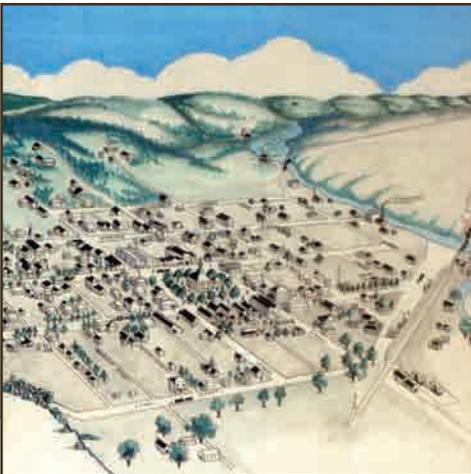


CITY OF SAN MARCOS DOWNTOWN MASTER PLAN



BROADDUS & ASSOCIATES
OCTOBER 2008

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OCTOBER 2008

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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City of San Marcos Downtown Master Plan

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Susan Narvaiz
Office of the Mayor

October 28, 2008

Dear Citizens:

The Downtown Master Plan, a guide for redevelopment and restoration of our historic downtown area, offers a fresh vision of how we can make our Central Business District more walkable, livable, naturally appealing and marketable in our 21st Century life.

Downtown San Marcos is the keystone for the growth and development of San Marcos. First established in the mid-Nineteenth Century with the founding of San Marcos, our Historic Downtown has been transformed through the generations, thriving as the commercial, governmental, residential and cultural center of the community.

In the 21st Century, it is now our turn to offer our stewardship of the Downtown. The Downtown Master Plan is the result of 18 months of work that brought together people from all areas of the community for workshops, presentations, discussions, debates, and brainstorming. The master plan unites our respective goals for Downtown: that it will be the vibrant, active heart of our community, with more local shops, restaurants, and entertainment options, with additional office and residential living space, and with improved pedestrian sidewalks and bicycle-friendly streets.

The Downtown Master Plan builds upon the positive characteristics inherent in San Marcos. It seeks to promote the authentic aspects of our heritage, enhance and preserve the charm of our historic buildings and neighborhoods, protect our river and natural resources, organize our landmarks, embrace our community assets, and shape our policies and infrastructure projects to guide further development. The strategies and recommendations described by this plan will be developed into current and future improvement projects and policy actions.

The master plan will be implemented over time as the City Council identifies funding sources, creates partnerships with the private sector, and commits to the completion of critical infrastructure projects contained in the plan to make this transformative plan a reality.

I would like to extend my sincerest thanks to those who participated in the creation of this significant document. As the Interstate 35 corridor expands and communities merge, the Downtown Master Plan, reflecting the spirit of our citizens, will insure the preservation of the unique identity of this very special place called San Marcos.

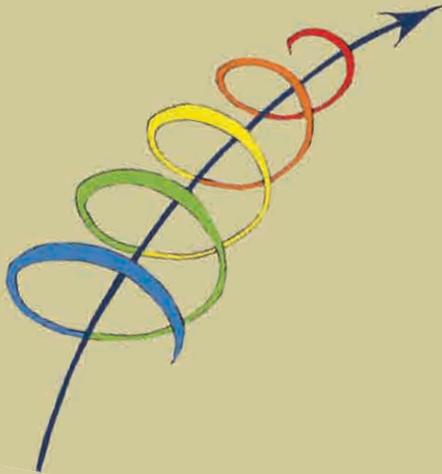
Sincerely,

Susan Narvaiz
Mayor

PREFACE

Welcome to the Downtown Master Plan

THE PLANNING PROCESS



STEP 1: INITIATION

Begins the project by aligning expectations, establishing planning goals, and charting a path for the planning project.

STEP 2: ANALYSIS

Involves the accumulation and analysis of quantitative and qualitative data necessary to generate a realistic portrait of the downtown area.

STEP 3: VISION

Focuses on early development of planning scenarios that holistically address the downtown's development.

STEP 4: DEVELOPMENT

Involves further study of the vision plan, including evaluation in greater detail of discrete site areas, so that it may be used to describe innovative development ideas, to obtain input, and build consensus from stakeholders.

STEP 5: REFINEMENT

Includes preparation of the final composite plan and relate supporting documents.

STEP 6: FINAL PLAN

Welcome to the City of San Marcos Downtown Master Plan! The plan summarizes the community workshops, discussions, and analyses that have taken place over the past twelve months, and its intent is to guide City leadership toward the revitalization of Downtown San Marcos. After approval by City Council, the Downtown Master Plan will inform the City on areas to direct City resources in order to stimulate positive growth Downtown.

The document is organized into chapters that are reflective of the planning process. The "Introduction" describes the premise of the Downtown Master Plan; the "Observations and Analysis" chapter discusses San Marcos' conditions today; the "Vision Plan" chapter illustrates the community's future vision for the Downtown; the fourth chapter, "Downtown Plan," articulates the specific strategies for the City to pursue in order realize the vision; and the final chapter, "Summary of Recommendations," lists strategic projects as a series of steps and policies. The Downtown Market Analysis prepared by TIP Strategies in conjunction with the Downtown Master Plan is summarized within the body report; a full version is available from the City.

If you have followed the Downtown Master Planning process, you will recognize many of the illustrations and ideas included in this booklet. However, since the purpose of this document is to describe implementable projects for the City, you may find that the ideas are presented in a different format than they were in the public presentations.

The format organizes the multitude of discussions and conversations into seven "umbrella" categories that will help the City implement the master plan in a step-by-step manner. These categories are: 1. San Marcos' Identity and Placemaking, 2. Downtown Business Development, 3. Development Standards & Processes, 4. Streets & Roadways Network, 5. Public Transit, 6. Stormwater Management & Water Quality, 7. Utilities Infrastructure.

This plan is the first step in creating a revitalized Downtown for the City. Your input and feedback to date has greatly influenced the plan's content, and your continued support and involvement will help ensure that this plan becomes implemented.

If you have questions regarding the document, its contents, or additional materials, please contact:

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Source: Broaddus & Associates, Inc.

Residents guided consultants on a walking tour around San Marcos' Downtown.



Source: Broaddus & Associates, Inc.

Public workshops allowed residents to collaborate with city planners and consultants.

INTRODUCTION

A Collaborative Approach

The City of San Marcos Downtown Master Plan is a part of a decade-long process that began with San Marcos' Horizons efforts in 1996, and stems from even earlier city master planning efforts. In light of extraordinary growth along the Interstate-Highway 35 corridor, the City's Horizons planning document has directed development for positive community growth. The original Horizons document has been expanded into several sector plans and other special area plans for City projects.

Yet, despite the Horizons plans and unprecedented development in other areas of the city, San Marcos' Downtown has struggled to maintain its identity. The Downtown is no longer the regional marketplace that it once was, and the city has developed a competing economic center along "the corridor." Recognizing the unrealized opportunities within San Marcos' Downtown and understanding the pressure for further growth from Austin and San Antonio, the City determined that a revised master plan was needed for the Downtown. The new Downtown Master Plan is conceptualized as a "big-picture" vision that will direct City projects and involvement for the revitalization of Downtown.

In 2006, the City appointed a Downtown Master Plan Task Force to ensure citizen input in the Downtown Master Plan, and a Request for Qualifications for consultants was released. In 2007, a team led by Broaddus and Associates, Inc. of Austin, Texas was brought on-board, and the public Master Plan process began. This document describes the outcomes of the Downtown Master Planning process, and serves as the Downtown Master Plan.

The Downtown Master Planning process engaged a diverse group of residents, business owners, and citizen interest groups. Community forums and open-houses, walking tours, meetings with key city staff and stakeholders, and surveys were conducted over the course of a year in order to form a representative foundation upon which to build the Downtown Vision. Over 1600 respondents

completed the Downtown Master Plan Survey, and more than 400 community members participated and collaborated in person with city staff and consultants.

Throughout the Master Planning Process, San Marcos citizens agreed that the City should assume an active role in the revitalization of Downtown as a vibrant, regionally-competitive town center. Participants also strongly agreed that San Marcos' Downtown has a unique quality of character that the City should protect and enhance through future development. These main goals as expressed by the community became the foundation for the Downtown Master Plan. Future City Policies and follow-on Capital Improvement Projects should support the Downtown Master Plan vision described within this document, as it is a direct representation of the combined opinions of San Marcos citizens.

San Marcos is at a key juncture for directing the future growth of the city, as the desire to reinvigorate the Downtown meets the increasing demand for development along the IH-35 corridor. The City should take up a key role in guiding positive growth in the Downtown area, reinventing it as a vibrant, competitive Downtown that retains San Marcos' unique character and identity. This Downtown Master Plan document is a starting-point for a new chapter of Downtown growth; its project list should be revisited and expanded as a working document in future years, but the document should remain true to the guiding visions of San Marcos residents.

INTRODUCTION

Your Reasons for Participating

The community workshops revealed a diverse group of stakeholders. Each workshop participant held a legitimate set of hopes, fears, and goals for San Marcos' future, and each was given opportunities to express their ideas and concerns.

As the planning process progressed, distinct motives for participation emerged, which aligned community members into five, inter-related groups. These groups are: those seeking promotion and development of business opportunities in San Marcos, those seeking preservation of the built heritage, those wanting protection of the River's ecosystem, those seeking relief from day to day frustrations Downtown, and those seeking an enhancement of their lifestyle related to neighborhood identity and walkability. These groups are described further below.

1. PROMOTION AND DEVELOPMENT

This portion of the community seeks to create clearer paths for business opportunities, realistic development limitations, and the promotion of the qualities inherent to San Marcos. They believe that San Marcos' future success relies upon the city's ability to compete with similar communities both regionally and nationally. These citizens hope that the City of San Marcos will craft a marketable identity that enables it to develop.

This constituency broadly champions:

- Less restrictive zoning and building codes.
- Financial incentives for prospective business owners.
- Increased accessibility & mobility through public transportation networks.
- Identification of niche markets.
- Increased confidence in public school system.



Source: Broaddus & Associates, Inc.

We'd like to give a special thank you to those who participated in the planning process:

| Group/Event: | # of people |
|--|-------------|
| City Planning Department | 5 |
| Downtown Master Plan Task Force | 5 |
| <u>Community Forum #1</u> | |
| Public Safety | 1 |
| City Water/Wastewater | 1 |
| Assistant City Managers | 2 |
| Main Street/Downtown Association | 4 |
| Texas State University-San Marcos | 3 |
| Public Works/Airport/Electric | 4 |
| City Engineering | 3 |
| Commuter Rail District | 2 |
| <u>Community Forum #2</u> | 52 |
| <u>Community Walking Tour</u> | 25 |
| City Planning & Zoning | 9 |
| <u>Community Forum #3</u> | |
| Mayor Work Session | 1 |
| <u>Community Forum #4</u> | 175 |
| <u>Business Community Forum #5</u> | 29 |
| Main Street/Downtown Association | 12 |
| City Staff Infrastructure Meetings | 10 |
| Transportation/Parking Committees | 12 |
| <u>Open House Community Forum #4</u> | 34 |

INTRODUCTION

Your Reasons for Participating

2. PRESERVATION

This section of the community is torn between the desire for growth and development Downtown and their concerns about impacts of development on the Downtown landscape. This group fears that further development Downtown will negatively impact both the character Downtown and the character of surrounding neighborhoods.

This group promotes:

- Designation and management of historical districts.
- Development of architectural and landscape design standards, supporting the historic character of Downtown.
- City oversight of design standards implementation.
- Mixed-use zoning within the Downtown District.
- Preservation of neighborhood and community atmosphere.

3. PROTECTION

This section of the community is torn between the desire for growth and development Downtown and their concerns about impacts of development on the eco-system of the San Marcos River. They view the San Marcos River as one of San Marcos' greatest attributes, and they strive to protect its delicate ecosystem.

These citizens encourage:

- Containment and treatment of storm-water prior to its release into San Marcos River.
- Development of a plan to clean-up the plume of groundwater & soil contamination Downtown that leaches into the aquifer.
- Regulation of plant species along river front to avoid further invasion of non-native species.
- Reduction of impervious cover in Downtown district.

4. RELIEF FROM FRUSTRATION

Throughout the planning process, citizens commented on a number of existing problems that have become sources of great frustration. These day-to-day annoyances affect the quality of life for residents of San Marcos, and in order for the Downtown to develop positively, this group feels that the sources of their frustrations need to be addressed.

Members of this group support:

- Coordination and appropriate timing of stoplights.
- Repair of broken sidewalks and curbs.
- Regulation of train schedules.
- Installation of a managed and monitored parking system.
- Reduction in noise pollution from industrial traffic Downtown.
- Promotion of easy parking for Downtown patrons.

5. ENHANCEMENT OF LIFESTYLE

The fifth group of citizens attaches great value to their community. They value close-knit residential neighborhoods, pedestrian-friendly streetscapes, locally-made products and services, and events that bring community members together. These citizens hope that the City will encourage additional cultural events and support physical connections, whether regional commuter rail or parkway systems.

This constituency encourages:

- Safe routes for cyclists, joggers, and pedestrians.
- Designation of places for farmers' markets, gatherings, exhibitions, and events.
- Regional public transportation systems to reduce automobile traffic.
- Promotion of "greenbelt" links and parkway systems.
- Localized neighborhood centers with dining, convenience shopping, and services.

INTRODUCTION

Key Terms

KEY TERMS

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT:

The application of public resources to stimulate private-sector investment.

CREATIVE CLASS:

A group of people consisting of “knowledge workers” (lawyers, doctors), “creative core workers” (architecture, design, media, education, computer programming), and Bohemians (artists, beatniks, skilled tradesmen, writers, musicians).

PLACEMAKING:

The process of creating memorable places such as parks, plazas, & streetscapes where people like to gather. Placemaking helps to strengthen a city’s “sense of place” or identity.

FORM-BASED CODES:

A type of development code that focuses primarily on controlling the physical form of buildings and secondarily on land-uses. Form-Based Codes are comparable to Zoning Ordinances but do not replace building safety codes such as the International Building Code.

WALKABILITY:

A measure of the pedestrian’s experience or walking conditions.

STREETSCAPES:

The public areas of the city; the parts of the city landscape that are visible from the street. A streetscape encompasses building facades, sidewalks, street furniture, tree canopy, paving, crosswalks, lighting, parking, and streets.



Source: Broaddus & Associates, Inc.

Citizens relayed their observations to planners at an early Master Planning Workshop.

WAYFINDING:

All the ways in which people orient themselves and navigate from place to place. Wayfinding features can include any parts of the streetscape such as lighting, street furniture, and landscaping as well as signage and branding.

BRANDING:

The process or act of developing and applying a brand or label such as a name, term, design, or symbol to a product.

OBSERVATIONS & ANALYSIS

The City of San Marcos' Background

Source: Perry Castenada Map Collection, University of Texas



Illustration of Historic San Marcos, 1881

OBSERVATIONS & ANALYSIS

THE CITY OF SAN MARCOS' BACKGROUND

San Marcos is a city of just over 50,000 residents located in south-central Texas halfway between Austin and San Antonio. San Marcos was initially settled because of its location on the natural springs at the head of the San Marcos River. Geographically, San Marcos is positioned between the high plains hill country on the west and the coastal plains on the east; it is self-titled the “gateway to the hill country.”

In 1848, San Marcos was designated the seat of Hays County, and the town was planned with a courthouse square and corresponding street grid, as seen above in an 1881 illustration. The future

of the town was secured with the arrival of the International – Great Northern Railroad in 1881 and of Southwest Texas State Normal School in 1899 – now Texas State University.

In the half-century since the construction of Interstate Highway 35, San Marcos has experienced significant growth. The county's population has increased fivefold in that time period, and San Marcos has reaped both benefits and pitfalls as the result. Some feel that development along the IH-35 corridor has been positive for San Marcos in that it generates a larger tax base for city use and draws visitors from across the region. Others feel

OBSERVATIONS & ANALYSIS

The City of San Marcos' Background



Source: Broaddus & Associates, Inc.

Downtown San Marcos Study Area

that the corridor growth is threatening the identity of San Marcos: they feel that the city has become indistinguishable from other development along the Interstate.

Growth along “the corridor” has also shifted businesses and patrons away from San Marcos’ historic Downtown. Several decades of decline have strained the Downtown, and, although the storefronts along the courthouse square remain populated with businesses, these small enterprises struggle to keep pace with IH-35 corridor giants. It has become apparent that San Marcos’ Downtown is not the regional destination that it once was, and it is the aim of this Master Planning effort to create a plan for the reinvigoration of the Downtown.

The Downtown study area is identified in the diagram above. However, since downtown planning is affected by the entire city, the document refers to the Downtown more loosely, and takes into consideration neighborhoods and key elements outside the outlined study area.

The following pages describe the observations and analysis of the Downtown’s strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats in order to generate a baseline understanding upon which to develop the Downtown Master Plan. There are seven sections of analysis; these are: 1. San Marcos’ Identity and Placemaking, 2. Downtown Business Development, 3. Development Standards and Processes, 4. Streets and Roadways Network, 5. Public Transit, 6. Stormwater Management and Water Quality, and 7. Utility Infrastructure.

OBSERVATIONS & ANALYSIS

I. San Marcos' Identity & Placemaking



Source: 3D Topo Quads, 2007

San Marcos is often referred to as the “Gateway to the Hill Country.”

1. SAN MARCOS' IDENTITY & PLACEMAKING STRENGTHS

As expressed in the many public workshops, San Marcos' greatest asset is its Downtown. Citizens of San Marcos are proud of the unique character of San Marcos as it relates to the quality of the Downtown neighborhoods, the integration of the natural springs and the river, the city's location at the edge of the Texas Hill Country, and the proximity of a major institution of higher-education. Indeed, San Marcos is the envy of many central Texas communities, since it still possesses a “sense of place” that many small towns are losing or have already lost.

San Marcos' location at the edge of the Texas Hill Country is one of the city's unique characteristics. Established along the seam of the Coastal Plains and the High Plains Hills, San Marcos historically became a commercial center for agricultural exchange between plains farmers and hills ranchers. San Marcos also became a resting place for travel from east to west along Ranch Road 12. The “Gateway to the Hill Country” identity remains with the community today.

OBSERVATIONS & ANALYSIS

I. San Marcos' Identity & Placemaking

San Marcos' Downtown neighborhoods possess many attributes that contribute to a strong identity of place. The neighborhood immediately surrounding the historic, landmark courthouse is known as the Downtown or Central Business District, and its brick facades and stone buildings give it a unique architectural charm. It is listed on the National Historic Downtown Register, which helps to preserve architectural character and ensure appropriate infill construction. Local businesses and county-related offices located in the Downtown help to maintain the "small-town" feel of San Marcos, and the Square bustles with activity at most times of the day.

East of the Downtown district between the river and the interstate is the Rio Vista neighborhood. Architecturally, it consists of small mid-century cottages that are typically populated by families and college students. South of the Downtown district between the railroad tracks and the interstate lay the East Guadalupe and Victory Gardens neighborhoods. These established, residential neighborhoods are known for their cultural heritage and community pride. Single-family cottages in a range of styles create the historic neighborhood fabric, and several neighborhood businesses line Guadalupe Street & LBJ Streets as they lead to the Downtown.

The Heritage neighborhood west of the Downtown is comprised of larger, single-family residential homes characteristic of the early twentieth century. The ornate Victorian and Craftsman architectural styles found in this neighborhood make it unique from more modest styles found elsewhere in San Marcos. The Dunbar neighborhood, located southwest of the Downtown district, is home to many cultural landmarks, including the Calaboose African American History museum and the Old First Baptist Church.

In addition to the strong cultural traits, all of the neighborhoods exhibit desirable physical traits that contemporary urban planning often attempts to



Source: Broadus & Associates, Inc.

San Marcos River

replicate. Compact, gridded street networks help ensure that the neighborhoods are navigable and walkable, with many residences within a five-minute walk of neighborhood services, parks, churches, and schools. The ability to live, work, and play within each neighborhood creates a mixed-use environment that is an asset to San Marcos' quality of life.

The San Marcos Springs and the San Marcos River are a beautiful natural amenity in the heart of the Downtown neighborhoods. Since most of the immediate area is floodplain, the river is surrounded by a green network of parks and recreation areas that are well-loved and used by the community. Residents, visitors and college students frequent the river from the University through the Downtown. On warm days, the river is busy with swimmers and

OBSERVATIONS & ANALYSIS

I. San Marcos' Identity & Placemaking

Source: Broaddus & Associates, Inc.



Texas State University - San Marcos

people floating in inner-tubes, canoes, and kayaks. Local restaurants have taken advantage of river-tourists and are perched overlooking the river and its banks.

The City's parks form a protective buffer between the busy Downtown and the fragile Springs & River, which is the only home of several endangered species. The Springs is also culturally significant, as archeologists believe it to be North America's oldest, continually-inhabited site.* The Springs' unique attributes are a strong element of San Marcos' identity.

**Handbook of Texas Online*, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/SS/rns10.html> (accessed February 28, 2008).

Texas State University's presence within San Marcos has been a boon to city growth, development, and local identity. The university boasts a full-time student population of nearly 30,000 and is the City's largest employer. It is a part of a larger higher education community that consists of more than 17 institutions within a 60 mile radius of San Marcos.

The University and academic community endow the area with numerous cultural opportunities, which include performances, historic collection displays, art exhibitions, and political debates. Having one of Texas' largest public universities in San Marcos – and within walking distance of the Downtown and its amenities – provides the city an additional element key to great places: the opportunity for people of all ages to learn.

