

# Mayor: San Marcos a 'thriving city'

By [Teri Figueroa](#) ([/staff/teri-figueroa/](#)) 5:15 p.m. Feb. 24, 2015



Palomar Station, a 370-unit apartment complex that opened last year, was among the new developments touted by San Marcos Mayor Jim Desmond on Tuesday during his annual "State of the City" address. Desmond also cited the city's good fiscal health and the "astounding" response to the Cocos fire during his speech. — *Eduardo Contreras*

SAN MARCOS — San Marcos is a thriving city that saw increased development last year and can expect even more growth in the months ahead, the city's mayor said Tuesday in his annual State of the City address.

The upbeat forecast given by Mayor Jim Desmond noted that San Marcos ended 2014 in strong fiscal health, but that perhaps the city's greatest accomplishment last year was how it handled adversity — namely, the devastating Cocos fire in May that burned nearly 2,000 acres, forced thousands of residents to evacuate and destroyed roughly three dozen homes in or near the city limits.

"Throughout all the chaos, it was our San Marcos community — you folks, our residents, our schools, the nonprofits. They all came together," said Desmond.

The mayor highlighted a surge of development in the city, including plans to build two apartment complexes in what the city calls the "Creek District" — a sort of downtown hub San Marcos has wanted to create for decades. In 2007, the city approved the master plan for the 214-acre shopping and housing district and 73-acre habitat preserve south of San Marcos Boulevard and around Bent Avenue, Grand Avenue and Discovery Street. The area is a flood plain, and the first steps toward someday building bridges and shoring up San Marcos Creek have just begun.

In retail news, the city last year bought the former Lowe's building off state Route 78 and will rent it to two stores: Winco and Hobby Lobby, both of which are set to open later this year. It will also own — and collect rent on — the building that will house a to-be-built DMV office.

Residential development is on the upswing, with the opening of a long heralded smart-growth project called Palomar Station — 370 apartments near Palomar College — and plans in the works for a neighboring project dubbed Davia, which will bring 400 apartments down the road.

Tuesday's luncheon — held at Green Gables Estate — drew roughly 300 people and was co-sponsored by the San Marcos Chamber of Commerce. It was Desmond's ninth State of the City speech and marks the start of his final term as mayor.

Desmond said the city's finances are steady, and the city is seeing a little more money come in from sales and property taxes. He said this year the city has started carving out money for necessary infrastructure maintenance and improvements.

San Marcos has a population of roughly 87,000 — five times larger than it was in 1980, and more than double what it was 25 years ago.

Desmond said the city is also working on an update to its website that will allow people to report concerns — perhaps graffiti, potholes, a darkened streetlight — anytime. And as the state continues to struggle through drought, San Marcos is moving to a drip-irrigation system and drought-tolerant landscaping.

San Marcos has also been working with other cities along the state Route 78 corridor to implement a campaign to brand the region as a united whole as it competes for business, talent and money.

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