

Fall 2012 Internship

City of San Marcos, TX



Alix Scarborough

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The City of San Marcos is the municipal governing agency for San Marcos, Texas. As a public entity, its purpose is to serve the citizens of San Marcos. The City’s stated mission is “to support the initiatives of the City Council and City Manager, to provide prompt, courteous service to the citizens, and protect the safety and welfare of citizens and visitors alike” (<http://www.sanmarcostx.gov/index.aspx?page=6>). The City has myriad functions, with over 550 employees in more than 20 departments. The following is a sampling of these departments.

Airport	Animal Services	Electric Utility	Emergency Management
Engineering and Capital Improvements	Fire Department	GIS	Library
Municipal Court	Parks & Recreation	Permit Center	Planning & Development Services
Police	Transportation	Solid Waste/ Recycling	Water/Waste water

My fall 2012 internship was in the Planning and Development Services department. This department’s purpose is partially derived from the City’s overall mission, in that the planning department attempts to manage growth by carrying out City Council policies. Tasks that fall under the purview of the Planning Department include the comprehensive master plan; land development code; reviewing applications for code compliance and compatibility; and customer service and information for citizens, landowners, and developers. The Planning Department also works closely with other groups in the City, especially the Permit Center and Engineering. On a

day-to-day basis, I observed planners preparing for Planning & Zoning Commission meetings, processing applications (such as for zoning changes or conditional use permits), providing information to the public, meeting with developers, and working on an update to the comprehensive plan.

My internship supervisor this semester was Kristy Stark, Assistant Director of Planning and Development Services. While Kristy oversaw my internship, I worked more closely on a daily basis with Francis Serna and John Foreman. Additional co-workers I learned from are listed below.

Name	Title	Email Address	Phone Number
Kristy Stark	Assistant Director	kstark@sanmarcostx.gov	805-2649
John Foreman	Planning Manager	jforeman@sanmarcostx.gov	393-8148
Francis Serna	Administrative Coordinator	fserna@sanmarcostx.gov	393-8230
Joni Hickey	GIS Administrator	jhickey@sanmarcostx.gov	393-8237
Matt Lewis	Director	mlewis@sanmarcostx.gov	393-8230
Elizabeth Gary	Building Services Administrator	egary@sanmarcostx.gov	393-2630
Alison Brake	Planner	abrake@sanmarcostx.gov	393-8232
Tory Carpenter	Planning Technician	tcarpenter@sanmarcostx.gov	393-8234

My official title at the City was Planning Intern, but that simple phrase does not begin to describe my duties within the Planning Department. In many ways, my title was quite apt – I made copies, delivered maps and paperwork to meetings, answered the phones while everyone was at lunch, and often had the feeling that the entire office was my boss! However, I was also given a high degree of autonomy, which enabled me to learn more and manage my own time.

Considered from one perspective, my role in the Planning Department was exactly the same as everyone else’s; I did what needed to be done. As is common in the governments of small cities, there is a lower degree of specialization in the City of San Marcos. Employees “wear many hats,” which can be both stimulating and a little overwhelming. For an intern, this is

the perfect environment to have the opportunity to learn about many different aspects of a job. I was glad that I rarely did the exact same thing for an entire day at work.

My responsibilities at the office have changed since August. At the outset, I was tasked with digitizing many of the archived records in the office. In addition, I created case files for new applications and helped with customer service at the front office. Later in the semester, I primarily became the Comp Plan Intern, working under John Foreman.

