

CITY OF SEBASTOPOL CITY COUNCIL

AGENDA ITEM REPORT FOR MEETING OF: July 15, 2025 - Item Continued from July 1st, City Council Meeting

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To: City Councilmembers  
From: Mayor Zollman  
City Council Liaison – Ad Hoc Committee – Sebastopol Library Staffing and Facilities  
Subject: **Sebastopol Library Staffing and Facilities Ad Hoc Committee Report Out. The item tonight is to receive the Report from the Ad Hoc Committee and discuss the recommended actions in the report. Recommendations:**

- Receipt of Report from current Ad Hoc Committee
- Dissolution of Current Ad Hoc Committee
- Creation of New Committee Named: Committee for Building the Commons (Period of Committee: July 1, 2025 through June 30, 2026)
- Approval of Scope of Work of Committee
- Committee Composition and Appointment to be Returned to a future Council meeting for consideration of approval

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RECOMMENDATION(S):

That the City Council receive and file the report from the Ad Hoc Committee and consider approval of the following recommended actions:

- Receipt of Report from current Ad Hoc Committee
- Dissolution of Current Ad Hoc Committee
- Creation of New Committee Named: Committee for Building the Commons (Period of Committee: July 1, 2025 through June 30, 2026)
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

In June 2024, the Sebastopol City Council formed the Library Staffing and Facilities Ad Hoc Committee to explore the feasibility of a modern library facility to serve both the Sebastopol community and the broader West County region. Over the course of the past year, the committee engaged in research, stakeholder engagement, and visioning work that led to a broader proposal: the development of the *Sebastopol Commons*—a shared civic space anchored by the Sebastopol Regional Library and enhanced through partnerships with community-based organizations, service providers, and local institutions.

This report outlines the committee’s findings and recommends transitioning its work toward this expanded vision through the formation of a new Committee for Building the Commons.

## BACKGROUND:

The Sebastopol Regional Library has long been a vital public resource. However, it faces increasing constraints due to aging infrastructure, limited space, and changing community needs. In response, the City Council established the Library Staffing and Facilities Ad Hoc Committee in June 2024 to evaluate existing conditions and explore options for modernizing and expanding library services.

Throughout the year, the committee held regular meetings, conducted comparative research, engaged library administrators and civic leaders, and maintained a public-facing blog to share findings. During this process, the committee identified a broader opportunity: to create a vibrant civic hub that not only houses an improved library facility but also supports cross-sector collaboration through shared infrastructure.

## DISCUSSION:

In an era where nearly every aspect of daily life has been commodified or otherwise commercialized, third spaces are ever more essential to creating a healthy sense of community. Libraries have historically been fundamental in filling that role. More than mere repositories of books, libraries are one of the essential pillars upholding our communities, and, without putting too fine a point, buttressing our democracy. Libraries provide literacy programs, after-school programs, lectures and workshops. They support our seniors, our disabled community members, our veterans, and all of our families. Libraries provide safe internet access for job searches and homework. Libraries are often the hub of community engagement with meeting rooms, event spaces, small theaters, and so much more. Most importantly, everything libraries do, they do in the spirit of uplifting the members of the community, inspiring literacy, encouraging free thinking, and promising a sense of belonging.

Investing in and increasing our library's ability to provide these services and more, is an opportunity for us to invest in the life of every person who lives here. Directly or indirectly, libraries make communities more inclusive, informed and inspired. The impact of this proposal will have a multigenerational impact on the residents of Sebastopol and the surrounding unincorporated areas.

The committee now proposes the creation of the *Sebastopol Commons*—a multi-use civic space envisioned as a dynamic hub for education, arts, health, senior services, and community engagement. Anchored by a new library facility, this space would co-locate or coordinate with other vital services and community organizations to maximize shared resources and long-term sustainability.

The concept aligns with emerging best practices in community development and addresses key Council goals, including equity, resilience, and innovation in service delivery. It also supports the mission of the Sonoma County Mayors and Councilmembers Association to promote shared services and regional cooperation.

To advance this work, the committee recommends:

- Expanding its membership to include representatives from relevant community sectors and public departments;
- Developing a detailed project concept and funding plan;
- Exploring grant, foundation, and public-private funding partnerships; and
- Continuing quarterly reporting to Council on progress.

These actions will position Sebastopol to pursue strategic funding, community engagement, and long-term planning with a unified civic vision.

**STAFF ANALYSIS:**

Staff concurs with the committee's assessment that the current library infrastructure is inadequate to meet growing community needs, and that a more expansive, integrated civic approach—such as the proposed Sebastopol Commons—could provide significant long-term value to the community.

Of note, any committee appointed by the City Council is generally subject to the Brown Act. The primary exception applies to ad hoc committees composed solely of less than a quorum of Council members, which are exempt from Brown Act requirements. However, when a committee includes public members appointed by the City Council, it no longer qualifies as an ad hoc committee and must fully comply with the Brown Act.

Accordingly, with the formal appointment of members as recommended, the newly proposed Committee for Building the Commons would be subject to Brown Act provisions, requiring open meetings, public notice, and compliance with transparency regulations.

