



What the San Antonio Planning Commission Actually Does

Here are the Commission's core responsibilities, based on the City Charter and official descriptions:

1. Acts as an advisory body to City Council on:

- **Amendments to the City's Master Plan**
- **Amendments to the Unified Development Code (UDC)**

2. Serves as the *final authority* on:

- **Subdivision plats** within San Antonio city limits and the ETJ (Extraterritorial Jurisdiction)

3. Responsible for long-range physical development planning:

- Making, amending, and extending the **Master Plan for physical development**
- Recommending **capital improvements** for the next five years

4. Maintains public records of its findings and determinations



What This Means for Your Public Comments

To be effective, your comments should focus on **issues the Commission is legally empowered to consider**. That means:



Topics That *Are* Within Their Purview

A. Subdivision Plat Issues (the biggest one for Guajolote Ranch)

This is where you can have the most impact. Relevant concerns include:

- **Traffic circulation and connectivity** (e.g., inadequate road capacity, lack of secondary access, emergency response times)
- **Drainage, flooding, and stormwater management** (e.g., impervious cover impacts, downstream flooding risk, insufficient detention)
- **Infrastructure adequacy**
 - Water supply
 - Wastewater capacity
 - Roadway improvements
 - Fire/EMS access
 - School capacity *only as it relates to infrastructure*, not educational quality
- **Environmental impacts tied to land development**
 - Aquifer recharge zone concerns
 - Tree preservation requirements
 - Erosion control
 - Wildlife corridors *only as they relate to subdivision layout*

- **Consistency with the Master Plan or adopted area plans** (e.g., density, land use compatibility, transportation goals)
- **Compliance with the Unified Development Code (UDC)**
 - Lot sizes
 - Setbacks
 - Street design standards
 - Connectivity requirements
 - Open space requirements

✗ Topics to Avoid (Outside Their Authority)

These are the issues that Planning Commissioners *cannot* legally consider, even if they personally agree with you:

- **General opposition to growth or development** (“We don’t want more people here” is not actionable.)
- **Property values** (They cannot consider whether a project raises or lowers them.)
- **School quality or overcrowding as a standalone issue** (They can only consider infrastructure capacity, not educational outcomes.)
- **Crime, policing, or social issues** (Not relevant to plat approval.)
- **Developer reputation or past behavior** (They must evaluate the plat, not the applicant.)
- **Aesthetic preferences** (They cannot require architectural styles or design choices.)
- **Zoning issues** (The Planning Commission does *not* control zoning — that’s the Zoning Commission.)
- **Political arguments or personal attacks** (These undermine credibility and are procedurally irrelevant.)

🌟 How to Structure Highly Effective Comments

Here’s a format that Planning Commissioners respond well to:

1. Start with a clear, relevant framing

Example: “I’m speaking today about the Guajolote Ranch plat and its compliance with the Master Plan and UDC standards.”

2. Identify a specific, commission-relevant issue

Examples:

- “The proposed plat does not appear to meet UDC connectivity requirements...”
- “The drainage plan may not adequately address downstream flooding risks...”

3. Cite the applicable policy or standard

Examples:

- “SA Tomorrow calls for development that protects the Edwards Aquifer Recharge Zone...”
- “UDC Section ___ requires two points of ingress/egress for subdivisions of this size...”

(You don’t need to be a lawyer — just referencing the policy shows credibility.)

4. Provide evidence or observations

Examples:

- Traffic counts
- Flooding history
- Infrastructure limitations
- Maps or photos
- Expert reports (if available)

5. Make a clear, actionable request

Examples:

- “We ask the Commission to delay approval until a full hydrological study is completed.”
- “We request that the plat be denied unless secondary access is added.”
- “We ask that the Commission require compliance with the adopted area plan density recommendations.”



Additional Tips for Maximum Impact

Speak to the Commissioners’ legal responsibilities, not emotions.

- They appreciate when speakers understand their role.

Use the language of planning.

- Words like “connectivity,” “infrastructure capacity,” “compliance,” “UDC standards,” and “Master Plan consistency” carry weight.

Be concise.

- Most public comments are 2–3 minutes. Tight, targeted comments stand out.

Coordinate as a group.

- Avoid repeating the same point. Assign each person a different issue area.

Submit written comments too.

- Written submissions can include maps, citations, and longer explanations.

Be respectful and professional.

- Commissioners are volunteers; respectful speakers get more attention.

Per Phillip Manna’s excellent advice-

- The Commission may limit speaking time to one minute if turnout is great.
- Don’t waste time with Name or preamble. Get right to your statement.
- Tailor your statement so that your most important point is made in the first minute.
- Try to give the Commission something they can hang their hat on.