

## **ATTACHMENT A**

### **PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

#### **REGIONAL SETTING**

The City of San Marcos (City) is located in the central portion of northern San Diego County (North County), approximately 40 miles north of downtown San Diego (Figure 1). The City is bounded by the cities of Vista and Carlsbad to the west; by the city of Escondido to the east; and by unincorporated areas within the County of San Diego to the north and south. Regional access to the City is provided by State Route 78 (SR-78). SR-78 is situated in an east-west orientation, and links Interstate 5 (I-5) with Interstate 15 (I-15) to provide north-south access. Access to and from the City is also provided by the SPRINTER, the commuter light rail system that connects San Marcos to the neighboring jurisdictions. There are no public or private airports located within City boundaries; however, the McClellan-Palomar Airport is located approximately four miles west of the City within the City of Carlsbad.

#### **PLANNING AREA**

The planning area for San Marcos encompasses the corporate city limits as well as portions of the County of San Diego's unincorporated land within the City's Sphere of Influence (SOI) (Figure 2). In total, the planning area encompasses approximately 21,205 acres (33.10 square miles), including approximately 15,579 acres (24.30 square miles) within the City's corporate limits and 5,629 acres (8.79 square miles) of unincorporated land within the City's SOI.

#### **THE PROJECT**

California state law requires each city to adopt a comprehensive, long-term general plan to guide the physical development of the incorporated city and any land outside the city boundaries that bears a relationship to its planning activities. The proposed project analyzed in the Program EIR would consist of a comprehensively updated City of San Marcos General Plan and Zoning Ordinance.

The proposed General Plan update is divided into seven topics that together meet the requirements for seven mandatory elements under state law including an optional Parks, Recreation, and Community Health Element. The elements to be included are: 1) land use and community design, 2) mobility, 3) conservation and open space (topics combined into one chapter), 4) parks, recreation and community health, 5) safety, 6) noise, and 7) housing.

Figure 1: Regional Location

Figure 2: Planning Area

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The City of San Marcos General Plan serves as a policy guide for determining the appropriate physical development and character of the planning area. The General Plan establishes the maximum level of development that can occur within the planning area. Most new development would come in the form of redevelopment and infill opportunities focused within several areas described as Focus Areas within the General Plan update (Figure 3). Development and redevelopment of these areas would allow for a variety of residential and non-residential uses needed to support the expected population of the community. The Program EIR will analyze the environmental effects of this expected development in accordance with the General Plan over the next two decades.

The Program EIR will also examine a comprehensive update to the Zoning Ordinance, including text and map changes needed to implement the proposed changes to the General Plan land use designations and other changes described in more detail below.

## **PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES OF THE GENERAL PLAN**

A General Plan serves as the blueprint for future growth and development. As a blueprint for the future, the plan must contain policies and programs designed to provide decision-makers with a solid basis to consider land use and development actions. The updated San Marcos General Plan would be guided by inter-related policies and programs to reinforce and build on the City's agricultural heritage, culture of learning, diversity of its employment, scenic resources, and parks and open spaces, as outlined in the General Plan's Guiding Themes. The nine guiding themes identified through the General Plan's comprehensive public participation program reflect the goals of the community, as described below.

### **Creating a Vibrant Destination City**

A central gathering place in San Marcos alive with people, shops, restaurants, events, and street life is vitally important to the San Marcos community. Residents share the desire for a "downtown" that attracts people regionwide while supporting the local needs of residents. The community envisions the downtown area as a highly walkable, urban area with a host of destinations—shopping, dining, working, cultural and entertainment events, arts, museums, and night life. Places to congregate, people watch, and participate in the urban experience are important. The downtown area will be safe and well-served by transit and a safe walking environment, and will be connected to adjacent destinations including California State University San Marcos, Palomar Community College, and the San Marcos Town Center.

## **A Strong Local Economy and Employment Base**

The ability of San Marcos to provide services that meet the diverse needs of existing and future populations is dependent on a vigorous and healthy economy. The General Plan will contain strategies to accommodate a diversity of businesses, an expanded employment base, and greater housing choices, while focusing on the retention of existing and attraction of new businesses offering high-paying jobs.