Over the four months of my internship, the biggest chunk of my time was spent on the digitizing project. My fellow intern, Johnathan Washington, coordinated this project with me. While it might sound like a monotonous job, I actually learned a great deal doing this. The primary items I digitized were old case files. These included plats, zoning changes, variances, conditional use permits (CUPs), planned developments, land use amendments, abandonments, and certificates of appropriateness. While many of these concepts had been discussed in my planning classes, reading the actual contents of a case file helped me understand the process behind these documents. It was especially interesting to track the correspondences between planners and clients, and see how the planner's work impacted (or didn't impact) the outcome of a case. This project also allowed me to learn how to use the MyPermitNow web site and LaserFiche software. MyPermitNow is an online system that allows the planning department to track progress of a case internally, as well as inform clients of necessary paperwork, fees, and deadlines. LaserFiche is a records retention software adopted by the City of San Marcos for use in various departments. It allows case files and similar items to be stored as pdfs and jpegs for future reference. Along with all this new technology, I became intimately acquainted with the copy and scanning machine, and often helped other employees figure out all its beeps and clatters.

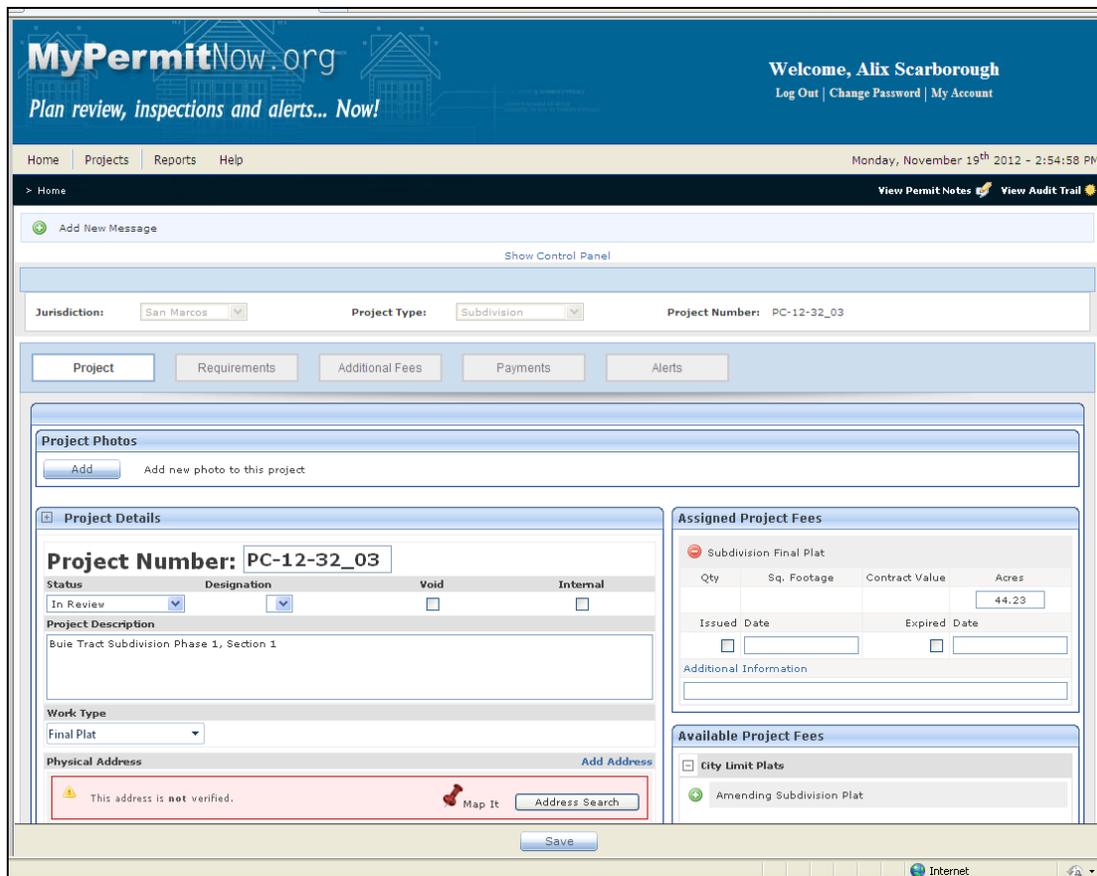


Exhibit 1: Screen shot of MyPermitNow web site

Johnathan and I have made significant progress with the digitizing project. With the boxes of files we scanned in and then destroyed, we were able to remove several filing cabinets from the hallway, as well as clear out an office (which is now the office of senior planner Amanda Hernandez). We coordinated our efforts using a joint Excel spreadsheet. Since I have been focusing on the comp plan for the past couple of months, I am not sure of the exact status of this project. However, I know it is an ongoing task – there are still boxes in the office!