OBSERVATIONS & ANALYSIS

I. San Marcos' Identity & Placemaking

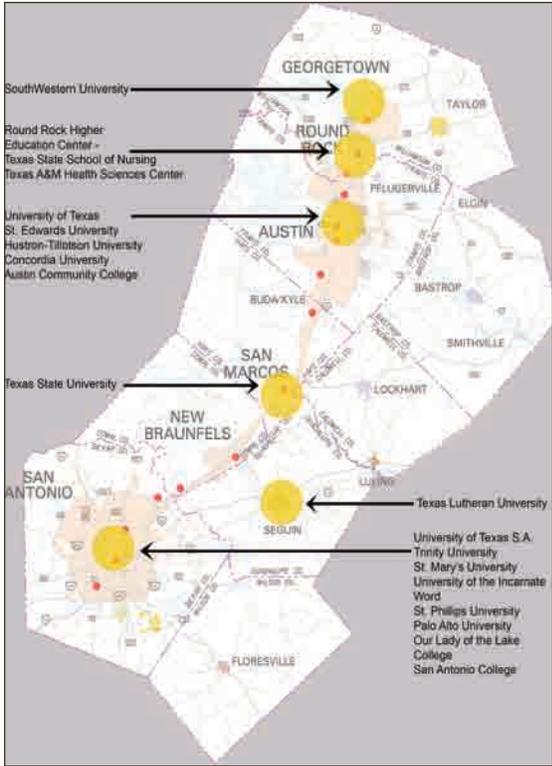
In 2005, Texas State University completed a Campus Master Plan that proposed a performing arts center and extended campus greens along the edge of the Downtown. In response, the City completed a Campus Edge Strategic Plan, which won the Texas American Planning Association award in 2007, that identified key areas for town-gown integration. The City worked collaboratively with the University to envision stronger retail and entertainment offerings along the University's edge, and developed improved infrastructure plans for roadways and stormwater management. University students, faculty and staff, as well as everyday residents and visitors benefit from partnerships between the City and the University.

Generally, San Marcos is considered a great place to live. It already has the framework of a city that "Creative Class" residents enjoy, and has maintained an element of affordability not found in neighboring communities. It is the combination of San Marcos' existing elements that give it a prevailing "sense of place" that any Downtown Plan should seek to embrace.

WEAKNESSES

In addition to all of San Marcos' strong points, the City has many weaknesses that need to be addressed in the Downtown Master Plan and future planning efforts. Firstly, the shift of economic growth toward "the corridor" has weakened the Downtown's vibrancy as a regional marketplace. Many no longer consider Downtown a destination within San Marcos and, instead, identify the outlet malls as "San Marcos."

Growth along IH-35 has eroded many of the neighborhoods within San Marcos. On-ramps and off-ramps have severed neighborhoods, and businesses suited to serve IH-35 commuters have replaced businesses that used to service the local community.



Institutions of Higher Education near San Marcos

Source: Broaddus & Associates, Inc. on ASA Intermunicipal Rail District Map

A previous lack of interest in developing Downtown has also resulted in many deteriorating and underdeveloped properties, which has weakened the community image and has impacted property values Downtown.

Although not explicitly a portion of the Downtown Master Plan, quality public education is a critical issue to consider for any urban redevelopment project. As the City seeks to attract young, professional families with its growth, oppressing concerns about San Marcos' public education system will be an important milestone.

OBSERVATIONS & ANALYSIS

I. San Marcos' Identity & Placemaking

Source: Broaddus & Associates, Inc.



COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS

How do people perceive the City of San Marcos?

Gateway to the Hill Country
Shopping Destination - Outlet Malls
University Town for Texas State University
Aquarena Springs
Jewel of the Corridor
"We are often defined by what we are not."

Which towns do you admire, and to which do you compare San Marcos?

Wimberley
Gruene
Dripping Springs
Fredricksburg

What should San Marcos be in 10 years?

A community that reflects its cultural heritage.
A place to retire.
A flagship for environmental preservation.
A haven from urban sprawl.
A community with a heart.

Another negative perception of San Marcos relates to the large university student population. Some negatively view San Marcos as just another college-town. The businesses within the Downtown largely serve university students, which adds to this perception. The high population of student renters has affected the quality and maintenance of many houses in San Marcos' Downtown, and has caused debate about the presence of students in "family-oriented" neighborhoods. Despite positive relationships between the City and the University, as evidenced by joint/responsive planning efforts, there appears to be an ongoing rivalry between some residents of San Marcos and the students.

San Marcos' weaknesses in community identity and its "sense of place" often pair with its strengths; identifying these combinations helps the Downtown Master Plan to address the City's weaknesses by building upon its inherent qualities. The next section outlines San Marcos' many opportunities for enhancing its neighborhood character and identity that will help it to attract and retain talented residents.

OPPORTUNITIES

San Marcos is poised to benefit from "corridor" growth unlike many central Texas communities who are not located along major transportation routes. The current and anticipated demand for office, retail, and residential space in the surrounding region presents an opportunity that San Marcos should welcome. Some of the regional space demand can be accommodated within San Marcos' Downtown, which, if appropriately guided by City programs, could help to reinvigorate the historic Downtown marketplace.

Retail in San Marcos' Downtown has the opportunity to piggyback off the success of outlying retail centers, and draw patrons from the existing tourist base. San Marcos could market to make Downtown the local compliment to the regional retail, offering local products and services that are

OBSERVATIONS & ANALYSIS

I. San Marcos' Identity & Placemaking



Source: Broaddus & Associates, Inc.

Shops and Dining Options in Downtown San Marcos

uniquely San Marcos. A marketing program that promotes Downtown businesses may help to draw patrons back Downtown and reinvent San Marcos as a vibrant, regional center.

In support of the promotion of Downtown identity, San Marcos has the opportunity to invest in a commuter rail stop along the existing Union Pacific railroad line. The Austin-San Antonio Intermunicipal Commuter Rail District has proposed that a commuter rail line between the two municipalities be instated as early as 2012 to ease traffic congestion along IH-35. Currently, feasibility studies are being conducted and meetings are being held in towns with proposed rail stops, including San Marcos.

San Marcos' Downtown businesses would benefit greatly from a Downtown commuter rail stop. A commuter rail stop would make Downtown San Marcos more accessible, as it would allow even more patrons access to the Downtown without increasing vehicular traffic. San Marcos has the opportunity to influence the implementation of the commuter rail line and its stops, since the rail line is in its planning phases.

Along with the rail stop comes the opportunity to enhance San Marcos' existing neighborhood character. Creative, professional families who wish to live in Central Texas may find San Marcos more affordable and its quality of life more appealing than its metropolitan neighbors to the north and south. San Marcos can seek to attract these families by

OBSERVATIONS & ANALYSIS

I. San Marcos' Identity & Placemaking

Source: Broaddus & Associates, Inc.



San Marcos has the opportunity to influence the character of development that occurs Downtown.

Source: Broaddus & Associates, Inc.



San Marcos has to opportunity to enhance and extend its network of hike and bike trails.

encouraging the development of quality housing stock in the Downtown and throughout the city.

The City of San Marcos has the opportunity to influence the type of residential development that occurs Downtown, and can use the demand for housing growth as an opportunity to infill underdeveloped Downtown properties with mixed-use and residential buildings. The infill opportunities are positive not only for providing additional tax base (demonstrated later in the Master Plan) but also aesthetically enhance the character of Downtown neighborhoods.

San Marcos has the opportunity to enhance neighborhood image by improving its parks and recreation system with extended bicycle trails and pedestrian pathways. The enhancement of the “public realm,” or the spaces between streets and buildings by planting street trees and improving pedestrian comfort and safety will help to strengthen neighborhood identities.

In undertaking Downtown neighborhood improvements, San Marcos has the opportunity to further enhance its relationship with Texas State University. The City of San Marcos has the opportunity to partner with the University to bring new cultural events to the community. The City may also influence student-oriented development in the Downtown neighborhoods closest to campus, strengthening friendly “town-gown” connections that improve San Marcos’ overall identity.

OBSERVATIONS & ANALYSIS

I. San Marcos' Identity & Placemaking

THREATS

The vision of San Marcos as a unique city is being threatened by the demand for development along the Austin-San Antonio “corridor.” Some fear that San Marcos has become indistinguishable from other “corridor” growth, and, indeed, the economic center of the city – and the city’s identity – has already shifted toward the interstate.

The strengthening of San Marcos’ Downtown neighborhood is also threatened by the perception that San Marcos does not need a commuter rail stop. Some feel that a commuter rail stop in San Marcos will make the city a “bedroom” community for people who work in Austin and San Antonio. Funding the commuter rail stop also poses a threat to its local feasibility. The rail stop will cost tax dollars to maintain and operate, and some fear that the City is not prepared to assume these costs.

Also in question by some is the depth of City commitment to improving Downtown neighborhoods. Some fear that the City will not be able to follow-through with elements recommended by a new Downtown Master Plan due to lack of resources or effective organization, and this poses a threat to positive growth throughout the city. Others fear that the Downtown Master Plan will not gain enough traction amongst members of the community to be instated in a significant manner that will enable Downtown revitalization.



Source: Broaddus & Associates, Inc.

Growth along the IH-35 Corridor



Source: Broaddus & Associates, Inc.

Interstate Development

OBSERVATIONS & ANALYSIS

2. Downtown Business Development



Source: Broaddus & Associates, Inc.

The Historic San Marcos Courthouse

OBSERVATIONS & ANALYSIS

2. Downtown Business Development

| Estimated Potential Demand for Office Development | |
|---|--------------------|
| DOWNTOWN SAN MARCOS | |
| | 2007-2012 |
| Employee Growth (jobs) | |
| Change in Total Employment, A-SA Corridor | 251,128 Workers |
| Change in Office Employment | 63,707 Workers |
| Office Demand Growth (sq. ft.) | |
| Square Ft. Per New Employee | 250 Sq. Ft. |
| Office Demand Growth A-SA Corridor | 15,926,778 Sq. Ft. |
| Office Long-Term Occupancy Rate | 85% |
| Net Office Demand, A-SA Corridor | 13,537,761 Sq. Ft. |
| Downtown San Marcos Potential | |
| Capture Rate | |
| Scenario 1: Low | 1.0% |
| Scenario 2: Medium | 1.3% |
| Scenario 3: High | 1.5% |
| Additional Office Workers | |
| Scenario 1: Low | 637 Workers |
| Scenario 2: Medium | 796 Workers |
| Scenario 3: High | 956 Workers |
| Additional Office Demand | |
| Scenario 1: Low | 135,378 Sq. Ft. |
| Scenario 2: Medium | 169,222 Sq. Ft. |
| Scenario 3: High | 203,066 Sq. Ft. |

Source: TIP Strategies, Inc.

According to TIP Strategies, over one-quarter million jobs are projected to be added to Austin-San Antonio Corridor in the next 5 years. 63,000 of these will be office jobs.

If San Marcos could attract just 1.0% of the corridor office jobs to the Downtown, adding 637 office workers, it would generate a demand for 135,000 square feet of office space.

2. DOWNTOWN BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

STRENGTHS

As previously mentioned, San Marcos has historically been a regional commercial center because of its function as the county seat and its location as a gateway to the hill country. Businesses Downtown largely sustain these identities: many Downtown businesses serve in support of county offices or are financial institutions, local headquarters, or retail centers. Patrons from Wimberley, Lockhart, and Seguin have historically utilized San Marcos' Downtown as their regional marketplace, and this is one of San Marcos' strengths.

San Marcos' Downtown currently serves as the local entertainment district. Although relatively limited,

businesses Downtown do provide dining, shopping, and entertainment options for the city and Texas State University. These businesses are primarily local enterprises that speak to the character of San Marcos; they are primarily located around the Courthouse Square and on the streets leading up to the university. In combination with Downtown offices, the entertainment businesses help to keep the Courthouse Square bustling with activity day and night.

San Marcos' central location between Austin and San Antonio on the IH-35 corridor is another of the city's strengths. San Marcos lies between one

OBSERVATIONS & ANALYSIS

2. Downtown Business Development

Source: Broaddus & Associates, Inc.



Citizens of San Marcos shared perspectives about the Downtown Plan at one of the several public workshops.

of the fastest growing communities in the United States and one of the country's most desirable cities to live. Though very different from San Marcos in many ways, these two communities are regional powerhouses that have influenced the success of San Marcos over the past 50 years.

Along those lines, the outlet malls are another of San Marcos' strengths, and they have become one of Texas' major tourist attractions. Located south of the Downtown on IH-35, these retail centers bring 8 million tourists to San Marcos annually, and San Marcos benefits from the revenue and expanded tax base.

WEAKNESSES

As identified in the Neighborhood Identity & Placemaking analysis, the boom in development along the IH-35 corridor has weakened the Downtown's prevalence as a regional marketplace. The popularity and size of the outlet malls coupled with the availability of large tracts of land has drawn commerce and development out of Downtown San Marcos. The resulting, outlying commercial center competes with the Downtown, and weakens the Downtown's position within the region.

As a result of the shifting focus of development, it seems that the Downtown's primary function is as a pass-through for travelers or commuters. It is not a primary destination for residents, students, or tourists. The locally-owned businesses struggle to

OBSERVATIONS & ANALYSIS

2. Downtown Business Development

| Estimated Potential Demand for Office Development | | | | | | | | |
|---|----------------------|--------------------|--------------|-----------|-----------|------------------------------|---------------|---------------|
| DOWNTOWN SAN MARCOS | | | | | | | | |
| | Incremental Spending | Additional Sq. Ft. | Capture Rate | | | Retail Demand (Sq. Ft.) 2012 | | |
| | | | Low | Medium | High | Low | Medium | High |
| Apparel & Services | \$16,654,134 | 75056 | 3% | 4% | 5% | 2,252 | 3,002 | 3,753 |
| Dining Out | \$3,934,798 | 12999 | 20% | 25% | 30% | 2,600 | 3,250 | 3,900 |
| HH Furnishings & Equipment | \$3,660,607 | 19940 | 3% | 4% | 5% | 598 | 798 | 997 |
| Retail Goods | \$15,513,900 | 75652 | 3% | 4% | 5% | 2,270 | 3,026 | 3,783 |
| Non-Residential Retail Demand | \$39,763,439 | 183647 | 5% | 7% | 9% | 7,719 | 10,076 | 12,432 |
| <i>+ Local Retail Demand</i> | <i>\$21,132,424</i> | <i>111230</i> | | | | <i>31,718</i> | <i>35,962</i> | <i>40,206</i> |
| Total Retail Demand | \$60,895,863 | 294,877 | | | | 39,437 | 46,038 | 52,638 |

Source: TIP Strategies, Inc.

As more jobs and residents come to the Austin-San Antonio area in the next 5 years, San Marcos will experience growth in demand for retail space.

A conservative capture rate of 5% would generate a demand for an additional 46,000 square feet of retail space in the Downtown.

sustain as they compete with the national retailers at the outlets. Some properties Downtown experience high turnover rates, and many businesses' success is subject to the seasonal University student population.

Many businesses and offices that were once located Downtown are re-locating outside the Downtown, including the County offices and many County-related businesses. The County justice center, annex, and records buildings will become vacant in upcoming months, adding to an already patchy rate of occupancy Downtown. The relocation of businesses outside of Downtown is viewed as a trend that needs to be addressed in the near-term.

The previous lack of interest in developing or conducting business Downtown has also resulted in many deteriorating and underdeveloped properties, which has limited the amount of available office and retail space. Local brokers view the available supply of space for office use inadequate: there is a critical shortage of office space in the Downtown area.

Another Downtown weakness is a lack of skilled jobs for graduates of Texas State University and other regional institutions of higher education. Downtown has been unable to attract and retain employers that would offer skilled jobs to these talented individuals. The lack of jobs for graduates negatively impacts the community, and thousands of potential workers and taxpayers relocate outside of San Marcos upon graduation.

OBSERVATIONS & ANALYSIS

2. Downtown Business Development

Source: Broaddus & Associates, Inc.



Entertainment options in San Marcos' Downtown

Source: Broaddus & Associates, Inc.



Downtown San Marcos supports an active, student nightlife

OPPORTUNITIES

One of San Marcos' largest opportunities lies in the high regional demand for office space Downtown. With the Austin-San Antonio corridor expected to continue to grow rapidly, San Marcos will undoubtedly encounter growth pressures from Austin and San Antonio. Specifically, the Austin-San Antonio corridor is expected to add over 250,000 jobs in the next five years alone. If San Marcos can capture just a small percentage of these jobs, it will generate a significant demand for office space. Fortunately, San Marcos is strategically positioned in the middle of this corridor, and the city has the opportunity to market itself as the prime location for businesses and employers whose markets are in both Austin and San Antonio.

The potential commercial growth provides San Marcos with the opportunity to re-position its Downtown and re-define its role not only in the city but in the entire region. Downtown San Marcos' assets and strategic location in the center of the corridor and along the future commuter rail provide it with a competitive advantage over other central Texas communities. Capitalizing on this opportunity can enable Downtown to realize its potential and become an important center of gravity along the Austin-San Antonio corridor.

The City of San Marcos has the opportunity to encourage the renovation and redevelopment of existing office spaces Downtown, in addition to new, infill construction, as a way to accommodate the projected demand. As the County vacates the justice center, annex, and records building, and as the Post Office relocates, an opportunity for reusing these spaces toward immediate accommodation of new businesses is presented.

Although the retail market is nearly saturated in San Marcos, there remains an opportunity for specialty retail, including dining and entertainment options, to be developed Downtown. The high demand for office space Downtown will fuel follow-on demand

OBSERVATIONS & ANALYSIS

2. Downtown Business Development

for supportive retail and commercial businesses. Downtown’s best retail opportunities will be in entertainment, dining, and specialty retail, as those are currently the dominant retailers. Demand for this kind of specialty retail in the Downtown will grow with the rise in Texas State University enrollment, the addition of office workers Downtown, and future residential growth.

Likewise, a strong retail sector Downtown will increase demand in the residential & office markets. As Downtown and its retail sector evolve as a destination, more San Marcos residents and more of the 8 million annual visitors to San Marcos will be drawn to the Downtown vicinity, bringing more dollars to Downtown retailers and entertainment venues. Downtown has the opportunity to be the city’s focal point for residents, students, and tourists alike, and its proximity to the University and access to the park system along the San Marcos River add to this opportunity.

THREATS

However, despite all these opportunities, there are threats to growth Downtown. The relatively unregulated development of office and retail space along the corridor poses a great threat to the realization of a vibrant Downtown. The ease of process in developing along IH-35 competes with the difficulty of developing in a less-utilized Downtown. The City will need to take an active role in directing some of this development into the Downtown if it is to realize its vision for a revitalized center.

The future vibrancy of the Downtown may also be threatened by the perception that Downtown is no longer a viable place for businesses whether they be office, service, or entertainment-based. Some members of the business community question the City’s commitment to recruiting new businesses to San Marcos and especially to the Downtown, and see this as one of the biggest threats to the realization of a revitalized Downtown.



Local retail near Texas State University

Source: Broaddus & Associates, Inc.



Local retail near Texas State University

Source: Broaddus & Associates, Inc.

OBSERVATIONS & ANALYSIS

3. Development Standards & Processes

Source: Broaddus & Associates, Inc.



San Marcos Streetscape

3. DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS & PROCESSES

STRENGTHS

Currently, San Marcos utilizes a traditional zoning ordinance to regulate development Downtown and throughout the city. This ordinance is updated regularly to accommodate changing demands and anticipated growth. Additionally, San Marcos has in-place a historic district overlay that protects the historic character of the Courthouse Square, and a height overlay that limits the height of development within the Downtown neighborhood. The restrictions on development within these areas attempt to preserve the historic architectural heritage of San Marcos.

WEAKNESSES

There is a critical shortage of office space in the Downtown. As a case in point, a local technology company, Kulabyte, has relocated to Hunter Road from Downtown because they are not able to find 10,000 square feet of office space Downtown despite their efforts to do so. Furthermore, there is currently no office space in San Marcos that would be considered Class A relative to the Austin and San Antonio markets. This exacerbates the shortage of commercial space because properties Downtown do not meet the needs of potential tenants.

OBSERVATIONS & ANALYSIS

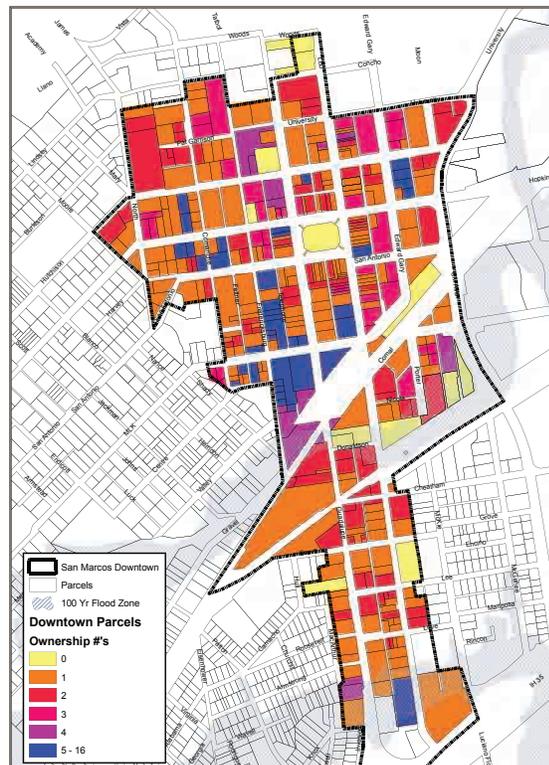
3. Development Standards & Processes

Developers cite many difficulties that are hard to overcome when considering to develop Downtown. Firstly, as the diagram at right indicates, many parcels in Downtown San Marcos have multiple owners, which makes land assembly difficult.

Secondly, some of the existing development standards and processes utilized by the City have effectively discouraged development in the Downtown area. The zoning for Downtown is perceived as being inconsistent from one block to the next. There are several different zoning categories applied within the Downtown area, including four categories of commercial districts, a mixed-use district, and central business areas, as well as parcels zoned for public use and various residential zones. Adding to the complexity of interpreting development potential on Downtown parcels are the four district overlays (the CBA Zoning District, Height Overlay District, Historic District, and Main Street Program District) and the City's case-by-case process of regulating the application of standards.

Developers have found that, when considering the small sizes of available lots, the zoning regulations for impervious coverage, parking requirements, and height limitations are too onerous to facilitate economically feasible projects Downtown. The inflexibility of development standards and the lack of alternative options have weakened the market for Downtown development and have forced developers to seek easier projects outside of the Downtown area.

