

City of San Marcos Councilmember Candidate Questionnaire 2026

Heather Hunter Candidate for City Council Place 4

1. Tell us about the experience, strengths and leadership style you would bring to City Council, and what you would most like to accomplish during your term?

I have been involved in politics since 2016, when I got into college and studied Political Science. I worked on campaigns at the local, state, and federal levels, and in 2020, after graduating, I was asked to run for the Florida State Senate. That experience taught me the importance of listening, community building, and putting service before politics. I was also fortunate to have Dr. Ferguson Reid Jr. as a mentor, whose guidance influenced my leadership. For the past five-plus years, I have worked as a Project Manager specializing in Grants Management. I have written, managed, and audited grants for local governments, businesses, nonprofits, and utilities for projects funded through the American Rescue Plan Act. This experience has given me practical knowledge of budgeting, compliance, auditing, and seeing projects through to completion. I hope to bring that to City Council and secure funding to turn San Marcos's priorities into reality.

2. San Marcos continues to grow, but the City also faces difficult budget decisions. Where do you think the greatest opportunities are to control costs, improve efficiency, or better prioritize spending while maintaining quality city services?

Budget season is currently underway, and from attending Community Budget Meetings at the San Marcos Public Library and Centro Cultural, one message stood out: we need to invest more in social services. Residents and nonprofits have made it clear that these services are vital to our community. With requests for assistance reaching roughly twice our current Social Services budget, I believe the City needs to identify additional ways to prioritize funding for these programs while continuing to look for efficiencies across the City. We should evaluate programs and expenditures based on their impact, eliminate unnecessary costs where possible, and ensure taxpayer dollars are directed toward the services residents rely on most. Residents should be able to thrive in San Marcos, not just survive and worry about making rent, feeding their children, or getting to a medical appointment. A responsible budget should reflect those basic needs while maintaining high-quality city services.

3. If the City received a one-time \$10 million grant with no restrictions, what would be your top priority for investing those funds and why?

My top priority would be investing the \$10 million grant based on the results of a new Comprehensive Needs Assessment. As the City of San Marcos approaches the end of ARPA funding in December 2026, we have an opportunity to reassess the gaps and determine where one-time funding can create the greatest lasting impact. I would focus on strengthening social services, particularly support for unhoused and vulnerable residents. Rather than making assumptions, I would use the assessment to identify current gaps and then invest in organizations already working directly with those populations. This could include expanding access to housing assistance, basic necessities, mental health resources, and other essential services. With population growth and increasing economic pressures, this grant should be used effectively and efficiently. My goal would be to make targeted investments that improve quality of life for San Marcos residents who need support the most.

4. What do you see as the biggest challenges facing local businesses today? What can the City do to help existing businesses succeed and attract new employers and investment?

The biggest concern I hear from local businesses is a lack of support from the City. There is a perception that our focus has shifted toward larger developments and employers, while the small, locally owned businesses making San Marcos unique aren't receiving the same opportunities and incentives. Our local businesses are part of what makes San Marcos a destination. They create jobs, contribute to our local economy, and give our community the character that attracts visitors and new residents. One of our biggest challenges is making sure these businesses can afford to stay here and continue to grow. The City should explore creating incentives and programs for existing local businesses similar to those offered to larger businesses and developments. This could include grants, fee assistance, streamlined permitting, or other tools that reduce barriers to growth. Attracting investment is important, but retaining the businesses already here should be vital.

5. Growth continues throughout San Marcos, but infrastructure does not always keep pace. What infrastructure investment should be the City's highest priority over the next five years? How would the City pay for it?

San Marcos and the surrounding areas are experiencing significant growth, and we need to keep pace. Over the next five years, our highest priority should be investing in infrastructure that supports safe, sustainable housing while protecting our existing residents and environment. Growth is inevitable, but we should not sacrifice quality for growth. Residents have concerns with new developments, including construction issues, broken pipes, and standards that do not always reflect community needs. If we are going to welcome new development, we should establish strong standards for construction, infrastructure, and environmental responsibility. We should explore state and federal grants and other funding opportunities tied to sustainable development. Smart growth means preparing for our future without losing sight of the people who already call San Marcos home.

6. Housing affordability and availability continue to be challenges in San Marcos. What actions would you support to increase housing choices while balancing infrastructure, neighborhood and community concerns?

Housing affordability and availability remain significant challenges in San Marcos. As the City's \$18.1 million in federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding concludes in 2026, we must address the gaps left behind by programs and services that funding made possible which includes affordable housing. I would start by revisiting the original needs assessment funded through ARPA and comparing it with where San Marcos residents are today. With the rising cost of nearly everything, it is clear that additional support is a necessity. I would support pursuing new funding through federal, state, and private grants while expanding the City's Grant Management Office to identify opportunities, dedicate resources to applications, and ensure funds reach residents who need them most. At the same time, we must thoughtfully balance new housing with infrastructure capacity and community priorities to create sustainable housing choices for the City.