	A	B	C
1	File Year	Entered Into Benson	Entered into Laserfiche
2	ZC-84-21	Yes	No
3	ZC-93-24	Yes	Yes
4	ZC-94-17	Yes	Yes
5	ZC-94-18	Yes	Yes
6	ZC-94-19	Yes	Yes
7	ZC-94-20	Yes	Yes
8	ZC-94-21	Yes	Yes
9	ZC-94-22	Yes	Yes
10	ZC-94-25	Yes	Yes
11	ZC-94-27	Yes	Yes
12	ZC-94-28	Yes	Yes
13	ZC-94-29	Yes	Yes
14	ZC-95-01	Yes	Yes
15	ZC-95-03	Yes	Yes
16	ZC-96-20	Yes	Yes

Exhibit 2: Sample of scanning status document

The other primary way I spent my time was working on various tasks for the Comprehensive Master Plan. John Foreman is the project manager for this update of the 1995 Horizons Master Plan. The project has been underway for over a year now, going from online crowdsourcing of ideas to vision workshops to goals drafted by a citizen committee. I worked closely with John throughout the fall semester, doing the little tasks to make the comp plan events more successful. This included distributing fliers across town, setting up for and cleaning up after workshops, taking minutes, and making copies of the agenda. I also created a handout for the department’s World Town Planning Day open house, which is attached at the end of this report.



Exhibit 3: Me at the Design Rodeo

The two biggest public events that occurred during my time as an intern were the Growth and Preservation Allocation (GPA) exercise and the Design Rodeo. The GPA exercise involved participants placing future population (signified by lego pieces) onto maps of San Marcos to indicate their preference for where density should be directed. The results of this workshop, in

turn, informed the Design Rodeo, a week-long series of charettes in which staff, consultants, and the public interacted to produce a final Preferred Growth Scenario. During the Design Rodeo, I helped by taking minutes during focus groups, directing traffic, and other intern-level duties. I also conducted a participant survey during this time, intended to measure the event's effectiveness and public satisfaction. This survey will be used in my undergraduate honors thesis in Spring 2013.

After the design rodeo, I was in charge of organizing, digitizing, and archiving (as appropriate) all the materials that came out of the event. This included lots of maps and hand-drawn sketches by consultants; sticky notes with public comments; poster board presentations from high school and college classes; photos; handouts; and anything else I came across.

After taking a breath from the big Design Rodeo, I began working with consultant Ben Luckens to prepare for traffic demand modeling. I spent several weeks using GIS and Excel to ready the data to be sent to our transportation consultants. Specifically, I was responsible for allocating future population to traffic analysis zones (TAZs) based on the preferred growth scenario and the current trends. I also allocated population into watersheds, created counts for different densities of residential development, and modified various shapefiles to keep the data current. This included a new shapefile of the Thoroughfare Plan, as well as the development zones that came out of the Design Rodeo.

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M
27	ENTITLED			New Entitled Pop	SF Units	SF Pop		MF Units	MF Pop	Total Pop		SF Low	SF Mid
28	Paso Robles SF			1763	678	1,763			0	1,763		339	
29	Paso Robles MU			0		0			0	1,380			
30	Star Park			0		0			0	1,380			
31	Star Park East			0		0			0	690			
32	East Village (HS)			5177	365	949		1,626	4,228	7,142			
33	Medical District			0		0			0	1,575			
34	Government Center			0		0			0	1,380			
35	Government Center East			0		0			0	0			
36	Downtown			770		0		296	770	3,760			
37	Downtown East			0		0			0	460			
38	Midtown Springtown			1282		0		493	1,282	4,387			
39	Midtown West			0		0			0	0			
40	Midtown East			629		0		242	629	629			
41	Blanco Vista SF North			1763	678	1,763			0	1,763			
42	Blanco Vista SF South			811		0		312	811	811			

