



City of Sebastopol Design Review/Tree Board Staff Report

Meeting Date: October 27, 2026
Agenda Item: 7A
To: Design Review/Tree Board
From: Eli Arreola, Associate Planner
Subject: Discussion of Approved 2026-2027 Work Plan

Background:

The City Council requested all standing committees to prepare and adopt a 2026-2027 Work Plan that went to the City Council for review and approval. The Design Review/ Tree Board (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 DRB 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.

Work Plan items do not include development review (private applications for development), which require both staff and DRB 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 Work Plan items. Additionally, other initiatives may be added by the Council or staff as needed.

Discussion:

On April 28, 2026, the Design Review/ Tree Board (DRB) adopted their 2026-2027 Work Plan. On October 6, 2026, the City Council approved the 2026-2027 Work Plan with the following addition:

1. Website updates for DRB webpage and information related to design regulations

The DRB additionally asked for permission to add another meeting a month to tackle the Work Plan items more efficiently. The City Council directed staff to return with this request in January 2027 alongside the mid-year budget review due to current staffing constraints and limitations.

This item in front of the Board is intended for a discussion about the City Council's additions and to create a plan to achieve the Work Plan items, given that the Board only meets once a month.

Additionally, the DRB has several work plan items that are intended to be joint efforts with the Planning Commission. Staff is seeking direction from the Board on whether there is interest in

holding joint meeting(s) with the Planning Commission during regularly scheduled Planning Commission meetings to advance joint work plan items.

Public Comment:

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

Recommendation:

The Board should review and discuss the City Council approved Work Plan and create a plan to accomplish the Work Plan items.

Attachment:

2026-2027 Design Review/ Tree Board Work Plan

DESIGN REVIEW/TREE BOARD WORK PLAN 2026-2027

Adopted by the Design Review/Tree Board at their April 28, 2026, regular meeting

In Order of Priority

#	Description of Item	Timing/Responsible Department and review body(s)
1	Centennial Project for the Plaza 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 125-year anniversary of the City. The Board suggested that an idea or design competition could be held. City Council Goal 1.3	Planning Dept/Planning Commission/Design Review Board/ City Council Summer-Fall 2026 Need to know the budget and scope
2	Tree Protection Ordinance Updates <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. 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. <u>The Board suggested adding the native plant list as a subcategory (Action COS 6a):</u> 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.	Joint Tree Ordinance Subcommittee with CAC Underway Planning Dept/ Planning Commission/ DRB
3	Sign Ordinance Updates Review and update the existing Sign Ordinance for items that need clarification, changes, or updates. <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. <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. <u>Action CD 1k:</u> Periodically review, and update as necessary, the City's Sign Ordinance	Subcommittee working on proposed changes and updates Underway

	to enhance community character and prohibit signage that detracts from the visual quality of Sebastopol. <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. <u>The Board suggested additional considerations as subcategories:</u> 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. 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. City Council Goal 3.3	Joint efforts with the Planning Commission/Planning Staff <i>Wayfinding signage design completed; Phase 1 installed early 2019</i> <i>Phases 2 and 3 are pending funding</i> <i>Streetscape Plan pending</i>
4	Design Guideline Updates 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. City Council Goal 6.2	Planning Dept/ Planning Commission/ DRB
6	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. <i>DRB had a presentation and discussion from the Dark Skies Sebastopol group on 4/28/26. At their next meeting, they would like to form a subcommittee to work with this citizen group to look at strengthening Sebastopol's Dark Sky regulations.</i>	Planning Dept/DRB/Planning Commission
5	Recommendation to City Council to have a second DRB meeting This would be a standing second meeting a month at the City Hall Conference Room, to save money on recording and staff time. This meeting would be open to the public, but would only be focused on work plan/ long-term projects.	City Council/City Manager

6	City Website Updates Identify and report to staff on outdated or incorrect information on the City’s website related to Design Guidelines and regulations, when updates are warranted. City Council Goal 4.2	Ongoing Planning Dept
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Possible Future Items:

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

Joint Design Review/PC Items:

C	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. <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.	Planning Dept/ Planning Commission/ DRB
C	Historic Resources <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: • 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. 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. <u>Action CD-3b:</u> Inventory historical and cultural resources and prepare a comprehensive survey of sites and structures, including those of architectural significance.	Planning Dept/ Planning Commission/ DRB

	<u>Action CD-3e</u>: Develop a priority list for the restoration and preservation of significant structures in the City.	
C	Historic Homes Guidelines <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: • 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 Activities that are exempt from the guidelines such as interior improvements, routine maintenance, and repair.	Planning Dept/ Planning Commission/ DRB
C	Design Standards for Industrial Development <u>Action LU 9d</u>: Adopt design standards for industrial development. <u>Action LU 9e</u>: Where feasible, provide infrastructure improvements as part of the Capital Improvement Program that support development of industrial areas.	Planning Dept/ Planning Commission/ DRB