

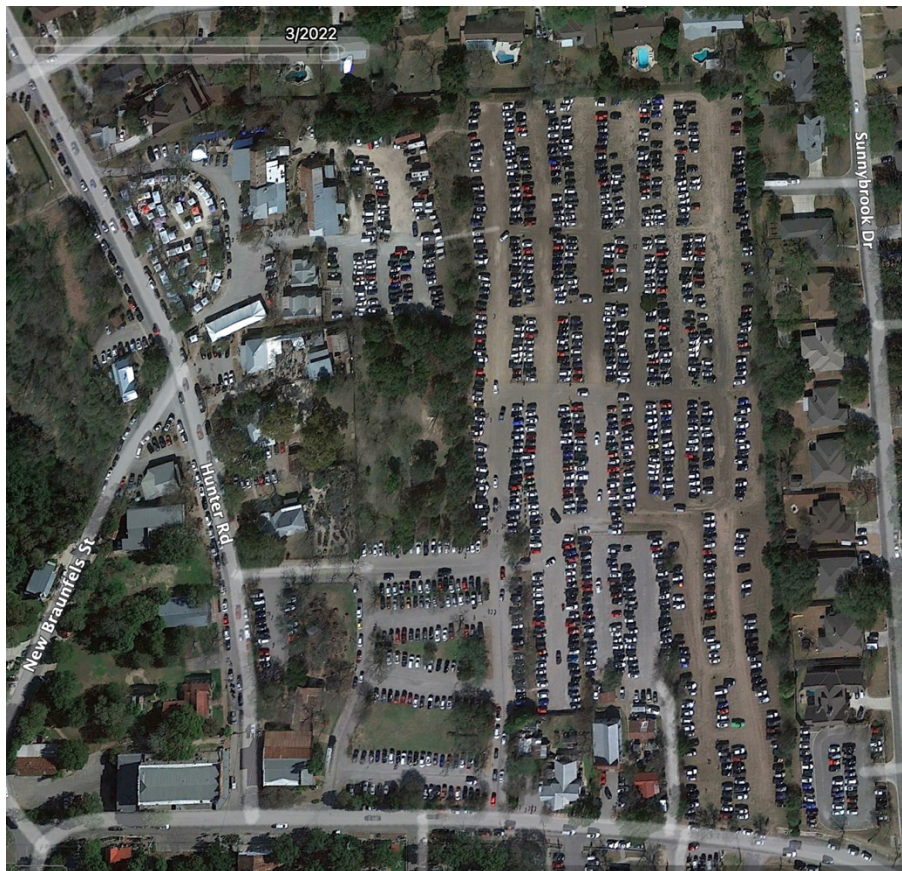
Special Use Permit Project Letter

Gruene Parking Lot Improvement

The intent of this project letter is to request a Type 2 Special Use Permit to improve an existing, legal non-conforming parking lot in the “R-2” zoning district.

Currently, the property has two zoning designations. A large portion of the property is in the “R-2” single-family and two-family district, with the remaining portion fronting Gruene Road being zoned “C-1” local business district. This Special Use Permit request is only for the portion of the property indicated in the Metes and Bounds survey included with this application. In lieu of requesting a rezoning to the “C-1A” neighborhood business district that would allow a parking lot by right, along with other commercial uses, we are requesting a Type 2 Special Use Permit to allow a parking lot with waivers to the development standards and an alternate landscape plan. It is our intent to improve the existing dirt parking lot to blend with the existing historic district and better serve visitors and residents.

We are proposing to improve visitors’ and residents’ experiences in Gruene by providing a more permanent and visually appealing solution to the current legal non-conforming dirt parking lot. As it currently exists the dirt parking lot can fill to capacity in the busier seasons (see image below).



With the proposed improvements our intention is to mitigate dust, erosion, and accessibility concerns that have been raised regarding the existing dirt parking lot. This improvement is also in response to the displacement of visitors during weather events, such as rain, which results in patrons seeking parking elsewhere. This impacts the adjacent residential neighborhoods and

increases the volume of mud tracked on the roads. The drainage from the existing dirt parking lot also causes run-off into some of the adjacent residential properties. We are proposing a full grading plan which includes a detention pond to mitigate these issues. This proposed improvement would align with a Tourism Priority of Envision New Braunfels to “Attract leisure, business and group travel, especially during the fall and winter seasons”. We recognize the impact the current composition of the parking lot can have on the visitors and residents during these seasons and want to provide a solution.