Exhibit 4: Sample of population allocation for traffic demand modeling

The next step in the comprehensive plan process, on my part, was reading through the Horizons Plan to pull pieces that could be kept and flag others for updating. This took quite some time, but in the end my table of contents summary showed which sections of the Plan could be imported (such as ancient San Marcos history); which sections needed minor updates (such as the introduction); and which sections required a complete overhaul (such as the demographics). This will be a very valuable contribution over the next few months, as the text of the plan begins to take shape.

At the time of this report, I am working independently to set up a slew of public outreach meetings for January 2013. We hope have staff and members of the citizen’s advisory committee give presentations to various San Marcos area organizations, explaining where we are in the plan update process and gaining valuable feedback from diverse segments of the population. This has involved calling and emailing representative of different groups, as well as online research and networking to locate contact information. As of today, I have confirmed 12 meetings for January and early February.

While digitizing and the comprehensive plan have dominated my time as an intern, I also had various other projects and responsibilities. These included reformatting lighting specifications for the Smart Code; preparing Planning & Zoning Commission administrative templates for Francis (recording secretary); updating the physical copies of the Code of Ordinances; helping Emily Koller (planning technician) with PDD zoning expiration best practices research; assisting Janis Hendrix (community initiatives administrator) with several fair housing focus groups; creating case files for incoming applications; and answering calls at the front desk. Clearly, I had the opportunity to “wear many hats,” and I did my best to try them all on!

Given my past internship experiences, classroom experiences, and the career I hope to pursue, this internship was the best choice I have made during my time at Texas State. Not only have I learned about “a day in the life” of a planner, but I have become more comfortable in an office environment and with coworker relationships. While my academic knowledge was certainly crucial to my success at the City of San Marcos, I believe my internship did much more for my employability than many of my classes. My only regret in this experience is that, due to my class-centered work schedule, I was not able to shadow my coworkers to many meetings. However, I will be continuing to work as an intern at the City during Spring 2013, and I look forward to trying to squeeze into more meetings and possibly even have a case assigned to me. I know I have much more to learn from the planning department, and I am grateful for the staff’s willingness to answer my questions and help me constantly improve.

This internship experience has enriched my academic experience and made my classes this semester more interesting and meaningful. At the same time, I cannot imagine holding this job four years ago, at the start of my college career. My time at Texas State has made me more

outgoing and confident in my abilities, which I believe shined through during this internship. In addition, my numerous honors classes improved my writing skills and enhanced my critical thinking and problem solving. I noticed this attribute especially when working on a project independently; when I encountered a roadblock, I would spend time trouble-shooting and solving it myself, instead of immediately asking for help. Most especially, the background knowledge gained from my planning classes made this experience possible and enjoyable; without that, I would have felt like an intern dropped in a foreign country, unable to speak the language!

