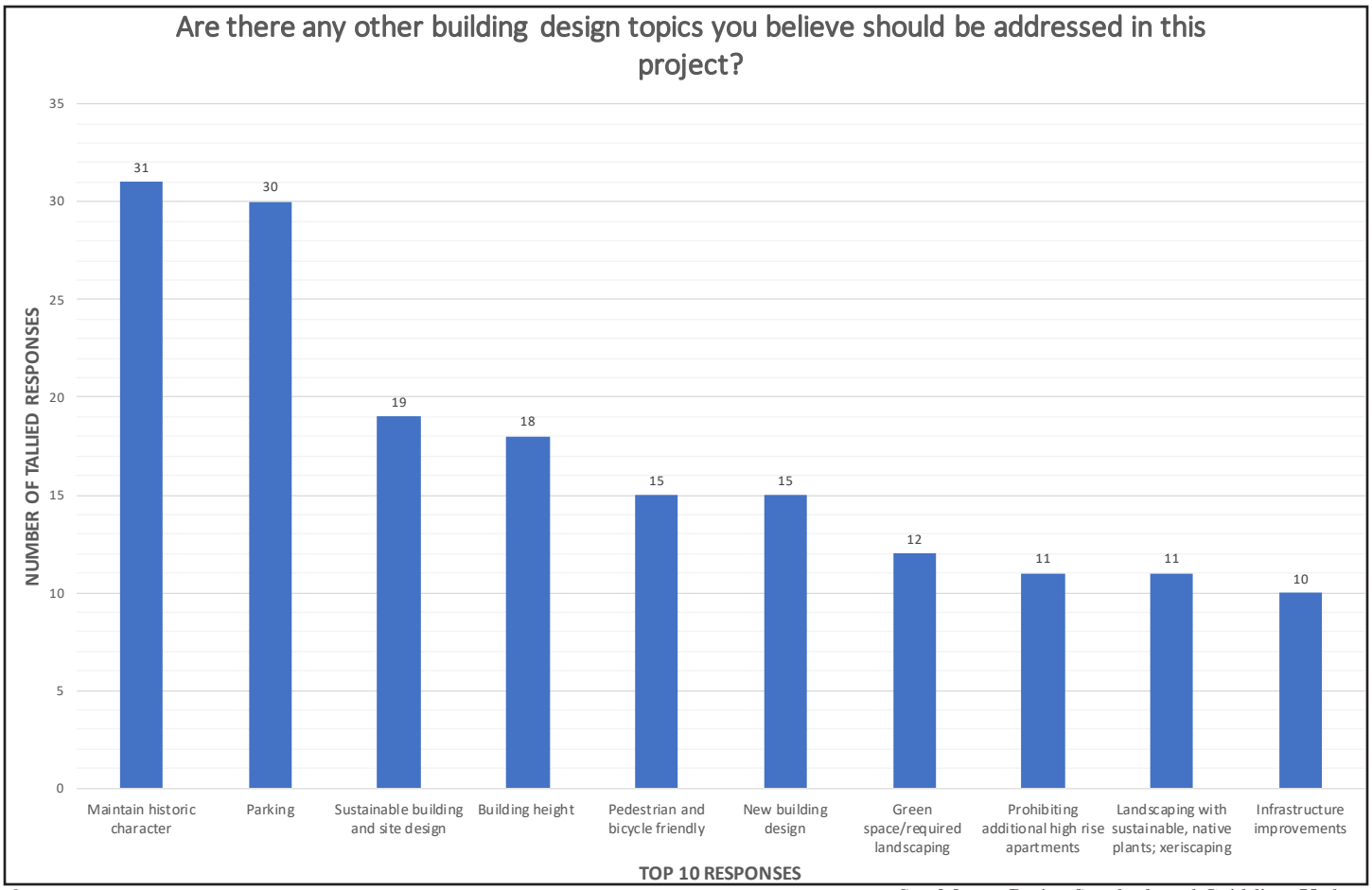


Question 7: The following topics will be addressed during this project: massing and articulation of buildings; building materials; street level building design that activates the public realm; transitions from high density zones to abutting sensitive edges. Are there any other building design topics you believe should be addressed in this project?