**City Council Goals/Priorities and/or General Plan Consistency:**

This agenda item represents the City Council goals/priorities as follows:

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

*INFRASTRUCTURE: Maintaining High Quality Infrastructure, Facilities and Services includes repairing/replacing outdated city facilities, improving streets, stormwater and wastewater infrastructure.*

*HIGH PERFORMANCE ORGANIZATION*

- *Restoring public trust*
- *Improve Public Communications*

*ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT*

**City of Sebastopol General Plan:**

*Action CSF 6c: Work collaboratively with the County library system and community volunteers to identify opportunities to expand and provide library services that meet the educational and social needs of all residents, including possible replacement or expansion of the Sebastopol branch library*

*Action CSF 6d: Identify partnership opportunities between municipalities, other agencies and library support organizations to expand library facilities, resources and services.*

*Action CSF 6j: After conducting comprehensive needs assessments, establish priorities and funding mechanisms for projects and improvements to public and community facilities and buildings. The priority-setting process should include an extensive public outreach and participation program, and should assess needs and opportunities associated with the following types of buildings and facilities: Library, Community Cultural Center, City Hall/City offices, and other community buildings/needs identified by the public and the City Council.*

*Action CSF 6e: Establish an innovative approach to funding cultural, community, and library facilities and/or services, in addition to State and Federal grants and loans. The City should establish mechanisms to allow gifts and dedication of land and facilities by individuals, local businesses, and national corporations.*

**FISCAL IMPACT:**

There is no fiscal impact with approval of this item; however staff time will be required.

**COMMUNITY OUTREACH:**

This item has been noticed in accordance with the Ralph M. Brown Act and was available for public viewing and review at least 72 hours prior to schedule meeting date. The City has also used social media to promote and advertise the City Council Meeting Agenda Items.

As of the writing of this staff report, the City has not received any public comment. However, if staff receives public comment from interested parties following the publication and distribution of this staff report such comments will be provided to the City Council as supplemental materials before or at the meeting.

**RESTATED RECOMMENDATION:**

That the City Council receive and file the report from the Ad Hoc Committee and consider approval of the following recommended actions:

- Receipt of Report from current Ad Hoc Committee
- Dissolution of Current Ad Hoc Committee
- Creation of New Committee Named: Committee for Building the Commons (Period of Committee: July 1, 2025 through June 30, 2026)
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**CITY COUNCIL OPTION(S):**

1. That the Council receive the report but deny the recommended actions.
2. That the Council receive the report and provide direction to staff for next steps.

**ATTACHMENT(S):**

Report from Ad Hoc Committee

**2nd ANNUAL REPORT  
THE CITY OF SEBASTOPOL'S AD HOC NEW LIBRARY BUILDING  
COMMITTEE  
FY 2024-2025**

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**I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

A general overview of the highlights of our reports along with our requests and recommendations. For additional detail please refer to Attachment 2, Our Research, below.

**A. ADDRESSING THE COUNCIL'S GOALS - WHY US?** After two years of meetings and extensive research, we are offering our continued services to the council to take on the responsibility for developing the concept for a Sebastopol Commons. These goals are closely aligned with those of the Association of Mayors and Councilmembers (SCMCA) of providing more shared facilities and services.<sup>1</sup> An additional objective of our work is the development of a

<sup>1</sup> See, for examples, (1) *Civic Commons: Reimagining Our Cities Public Assets*

comprehensive, integrated plan for a public common which would enable us to be more competitive in applications for funding and increase the effectiveness of our capital campaign.

In essence, we are offering our experience and service to support our Acting City Manager, the Council, and the Association of Mayors and Councilmembers (SCMCA) on shared facilities and services.

**B. OUR CONCEPT:** We envision the development of a comprehensive, unified plan for the effective and efficient use of our community's assets and resources...The Sebastopol Commons.<sup>2</sup>

We believe that developing a comprehensive project concept, also known as conceptual design, is valuable because it provides a clear vision for the entire

<https://civiccommons.us/app/uploads/2023/08/Civic-Commons-©-Studio-Gang.pdf>

*This booklet offers a new look at the community anchors we have and the vibrant hubs our public spaces can become when we invest in collective urban life. Its vision focuses on positive transformation at the architectural scale-where personal experience and aspiration meet broad, long-range planning efforts-in order to spark the imagination and spur us to work together towards realizing the abundant potential of what we hold in common.*

and  
(2) Mount Vernon Library Common  
<https://www.mountvernonwa.gov/933/Mount-Vernon-Library-Commons-Project>

<sup>2</sup> See, *Finding Friendship and Connection Through the Public Realm*  
<https://medium.com/reimagining-the-civic-commons/finding-friendship-and-connection-through-the-public-realm-1a6114c7f22a>

*6 cities are showing how imaginative use of public and nontraditional spaces can bring people together and grow community.*

and,  
*Why America Needs a Strong Civic Commons*  
<https://medium.com/reimagining-the-civic-commons/why-america-needs-a-strong-civic-commons809ac156a26b>

and,  
*Why America Needs a Strong Civic Commons*  
Full Report: <https://civiccommons.us/app/uploads/2024/10/Why-America-Needs-a-Strong-Civic-Commons.pdf>

and,

#### **How to Show (and grow) the Impact of Your Civic Spaces**

<https://medium.com/reimagining-the-civic-commons/how-to-show-and-grow-the-impact-of-your-civic-spaces-e13662a54cab>