Complicating the issue of development standards further is the City's want for property owners to restore many historic buildings Downtown. The cost of rehabilitating these structures and updating them to contemporary codes is significant, and oftentimes property owners are not prepared to assume these cost premiums. As a result, some historic structures Downtown continue to deteriorate and remain



Existing Ownership Patterns

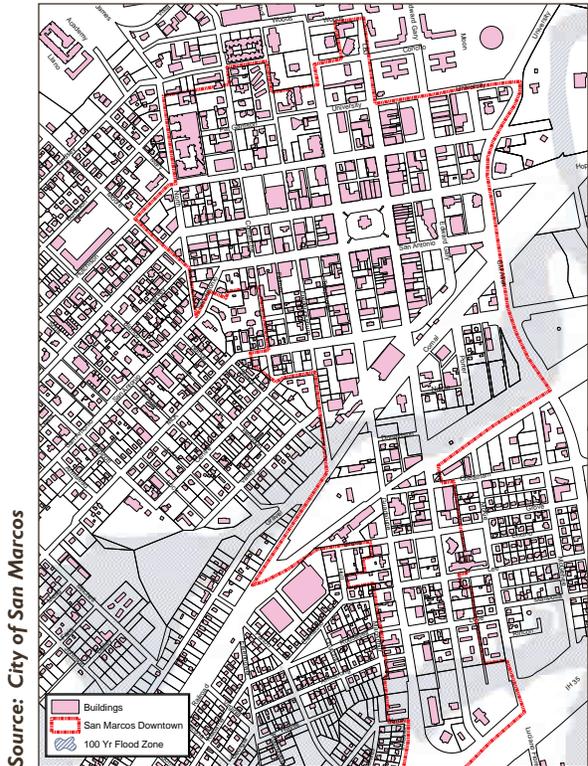
Source: City of San Marcos

vacant on key Downtown blocks, reducing property values throughout Downtown. Properties with known pollution problems also pose hazards and require expensive abatement procedures; again, the structures are dilapidated and unoccupied, and the property values surrounding polluted plots remain discounted, affecting the City's tax revenues.

As previously mentioned, the existing ownership patterns throughout the Downtown are difficult to overcome. Most of the parcels Downtown are owned by separate individuals, making property assembly difficult for would-be developers. When the size of available parcels is combined with the current zoning requirements, developers are not able to employ economies of scale when building

OBSERVATIONS & ANALYSIS

3. Development Standards & Processes

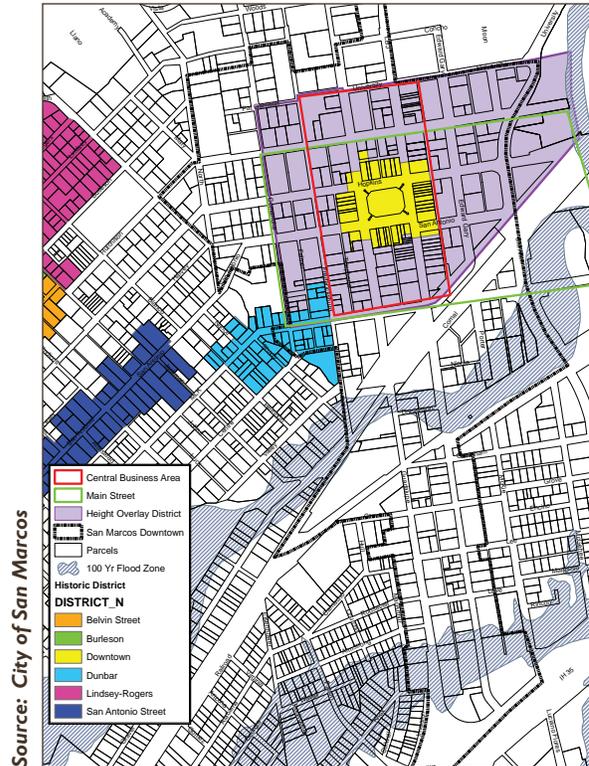


Existing Building Footprints

in Downtown, so they have chosen to invest their money in developing space elsewhere. The complications of developing economically-feasible projects Downtown have caused a shortage of office space, and potential businesses are, in return, locating outside the Downtown. This is one of San Marcos' biggest areas of weakness.

OPPORTUNITIES

San Marcos has the opportunity, in light of a new Downtown Master Plan, to accommodate the demand for office space. In order to enable growth and encourage private investment Downtown, San Marcos has the opportunity to re-evaluate existing development processes and standards. A



Existing Overlay Districts

re-evaluation of development standards will help the Downtown to accommodate the increasing regional demand for high quality (Class A) office space and the projected demand for residential and follow-on retail growth. San Marcos' development standards need to focus on the quality of place that they promote.

A map of the existing building footprints Downtown demonstrates that ample infill opportunities exist. Currently, surface parking lots, low density industrial uses, and even some undeveloped lots account for a significant portion of the Downtown study area. As mentioned in the Downtown Business Development section, if Downtown San Marcos can recruit even a small percentage of the anticipated

OBSERVATIONS & ANALYSIS

3. Development Standards & Processes



Source: Broaddus & Associates, Inc.

The City of San Marcos should focus on Infill Development Downtown.

FISCAL IMPACT ANALYSIS OF INFILL DEVELOPMENT

TIP Strategies, Inc. conducted a limited fiscal analysis for the City of San Marcos as part of the Downtown Master Plan. This fiscal analysis included three land-use scenarios for a typical city block and measured the tax implications for both the city and the county of redevelopment of the parcel under the three scenarios.

The typical block measures 400 feet by 400 feet, which totals 3.67 acres. It lies outside of the Central Business Area and is zoned Community Commercial. As a result, the city's parking space requirements apply to a development on this parcel. In addition, the parcel is in the height

overlay district with a current height limitation of 4 stories or 45 feet. Adjustments to the buildable area, which include setback, access, alley ways and other requirements, account for 46,000 square feet.

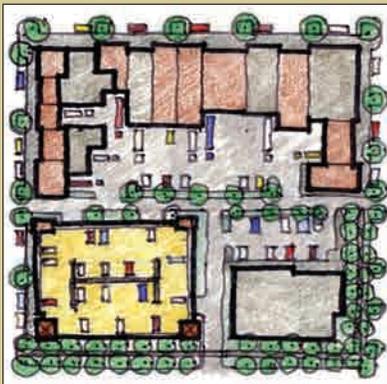
Under the first scenario, the parcel is a sample of the prevailing development pattern in downtown. To provide enough parking for the 1 and 2-story buildings on the lot, 51% of the block must be devoted to a surface parking lot with 235 spaces. The building footprint accounts for 20% of the block's surface area, which accommodate buildings totaling 48,750 gross square feet.

OBSERVATIONS & ANALYSIS

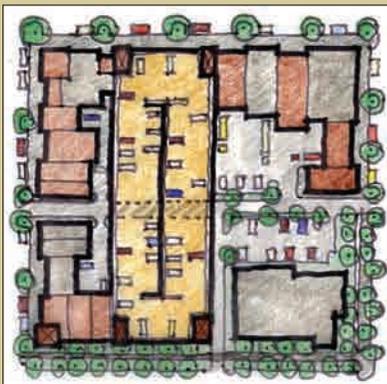
3. Development Standards & Processes



Scenario 1



Scenario 2



Scenario 3

Summary: Scenario 1

- 29% (46,000 sf) setbacks, access, alleyways
- 51% (81,500 sf) surface parking
- 20% (32,500 sf) buildable area

Under the second scenario, the parcel is redeveloped under the ordinance changes proposed by the Downtown Master Plan. In this scenario, the parcel would still be subject to the height restriction of 45 feet but would not be subject to the parking space requirements. Instead, the property owner would pay a parking in-lieu of fee to “buy” into an off-site regional parking structure. As a result, only 31% of the block is devoted to a surface parking lot with 144 spaces. The building footprint accounts for 40% of the block’s surface area, which accommodates buildings totaling 256,000 gross square feet.

Summary: Scenario 2

- 29% (46,000 sf) setbacks, access, alleyways
- 31% (50,000 sf) surface parking
- 40% (64,000 sf) buildable area

Under the third scenario, the parcel is also redeveloped under the ordinance changes proposed by the Downtown Master Plan. In this scenario, half of the parcel is subject to a 45-foot height restriction and half is subject to an 80-foot height restriction. Like the previous scenario, the property owner would pay a parking in-lieu of fee. In this scenario, 30% of the block is devoted to a surface parking lot and 5-story parking garage. The building footprints represent 41% of the block’s surface area and accommodate buildings totaling 363,000 gross square feet.

Summary: Scenario 3

- 29% (46,000 sf) setbacks, access, alleyways
- 30% (48,000 sf) surface parking
- 41% (66,000 sf) buildable area

OBSERVATIONS & ANALYSIS

3. Development Standards & Processes

| Summary of Fiscal Impacts | | | |
|---|--------------|---------------|---------------|
| DOWNTOWN SAN MARCOS | | | |
| | Scenario 1 | Scenario 2 | Scenario 3 |
| Space Summary | | | |
| Net Buildable Area | 32,500 SF | 64,000 | 66,000 |
| Parking Spaces | 235 Spaces | 144 | 600 |
| Retail Space (Gross SF) | 24,375 GSF | 128,000 | 181,500 |
| Residential (Housing Units) | 34 Units | 178 | 252 |
| Office Space (Gross SF) | 14,625 GSF | 76,800 | 108,900 |
| Tax Base - Year 10 | | | |
| Total Land Value | \$192,328 | \$1,009,968 | \$1,432,103 |
| Total Building Value | \$9,510,232 | \$49,940,909 | \$70,814,649 |
| Total Furniture, Fixture, & Equipment Value | \$493,508 | \$2,591,547 | \$3,674,733 |
| Total Retail Sales (Cumulative) | \$17,442,168 | \$91,593,741 | \$129,877,063 |
| Tax Base - Year 20 | | | |
| Total Land Value | \$243,847 | \$1,280,509 | \$1,815,722 |
| Total Building Value | \$12,281,577 | \$64,494,025 | \$91,450,512 |
| Total Furniture, Fixture, & Equipment Value | \$634,506 | \$3,331,968 | \$4,724,626 |
| Total Retail Sales (Cumulative) | \$47,774,250 | \$250,876,060 | \$355,734,413 |
| City Tax & Fees Collection - Year 10 | | | |
| Property Tax Collections | \$350,416 | \$1,840,135 | \$2,609,254 |
| Retail Sales Tax Collection | \$215,847 | \$1,133,473 | \$1,607,229 |
| City Tax & Fees Collection - Year 20 | | | |
| Property Tax Collections | \$974,126 | \$5,115,413 | \$7,253,496 |
| Retail Sales Tax Collection | \$591,206 | \$3,104,591 | \$4,093,143 |
| County Tax & Fees Collection - Year 20 | | | |
| Property Tax Collections | \$682,366 | \$3,583,297 | \$5,081,004 |
| Retail Sales Tax Collection | \$197,069 | \$1,034,864 | \$1,467,404 |

Source: TIP Strategies, Inc.

Results

The table above illustrates the development characteristics under each scenario and provides a summary of the tax implications for the city and the county. The assumptions made to reach these results can be found in the full version of the Downtown Market Analysis report.

OBSERVATIONS & ANALYSIS

3. Development Standards & Processes

Source: Broaddus & Associates, Inc.



Streetscapes should frame Downtown Landmarks.

commercial market within the next five years, it will result in a significant demand for office space. San Marcos should take advantage of the opportunity for commercial growth to infill underdeveloped and underutilized properties in the Downtown area.

The City of San Marcos has the opportunity to benefit financially from infill development, as illustrated in the fiscal analysis of a typical city block (See inset on facing page). If the City were to restructure its development standards and infill development were to occur, the City revenue from ad valorem taxes would increase five-fold from current figures. This revenue could be used to reinvest in other Downtown projects such as streets improvements, parks beautification, or further recruitment and marketing programs.

The City also could utilize the opportunity to re-visit its development standards to positively influence the type of development Downtown. Many communities have implemented versions of Form Based Codes, which place focus on the physical outcome of development rather than on a property's land use. Form Based Codes have been found to more effectively ensure that development meets historic character standards. Additionally, Form Based Codes are more successful at creating quality mixed-use environments than traditional zoning.

OBSERVATIONS & ANALYSIS

3. Development Standards & Processes



Source: Broaddus & Associates, Inc.

The height restrictions are still valid throughout most of the Downtown.

In order to further encourage development in Downtown while promoting San Marcos' unique character, the City has the opportunity to seek federal and state grants for historic preservation of Downtown structures. The City can facilitate programs that offer developers and property-owners financial help toward the preservation and rehabilitation of San Marcos' historic facades. In a similar way, the City also has the opportunity to take an active role in pollution abatement Downtown.

THREATS

Development Downtown is threatened by the continued fear of bad development. The fear that development will mean the deterioration of the historic fabric of the Downtown. Citizens need to realize that, if development does not occur, the Downtown will self-deteriorate from lack of use. This situation is sometimes referred to as demolition by neglect.

OBSERVATIONS & ANALYSIS

4. Streets & Roadways Network



Source: Broaddus & Associates, Inc.

CM Allen Parkway

4. STREETS & ROADWAYS NETWORK

STRENGTHS

Downtown San Marcos' existing streets and roadway network has many strong points. Primarily, its gridded network of local streets is relatively easy to navigate, and the system is one that contemporary urban planning often attempts to replicate. Compact neighborhoods are walkable from a pedestrian's point-of-view, and most residences are within a five-minute walk of neighborhood services, parks, churches, and schools, which is one of San Marcos' strongest points.

San Marcos' Downtown is connected to the interstate via Ranch Road 12-State Highway 80 (on Hopkins Street) and Loop 82 (on Guadalupe Street). These streets serve as regional connectors that bring people through the Downtown on their way to other locations, such as Texas State University located north of the Downtown or the community of Wimberley to the west. Traffic counts indicate that 11,300 vehicles travel to Downtown along Hopkins, while 24,000 vehicles utilize the Guadalupe Street/LBJ Street corridor. Other traffic utilizes the Aquarena Springs exit on IH-35 and is filtered to the Downtown via University Drive and CM Allen Parkway.

OBSERVATIONS & ANALYSIS

4. Streets & Roadways Network



Source: Broaddus & Associates, Inc.

Wide streets accommodate angled parking spaces in Downtown San Marcos.

WEAKNESSES

Currently, there is no “gateway” signage that welcomes or directs visitors to the Downtown area from IH-35. Although the Downtown is physically connected, a lack of guide signs to direct motorists to Downtown from CM Allen, Guadalupe Street-Loop 82, and Hopkins Street-Ranch Road 12-State Highway 80 makes getting to Downtown relatively difficult for visitors to San Marcos. The lack of signage is a problem for the Downtown, especially as it relates to increasing access to Downtown businesses.

As mentioned earlier, much of the traffic Downtown is through-traffic that utilizes the State Highways. The through-traffic, especially the traffic that is transport-related, causes noise and speed problems

within the Downtown. Intersections along these highways are crowded during rush-hour, and the inappropriate timing of traffic lights causes long waits along the through routes.

The volume of traffic along the State Highways poses problems for residents, workers, and visitors of the Downtown, and the intersections are not pedestrian-friendly. Oftentimes, people will drive from one side of the Downtown to the other in order to access businesses instead of walking just because they fear crossing the wide, busy highways.

On the other hand, one of the through-corridor routes that the City has constructed is currently underutilized. CM Allen Parkway, which is located

OBSERVATIONS & ANALYSIS

4. Streets & Roadways Network



Source: Broaddus & Associates, Inc.

Parking in Downtown San Marcos

on the east side of the Downtown, is meant to relieve traffic from State Highway 82 and direct it around the Downtown. However, since it is not directly connected to an interstate on and off-ramp, it is not utilized as intended.

The one-way streets Downtown also pose problems for vehicular navigation. State Highway 82 splits along Guadalupe and LBJ Streets in order to accommodate the volume of through-traffic along that route. Not only are one-way streets more difficult to navigate, but studies indicate that one-way streets negatively impact the visibility of businesses in Downtown areas.

Another perceived problem in San Marcos relates to the parking within the Downtown area. San Marcos

has a high demand for on-street parking within the Downtown area – especially surrounding the Courthouse Square. Downtown business owners complain that they lose business due to the lack of parking spaces immediately adjacent their shops. However, based upon our field observations, the current supply of on-street parking and surface lots is adequately meeting the parking demand, although there is some abuse of parking spaces by students at Texas State who occupy parking spaces without visiting stores or restaurants.

Many of the pedestrian walkways and sidewalks within San Marcos' Downtown are not up to current accessibility standards for people with disabilities. They are also difficult to navigate for other user groups, including the elderly and patrons with children. Many of San Marcos' sidewalks feel unsafe for pedestrians – especially those along the arterial highways. The multi-lane roadways are obstacles for pedestrians who need extra time at crossings.

OPPORTUNITIES

As iterated in much of the Downtown Master Plan analysis, the City has the opportunity to re-invent Downtown as a regional destination. In order to realize this goal, the City needs to improve upon its existing streets and roadways network. With the extension of Wonder World Drive to Ranch Road 12, much of the through-traffic utilizing the State Highways Downtown will be rerouted around the City; thus, the City will have the opportunity to reevaluate the thoroughfare plan to improve traffic flow and pedestrian comfort with the reduced traffic demands in-mind.

While many feel that there is not enough parking in the area immediately surrounding the Courthouse Square, parking studies indicate that the Downtown has adequate parking within a several-block radius of the Square. Although outdated, a 1998 study by transportation consultant John Edwards, P.E., suggested that a parking management strategy be adopted by the City in order to regulate parking

OBSERVATIONS & ANALYSIS

4. Streets & Roadways Network

Downtown. Additionally, a parking management system may provide the City an opportunity to collect usage tariffs that can be applied to future improvements Downtown.

Additionally, the City of San Marcos has the opportunity to incorporate streetscape beautification into the roadways improvements projects. As discussed in the Neighborhood Identity and Placemaking section, the extension of the parks system with street trees, lighting, and other measures would enhance neighborhood image in addition to improving pedestrian comfort and safety. The City of San Marcos has the opportunity to implement the bicycle lanes as suggested in the 2004 Transportation Master Plan as a part of roadway improvements projects as well. Extending bicycle paths from the University to the Downtown will help relieve traffic volume and demand for parking Downtown.

THREATS

The City may encounter some resistance from stakeholder groups regarding the conversion of Guadalupe and LBJ streets to two-way streets. Additionally, the Texas Department of Transportation will play a role in determining changes along Hopkins Street, especially in regard to traffic capacity and safety.

Street infrastructure projects are generally expensive Capital Improvement Projects and can be slow to implement. Additionally, while incorporating other upgrades to utilities may save money during construction, this kind of cooperation is difficult to coordinate. A long lead time will be needed in order to plan, finance, and construct these improvements.

The City will also need to overcome the perception that the Downtown has inadequate parking in relation to Downtown demand.



Example of deteriorated San Marcos Sidewalk

Source: Broaddus & Associates, Inc.



Sidewalks around the Courthouse Square have been recently improved with pedestrian-friendly elements.

Source: Broaddus & Associates, Inc.

OBSERVATIONS & ANALYSIS

5. Public Transit

5. PUBLIC TRANSIT

STRENGTHS

Currently, the Capital Area Rural Transportation System (CARTS) provides a fixed-route service for the City of San Marcos. This service is known as CARTS Around Town, or CAT, and is an asset for mobility in San Marcos. Several routes service the Downtown and Texas State University, and these routes provide connections to the outlying destinations such as the outlet mall and high school.

San Marcos recently completed construction of an intermodal station on Guadalupe that provides access to the Greyhound Bus Line and to AMTRAK passenger rail. The CARTS service links into this station, and bicycle racks that tie-into bicycle routes are being planned at the station.

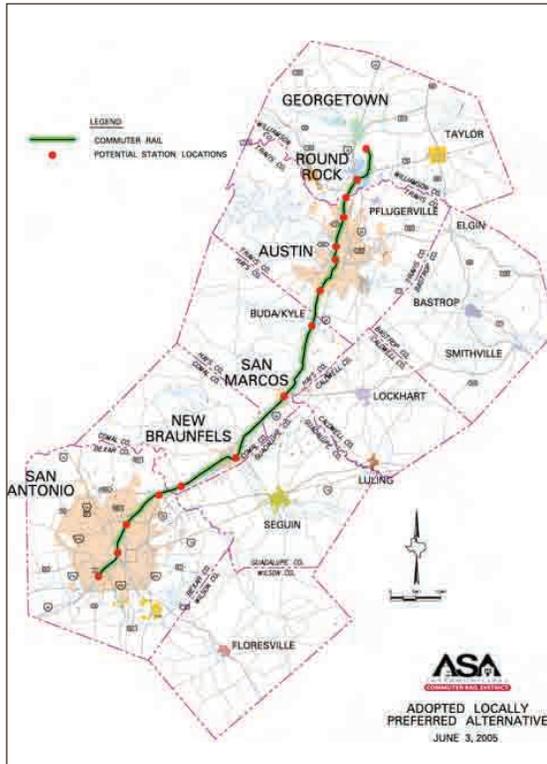
Texas State University operates a student bus service that connects areas of San Marcos with large student populations to the University. This bus system also services Texas State University students who live in outlying communities such as Austin.

WEAKNESSES

Although the CARTS bus service is currently viewed as adequate since demand for the service is limited, this regionally-supported service is scheduled to be discontinued when San Marcos' population reaches 50,000 residents (anticipated by the 2010 census).

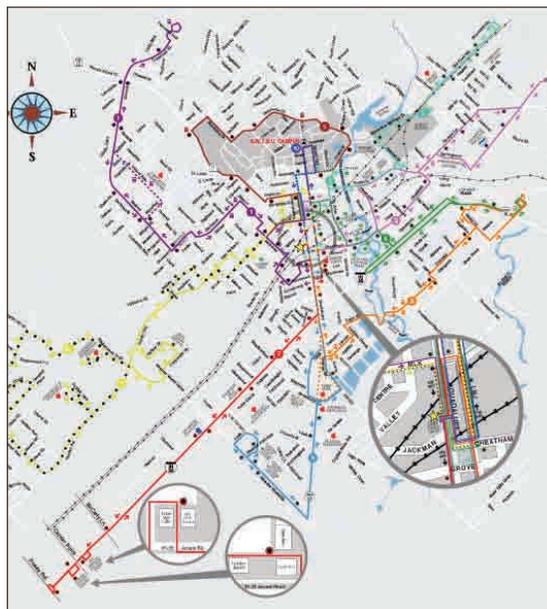
The rising cost of gasoline coupled with an increasingly crowded IH-35 corridor will increase the demand for public transit, especially as it relates to the everyday mobility of San Marcos citizens. The lack of a rubber-tire transit service will negatively affect quality of life for residents and visitors of San Marcos.