This question provided an opportunity for participants to note topics they hope to see addressed by this project. Less people responded to this question:

- Answered by 223 participants
- Skipped by 326 participants

Upon tallying the written responses to this question, over 50 specific topics emerged. While about half of the topics received only between one and three votes, the top 15 answers received 10 or more votes. The top 10 answers are shown in the chart below. Similar to the top answer in question 6, participants hope that this project will result in the maintenance of San Marcos's historic character, which includes the preservation of historic buildings, ensuring new development is compatible with historic buildings, the importance of maintaining a sense of place and emphasizing San Marcos' unique identity. The second most mentioned topic was parking, although there were a wider variety of opinions about parking. While the comments did not focus as much on the appropriate amount of parking, they did mention that parking garages should be considered and that their location should be on the periphery of downtown so as not to break up downtown development. They also mentioned that students bring their cars from home so adequate on-site parking should be provided for residential buildings.While not all topics mentioned in responses to this question will be addressed in this project, their mention by participants is important and a list of topics to be addressed later will be provided to the city.



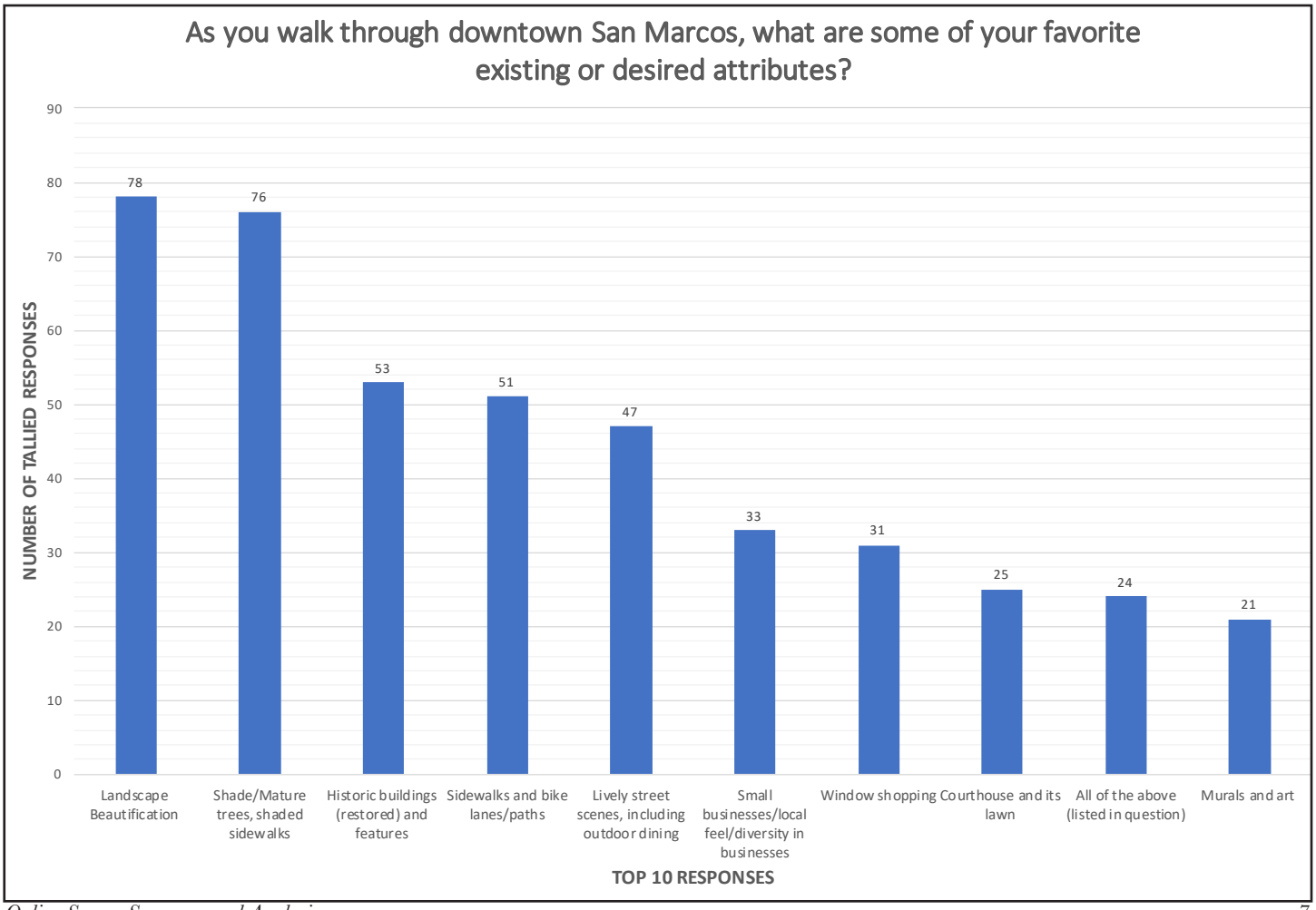
Question 8: As you walk through downtown San Marcos, what are some of your favorite existing or desired attributes? (ex: shaded sidewalks, lively street scene, saying hi to passersby, window shopping, landscape beautification, etc.)

