

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

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**To:** Honorable Mayor and City Councilmembers  
**From:** Councilmember Phill Carter  
**Responsible Department:** Community Development  
**Subject:** Approval to Host an Economic Gardening Program Event for Sebastopol Businesses

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**RECOMMENDATION**

That the City Council approve the Economic Gardening Program Event and authorize staff to proceed with coordination and implementation.

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**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The City of Sebastopol is proposing to host an Economic Gardening Program Event aimed at supporting the growth of home grown businesses.

**BACKGROUND**

As part of the City's ongoing commitment to economic development and business resilience, Councilmember Carter is recommending the launch of an Economic Gardening outreach effort, beginning with a public education and engagement event in Fall 2025.

Economic Gardening is a nationally recognized model that supports second-stage and growth-oriented small businesses by providing resources, networks, and strategic insights. Rather than focusing on recruitment, this approach strengthens the local economy from within—retaining the City's cultural and economic identity.

Communities such as Littleton, Colorado, have used this model to double job creation without offering traditional business incentives. Sebastopol has the potential to adapt this framework in a way that reflects its agricultural, artisan, and creative economy.

**Objectives of the Event:**

- Launch an Economic Gardening initiative tailored to Sebastopol's business environment
- Educate local business owners and stakeholders on Economic Gardening strategies
- Strengthen partnerships with regional providers such as the Sonoma County EDB
- Assess community interest and feasibility for future program development
- Position Sebastopol as a proactive, business-friendly city focused on sustainable local growth

**Why It Matters:**

- Over 40,000 cars pass through Sebastopol daily; improving local business capture can increase sales tax revenue
- Economic Gardening aligns with Sebastopol's heritage and strategic economic goals
- Offers a low-cost, high-return alternative to conventional business recruitment

### Goals & Metrics (3-Year Targets)

Metric	Target
Business Count	+10%
Business-related Tax Revenue	+20%
Job Quality	↑ average wages and full-time positions
Priority Sectors	Artisan manufacturing, packaged foods, farm-to-table, creative ag-tourism

### Program Roadmap

Phase	Timing	Key Actions	Lead / Support
Kickoff Workshop	September 2025 (Full-day)	Identify needs, share best practices, form action teams	Chamber (Lead); City Hosts
Action Plan & Communications	Sep–Oct 2025	Publish workshop report, set up bi-monthly City–business meetups, launch online engagement	City (Strategic); Chamber (Ops)
Ongoing Execution	Nov 2025 onward	Bi-monthly roundtables, alternating learning sessions (e.g., marketing, finance), partner assistance, semi-annual progress reviews	Chamber (Lead); City Liaison; Partners/Volunteers

### Roles

- City of Sebastopol: Strategic oversight, policy support, use of public facilities, part-time liaison (~5 hrs/week)
- Chamber of Commerce: Program convener, logistics and outreach, progress tracking
- Local Businesses: Participation, mentorship, feedback
- Community Partners: Sonoma County EDB, banks, tourism organizations, educational institutions (training, funding, sponsorship)

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### Cost & Funding (Year 1)

- Estimated Cost: \$1,000–\$1,500 (for workshop food, materials, contingency)
- Covered by: Chamber funds, sponsorships, and a small City contribution (less than \$500), plus in-kind City resources (meeting space, printing, volunteer speakers)
- Additional Funding Opportunities: County EDB or USDA Rural Development mini-grants (e.g., \$5,000–\$10,000 for toolkits or intern support)

### Expected Benefits

- Boost in local sales, increased visitor retention, and branding Sebastopol as a “foodie/artisan hub”
- Sustainable job creation and wage growth at minimal public cost
- Creation of a durable public-private communication structure that reduces friction in permitting and policymaking

### Immediate Next Steps

- Approve concept and nominal funding (Council action – **Complete**; \$3,000 allocated in FY 2025–26 Budget)
- Form planning team (City liaison + Chamber staff) by late August

- Secure workshop sponsors, venue, and facilitator; issue business invitations
- Host workshop in September–October 2025; deliver action report within 30 days

### **STAFF ANALYSIS**

This event aligns with City Council’s focus on long-term fiscal sustainability and economic resilience. It advances Council’s goal to develop an Economic Development Strategy and supports the City’s identity as a small, self-sustaining community with unique local businesses.

### **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

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**

The FY 25 26 City Budget contains funding in the amount of \$3000 for this event.

### **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 promoted the City Council meeting and agenda items through its social media platforms.

As of the writing of this report, the City has not received any public comments. Any comments received after publication will be provided to the City Council as supplemental materials prior to or during the meeting.

### **RESTATED RECOMMENDATION**

That the City Council approve the Economic Gardening Program Event and authorize staff to proceed with coordination and implementation.

### **OPTIONS**

1. Do not approve the event

### **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) \$3000

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

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