Opportunities to accommodate business expansion, relocation, and entrepreneurship, will be analyzed. The General Plan will capitalize on these strengths and plan efficient use of lands and resources to further economic sustainability, while promoting the well-educated citizenry available to potential employers. Preserving existing employment areas will receive priority in the General Plan while also recognizing the need for revitalization and redevelopment of certain business areas.

## **Connecting People to Places**

The residents, businesses; and visitors of San Marcos recognize the growing importance and environmental value of having a variety of transportation choices to move about the community. The General Plan will create a framework where people connect to the places they want to travel to in San Marcos through an extensive, efficient, and safe network of roadways, transit services, shuttles, bikeways, pedestrian trails, and well-designed sidewalks. Enhancements to the mobility system will be prioritized to those areas experiencing the greatest need and that are best suited for improvement. Traffic congestion will be lessened through greater mobility choices, better management of demand, improvement to the roadway system, and traffic control devices. Improved mobility connections between neighborhoods, as well as new connections across SR-78, will be addressed in the General Plan.

## **An Educational and Academic Hub**

The citizens of San Marcos recognize the academic and financial enrichment Palomar Community College and California State University San Marcos provide the community. As these institutions expand with a growing regional population, opportunities exist for greater synergy between the community and academia. Policies and programs will be woven throughout the General Plan to further coordination and collaboration and capture the innovation and progressive spirit emanating from the college community. In addition, the General Plan will address research and development, high technology, and renewable/alternative energy pursuits in

**Figure 3: Focus Areas**

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conjunction with university activities. The General Plan will also contain policies and programs to further collaboration with the San Marcos Unified School District to ensure high-quality K-12 public education throughout the community.

### **A City with Choices**

Providing more variety in the City—shopping, dining experiences, cultural venues, entertainment activities, and community events is highly valued by the community. Residents cite the need to frequently travel to destinations outside of San Marcos to meet these needs. The General Plan will pursue a rich land use mix, and policies and programs to attract a diversity of choices for San Marcos citizens. Greater variety of housing choices, including senior housing and live work units, will also be addressed in the General Plan. Additional recreation options such as pools, tennis courts, or other activities for the entire spectrum of users—children, teens, adults and seniors—will be considered in the General Plan.

### **Sustaining Environmental Quality**

Critically important to community residents is retaining and enhancing the environmental quality already found in the City. Residents strongly support the preservation of additional open space, maintaining the City's scenic ridgelines and expanding the wealth of parks and trails already found throughout the community. Visual cleanliness is an important value to residents and encompasses improving the aesthetics of aging areas or areas in need of revitalization, controlling litter, and enforcing development codes. The General Plan will include strategies to preserve the quality of San Marcos water bodies and address air quality and noise issues. Careful management of growth and development synchronized with the provision of adequate public facilities and services contribute to the environmental quality found in San Marcos.

### **Building a Greener Community**

Creating a greener community will further advance the quality of life and the appeal of San Marcos to existing and future residents and employers. The community supports new initiatives for environmentally friendly building practices applicable to existing and new development. Addressing water conservation, solar energy, and enhanced recycling opportunities, and promoting energy conservation practices are all strategies that are valued by community members. The General Plan will consider a range of environmental initiatives to create a greener San Marcos while taking the associated costs and benefits of these strategies into account.

## **A Healthy and Safe Community**

A safe, secure, and healthy environment is the cornerstone of a successful community. Maintaining very low crime rates and addressing crime prevention through environmental design will be addressed in the General Plan. Healthy community policies such as active lifestyles, safe routes to schools, access to nutritious foods, and community and social connectivity are important to San Marcos residents and will be addressed in the General Plan. Protection from natural and man-made hazards such as flooding, wildfires, and hazardous materials are also concerns of the community that will receive attention in the General Plan.