The final survey question asked participants to consider their favorite attributes of downtown San Marcos. The participant response rate for this question went back up to a similar rate for questions 5 and 6:

- Answered by 276 participants
- Skipped by 273 participants

Written responses to this question were tallied into 59 different categories, with appoximately half of the categories only receiving between 1 and 3 responses. The suggestions in the question prompt did appear in the answers provided, although not all fell in the top 10. The top two responses focused on landscaping - one on the importance of landscape beautifucation including near sidewalks and in public areas, as well as the importance of including native Texas plantings. The second response was specific to the importance of shade trees to make the summers more tolerable and to incorporate more green downtown. The response common to many of the questions in this survey appeared again as the third most common response - the importance of historic buildings and features including stone street signs and horse ties.

While many of the responses focused on the importance of adding the elements mentioned, responses also recognized the work that the city has already put into making downtown an enjoyable experience, especially in regards to landscaping, sidewalks and art.



SUMMARY AND NEXT STEPS

This first opportunity for community engagement in the update to the San Marcos Design Standards and Guidelines showed that the community is ready to contribute. The survey turnout of over 500 participants, and over 200 responses for each question is a clear sign that people are ready to weigh in on the conversation and to help guide the process of updating the standards and guidelines. While a wide variety of community opinions were expressed through the questions in this survey, the top 10 responses for the questions aligned with the responses collected during the Focus Group meetings. Most notably, responses continue to emphasize the importance of maintaining a sense of place and the distinct identity of San Marcos, while promoting design excellence for all new development. Similarly, responding to context and balancing old and new also appeared as themes in the survey responses.

The results from this survey are an important first step for community feedback in this project. They will inform the presentation materials and the activities planned for a community workshop to be held later this summer.

LEARN ABOUT ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN

City of San Marcos Downtown Architectural Standards

Are there currently downtown design standards and guidelines in San Marcos? Yes, the City adopted standards and guidelines in 2012. Both standards and guidelines are utilized when reviewing new development in the downtown area. Standards are found in the San Marcos Deveopment Code, and guidelines are found in the San Marcos Design Manual.

What is the difference between standards and guidelines? Standards and guidelines work together to influence certain parts of a building. Standards include a "shall" or a "must" statement. For example, "a front porch must be at least 6 feet deep". Alternatively, guidelines typically include a "should" statement that helps provide intent or guidance to a standard. For example, "An awning or canopy should be in character with the building and streetscape."

