

Planning for Growth in Comal County
Input from Feb 3 Breakout Sessions

WATER QUALITY SESSION

What goals should we set as a community to preserve water quality?

- 1) Enact local and state policies to improve water quality and flood infrastructure.
 - Developers make flood proof infrastructure
 - Create flood and water commission with regular meetings to advise city council and commissioner's court.
 - Developers pay for all water quality and flood abatements
- 2) Prevent water pollution
 - Expand hazardous material collection sites (mobile) and frequency
 - Educate about pollution prevention
 - Manage hazardous waste exposure
- 3) Enforce & maintain high water quality standards
 - Ensure high water quality long term
 - Improve water quality that enters our system
 - Maintain or reduce quality impacts (nutrients, pollutants)
 - High water quality standards
 - Clean up of dry creek beds for h2o quality
- 4) Decrease storm water impact through landscape management
 - Proactive storm H2O management through natural methods
 - Rural landscape to manage storm water impact
- 5) Increase water testing opportunities
 - Educate or make available water safety testing kit (lead, etc.)
 - Frequent water testing opportunities
- 6) Enact Policies to encourage greywater usage.
 - Ability to use gray water from landscape
 - Use rainwater h2o/gray water for landscape
- 7) Protect Wildlife areas that are not currently checked.
- 8) Comal County residents are informed and engaged in preserving water quality
 - Increase use of rainwater collection
 - Form neighborhood partnerships to act as private groups
 - Increase public awareness of water quality issues

What are the windows of opportunity to advance these goals?

- New Braunfels Comprehensive Plan
- Encourage countwide comprehensive plan for unincorporated areas
- Legislative session – contact reps
- Existing community organizations – get them to act (neighborhood and community groups)
- News outlets (education opps)
- Headwaters project
- Neighbors share ideas and solve problems together – highlight success stories
- Continue to pursue collaborative opportunities

OPEN SPACE SESSION

What goals should we set as a community to preserve open space?

- 1) River Habitat and Protection
 - Flood plains promoting wildlife habitat retention
 - Protect riparian habitat for wildlife and water quality
- 2) Prioritize
 - Identify Bio-gems
- 3) Education and Advocate for open space
 - To pursue aggressively public land for open space (especially through land trust)
 - Work toward open space preservation
 - Educating public on conservation easement incentives
 - Advocate for open lands and public trail systems along the Upper Guadalupe River (above Canyon Lake) *Note: Participants indicated that this also relates to the goal below.*
- 4) Trails and Public Use
 - Develop comprehensive trail system in New Braunfels
 - Linking open areas on trails that exist
 - Create diverse recreational activities
 - Educating public on conservation easement incentives
 - Work toward open space preservation

What are the windows of opportunity to advance these goals?

- New Braunfels Comprehensive plan – advisory boards – advocate
- Regional Habitat Conservation Plan
- Support Comal Trails Alliance
- Bonds for open space
- Partnering of advocacy groups to educate public
- Utilizing water and sewage regulations to limit/manage density

Additional Recorder Notes:

The common themes that came up were:

- Developing and linking trail systems—not only within the county but perhaps between counties where feasible; also, trails can serve as wildlife corridors
- Protecting riparian habitat, which would provide wildlife corridors as well as protect water quality in streams and rivers; if developed properly, greenways along river systems can be used as trails as well as protect riparian habitat
- Educating the public about the value of conserving open space, advocating for open space, and procuring open space
- Providing a diversity of outdoor opportunities to meet different needs—for example, low-impact trails, playgrounds, and ball parks
- Identifying “BioGems”—one table came up with this idea but the group embraced it; could use such an approach to inventory and prioritize areas for protection

Windows of opportunity

- New Braunfels comprehensive planning process—join advisory committees
- Regional Habitat Conservation Plan—work with county to create required preserve *within* the county for mitigation credits
- Comal Trails Alliance—work with that group in its efforts to build and expand trail system
- Bonds—pursue a bond initiative to outright purchase conservation lands within county
- Partnering for education and advocacy—work with existing groups (e.g., Audubon, Master Gardeners, Comal Trail Alliance, League of Women Voters) in county to educate and advocate for open space

CITY / COUNTY COLLABORATION SESSION

As we plan for growth in Comal County what are our shared goals?