Source: ASA Intermunicipal Commuter Rail District



ASA Intermunicipal Commuter Rail Proposed Stops

Source: CARTS



Existing Bus Routes Map

OBSERVATIONS & ANALYSIS

5. Public Transit

OPPORTUNITIES

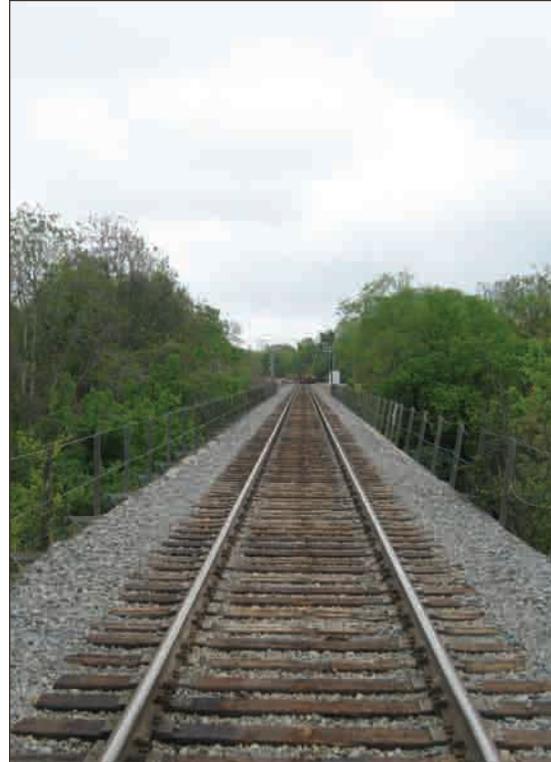
The City of San Marcos has the opportunity to promote transportation alternatives to allow people choices in travel to and from the Downtown, making Downtown more accessible. By supporting transportation options, San Marcos effectively encourages the mixed-use development that is desirable for the Downtown.

One of San Marcos' best upcoming opportunities is the planned commuter rail between Austin and San Antonio. The target date for commencement of this service is 2012, and the Austin-San Antonio Intermunicipal Commuter Rail District has proposed that a stop be located in San Marcos. Locating this commuter stop within the Downtown – and within walking distance of the Courthouse Square – would be extremely beneficial for existing Downtown businesses, and would surely attract further development in the area.

The presence of a commuter rail stop demands a multi-modal transportation center, and the City has the opportunity to link future bus services into this hub along with the existing intermodal station. San Marcos will have the opportunity to market itself as a community that is setting an example with transportation options. San Marcos may be able to improve ridership figures of the current CARTS system and any future City-operated bus service by relocating stops to neighborhood centers or city landmarks.

THREATS

A successful public transit system in San Marcos is threatened by the current social culture that relies heavily on personal vehicles. Financing the commuter rail stop and a bus system are expensive undertakings. San Marcos will need to prioritize these efforts and consider the cost offsets of increased Downtown tourism, businesses, and residents that a commuter rail will provide.



Source: Broaddus & Associates, Inc.

San Marcos has the opportunity to have a stop on the proposed Austin - San Antonio Commuter Rail line.

OBSERVATIONS & ANALYSIS

6. Stormwater Management & Water Quality



Source: Broaddus & Associates, Inc.

Street Flooding Downtown

6. STORMWATER MANAGEMENT & WATER QUALITY

STRENGTHS

San Marcos currently has in-place some stormwater drainage systems for the Downtown area. Upgrades to these systems for portions of the Downtown are currently under design, and the City recognizes the need for water quality treatment.

WEAKNESSES

However, San Marcos' stormwater management system Downtown is inadequate. The city experiences flooding in the Downtown area, largely due to a undersized storm sewer system and the fact that 90-95% of the Downtown district is covered with impervious material. Street flooding occurs

in low-lying sections when storm water drains are overwhelmed by rainwater runoff.

San Marcos does not have storm water detention infrastructure in place that would help to mitigate the heavy rainfall events that are becoming typical of central Texas. In October 1998, the San Marcos River flooded when 28 inches of rain fell on the city within a 2-day period, causing significant damage and exacerbating problems downriver.

Another issue, perhaps more problematic than storm water detention, is storm water treatment.

OBSERVATIONS & ANALYSIS

6. Stormwater Management & Water Quality

Water runoff from the Downtown eventually ends up in the San Marcos River – a natural habitat for several endangered species – without any treatment for water quality. This means that all of the pollutants that collect in the Downtown area end up in the San Marcos River without proper filtration.

Additionally, since most of the Downtown is already covered with impervious surfaces, there is a lack of development standards for on-site treatment and detention in the Downtown area. Current development standards require landowners to comply with some pervious cover requirements, but this does little to lessen the problem of untreated and excess runoff.

OPPORTUNITIES

The City has the ongoing opportunity of improving its storm water management. Currently, the City has projects under design that will improve capacity for entire regions of the Downtown.

The East Hutchison Street Drainage Improvements Project will upgrade the capacity of the entire storm sewer system north of Hutchison Street. At the present time the project is considering options for a water quality treatment, although nothing has been settled. Additionally, the East Guadalupe Drainage Improvements project is scheduled for 2010, and will improve capacity for another area of the Downtown.

San Marcos has the opportunity to lead in the generation of a Regional Stormwater Management District. If the City deems this a priority, it could assume a leading role in protecting the San Marcos Springs, the River and its endangered species, and a portion of the Edwards Aquifer Transition Zone.



Source: Broaddus & Associates, Inc.

San Marcos River Ecosystem

THREATS

Of course, the leading threat for upgrading storm water capacity and for undertaking a regional management plan is the expense. Storm water capacity upgrades can be implemented simultaneously with other street improvements projects in order to reduce overall cost. Additionally, the creation of a Regional Storm Water Management plan requires public consent, and convincing San Marcos' taxpayers of the need for such a plan may prove difficult.

OBSERVATIONS & ANALYSIS

7. Utility Infrastructure

Source: Broaddus & Associates, Inc.



Unattractive Overhead Lines

Source: Broaddus & Associates, Inc.



Unattractive Overhead Lines

7. UTILITY INFRASTRUCTURE

STRENGTHS

Both municipal and private suppliers provide the utilities in San Marcos. Water, wastewater, and electricity are municipal systems, while Century Telephone and Grande Communications provide telecommunications. The municipal systems are continually upgraded and maintained as necessary, and, with the exception of the blocks just north of the railroad tracks, should support full development growth throughout the Downtown. Significant upgrades are not needed at this time.

WEAKNESSES

Many citizens complain that the overhead electric and telecommunications lines are unattractive and that they distract from the beauty of San Marcos. Indeed, the quality of streetscapes is affected by the unattractive overhead lines, and several cities throughout the United States have undertaken projects to bury these lines below-ground.

Additionally, as San Marcos' Downtown densifies and as buildings become taller in some areas, overhead utilities become problematic for emergency service access. The aerial lines can impede access for fire and rescue providers.

OPPORTUNITIES

The City of San Marcos also has the opportunity to bury the overhead lines for both aesthetic and safety reasons, and could work in partnership with private suppliers in order to share expenses and ensure quality. The improvements could be made in concert with other street infrastructure upgrades to save on project cost.

THREATS

The City may have difficulty coordinating with the privately-operated telecommunications providers. Burying aerial lines is expensive, and the private companies may not be willing to cooperate.

END OF CHAPTER

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VISION PLAN

Benchmarking and Planning Principles

Source: Townscape, Inc.



Quality of Place Attracts Talent

VISION PLAN

BENCHMARKING & PLANNING PRINCIPLES

In order for San Marcos to realize the vision for a vibrant Downtown, the city and other stakeholders will need to actively promote the economic revitalization of Downtown. Economic development can be defined as the application of public resources to stimulate private sector investment. Therefore, the City of San Marcos' role for the Downtown Master Plan is to direct public resources effectively and efficiently in order to kindle private investment within the Downtown.

The economic model utilized for the Downtown Master Plan focuses on the factors that play important roles in stimulating economic vitality in a community. In contrast to traditional economic

“Awesome Talent has the freedom to roam the earth—to pick off the best gigs, to pocket the largest financial rewards. In that sense, organizations will increasingly take a back seat...On the other hand, though, enterprises that manage to master the market for talent will do better than ever...But to attract, retain, and obtain the most from Awesome Talent, organizations will need to offer up an Awesome Place to Work.”

Tom Peters, Re-Imagine

Place is “becoming the central organizing unit of our economy and society, taking on the role that used to be played by the large corporation.”

Richard Florida, Rise of the Creative Class

“Enhancing livability, therefore, should be a central objective in every city's economic transition strategy, and the elements of livability should be employed as economic development tools.”

Urban Land Institute, May 2006

development models that employ mostly industrial recruitment strategies, this model acknowledges that employers are increasingly locating where talented employees are, and this “creative class” is moving to places where they want to live.

In other words, today's talented employees decide where they want to live first and then find work in those places, rather than the other way around. For this reason, employers are locating in communities that have the quality of place that will attract or have already attracted the talent that they need. As a result, quality of place and “sense of place” issues are central to a community's success in economic development.

VISION PLAN

Benchmarking and Planning Principles

Thus, San Marcos needs to focus on enhancing the quality of place in the Downtown, and it should benchmark its planning principles on the common characteristics of successful and loved downtowns across the nation in places such as Washington, D.C., Seattle, San Francisco, and Austin.

The following list of characteristics for placemaking are intended to inspire basic planning and design attributes for Downtown redevelopment. Fortuitously, San Marcos' Downtown already possesses several of these key physical attributes, and by building upon and enhancing their inherent qualities, San Marcos' Downtown will become an even more welcoming place to live, work, and play.

ESTABLISH DOWNTOWN AS A DISTINCTIVE DESTINATION

Downtown should be the definitive center and symbolic heart of the town, linked to but distinct from its surroundings and other districts in the city. By virtue of its compactness, clear edges, human-scaled architecture, walkable streets, public spaces, amenities and eye-catching detail, it should be perceived as a distinctive place in its own right; a singular and appealing destination whose character and vitality make it more than the sum of its individual parts.

MAINTAIN AUTHENTICITY

San Marcos should build upon the unique assets that differentiate its Downtown from other Downtowns throughout the region. The historic patterns, precedents, and traditions should be respected, and the natural features – such as the Springs and the River – should be preserved and linked to the Downtown. Older buildings and blocks that lend a sense of heritage and character should be retained, especially those that provide lower rent options for creative entrepreneurs and new business start-ups. Locally-owned businesses should be recruited to the Downtown in order to maintain San Marcos' authenticity and uniqueness.



Source: Townscape, Inc.



Source: Townscape, Inc.



Source: Townscape, Inc.

VISION PLAN

Benchmarking and Planning Principles

Source: Townscape, Inc.



EMBRACE MIXED-USE & COMPACTNESS

Redevelopment and infill development should be guided toward the goal of high-density mixed-use, and essential land uses and projects should be established within a quarter-mile radius. The mixture of entertainment, retail, employment and residential uses within a compact area makes for a vibrant Downtown, which is the kind of place that talented employees seek. The mix of restaurants and retail, civic uses, offices, residences, and basic goods and services within a compact area helps to ensure that Downtown experiences activity beyond traditional business hours and remains walkable.

Source: Townscape, Inc.



GENERATE STANDARDS FOR GREAT STREETS

Street design should reflect a dual concept of the street as both vehicular thoroughfare and civic space. Attributes such as design speed, travel direction (one-way or two-way), land widths, corner radii, on-street parking, sidewalks, pedestrian crossings, street trees and amenities should be conceived in a comprehensive fashion to achieve a balance of the needs of drivers, transit users, bicyclists, and pedestrians. These attributes should offer a real choice of safe mobility options.

Source: Townscape, Inc.



ENGAGE THE STREET WALL

New and redeveloped Downtown buildings should generally be placed at the sidewalk to give Downtown streets and blocks a comfortable sense of enclosure. Continuity of windows and doors should create a permeable relationship between the buildings and the sidewalk, connecting inside to outside. A consistent “visual texture” for the street wall, created by complementary arrangements of floor lines, window and door openings, massing, and other features is more important to a cohesive image for Downtown that a consistent architectural period or style. Off-street parking should be behind or to the side of buildings so that it minimizes disruption of the street wall.

VISION PLAN

Benchmarking and Planning Principles

PROMOTE WALKABILITY (& BIKEABILITY)

Sidewalk and crosswalk design, shade, weather protection, wayfinding, amenities and public spaces should be conceived and designed to make walking Downtown safe, comfortable, efficient and pleasurable to the degree that patrons happily “park once” and enjoy walking to multiple destinations. Streets should be designed so-as to promote bicycle usage, and bicycle-friendly features, such as bike racks, should be situated throughout the Downtown.



Source: Townscape, Inc.

AUGMENT PUBLIC SPACES

The Courthouse Square in San Marcos serves as the primary public space and the symbolic heart of the Downtown. It should be augmented with a diverse offering of secondary public spaces, such as small greens, plazas, pocket parks, and pedestrian ways that are linked by walkable streets and furnished with amenities that support and encourage activity in the public realm. These central public spaces should also tie into San Marcos’ park network along the San Marcos River, creating a green framework throughout the Downtown that enhances its identity.



Source: Townscape, Inc.

ENCOURAGE THIRD PLACES

San Marcos should encourage the establishment of “third places” distinct from home and work, such as coffee shops, internet cafes, alfresco dining areas, pubs, bookstores, and the like, that foster a culture of informal gathering, socializing, conversing and exchanging ideas. The best third places are adjacent to sidewalks and public spaces; each benefits greatly through association with the other.



Source: Townscape, Inc.

MIND THE DETAILS

Great downtown environments engage both the sense and intellect with diverse and detailed architectural facades, preservation of key views, engaging signage, attractive furnishings, colorful planting, sidewalk commerce, public art, and many other points of detail. The city’s regulatory

VISION PLAN

Benchmarking and Planning Principles

Source: Townscape, Inc.



framework should be flexible enough to allow the unfolding of a diverse and stimulus-rich environment over time.

PLANNING PRINCIPLES

In keeping these key characteristics for placemaking in mind, the following list of five planning principles were developed specific to San Marcos' Downtown. As Planning Principles, their intent is to guide the generation of the Vision plan and all follow-on projects.

1. Promote the Downtown's authentic identity and establish it as a distinctive destination.
2. Encourage a mix of uses that supports a viable Downtown.
3. Enhance and preserve the unique charm of the natural and built environment related to topography and vegetation, the San Marcos River, historic buildings, and established neighborhoods.
4. Prescribe sustainable infrastructure projects that minimize and shade paved surfaces, resolve stormwater problems, balance vehicular and pedestrian needs, and prioritize parking strategies.
5. Organize the key town elements to create a network of inviting, walkable, and livable places addressing historic preservation, neighborhood and town-gown connections, height issues, stormwater, parking, and marketplaces.

Source: Townscape, Inc.



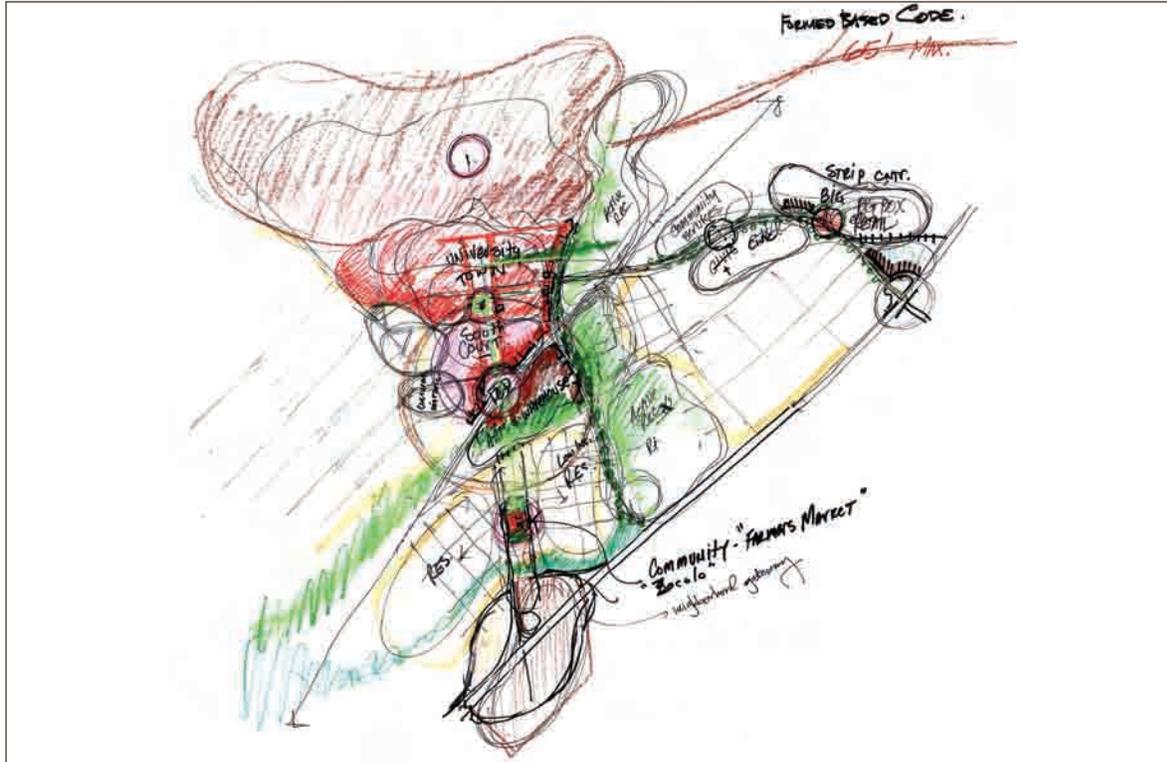
Improving the quality of place in Downtown San Marcos will help to attract talented employees, to recruit talent-seeking employers, and to generate additional demand for development. On the following pages, the Planning Principles are applied to a Vision Plan for the Downtown.

Source: Townscape, Inc.



VISION PLAN

The Big Ideas



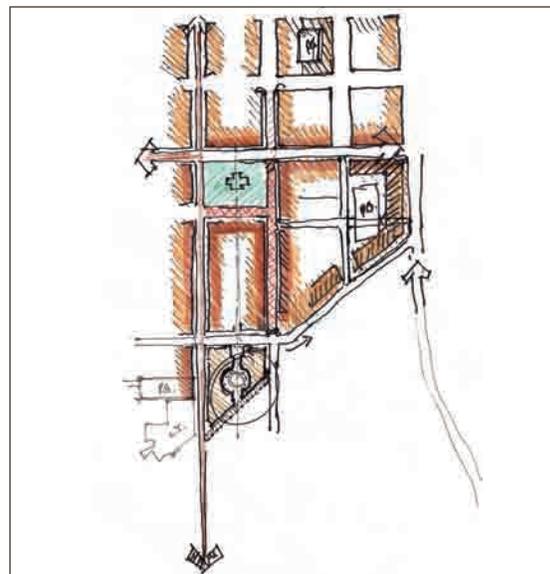
Source: Broaddus & Associates, Inc.

Big Ideas concept sketch

THE BIG IDEAS

The series of Big Ideas diagrams summarizes the vision for San Marcos' Downtown. It keys into the five Planning Principles, and illustrates the concept to promote authenticity and identity, preserve neighborhood character, connect to and engage the river and the university, and to organize key landmarks and access corridors into a system of interconnected spaces.

First, the Big Ideas plan focuses on enhancing the Downtown's connections to the San Marcos River. A series of east-west "green," pedestrian fingers bring the park into the Downtown and residents into the park. Next, the diagram establishes



Source: Broaddus & Associates, Inc.

Downtown Plan concept sketch

VISION PLAN

The Big Ideas

Source: Broaddus & Associates, Inc.



Establish pedestrian-friendly connections Downtown.

Source: Broaddus & Associates, Inc.



Utilize CM Allen Parkway to alleviate traffic Downtown.

Source: Broaddus & Associates, Inc.



The five-minute walk from the TOD should be delightful.

north-south linkages between the Downtown and Texas State University. Making Guadalupe and LBJ Streets more pedestrian-friendly will help to physically connect the Downtown with Texas State University's campus.

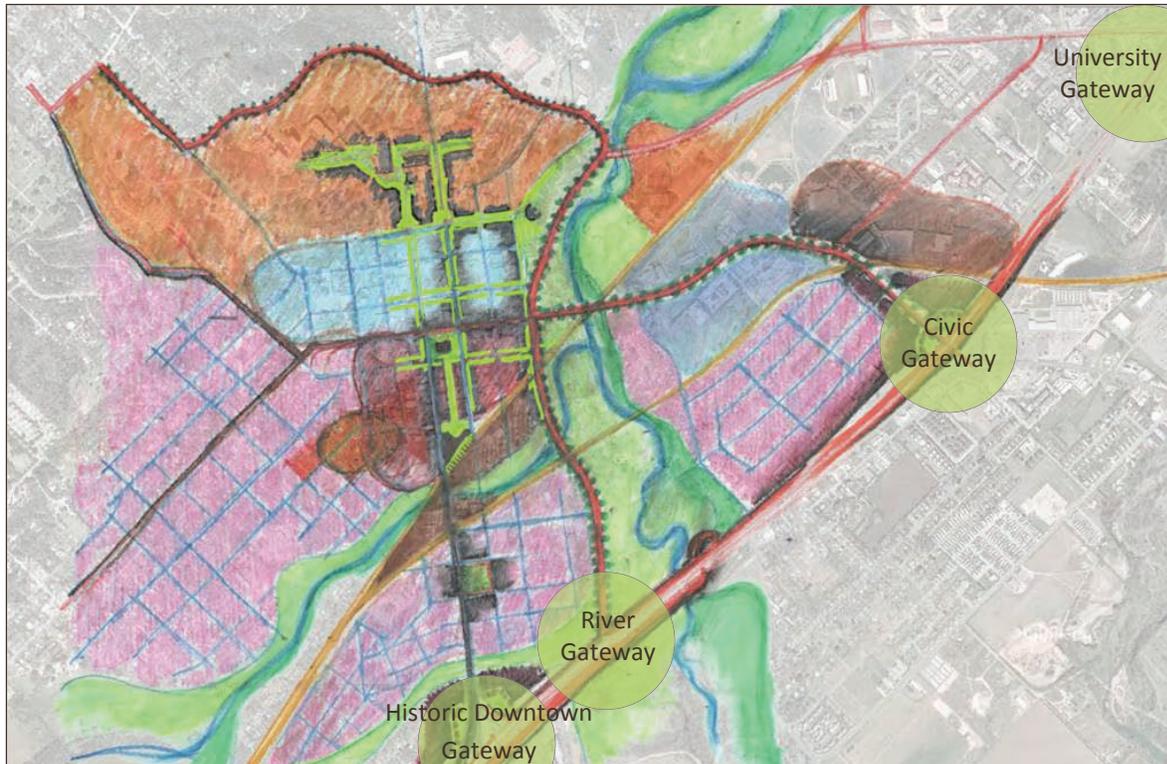
Second, the vision diagram illustrates the idea to make CM Allen Parkway a more utilized Downtown bypass route. Relocating vehicles to this road would relieve congestion around the Courthouse Square. Additionally, CM Allen Parkway would be a great location for mid-rise, garden-apartment residences that are both located in Downtown and overlook the park.

