

CITY OF SEBASTOPOL CITY COUNCIL
AGENDA ITEM REPORT FOR MEETING OF: July 15, 2025

=====

To: Honorable Mayor and City Councilmembers
From: Mayor Stephen Zollman
Responsible Department: Community Development
Subject: Informational Presentation from the Sebastopol Chamber of Commerce on the Main Street America Program
Presenter: Sebastopol Chamber of Commerce

=====

RECOMMENDATION:

That the City Council receive an informational presentation from the Sebastopol Chamber of Commerce on the Main Street America program as a potential framework for downtown revitalization and economic development.

=====

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The City of Sebastopol continues to prioritize support for a vibrant and resilient downtown. As part of broader efforts to foster economic development and revitalization, the Sebastopol Chamber of Commerce has attended an event focused on the Main Street America program, that supports place-based, locally driven economic transformation. The Chamber is interested in sharing this information with the City.

BACKGROUND:

The Chamber of Commerce recently reached out to the City regarding the Main Street America program. The Sebastopol Chamber of Commerce has been exploring opportunities to support downtown vitality and recently participated in a regional session on the Main Street America program. This program, administered by Main Street America (a program of the National Main Street Center), provides a place-based, community-driven approach to economic revitalization that has been implemented in small cities across the country.

DISCUSSION:

This informational item presents an opportunity for the Chamber of Commerce and its Sebastopol Downtown Association Committee (formed under the Chamber) to share insights, outline revitalization ideas, and communicate what resources or support they may seek from the City of Sebastopol moving forward.

The Chamber is presenting this informational item to introduce the program, highlight its potential benefits, and share case studies from peer communities; key takeaways from the Chamber's recent exposure to the program; and potential opportunities for future exploration in Sebastopol.

Following the presentation, the Council could choose to provide direction on potential next steps, including but not limited to:

- Encouraging the Chamber to conduct a business listening session with local business owners and stakeholders;
- Requesting the Chamber to invite guest speakers from other communities—include other Bay area chambers such as the San Francisco Chamber. The Mayor met with its Executive Director who has extended an offer to participate in one event and remains open to other collaborations. Other potential chamber collaborations are the San Francisco's Golden Gate Business Association, Sonoma County's

Professionals with Pride as well as other minority bar associations as well as other business improvement districts, Sonoma County Tourism, or the Sonoma County Economic Development Board—to share lessons learned and effective revitalization practices

- Providing a report to the Council on the results of the listening session and next steps

This agenda item is for informational purposes only. The Council will not take formal action at this meeting but may offer direction for future items based on the content presented.

STAFF ANALYSIS:

This initiative aligns with the City's broader economic development goals and strengthens partnerships with key community stakeholders. It also supports community engagement efforts around long-term strategies for economic vitality and could be used in collaboration with City staff who is in the process of creating the City's Economic Development Strategy.

CITY COUNCIL GOALS/PRIORITIES/GENERAL PLAN CONSISTENCY:

This agenda item supports the following City Council goal:

COMMUNITY VITALITY: Enhance Sebastopol as a great place to live that values community health and well-being. Preserve Sebastopol's unique character.

LONG TERM FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY: Achieving Greater Fiscal Resilience and Long Term Fiscal Sustainability

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Develop Economic Development Strategy

This agenda item supports the following General Plan goals:

Protect and Increase the Economic Vitality of the City's Main Economic Sectors: Downtown and the Northern and Southern Gateways

Action EV 1c: Continue to support the Chamber of Commerce, Cittaslow Sebastopol, and the Downtown Association in their efforts to promote and market Sebastopol as a location for business development and local and destination recreation that is consistent with the goals of the General Plan.

Policy EV 1-10: Encourage partnerships and collaboration between the City, the Sebastopol Chamber of Commerce, the Center for the Arts, Cittaslow Sebastopol, Sebastopol Entrepreneurs Project, the Downtown Association, other cities in the region, Sonoma County Economic Development Board, and various industry organizations in order to pursue regional economic development opportunities and improve relations with private industry.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no fiscal impact associated with the Chamber's informational presentation. The cost of a future listening session or additional events has not yet been determined.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH:

This item has been noticed in accordance with the Ralph M. Brown Act and was made available for public review at least 72 hours prior to the scheduled meeting date. The City has also used social media platforms to promote and advertise the City Council meeting and agenda items.

As of the writing of this report, the City has not received any public comment. Any comments received after the publication of this report will be shared with the City Council as supplemental materials before or during the meeting.

RESTATED RECOMMENDATION:

That the City Council receive an informational presentation from the Sebastopol Chamber of Commerce on the Main Street America program as a potential framework for downtown revitalization and economic development and provide direction.

OPTIONS:

None; No action is required on this item.

ATTACHMENTS:

None

APPROVALS:

Department Head Approval: Approval Date: 7-7-2025

CEQA Determination (Planning): Approval Date: 7-7-2025

The proposed action is exempt from the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)

Administrative Services (Financial): Approval Date: 7-7-2025

Costs authorized in City Approved Budget: ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A

Account Code (if applicable) _____

City Attorney Approval: Approval Date: 7-7-2025

City Manager Approval: Approval Date: 7-7-2025

From: [Andrea Caron](#)
To: [Stephen Zollman](#)
Cc: [Mary Gourley](#); [Myriah Volk](#)
Subject: Re: Main Street America program presentation before council
Date: Wednesday, July 9, 2025 2:04:01 PM

Thank you. Here is the outline for next Tuesday's agenda.

Main Street America – Sebastopol Overview

Main Street America is a national nonprofit revitalization program affiliated with the National Trust for Historic Preservation. It supports over 1,200 communities in restoring economic vitality to their downtowns through a flexible, community-driven framework.

Sebastopol is uniquely positioned to benefit:

- We have a walkable, historic downtown with strong local engagement.
- We're facing challenges: empty storefronts, post-COVID economic stress, and leadership burnout.

Main Street's Four-Point Approach:

1. Design – Improve streetscapes, signage, and aesthetics.
2. Economic Vitality – Strengthen and diversify the local economy.
3. Promotion – Market our downtown to locals and visitors.
4. Organization – Build partnerships across city, business, and community groups.

Joining the Main Street network offers:

- Access to grants (e.g., \$50K T-Mobile Hometown Grants)
- Technical assistance and national resources
- Training for volunteers and staff
- Long-term sustainability planning for our downtown

Cities like Eureka, CA have seen great success with this model, launching façade grants, attracting tourism, and reviving their local economy.

Next Steps for Sebastopol:

- Identify a lead organization (e.g., Chamber or City-supported coalition)
- Apply for membership (~\$300–600 annually)

- Designate a coordinator (staff or volunteer)

I urge the Council to explore this opportunity, support the program, and help us bring energy, coordination, and resources back to Main Street Sebastopol.

For more, visit: www.mainstreet.org

— Andrea Caron and Myriah Volk