*There's strong demand for high-quality civic infrastructure in communities across the U.S. A 2020 report by the Kinder Institute identified more than \$12 billion in needed funding for high-priority civic infrastructure projects nationwide. And when local governments have access to flexible federal funding, they often prioritize civic infrastructure. For example, Lexington, Kentucky, dedicated nearly 25% of its investments from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) in parks and public spaces, and Akron, Ohio, used its ARPA funds to invest heavily in parks and public spaces. Cities of all sizes, including Detroit and Oskaloosa, Iowa, have used flexible funds from HUD's Community Development Block Grants to transform vacant lots into a greenway and revitalize downtown building facades.*

design process, helps ensure the project's success, and facilitates communication with stakeholders. It will serve as the foundational document outlining the project's overall vision, design intent, and goals, which guides decision-making throughout the project lifecycle.

Articulating a strong concept for the project before seeking funding is crucial.

A well-defined concept demonstrates understanding of community needs, provides a clear vision for the project, and increases the likelihood of successful funding and implementation. It also allows for better future planning and engagement with our community stakeholders, ensuring a more effective and impactful project.

Talking to individuals who have been deeply affected by the library over the course of their lives, we came to an essential truth about library service. Beyond the typical aspects of learning, growth and study that everyone likely associates with a library, we found that our local library has value in creating safe spaces and communities

One of our community's assets, the Sebastopol Regional Library, is seen as an anchor tenant for a knowledge common.<sup>3</sup> Such a building could provide space for our beloved library *as well as* coffee shops inside the premises, gathering space for personal and civic dialogue, books available for purchase as well as borrowing, and more. A concrete example and a notable source of inspiration is our sister city Yamauchi-Takeo's City Library and Historical Museum.<sup>4</sup>

We recognize that what we refer to as the knowledge commons cannot cater to every single need or interest of the community. While our library strives to be inclusive and offers a wide range of resources, its collections and services struggle with limited space, budget, and the diversity of the community it serves. In the process of developing a concept statement, some individuals may find that the library doesn't meet their specific needs or preferences, even as it strives to be a valuable resource for many; hence the network of community assets we identify as the Sebastopol Commons.

<sup>3</sup> **Note:** We also see the potential of including, within the knowledge commons, space for senior, youth and community well-being services. All of which, we consider, essential in determining how to best provide for those services would be a part of the work for the committee.

<sup>4</sup> As of May 31, 2024: The estimated population was 47,136 people residing in 19,207 households. Working, as a community, the city developed a City Library & Museum which is described as one of the most beautiful in Japan. For more information see *Takeo City Library & Historical Museum*  
<https://www.facebook.com/reel/1015576203943263>

**and**

<sup>6</sup> *Recommendations for Unique Libraries in Japan, Let's Take a Japanese Literary Journey!*  
<https://en.japaholic.com/unique-libraries-in-japan/>



**C. WHAT WE BRING TO THE TABLE:** We can assist with providing connection to the financial and planning resources which we have developed over the past two years:

1. From Library Administration: Connections to state infrastructure grants as well as the equivalent to \$4 million that it provided Santa Rosa for building the Roseland Branch.
2. Library Foundation: The Library's JPA (the ONLY JPA that comes with a Foundation), is charged with having an association foundation to raise capital campaign money for buildings, etc.
3. Private Funders: Some of which have already been approached (*See below, D. How to Fund the Commons*); and,
4. Research Bank: We have created a comprehensive research bank in the course of the past two years. A significant amount of this research has been shared with the community through the publication of a weekly blog.

**D. HOW TO FUND THE COMMONS:** The potential funding sources identified in the May 21, 2024, report to the council, remain the same; however, current events are having an impact on availability.<sup>1</sup>

Funding the commons involves finding ways to manage and fund resources that are shared by a community or the public, preventing overuse and ensuring sustainability. This can include financial contributions, innovative funding mechanisms, and collaborative approaches.

Raising funds during challenging times requires a shift in strategy, focusing on financial discipline, efficient operations, and strong donor communication. It is also crucial to diversify fundraising efforts and emphasize the impact of the organization's work. By preparing carefully, prioritizing essential needs, and adapting to the changing landscape, organizations can not only survive but thrive in difficult economic conditions<sup>1</sup>

**1. CAPITAL CAMPAIGN:** The committee met twice with the Sonoma County Library's Fund Development Manager, Craig Palmer, and once with a representative of the Sonoma County Library Foundation, Vice-President, Pat Kuta regarding the development and implementation of a Capital Funding Campaign. Both expressed interest in using the City of Sebastopol's New Library Building as the basis of a model for future SCL and Foundation capital projects.