The Big Ideas plan also describes ideas about connecting the Courthouse Square to the south, toward the proposed location for a commuter rail stop. Making the five-minute walk from the rail stop to the core of Downtown a delightful and pleasant experience will help to ensure the success of Downtown shops and businesses as the rail stop comes online. The City could also consider forming a more dense, transit-oriented development in this area of the Downtown, encouraging a mix of entertainment options and residential units in close proximity to a larger transit hub.

In addressing the need to better organize access corridors to and from the Downtown, the Big Ideas diagram depicts key gateways for access to the Downtown and its neighborhoods. These four gateways correspond with key vehicular corridors, and should indicate to travelers the specific destination to which the route leads. The University Gateway corresponds with the Aquarena Springs entrance, the Civic Gateway corresponds with the Hopkins Street entrance, the future River Gateway corresponds with CM Allen Parkway, and the Historic Downtown Gateway corresponds with Guadalupe Street.

VISION PLAN

The Big Ideas

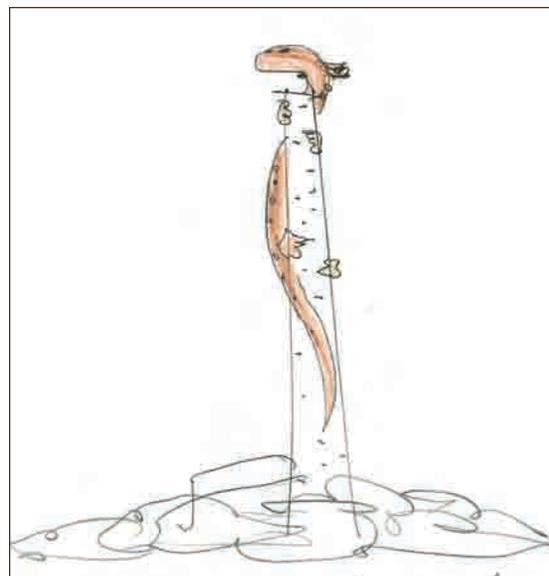


Source: Broaddus & Associates, Inc.

Key Gateways to the Downtown

Each of the gateways should offer a unique series of landscaping elements that tie-into the streetscaping along the vehicular corridors that lead to the Downtown. An illustration of the Historic Downtown Gateway indicates ideas about colored pavers, ornamental trees and vegetation, and a vertical focal point. The Gateways should be implemented as a part of Downtown wayfinding strategies.

Finally, the Big Ideas plan attempts to promote and preserve the cultural and historical heritage of San Marcos. Each neighborhood is envisioned in the Downtown Master Plan as being distinct in terms of identity, yet as also working in concert to form a rich character that is uniquely San Marcos. The Big Ideas diagram identifies these neighborhoods as a series of “villages” that compose the Downtown.

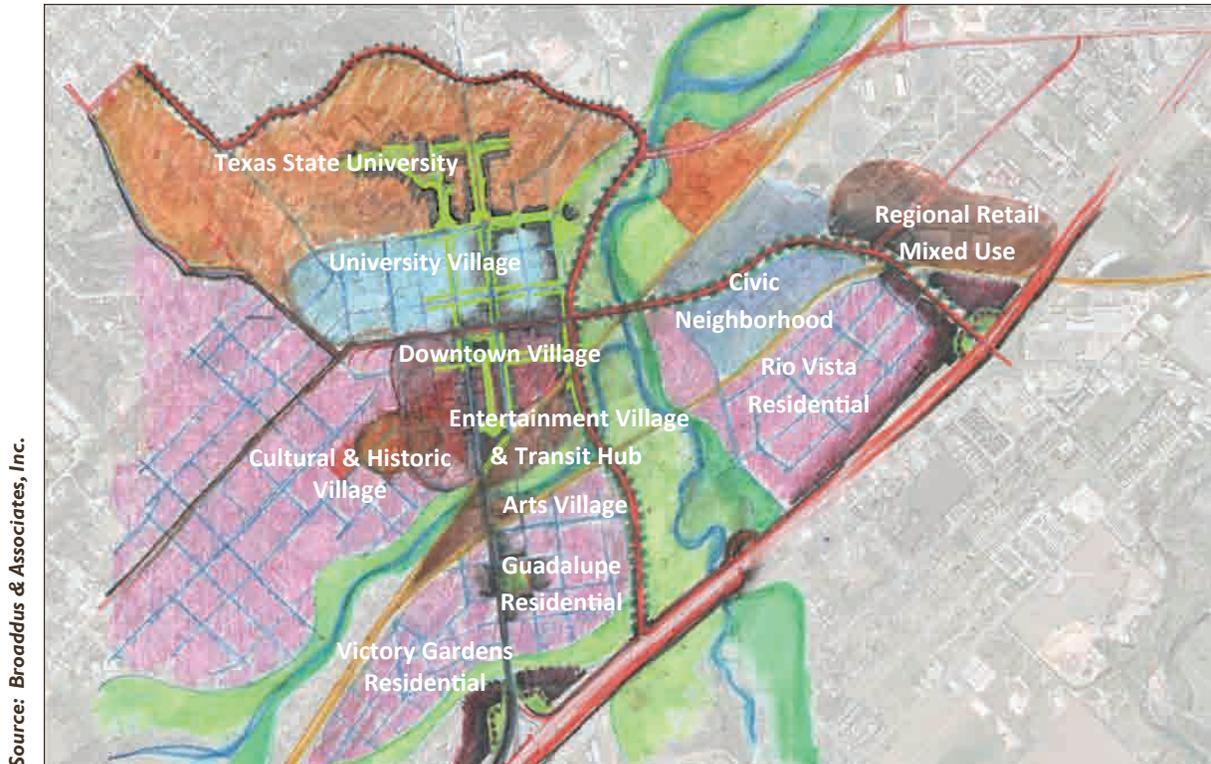


Source: Townscape, Inc.

“San Marcos Salamander” Gateway Signage Idea

VISION PLAN

The Big Ideas



Source: Broaddus & Associates, Inc.

Promote and protect existing neighborhood character.

THE DOWNTOWN VILLAGE

This village coincides with the existing Downtown neighborhood that is identified in the Observations and Analysis chapter. This neighborhood is essentially comprised of the Courthouse Square and the blocks that immediately surround it. The Downtown Village should seek to preserve its historic character while encouraging appropriate infill development in underdeveloped properties. The Downtown Village should be a mix of housing, employment, entertainment, and retail usages that support the unique flavor of San Marcos. It should be the heart of the entire community, and it should hold together all of the other Downtown neighborhoods.

THE UNIVERSITY VILLAGE

Following along with ideas that were articulated in the City's 2007 campus Edge Strategic Plan, the University Village is identified as the area between the central Courthouse Square and Texas State University. The neighborhood should be comprised of a mix of housing and entertainment options that successfully engages the student population to the north. This village will help to maximize Downtown's connections to the University and will serve as a transition zone for town-gown relations. It should be a place for interaction between students, non-students, and out-of-towners.

VISION PLAN

The Big Ideas

ENTERTAINMENT VILLAGE & TRANSPORTATION HUB

The southern half of the Downtown neighborhood currently consists of loft-style residential units, a number of warehouses, some of which are historical, and a mixed assortment of businesses. The Downtown Master Plan envisages this area as the location for a future transportation hub for the proposed commuter rail stop; this district could offer a combination of uses ranging from housing to retail to entertainment and arts.

ARTS VILLAGE

Adjacent to the transportation hub lies a second warehouse zone. This neighborhood, identified as the arts village in the Big Ideas diagram, offers a transitional space with structures large enough to serve as artist's studios, music centers or other cultural development venues.

EAST GUADALUPE & VICTORY GARDENS

The East Guadalupe and Victory Gardens neighborhoods comprise another of the Downtown Master Plans' villages. These residential communities, with their unique heritage, are envisioned as having a neighborhood market and community gathering spaces just east of Guadalupe Street.

CULTURAL & HISTORIC VILLAGE

This village, located to the southwest of the Courthouse Square, is viewed as an extension of the cultural amenities located Downtown. The Calaboose African American History museum is located within the Dunbar neighborhood. Also proposed are the Eddie Durham Jazz Park and the Cephus House.

CIVIC NEIGHBORHOOD

East of the Downtown, between the San Marcos River and the interstate, exists a neighborhood of Civic and Community Services. These community



Source: Broaddus & Associates, Inc.

San Marcos Neighborhood

services are located adjacent to the community park, and create a hub of city government and amenities, including city hall, the activity center, and the library.

The City of San Marcos should seek to actively direct positive growth Downtown in a manner consistent with the Planning Principles and Vision Plan. By building upon the already-established framework resident to Downtown San Marcos, and by realigning economic development principles to value quality of place, San Marcos will be well poised to realize the vision for an active, vibrant, and revitalized Downtown.

THE DOWNTOWN PLAN

The Big Ideas

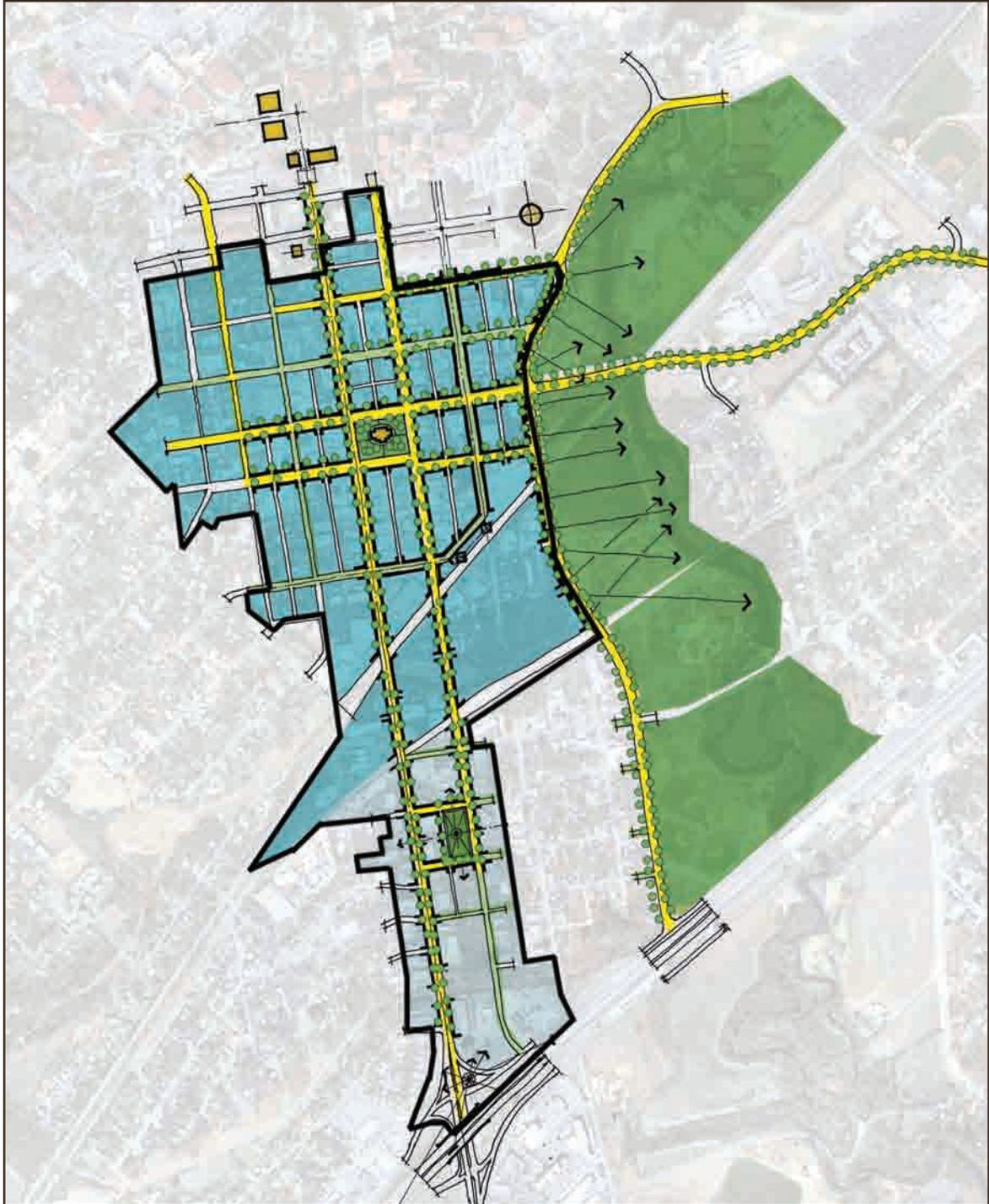


Source: Broaddus & Associates, Inc.

Downtown Master Plan: Lively, urban spaces built within the existing Downtown framework and characterized by a pedestrian-friendly network of parks and landmarks promote San Marcos' unique qualities.

THE DOWNTOWN PLAN

The Big Ideas



Source: Broaddus & Associates, Inc.

Downtown Master Plan: Key elements include revisiting Downtown development standards, reworking the existing street network, and implementing a financing and management district.

THE DOWNTOWN PLAN

San Marcos' Identity & Placemaking

This chapter outlines specific strategies that the City of San Marcos can implement in order to achieve the Vision for a revitalized Downtown. Two versions of the Master Plan are illustrated on the previous pages; the first captures the vision plan for Downtown while the second begins to map the Plan's more specific elements. Features of these plans will be described in more detail in this chapter; and they are structured into the same "umbrella" categories utilized in the Observations and Analysis section of the document. In addition, an Implementation section is added at the end of the chapter to describe the many financial and management options that the city can employ to make the vision a reality.

The City should focus on re-establishing Downtown as a distinct destination, building upon the authentic characteristics of San Marcos. Ultimately, investing in the physical quality of place in San Marcos will help to attract talented, creative citizens and employers.

1. SAN MARCOS' IDENTITY & PLACEMAKING

MARKETING FOR SUCCESS - MAKING THE DOWNTOWN A UNIQUE DESTINATION

There are multiple strategies that the City of San Marcos could employ in order to make the Downtown a unique destination. On the marketing and branding side of destination development, the City should begin to generate a strong "brand" for the Downtown that integrates with the city-wide branding efforts that are currently underway.

The Downtown branding strategy should include the generation of well-developed products such as blast media campaigns and up-to-date websites that help to promote the Downtown. The marketing campaign should specifically target developers, investors, and businesses in addition to reaching out to the eight million tourists visiting the outlet malls.



Source: Broaddus & Associates, Inc.

Nodes & Visual Connection

COMPREHENSIVE SIGNAGE & WAYFINDING

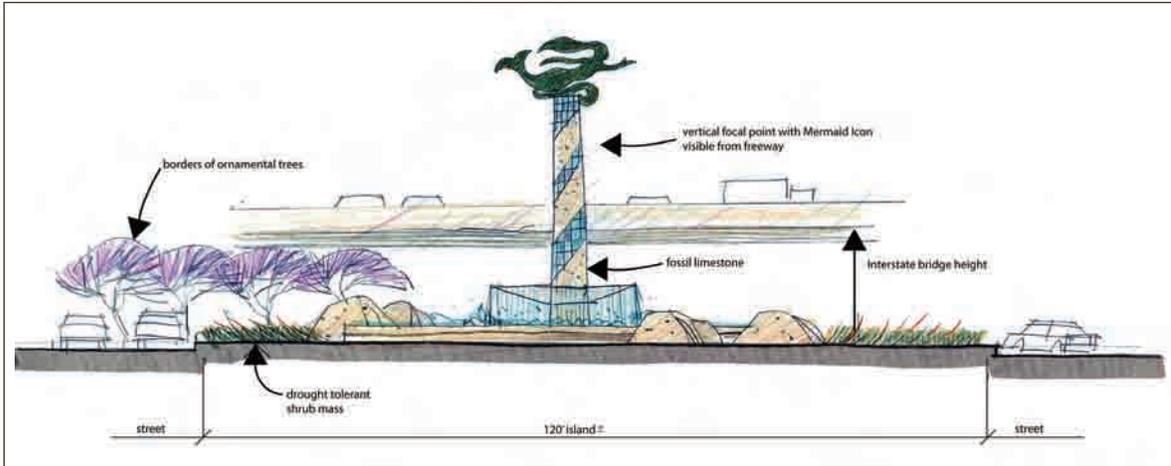
Along with the development of external marketing strategies, the City should establish a comprehensive wayfinding plan to include a signage strategy that helps to direct visitors both to and around the Downtown. The wayfinding plan should encompass a hierarchy of elements that range from the vehicular to the pedestrian experience.

Vehicular signage on IH-35 that directs people to the Downtown should be coupled with entry gateway markers at five key locations, which correspond with the main access corridors of Aquarena Springs, Hopkins Street/County Road 12, CM Allen Boulevard, Guadalupe Street, and Wonder World Drive. The City will need to work with the Texas

THE DOWNTOWN PLAN

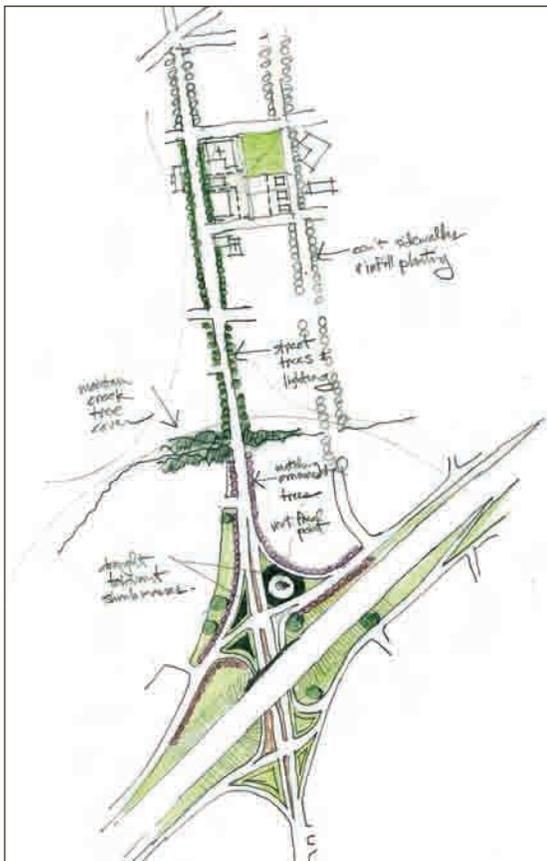
San Marcos' Identity & Placemaking

Source: Townscape, Inc.



Example of Gateway Signage into the city (Guadalupe Gateway off from I-35)

Source: Townscape, Inc.



Example of Gateway Plan at Guadalupe Street, the Historic Downtown Gateway

Department of Transportation to establish better signage for Downtown exits along IH-35. The Texas Department of Transportation will also need to be consulted as landscaping and median plans are developed for areas surrounding interstate entry and off-ramps.

The gateway markers at these locations should be representative of Downtown or San Marcos, and standardized or themed motifs could register on street signs and directional signage throughout the city. Several motif ideas were offered during conversations with residents of San Marcos, including Texas stars, San Marcos salamanders, and Aquarena Springs mermaid icons. As a way to garner community support, San Marcos could conduct a public campaign to generate a new city icon.

Beyond the gateway markers and branding symbols, directional vehicular signage that points visitors to the city's nodes and landmarks - such as those identified by the existing San Marcos Wayfinding System Plan from 2002 - should be implemented consistently throughout the Downtown and especially along the primary access corridors like Hopkins Street, Guadalupe Street, LBJ Street,

THE DOWNTOWN PLAN

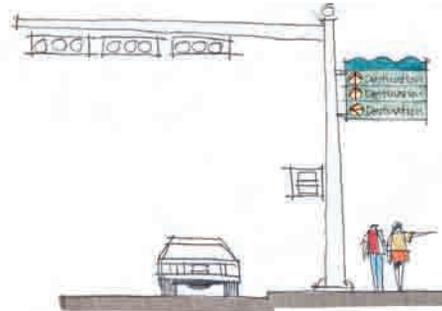
San Marcos' Identity & Placemaking

University Drive, Aquarena Springs Drive, and CM Allen Boulevard. The comprehensive signage plan should be sure to direct Texas State University traffic around, instead of through, the Downtown to reduce congestion on the Courthouse Square. At the vehicular scale, directional signage should also include parking and public transit locations.

In addition to properly signing the primary access corridors, the City should consider incorporating street trees and other landscaping elements into the Downtown streetscape. These beautification features help to identify the Downtown as a place distinct from the rest of San Marcos, and is a project that can be extended to other areas of town as Downtown landscaping is completed. Low-maintenance, ornamental grasses and flowers should be considered to reduce demands on valuable water resources and staff hours.