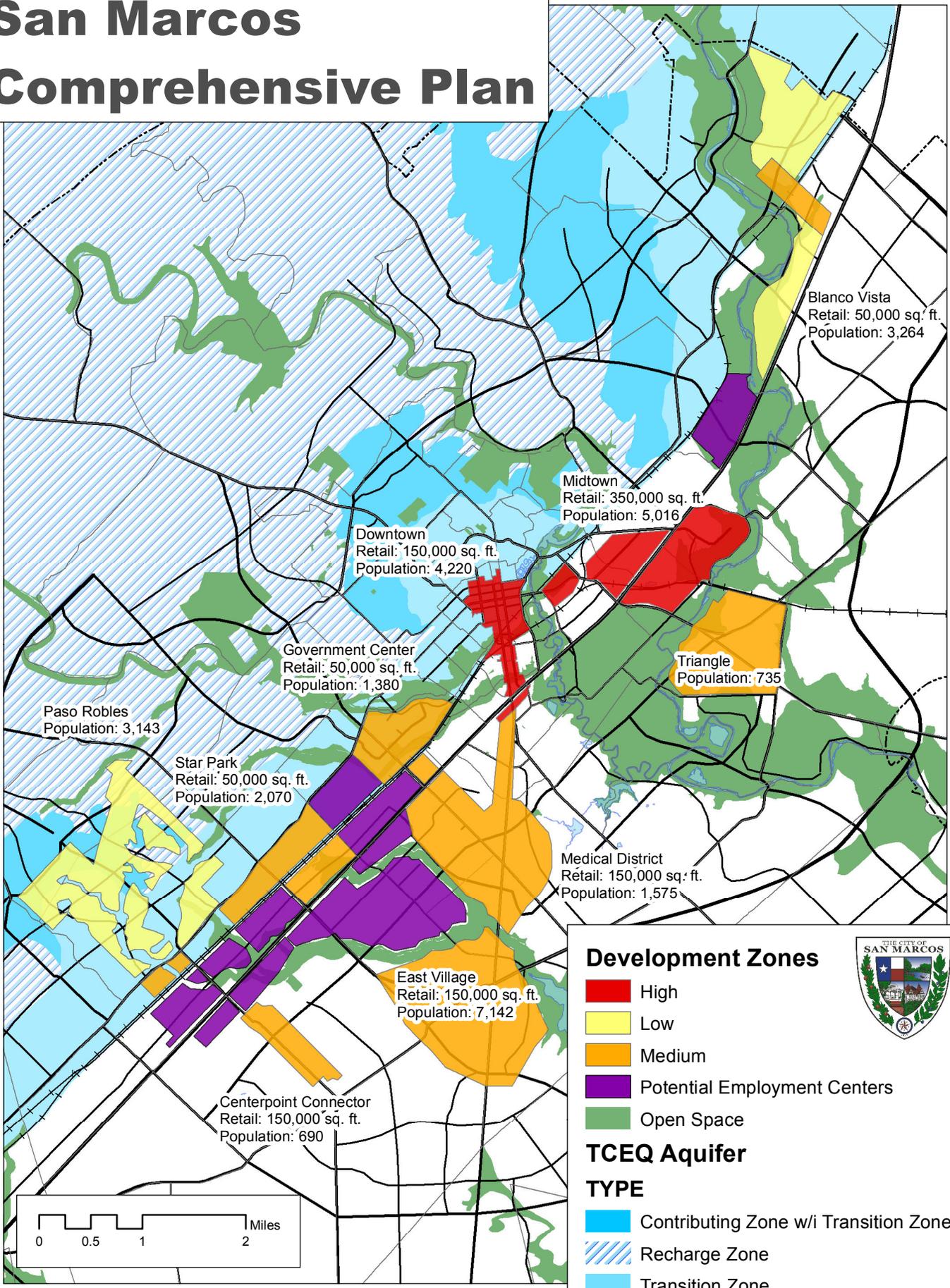
The biggest deviation from my original job description was the time spent on the comprehensive plan. Of the job description below, written in August, I feel I have adequately completed all except bullet points three and five. Comprehensive planning is a major interest of mine in the field of urban planning, and I was delighted to have the opportunity to work with John on the Plan update. Next semester, I hope to spend some time learning about legal notifications, case research, and staff reports, so I will be well-rounded in the field of municipal planning.

- Planning and Zoning Commission packet preparation, copying, etc.
- Assist with phone and counter coverage.
- Surrounding property owner legal notice research, mailing and posting of state required notification signs
- Assisting customers with general planning information (zoning designation of property, allowed uses in each zoning district, referring customers to the appropriate Development Services division)
- Assisting planners with preliminary case research (zoning research, prepping staff reports with background information for Planner's analysis)
- Intake case file preparation of development applications submitted to the Planning Division
- Assist the department in adhering to records retention requirements (this includes familiarity with case file contents, scanning of departmental files to convert paper files to electronic files, and organizing electronic files on department server)
- Complete special projects as assigned

By the end of the semester it is our goal that the Intern will have a well rounded view of how a Planning Department interacts with both the City organization as a whole, with the public and how the department functions in order to support both internal and external customers. By the end of the semester the Intern will be familiar with a variety of development requests, state and local processing requirements, as well as the proper analysis required for review and action of each type of development application. Finally, it is our hope that the Intern will gain both the necessary day-to-day knowledge and the confidence necessary to work in a Planning Department.

