

## Responses to Questions from The Coast News

**Name:** Chris Orlando

**Age:** 48

**Occupation:** Co-founder of a financial technology company

**Education:**

- Bachelor of Arts, Political Science, University of California Santa Barbara
- Master of Business Administration, George Washington University, Washington, DC

### **Previous Government experience:**

I have served 3 terms (12 years) on the San Marcos City Council. In addition to my 12 years on the Council, I have served six years (two as chair) on the board of director of the North County Transit District (NCTD) and six years at the board of directors of the San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG), representing both San Marcos and the North County Transit District. I've also represented the entire San Diego region on the transit board that oversees the San Diego to San Luis Obispo rail corridor.

### **1. Why are you running for your respective office?**

I am running for Mayor of San Marcos to ensure the residents' voice is always the most import voice at city hall.

As Mayor, I'll take a resident-first approach to every decision – putting what's best for residents before everything else. My agenda will be to implement solutions to our traffic problems, enhance parks and trails, and protect our neighborhoods by only supporting developments that bring needed infrastructure or amenities. I'll take concrete steps to ensure the city's budget remains balanced and actively promote economic development to attract and retain businesses.

My candidacy is about the future of San Marcos – preserving the neighborhoods we love and improving quality of life. San Marcos is a thriving community with world-class neighborhoods, parks, trails and amenities - a place anyone would want to raise a family, go to school, start a business or retire. I am running for Mayor to preserve and protect what's great about San Marcos, while working hard to make it even better.

**2. What do you feel are the three biggest priorities for the next city council, and how as a council member would you help the council achieve those objectives?**

The top three priorities for the next council are to reduce traffic congestion, to take a more common sense and incremental approach to new development, and to preserve our open space and expand our park system, while keeping city finances strong.

As mayor, I would work to achieve these objectives by having an honest conversation with residents about how we're going to grow as a city, what the impacts of that growth will be, and how we manage those impacts, so that we can maintain our quality of life.

San Marcos is really at a crossroads in determining what kind of city it will be in the future. The key question in this election is: will we say yes to every project that comes forward, or will we ask hard questions, raise the bar higher, and demand more from those who want to add growth to our city?

**3. This year marks the first year that San Marcos will elect representatives by districts. If elected as mayor, what do you see your role is in terms of keeping the council focused on not only the interests of the residents in their specific district, but of the community at large?**

As we move to district representation in San Marcos, the mayor, the only official elected city-wide, will play an important new leadership role. My focus will be to take a resident-first approach to every decision – putting what's best for residents of the whole city before everything else. I will work collaboratively with council members to ensure the needs of their district constituents are being met, along with the needs of the community as a whole. And I'll work to foster a collegial environment in which voices of every community in our city will be heard and considered.

**4. A number of residents have complained about the pace and type of development coming into San Marcos, namely that residential development is outstripping infrastructural improvements and workforce and low-income housing is not being approved at the pace of high-end housing. What are your thoughts on the concerns and how would you address them?**

I understand residents' concerns about development and was the only councilmember and the only candidate for mayor to vote against new housing developments that will negatively impact our schools, add traffic congestion and hurt important environmental assets - without bringing new infrastructure.

Since 2010, the City approved only one-fifth of its share of very low, low and moderately priced homes, while it has approved nearly twice its share of expensive homes. Those expensive homes drive up housing costs. They don't make it easier for our teachers, fire and sheriff's personnel to buy homes here, they make it harder. They don't solve the housing crisis, they make it worse.

The question is not "Is development good or is development bad." As a City we are going to grow. The question is how we're going to grow. Do we approve every project that comes through, or do we take a more thoughtful, incremental approach - working hard to make sure the projects that come forward benefit our communities and our businesses?

As Mayor, I'll ask the hard questions about new development and make sure only projects that bring new infrastructure or other benefits to the city are approved.

**5. A number of large projects in the unincorporated areas surrounding the city (Lilac Hills Ranch, Newland Sierra) could have a major impact on local thoroughfares if approved by the county. Understanding that while the city does not have any discretionary authority over the projects but it does have the ability to make necessary improvements to its infrastructure, as mayor, how would you address the impacts of these projects on local roads?**

Newland Sierra includes more than 2,100 homes right outside the San Marcos border. It will impact our roads, our schools, our parks and our infrastructure.

As a councilmember, I pressed the city take an active role in understanding and commenting on the impacts of the project, but was rejected by all the other members of the city council. I believe the city's comments on the Newland Sierra EIR, which were limited to a two-page letter, were weak and ineffective.

As a city we need to be better than that and aggressively fight to ensure that projects, even those outside the city, appropriately mitigate for their impacts on our city. I am the only candidate for Mayor who has stood up to developers and said no to projects that will negatively impact our city.

**6. How would you describe San Marcos' reputation with the business community and what would you do, if anything, to change it?**

San Marcos has a strong reputation within the business community. As a councilmember, I made economic development a priority and will continue to support our business community as Mayor.

Our economic development goals should be to attract and retain businesses that bring high-paying jobs, add amenities to our community and enhance our economic base. And we should make it easier to start and expand a business in the city.

**7. San Marcos has a reputation for being the educational hub on North County, yet many locally believe the city must do more to allocate land for new schools for its own local K-12 district. How would you assure that the city and school district continue to work collaboratively to look for solutions for school overcrowding?**

I was the first councilmember to raise concerns about school overcrowding and I have been the strongest voice for working collaboratively with the school district. As Mayor, I will continue to work hard to help address school capacity issues.

Since 2001, the school district has grown by more than 7,000 students reaching a total enrollment of more than 20,000. To keep pace with this growth, San Marcos Unified School District has built, re-built or renovated 10 schools since 2004.

Despite saying they wanted to be a partner in addressing the problem, the Building Industry Association is suing the San Marcos School District. Developers argue that asking them do more to support new school construction is “unjustified and grossly excessive.”

I’ve called on the developers to drop their lawsuit and to work with the city and the school district to address the problem. Our schools are critical to keeping San Marcos a thriving city. The city needs to work collaboratively with the School District and the building industry to address our school capacity issues.

**8. What do you believe is the future of the San Marcos Creek District plan, and how as mayor would you help the city achieve that direction?**

The Creek District plan currently includes a level of development that does not match the market demand and that residents do not want. I believe we need to reconsider

the Creek District development along with other critical parts of the city's General Plan.

Since it was passed in 2012, the General Plan has been amended 11 times, adding nearly 700 new housing units. This piecemeal approach does not comprehensively consider overall growth, traffic congestion, infrastructure needs, and other factors that are critical to protecting our quality of life. And it does not give the residents an opportunity to have an equal say in the process.

As mayor I will ask the council and the city to undertake a significant update of the General Plan to right-size the Creek District plan and to update other portions of the General Plan that no longer match the realities of the current market or residents' expectations.

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