

City of San Marcos Councilmember Candidate Questionnaire 2024

Lorenzo Gonzalez

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 current role as a School-Based Law Enforcement Officer has given me valuable insights into public safety, and a deep understanding of how to keep our community safe.

Every day, I work directly with families, students, and educators, and I've seen how important it is to build trust and relationships across our community, as well as the importance of communication, understanding, and problem-solving in real time.

Additionally, I've been actively involved with small businesses, learning firsthand about the challenges and opportunities they face. I'm committed to making sure our local businesses have the support, tools and resources they need to grow and create jobs right here in our San Marcos.

My leadership style is all about collaboration. I believe in listening to everyone's voice, building consensus, and finding practical solutions that work for both residents and businesses. I'm focused on making thoughtful decisions that benefit the whole community, whether it's improving public safety or driving economic growth.

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

One of the biggest challenges local businesses face is access to the right resources, whether that's funding, mentorship, or workforce support. Small business owners need connections to grants, programs, and partnerships that can help them grow and compete. Additionally, as San Marcos continues to grow, businesses are struggling to find and retain skilled workers to meet their needs.

As a Councilmember, I will work to connect our local businesses with available resources at the city, state, and federal levels, making sure they have the tools they need to thrive. I'll also focus on building stronger partnerships between businesses, educational institutions, and workforce development programs, ensuring that local residents are prepared for available jobs and businesses have access to the talent they need to succeed. This approach will help create more economic opportunities for both business owners and residents.

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?

When conflicts arise between businesses and residents, there's no one-size-fits-all solution. Every issue is unique, and as a Councilmember, I'll approach each situation with the goal of finding creative solutions that benefit both sides. I believe that a strong business community is the backbone of a

thriving, economically stable residential community. By fostering open dialogue and collaboration, I'll work to ensure that we build a San Marcos where both businesses and residents can prosper.

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

Resources and opportunities are key to helping our current businesses grow and attracting new ones. San Marcos should focus on connecting small businesses to resources not only within the city government but also from state, federal, and private sector programs. Many of the programs traditionally reserved for large corporations should be adapted to fit the needs of small businesses, giving them the same opportunities to grow, compete, and succeed.

Additionally, offering incentives to keep businesses local and entice new ones will ensure that San Marcos remains an attractive place for entrepreneurs. Whether it's through tax breaks, grants, or simplifying the process of starting a business, we can make San Marcos a hub for innovation and local success.

Investing in workforce development is also critical. By providing training programs and partnering with local businesses, we can ensure that San Marcos residents have the skills they need to fill available jobs and grow professionally. This will make our workforce more competitive and help businesses thrive.

We also need to focus on keeping recent graduates of Texas State University in San Marcos post-graduation. By providing local job opportunities, affordable housing, and a vibrant community, we can encourage graduates to build their futures right here. Keeping talent in San Marcos is essential for long-term growth and maintaining a strong, skilled workforce.

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

Strengthening the relationship between San Marcos and Texas State University is crucial for the growth and success of both the city and the university. One key area of focus would be collaborating on economic development initiatives. By supporting joint business incubators or innovation hubs, we can encourage entrepreneurship and foster new business ideas from students and faculty that benefit the local economy.

Another important area is improving transportation and infrastructure between the city and the campus. We need to ensure that public transportation, bike lanes, and pedestrian paths make it easier for students and faculty to connect with the broader San Marcos community.

Additionally, I would work to promote housing and community integration. We need to ensure that there are affordable housing options for students, faculty, and residents alike, while encouraging graduates to stay in San Marcos post-graduation. This will help further integrate Texas State graduates into the local community and contribute to long-term growth.

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

San Marcos needs a well-rounded approach to transportation infrastructure. Public transportation, bike paths, and walking paths are essential, especially for our student and university community. Improving

public transit options will help reduce traffic congestion and provide affordable and convenient transportation for residents, students, and workers alike.

