



City of Sebastopol Design Review/Tree Board Staff Report

Meeting Date: March 24, 2026
Agenda Item: 6A
To: Design Review/Tree Board
From: Tori Henkel, Permit Technician
Subject: Discussion and Direction on DRB 2026-2027 Work Plan
Recommendation: Discuss, Prioritize, and Provide Suggestions for the Work Plan

Background:

The City Council has requested all standing committees to prepare and adopt a 2026-2027 Work Plan that will go to the City Council for final adoption. The Design Review/Tree Board (DRB) has not previously prepared a work plan. This agenda item intends to introduce what a work plan may look like and what it may include. Staff welcomes input from Board members on what items should be added to the work plan, timelines for items, and any estimates of Staff time that may be needed to complete the items.

The DRB Work plan may be periodically updated as work items are completed or as other items come forward. These updates are done with the input of Planning staff and the Design Review Board, and are then presented to the City Council for their review and approval. This ensures that the various city entities, elected, appointed, and staff, are aware of the work being done by staff and the Board; allows for transparency and public input; and enables the Council to establish priorities for Design-related work. Work plans are prepared and approved for each City Board or Commission, and together they allow staff to allocate time/resources and to apply for potential grants to fund various initiatives.

Workplan items do not include development review (private applications for development), which require both staff and Design Review Board time and occur on an ongoing basis. As the City has no control over the ebb and flow of these items, a significant uptick or downturn may affect the overall timeline of the Workplan items. Additionally, other initiatives are added by the Council, Board, or staff as needed.

Discussion:

Attached, the Board will find a listing of Workplan items still to be achieved to implement General Plan Programs and to carry out other Council-established priorities.

Staff has prioritized various items in accordance with deadlines and initiatives that coordinate with other bodies (such as the Plaza Centennial Project, which is a joint effort with the Planning

Commission to develop a plan for a re-envisioned Plaza to celebrate 125 years for the City of Sebastopol).

Public Comment:

No public comments have been received as of the writing of this staff report.

Recommendation:

The Board should review and discuss the Draft Work Plan and make suggestions for additions, deletions, and prioritization. A revised Draft Work Plan will be brought back to the Board for approval this Spring before going to City Council for review and approval.

Attachment:

Discussion Draft of 2026-2027 Work Plan

DISCUSSION DRAFT DESIGN REVIEW WORK PLAN 2026-2027

Not in Order of Priority

#	Description of Item	Timing/Responsible Department and review body(s)
1	<p>Centennial Project for the Plaza</p> <p>This project would be a joint effort with the Planning Commission to develop a plan that would bring improvements to the Plaza in the downtown center of the City. This is also part of the Council's goals to develop a plan to update the Plaza as part of the 100-year anniversary of the City.</p>	<p>Planning Dept/Planning Commission/Design Review Board/ City Council</p> <p style="color: red;">Summer-Fall 2026</p>
2	<p>Tree Protection Ordinance Updates</p> <p><u>Action COS 6c</u>: Review and possibly revise the Tree Protection Ordinance in order to strengthen monitoring provisions for re-planting efforts, in order to ensure the long-term health and viability of re-planted trees. Revisions should also address the current fee structure for violations of the TPP to ensure that violations are more costly than compliance with the TPP requirements.</p> <p style="color: green;">DRB, in conjunction with the CAC, have developed a subcommittee to develop a list of changes to the Tree Ordinance that would come to the DRB for review. That would then be passed to the PC as a recommendation for PC, and then final approval by the City Council.</p>	<p>Joint Tree Ordinance Subcommittee with CAC</p> <p style="color: green;">Underway</p>
3	<p>Sign Ordinance Updates</p> <p>Review and update the existing Sign Ordinance for items that need clarification, changes, or updates.</p> <p><u>Policy CD 1-5</u>: Clearly define the points of entry into the city through use of distinctive gateway designs, lighting, and landscaping that provides a cohesive relationship between the following entry points into the city: Bodega Avenue, Gravenstein Highway South, Sebastopol Avenue, High School Road, and Gravenstein Highway North.</p> <p><u>Policy CD 1-14</u>: Monitor the placement of unapproved and unpermitted signage throughout the community to reduce visual clutter and nuisance signage, including temporary signs that are not permitted by the Municipal Code.</p> <p><u>Action CD 1k</u>: Periodically review, and update as necessary, the City's Sign Ordinance to enhance community character and prohibit signage that detracts from the visual quality of Sebastopol.</p> <p><u>Action CD 1l</u>: Regularly monitor the status and condition of all City-owned signs and conduct maintenance activities and periodic upgrades to City signs in order to improve the visual appearance of the city.</p>	<p>Subcommittee working on proposed changes and updates</p> <p style="color: green;">Underway</p>

Other/Future General Plan Implementation Items

with Priority in Adopted General Plan (A = 1, B = 2, C = 3)

	Description of Item	Responsible
B	Dark Sky Regulations <u>Action COS 11g</u> : Review and consider strengthening the exterior lighting standards contained in the Design Review Guidelines. The lighting standards in the Design Review Guidelines should incorporate principles and best practices endorsed by the International Dark Sky Association. The updated standards should address: Nuisance prevention, Shielding requirements, Level of illumination, Energy efficiency requirements, and Accent Lighting.	Planning Dept/DRB/ Planning Commission

