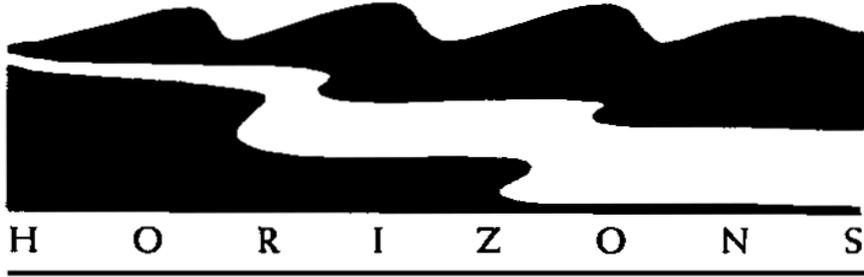


San Marcos



Wonder World Drive Land Use Plan



Prepared by
Planning and Development Services Department
City of San Marcos

Adopted: January 14, 2002

CITY OF SAN MARCOS

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San Marcos Horizons
Wonder World Drive Land Use Plan

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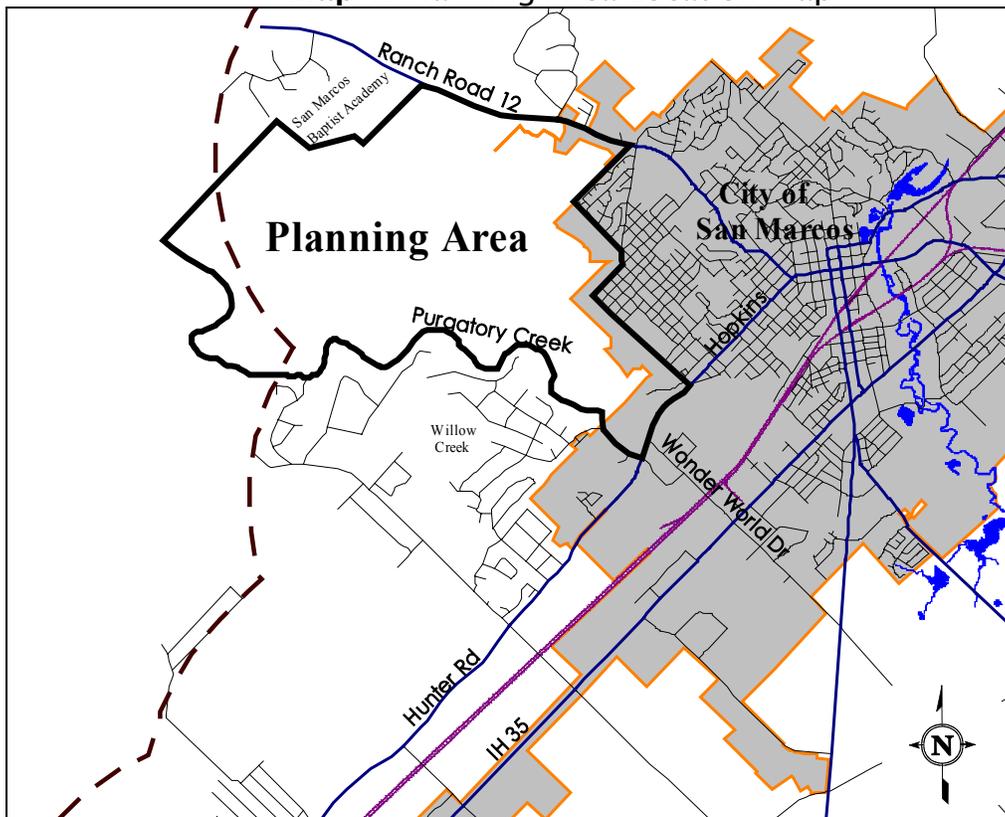
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I. Introduction

A. Planning Area

The planning area is located on the western edge of the City. It contains approximately five square miles and includes lands around the planned Wonder World Drive Extension. The planning area is bounded roughly by the existing City Limits and Hunter Road on the east, Purgatory Creek on the south, the San Marcos Baptist Academy to the west, and Ranch Road 12 to the north.

Map 1: Planning Area Location Map



B. Purpose & Objective

The purpose of this plan is to establish a framework for future growth and development in the planning area. The plan addresses issues of land use and transportation, environmental protection, and community character. The plan makes recommendations on a future land use pattern, including the mix of residential and non-residential uses, the density and intensity of development, and a preferred overall development character for the planning area.

C. Planning Process

City planning staff began compiling information and developing detailed mapping for the planning area in September of 2000. The public participation process began in October with the ***Kickoff Meeting*** held October 26 at the San Marcos Activity Center. This meeting solicited community input from property owners, business owners, neighbors, and other interested citizens on the key issues and community desires for future development in the planning area. Approximately 50 citizens attended this meeting, with over half submitting written comments on a form provided by staff.