## **Continuing Our Agricultural Heritage**

The rustic, rural aesthetic in Twin Oaks Valley is highly prized by many citizens of San Marcos. Preserving and celebrating the City's agricultural heritage enhances the identity of San Marcos and attracts visitors to experience a slice of "Old California." Preserving the City's agricultural lands provides opportunities to further local food production and support local farmers markets, strengthening the City's economy and appeal. Opportunities also exist to explore agricultural tourism to ensure the City's agricultural lands remain viable.

## **PROJECT CHARACTERISTICS**

### **General Plan Elements**

The updated San Marcos General Plan consists of chapters, also known as elements, that encompass all the elements required by California General Plan Law. The seven elements in the San Marcos General Plan include:

- Land Use and Community Design
- Mobility
- Conservation and Open Space
- Parks, Recreation and Community Health
- Safety
- Noise
- Housing

Each element identifies related goals and policies. In addition, the General Plan Implementation Program provides a course of action for the City to implement ensuring that the overall direction provided by the goals and policies set forth in the General Plan is translated from general terms

into specific actions. The issues addressed in each element often overlap. A general description of each element is provided below.

### *Land Use and Community Design*

The Land Use and Community Design element establishes the general permitted uses of both public and private lands within the community, and guides decision makers on the desired pattern of growth, development, and forecasted land use change in San Marcos. The Land Use and Community Design Element focuses on the concepts of balanced growth and development, community connections, economic strength and stability, and the overall quality of life for the community. This element describes both existing and future land use activities by identifying the distribution, location, and intensity of all land use types throughout the city. These land use designations serve to provide a rational and ordered approach to land use development and maintenance of public uses and open space by identifying the types and nature of development allowed in particular locations throughout the planning area. The proposed General Plan Land Use and Community Design chapter would establish 25 land use designations that are grouped according to the following land uses: Agricultural/Residential, Residential, Mixed Use, Commercial, Industrial, Public/Institutional, Recreational, and Specific Plan Area. The residential categories include 10 designations ranging from hillside residential development to high-density development. The non-residential categories include a variety of designations that promote a range of revenue and employment generated services, such as Commercial, Neighborhood Commercial, Office Professional, Business Park, Light Industrial, and Industrial. Mixed use designations include both a mix of residential and non-residential uses or a mix of commercial and office uses. Other non-residential uses include: Public/Institutional designation, which allows for schools, fire stations and utilities; Park and Open Space designations; and a Specific Plan Area, which may contain a mixed residential, commercial, industrial, public, and/or open space uses for a particular area.

Seven new designations are proposed to be added to the existing General Plan land use designations. The first proposed designation, identified as High-Density Residential, would allow for multi-story, multi-family developments within walking distance of commercial centers and transit services. Four proposed Mixed Use designations [Mixed Use 1, Mixed Use 2, Mixed Use 3 (Non-Residential), and Mixed Use 4 (Non-Residential)] provide for a variety of commercial, office professional, civic, business park, and residential uses integrated as a cohesive development that may be mixed “vertically,” with some designations encouraging pedestrian scale and orientation at the street level. The Business Park designation would allow for employee-intensive uses, including research and development, “clean” industry, technology

centers, offices, administrative uses, supporting retail, and industrial support services. The new Specific Planning Area designation is applied to areas where a Specific Plan has been, or will need to be, adopted.

The Land Use Element will also highlight the areas that have been identified for change over the planning horizon of the General Plan. The City of San Marcos worked with a General Plan Advisory Committee (GPAC) and community members to identify these areas where land use changes are likely to occur, referred to as the Focus Areas. Multiple factors were considered in selecting these Focus Areas, including the Guiding Themes, opportunities and constraints, adjacent development patterns, market conditions, and goals and objectives for the City.

These Focus Areas are classified as City Change Areas (CCA), Study Areas (SA), Consideration Areas (CA), and Property Owner-Initiated Areas (POA). Figure 3 depicts the location of the four types of Focus Areas in San Marcos and each Focus Area type is defined below.

### **City Change Areas (CCA)**

City Change Areas represent areas in San Marcos where changes in planned land uses have been previously adopted by the City Council or are pending. The General Plan map will be updated to reflect these changes concurrent with other land use designation changes.