As a part of a comprehensive wayfinding plan that operates on many levels of the user-experience, the City should consider pedestrian-scaled signage elements. These signs may be primarily directional, but could also include maps and directories for landmarks and public transportation, public posting locations, and temporary event signage. When paired with pedestrian oriented streetscaping elements such as benches, lighting, garbage receptacles, and variable paving textures, pedestrian-signage becomes another useful wayfinding tool.

Ultimately, the goal for a comprehensive wayfinding system is to unify the public's experience of San Marcos and its Downtown. Although it needs to integrate with city-wide signage and wayfinding systems, the Downtown should be the easiest place to find in San Marcos and should be the most welcoming place to be, whether traveling by car, rail, or foot.



Primary Access Corridor Signage-
signal pole with river motif



Secondary Street Signage-
mermaid icon on top, "downtown green" with cream front.



Pedestrian-Scaled Signage-
river motif with either mermaid icon or star, "downtown green", ground mounted

Source: Townscape, Inc.

THE DOWNTOWN PLAN

2. Downtown Business Development

Source: City of San Marcos



A band at a past San Marcos Texas Natural & Western Swing Festival.

PROMOTION OF CULTURAL EVENTS

The City of San Marcos could also enhance its identity by promoting cultural events in the Downtown area. These events, when properly marketed, draw visitors and community members to the City and into the Downtown.

As an example, San Marcos could reinstate its chili festival, sponsor performances in conjunction with Texas State University or promote farmers or artists markets Downtown. Events such as these could also take place at key nodes of activity in the residential neighborhood Downtown or could be located along the banks of the beautiful San Marcos River.

2. DOWNTOWN BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

The vision for the Downtown Master Plan in terms of Downtown Business Development is to reinvent Downtown as a regional marketplace, and the City has the opportunity to do this given the projected growth in the Austin - San Antonio region. The City will need to recruit and retain employers from the region and stimulate economic growth in order to realize a reinvigorated commercial center Downtown.

STRATEGIC PLANNING

In order to do this, the City should to conduct a retail recruitment analysis and to devise a strategy to promote Downtown as a specialty retail destination. The study can also be used as a marketing tool for recruitment purposes.

The City should generate a city-wide economic development strategic plan that outlines goals, strategies, and actions to advance economic development in San Marcos. This plan should specifically consider the role of the Downtown in the overall economy and include strategies to promote Downtown.

EMPLOYER RECRUITMENT

As San Marcos refocuses its perspective toward a regional market, the City should, likewise, focus its recruitment efforts on the regional growth in both Austin and San Antonio. If San Marcos can capture at least 1.5% of the region's commercial growth in the next five years – and direct some of that development Downtown – a significant demand for office space will be generated.

The City should target employers who have markets in both Austin and San Antonio, as they are ideal candidates for locating at the halfway point – San Marcos' Downtown.

THE DOWNTOWN PLAN

2. Downtown Business Development

| Projected Residential Space Demand Summary | |
|--|---------------------|
| DOWNTOWN SAN MARCOS | |
| | Change 2007-2012 |
| Capture Rate | |
| Scenario 1: Low | 1.0% |
| Scenario 2: Medium | 1.3% |
| Scenario 3: High | 1.5% |
| Owner-Occupied MF | |
| Scenario 1: Low | 278 |
| Scenario 2: Medium | 348 |
| Scenario 3: High | 417 |
| Renter-Occupied MF | |
| Scenario 1: Low | 124 |
| Scenario 2: Medium | 155 |
| Scenario 3: High | 186 |

Source: TIP Strategies, Inc.

| Potential Space Demand Summary | | |
|--|----------------|-------------|
| DOWNTOWN SAN MARCOS - 2007-2012 | | |
| | Regional Focus | |
| | Low | High |
| Office Market | | |
| Additional Office workers | 636 Workers | 956 Workers |
| Additional Office Deman (Sq. Ft.) | 135,378 SF | 203,066 SF |
| Residential (Multi-Family) Market | | |
| Total New MF Units | 402 Units | 603 Units |
| Est. Sq. Ft. (at 700 per Unit) | 281,591 SF | 422,387 SF |
| Retail Market | | |
| Total Retail Demand (Sq. Ft.) | 39,437 SF | 52,638 SF |

Source: TIP Strategies, Inc.

As previously mentioned, the demand for office growth is coupled with growth in the areas of retail, residential, and entertainment uses. Additionally, as the City survey of San Marcos residents conducted in conjunction with the Downtown Master Plan revealed, many support the idea of additional retailers and restaurateurs in the Downtown area. Therefore, the City should promote the local, specialty retail, restaurant, and entertainment businesses, and encourage the establishment of more “third places” businesses Downtown.

THE DOWNTOWN PLAN

3. Development Standards & Processes

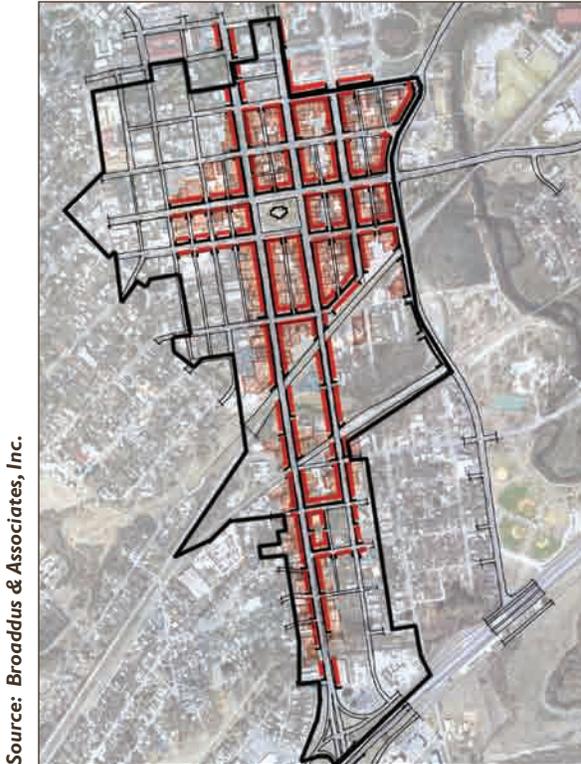
3. DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS & PROCESSES

In terms of Development Standards and Processes, the vision for the Downtown Plan is to facilitate and accommodate the anticipated space growth within the Downtown while enhancing San Marcos' unique character. The Development Standards and Processes should help to make San Marcos a great employment center, living environment, social environment and learning community.

EMBRACE MIXED USE DEVELOPMENT & COMPACTNESS

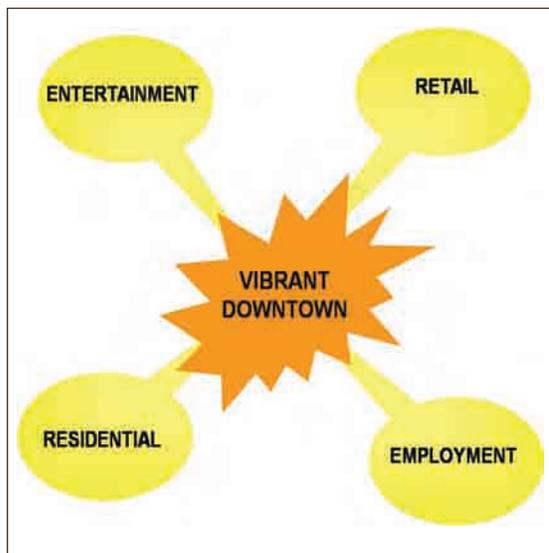
Primarily, San Marcos should set an example by encouraging mixed-use development in the Downtown. Mixed-use development, as described in the diagram in the lower-left, is a mix of uses, such as entertainment, retail, employment, and residential, within a compact, walkable development. In order to do this, San Marcos will need to revisit its existing development code to establish a development process that yields predictable physical results. Specifically, San Marcos should consider adopting a type of Form Based Codes, which focus on regulating the physical character of the buildings rather than building usage and abstract development requirements, such as open space ratios.

Form Based Codes direct property owners and developers to create buildings that have a desirable relationship to the street, desirable heights and densities, an appropriate use of windows, and appropriate façade articulations. Form Based Codes are replacing traditional zoning ordinances in many communities, and cities often consider Form Based Codes especially useful when regulating development in historic districts. Form Based Codes do not segregate usages as traditional zoning ordinances do, so help to ensure that mixed-use development occurs – even in infill situations like San Marcos' Downtown.



Source: Broaddus & Associates, Inc.

The City should consider Form Based Codes in the Downtown core and along primary retail streets to promote a mix of uses and support historic character.

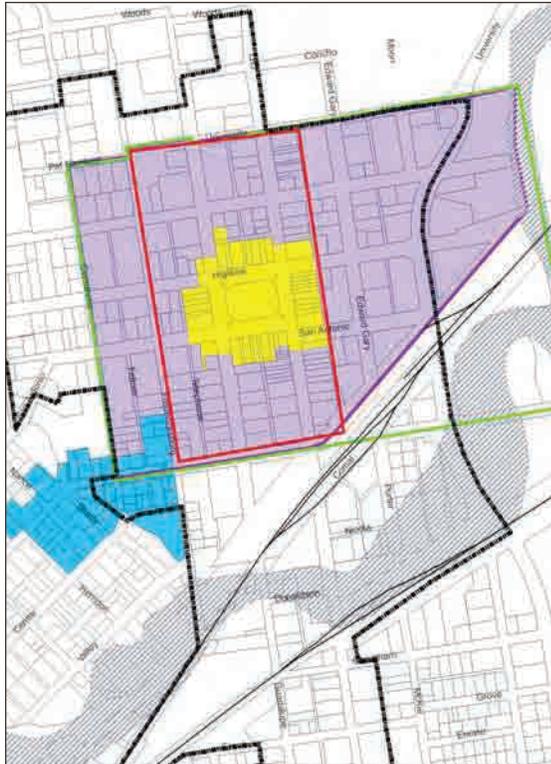


Source: TIP Strategies, Inc.

A Mix of Uses helps to create vibrant downtowns.

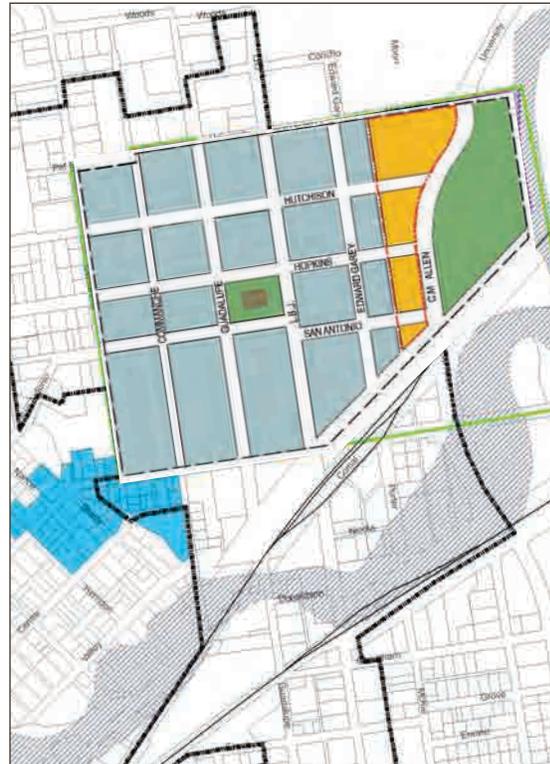
THE DOWNTOWN PLAN

3. Development Standards & Processes



Source: City of San Marcos

Existing Downtown Height Overlay (in purple)



Source: Broaddus & Associates, Inc.

Proposed Downtown Height Overlay (in orange)

The real focus of mixed-use development in San Marcos is to ensure that residential demand growth can be accommodated Downtown alongside commercial and retail growth. As described in the Downtown Business Development section, there is a significant demand for commercial growth within the Austin – San Antonio region. This demand will fuel and will be further fueled by residential growth in San Marcos. The proposition of a commuter rail between Austin and San Antonio creates an additional opportunity for San Marcos to grow its residential base Downtown. Encouraging mixed-use developments in Downtown San Marcos will help the City to revitalize the district and make it a desirable place.

The City of San Marcos will also need to ensure that new development requirements are flexible enough to accommodate desirable projects. San Marcos should consider establishing a fee in-lieu of meeting development requirements for parking or pervious cover. The fees collected from developers can be used by the City to construct parking garages and storm water treatment facilities.

The City should also consider implementing an increased height overlay in the Downtown neighborhood. The Downtown Master Plan recommends establishing the height overlay in the half-blocks adjacent CM Allen Parkway, as taller

THE DOWNTOWN PLAN

3. Development Standards & Processes

Source: Broaddus & Associates, Inc.



Restored Mixed-Use Downtown

development in these areas will not interfere with the historic character immediately surrounding the Courthouse Square.

The Downtown Master Plan sets the maximum height within this overlay area as 80 feet, which will encourage a higher-density residential development along the edge of the park. Ideally, these residences would be garden-apartment type units that take advantage of the views to the park. Residences here would be within a five to ten minute walk of the proposed commuter rail stop as well as of Texas State University.

Source: Townscape, Inc.

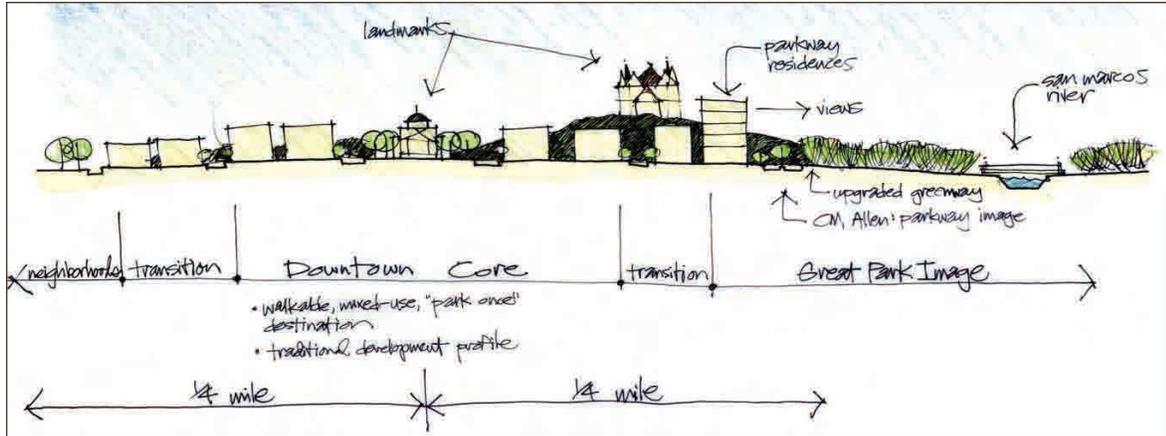


Example of Four-Story Residential Building for CM Allen

It is important for citizens to understand that this height overlay does not suggest high-rise development Downtown; instead, development within the 80 foot overlay would be limited to approximately six stories. Also, the existing height overlay would not be modified for the remaining portions of the Downtown area.

THE DOWNTOWN PLAN

3. Development Standards & Processes



Source: Townscape, Inc.

Sketch Diagram of the height overlay & parkway or garden-residences concept.

PURSUE PUBLIC / PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS

In order to stimulate development Downtown, the City may consider creative public-private partnerships. These partnerships could take the form of programs that help property owners to restore historic façades or to mitigate pollution on key Downtown properties.

Additionally, the City could consider programs that focus on land assembly for later resale to private developers. In this way, the City can ensure feasible development in key areas Downtown while also influencing the type of development that results.

THE DOWNTOWN PLAN

4. Streets & Roadways Network



Map of Bypasses and Gateways

4. STREETS & ROADWAYS NETWORK

The key goal for the Downtown Master Plan in terms of the Streets and Roadways Network is to support the idea that Downtown is a destination. This means that the Streets and Roadways Network needs to direct through traffic around the Downtown and to direct Downtown visitors to the Downtown. Downtown should be one of the easiest places to reach in San Marcos.

SIGNAGE FOR BYPASS ROUTES

As previously mentioned in the San Marcos' Identity and Placemaking section, the City should generate and implement a comprehensive wayfinding plan that includes signage (see pages 59-61). The Downtown Master Plan recommends that signage be located along the interstate to direct through

traffic to bypass routes – such as Wonder World Drive – and to direct visitors to Downtown on the key access corridors, which are Aquarena Springs, Hopkins Street, Guadalupe Street, and a future exit at CM Allen Parkway.

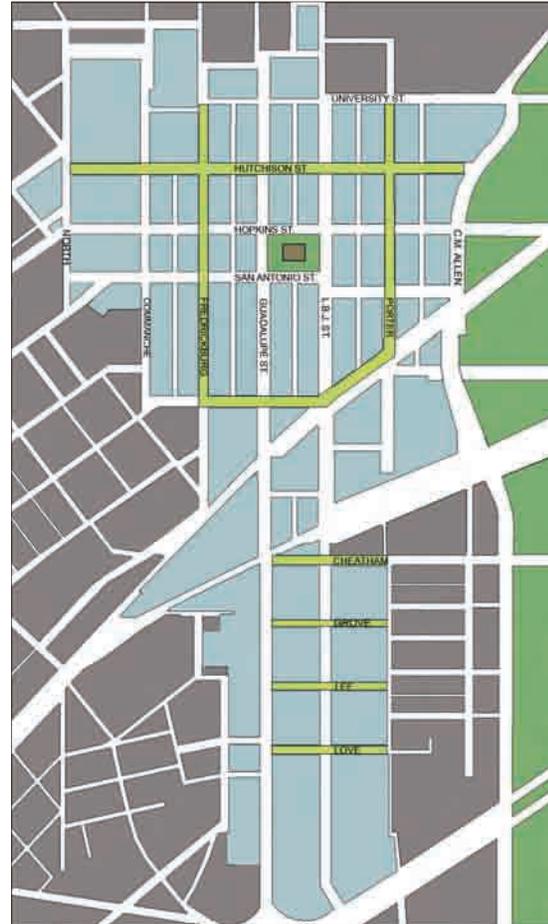
It is especially important for the City to stress the use of main bypass routes today, as they will alleviate traffic congestion in the Downtown and, in turn, will facilitate the development of more pedestrian-friendly and two-way streets in the future. Appropriate signage from IH-35 is the starting place for the implementation of long-range street and roadway network improvements.

THE DOWNTOWN PLAN

4. Streets & Roadways Network



Source: Broaddus & Associates, Inc.



Source: Broaddus & Associates, Inc.

PRIMARY STREETS

- Primary streets are designed to carry larger numbers of cars.
- Should be the location for the primary retail, office and some residential spaces.

SECONDARY STREETS

- Secondary Streets are designed to carry smaller numbers of cars and service access.
- Allows for some retail and office space, but should be primarily residential.

THE DOWNTOWN PLAN

4. Streets & Roadways Network

Source: Broaddus & Associates, Inc.



Source: Broaddus & Associates, Inc.



TERTIARY ALLEYWAYS

- Alleys are designed to carry service and emergency vehicles and should give direct access to the interior portions of the blocks.
- Allows access to surface parking and loading docks of retail and office spaces.
- In some cases, especially in the cases of alleyways that lead to the Courthouse, alleyways can be converted into intimate retail zones.

URBAN EDGES

- Downtown urban blocks should be infilled in order to frame the roadway networks.
- Form-Based Codes, which regulate the physical form of infill development, should focus on creating continuous street walls.
- The first-floor of these infill buildings should be constructed to hold retail or office space, so that the streetscape is consistent.

THE DOWNTOWN PLAN

4. Streets & Roadways Network

PRIMARY, SECONDARY, & TERTIARY STREETS

With the bypass routes in mind, the Downtown Master Plan identified a series of primary, secondary, and tertiary streets within the Downtown. Conceptualizing these streets as primary access routes, secondary, local-access routes, and tertiary alleyway service routes helps to inform the types and locations of building uses that will occur within the Downtown neighborhood.

For example, the Downtown Master Plan identifies Guadalupe street as a primary access corridor. As such, this route is a preferred location for businesses such as retail and office, and should also include some residential spaces. Secondary routes compliment the primary routes and are a preferred location for residential usages, but may also be the location for some retail and office spaces. Tertiary routes provide back-of-house access to these businesses and residences.

The City should link the roadway hierarchies with development guidelines such as form based codes to facilitate retail and entertainment uses in higher-traffic locations.



Source: Broaddus & Associates, Inc.

Primary Street Downtown

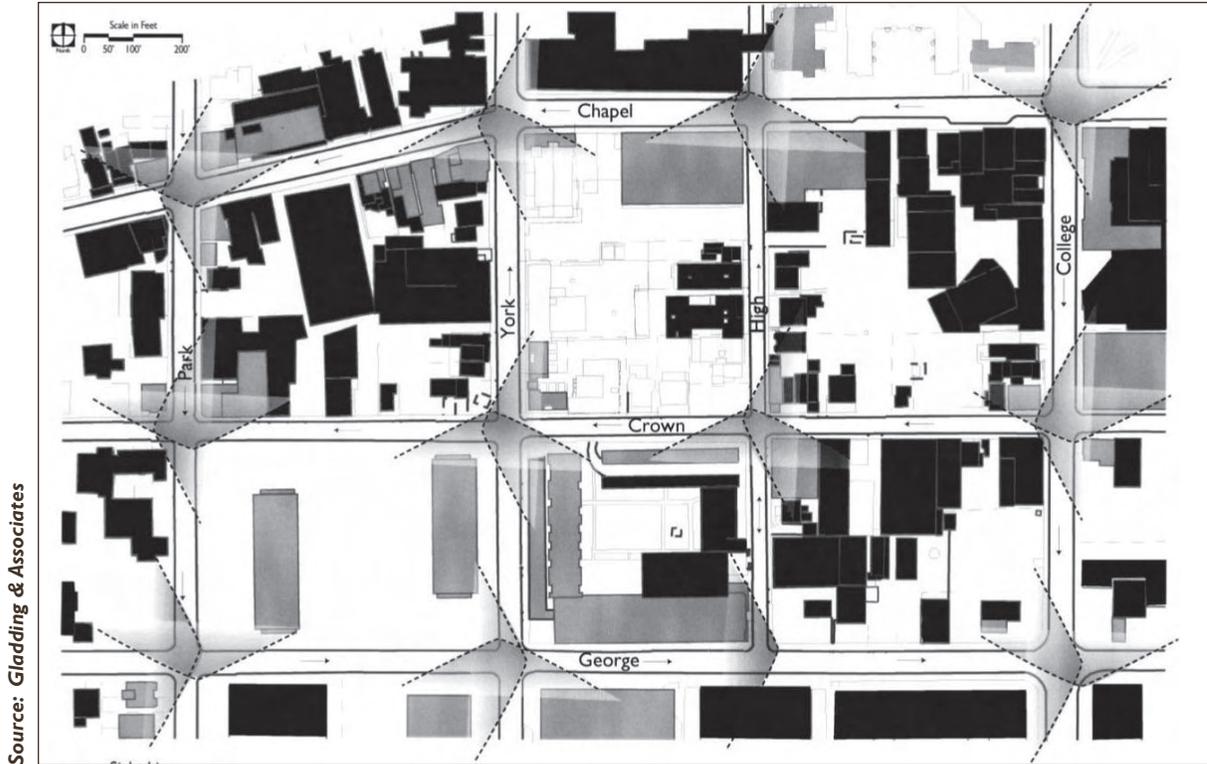


Source: Broaddus & Associates, Inc.