A ***Community Workshop*** was held on February 1, 2001 at the Activity Center. A conceptual future land use map was presented along with various land use options. These options were discussed and participants were asked to submit written comments to help clarify the vision of future development in the planning area regarding land uses, densities, community character, and environmental protection. Also, preliminary policy options were presented for discussion and comment. The workshop was attended by 65 citizens, with 30 submitting written comments.

A ***Presentation*** of the refined conceptual land use plan and preliminary policy recommendations was held on July 19, 2001 at the Activity Center. The refined land use plan map was presented along with a number of specific policy recommendations for growth and development in the planning area. The meeting included public comment and discussion and attendees were also given the opportunity to provide written comments on the proposed plan. Over 40 citizens were in attendance, with half a dozen submitting comment forms.

The **Planning and Zoning Commission** recommended approval of the plan to the City Council on September 25, 2001.

II. Existing Conditions

A. Natural Environment

The planning area is characterized by hilly terrain and rocky, shallow soil. Land elevations in the planning area vary from around 610 feet at the intersection of Wonder World and Hunter Road to over 870 feet at the crest of the hill near the location where the proposed Wonder World Drive meets Ranch Road 12.

The planning area is located over the Edwards Aquifer, which is the water-bearing underground network of porous and honeycombed limestone formation of the Edwards Plateau. It is the primary source of water for San Marcos, as well as over 1.5 million other Texans, and is the source of the San Marcos River. Most of the planning area falls within the Edwards Aquifer recharge zone, which is the area of fractures, caves, and porous limestone that provides a path for water to run from the surface into the artesian area of the aquifer.

Purgatory Creek makes up the southern boundary of the planning area and a number of tributaries traverse the area. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has mapped the 100-year floodplain along Purgatory Creek and many of its tributaries. These floodplains are shown on Map 2. In addition the City of San Marcos' Edwards Aquifer Ordinance identifies "water quality zones" and "buffer zones" around each of these waterways.

An Upper San Marcos Watershed District flood control dam is located on Purgatory Creek in the southeast portion of the planning area near the Hunter Road intersection with Wonder World Drive. The proposed route of the Wonder World Drive extension passes along the east and north sides of the dam. The bridged portion of the proposed roadway will pass over the outflow portion of the dam downstream from the spillway. Behind this dam is an inundation easement, which is the area set aside for floodwater storage. Although much of this land is under private ownership, the easement precludes development from occurring within its boundaries. The approximate location of the inundation easement, which is defined as 657.8 feet elevation, is shown on Map 2.



This unnamed creek drains the woods and meadows into Purgatory Creek, a tributary of the San Marcos River.

B. Existing Land Use

Most of the planning area is currently open space and ranch land. A mixture of commercial, multi-family, and single-family uses currently exist along the Ranch Road 12 corridor.



Photo by Carl H. Deal III

C. Existing Transportation Network

No roads currently exist within the planning area. Parts of the planning area are bound by arterial roadways and regional highways, including Ranch Road 12 to the north and Hunter Road (FM 2439) to the southeast. The proposed Wonder World Drive extension will cut through the planning area to connect Hunter Road and Ranch Road 12. Also, a number of stub streets from existing residential subdivisions are planned to continue into parts of the planning area as development occurs.

D. Community Facilities

Police, Fire, and Emergency Medical Service

Police and fire protection for most of the planning area is currently provided by the Hays County Sheriff's Department and the South Hays Fire Department, respectively. Those areas within the city limits of San Marcos are served by the San Marcos Police Department and Fire Department (through the Holland Street Station located on the corner of Holland Street and Academy Street). As areas are annexed in the future the City will take over fire and police services to the annexed area. Emergency Medical Service in the planning area is provided by the San Marcos/Hays County EMS, which operates by contract with the City of San Marcos and Hays County.

Water and Wastewater Systems

While most of the planning area is undeveloped and the existing rural development in the area is served by private wells and septic systems, the City of San Marcos is the designated provider of water and wastewater service for the area. Any future development within this area that will connect to a central water or wastewater system will be served by the City.

Electric Service

Electric service is provided to the area by the City of San Marcos, which serves roughly the eastern half of the planning area, and the Pedernales Electric Cooperative, serving the western half of the planning area. A substation is located along Ranch Road 12 just east of the San Marcos Baptist Academy. A major power line runs through the planning area from this substation south across Purgatory Creek into the Willow Creek area.

Other Utilities

Natural Gas is supplied to the area by Entex, Inc.

Map 2: Natural Features

III. Planning Framework

A. *Horizons Master Plan*

San Marcos Horizons is the City of San Marcos' master plan, which was originally adopted in 1996. It is intended to guide the growth of the city over the next decade and beyond. It is a plan that is based on the community's vision for the future that has been developed through an extensive public planning process. It states the city's goals regarding future land uses and establishes coordination with related infrastructure plans. The master plan contains a series of goals as well as an action plan that outlines policy recommendations for the growth and development of the community. The San Marcos Horizons jurisdiction includes the City of San Marcos and its two-mile Extra-Territorial Jurisdiction (ETJ). Most of the Wonder World Drive planning area falls within this ETJ and this plan, once adopted, will become a component of the San Marcos Horizons master plan.