Joint Design Review/PC Items:

<p>B</p>	<p>City Signage -Streets and Parks <u>Action CD 2b:</u> Develop and place distinctive street signs within the Downtown. <u>Action CD-2i:</u> Develop and implement a sign program to identify City parks.</p> <p>Streetscape Plan and Street Signage <u>Action CD-2e:</u> Develop a streetscape improvement plan that prioritizes upgrades to physical connections and aesthetic continuity throughout the Downtown. Establish incentives for businesses in the Downtown to participate in beautification and public space enhancement efforts.</p>	<p>Planning Dept/ Planning Commission</p> <p><i>Wayfinding signage design completed; Phase 1 installed early 2019 Phases 2 and 3 are pending funding</i></p> <p><i>Streetscape plan pending</i></p>
<p>B</p>	<p>Native Plant List <u>Action COS 6a:</u> Make available a list of plants and trees native to the region that are suitable for use in landscaping. The plant and tree species should be drought-tolerant, available from local sources, and consideration should be given to the suitability of the plant and tree species for use as habitat to native animals, birds, and insects. The list should be provided online in a user-friendly format, and staff should direct project applicants to the list during site design review and approval.</p>	<p>Planning Dept/ Planning Commission/ DRB</p>
<p>B</p>	<p>Urban Design Guidelines for Key Areas <u>Action CD 1b:</u> Develop and update urban design guidelines to include design standards and goals for key districts, areas, or types of development throughout the community, including, but not limited to, the Downtown, Gravenstein Highway (north and south), as well as single-family and multifamily types of development. Design guidelines should include provisions that enhance and support the unique qualities of areas, as well as support the character of residential neighborhoods. The design guidelines should allow for creative design solutions and architectural diversity. Consideration should be given to incorporating form-based code components into the design guidelines.</p> <p><u>Action CD 1c:</u> Provide design and development guidelines for gateways to the city to encourage special features and to discourage the establishment of new fast-food establishments, auto-dependent businesses, and similar uses, and minimize sidewalk driveway cuts to the maximum extent possible.</p>	<p>Planning Dept/ Planning Commission/ DRB</p>
<p>B</p>	<p>Design Guideline Updates <u>While the ODS have been adopted, they are voluminous and difficult for the public to utilize. The PC and DRB would work together to make the existing design guidelines more objective so that they may be more useful in assessing all projects moving forward.</u></p>	<p>Planning Dept/ Planning Commission/ DRB</p>

<p>C</p>	<p>Historic Resources</p> <p><u>Action COS 10e</u>: Develop a Historic Sebastopol program to identify and protect historic resources, encourage landowners to voluntarily preserve and rehabilitate historical structures, and to provide a coordinated approach to draw visitors and tourists to these areas. The program may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinated signage and identifying placards of historic areas, including downtown, specific buildings, and businesses. • Maps available online, at the Chamber of Commerce, and key locations of the City that direct visitors and history aficionados to key historic and cultural resources in the City. • Establishment of local historic districts (such as the downtown) with standards to conserve historical resources and promote the highest and best use of such resources. <p>Property owner incentives for the preservation and restoration of historic buildings and sites. Consider the following incentives: Interest-free or reduced interest loans for rehabilitation work consistent with the original character of the building; tax incentives for the preservation of historic structures, including the use of Mills Act preservation contracts; reduced processing fees for preservation and protection of outstanding buildings; use of the State Historic Building Code where applicable; a brochure that identifies resources to purchase materials and fixtures that are historically accurate in appearance but offer modern benefits (e.g., energy-efficient lighting, windows, building materials that correlate to specific architectural or historic periods that are often seen in the City); and awards and grants for the preservation and protection of outstanding buildings.</p> <p><u>Action CD-3b</u>: Inventory historical and cultural resources and prepare a comprehensive survey of sites and structures, including those of architectural significance.</p> <p><u>Action CD-3e</u>: Develop a priority list for the restoration and preservation of significant structures in the City.</p>	<p>Planning Dept/ Planning Commission/ DRB</p>
<p>C</p>	<p>Historic Homes Guidelines</p> <p><u>Action COS 10f</u>: Develop guidelines for remodels of potentially historic residential structures to ensure that the character and individuality of such residences are maintained. The guidelines should address:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design styles, age of home, and other criteria to determine applicability of the guidelines; • Exterior features that are important and covered by the guidelines (e.g., siding and exterior finishes, windows, doors, roofs, porches, garages, outbuildings, and streetscapes); • Standards for modifications and renovation, including the extent of changes that can occur; and <p>Activities that are exempt from the guidelines, such as interior improvements, routine maintenance, and repair.</p>	<p>Planning Dept/ Planning Commission/ DRB</p>
<p>C</p>	<p>Design Standards for Industrial Development</p> <p><u>Action LU 9d</u>: Adopt design standards for industrial development.</p> <p><u>Action LU 9e</u>: Where feasible, provide infrastructure improvements as part of the Capital Improvement Program that support development of industrial areas.</p>	<p>Planning Dept/ Planning Commission/ DRB</p>