

City of San Marcos City Council Candidate Questionnaire 2024

Griffin Spell

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.

I have been a resident of San Marcos for over 17 years, coming to San Marcos to attend Texas State University. I quickly decided to stay and make this city my home. I served on the City's first Neighborhood Commission. In 2015 I was unanimously appointed to the San Marcos Historic Preservation Commission where I served five years, the last two as Chair. In 2020 I was appointed to the Planning & Zoning Commission, unanimously re-appointed in 2023, and elected Vice-Chair earlier this year. I'm also a former downtown employee, as KZSM Community Radio's first Station Manager. I believe I have the most practical experience actually working at City Hall, making a difference for our community. My approach to leadership on the dais is based upon mutual respect for everyone, to chart the best course for the City of San Marcos.

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

The biggest challenge I see our business community facing is uncertainty. Whether from inflation, high rents, or insufficient long-term planning, a lack of confidence in the direction our community is headed places local businesses on the wrong foot. In contrast, our business community thrives when it can be confident in the future of our city and the leadership at City Hall. As a Planning & Zoning Commissioner, I've always strived to make sure we think long term; five, ten, twenty years from now in planning for the future. As a councilmember, I will focus on the 'nuts and bolts' of running an effective, efficient, and focused local government, so that our local businesses can be confident in the future of San Marcos.

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?

City officials, whether they are elected, appointed, or employed by the City have an important responsibility to work with all parties, including the Chamber of Commerce and the Greater San Marcos Partnership, for the overall good of our community. I have a reputation as a Planning & Zoning commissioner of working with everyone, and of making sure the votes I cast give businesses a chance to succeed and thrive. The key to any successful discussion at the council dais is respect; respect for citizens who live and work in our City, respect for business owners investing in San Marcos, and respect for our professional city staff.

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

We should continue our relationship with the Greater San Marcos Partnership, as our region's primary economic development organization, with a particular emphasis on supporting businesses in their critical first three years of operation. I want to bring more retail south of IH-35, including a new grocery store. I want us to prioritize economic diversification, particularly bringing in manufacturing jobs that provide good wages. I believe we have a moral responsibility to try and bring well-paying jobs that a majority of our citizens can compete for, and a fiduciary responsibility to taxpayers to create a diverse tax base. I support the creation of a sales tax anti-volatility fund, as part of a broad approach to keep future taxes low and future budgets stable and balanced.

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

As a Texas State alumnus, I feel I have a valuable perspective on Town & Gown issues that isn't always represented on City Council. I feel the key to a successful relationship with Texas State is having and maintaining open lines of communication, but that also requires Texas State's leadership to want to work with us. When the University buys land and takes it off the tax rolls (as it did in December with The Vistas and Sanctuary Lofts), that shifts a property tax burden onto every homeowner and business in San Marcos. We need to work with the university to meet their needs without them purchasing more land.

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

We need a 'leave no stone unturned' approach to transportation in San Marcos. One of the main issues is the lack of awareness in our community about the options that already exist, including CARTS, the Bobcat Shuttle, and the train station on South Guadalupe. Our capacity often exceeds demand which makes it hard to justify expansion to outside organizations that could provide funding. I support the integration of Texas State's transportation service and our regional bus system. For roads, we need to finish construction projects around the city in a timely manner. We need to work with our city's Parking Advisory Committee to find solutions to downtown and riverfront parking. We must provide waivers for San Marcos taxpayers if the city implements paid parking for riverfront parking.

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?

We need to use every tool in our toolbox to bring additional housing to the community, while protecting our existing neighborhoods and the environment. We need to help people stay in the

homes they already own and maintain them. We need to create a stronger 'renter to homeowner' pipeline so that people who come to San Marcos and want to purchase their first home can afford to do so, and not be forced away due to lack of availability or a lack of options. As a Planning and Zoning Commissioner I've voted for thousands of new single-family homes, apartments, townhomes, and other housing projects across San Marcos to increase our housing supply.

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?

I would consider capital improvement projects that had to be postponed or cancelled due to funding. I would also look at projects that have outside matching funds or grants, to get the most value out of our investment. In particular, I would look at flood mitigation and transportation infrastructure projects.

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.

Yes, I agree with the Chamber's "Government Relations & Advocacy Guiding Principles".

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

Because two of our capable city councilmembers are stepping down, I believe that there is an urgent need for new leaders with experience at City Hall. I'm the only candidate for Place 5 to have ever served on Planning and Zoning. After I ran for Council in 2018 the advice I received, including from many Chamber members, was to keep being active in our City, get more experience at City Hall and get appointed to Planning and Zoning, and then run again in five or six years. I've followed that advice and I am once again asking for your support and your vote. I'm asking for the opportunity to take the next step and serve you on our City Council.