**2. PUBLIC PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS:**<sup>1</sup> Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs), also known as P3s, are long-term arrangements between government entities and private sector organizations. Used to finance, build, and operate civic projects, the goal is to leverage private sector expertise to deliver public services more efficiently, leveraging private expertise and capital to address



challenges like infrastructure deficits and economic growth, while sharing risks and rewards. Public Commons, in the context of P3s, refers to the common resources or areas that are subject to the partnership, such as roads, public spaces, or community assets.<sup>1</sup>

**3. GRANTS:** The committee has identified a number of additional potential sources for funding the commons project, including, but not limited to, the Ford Foundation; U.S. Department of Transportation (Helping Communities Accelerate Infrastructure; and, Building Resilient Communities (Star Net), Every Library, Kresge Foundation<sup>1</sup>, Knight Foundation<sup>1</sup>, Mellon Foundation<sup>1</sup>, Ford Foundation,<sup>1</sup> Rockefeller Foundation<sup>1</sup>, among others.

The committee has also identified resources to aid in the development and pursuit of grants: Candid ("Guide Star") Essential nonprofit data, tools, and resources; Every Library Institute; Thriving Communities Technical Assistance Centers ("TCTAC") which are a collaborative initiative of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and U.S. Department of Energy Trust for Life, Research America, Fund Libraries, among others.

It is of critical importance that development of a comprehensive concept plan for the Sebastopol Commons before entering into the competition for funding.

**4. COUNTYWIDE LIBRARY INFRASTRUCTURE BOND:** Another potential source of funding is through the use of infrastructure bonds. Bonds can be used to fund construction, renovations, and equipment purchases. Bonds are often used to fund large projects that require significant amounts of money. A campaign to secure bonds for a new library or other civic building would require a larger base of support than the City of Sebastopol alone can muster.

Library facilities countywide are aging structures that will need replacement in the not-too-distant future. Buildings are costly and public money is already hard to come by. This is illustrated by the difficulty Sonoma County Library and Santa Rosa have had in securing funding for the much-needed Roseland library branch.

The terms of the library JPA allows for its members to work together to solve this ongoing issue. *We propose working with the SCL and fellow JPA members to develop a unified approach to securing voter approval of a countywide infrastructure bond for the construction of new library buildings, as needed, within the County of Sonoma.*

**E. AN INTEGRATED APPROACH:** Our city is a complex system that exists to resolve many human problems simultaneously. Our community provides people with jobs, housing, education, culture, health, entertainment, organization, and government.

Over time the city has evolved to become economic and social epicenters fostering innovative solutions to societal challenges while creating new challenges. We are now living in an urban era facing a climate crisis. It is more important than ever that we focus efforts to get cities right.

Narrowly looking at issues like transportation, waste management, drainage, parks, water, education, land use, economic development, and housing, each independently, *is not* an effective or efficient way to provide community services.

A compartmentalized approach to community service does not consider the *multifaceted* nature of many of the problems that our city is trying to resolve and ignores the opportunity for *integrated planning* to make investments, programs and service provision more efficient and co-beneficial across sectors, creating a win-win for city management and residents alike.

An integrated approach to the development of the Sebastopol Commons proposes a different kind of decision-making on which key actors from *distinct parts* and levels of the community collaborate to make decisions together and create projects and services that maximize the use of taxes creating cascading benefits: social, economic and environmental.

An integrated approach allows us to explore questions such as how to address growth, while simultaneously connecting people, providing equitable services while conserving key ecosystems and resources. To do this effectively, data must be at the core of these types of questions. We need to recognize the opportunity and limitations of data to aid in decision-making, drawing from local knowledge, including vulnerable and indigenous communities, interagency data collection and coordination and best practices for managing and updating data.

One aspect of an integrative approach is the continuation and expansion of our work with our nonprofit leaders to collectively raise needed funds.

Members of the Library Ad Hoc Committee have assisted with the creation of the nonprofit collaborative and through that have heard the needs of our community nonprofits over the last two years.

**F. THE IMPORTANCE OF SUSTAINABLE DESIGN:**<sup>5</sup> We support a sustainable design model for the Commons, designed in part to house the Sebastopol Regional Library as its anchor tenant.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> See, *Constructing green libraries: Sustainable architecture for a greener future* <https://blog.pressreader.com/libraries-institutions/constructing-green-libraries-sustainable-architecture-for-a-greener-future>

<sup>6</sup> Also see, Whole Building Design Guide (WBOG) <https://www.wbdg.org>

A sustainable building design will also be an attraction to funders and the public. Sustainable infrastructure design is crucial because it minimizes the negative impact of infrastructure projects on the environment and society, while promoting long-term economic benefits and resilience. It focuses on resource efficiency, minimizing waste, and optimizing energy use to reduce the ecological footprint of infrastructure. Sustainable infrastructure also prioritizes social equity, ensuring that communities have access to essential services and promoting inclusivity.

A sustainable interior design is crucial because it prioritizes environmental protection, resource conservation, and the health and well-being of occupants. It involves minimizing waste, energy consumption, and the use of non-renewable resources while creating healthy and comfortable indoor environments.

**G. QUARTERLY REPORTS.** Once formed, the committee will develop and provide the council with quarterly reports on the status of our work in the following areas: Identify and secure membership; Develop a list of needs and a list of shared needs; Compile research on similar projects; Explore and define the project concept; and determine the scope of work of a feasibility study

We would be pleased to add to our interim report additional items selected by the council and/or Acting City Manager.