San Marcos Tomorrow Vision Statement:

- A dynamic community that grows more attractive and seeks to enhance its great natural beauty, rich architectural heritage, and small town charm for the enjoyment of both residents and visitors by carefully managing its growth and protecting its unique quality of life;
- A community that recognizes its unique environmental setting and actively works to protect the Edwards Aquifer, the San Marcos Springs, the San Marcos River, and other natural resources;
- A community that fosters cooperative efforts among public and private entities, organizations, neighborhoods, and individuals to identify and meet community needs;
- A city that actively seeks economic growth that benefits the entire community while protecting its natural resources and quality of life;
- A community that offers a wide range of transportation options and has a safe and efficient street system;
- A city that provides services, facilities, and infrastructure in a timely, fiscally and socially responsible manner;
- A city with a foundation of safe, stable neighborhoods which offer a sense of community and civic pride;
- A city that celebrates its rich ethnic heritage and cultural diversity while building partnerships that strengthen the community;
- A community with diverse educational resources that offer a broad range of high quality educational and training opportunities to achieve personal and professional goals; and
- A city that has a vital and economically thriving downtown area which remains a historic, cultural, and diversified business center of the community.

Applicable goals from the master plan have been incorporated into the Goals section of this document.

B. Sector Plans

The City has been divided into eight “sectors.” In addition to the more general recommendations of the master plan, the City has prepared, or is in the process of preparing, detailed sector plans for each of these areas. These plans include a future land use map for the area. The Wonder World Drive planning area is adjacent to Sector 1 and Sector 2. The recommendations of these two sector plans will be a factor in developing recommendations for this plan. Likewise, the results of this plan will influence future updates to the sector plans.

C. Wonder World Drive Environmental Assessment

With the assistance of transportation and environmental consultants, the City of San Marcos is currently preparing plans for the extension of Wonder World Drive. The project team for the Wonder World Drive Extension envisions this roadway as a limited access four-lane, divided road with no direct access to adjacent properties. In addition, the only cross-street connections would be at Ranch Road 12 and a future extension of Craddock Avenue. This process also included reviewing three alternative routes and selecting a recommended route. *The recommended route, shown on many of the maps within this plan, is preliminary and subject to change based on the results of the Environmental Assessment.*

This process will include the preparation of an Environmental Assessment, which will be reviewed by various State and Federal agencies to ensure that the project will proceed in compliance with applicable state and federal regulations (including the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the Endangered Species Act, the Clean Water Act, and the National Historic Preservation Act).

D. Existing Development Regulations

The City's existing **Zoning Ordinance** divides the city into districts and applies regulations regarding allowable uses, the density or intensity of development, and the bulk of buildings on the land. Zoning regulations control the location, type, character, and design of development on individual properties. The three basic categories of districts are residential, commercial, and industrial. Various districts exist within each of these general categories. The individual districts differ by the uses allowed, the density or intensity of development, and variations in other regulations. In addition other specialty districts exist for open space, public and institutional uses, and planned developments. The zoning ordinance applies only within the City Limits.

The City's **Subdivision Ordinance** controls the division of land and the layout of lots, blocks, and local streets and utilities. The City reviews subdivision plats within the City Limits and also within the City's extraterritorial jurisdiction (ETJ), which is currently 2 miles from the City Limits, except where modified by boundary agreements with neighboring cities.

The City's **Edwards Aquifer Protection Regulations** protect water quality and quantity in the Edwards Aquifer by placing reasonable limits on development within the Recharge and Transition Zones of the Edwards Aquifer. In general, these regulations limit the amount of impervious cover allowable for new development. Additional restrictions are placed on lands that fall within *water quality zones* and *buffer zones* along streams and *sensitive feature protection zones* around sensitive environmental features, as defined by the ordinance. The ordinance also encourages clustering of development by providing a density bonus for each acre of land preserved or protected. (As noted previously, most of the planning area is located within the Edwards Aquifer Recharge or Transition zones.) These regulations apply within the City Limits and within the City's ETJ.

Because most of the planning area is outside the City Limits, various County development regulations also currently apply.

IV. Goals

The identification of goals is an important step in the planning process because these statements represent the basic values of the community, in addition to serving as a strategic guide for plan realization. The goals contained in this section are taken from San Marcos Horizons, the City's master plan and were selected for their applicability to this planning effort.

A. *Natural Resources Goals*

- **Protection of the Edwards Aquifer**

The city shall protect water quality and control development over the Edwards Aquifer

B. *Community Growth and Land Use Goals*

- **Growth Management**

Carefully manage and direct the growth that will inevitably occur in and around San Marcos to ensure that the high quality of life enjoyed by the residents of the community is enhanced.

- **Annexation**

Pursue an aggressive policy of annexation to protect the community's tax base and to establish better control over the quality of development that occurs at the fringe of the urbanized area.

- **Neighborhood Conservation/Revitalization**

Provide measures which will stabilize existing neighborhoods and protect them from deterioration or the encroachment of incompatible land uses.

- **Community Growth**

New growth should "pay its own way" except when public/private partnerships are encouraged in the "preferred growth corridors."