7. Residents and businesses do not always agree on issues before City Council. How would you listen to competing viewpoints, weigh the broader impact of a decision, and determine what is best for San Marcos as a whole?

This is true for residents as a whole. There will always be times when residents, businesses, students, and other community members agree or disagree on issues before City Council. That is a natural part of local government. The responsibility of the City Council is to listen to those competing perspectives and ultimately make a decision that serves San Marcos as a whole. If elected, I would hear from all sides before making a decision, while considering both the immediate and long-term impacts. We are not only making decisions for the people who live and work in San Marcos today, but we are shaping the community that future residents, families, students, and businesses will inherit in the future. Good leadership means balancing competing interests, asking the difficult questions, and looking beyond the next election cycle. My goal would be to make thoughtful, researched, and informed decisions that protect what makes San Marcos special while preparing our community for the future.

8. Tell us about a position you held strongly but later changed your mind about. What caused you to reconsider your viewpoint, and what did you learn from that experience?

Throughout my time as a registered voter, especially over the last five years, I've watched political parties become increasingly divided. As a strong, young progressive in college, I often believed the other side of the aisle was unwilling to work with us or accomplish anything meaningful. Over time, I realized we were contributing to that same division. I began to understand that progress doesn't require everyone to agree, but it requires people to listen and work toward practical solutions. That perspective has shaped how I view local politics in San Marcos. Everyone I've spoken with cares about the San Marcos River, affordable housing, and supporting our small businesses. We may disagree on how to achieve those goals, but that doesn't mean we can't work together. I've learned that changing your mind isn't a weakness. It's growth. We should face our challenges hand in hand, not with raised fists.

9. Texas State University is one of our community's greatest economic assets. What is one new or expanded partnership between the City and Texas State that you would like to see, and how would you help make it happen?

I am interested in working with Texas State University, if elected. Key word: working with. San Marcos is a shared community for students and longtime residents alike, and our partnerships should reflect that. Texas State is one of our greatest economic assets. It creates jobs, prepares our next generation workforce, and brings people and investment into San Marcos. At the same time, our community is home to generations of families who contribute economically, artistically, and professionally. I would like to build a stronger partnership between Texas State and local residents through initiatives that connect students and faculty with local businesses, nonprofits, and community organizations. This could create more opportunities for internships, mentorships, research, and community-based projects while directly benefiting San Marcos residents. If elected, I would bring both sides to the table, listen to their needs, and help create partnerships where Texas State and our residents can grow together.

10. What is one decision made by the current or a previous City Council that you believe was the right decision, and one you would have handled differently? Why?

I believe the Data Center Ban was an important and necessary decision by the City Council. San Marcos took a leadership role in Texas by prioritizing the protection of our natural resources and quality of life. If elected, I will continue looking for ways to protect our water, land, and other resources so they can serve San Marcos for generations to come. One area I would have approached differently is the use of significant tax incentives to attract large businesses. I understand the desire to bring investment and jobs to San Marcos, but I believe we must also consider the small and locally owned businesses that give our community its unique character and are often struggling to stay afloat. I would have placed greater emphasis on creating a more balanced economic development strategy, one that welcomes responsible investment while ensuring our local businesses have meaningful opportunities to grow and thrive.

11. If you had the authority to rewrite one City ordinance tomorrow, what would it be, why would you change it, and what unintended consequences would you anticipate?

If I had the authority to rewrite one City ordinance, I would adjust San Marcos's water conservation ordinance. By strengthening the rules for outdoor water use by limiting lawn irrigation, requiring drought-resistant landscaping, and encouraging smart irrigation systems that automatically adjust based on weather conditions we could save more water than just when we are in Stage 3 Drought conditions. I would change the ordinance because water is an important and limited resource, especially as San Marcos continues to grow. Preventing unnecessary outdoor water use could help conserve water and reduce the need for stricter restrictions when future droughts occur. Unintended consequences that I anticipated would be that homeowners and businesses might face higher costs to replace lawns or install new irrigation systems. Landscaping companies could also be affected by reduced demand for traditional lawns. To address this, the City could offer programs to help residents transition to water-efficient landscaping.

12. Please review the San Marcos Chamber's "[Government Relations & Advocacy Guiding Principles](#)" document. Do you agree with all of these statements? Please describe any statements you do not agree with.

I agree with the statements outlined in the San Marcos Chamber's Government Relations & Advocacy Guiding Principles. Many of these principles closely align with my own campaign values and the vision I have for our community. In a perfect world, if all of these areas were operating at their peak, San Marcos would be one of the most thriving cities in Texas. While there are areas where our city is strong, there are also areas where improvement and more proactive leadership are needed to ensure these principles are not only met, but exceeded. I believe these principles should serve as a baseline for what we expect from our city government, not a ceiling for what we can accomplish. Our goal should be to build on these standards and find innovative ways to better serve the residents who call San Marcos home. I want to help create a city that is economically strong, community-focused, and committed to exceeding expectations rather than simply meeting them.

#