## **II. REQUESTS & RECOMMENDATIONS**

**1. NAME:** We propose disbanding the current ad hoc committee and forming a new committee that follows the Brown Act. This new committee will direct the mission and expand our community engagement efforts. We propose the new Committee for the New Library Building be Titled: **Committee for Building the Commons.**

**2. MEMBERSHIP:** We request membership to include a representative from the Community Based Organizations; the Sebastopol Center for the Arts; the City's Parks and Recreation Department; Senior Center; Community Center; Gravenstein Health Action Coalition; the faith community; Sonoma County Library, Sonoma County Library Foundation, the Community Foundation, Gold Ridge Fire District, among others.

*The WBDG is based on the premise that to create a successful high-performance building, one must apply an integrated design and team approach in all phases of a project, including planning, design, construction, operations and maintenance.*

With the **proposed name and mission** we also propose adding (1) another City Council member and (2) **City staff**: (a) Planning Director and (b) Public Works Director and/or a selected member of the City's Planning Commission.

**3. TERM:** We request the creation of the new committee for a limited duration period of: 2025-2026 Fiscal Year.

**4. RECOMMENDATIONS:** We recommend several strategies for cultivating local systems changes that other cities can keep top of mind as they invest in public assets for social, environmental, and economic change:

**A.** A focus not just on placemaking but “place keeping,” the long-term management of our public spaces, to support local workforce development and wealth building to sustain civic commons investments.

**B.** Revamp community and economic development funding to include financing for civic asset revitalization and programming as infrastructure for an equitable city.

**C.** Advocate for policy change at all levels to support investment in our public spaces. Develop the understanding of the social and economic benefits of revitalized public spaces to build support for sustainable resources.

**D.** Require the measurement of outcomes that matter. Collect and share data and stories with policymakers, so they have evidence of the social, environmental, and economic returns on investment in civic assets.

**E.** Institutionalize the reimagining of civic commons through annual budgets, program requirements, regulations, and ordinances, so the approach extends beyond one or two mayoral administrations.

### **III. CONCLUSION**

Our work this year has exposed two shortcomings in key policies for the SCL and motivated the Commission to take responsibility to correct these deficiencies.

We have learned that our community can be better served by developing a grander concept than the simpler one of “building the library that Sebastopol deserves.” There are several critical organizations that need more or better space (such as the Senior Center, the Community Center, GHAC, the Library). These organizations might benefit from expanded or shared space and shared resources. Some are financially at risk and could potentially survive through sharing.

We believe that by focusing on a *network of civic assets* — rather than a single public space — and on achieving key social, economic, and environmental outcomes, cities can fundamentally shift how they revitalize shared public places. This approach leads to cross-silo, collaborative leadership, more strategic operations, and greater innovation.

Community collaboration at each design stage is more efficient and can support the development and implementation of effective strategies, policies and services. Civic design is a tool that can be used to discover challenges, work together towards potential solutions and enable wider and ongoing participation.

The coming year's efforts would address both Council goals and SCMCA goals.

We look forward, with your support and the active involvement of our community partners, to the creation of a civic commons which has our beloved Sebastopol Regional Library as one of its anchors.

**ATTACHMENT 1:**  
**SAMPLE ELEVATOR PITCH SEBASTOPOL COMMONS <sup>7</sup>**

*The Sebastopol Commons project is a multi-use infrastructure project located in historic downtown Sebastopol.*

*Combining several community assets and service providers, this project is a catalyst for economic development in the downtown corridor.*

*This project includes public library services, community center space, a commercial kitchen, public restrooms, and structured parking with electric vehicle charging center, park and ride, and transit stop, and space for community gatherings and recreation.*

*As an equitable anchor institution of any modern city and region, the Sebastopol Regional Library is well-positioned to extend its role as a critical community connector; offering a place for community members to gather, an early learning hub, access to digital literacy, new business incubation, employee training, and the necessary tools that strengthen democracy by addressing knowledge gaps.*

*The Project will stress sustainability by designing to Passive House standards, reducing energy use by 80%, achieving 40% reduction in Global Warming Potential (GWP) in concrete mix, and including a 112kW solar array on the south elevation.*

**ATTACHMENT 2**  
**A REVIEW OF OUR WORK AND RESEARCH**  
**FY 2024-2025**

On May 21, 2024, the committee provided the council with its initial report on what it would take to build a bigger and better Sebastopol Library.<sup>8</sup>

On June 18, 2024<sup>9</sup> the council accepted the committee's report, dissolved the initial, then current, New Library Building Ad Hoc Committee and created a new one to research and provide recommendations on funding sources that might be available to help create a new library for Sebastopol

<sup>7</sup> For example, see, *Mt. Vernon Library Commons* at <https://www.mountvernonwa.gov/933/Mount-Vernon-Library-Commons-Project>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.cityofsebastopol.gov/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/Agenda-Item-Number-12-Library-Ad-Hoc-Committee-Report.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.cityofsebastopol.gov/events/city-council-meeting-june-18-2024/>

Since that date, the committee has held monthly meetings; conducted interviews; continued research; and continued the publication of its weekly Blog.

We were ambitious in our goals for this past year forgetting, for the moment, the phrase "*If it is not one thing it's another.*"

**A. SONOMA COUNTY LIBRARY**

**1. CURRENT FUNDING SCL:** The SCL does not have a policy for funding new library buildings nor a policy for the equitable allocation of resources for the construction and operation of a new library building ("Capital Improvement Plan" or "CIP").