C. *Transportation Goals*

- **Mobility**

Improve the overall mobility of citizens in the community, as well as thru-travel, across-town travel, by implementing a well-coordinated major thoroughfare plan which moves people and goods in a safe, expeditious, economical, and environmentally sensitive manner.

- **Alternative Modes of Transportation**

Provide alternative modes of transportation in the community including public transit, bicycle, and pedestrian routes.

D. Parks & Open Space Goals**• Parks**

Plan sufficient park space to meet the recreational needs of the community as it continues to grow. Park facilities should meet a variety of recreational needs and should include both neighborhood parks as well as community-wide facilities.

E. Community Character Goals**• Historic Preservation**

The city shall protect and renovate its culturally and historically significant structures/features and protect and enhance its neighborhoods so that the neighborhoods and the city maintain a distinct and unique identity.

• Community Gateways

Create attractive “gateways” into San Marcos which provide aesthetically pleasing and informative entrances into the community.

• Quality of Life

Recognize that quality of life is an economic development incentive used to attract the types of business and residents San Marcos desires.

V. Development Plan

A. Community Character

This plan acknowledges the unique “Hill Country” character of the planning area and the public’s desire to retain this unique character while accommodating future development in the area. Under current development practices, the community is not assured of high-quality development that preserves the area’s character and maintains the quality of life. This section identifies some of the key components of community character that this plan seeks to preserve.

Community Gateways

Community gateways are the major entryways into the community. These gateways provide visitors with their first impression of the community and are also the most visible portions of the community for residents. Careful attention should be paid to these areas to make sure that these entryways are attractive and present the desired high-quality character, particularly in regards to the other character concerns described below. Ranch Road 12 is one of the most significant gateways into the City of San Marcos.

Viewshed Protection

Views are one of the most difficult aspects of community character to address. While it is impossible to protect all aesthetically pleasing views, it is important to identify and protect some of the best Hill Country views within the planning area. The two key components to view protection are:

1. protecting the area *viewed* by encouraging natural building materials and encouraging homes and other development to be ‘hidden’ to the extent possible through preservation of vegetation and appropriate site design (for example, structures should not be visible above the tops of the trees on a ridge or hilltop).
2. protecting areas to *view from* by making this a consideration in the layout of roads, site design for new developments, and the acquisition of park and open space.



Photo by Carl H. Deal III

Preservation of Open Space and Existing Vegetation

The natural Hill Country landscape of the planning area is one of its most distinguishing characteristics. Preservation of large contiguous areas of open space not only provide benefits for water quality, wildlife habitat, and other environmental concerns, but also help preserve the visual character of the area. In addition, by preserving as much existing vegetation as possible in developing areas, the negative visual impacts of urban development can be reduced and the natural beauty of the area preserved.

Development Aesthetics

New development generally detracts from the visual character of the natural landscape. Although new development will always result in a change in the landscape's character, the most egregious negative impacts can be minimized through appropriate site design and regulatory control over development.

Low quality **signs** and excessive signage can have a detrimental impact on community aesthetics and property values. This is particularly noticeable in scenic areas, such as the Hill Country. Reasonable limits on business signs can be very effective at preserving the natural beauty of the planning area. Off-site signs (i.e., billboards) are generally inappropriate for this area.

"Change is
inevitable -
ugliness is
not."
*Scenic
America*

Landscaping of new development, particularly higher intensity development such as businesses and apartments, can significantly improve the visual character of development. Landscaping should be required along street frontages, in and around parking lots and other paved areas, around building foundations, and within yard areas of all non-single-family development. The City should encourage the use of native landscaping and drought-tolerant vegetation.

Architectural styles and building materials should enhance the property and surrounding properties. Lower quality building materials often have a detrimental impact on the property values of surrounding properties. Minimum design guidelines and review procedures should be in place to prevent new development from detracting from the overall character and aesthetics of the community. Additionally, development within the planning area should be encouraged to use traditional Hill Country building materials, such as stone, wood, and other natural materials that would help preserve the general "Hill Country" character of the area.

Excessive and improperly shielded **lighting** of properties can negatively impact adjacent properties, can be a safety hazard for drivers, and contributes to urban light pollution, which impacts the visibility of the night sky. Lighting can be installed that adequately and safely illuminates property and roads without negatively impacting neighboring

properties or drivers. In addition, this type of low impact lighting often costs less to install and operate and can significantly reduce energy use.

While **power lines** are a necessity, many communities are reducing the visual impact of these lines. One approach is to encourage the underground installation of these lines, where feasible. Another approach is to have power lines placed behind properties in an alley or along the shared property line rather than along the street within new developments. Other means are available for reducing the visual impact of overhead wires, for example by reducing the number of locations where lines cross over a major street and by grouping lines at defined crossing points.

Where **outdoor storage** is allowed it should be adequately screened with walls, fencing, or landscaping to reduce the visual impact from adjacent roadways and surrounding properties. Large garbage containers should also be adequately screened and enclosed to reduce both the visual impact and the incidence of blowing trash. On-site mechanical equipment (such as HVAC, utility boxes, etc.), whether in yard areas or on the roof of a building, should be screened with landscaping or appropriate architectural features.