Alleyway

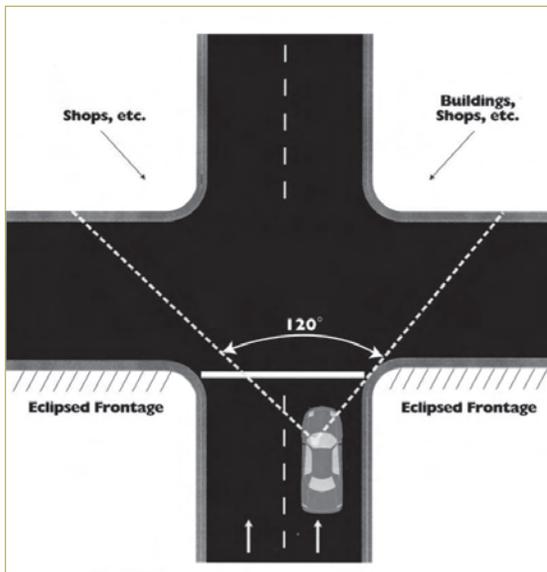
THE DOWNTOWN PLAN

4. Streets & Roadways Network



Source: Gladding & Associates

Retail & Commercial properties eclipsed by one-way streets in New Haven, CT.



Source: Gladding & Associates

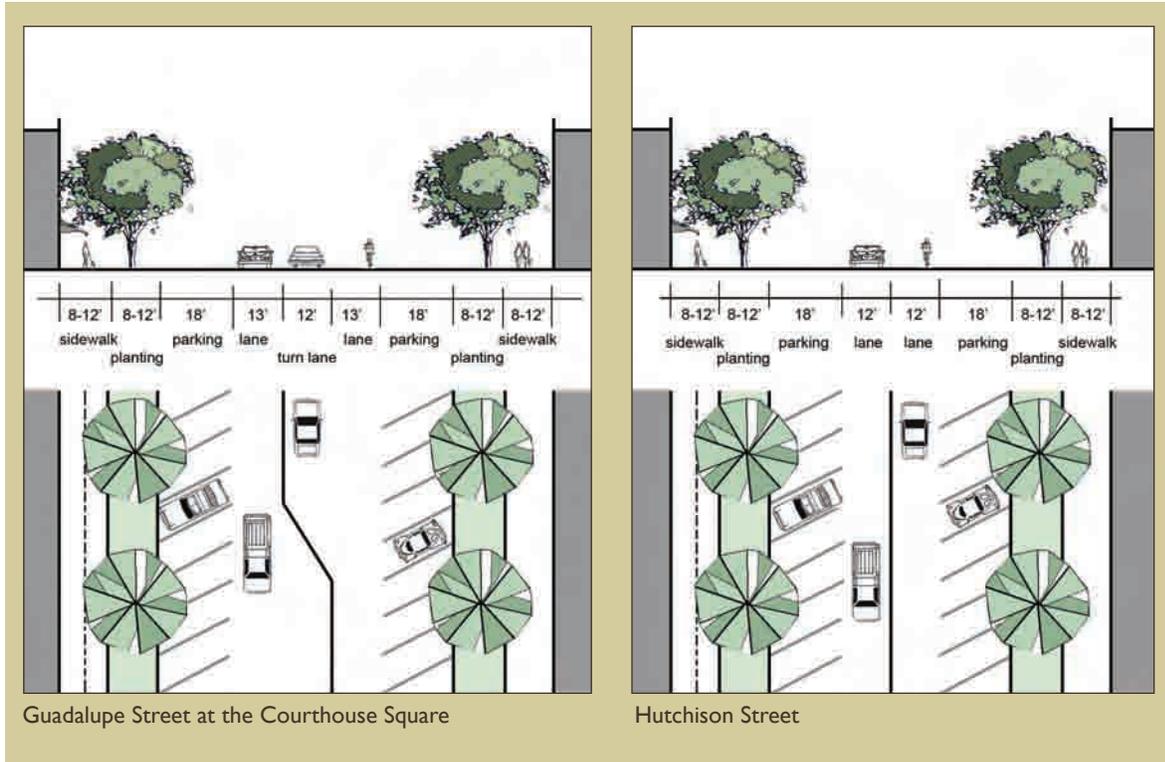
Eclipsed Retail Frontage on a One-Way Street

ONE-WAY to TWO-WAY

The Downtown Master Plan recommends converting the one-way streets within San Marcos' Downtown neighborhood back to two-way streets. This conversion – along with the usage of bypass routes – will help to solve many of the traffic problems Downtown. Motorists tend to drive faster on one-way streets than on two-way streets, which impacts the walkability of Downtown neighborhoods. Additionally, studies have indicated that well-designed two-way streets actually carry more capacity than one-way streets do, especially if traffic lights are appropriately timed.

THE DOWNTOWN PLAN

4. Streets & Roadways Network



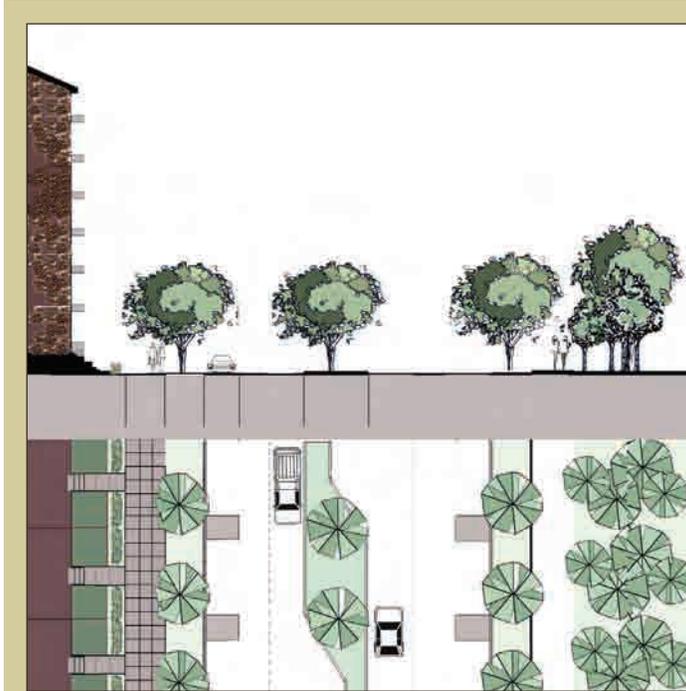
Yet another argument for the conversion of these streets is the fact that retail and other businesses perform better when located on two-way streets than one-way streets. This is because drivers typically employ a limited range of vision when operating a vehicle; businesses with locations outside this range of vision typically experience less patronage than their visible counterparts. On two-way streets, this impact is lessened, making locations on all corners of the intersection desirable places for businesses.

With this in mind, the Downtown Master Plan has developed a series of typical street sections for the Downtown area. The street sections, illustrated in a sequence on these pages, capture many of the preferred streetscaping tactics that are discussed in this document. Firstly, the traffic in all of these street sections is two-way traffic.

Secondly, the number of lanes for traffic is reduced and the width of sidewalks are increased in order to make streets more pedestrian-friendly, which is ideal for Downtown areas. Next, streets exhibit parking options on either side of the roadway, and bulb-outs help to reduce the speed of traffic and to protect parked vehicles.

THE DOWNTOWN PLAN

4. Streets & Roadways Network



Boulevard Street Section & Plan for CM Allen Parkway

CM Allen Boulevard could be redesigned with a median to allow parallel parking on either side of the road. Sidewalks and landscaping could be expanded on the park side of CM Allen as an extension of the hike and bike trail.

The increased height allowed along CM Allen would not overpower the wider street section, and residences here could have prime views to the existing park.

Street trees and other landscaping elements that add interest and detail to the streetscapes are illustrated, and ample room is provided to allow for on-street cafes and informal gathering that is desirable Downtown. The City of San Marcos should consider implementing streetscapes standards such as those illustrated in these diagrams in order to make San Marcos' Downtown a more desirable place for visitors, workers, and residents.

THE DOWNTOWN PLAN

4. Streets & Roadways Network

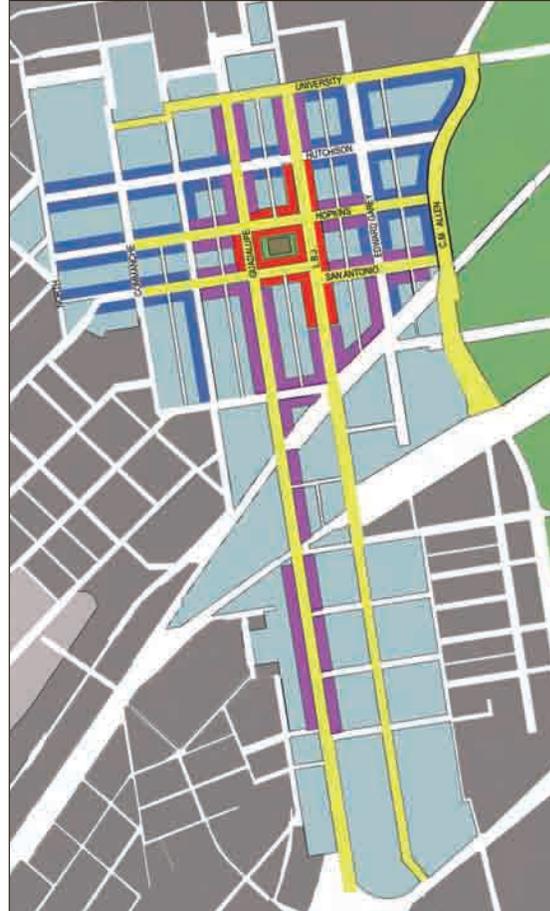
“Nobody has ever traveled downtown merely to take advantage of abundant parking.”
Downtown Parking: Reining in the 800-pound Gorilla
Kent Robertson, Ph.D.

PARKING

Although there is local support to build a parking garage that would provide convenient parking to the downtown core, this may be a rash decision as the initial capital costs and ongoing operational and maintenance costs place a financial burden on the City or private developer. The parking garage would need to generate revenues to offset these costs. The problem with paying to park in the garage is that there is an abundance of free parking on the street and in surrounding surface lots. It is likely that all the free spaces will be occupied first, and only the overflow will park in the garage.

Instead, the City should consider first starting out with introducing a paid parking program for on-street spaces around the town square and leading up to the university. Parking meters or multi-space meters could be installed to capture revenue on premium parking spaces. This will help to discourage students from occupying prime parking spaces that should be utilized by patrons and visitors. If enforced, a paid parking program will also help to establish a parking fund to support future construction of parking facilities.

As the on-street parking continues to increase occupancy levels, the City should look for opportunities to purchase property in the areas surrounding the Downtown core and construct



Source: Broaddus & Associates, Inc.

Phase One Parking Management Plan

-  Premium Metered Parking
-  Metered Parking
-  Free Parking

THE DOWNTOWN PLAN

4. Streets & Roadways Network

surface lots to meet the growing demand. The revenue collected at the surface parking lots combined with the revenue collected from on-street parking will cover the initial construction costs and operation and maintenance.

When these facilities reach critical levels of occupancy, it would then be appropriate to study the feasibility of building a parking structure. The cost of owning, operating, and maintaining a parking structure can be very expensive. A parking “system” that generates revenue from all of its spaces will be required to match the financial burden of a parking structure.

A parking manager should be appointed to operate the system and to direct parking enforcement. This can be done “in house” under a division of public works or parks and recreation. As an auxiliary service, this position will require full time attention to manage appropriate staff, issue and collect citations, operate facilities, oversee maintenance, etc. A secondary alternative may be to retain a privately-operated parking management company to operate the parking system. They would report to a manager within the City’s current structure and oversee all parking operations. The service is similar in nature to typical contracts for janitorial, landscaping, etc.

Source: Wikimedia Commons



Solar-powered, multi-space parking meter in Redwood, California.

Source: Wikimedia Commons



More traditional parking meter in Aimes, Iowa.

THE DOWNTOWN PLAN

4. Streets & Roadways Network

ACCOMMODATING BICYCLES & PEDESTRIANS

The core Downtown neighborhood of San Marcos should be a very walkable place, and the central square has already been improved with many pedestrian-friendly features in mind. However, beyond the Courthouse Square, the sidewalk provisions become less adequate and then gradually cease to exist.

Currently, the City is scheduled to implement a street improvements project along Hutchison Street. This project should become the model for new pedestrian-friendly and bicycle accommodating measures Downtown. The Downtown Master Plan recommends introducing streetscaping elements, like street trees, to upcoming Capital Improvement Projects, and systematically implementing standard pedestrian-friendly streetscaping throughout the Downtown.

Improved pedestrian connections into Downtown and adjoining recreational, retail and employment opportunities would also be beneficial to the East Guadalupe neighborhood and other residential neighborhoods around Downtown. Specifically, the Downtown Master Plan recommends that the City address the connections between the East Guadalupe neighborhood and the Downtown, as pedestrian and bicycle access are limited by the railroad crossing on Guadalupe Street.

Essentially, the Downtown Master Plan envisions the streetscape as an extension of the green parks network. With that in mind, the City should focus on improving the quality of pedestrian and bicycle elements; all sidewalks should be brought into compliance with ADA requirements, and the City should take care to focus on the details that make sidewalks safe and comfortable pedestrian environments, including shade, textured pavers, benches, and lighting.



Source: Broaddus & Associates, Inc.

Street Trees Plan

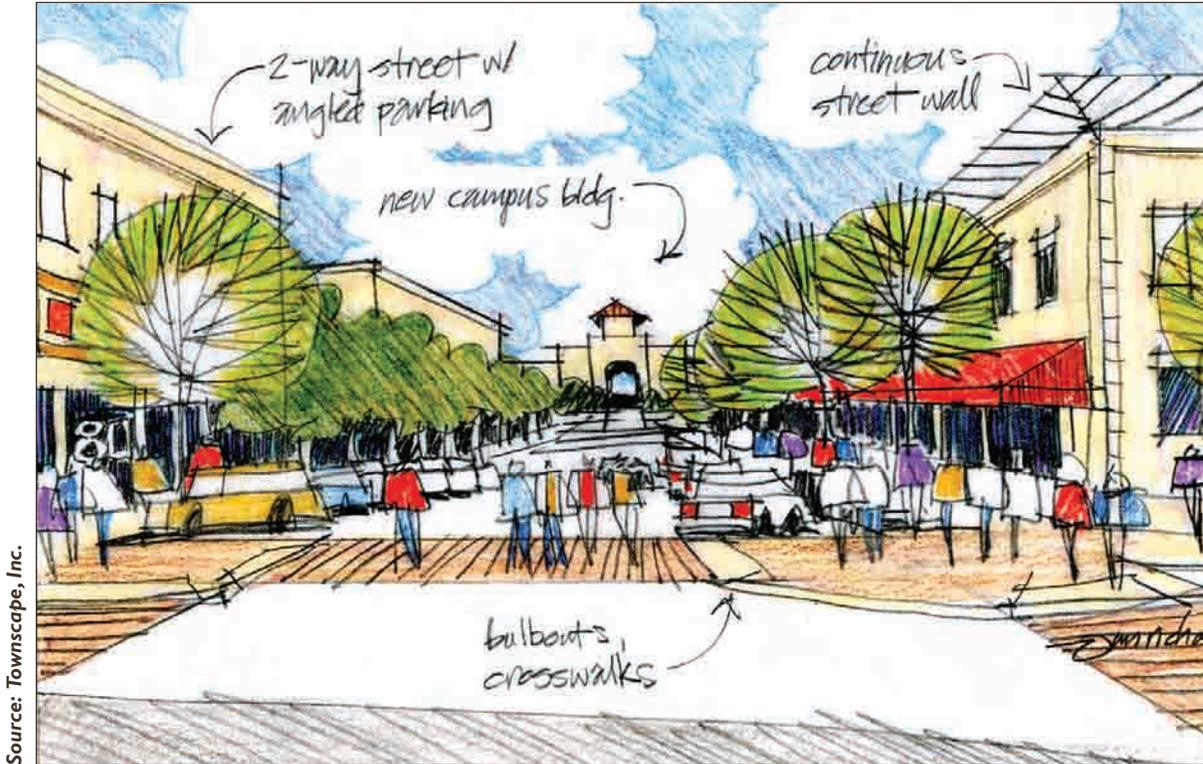


Source: American Institute of Architects website

Example of Pedestrian-Friendly Pathways

THE DOWNTOWN PLAN

4. Streets & Roadways Network



Source: Townscape, Inc.

AFTER



Source: Townscape, Inc.

BEFORE

GUADALUPE STREET AT HUTCHISON STREET

This graphic demonstrates many of the Downtown Master Plan concepts related to Streets and Roadways. Here, Guadalupe Street becomes a typical, two-way street with angled parking. Pedestrians are encouraged to cross the streets at indicated intersections, and traffic-calming devices, such as bulb-outs, help to keep vehicular traffic from moving too quickly through the area.

Street trees shade and define the public spaces, making them pleasant places for people to gather outside their favorite shops and cafes. Sidewalks utilize colorful, textured pavers and are ADA accessible. The new gateway building planned for Texas State University creates a visual point of interest the end of the street, and a continuous street wall frames the focal landmark.

THE DOWNTOWN PLAN

4. Streets & Roadways Network



Source: Townscape, Inc.

AFTER: Proposed TOD Hub

AFTER

EDWARD GARY STREET AT THE PROPOSED COMMUTER RAIL STOP

This graphic illustrates the idea for a proposed commuter rail stop to be located at the end of Edward Gary Street. Again, Edward Gary is redesigned as a two-way street with parallel parking and widened sidewalks. Street trees line the road and shade pedestrian walks to and from the rail station.

Here, the idea of a market plaza is incorporated into the rail station development, which could be a unique element that is utilized for farmer's or artist's markets, gathering spaces for performances or any variety of events.

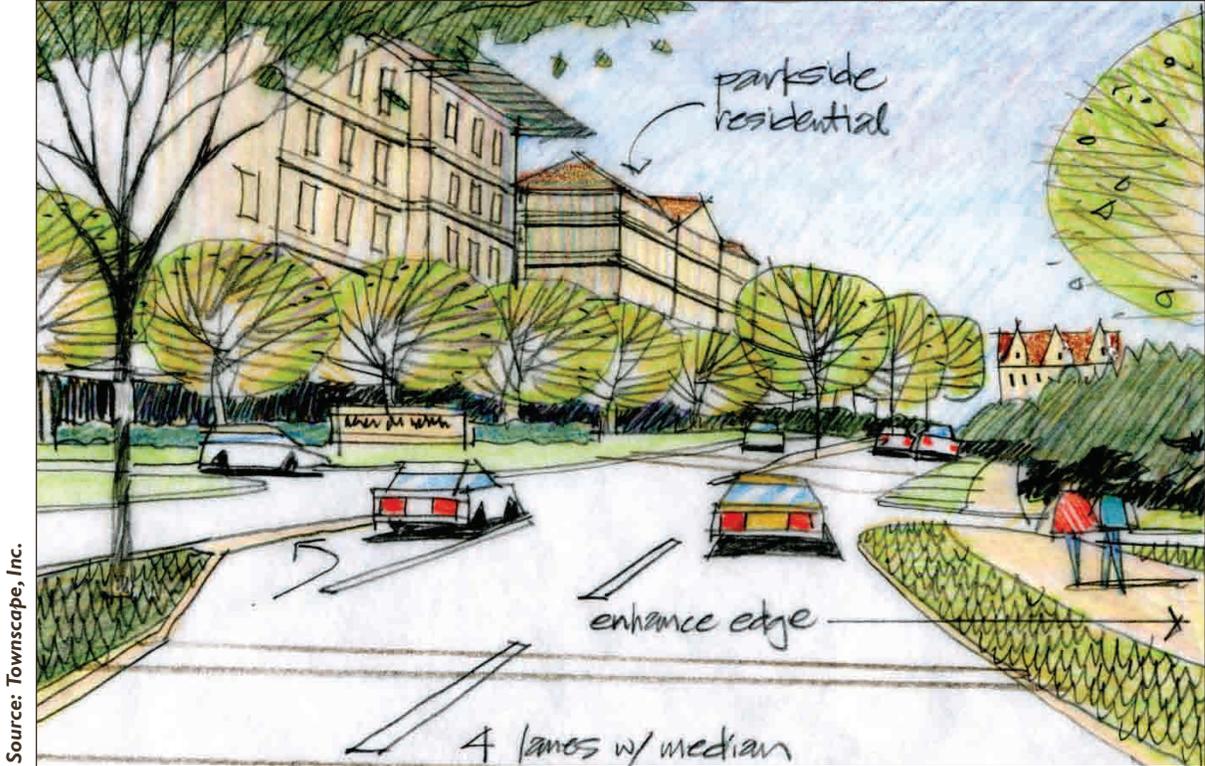


Source: Townscape, Inc.

BEFORE

THE DOWNTOWN PLAN

4. Streets & Roadways Network



Source: Townscape, Inc.

AFTER



Source: Townscape, Inc.

