

City of San Marcos Councilmember Candidate Questionnaire 2024

Amanda Rodriguez

1. Please describe your experience, areas of expertise, and leadership style and how you feel they make/will make you an effective Councilmember in San Marcos.

My nearly half a decade of experience as a Legislative Director in the Texas House of Representatives has equipped me with the skills to tackle systemic issues and drive meaningful change. I successfully advanced legislation on foster care reform, criminal justice, environmental health, housing equity, and higher education access. This background has deepened my commitment to holistic, intentional, and innovative policy solutions.

As a Council member in San Marcos, I will leverage my expertise in crafting data-driven, inclusive policies. My leadership style focuses on collaboration and strategic problem-solving, ensuring that diverse community needs are met effectively. I am dedicated to creating equitable, impactful policies that enhance the quality of life for all residents.

2. What do you see as the biggest challenges our local businesses face? What can you do as a Councilmember to help overcome them?

Local businesses in San Marcos face challenges such as economic uncertainty, a burdensome permitting process, limited access to funding, workforce development issues, and infrastructure inadequacies.

As a Councilmember, I would address these by:

- **Boosting Economic Stability:** Advocate for policies that promote economic diversification and resilience to better withstand market fluctuations.
- **Expediting Permits:** Streamline and expedite the permitting process to reduce delays and support efficient business operations.
- **Improving Funding Access:** Work to enhance access to local grants and funding programs specifically designed for small businesses.
- **Enhancing Workforce Development:** Collaborate with educational institutions to ensure training programs meet the evolving needs of local businesses.
- **Investing in Infrastructure:** Prioritize infrastructure improvements to support small business operations and accessibility.

3. How will you balance citywide discussions and bridge the gap between private citizens and the business community when they are at odds on issues that impact the business/economic environment or other vital issues that affect San Marcos?

Balancing citywide discussions and bridging gaps between private citizens and the business community requires viewing residents not just as consumers, but as active citizens whose well-being drives economic prosperity. Our economy thrives when we nurture these roots and address concerns holistically. By valuing both perspectives and focusing on mutual benefits, we can create an environment where economic growth and community well-being go hand in hand.

To bridge gaps, I will:

- **Promote Open Dialogue:** Facilitate regular forums where citizens and businesses can voice concerns and collaborate on solutions.
- **Encourage Collaborative Solutions:** Seek common ground by integrating feedback from both sides to create balanced policies that address community needs and business interests.
- **Foster Transparency:** Ensure transparent decision-making processes so all stakeholders understand how their input influences policy.

4. What can the City do to encourage existing business growth and new business attraction?

To encourage existing business growth and attract new businesses, the City should focus on understanding and addressing why residents are leaving town for jobs elsewhere. By engaging with the community, we can identify the opportunities people seek and work to keep local talent in San Marcos. By aligning job opportunities with resident needs and supporting businesses that value their workforce, we can enhance local economic growth and retention.

Key strategies could include:

- **Job Market Analysis:** Conduct surveys and studies to determine which jobs residents are leaving town for and develop strategies to offer similar opportunities locally.
- **Support Fair Business Practices:** Promote businesses that prioritize fair treatment of employees, offer competitive wages, and provide essential benefits such as childcare support.
- **Incentivize Quality Employers:** Offer incentives and support to businesses that create high-quality, sustainable jobs and foster a positive work environment.

5. If elected what will you do to further/strengthen the relationship between the City of San Marcos and Texas State University?

If elected, I will strengthen the relationship between the City of San Marcos and Texas State University by fostering better collaboration and addressing mutual concerns. I will ensure that university expansion aligns with residents' needs by facilitating regular dialogues between city officials, university leaders, and the community.

To bridge gaps, I will promote partnerships that create opportunities for local businesses and students, aligning academic programs with community needs. Additionally, I will advocate for expanded support for local students to attend Texas State at low or no cost.

By addressing these key areas, we can ensure that both the university's growth and the community's interests are supported, creating a more cohesive and beneficial relationship.

6. What improvements do you believe are needed for adequate transportation infrastructure in San Marcos?

To improve transportation infrastructure in San Marcos, I would prioritize developing a comprehensive public transportation system that is affordable, accessible, and reliable. This includes investing in expanded transit options, increasing service frequency, and integrating various transportation modes like buses and bike-sharing.

Equally important is maintaining and upgrading existing roads to ensure they are safe and well-maintained. During road construction, we must be intentional about minimizing disruptions to travel and prioritizing safety. Improved communication about construction projects and clear detours can help reduce inconveniences for residents and ensure a smoother travel experience. By addressing these areas, we can create a more efficient, reliable, and user-friendly transportation network.

7. A major issue facing the region is housing availability, lack of workforce housing, and housing affordability and diversity. If elected what actions would you take to create more housing choices in San Marcos?

If elected, I would address housing issues in San Marcos by taking several key actions:

- **Increase Housing Choices:** Support and fund the development of diverse housing options, including affordable and workforce housing, to meet varying needs within the community.
- **Maintain Public Housing:** Ensure full funding for existing public housing, including regular maintenance and timely repairs.

- **Acquire and Transform Properties:** Establish a fund to acquire distressed properties and convert them into affordable housing, keeping land accessible for future generations.
- **Champion Tenants' Rights:** Advocate for strong tenants' rights and combat discrimination against housing vouchers to ensure equal access for all.
- **Enhance Accessibility:** Mandate that new construction projects meet high accessibility standards to accommodate individuals with disabilities.

These actions aim to create a more inclusive and affordable housing environment for **everyone** in San Marcos.

8. If you received a \$1 million grant to use for the city any way you wanted, what would you do with it and why?

If I received a \$1 million grant, I would allocate it to enhance social services for the most marginalized communities in San Marcos. Investing in these services would address critical needs such as affordable housing, mental health support, and job training programs. By focusing on these foundational areas, we can strengthen our community from the ground up, ensuring that everyone has the support they need to thrive. When we invest in the well-being of our most vulnerable residents, we create a more equitable and flourishing city for all. This approach aligns with the belief that by nurturing our community's roots, we enable the entire city to bloom.

9. Please review the San Marcos Chamber's "Government Relations & Advocacy Guiding Principles" document. Do you agree with all of these statements? Please describe below any statements you do not agree with.

Principles I disagree with:

RE: Public Safety & Emergency Preparedness

- While maintaining low crime rates is important, true public safety requires addressing broader community needs. Investing in education, mental health services, and economic opportunities is crucial for helping individuals lead fulfilling lives and preventing crime at its roots. The San Marcos Area Chamber of Commerce should prioritize these investments, as anything less may not be financially sound. A focus on comprehensive community support will ultimately be more cost-effective and lead to a safer, more vibrant community.

RE: Health Care

- While cost-effective health care is important for both business success and community health, larger businesses must take a proactive role in supporting their employees.

Rather than relying solely on individuals to manage their health, businesses should implement policies and incentives that promote wellness. By fostering a supportive environment and providing comprehensive health benefits, companies can contribute more effectively to overall health outcomes and benefit both their workforce and the broader community.

10. Any additional information you would like members of the San Marcos Area Chamber of Commerce to know?

We are at a pivotal moment for our city. If we don't make substantial changes to how our local government operates, we risk losing residents to neighboring communities, which would be a significant blow to our community and its unique culture. I am committed to remaining grounded and approaching this role with authenticity and integrity. My focus is not on personal gain but on genuinely serving and caring for our residents. The community deserves a local government that embodies empathy, respect, and decisive action. I am fully dedicated to ensuring that our government reflects these values and meets the needs of every resident.

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