B. Future Land Use Plan

This section describes the future land use pattern for the Planning Area, as developed through the planning process based on the concerns and desires of the stakeholders, the goals and policies of the city’s adopted master plan, and general urban and regional planning principles. The descriptive text in this section, as well as the Future Land Use Map, are intended to guide development-related decisions by the City Council and the Planning and Zoning Commission. *The conceptual land use “bubbles” on Map 3 reflect general locations for different development categories, but are not intended to represent precise boundaries or exact acreages.* The following section describes the Future Land Use Plan by subarea:

Very Low Density Residential Area

Most of the planning area (73%) is designated for *Very Low Density Residential* (VLDR), which is characterized by residential housing at an overall density of 0 to 3 dwelling units per acre. This plan further distinguishes between those areas inside the Wonder World Drive extension (i.e., north and east of the proposed roadway) and those outside (i.e., south and west of the proposed roadway). Areas inside are designated for an overall density between 2 and 3 dwelling units per acre. Areas outside are designated for an overall density up to 1 dwelling unit per acre. In addition, limited “neighborhood commercial” development may be appropriate within these large VLDR areas as part of a well-designed plan for a clustered residential neighborhood.

Future Land Use*	
VLDR (1 du/ac)	1,841 ac (55%)
VLDR (2-3 du/ac)	589 ac (18%)
LDR	56 ac (1.7%)
MDR	11 ac (0.3%)
Commercial	150 ac (5%)
Open Space**	587 ac (18%)
Road***	76 ac (2%)
Planning Area	3,310 ac (100%)

*Acreages are approximate.
 **This is the minimum amount of Open Space preserved through existing parkland and easements. More open space preservation is expected through additional dedication, public acquisition, and the Conservation Development process.
 ***Approximate area of proposed Wonder World Drive extension (does not include other internal roads that will be created as land develops)

Clustering and “conservation development” are encouraged for all of these areas in order to provide maximum protection for the water resources of the Edwards Aquifer and to minimize the costs of providing infrastructure. (See the Conservation Development sections both in the Action Plan chapter and in Appendix A for more detail.)

Note: Higher density residential development, including apartments is not necessarily considered inappropriate along the Ranch Road 12 corridor. However, the environmental sensitivity of the area and other negative impacts of higher density development in this area warrant the designation as Very Low Density Residential. Higher density residential development, particularly along Ranch Road 12, can be accommodated through the City’s Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) provisions in the zoning ordinance and/or any new provisions added in the future for Conservation Development.

Ranch Road 12 & Wonder World Drive

A node of commercial development is planned for the intersection of Ranch Road 12 and Wonder World Drive. Development at this intersection is envisioned as a node of high-quality, attractive shopping centers appropriate for a major community entryway into the City of San Marcos. Development of individual “strip commercial” businesses is strongly discouraged at this location and should instead be developed as larger-scale centers with an integrated traffic layout and site design. However, “Big Box” and other high intensity, large-footprint uses, particularly those that generate large amounts of regional traffic, are generally more appropriate in the preferred growth areas along or near the IH 35 corridor, as identified in the Horizons Master Plan.

Ranch Road 12 Corridor

The Ranch Road 12 corridor from Craddock Avenue to the commercial node at the Wonder World Drive intersection is one of the major community entryways for the City. Therefore, most of the Ranch Road 12 frontage along this corridor is planned for high-quality commercial and office development designed to create attractive community shopping areas that enhance the character and quality of life of the City. Smaller scale neighborhood-serving commercial areas are also appropriate at the intersections of Ranch Road 12 and the proposed neighborhood roads shown on the plan map.

Craddock Avenue & Wonder World Drive

A smaller node of commercial development is planned along Craddock Avenue on both sides of Wonder World Drive. This development is envisioned as high-quality, small-scale *Neighborhood Commercial* development of no more than 15 acres, which is designed to be compatible with, and mainly serve the needs of, nearby residential areas. Neighborhood Commercial development is characterized by small-scale commercial and office uses that are typically limited in size to encourage neighborhood friendliness and compatibility. Access to this commercial node will only be provided from Craddock Avenue, not Wonder World Drive.

Limited amounts of *Medium Density Residential* (MDR) uses, housing at 6 to 12 dwelling units per acre, can be incorporated into the overall design of this neighborhood center. The recommendations of this plan are for townhouse or small lot single family development to serve as a transition from areas of *Neighborhood Commercial* to surrounding lower density single family neighborhoods. Additionally, second floor multi-family uses would be allowable within the *Neighborhood Commercial* area.

Hunter Road & Wonder World Drive

A mixture of Commercial, Medium Density Residential (MDR), and Low Density Residential (LDR) development is planned for the area around this intersection, per the adopted Sector One Plan.

Open Space Area

Open Space areas include active recreational areas, such as neighborhood and community parks, and passive open space areas, such as nature preserves, sensitive environmental lands, ranchland, and low impact park uses, such as picnic areas and trails. See the following section for more detail on open space preservation within the planning area.