Why are we updating these standards and guidelines? In January 2020, the San Marcos City Council provided direction to update these standards in order to include new standards to address design issues, create new graphics to illustrate the difference between standards and guidelines, and to tailor those standards and guidelines to different parts of downtown.

What types of topics are being addressed in the update? Several topics are being addressed, including:

- Massing of larger buildings to promote compatability with the traditional scale of downtown
- Articulation of facades
- Building materials
- Street level design that promotes a sense of place and activate the public realm; and
- Transitions from higher density zones to abutting sensitive edges

I'm not familiar with design terminology, what do all of those terms mean? We've included a helpful guide on the next few pages to define some design elements.

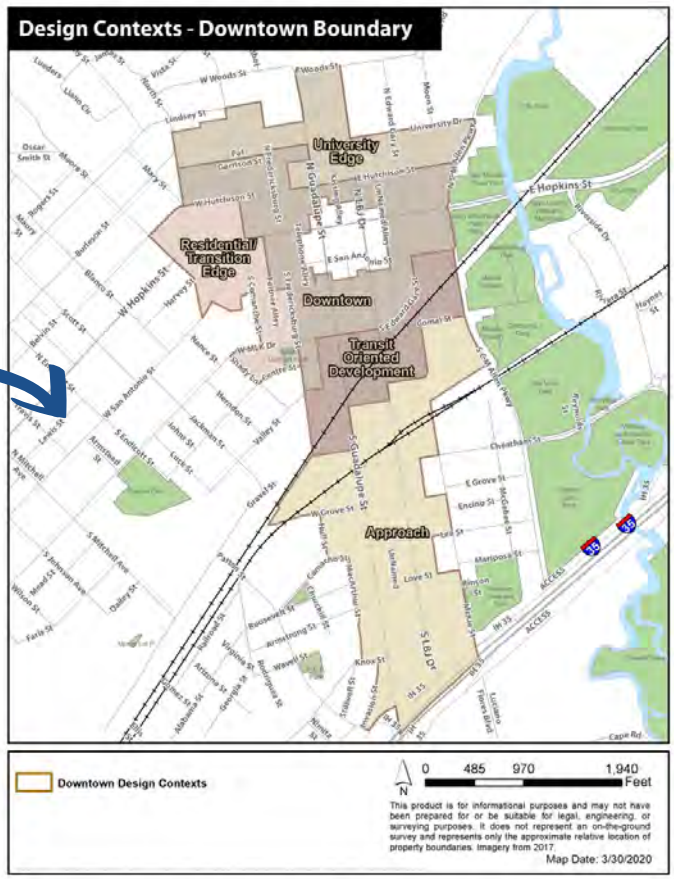
Where do these standards apply?

THE DOWNTOWN

While there are various architectural standards that apply to commercial or multifamily projects within the San Marcos City Limits. This project is looking specifically at updating standards and guidelines that are within the Downtown as shown in the downtown boundary in the map to the right.

WHAT ARE DESIGN CONTEXTS?

Design contexts are smaller geographic areas in the downtown that have unique attributes. For example, building design standards in the University Edge may need to look very different than standards in a "Residential Transition Edge".



Architectural Terms Explained

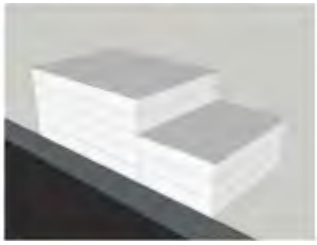
MASSING

Building massing refers to the shape, volume, or "chunk" of a building. Building massing techniques can be used to reduce the overall appearance of building while also helping to create a more interesting building form or shape. To "step down" a mass of a building means to potentially remove chunks of the building to help create a smooth transition between the building and the pedestrian, street, or other sensitive feature. Stepdowns can occur at various angles on a building:

