

Planning ace 'feels the pain' like a Leon Springs motorist

But the shopping centers sure are pretty

By **Lauri Gray Eaton**
Editor of the Times

The grassy, landscaped entries, the sylvan setbacks and the aesthetically appropriate Hill Country limestone retaining walls fronting the new shopping centers along IH-10 generally don't happen by accident or altruism, said a San Antonio planning expert.

"The look" is part of "the plan."

"When you look at The Rim and you see all the landscaping in place, that is part of the overlay zone, of the character we are trying to build along this corridor," said Jesus Garza, planning manager for the City of San Antonio, who spoke to the Leon Springs Business Association at their Nov. 9 mixer hosted by the Longhorn Café.

"The Hill Country corridor is the first one we adopted in San Antonio," he said.

Called the Hill Coun-



Jane Schoonover and Katy McKinney enjoy the Leon Springs mixer.

try Gateway, the overlay zone was added in 2003 and extends 100 feet to each side of IH-10 along the 7.2 miles from UTSA Boulevard to Leon Springs.

The city requires that the plans of developers constructing the commercial properties along the Hill Country Gateway include "architectural standards" that meet the aesthetic expected of the area. The standards apply to such pedestrian parts of the development as setbacks, fences and walls — aspects that otherwise might be ignored or given the short shrift in the interest of the bottom line.

Garza gave the group an overview of the continued growth that began when, in 1877, the railroad came to a sleepy San Antonio. Streetcar lines soon followed. The population of the Alamo City sprang from 50,000 in 1900 to 120,000 just two decades later, he said.

More recent explosive growth of the city 27 percent in the past 10 years has occurred largely through annexation, he said.

Add to that the growth of surrounding counties such as Kendall (21 percent growth) and Comal (23 percent) and you have the reason that "in the past 15 years, vehicle numbers have gone from .5 million to 1.2 million (and) the growth of vehicle miles traveled has grown four times faster than the population."

'You feel our pain'

To get to the 5:30 p.m. meeting, Garza said, he spent about 20 minutes negotiating the dense traffic of "the loop" of the Boerne Stage Road exit to the turnaround and the



Ted Resnick and Denise McCoy enjoy the company of their business colleagues and friends.



San Antonio planning manager Jesus Garza addresses the area's tremendous growth.

Photos by Craig Racho



Susan Allen, John Paul Visosky, Kam Emerson and Cliff Blessing greet the Leon Springs Business Association attendees at the monthly mixer.

Longhorn Café.

"You feel our pain," shouted an audience member, who was among those planning to attend a sure-to-be-crowded TxDOT meeting on the subject later that night. "What are you planning to

intersection) was a four-way stop," noted businessman Jeffrey Jauer. "They put a stoplight in, and now it's a mess."

Garza credited continued commercial and housing developments that lack "feeder" routes, thereby requiring all vehicles to use the same lone thoroughfare, which in turn becomes bottlenecked.

do about the traffic on Boerne Stage Road?"

"We only have small jurisdiction of Boerne Stage Road," Garza replied. "The county has the rest."

"I've been living out here 15 years, when (the

The next Leon Springs Business Association mixer will be a holiday event 5:30-7 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 14, at Independence Living at the Dominion. In lieu of a \$10 admission fee, bring an unwrapped toy. For more information, call Cliff Blessing at (210) 698-8100.