C. Environmental Protection & Open Space

The City of San Marcos is committed to protecting our natural environment. The recommendations of this plan are based, in large part, on protecting the unique and sensitive environmental lands within the planning area. In addition to the City's environmental protection regulations, the City is committed to preserving sensitive land in this area. Recently the City has acquired over 130 acres of open space within the planning area and is in the process of acquiring an additional 325 acres.

This plan encourages additional preservation of parks and open space in the Planning Area through parkland dedication, City acquisition, and through the concept of Conservation Development (as described in the Action Plan section and in Appendix A).

Open Space preservation should include an emphasis on:

- 1) the development of active parkland within neighborhoods;
- 2) the preservation of sensitive environmental features and large contiguous blocks of greenspace; and
- 3) the creation of an interconnected system of parks and trails through the strategic location of parks, greenways, and other open space.

Landowners within the planning area should be aware of endangered species issues within the planning area that may necessitate the need to prepare a Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) in consultation with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service as part of the development review process.

Map 3: Future Land Use

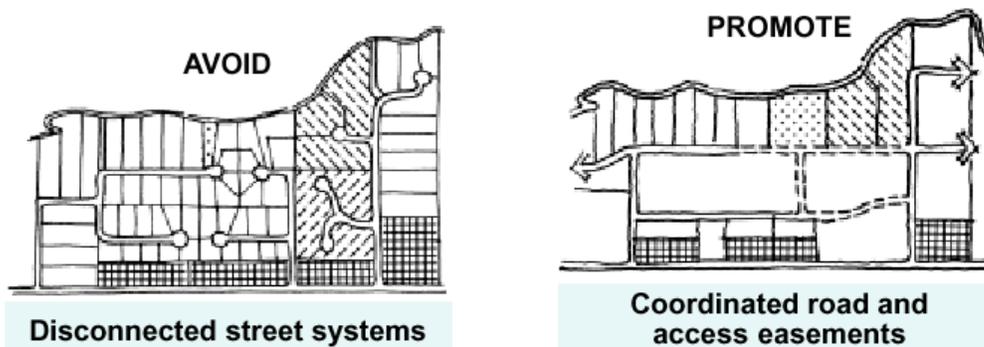
D. Future Transportation System

This section of the plan focuses on identifying general transportation system improvements that are currently planned, or are recommended to serve future development as detailed in the Future Land Use Plan.

Roads

In addition to the Wonder World Drive extension, it is envisioned that many local and collector roads will be developed throughout the planning area as future development occurs. Access points where these roads will connect with Ranch Road 12, as well as existing neighborhood streets, are shown on the Future Land Use Map. It is the intent of this plan to encourage these future streets within new developments to create an interconnected system throughout the planning area.

Subdivisions are often created with little attention to area-wide circulation. Disconnected internal street systems force more trips onto through streets and impede pedestrian and bicycle travel. This plan recommends an interconnected and coordinated street system in order to reduce trip lengths for all transportation modes. Cul-de-sacs should only be used when topographic conditions warrant their use or when they are an integral part of the design of a conservation development. In addition, limiting neighborhood access to Ranch Road 12 to one or two access points would create unnecessary bottlenecks and would funnel a large amount of traffic onto those roads. Therefore, this plan recommends four access points onto Ranch Road 12 (as shown on Map 3).



Part of the agreement with the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) on the construction of the Wonder World Drive extension is that the following road segments will be removed from the State system and will become city streets:

- Ranch Road 12 (RM 12) from the proposed Wonder World Drive intersection into downtown at Guadalupe Street
- Hunter Rd/Hopkins St (FM 2439) from Wonder World Drive to the intersection with Moore Street (RM 12)

The City will take over maintenance responsibilities for these streets, including control of traffic lights.

Bicycles and Pedestrians

As noted in the Goals section, the City should be planning for alternative modes of transportation. Bicycle and pedestrian facilities should be provided in all new developments and for all street projects, unless shown to be unfeasible or unnecessary. Connectivity within and between neighborhoods, shopping areas, and other destinations is extremely important in order for the transportation system to adequately and safely serve the needs of pedestrians and bicyclists.

The wide shoulders being designed for the Wonder World Drive extension should be designated as part of the City's Bike Route system. In addition, the future redesign of Ranch Road 12 should make appropriate accommodations for both pedestrians and bicyclists. *Wide commercial sidewalks should be continuous along this route and on-street bike lanes or an off-street bike path (separate from the sidewalks) should be included.*

Often, when designing conventional neighborhoods, the unique needs of pedestrians and bicyclists are overlooked. Long blocks and cul-de-sacs act as barriers to neighborhood connectivity. Where cul-de-sacs or long block lengths are used, mid-block and cul-de-sac crossings through neighborhoods should be required, where feasible, in order to maintain neighborhood connectivity.