### **Study Areas**

Three Study Areas were chosen where future land use change is highly likely to occur within the planning horizon of the updated General Plan. The three Study Areas selected for land use changes are referred to as the Mission Road Study Area, the Rancho Santa Fe Road Study Area, and the San Marcos Boulevard Study Area.

The Study Areas represent sites in San Marcos that offer centrality and favorable market conditions, and fulfill current needs for the City's commercial and housing markets in a changing economy. These sites offer the best potential for addressing the community's goals as identified in the Guiding Themes. Given the existing characteristics of the Study Areas, revitalization would visually enhance the community and provide additional community benefits such as employment, shopping, and housing opportunities.

Based on their accessibility to transit, the Study Area sites have also been identified on the San Diego Association of Government's (SANDAG's) Smart Growth Opportunity Map as mixed-use

transit corridors. The inclusion of the Study Areas on the Smart Growth Concept Map is the result of previous collaborative efforts by City staff and SANDAG in 2006.

### **Consideration Areas**

The Consideration Areas are also highly likely to experience land use change throughout the planning horizon of the General Plan. In selecting the Consideration Areas, market conditions, opportunities and constraints, and adjacent development characteristics were considered in light of the Guiding Themes.

In some cases, the land use designation will be changed to allow uses that differ from what exists in the area today or what the existing General Plan designation allows. In other cases, the land use designation is proposed to be updated to better match the character of development that currently exists for that particular Consideration Area. The proposed General Plan reflects changes to 10 individual Consideration Areas.

### **Property Owner-Initiated Areas**

Property Owner-Initiated Areas represent areas of the City where property owners have requested changes to the allowable land uses on their property. There are 41 individual Property Owner-Initiated Areas represented in the proposed General Plan.

The proposed changes to the land use classification system and the proposed land use changes in the Focus Areas discussed above (i.e., City Change Area, Study Areas, Consideration Areas, and Property Owner-Initiated Areas), would require the development of consistent zoning districts and would necessitate additional amendments to the existing Zoning Ordinance and Zoning Map as described in more detail on page A-10 and A-11.

### *Mobility*

The Mobility Element guides the continued development of the circulation system to provide the safe and effective movement of people and goods and to connect people to places. The anticipated development identified in the Land Use and Community Design chapter will increase the demand for local and regional roadways and other alternative modes of transportation. The Mobility Element addresses the existing transportation needs of the community and identifies transportation facilities needed to accommodate the planned development under the Land Use and Community Design chapter. Level of service, “complete streets,” and traffic calming are

integral components of the chapter. Both local and regional transportation facilities located within the planning area are discussed. Public transportation facilities and routes, pedestrian and bicycle access, pedestrian safety and walkability, recreational trails, traffic calming, and parking are also addressed in this chapter.

### *Conservation and Open Space*

The Conservation and Open Space Element focuses on the protection and enhancement of ecological, biological, open space, and scenic resources of the planning area. This element also discusses water resources, recycling and solid waste, and preservation of cultural and historic resources. It also contains goals and policies to address resource sustainability, and air quality, climate change, and energy.

### *Parks, Recreation, and Community Health*

The Parks, Recreation and Community Health Element focuses on maintaining and developing the integrated system of community parks, facilities, and trails, as well as fostering community health and family enrichment. It also contains goals and policies to address these issues.

### *Safety*

The purpose of the Safety Element is to identify and address those features existing in or near the planning area that represent a potential hazards or risks to the citizens, structures, public facilities, and infrastructure located in the community. The Safety Element establishes goals and policies to minimize risk to residents, workers, and visitors associated with: geologic and seismic geologic hazards, flooding and inundation hazards, fires, and neighborhood safety. Emergency preparedness and airport safety planning are also addressed in this element.

### *Noise*

The Noise Element addresses noise sources in the community and identifies ways to reduce the impact of these noise sources on the community. This chapter identifies the effects of noise on the surrounding environment and defines noise standards and land use compatibility guidelines to protect noise sensitive land uses from excessive noise. Goals, policies, and plans to address and control transportation-related noise and non-transportation related noise are also identified.