BEFORE

CM ALLEN PARKWAY NEAR HOPKINS STREET

This graphic demonstrates several ideas discussed in the Downtown Master Plan. First, CM Allen is further improved with a boulevard street section and street trees; it leads visitors along the edge of the Downtown toward the Old Main building at Texas State University. The edge of the park system, which runs parallel to the San Marcos River, should be enhanced with pedestrian walkways and landscaping.

The Downtown side of the street, where the Downtown Master Plan has indicated a height overlay, could be developed with medium-density residential buildings that overlook the park. Street trees and widened pedestrian routes should tie these residential buildings into the Downtown fabric.

THE DOWNTOWN PLAN

5. Public Transit

5. PUBLIC TRANSIT

The goal for the City in terms of the Public Transit portion of the Downtown Master Plan is to promote a range of transportation options for public use. The City should focus on enhancing mobility throughout Downtown neighborhoods and access to the Downtown in order to improve San Marcos' quality of life.

COMMUTER RAIL

Firstly, the target commencement date for the commuter rail service between Austin and San Antonio is 2012. The City of San Marcos should promote a commuter rail stop Downtown and work to finance the operation and maintenance of the stop. The site that the Downtown Master Plan proposes is located at the end of Edward Gary Street and to the West of LBJ street, as locating the commuter rail stop between LBJ and Guadalupe Streets is not feasible because of required stopping length.

The commuter rail station should be designed as a hub of regional significance that serves as a distinctive gateway and welcoming entrance to San Marcos' Downtown. The station will be a multi-modal hub that provides pedestrian-friendly elements and accommodate bicycle, vehicle, shuttle and bus traffic. It will serve as a transfer point for the Downtown area, Texas State University, the outlet malls, and surrounding neighborhoods. Park-and-ride parking structures, retail, entertainment, and residential units should be located nearby.

BUS / SHUTTLE SYSTEM

As San Marcos reaches its population threshold for regional bus service and the CARTS program is phased-out, the City will need to consider replacing it with a City-sponsored system. The Downtown Master Plan recommends that the City conduct further research into bus or shuttle system options in order to determine needs, priorities, and partnership possibilities.



Source: Wikimedia Commons

Commuter Train



Source: Used-Buses.net

City Bus

THE DOWNTOWN PLAN

6. Stormwater Management & Water Quality

6. STORMWATER MANAGEMENT

For the City, the goal for Stormwater Management and Water Quality is to expand the capacity of existing systems Downtown to support additional development, and also to incorporate collective storm water treatment facilities to improve storm water quality before it enters the San Marcos River.

CHAIN OF PONDS

Stormwater capacity projects for the Downtown area are already under design and scheduled to be implemented within the next few years. However, the City has struggled to locate a collective water treatment facility within the Downtown area. The Downtown Master Plan, therefore, has suggested a Chain of Ponds system that would be located within the existing parks network and run parallel to the River.

Essentially, the Chain of Ponds would help to manage stormwater runoff both in terms of detention and in terms of treatment. As rain events occur, the first portion of water that is captured in the stormwater drains would be directed into the first stormwater pond for detention and treatment. As more rain falls, overflow water would be channeled into similar ponds further downstream. The levels of the ponds could be monitored by a computer system so that runoff can be quickly managed in extreme rainfall events, reducing the risk of impact of River flooding and the impact of pollution.

STORMWATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

Additionally, the City could consider forming a Stormwater Management District that would focus on the regional management of stormwater and the protection of the San Marcos River. There are three steps to forming an official Stormwater Management District. First, the City would need to conduct a flood damage and water quality assessment study. The study would define the economic impact on local businesses and also define the types of detention and water quality systems that are required.



Source: Broaddus & Associates, Inc.

Chain of Ponds Concept

THE DOWNTOWN PLAN

7. Utility Infrastructure

Second, the City would present the District to voters for approval. Once approved, the City would design a taxing budget structure, which would also require voter approval. Alternatively, the State could pass a law that would form a Stormwater Management District, and this would also require a local vote. Funding for the District is achieved by levying a tax that is ultimately determined by a board. Options for grants and low-interest loans may be available from the Army Corps of Engineers or from the Texas Water Development Board.

7. UTILITY INFRASTRUCTURE

The goal for Utilities Infrastructure is to support development within the Downtown area so that it can realize its vision for being a dense and populated regional center.

PREPARE FOR DEVELOPMENT

The City will need to consider upgrading the utilities that run near the proposed commuter rail station, as the current lines will not support dense development in those blocks. The City will need to monitor and continually maintain existing infrastructure.

Additionally, as density increases Downtown, the City will need to plan for increased demands for fire, protection, and rescue services.

BURY OVERHEAD LINES

The City of San Marcos should consider partnering with the local telecommunications companies to bury the unattractive overhead utility lines that exist throughout the Downtown. Although costly, the aesthetic improvements would greatly improve the quality of public space featured in San Marcos' Downtown. Underground utilities would also create better access for fire rescue aerial apparatuses during times of fires or other emergencies.

The cost impacts of burying overhead utilities can be lessened by coordinating these projects with other utility or street improvement projects.

THE DOWNTOWN PLAN

Implementation

Source: TIP Strategies, Inc.

| Mechanism | Funding Source | Burden | Uses | Initiation |
|---|---|-----------------------------|---|--|
| Tax Increment Financing | Allocation of incremental property tax revenues to the TIF | Property owners in district | Structural and infrastructure improvements | Petition of property owners in district or city council |
| Public Improvement District (Business Improvement District) | Additional assessment | Property owners in district | Improvements of water, wastewater, health & sanitation, drainage, street & sidewalk, mass transit, parking, library, park, recreation & cultural facilities, landscaping & other aesthetics, art installation, creation of pedestrian malls, supplemental safety services, supplemental business-related services | City council or by petition of 50% or more of property owners in the given geographic area |
| Municipal Management Districts | Self-imposed property taxes, special assessments, and impact fees | Property owners in district | Facilities, infrastructure, and services beyond those provided by property owners or by the municipality | Petition of 50% or more of property owners in the given geographic area |
| Special Purpose District | Additional tax | Patrons/users of district | Depends on structure of SPD | Legislative action |

IMPLEMENTATION

The City of San Marcos has several options for managing and funding the Capital Improvement Projects that result from the Downtown Master Plan. If the goal is to make the implementation of this plan a priority, the City will need to commit to an organizational framework and identify a clear funding stream for infrastructure and other projects.

By developing clear performance measurements for evaluating milestones and achievements, the City can plan for Downtown revitalization success.

FINANCING OPTIONS

The City of San Marcos has several options for implementing supportive projects toward the realization of a reinvigorated Downtown. Unlike the federally financed urban renewal projects of the 1960s and 1970s, today's downtown revitalization efforts are more likely to be financed with private funds or through innovative public-private partnerships.

The Master Plan recommends instating a Financing District to provide a secure funding source for improvements in Downtown San Marcos. The Financing District can employ a combination of mechanisms for generating revenue; these are described further on the following page.

THE DOWNTOWN PLAN

Implementation

TAX-INCREMENT FINANCING (TIF) DISTRICTS

Tax-increment financing districts, which allow taxing entities to repay the costs of improvements to a designated area with the future tax revenues generated by increasing property values, are among the most popular funding mechanisms.* These districts can be structured as a single, large tax-increment district (as in San Diego) or as a series of smaller tax-increment districts in targeted areas (as in Chicago).

PUBLIC IMPROVEMENT DISTRICTS (PID)

PIDs, also known as Business Improvement Districts, offer cities a means for improving their infrastructure to promote economic growth in an area. The Public Improvement District Assessment Act allows cities to levy and collect special assessments on properties that are within the city or its extraterritorial jurisdiction (ETJ).

PIDs may be formed to create water, wastewater, health and sanitation, or drainage improvements; street and sidewalk improvements; mass transit improvements; parking improvements; library improvements; park, recreation and cultural improvements; landscaping and other aesthetic improvements; art installation; creation of pedestrian malls or similar improvements; supplemental safety services for the improvement of the district, including public safety and security services; or supplemental business-related services for the improvement of the district, including advertising and business recruitment and development.

*As described in the Texas Attorney General's Office Handbook on Economic Development Laws for Texas Cities: 'Each taxing unit can choose to dedicate all, a portion of, or none of the tax revenue that is attributable to the increase in property values due to the improvements within the reinvestment zone. The additional tax revenue that is received from the affected properties is referred to as the tax increment. Each taxing unit determines what percentage of its tax increment, if any, it will commit to repayment of the cost of financing the public improvements.'

MUNICIPAL MANAGEMENT DISTRICTS

These districts, also called downtown management districts, are created within an existing commercial area to finance facilities, infrastructure and services beyond those already provided by individual property owners or the municipality. The improvements may be paid for by self-imposed property taxes, special assessments and impact fees, or by other charges against district property owners. The creation of the district does not relieve a city from providing basic services to the area. A district is created to supplement, not supplant, the municipal services available to the area.

MUNICIPAL DEVELOPMENT DISTRICTS

A municipality may create a municipal development district comprising all or part of its city limits, all or part of its extraterritorial jurisdiction (ETJ), or any combination of all or part of these areas. To create a district, a city must call an election through an order that defines the proposed boundaries of the district. These districts are financed through an additional sales tax approved by the city's voters, a tax which is similar to the economic development sales tax.

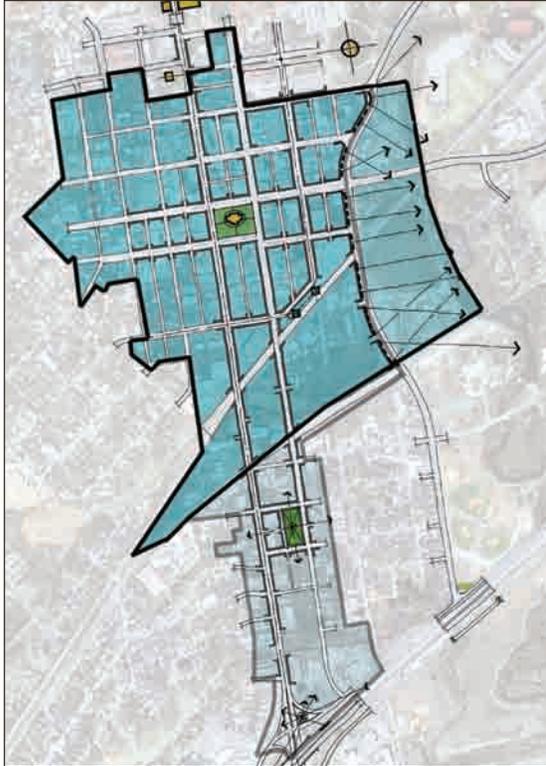
SPECIAL PURPOSE DISTRICT

Another approach to downtown finance is the creation of a special purpose district. Unlike the TIF district, which collects the tax increment created by rising property values, a special purpose district represents an additional tax. Special purpose districts are legally recognized governments and operate independently from other taxing jurisdictions, such as the city or county. They can collect money from a variety of sources, including bond issuances, user fees and grants, and are typically governed by a board.

THE DOWNTOWN PLAN

Implementation

Source: Broaddus & Associates, Inc.



Proposed Downtown Management and Financing District Boundary (dark blue).

In addition to using financing districts, economic development may be funded by a variety of other mechanisms, including bond issues for economic development, economic development sales taxes, venue project taxes, local hotel occupancy taxes, matching funds or loans, or merchant's associations, corporate donations, product sales, hotel-motel taxes, and special events fundraising. The Main Street program lists the following formula for an "ideal" funding strategy; 1/3 city funding; 1/3 downtown business and property owners; and 1/3 other contributors, including major businesses and industries in the community, citizens, etc.

A full description of financing mechanisms can be found within the Downtown Market Analysis report prepared by TIP Strategies, Inc. in conjunction with the Downtown Master Plan.

Alongside selecting an appropriate financing strategy with the help of an attorney and consultant, the City will need to determine a corresponding boundary for the Financing District. The District boundary, as illustrated in the diagram at left, should extend to include the parks up to the edge of the San Marcos River so that funds can be used for drainage and other improvements. The City should be careful to not include too many single family residences in the Financing District (the attorney can assist with boundary determination).

Additionally, the City will need to identify the overall public improvement costs for the projects outlined within the Downtown Plan. These costs will become the "target" for the financing district to achieve in terms of a revenue stream. The City will then need to analyze the potential revenue from the financing district to verify that the funding stream will be adequate for the necessary public improvements.

DOWNTOWN MANAGEMENT

The City will also need to determine an organizational framework for managing the Downtown area. This management area should be consistent with the boundaries of the Financing District.

There are several ways to structure Downtown management. For example, Austin implemented a PID and then contracted with the Downtown Austin Alliance (DAA), who spearheads the improvements and maintenance of the Downtown District. With this scenario, the DAA is required to have their budget and service plan approved by the Austin City Council for oversight. This may be a favorable approach for San Marcos.

The Main Street program should work under the broader "management organization," since, as its scope is defined today, it would not be advisable to have it take on a larger Downtown Management scope of work. The attorney and consultant who are hired to develop the Financing District can also further advise the City on structuring an appropriate management authority.

END OF CHAPTER

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RECOMMENDATIONS

Downtown Plan Summary

This section of the report summarizes the recommendations that were described in detail in the Downtown Master Plan chapter. The chapter's intent is to translate the spirit of the Big Ideas and vision of the Downtown Plan into a list of recommendations that the City can further develop into Capital Improvement Projects.

The Recommendations are structured into seven distinct, yet interrelated, categories: 1. San Marcos' Identity and Placemaking; 2. Downtown Business Development; 3. Development Standards and Processes; 4. Streets and Roadways Network; 5. Public Transit; 6. Water Quality and Stormwater Management; and 7. Utilities Infrastructure. Additionally, a category for Implementation was added to outline a strategy for managing and financing improvements Downtown.

Each category is directed by vision statements, or goals, that tie-back the Big Ideas and Downtown Plan; each recommendation should, therefore, respond to these overarching vision goals.

Please keep in mind that this list is not exhaustive: recommendations for the Downtown will emerge and evolve over the next several years as development occurs. Also, this list does not attempt to identify the specifics of each recommendation; its intent is simply to create a starting point for City-led development Downtown.

IMPLEMENTATION

VISION / GOAL:

- Make implementation of this plan a community-wide priority.
- Commit to an organizational framework that will enhance the opportunities for implementation and successful revitalization.
- Commit to develop a clear funding stream for infrastructure and other improvements.
- Embrace public-private partnerships for assisting in the implementation of the downtown plan.
- Plan for success by developing clear performance measurements for evaluating milestones and achievements.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Financing Improvements:

1. Choose a type of Financing District (PID, TIF, MMD).
2. Select an attorney and consultant to assist the city in its decision-making process in identifying the most appropriate financing district.
3. Choose the boundary for the Finance District.
4. Identify the overall public improvement costs (drainage, detention, streetscapes, etc.) associated with the Downtown Plan.
5. Analyze the potential revenue from the financing district to verify that the funding stream will be adequate for the necessary public improvements.
6. Obtain and incorporate private sector input during this process.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Downtown Plan Summary

IMPLEMENTATION, CONTINUED

Downtown Management:

1. Decide on the management of the Downtown Area (consistent with the boundaries of the Financing District).
2. Existing Main Street program should work under the broader “management organization.”
3. The attorney and consultant who is hired will advise on the appropriate management authority, given the Financing District San Marcos chooses.

1. IDENTITY AND PLACEMAKING

VISION / GOAL:

- Make Downtown San Marcos an even better residential, learning, social, and employment destination.
- Establish Downtown as a unique destination.
- Attract talented, knowledge-workers & Creative Class citizens.
- Unify the public experience at the vehicular and the pedestrian scale.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Market for Success:

1. Build a Strong Brand and Image for the Downtown that is unique but yet ties-into San Marcos’ overall marketing strategy.
2. Generate well-developed products (websites, media campaigns) to promote Downtown.
3. Market Downtown to a wide range of groups: investors, developers, business owners, workers homebuyers, and tourists.

Signage & Wayfinding:

1. Develop and implement a comprehensive wayfinding plan that includes signage.
2. Develop an icon for San Marcos’ Downtown as a part of the brand.
3. Work with Texas Department of Transportation to establish Downtown signage on IH-35.
4. Construct unique gateway markers and landscaping to denote key access corridors.
5. Establish directional signage at both vehicular and pedestrian scales.
6. Unify the public experience with street trees, benches and other landscaping improvements.

Enhance Downtown’s Unique Characteristics:

1. Continue to increase the promotion of cultural events that draw people Downtown.
2. Establish and enhance centers of activity within each neighborhood.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Downtown Plan Summary

2. DOWNTOWN BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

VISION / GOAL:

- Re-make Downtown as the regional marketplace that it once was.
- Recruit and retain employers to stimulate economic growth.
- Stimulate the physical redevelopment of Downtown.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Strategic Planning:

1. Conduct retail recruitment analysis and devise retail strategy.
2. Generate a city-wide economic development strategic plan.
3. Conduct a more extensive niche market analysis for commercial and retail growth.

Recruit Employers:

1. Target employers who have markets in both Austin and San Antonio.
2. Capture at least 1.5% of regional commercial growth in next five years.
3. Commit to recruitment with incentives.
4. Promote local, specialty retail, entertainment, and dining.
5. Encourage the establishment of “third place” businesses.

3. DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS & PROCESSES

VISION / GOAL:

- Facilitate and accommodate anticipated growth while enhancing Downtown character.
- Seek to make Downtown San Marcos an even better residential, learning, social, and employment destination.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Embrace Mixed-Use Development & Compactness:

1. Revisit existing development ordinance.
2. Offer options to make codes more flexible. Establish a fee in-lieu of meeting parking development requirements.
3. Implement an 80 foot height overlay along half-block adjacent to CM Allen to encourage mid-rise residential development without impacting historic Courthouse Square. (The remainder of the Downtown overlays should be unaltered.)
4. Replace zoning development standards with Form Based Codes or Urban Code for Downtown.
5. Make development Downtown easier and faster than anywhere in the City. Set a high bar and expedite approvals for Downtown development.

Pursue Public /Private Partnerships:

1. Focus on infill-development.
2. Work closely with developers to ensure development meets Downtown visions.
3. Consider creative public/private partnerships for façade restoration, pollution mitigation, or land packaging.
4. Take leadership role in acquiring properties and assembling land for development.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Downtown Plan Summary

4. STREETS & ROADWAYS NETWORK

VISION / GOAL:

- Support idea that Downtown is a destination.
- Direct “through-traffic” around the perimeter of Downtown.
- Direct visitors into Downtown.
- Make Downtown easily accessible to all.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Bypasses & Signage:

1. Implement a comprehensive wayfinding plan with signage.
2. Work with Texas Department of Transportation to properly sign bypass routes such as Wonder World Drive.

Primary, Secondary & Tertiary Streets:

1. Conceptually identify routes as Primary, Secondary & Tertiary (as on pages 66 & 67).
2. Reinforce the character of primary and secondary streets by implementing Form Based Codes.

One-Way to Two-Way:

1. Convert Downtown Streets into Two Way streets.
2. Seek TxDOT cooperation in converting Guadalupe & LBJ to 2-way streets.
3. Time lights to improve traffic flow.

Parking:

1. Create parking management plan and corresponding parking district.
2. Begin by instating a metered parking plan.
3. Use revenues as a way to finance future parking options, such as lot acquisition for surface lots and later construction of parking garages.

Pedestrians, Bicycles, & Street Trees:

1. Make streetscapes pedestrian and bicycle-friendly.
2. Incorporate consistent streetscaping elements, i.e. street trees, paving, benches, and lighting.
3. Create corridor plan from each gateway & coordinate with signage, wayfinding, & branding.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Downtown Plan Summary

5. PUBLIC TRANSIT

VISION / GOAL:

- Make mobility Downtown a priority.
- Promote a range of transportation options, such as pedestrian, bicycle, rail, and bus service.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Commuter Rail:

1. Promote the commuter rail stop
2. Fund the operation and maintenance of a commuter rail stop.
3. Finance the construction of a commuter rail station.

Local Bus / Shuttle:

1. Conduct further studies to determine demand, feasibility, and partnership options.
2. Consider rising fuel costs and their impact on citizens' access to jobs & education when evaluating demand.
3. Locate bus stops to coincide with neighborhood nodes and commercial areas as well as proposed transit hubs.

6. STORMWATER MANAGEMENT

VISION / GOAL:

- Expand capacity of existing system.
- Implement stormwater detention and water quality treatment system.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Chain of Ponds:

1. Implement a water quality and detention system to address street flooding, pollution & abatement.
2. Structure the construction of the system to coincide with street upgrades throughout Downtown.

Establish Regional Management Authority:

1. Consider the formation of a Voter Approved District.
2. Finance the district with voter-approved taxes, grants and loans.
3. Establish stormwater impact fees for new development to finance ongoing maintenance and operations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Downtown Plan Summary

7. UTILITY INFRASTRUCTURE

VISION / GOAL:

- Develop the utility & infrastructure capacity in the Downtown area to support further development and density.
- Update utility infrastructure in a manner consistent with vision of the Downtown Plan.

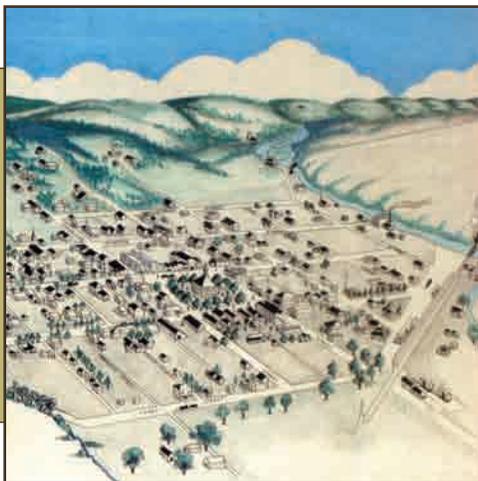
RECOMMENDATIONS:

Prepare for Development:

1. Prepare a utility upgrade and maintenance strategy that supports Downtown development.
2. Develop utility capacity in TOD area, especially improving water lines to support commercial density.
3. Take advantage of redevelopment and utility improvements to expand capacities in other areas.

Bury Overhead Lines:

1. Replace aerial electric and telecommunication lines as other street projects are undertaken.
2. Partner with private telecommunications companies to coordinate implementation.



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