*Exhibit 5: Original internship job description,
August 2012*

San Marcos Comprehensive Plan



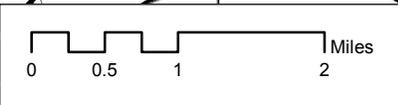
Development Zones

- High
- Low
- Medium
- Potential Employment Centers
- Open Space

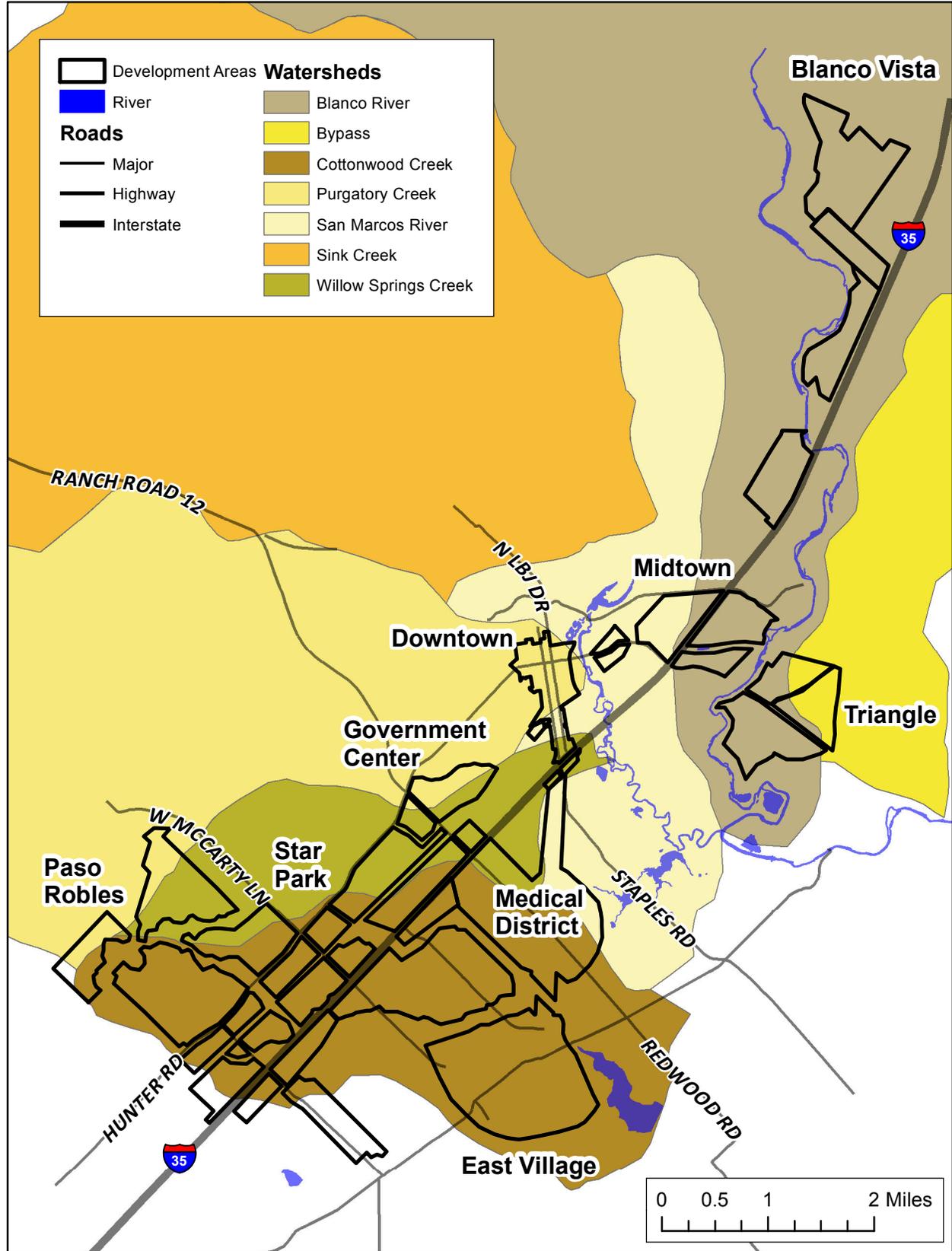
TCEQ Aquifer

TYPE

- Contributing Zone w/i Transition Zone
- Recharge Zone
- Transition Zone

Development Zones and Watersheds



Vision San Marcos: A River Runs Through Us

Comprehensive Plan

What is a comprehensive master plan?

A comprehensive plan puts all the pieces in a city together. It creates a vision for the city's future, as well as specific objectives to achieve that vision. The Comprehensive Plan should be kept updated to guide the growth and development of the city of San Marcos.