### *Housing*

The existing certified City of San Marcos Housing Element 2005-2010 identifies the current and future housing needs within the City's planning area. This element includes a comprehensive discussion of the community's profile including population and household, land use, employment, and housing stock characteristics. In addition, this element addresses the constraints associated with housing production in the City. An integrated set of goals, policies, and programs are presented in this element that are intended to identify strategies for housing opportunities, homeownership opportunities, rental assistance/conservation, and maintenance/conservation for the planning area. The existing certified Housing Element will be incorporated into the proposed General Plan update.

In the San Diego region, the San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) works with each of the 18 cities and the county to conduct the Regional Housing Needs Assessment, or RHNA, which is then implemented through individual housing elements. The state does not require that the City of San Marcos (or other local jurisdictions) build these housing units, but rather, have enough vacant and/or underdeveloped land that could support the development of housing to meet the estimated need. It should be noted that the RHNA is affected by Senate Bill (SB) 375 and SB 575 in several ways. The main differences for this cycle include the timing of the RHNA process, required coordination/consistency with the RTP and its SCS per SB 375, and the length of the housing element cycle. The fifth cycle for the San Diego region will cover an eight-year time period from January 1, 2013, to December 31, 2020. Past housing elements covered a five-year cycle. SANDAG expects to approve the draft RHNA by July 2011. Once the RHNA has been approved by SANDAG, the City of San Marcos will begin to update its Housing Element to meet the State's 2013 deadline. No update to the content of the Housing Element is proposed as part of this project.

### *Implementation Program*

The General Plan update includes an Implementation Program that will serve to ensure the overall direction provided in each General Plan element is translated from general terms to specific actions. The Implementation Program provides strategies to implement the adopted policies and plans identified in each of the General Plan Element. The various programs within the Implementation Program serve as a basis for making future programming decisions related to the assignment of staff and the expenditure of City funds. The programs specifically identify individual program responsibility, funding sources, and time-frame for completion.

## **Zoning Ordinance Update**

Text and map amendments to the existing Zoning Ordinance will be required to implement the proposed General Plan. Major components of this update include:

- Developing standards and use regulations for four new mixed-use zone categories;
- Creation of a new overlay district to implement the airport land use compatibility plan;
- Changes to encourage the use of sustainability features such as renewable energy, low-impact development and water conservation;
- Updates to the city's parking standards;
- Updates in response to state requirements concerning flood protection;
- Updates in response to state requirements for mobile homes;
- Updates to requirements for storage, use, transportation, and disposal of hazardous materials;
- Updates to the classifications and treatment of non-conforming uses; and
- Comprehensive reorganization and amendment of the text of the zoning ordinance for greater ease of use.

## **INTENDED USES OF THE PROGRAM EIR**

The Program EIR serves as the basis for environmental review and impact mitigation for adoption and implementation of the City of San Marcos General Plan. The City will review subsequent implementation projects for consistency with the Program EIR and prepare appropriate environmental documentation pursuant to CEQA provisions for Program EIRs and subsequent projects. Subsequent projects under the Program EIR may include, but not limited to, the following implementation activities:

- Rezoning of properties;
- Approval of Specific Plans;
- Approval of development plans, including tentative maps, variances, conditional use permits, and other land use permits;
- Approval of development agreements;
- Approval of facility and service master plans and financing plans;
- Approval of funding of public improvement projects;
- Approval of resource management plans;
- Issuance of municipal bonds;

- Issuance of permits and other approvals necessary for implementation of the General Plan;
- Acquisition of property by purchase or eminent domain; and
- Issuance of permits and other approvals necessary for public and private development projects.

The following lead, responsible, and trustee agencies may utilize this Program EIR in the adoption of the General Plan and approval of subsequent implementation activities. These agencies may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- City of San Marcos
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
- California Department of Fish and Game
- California Department of Conservation
- California Department of Housing and Community Development
- California Department of Transportation (Caltrans)
- California State Lands Commission
- California Water Resources Control Board
- San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG)
- San Diego County Air Pollution Control District
- County of San Diego
- San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board
- Vallecitos Water District
- Vista Irrigation District
- Olivenhein Water District
- Rincon Water District

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