Commercial areas are often destinations for pedestrians and bicyclists. It is important to consider their needs when reviewing site plans for commercial development. The entire development should provide: safe pedestrian and bicycle access to all uses within the development, connections to existing and planned public pedestrian and bicycle facilities, and connections to adjacent properties. Sidewalks should be provided along the entire length of any façade containing a public entrance, leaving room for foundation planting beds. Pedestrian walkways should be provided from all building entrances to existing and planned public sidewalks or pedestrian/bike facilities. Internal pedestrian walkways should be distinguished from driving surfaces. Site design should generally allow pedestrians to walk parallel to moving cars.

Transit

As the City grows it will become increasingly important to plan for alternative modes of transportation, particularly for those who are unable to drive such as the elderly, physically disabled, and transit-dependent. Clustered neighborhoods and conservation development subdivisions help create more pedestrian-friendly and transit-friendly neighborhoods by putting residents closer to the nearest transit stop. In addition, new commercial development should be encouraged to consider the needs of transit users in their site design by providing convenient pedestrian access to their business from the nearest transit stop and by including space for a transit stop (in consultation with transit providers).

E. Access Management

Streets and highways serve two general purposes:

1. providing access to adjacent properties, and
2. providing a means of “through traffic” movement

The primary function of arterial roadways is to provide relatively uninterrupted travel throughout the city. Conflicts between through traffic and traffic entering and exiting from direct access driveways can result in:

- increased accidents
- reduced travel times/increased delays
- increased congestion
- increased auto emissions & fuel consumption

If left uncontrolled, the carrying capacity and safety of the roadway can be degraded over time. Therefore, this plan recommends access management controls for the Wonder World Drive Extension and Ranch Road 12.

Wonder World Drive Extension

As noted previously, the Environmental Assessment for the Wonder World Drive Extension envisions a limited access roadway with no direct access to adjacent properties. In addition, the only street connections would be at the project termini (Hunter Road and Ranch Road 12) with one additional cross-street connection at the Craddock Avenue extension.

Ranch Road 12

Access to adjacent properties will continue to be allowed on Ranch Road 12. However, it is important to maintain the primary function of Ranch Road 12 as a primary arterial serving the City and surrounding areas. In order to preserve the ability of this highway to move traffic and to reduce the potential for conflicts between automobiles and bicycle/pedestrian traffic, this plan recommends a program to manage the location, design, and operation of driveways and street connections on Ranch Road 12 (see the following Action Plan section for more detail).

VI. Action Plan

A. Plan Adoption & Amendment

- ◆ The City formally adopts this Wonder World Drive Land Use Plan as an element of the Horizons Master Plan.
- ◆ Where recommendations of this plan conflict with previously adopted elements of the Master Plan, the most recently adopted provisions shall apply.
- ◆ The City will review the recommendations of this plan periodically (either through a review of this plan or through incorporation of this area into the Sector planning process) to ensure that it remains current and relevant to changing conditions in the community.
- ◆ The City will implement this plan as development occurs.

B. Annexation of Planning Area

Most of the planning area is currently outside the city limits of the City of San Marcos. In order to promote efficient growth of the City and to ensure that development within the planning area fully complies with the recommendations of this plan, the City intends to annex the planning area. Such annexation may occur as a single act encompassing the entire planning area or may be accomplished in stages.

C. Conservation Development Overlay Zoning District

A new “Conservation Development” overlay zoning* district should be created with the purpose of encouraging the preservation of large areas of open space for environmental protection, recreation, and aesthetic preservation. This district should include the following provisions:

- ◆ An inventory and analysis of natural features should be required for each site.
- ◆ Protected open spaces should be determined based on this natural features analysis.
- ◆ Minimum standards for acceptable open space areas should be established.
- ◆ Provide density bonus for preservation of open spaces:
 - Density bonus should only be available if more than a minimum percentage of the total land area is preserved as permanent open space. This could be accomplished through the City’s Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) rules.
 - Open space must be permanently preserved through a conservation easement or dedication. It cannot include yards or other lands retained as part of a private lot.
 - Open space lands, or conservation easements, must be dedicated to the City of San Marcos, another public agency, a land trust, or other non-profit organization with a land preservation mission.
 - Open space should be either usable parkland or be large contiguous areas that are appropriate for preservation, not merely scattered tracts or slivers of ‘leftover’ or unbuildable land. An exception to this might be allowable for relatively narrow strips for a trail system, however the developer should be required to actually build the trail for such an exception.

* An ‘overlay zoning district’ is a district that imposes uniform requirements on all properties within its area which are in addition to those of the underlying standard zoning district.

- ◆ Lands already preserved through easements or other means, or other undevelopable lands such as within floodways, should be subtracted from the gross site area.
- ◆ Dedicated parkland per the subdivision dedication requirements should count as protected open space, but should not count towards development bonuses.
- ◆ Transfers of development rights can be accomplished between landowners through the TDR zoning process.