Visioning, Goals, and Objectives

The Plan update began in 2011 with Dream San Marcos, a community visioning process. In Spring 2012, the Steering Committee and Citizens Advisory Committee were appointed. With information from Dream San Marcos, these committees drafted vision statements that were adopted by the City Council in June. The vision statements addressed the following areas:

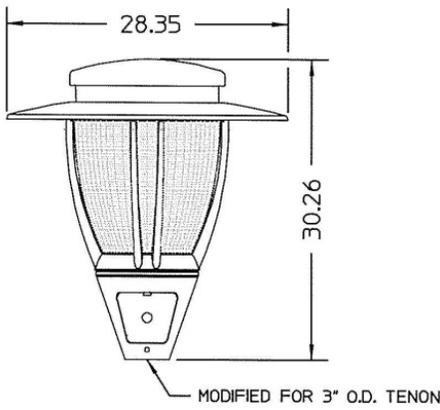


*Growth and Preservation Allocation exercise
August 2012*

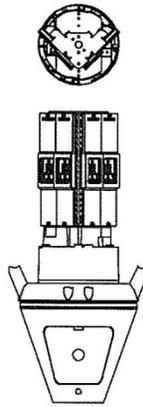
- Environment and resource protection
- Parks and public facilities
- Economic development
- Transportation
- Land use
- Neighborhoods and housing