FRONT

Reduces the mass of a building along a street

SIDE



Reduces mass providing transition to a smaller building

MIDDLE

Reduces the central mass by expressing different "chunks"

REAR

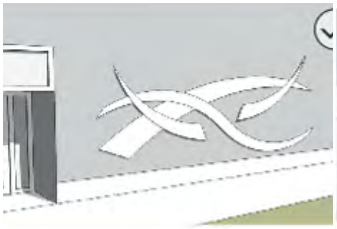
Creates a transition between the rear and a sensitive area (outdoor area or amenity space)

STREET LEVEL DESIGN

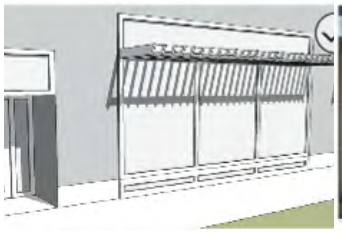
Street level design refers to the various elements that are viewed by a pedestrian walking along a building. Street level design elements can make the pedestrian experience more enjoyable and can help ensure larger buildings relate appropriately to the sidewalk and the street.

SHOPFRONT WINDOWS / DISPLAYS

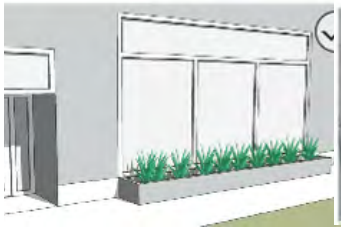
WALL ART



CANOPIES / AWNINGS (SHADE)



PLANTERS / LANDSCAPING



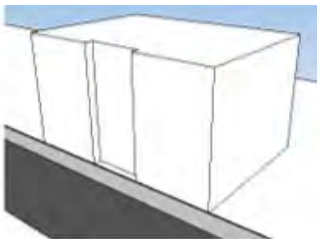
ARTICULATION

Building articulation refers to various detailed elements of a building. They are smaller than massing elements and focus on creating visual interest in a building through different vertical or horizontal details that articulate or provide a building uniqueness. Here are few examples of articulation styles:

ACCENT LINES

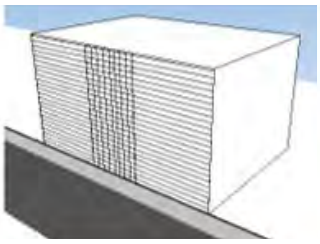
Vertical or horizontal lines on a building that projects slightly from the building wall (moldings, sills, cornices, canopies)

MINOR WALL OFFSETS



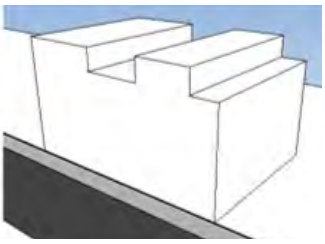
A wall offset occurs when a building includes a notch or indent in the building wall for the full height of the building.

MATERIAL/COLOR CHANGES



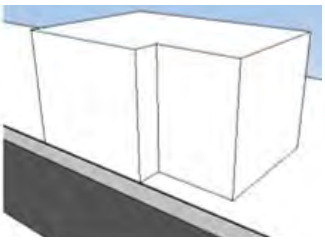
Material and color changes (every 15-30') can provide visual variety to a blank wall. Changes typically follow a pattern.

HEIGHT VARIATION



Changes in vertical height of building that are more than 2 stories tall.

INCREASED SETBACKS



A setback occurs when a building is pushed back slightly from the front property line for a portion of the building. This creates additional pedestrian space.

BASE, MIDDLE, CAP

This is a technique in which the ground floor, middle, and cap (or top) of a building are accented into three distinctive areas.

TRANSITIONS

A transition refers to when a building includes elements that soften the building as it moves closer to a sensitive edge. A sensitive edge could be a park, a smaller residential structure, or a historic district or site. Elements that would soften the building may be a reduction in height, or enhanced massing, articulation, or street level design.