

City of San Marcos Mayoral Candidate Questionnaire 2026

Ryan Thomason Candidate for Mayor, City of San Marcos

1. Tell us about the experience, strengths, and leadership style you would bring to the role of Mayor. What would you most like to accomplish during your term?

My experience is extensive. I have been a San Marcos resident for 43 years. I served a full term on the Planning and Zoning Commission and two terms on City Council. I currently serve on the Hays County Food Bank Board of Directors, in addition to serving on numerous other committees and boards. My approach to leadership is grounded in a simple principle: the responsibility of every City Council is to protect and preserve the health, safety, and welfare of every citizen. As Mayor, I would bring my experience in local government, my understanding of the community, and my regional relationships to that responsibility.

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?

The City budget has grown by well over \$150 million since I left office in 2015, yet we are now likely facing a deficit. There is no single solution for an organization as large and complex as the City of San Marcos. One area the City must look very closely at in the coming years is the use of technology to improve efficiency rather than automatically adding more staff. We should continually examine how we deliver services, identify opportunities to streamline operations, and make sure taxpayer dollars are being used as efficiently as possible.

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?

Unfortunately, \$10 million does not go as far today as it did when I served on City Council from 2010–2015. If I had unilateral authority over a one-time grant of that amount, I would invest the money in infrastructure and other assets that have a long useful life.

Some of the areas I would look at most closely would be drainage, road maintenance, and aging underground infrastructure, including water and wastewater lines. A one-time source of funding should be used for one-time capital needs rather than ongoing expenses.

4. What do you see as the biggest challenges facing local businesses today? As Mayor, how would you help create a climate where existing businesses can succeed and San Marcos can attract new employers and investment?

As a Council, we must acknowledge what we can impact and what we cannot impact. We cannot control interest rates, for example. But we can control the local processes that determine how easily businesses—from small businesses to large employers—can become part of our community.

The process of getting a business started in San Marcos has been problematic for generations. We must get on the same page about how to improve that process. If we want to bring more jobs and investment to our community, we need a city government that is responsive, predictable, and willing to work with businesses to help them succeed.

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 has grown much faster than its supporting infrastructure. We could move a thousand people to San Marcos this week, but the roads, traffic signals, fire department, and police department do not automatically adjust to accommodate that growth.

In the short term, the solutions are difficult. If one department's budget increases significantly, another department's budget may have to decrease unless additional revenue is available.

The long-term solution is strong commercial economic development. We must have commercial growth that creates higher-paying jobs and a stronger tax base in order to sustain continued residential growth. We need to make sure infrastructure investment keeps pace with growth while building the economic foundation necessary to support it.

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?

Affordable housing has been a topic of conversation for many years, with relatively few successes. Municipal government has a responsibility to protect current residents and should never allow existing residents to bear the cost of new growth. As we consider additional housing, we need to make sure that infrastructure and public services are capable of supporting that growth and that the costs associated with new development are appropriately addressed.

7. The Mayor is often called upon to bring people together when residents, businesses, and Councilmembers have differing views. How would you help build consensus while ensuring that different perspectives are heard and decisions move forward?

The will of the people is strong and passionate, and the priorities of Councilmembers, businesses, and residents are not always going to be the same.

The role of the Mayor is to make sure Council has accurate information and that residents and stakeholders have meaningful opportunities to provide feedback. There will be split votes from time to time, and that is part of the democratic process.

Differing opinions should be exactly what is needed to produce better government and a stronger identity as a city. My role would be to make sure those differences are heard, respected, and ultimately translated into thoughtful decisions for San Marcos.

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?

There were votes during my nine years in office that I would happily choose to handle differently today. As time goes on, we should all learn from our mistakes, as well as from changes in market conditions and circumstances. In particular, there are some zoning decisions I would approach differently today. I do not know whether changing my votes would have changed the ultimate outcomes, but I would be comfortable acknowledging that I would make some of those decisions differently today.

Leadership requires the willingness to learn, reconsider, and acknowledge when a different approach may have produced a better result.

9. The Mayor serves as an important ambassador for San Marcos and works with Texas State University, Hays County, state leaders, and regional partners. What relationships or partnerships would you prioritize to help move San Marcos forward?

The role of Mayor is much more regional than that of a Councilmember representing Places 1–6. I have many regional relationships with County Commissioners and County Judges, several of whom serve with me on regional boards such as CAPCOG. I also have relationships with regional economic development organizations and other community partners.

I have been on very good terms with the President of Texas State University for several years. These relationships are important because San Marcos does not operate in isolation. Our future depends on strong partnerships throughout the region. This is a role for which I am well prepared.

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?

The Council that hired Stephanie Reyes made a very good decision. She is extremely well respected within the organization, and I believe that was an important leadership decision for the City. On the other hand, I believe the City's decision to become involved in international affairs was completely unnecessary. San Marcos should focus on issues where our local government can actually have a meaningful impact. We cannot directly influence what happens in other parts of the world. We must stay in our lane and focus on the responsibilities entrusted to us by the people of San Marcos. Distractions can create division, while our role should be to bring people together around the issues that directly affect our community.

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?

When I left office, I believed the single worst ordinance on the books was the sign ordinance. While it may not have a large financial impact on the City, it is incredibly unfriendly to businesses that are simply trying to advertise themselves. We should be encouraging businesses to succeed, not creating unnecessary barriers to their ability to market themselves.

I would revisit the ordinance with the goal of making it more business-friendly while still maintaining reasonable standards for the appearance and character of the community. Any changes should be carefully considered to avoid unintended impacts on traffic safety, neighborhood character, or visual clutter.

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.

Yes, I agree we should endeavor to achieve everything in this document.

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