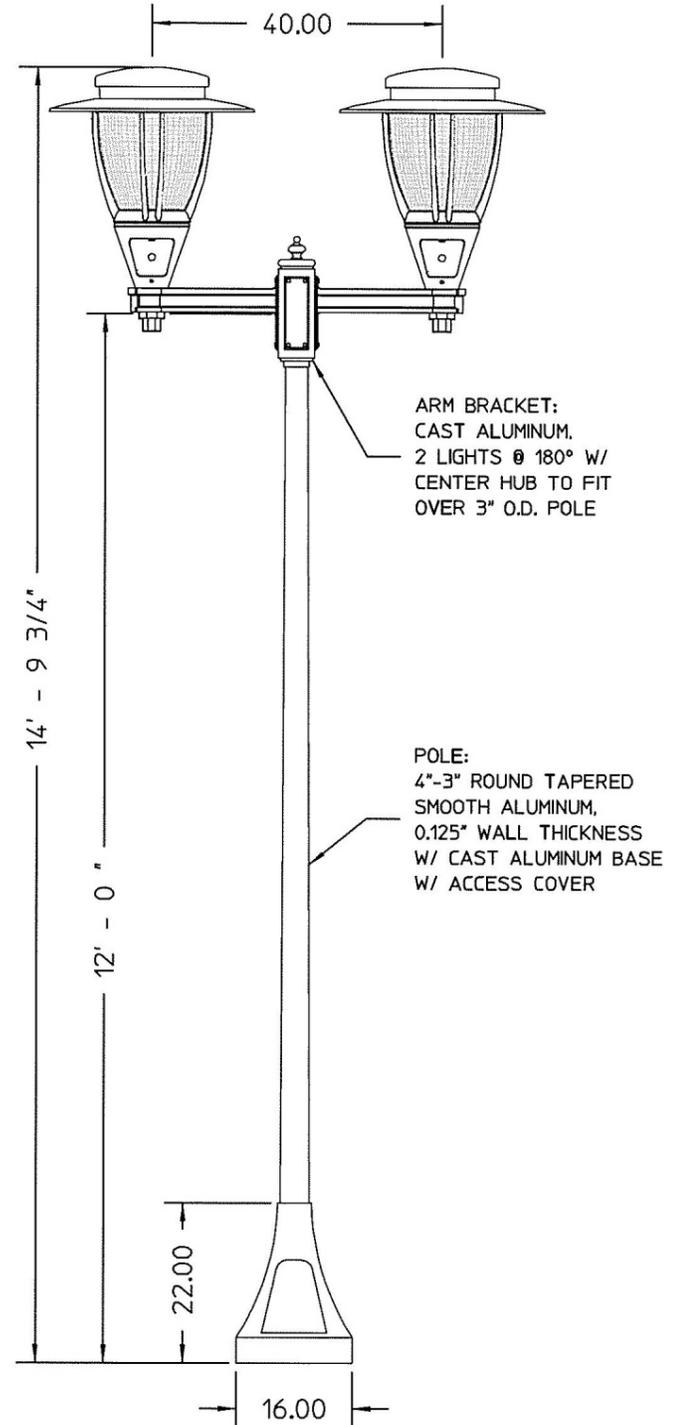
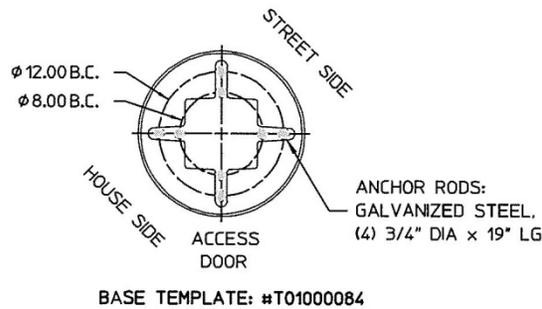
Luminaire Detail



**Top View
LED Module Assembly**



Base Template Detail



SPECIFICATIONS:

1. 80, 4000K (CCT) LUXEON REBEL ES LED's ON ALUMINUM CORE PCB, SEALED ACRYLIC LENS, IP66 RATED, 60,000 HRS @ 25°C & 70% LUMEN MAINTENANCE, 0.99 POWER FACTOR.
2. PHILIPS ADVANCE XITANIUM LED DRIVER, 120-277 VAC, 50-60 Hz, 350mA DRIVE CURRENT, ADDITIONAL 10KV SURGE SUPPRESSION.
3. GLOBE: TYPE III, NARROW BODY, ACRYLIC
4. FASTENERS: ALLEN HEAD SET SCREWS
5. COLOR: BLACK
6. PHOTO CONTROL: TWIST-LOCK RECEPT.
7. COLOR TEMPERATURE: 4000K

NOTE:

PARTS OF THE ENTIRE LIGHT ASSEMBLY SHALL BE AS SPECIFIED OR APPROVED EQUIVALENT

ORDERING GUIDE (PHILIPS HADCO): S5995C LUMINAIRE, SA5995G ARM BRACKET, SP5995A POLE, OR APPROVED EQUIVALENT

MODERN DOUBLE LIGHT ASSEMBLY

The City of San Marcos
Engineering and Capital Improvements

STANDARD DETAILS
N.T.S.

DRAWING:

DATE: AUGUST 2012

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