Proposed Use Request:

- **Code Requirement:** Section 144-3.3-2 for “R-2” single and two-family district does not allow parking lots as a primary use by-right.
 - **Proposed Alternative:** To allow improvements to the existing, legal non-conforming parking lot we are requesting that parking lot be permitted as a primary use

Proposed Deviations from Development Standards:

- **Code Requirement:** Section 144-5.1-1(e)(5) “Any use requiring five or more off-street parking spaces under the provisions of this section shall be required to delineate or mark each space in a manner acceptable to the city.”
 - **Proposed Alternative:** We are proposing the utilization of wheel stops to delineate parking spaces to blend with the existing paved sections of the parking lot and throughout Gruene. The proposed design is to blend the improvements with the current appearance of the Historic Gruene District and its existing elements.
- **Code Requirement:** Section 144-5.3-2(h) “Where a ... non-residential development is adjacent to land used or zoned only for single-family, two-family (duplex), three-family (triplex) or four-family (quad-plex) development, a six-foot tall (minimum) to eight-foot tall (maximum) solid screen residential buffer wall must be installed and maintained by the commercial/multifamily property owner/developer as a buffer between the properties.”
 - **Proposed Alternative:** As this property currently operates as a legal non-conforming parking lot there are residential fences existing along the property lines, including gates that provide residents direct access to Gruene. We recognize the impact and importance of a buffer to the residences and held a meeting at Gruene Hall on February 10th, 2024 where we solicited feedback from the Cypress Rapids subdivision. At that meeting it was concluded by the adjacent neighbors that no fence or wall would be favorable.

Alternate Landscape Plan/Variance:

- **Code Requirement:** Section 144-5.3-1(b)(7)(i) “At least one tree per 25 linear feet of property, or part thereof, a minimum one and one-half inches (1½”) in diameter, shall be planted along the common property line of the single-family or two-family property.”
 - **Proposed Alternative:** In lieu of a tree every 25 feet, our proposed alternative focuses on preserving mature trees along the neighboring residential properties

and establishing a 5-foot landscape buffer to increase the distance from the drive aisle. Additionally, the proposed layout prevents cars from parking directly against property lines, reducing headlight glare into neighbors' yards.

- **Code Requirement:** Section 144-5.3-1(b)(7)(i) “At least one minimum one and one-half-inch (1½”) diameter tree per 14 parking spaces shall be planted in or adjacent to a parking lot.”
 - **Proposed Alternative:** To maintain the natural appearance within the Gruene Historic District we are proposing to plant minimum 4-inch caliper trees dispersed throughout the parking lot in lieu of the amount required by code at 1.5-inch caliper. We believe the planting of fewer but larger, more mature trees would protect the historic appearance of the area while still providing noise reduction, biodiversity, and pavement temperature regulation intended with the requirement of shade trees.
- **Code Requirement:** Section 144-5.3-1(b)(9)(ii) “All landscaped areas shall be irrigated, unless waived by the planning director for xeriscaped landscaping or where preserved landscaping is established”.
 - **Proposed Alternative:** In lieu of installing irrigation, we intend to utilize landscaping management practices that have proved successful throughout Gruene. NBU reports commercial irrigation is the single biggest water usage for commercial properties, with it being 67% of the commercial water usage in 2022 and 83% in 2019. In addition, as we progress in the water restriction stages due to drought it is required that landscaping irrigation is limited to one day a week in Stages 1 and 2, and one day every other week in Stage 3. Presently landscaping is maintained by maintenance staff that water and care for landscaping manually, and this hand watering method is permitted any day throughout Stages 1 through 3. We believe this method of maintaining the parking lot’s landscaping is preferred and sustainable. To install irrigation would not be as water and energy-efficient as the current landscape management practices already in place in Gruene, and we intend to utilize native landscaping that is resistant to the climate and droughts in Central Texas.

The goal of this Type 2 Special Use Permit is to improve an existing resource within Gruene and to meet the intentions of the development standards of the City of New Braunfels Code of Ordinances and Envision New Braunfels.

We believe this request is consistent with the following actions from Envision New Braunfels:

- ☐ Action 1.3: Encourage balanced and fiscally responsible land use patterns.
- ☐ Action 1.5: Promote economic centers by ensuring adequate parking for people to visit businesses/restaurants/shops.
- ☐ Action 1.6: Incentivize infill development and redevelopment to take advantage of existing infrastructure.
- ☐ Action 3.22: Encourage venues within walking distance of neighborhoods and schools.

- ☐ Action 3.6: Pro actively provide a regulatory environment that remains business and resident friendly.
- ☐ Action 5.4: Incentivize water use reduction and conservation.
- ☐ Action 7.37: Increase public parking, both for automobiles as well as bicycles.
- ☐ Action 7.38: Identify possible additional parking areas for Downtown, Gruene, tourist areas and high demand events such as Wurstfest.

We believe this request is consistent with the following goals from Envision New Braunfels:

- Tourism Goals:
 - “Improve existing and create new facilities that encourage tourism and generate revenue through performing arts, conventions, sports events, festivals, and other destination events.”
 - “Enhance existing resources for tourism.”
 - “Ensure adequate parking for all tourist destinations via public/private partnerships city-wide.”
- Transportation Goals:
 - “Increase parking options in high-demand areas of New Braunfels... while ensuring efficient and economical land use strategies.”

We believe this request aligns with the goals of Envision New Braunfels, emphasizing balanced land use, economic and tourist centers, infill development, water conservation, and increased parking. The request is consistent with tourism and transportation goals, aiming to improve existing resources, ensure adequate parking, and align with environmentally sustainable practices. Overall, the proposed project aims to contribute positively to the historic district while addressing the needs of both visitors and residents in New Braunfels.