

## City of San Marcos Councilmember Candidate Questionnaire 2025

### Chase Norris – Candidate for Place 1

**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 earned a Master of Public Affairs from the LBJ School and a Master of Science in Community & Regional Planning at UT Austin, where I studied public finance, land use, and policy development. For over a decade, I have worked in municipal and state government on affordable housing, homelessness prevention, public transit, resource recovery, watershed protection, development services, and disaster recovery. In each role, I combined technical skills with coalition building to deliver results, from implementing Austin's universal recycling ordinance to administering billions in HUD recovery funds at the Texas General Land Office. My leadership style is collaborative, data-driven, and rooted in integrity. I believe the role of a councilmember is to listen first, bring people together, and translate community needs into effective, equitable policies.

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

San Marcos businesses face two main challenges: competition with online retailers and fluctuations in local spending. This year's dip in sales tax revenue suggests that too many purchases are leaving our community. As councilmember, I will work to keep more dollars circulating locally. My proposal is to partner with the Chamber on a local "goods & services hub," an online marketplace styled after Amazon but focused on San Marcos businesses. Paired with a "Shop Local as Civic Duty" campaign, this will strengthen small businesses and sales tax revenue alike. I will also pursue state and federal grant opportunities, such as Small Business Administration innovation grants, to support local entrepreneurs and retail promotion. Supporting San Marcos businesses is about both pride and prosperity: when we shop local, we grow local.

**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?**

When private citizens and businesses are at odds, my role is to make sure both voices are heard, respected, and reconciled into practical solutions. I believe most conflicts stem from framing: residents want livable neighborhoods, while businesses want predictable conditions to succeed. These are not opposites. They are interdependent. A thriving economy depends on stable housing, safe infrastructure, and community trust. I will facilitate open forums, use data to clarify impacts, and work toward win-win policies, such as housing that supports workforce stability or infrastructure that benefits both commerce and residents. My approach is not to pick sides, but to ensure every decision creates a stronger whole: a San Marcos where businesses succeed because people thrive.

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

San Marcos must balance supporting existing businesses while attracting new ones. A small investment in additional economic development staff will yield a strong return through expanded outreach, grant-writing, and recruitment. I will prioritize industries that bring high-paying jobs in high-demand sectors, trades, healthcare, advanced manufacturing, and technology, based on Texas

Workforce Commission data. I also see our entertainment and tourism economy as a unique advantage; expanding our cultural and natural attractions will grow sales tax revenue while boosting our city's profile. State and federal programs such as the Texas Enterprise Fund and U.S. EDA grants can support this growth. Our strategy must blend talent retention, targeted recruitment, and destination development.

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

There is a perception of a divide between longtime residents and the University, but this divide is unnecessary. Texas State is one of our greatest assets and an engine of talent, research, and innovation. I want San Marcos to be a city that embraces its graduates, retaining their skills by expanding partnerships with local businesses, nonprofits, and city government. Studies show that cities with strong "town and gown" relationships see higher rates of entrepreneurship and economic development. I will support initiatives such as joint workforce training programs, student internships in local businesses, and joint city-university research on housing and infrastructure. Our futures are intertwined, and I will work to ensure San Marcos and Texas State grow together, not apart.

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

San Marcos must invest in safe, efficient infrastructure for pedestrians, cyclists, drivers, and especially transit riders. Our 2024 Transportation Master Plan identified gaps in connectivity, particularly along major corridors. Federal programs like the Department of Transportation's RAISE grants could bring millions to fund street redesigns, sidewalks, and bus improvements. To compete for these funds, I propose hiring an additional grant administrator dedicated to transportation and infrastructure. This is a high-return investment. One staff member can unlock tens of millions in federal funding. With shade and benches at every bus stop, improved bike lanes, and safer intersections, we can make San Marcos a model of multimodal mobility.

**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?**

San Marcos faces a housing shortage that especially hurts working families. I support using city tools like density bonuses, inclusionary zoning, and streamlined permitting for missing middle housing: duplexes, triplexes, townhomes, and courtyard apartments. I will also pursue long-term affordability strategies: land banking to preserve sites for housing, and community land trusts to keep housing permanently affordable. These strategies are proven in cities nationwide and can stabilize costs while expanding supply. By aligning our housing policies with workforce needs, we ensure teachers, nurses, first responders, and service workers can afford to live in San Marcos. Affordable housing is not just a social good. It is essential infrastructure for a healthy economy.

**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?**

With \$1 million, I would make investments with the highest community return. First, I would dedicate funds to hire grant administrators and economic development staff, multiplying the value by bringing in additional millions in outside resources. Second, I would invest in transit equity by ensuring every bus stop has shade and seating, improving both ridership and dignity for those who rely on transit. Finally,

I would seed our affordable housing trust fund, expanding opportunities for working families. Each of these investments pays dividends in business growth, worker stability, and community resilience.

**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.**

I agree with the Chamber's guiding principle that job growth, workforce education, and housing diversity are essential to San Marcos's prosperity. I strongly support investment in public schools, career readiness, and locally provided post-secondary training. I also share the Chamber's commitment to public safety, infrastructure improvements, and long-term water supply planning. On taxation, I support reducing unnecessary burdens, but I believe tax policy must balance fairness, sustainability, and the needs of our growing community. On health care, I agree with promoting wellness and affordability, but I also support expanding access so all families can thrive. I especially applaud the Chamber's commitment to racial and social equity, which aligns with my vision of San Marcos as a community where every resident has a fair chance to succeed.

**10. You may use this opportunity to provide any additional information you would like members of the San Marcos Area Chamber of Commerce to know.**

San Marcos is poised for extraordinary growth, and my vision is to ensure that growth benefits our whole community. I will champion businesses that pay strong wages, protect our environment, and invest in our people. I bring both technical expertise and a deep passion for public service, rooted in my years of work on housing, transit, environmental protection, and economic revitalization. As councilmember, I will be a bridge-builder, partnering with the Chamber, Texas State, and our residents to make San Marcos a place where business and community rise together.

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