- 1) Lifestyle
 - How to move more people instead of with cars
 - More school needs in Comal County
 - Maintain quality of life
 - Open spaces/ green
 - Defining what positive growth is in Comal and educating developers
- 2) Communication and Information
 - Coordination county cities utilities (quarterly meeting)
 - Communication between municipalities and citizens
 - Collaboration with other municipalities
 - More clarity around who is responsible
 - Communication portal citizen feedback

How can cities and counties work together to advance these goals?

- Coordinate deer, etc. management for water quality.
- One stop shop for regulatory structures and news
- More collaboration & education of developers

Positive examples:

- Cibdo Creek Muni Authority
- Wastewater treatment
- One plant can serve several communities
- Next step: incorporate the counties

What are the windows of opportunity to advance these goals?

- County-wide plan could be useful
- How is Bulverde's tree ordinance being monitored?

WATER SUPPLY SESSION

What goals should we set as a community to assure adequate water supply?

- 1) Conservation
 - Conservation:
 - Limiting watering yards
 - Low flow toilets & app.
 - Rain water collection
 - Require low water use appliances and fixtures
 - Educate for conservation
 - Xeriscape
- 2) Planning and Oversight

- City/Co regs to require future plan to ensure adequate resources
- Adequate oversight for watershed
- Protect recharge zones
- Good data for future needs

3) Increase supply

- Desal Wells and plants
- Recharge dams
- Recycling waste water
- Tax incentive for rainwater in county
- New housing req rainwater harvesting in new construction for landscaping

What are the windows of opportunity to advance these goals?

- Comal Trinity Groundwater Conservation District – get notice o rules – “Drought Management Plan”
- Educate ourselves on ways BBRA & GCD & EAA operate
- Legislative changes – every 2 years
- Incentives & rebates from NBU, MUDs & other water companies
- Education of conservation efforts
- Progressive pricing for high volume users
- County & City govts. Carrot & stick to improve conservation
- Private wells in county – way to regulate use
- Info campaign for citizens about conservation, supply, innovative ideas
- Citizen organizations to urge officials to develops rules & regs
- Push legislature to give county more land-use authority
- NBU should get more progressive on water conservation processes.

Additional Recorder Notes:

Participants expressed a high degree of concern for assuring adequate water to meet the growing population. Several expressed the need for better understanding of how water is currently managed.

Community goals – Three general topics emerged.

Planning and Oversight

1 – Need good data for future needs. “You can’t assure a water supply if you do not know what you are planning for.”

2 – Need to protect recharge zones. “Slow down the water that hits the ground.”

3 – Need adequate oversight for watershed. “New development threatens the fragile watershed.”

4 – Need city and county regulations to require a plan to ensure adequate resources for the future.

Conservation “Protecting the water that’s here.”

1 – Require low water use appliances (for example, low-flow toilets)

2 – Encourage rain water collection

3 – Encourage landscaping that requires less water: Texas native plants, xeriscaping

4 – Help educate for water conservation

5 – Limit lawn watering

Increase supply

1 - Provide a tax incentive for rainwater collection

2 - Recycle waste water

3 - Require new housing to provide rainwater collection for use in landscaping

4 - Invest in technology that pulls the salt out of water so it can be added to the fresh water supply. For example, desalination plants.

Opportunities – What are the windows of opportunity to advance these goals?

1 – Comal Trinity Groundwater Conservation District has opportunity for citizen input regarding drought management. Sign up for notices at their Website.

2 – Become informed on the ways water management authorities and aquifer alliances operate so you can participate. Go to their Websites and sign up for notifications. For example, the Greater Edwards Aquifer Alliance; Guadalupe Blanco River Authority; groundwater conservation districts

3 – Lobby when the state legislature is in session (every two years). Educate state elected officials on the need for more land-use authority in the county.

4 – Learn about and take advantage of incentives and rebates offered by water districts.

5 – Education: Become informed and help inform others about why water needs to be conserved and ways to do it. Create an information campaign for citizen groups.

6 – Support progressive pricing for high-volume users.

7 – Support ways to regulate the use of water from private wells.

8 – Lobby New Braunfels Utility district for progressive water conservation processes.

9 – Organize citizens to urge officials to develop rules and regulations that promote water conservation.