In the course of discussions with the SCL Director about the proposed funding for the Roseland Library branch in Santa Rosa, we learned the SCL has no procedure for funding requests submitted by JPA members for the construction of new library buildings.

Recently, without regard to the absence of a policy or procedure for the construction and funding of new library buildings, the SCL Commission approved at least \$4 million, from property tax revenues, to aid the City of Santa Rosa in the construction of the new Roseland Regional Branch.

**2. CHANGE:** Since that time, the committee has been working with the City of Sebastopol's appointed commission representative to the SCL Commission, to address this matter.

The Commission has now formed a Task Force to research and recommend a CIP Plan, among other items. The Task Force has agreed to meet with the committee once it starts this work.

**B. THE COMMONS:**<sup>10</sup> After a little more than two years of work, we believe that the model that would serve the City of Sebastopol and the West County community best is an integrated plan for a public common with the Sebastopol Regional Library as one of the anchor tenants.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>10</sup> <sup>10</sup> The "commons" refers to resources, both natural and cultural, that are shared by many people and managed collectively. These resources can include things like air, water, forests, fisheries, and even digital information or public spaces. The term also relates to the concept of the "Tragedy of the Commons," which describes the potential for shared resources to be overused and depleted due to individual self-interest.

Elaboration:

<sup>11</sup> See, The Power of the Commons  
<https://civiccommons.us/app/uploads/2023/01/ThePoweroftheCommons.pdf>



"Commons" is a term often used to refer to the facilities and shared spaces where a city's residents "celebrate, learn, rest, play, make key decisions, express collective aspirations and provide for themselves and one another."<sup>12</sup>

Here, "The Commons" refers to a vibrant network of community spaces that foster connection, learning, and social interaction. Capital projects play a crucial role in creating these commons by providing the physical infrastructure and resources necessary to support these activities.<sup>13</sup> (See, Attachment 1: Sample Elevator Pitch-Sebastopol Commons)

The commons are also increasingly being recognized as an important factor in the quality of life of citizens and the ability of cities to attract and retain the talent and investment needed to support their overall economic vitality.<sup>14</sup> <sup>15</sup>

Our city, and the surrounding West Sonoma County community which we serve, has a need for a well-designed, space to engage with one another, to meet to learn, and to receive services.

Limited funds require a creative approach one which encourages consolidation, efficiently, the sharing of resources, and collective impact.

We see our anchor tenant, the Sebastopol Regional Library, as reading room, book, music and video lender, internet café, town hall, concert venue, youth activity center, research archive, history museum, art gallery, homeless day shelter, office suite, coffeeshop, seniors' clubhouse and meeting place, rolled into one.

<sup>12</sup> See, How CivicCommons.US Is Creating a New Model for Urban Revitalization  
<https://www.about.us/blog/how-civiccommons-us-is-creating-a-new-model-for-urban-revitalization>  
**and**  
*Reimagining the Civic Commons: A Transformative Model for Urban Renewal*  
<https://publiclibrariesonline.org/2025/02/reimagining-the-civic-commons-a-transformative-model-for-urban-renewal/>

<sup>13</sup> See, for example, *Reimagining the Civic Commons*  
<https://civiccommons.us/app/uploads/2018/01/Project-Backgrounder.pdf> and  
*Report Highlights 'Reimagining the Civic Commons' Projects, Lessons*  
<https://philanthropynewsdigest.org/news/report-highlights-reimagining-the-civic-commons-projects-lessons>  
**and**  
*Reimagining the Civic Commons: A Transformative Model for Urban Renewal*  
<https://publiclibrariesonline.org/2025/02/reimagining-the-civic-commons-a-transformative-model-for-urban-renewal/>

<sup>14</sup> See, *Re-Imagining the Civic Commons*  
<https://www.tamarackcommunity.ca/latest/re-imagining-the-civic-commons#:~:text=Re%2Dimagining%20the%20Civic%20Commons%20%2D%20Cities%3A%20Where%20Opportunity%20Meets,that%20can%20be%20realized%20by>

<sup>15</sup> See, video, *Re-Imagining the Civic Commons*  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6WGRjMKmn50>

Public library capital projects, often referred to as "The Commons," focus on improving and expanding library facilities to enhance community engagement, access, and services. These projects can include new library buildings, renovations, expansions, and technology upgrades. Funding for these projects typically comes from a combination of local, state, and federal grants, as well as local tax levies and bond issues.

These projects are often designed to address specific community needs and priorities, such as improving access to technology, expanding programs for children and seniors, or creating more welcoming and accessible spaces for all.

**C. CONSOLIDATION & COLLABORATION:**<sup>16</sup> Achieving a shared vision for reimagining assets systemically and inclusivity requires collaborative leadership from various sectors, departments, and disciplines, as well as local residents.

In the performance of its assigned task (s), the committee will take a cohesive and strategic approach to address local issues identified by the city council to address the "Consolidating Priorities and Collaborative Partnership" priorities adopted by the Sonoma County Mayors and Councilmembers Association (SCMCA) at its meeting of May 22, 2025.<sup>17</sup>

We can also address other of the cities and Mayor and Council Members goals and strategies around Community Safety through addressing unhoused and mental health needs.

