



## City of Sebastopol Planning Department

Date: July 8, 2025  
To: Public Arts Committee  
From: Luke Lindenbusch, AICP – Interim Supervising Planner  
Subject: California Cultural District Grant Application

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### **Recommendation**

Receive an update from staff on the application process, including adherence to the 2025 Cultural District Guidelines and the requisite development of a cultural asset inventory. Provide further recommendations for inclusion in the final grant application slated for Council approval in August 2025 ahead of the August 7, 2025 application deadline.

### **Background**

At the special meeting of June 10, 2025, Public Arts Committee (PAC) recommended that the City to pursue a California Cultural District grant offered by the California Arts Council, a state agency. This program has only been offered once before, approximately a decade ago, when only 12-14 cities throughout California were selected.

Benefits of the designation include official recognition as a State Cultural District, increased visibility and prestige for the City's arts and cultural assets, and enhanced eligibility and preference for state-level arts grants and programming.

Marketing and promotion services offered to designated jurisdictions include free graphic design services provided by the State Arts Council, distribution of promotional materials at state Welcome Centers, and inclusion in statewide cultural tourism campaigns.

The City of Emeryville was cited as a comparable example. Despite its small size, it successfully secured the designation in the previous round, receiving both funding and promotional support. Further, the unique branding as a Rotten City Cultural Arts District is reminiscent of Sebastopol's distinctive character as a creative community, and a successful application could preserve and enhance that cultural character.

Staff indicated that the City has a strong foundation of arts programming and community engagement that positions it well for the application. The designation could enhance existing efforts and serve as a catalyst for further cultural and economic development.

Committee members expressed support for pursuing the designation, emphasizing its alignment with the City's goals for cultural enrichment, community identity, and economic development. The Committee planned to formalize a recommendation to the City Council to pursue the designation and begin preparing a competitive application.

The meeting included consideration of the geography of a prospective Arts District, and exploration of district type (Consumption, Production, Cultural Heritage), with an emphasis on walkability and social equity.

### **Environmental Review**

The proposed action to support an application for California Cultural District designation does not constitute a “project” under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), as it involves administrative and organizational activities of government that will not result in a direct or reasonably foreseeable indirect physical change in the environment.

### **Fiscal Impact**

There is no immediate fiscal impact associated with the action to support an application for California Cultural District designation. Preparation of the application will be conducted by City staff.

If the City is selected for designation, it may receive a baseline annual stipend historically ranging from \$5,000 to \$10,000, with the potential for significantly higher grant awards depending on available state funding. However, all state funding is contingent on a one-to-one local match, meaning the City would need to allocate or secure matching funds equal to any state-provided grant amount in order to receive those funds.

The designation may also increase the City’s competitiveness for future arts-related grants and could reduce marketing and promotional costs due to state-provided materials and support. Any future costs associated with implementing or expanding arts programming within the designated district would be subject to separate Council review and appropriation.

### **Attachments**

- 2025 Cultural District Guidelines