

Miguel Arredondo
Candidate for City Council, Place 6

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?

San Marcos isn't just where I live. It raised me. I'm a proud San Marcos Rattler and Texas State Bobcat, and for 11 years I've had the privilege of serving this community on the SMCISD Board, including as Board Vice President. I've also served as Chief of Staff to State Rep. Erin Zwiener, and today I lead our local United Way and serve on the Housing Authority Board.

My leadership style is simple: show up, listen, bring people together and get to work. On the School Board, that meant universal school meals, better wages, safer schools and major investments in our campuses and students.

This is a one-year term. I'm not running to spend a year studying problems we already understand. I'm running to bring urgency, new ideas and measurable results on affordability, infrastructure, neighborhoods and economic opportunity.

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?

A budget is a statement of priorities. I learned that on the School Board, where every difficult budget decision ultimately affected a classroom, employee or family. City Hall should approach taxpayer dollars with that same seriousness.

Core services come first: public safety, streets, drainage, water, wastewater and the employees who keep San Marcos running. Then we should examine vacancies, administrative costs, consultants, contracts and duplication and ask a simple question: What result are taxpayers getting?

Efficiency also means working together. The City, Hays County, Texas State, SMCISD and our nonprofits often serve the same people. Stronger partnerships and aggressively pursuing outside funding can stretch local dollars further.

I'm not interested in cutting just to say we cut. Protect what works, fix what doesn't and make sure every dollar moves San Marcos forward.

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?

I'd invest it where people would still feel the difference 20 years from now: our neighborhoods.

I would accelerate water, wastewater, drainage, streets and sidewalks in areas with existing needs and use part of the investment to help unlock affordable and workforce housing. I'd also prioritize projects that reduce long-term water, energy and utility costs for residents.

And I'd make that \$10 million work harder by leveraging state, federal and private dollars wherever possible.

One-time money should solve long-term problems, not create recurring expenses taxpayers inherit later. Strong neighborhoods mean safe housing, reliable infrastructure and a real opportunity for families to stay and build a life here. I'd use this opportunity to leave something tangible behind for the next generation.

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?

I talk to local business owners regularly, and many are feeling the same squeeze as families: utilities, rent, insurance, labor costs and employees who increasingly struggle to afford living here.

My first economic development question isn't "Who can we recruit?" It's "How are the businesses already here doing?"

City Hall should make permitting predictable, communicate clearly and solve problems instead of sending entrepreneurs from department to department. We should better connect businesses with Texas State and SMCISD talent, workforce training and other resources.

Then we should recruit employers that complement our community, create good-paying jobs and strengthen our tax base. Incentives are tools, not entitlements, and should produce measurable public benefit.

I want San Marcos to be a place where someone can start a business, grow it, hire locally and still recognize their community ten years later.

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?

Water and wastewater capacity must be at the top of the list, alongside streets, sidewalks and drainage in neighborhoods that already need attention.

I was born in San Marcos and learned to swim in our river. Long before I understood aquifers, infrastructure plans or utility rates, I understood that the river was part of who we are. Protecting our water while preparing for growth is both an environmental and economic responsibility.

Growth cannot come first and infrastructure second. Development should pay its fair share of the capacity it requires, while the City aggressively pursues grants, regional partnerships and responsible long-term financing.

My test is simple: maintain what we have, fix what we've neglected and make sure we have capacity before adding more demand. Existing residents shouldn't subsidize growth that leaves them behind.

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?

I want the teacher, firefighter, restaurant worker, young family and retiree to have a realistic chance of living in the community they serve.

That starts with understanding what San Marcos residents actually earn. I want better local data on incomes, rents, home prices and vacancies rather than relying solely on Austin-area AMI figures.

We need workforce and permanently affordable housing, preservation of existing affordable homes, pathways to homeownership and more choices between apartments and large single-family homes. We should also examine fees, permitting times and regulations that add costs without meaningful public benefit.

But affordability cannot mean ignoring infrastructure or neighborhoods. Development should pay its fair share, water capacity matters and residents deserve a voice.

Growth should make room for new neighbors without making longtime San Marcans wonder whether there is still room for them.

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?