D. Hill Country Area Overlay Zoning District

The following requirements should be incorporated into a new “Hill Country Area Overlay Zoning District” in order to promote the preservation of the natural ‘Hill Country’ character of the area:

- Utility lines (electric, phone, cable, etc.) should be placed underground where feasible.
- New billboards should not be allowed within this district.
- Encourage the use of traditional Hill Country building materials and architecture.
- Encourage development to be hidden from view as much as possible to preserve the rural character of the area (i.e., through vegetative screening, prohibiting buildings above the tree line or on hilltops and ridges, etc.)
- Uses that include storage of hazardous materials, including gasoline, should require a Specific Use Permit.

E. Other Changes to Existing Zoning & Subdivision Regulations

The following changes to current development regulations are recommended to implement the recommendations of this plan:

Land Use

- Create or modify Commercial Districts to include distinctions based on community character, such as “Neighborhood Commercial”, “Community Commercial”, “General Commercial” etc. (see Sector Two Plan for more detail).

Transportation

- Require shopping centers over a certain size to include within their site plan accommodation for a transit stop in consultation with the transit provider(s).
- Require adequate bicycle parking for all commercial and multi-family development (a typical requirement is 1 bicycle space for every 10 or 20 car spaces).
- Adopt zoning ordinance changes to ensure that new development provides better accommodation for pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit users.

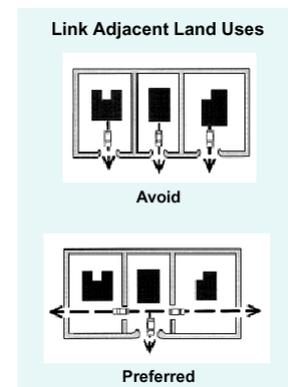
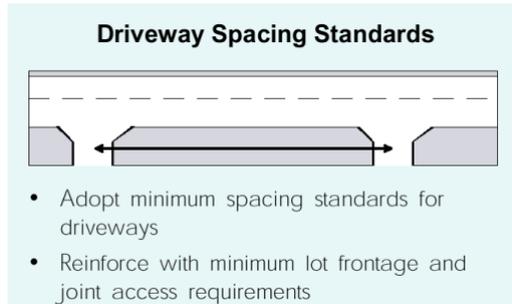
Trail System

- Construction and dedication of trails, for recreation and/or transportation, should be required as part of the subdivision process similar to the required construction and dedication of roads and sidewalks. Locations of trails should be based on the goal of building an interconnected system throughout the community and should be consistent with trail corridors mapped in the Transportation Master Plan or the Parks and Open Space Plan.

Access Management

The following actions should be taken to control access on Ranch Road 12:

- Use the city’s “access driveway permit” process to limit access points onto Ranch Road 12.
- Use subdivision review authority to ensure minimum driveway spacing and lots of adequate width. (Large properties must subdivide in such a way as to meet the minimum driveway spacing.)
- Ensure adequate “throat depth” to allow for adequate vehicle stacking.
- Encourage shared-use driveways to minimize the number of access points onto the roadway.
- Use “cross-access easements” to ensure connectivity between adjacent properties without need to use the main roadway.
- Avoid individual residential lots facing Ranch Road 12. Residential development along Ranch Road 12 should be developed in one of the following ways:
 - Rear of residential lots toward the roadway (i.e., “reverse frontage”)
 - Residential lots facing a perpendicular cross street, with an extra-large side yard for the corner lots adjacent to the arterial
 - Shared driveway for multiple lots; driveways should not require vehicles to back out onto an arterial street



Aesthetics

In order to preserve and enhance community character and the quality of life in the community, strengthened regulations should be developed to address signs, landscaping, lighting, and outdoor storage, including the following:

- The City should consider the prohibition of off-site advertising signs (i.e., billboards) within the City and the ETJ, particularly within the planning area.
- The number, height, and size of on-site signs should be limited for commercial areas within the planning area.
- Generous landscaping of development should be required including landscaping of yard areas, street frontages, parking lots, and building foundations.
- Incentives or requirements should be in place for preserving appropriate amounts of natural vegetation.
- Encourage the planting of street trees along new streets.
- Excessive lighting should be discouraged and lighting that produces excessive glare or light on neighboring properties should be prohibited.
- Outdoor storage, mechanical equipment, garbage containers, etc. should be screened from adjacent roadways and neighboring development.

Appendix A: Conservation Development

Typical very low density subdivisions contain large lots spread evenly across the landscape. Conservation Development subdivisions are characterized by smaller lots with the preservation of significant areas of open space, without reducing the total number of houses allowed. Open space is preserved in large contiguous conservation areas as ranchland, farmland, parks, greenbelts, and environmental corridors. The benefits include:

- Provides enhanced protection of environmentally sensitive areas
- Fosters the preservation of the “Rural Hill Country Character”
- Homeowners are guaranteed permanent open space
- Typically lower costs for roads, utilities, and other infrastructure
- Does not require public expenditure for open space
- Lots adjacent to permanent open space sell for a premium and maintain their value better over time
- Concept has been successfully used across the country

“A house on a smaller lot with a great view is frequently worth as much or more than the same house on a larger lot which is boxed in on all sides by other houses.”

Growing Greener,
National Lands Trust, Inc.

Conservation subdivisions have been called “golf course communities, without the golf course.”