*For example, our local regional, branch has Community Social Service Days; 2) Emergency and Crisis preparedness programs; and is already designated ER location...for weather, earthquake, etc.*

Collaboration is not just a desirable practice but a critical element in designing successful civic commons that serve as vital community assets.

**D. MEANINGFUL COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT:** The phrase "meaningful community engagement" has been defined as partnerships and coalitions that help mobilize resources and influence systems, change relationships among

<sup>16</sup> See, *Serving Those Who Serve Our Communities: A Collaborative Approach to Civic Design*  
<https://hoeferwelker.com/press/civic/serving-those-who-serve-our-communities-a-collaborative-approach-to-civic-design>  
**and**

Communicative Planning  
[https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-030-70428-5\\_3](https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-030-70428-5_3)

<sup>17</sup> [https://sonomacountylocalleaders.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/2025.05.22\\_BOD-Special-Meeting-Agenda\\_Final.pdf](https://sonomacountylocalleaders.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/2025.05.22_BOD-Special-Meeting-Agenda_Final.pdf)

partners, and serve as catalysts for changing policies, programs, and practices.<sup>18</sup>

Meaningful community engagement is essential in shaping the designs for new Sebastopol Commons which will include space for our loved library and other community-based partnerships and coalitions. including space for the new library.

Our community engagement ethos is a direct reflection of our project principles: (1) Equitable - prioritizes listening and amplifying the voices of underserved community ties; (2) Transparent - clearly identifies what is fixed, what is flexible, and where community can have impact and the outcomes of that input; (3) Just - understands and acknowledges the past and creates a different future; (4) Accessible - meets the community where they are, variety of methods of participation, culturally relevant and responsive Informed - is informed by research, review and recognition of what has already been asked of communities and what's already been shared; (5) Flexible - asks for input on process, listens to feedback, is open to change and not sticking with a singular approach to engaging the community; and, Climate Friendly & Sustainable - Climate friendly and sustainable practices involve minimizing environmental impact through reduced resource consumption, waste, and greenhouse gas emissions, promoting renewable energy, and fostering a circular economy for long-term well-being. <sup>19</sup>

Examples of community engagement programs can include, but are not limited to, the following: (1) Community meetings Open to the public with activities to share information and gather design feedback from community members; (2) Tabling at existing event; (3) Hosting a booth at existing community events to share information and receive quick feedback from attendees; (4) Paid engagement programs-Longer term, paid programs with multiple sessions that participants apply to be a part of; (5) Focus groups smaller group discussions for more in-depth design feedback (often paid) Interviews; (6) One-on-one discussions with community member; (7) public surveys; and, (8) Online and print questionnaires, including public voting and poster boards with questions

Our goal is to provide efficient and quality service to our community.

<sup>18</sup> For example, see, *Best Practices for Meaningful Community Engagement*  
[https://groundworkusa.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/GWUSA\\_Best-Practices-for-Meaningful-Community-Engagement-Tip-Sheet.pdf](https://groundworkusa.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/GWUSA_Best-Practices-for-Meaningful-Community-Engagement-Tip-Sheet.pdf)

**and,**

Assessing Meaningful Community Engagement

<https://nam.edu/our-work/programs/leadership-consortium/assessing-meaningful-community-engagement/>

<sup>19</sup> In general, see, *Social Equity in Urban Resilience Planning*

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13549839.2019.1645103#d1e178>

A broad community base will help accomplish that goal.

**F. SUSTAINABLE DESIGN:** The following is a list of reading materials and resources which we have consulted, to date, for this aspect of our work:

### **READING LIST SUSTAINABLE DESIGN**

#### **Climate and Sustainability Action Guide for California Libraries**

<https://www.library.ca.gov/uploads/2024/05/Climate-and-Sustainability-Action-Guide-for-CA-Libraries.pdf>

#### **Sustainable Libraries California**

<https://www.library.ca.gov/services/to-libraries/sustainable/>  
*Sustainable California Libraries grants fund climate and sustainability programming for adults and intergenerational groups.*

#### **Resources for Sustainable California Libraries Projects**

<https://www.library.ca.gov/services/to-libraries/sustainable/resources/#background>

#### **Sustainability and Libraries: ALA and Sustainability**

<https://libguides.ala.org/SustainableLibraries>

*Sustainability was adopted as one of ALA's Core Values of Librarianship by ALA Council in 2019, based on the 2018 recommendations of the ALA Special Task Force on Sustainability.*

*This introductory page of the Sustainability and Libraries resource guide highlights activities from the American Library Association that focus on sustainability as a core value of librarianship. Other pages of the guide provide resources on sustainability, including a bibliography of recent titles and online resources.*

#### **Sustainable Libraries: Resources and webinars for climate action**

<https://www.webjunction.org/news/webjunction/sustainable-libraries-resources-webinars.html>

*Web Junction and the Sustainable Libraries Initiative are collaborating to offer a set of resources to support libraries as they address the greatest threat to global health and the grandest challenge of our time: climate change...*

...