Expanding and maintaining bike lanes and pedestrian paths will not only promote healthier, eco-friendly travel options but also make it easier for people to connect with key areas of the city, including the Texas State University campus. These improvements will help make San Marcos a more accessible and connected community, benefiting both residents and visitors.

Additionally, we need to continue investing in road improvements to address congestion and ensure that our infrastructure can keep up with the city's growth. As San Marcos continues to expand, we must proactively upgrade and maintain our roadways to support increased traffic, particularly along major thoroughfares.

Adequate transportation infrastructure is essential for economic growth, quality of life, and safety for all residents.

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?

Housing affordability is one of the most pressing issues facing San Marcos, and it's essential that we create more housing choices to accommodate both current and future residents. We must work creatively to provide more affordable options while ensuring that the city continues to grow in a sustainable way.

Additionally, I would work to incentivize affordable housing developments by offering tax breaks or other financial incentives to developers who prioritize affordable and workforce housing. It's critical to ensure that these developments are not only affordable but also well-integrated into the community, with access to public transportation, schools, and essential services.

Another idea is to promote mixed-use development that combines residential, commercial, and retail spaces in one area, encouraging vibrant, walkable neighborhoods. This can help reduce the cost of living by creating communities where people can live, work, and shop all in close proximity.

I would also support expanding community land trusts (CLTs), which allow the city to work with nonprofits to secure land for affordable housing developments, keeping housing costs down long-term. This would help ensure that affordable housing remains accessible to residents even as property values rise.

Finally, it's important to renter protections to prevent current residents from being priced out of their homes as the city continues to grow.

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 prioritize investing in small business development, particularly programs and opportunities for entrepreneurs from traditionally marginalized communities, including Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC), the LGBTQ+ community, and others who have historically faced barriers to starting and growing businesses.

By providing resources, mentorship, and grants to these communities, we can foster innovation, create jobs, and help build a more inclusive economy in San Marcos.

A strong business community is the backbone of a vibrant city, and the foundation on which everything else is built. When businesses thrive, they create jobs, support local families, and contribute to a more stable and prosperous community. Investing in small businesses, especially those led by underrepresented entrepreneurs, strengthens the foundation of our city and ensures that all members of the community have the opportunity to succeed.

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.

Overall, I agree with the guiding principles outlined by the Chamber, particularly the focus on business development, infrastructure, housing, and inclusivity.

As a member of law enforcement, I have deep appreciation for our first responders and understand the critical role they play in our community. I fully support the need for strong police and sheriff departments to maintain public safety. At the same time, I am adamant that our law enforcement officers be held to the high standards our community expects. Bad actors within these organizations must face appropriate consequences, and transparency is key to maintaining the public’s trust in law enforcement.

I also firmly believe that health care is a human right, and a healthy workforce makes for a healthy business. Ensuring that workers have access to affordable, quality health care is critical. However, this should not come at the expense of our small business community. I am committed to finding solutions that ensure businesses can thrive while also providing necessary health benefits to their employees, fostering a balanced and sustainable approach.

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

I am committed to building a stronger, more inclusive San Marcos that supports both our residents and businesses. I believe that small businesses are the backbone of our community, and I will work tirelessly to ensure they have the resources and opportunities they need to thrive. Whether it’s cutting red tape, connecting businesses to state and federal programs, or creating workforce development initiatives, I am dedicated to making San Marcos a hub of innovation and growth.

I also recognize the importance of smart, sustainable development as our city grows, ensuring that we protect our environment and provide affordable housing options for all. At the same time, I am committed to supporting a healthy workforce by advocating for healthcare solutions that benefit both employees and employers.

My leadership style is rooted in collaboration and listening to all voices. I am focused on finding creative, practical solutions that benefit the entire community. I look forward to the opportunity to serve and work alongside the Chamber and the San Marcos business community to create a vibrant and prosperous future for our city.