Public service doesn't only happen behind a dais. Some of the most important conversations I've had as an elected official happened at H-E-B, Friday night football games, parks, restaurants and community events.

That accessibility matters to me, and City Hall should have the same attitude.

Residents, neighborhoods and businesses should be brought into conversations early enough to actually influence decisions, not after everyone assumes the decision has already been made.

I'll listen, ask questions and weigh the facts: affordability, jobs, fiscal impact, infrastructure, neighborhoods, our environment and long-term community benefit.

I won't promise everyone will agree with every vote. I can promise people will know where I stand, why I made the decision and that I'll still be there to talk afterward. Accountability doesn't end when the vote is taken.

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?

For years, I was hesitant about expanding the presence of uniformed peace officers in our schools. I worried about unnecessarily criminalizing student behavior and contributing to the school-to-prison pipeline.

Uvalde changed my thinking.

I still believe those concerns are legitimate and districts need strong guardrails so ordinary student discipline does not become a law enforcement matter. But I also believe we have an obligation to protect our children from the unimaginable.

Those principles do not have to compete. We can invest in counselors, prevention, relationships and restorative practices while ensuring trained professionals are prepared to respond when lives are in danger.

That experience taught me leadership sometimes requires reconsidering a deeply held position when circumstances demand it. Changing your mind isn't abandoning your values. Sometimes it's finding a better way to honor all of them.

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 want a pipeline that begins in an SMCISD classroom, continues at Texas State and ends with a good-paying career right here in San Marcos.

We already educate incredible talent. Our challenge is giving that talent more reasons to stay.

I would bring SMCISD, Texas State, the City, Chamber and employers together to identify workforce needs, expand internships and apprenticeships, connect students directly with local employers and help Texas State entrepreneurs turn ideas into businesses headquartered here.

As a trustee, I've helped strengthen the SMCISD-Texas State partnership that gives students access to college coursework while still in high school.

Now let's finish the pipeline: Educate here. Train here. Innovate here. Build a business or career here. That's economic development that grows from San Marcos instead of simply arriving here.

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 Council was right to prohibit data centers. Economic development should create good-paying jobs and strengthen our tax base without placing disproportionate demands on our water, electricity, infrastructure or quality of life.

Where I would have moved differently is housing affordability. San Marcos doesn't suffer from a shortage of studies telling us housing is expensive. We suffer from a shortage of measurable progress.

I want a public Housing Affordability Dashboard tracking local rents, home prices, incomes, vacancies, affordable housing, evictions, permitting and infrastructure capacity, paired with annual goals and accountability.

I believe in planning. But there comes a point when another report becomes a substitute for action.

This is a one-year term. Families experiencing housing insecurity cannot wait indefinitely for government to act on problems it already understands.

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?

I would tackle the parts of our development code that make it unnecessarily expensive to build the kinds of homes working San Marcos families need.

We need more starter homes, townhomes, condos, accessory dwelling units and choices between large apartment complexes and large single-family homes. I would examine lot requirements, parking standards, permitting and other rules and ask whether each provides enough public benefit to justify the cost it adds.

But I wouldn't confuse deregulation with affordability. Poorly designed changes can fuel speculation, displacement, infrastructure problems and pressure on established neighborhoods.

Reform must come with infrastructure planning, neighborhood input and anti-displacement strategies.

My goal isn't simply to make it easier to build. It's to make it possible to build homes a teacher, first responder, young family or longtime San Marcos resident can actually afford.

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 share much of the Chamber's vision: strong schools, infrastructure, workforce development, housing, public safety, water security and an economy where businesses can thrive.

Where I differ is the call for local governments to be aggressive in using economic development incentives. I believe we should be strategic, not simply aggressive.

Taxpayer dollars should buy measurable public benefit: good-paying jobs, meaningful tax-base growth and responsible demands on water and infrastructure. Agreements should be transparent and include accountability when commitments aren't met.

Being pro-business and protecting San Marcos aren't competing ideas. Our river, workforce, neighborhoods, schools and quality of life are part of our economic advantage. I want growth that strengthens those assets, helps businesses succeed and ensures the people who built this community can share in its prosperity.