#### **Sustainable Libraries Initiative: Recommended Readings**

<https://www.sustainablelibrariesinitiative.org/recommended-reading>

#### **Sustainability—A Call to Action for the Library Community**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K7QA6Ex-lFk>

**An Introduction to Sustainable Thinking for Public Libraries with Rebekah Smith Aldrich**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cjsuWGR2Tss>

**Sustainability in Libraries: A Path to Environmental, Economic, and Social Resilience**

[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/389125144\\_Sustainability\\_in\\_Libraries\\_A\\_Path\\_to\\_Environmental\\_Economic\\_and\\_Social\\_Resilience](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/389125144_Sustainability_in_Libraries_A_Path_to_Environmental_Economic_and_Social_Resilience)

**How Libraries Are Becoming ‘Sustainable’: An ambitious goal of "making choices that are good for the environment, make sense economically, and treat everyone equitably."**

<https://www.ourtownsfoundation.org/how-libraries-are-becoming-sustainable/>

**Libraries and Sustainability: A Guide**

<https://medium.com/everylibrary/libraries-and-sustainability-a-guide-4b6b769b9c7>

**100 Ways to Make Your Library a Little Greener**

<https://vermontlibraries.org/100-ways-to-make-your-library-a-little-greener>

**2. SOME RESOURCE ORGANIZATIONS:**

**Sustainable Libraries Initiative**

<https://www.sustainablelibrariesinitiative.org>

*The Sustainable Libraries Initiative is a member-driven organization that empowers library professionals to be leaders in triple-bottom-line sustainability (environmental stewardship, social equity, and economic feasibility) both within their organizations and in their communities. The Sustainable Library Certification Program is now enrolling public and academic libraries internationally and school librarians throughout New York State*

**Sustainability Committee**

<https://www.ala.org/aboutala/sustainability-committee>

*To provide the necessary leadership and monitoring of ALA strategic initiatives that will infuse the core value of sustainability throughout the policies, procedures, practices of our association and our professional activities, in collaboration with the ALA President, ALA Council, ALA divisions, ALA offices and units, ALA round tables, ALA committees, ALA affiliates and ALA staff so that our association and its members contribute to the development of sustainable and resilient communities. In particular, this committee will maintain a working relationship with the Public Policy & Advocacy Office, Public Programs*

*Office and the Conference Committee; as well as with PLA, ACRL, AASL and other divisions, to work with their membership affect meaningful sustainability-related outcomes and model best practices for their memberships and institutions to help affect meaningful sustainability-related outcomes for the association that result in true change and model best practices for our membership.*

### **Sustainable California Libraries**

<https://www.library.ca.gov/services/to-libraries/sustainable/>

*Sustainable California Libraries grants fund climate and sustainability programming for adults and intergenerational groups.*

### **Blue Marble Librarians**

<https://www.youtube.com/@bluemarblelibrarians/videos>

*The Blue Marble Librarians are a group of librarians that work on helping libraries and their communities come to together to envision and manifest a resilient, just future.*

### **Blue Marble Library Guide: Blue Marble Library Blog**

<https://guides.masslibsystem.org/ClimatePrepWeek>

### **Environment, Sustainability and Libraries Section (IFLA)**

<https://www.ifla.org/units/environment-sustainability-and-libraries/>

*The International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) is an independent, international, non-governmental, not-for-profit, public benefit organization which advances the interests of library and information associations, libraries and information services, librarians and the communities they serve throughout the world.*

*Formed in 1927, the Federation has its headquarters in The Hague, Netherlands. To achieve its purpose, the Federation seeks to:*

- 1. **promote** high standards of delivery of library and information services and professional practice, as well as the accessibility, protection, and preservation of documentary cultural heritage. This is done through the enhancement of professional education, the development of professional standards, the dissemination of best practice and the advancement of relevant scientific and professional knowledge.*
- 2. **encourage** widespread understanding of the value and importance of high-quality library and information services in the public, private and voluntary sectors.*
- 3. **represent** the interests of its members and library and information organizations and the communities they serve throughout the world.*



*IFLA's Environment, Sustainability and Libraries Section (ENSULIB) aim is to encourage librarians to inspire their communities into more environmentally sustainable way of action, by providing materials on green librarianship, giving voice to green librarians and library projects worldwide, leading by example, and offering a discussion forum.*

### **3. PASSIVE HOUSE DESIGN**

**A Passive House** is a building standard that uses design and construction to reduce energy use. This makes them more comfortable, affordable, and environmentally friendly.

How it works

- **Insulation:** Passive Houses are very well insulated to retain heat from the sun and occupants.
- **Ventilation:** Passive Houses are well ventilated to take advantage of natural breezes.
- **Shading:** Passive Houses use shading to protect from overheating.

Benefits

- **Energy efficiency:** Passive Houses use up to 90% less energy than a typical home.
- **Comfort:** Passive Houses maintain consistent temperatures and good air quality.
- **Noise reduction:** Passive Houses reduce both internal and external noise.
- **Environmental impact:** Passive Houses reduce a building's carbon footprint.

History: The Passivhaus Institute in Darmstadt, Germany established the Passive House standard in 1996. The Passive House Network offers courses and training to help people build and work on Passive Houses.