



CITY OF SEBASTOPOL CITY COUNCIL
AGENDA ITEM REPORT FOR MEETING OF: April 7, 2026

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To: Honorable Mayor and City Councilmembers
From: Sebastopol Commons: Building the Commons Committee
Responsible Department: Public Works
Subject: Sebastopol Commons: Building the Commons Committee Second Quarterly Report

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RECOMMENDATION

That the City Council receive the second informational report from the Building the Commons Committee.

PROCESS OF AGENDA ITEM

- a. Presentation of agenda item by the Requestor or Responsible Department
- b. Questions and discussion from Councilmembers
- c. Public comment period
- d. Presentation Received

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report reflects the Committee’s continued work and progress to advance the Sebastopol Commons as a vibrant, shared civic asset.

BACKGROUND

The Sebastopol Commons is envisioned as a shared civic space and multi-use community hub within Sebastopol city limits, serving West Sonoma County residents. It is intended to support education, arts & culture, health & wellness, senior services, community connection, recreational classes, and potentially public library or library-adjacent functions that foster learning, access, and civic engagement.

The Building the Commons Oversight Committee was established by City Council action in 2025. It is charged with guiding early concept development, assessing community needs, exploring funding strategies, and providing quarterly reports to Council on progress in the following areas:

- Identifying and securing membership
- Developing lists of needs and shared needs
- Compiling research on similar projects
- Exploring and defining the project concept and determining the scope of a feasibility study
- Performing other related duties as assigned by the City Council

DISCUSSION

As part of the responsibilities of the Committee, the Committee was tasked with providing quarterly updates. Tonight’s item provides the second quarterly update. The Committee has two ad hoc committees formed: The Finance Committee and the Community Needs Committee. Both have provided informational status reports and those are attached for reference. Highlights of the reports are listed below:



Building the Commons Ad Hoc Finance Subcommittee Report:

The attached February 10, 2026 report from the Ad Hoc Finance Subcommittee provides a preliminary analysis of six location/approach options. No location is final or preferred; all are early-stage concepts only. The committee discussed preliminary options, financing overview on preliminary options, as well as Facility Needs Priorities (critical/immediate/future/peripheral and subsidiary).

At the February 10, 2026 Committee Meeting, the Committee approved to define the purpose of the subcommittee as follows:

Our purpose is to create a long-term solution included with the charge of our advent and that in doing so we're weighing the elements of cost, location, and access, and that timeliness and immediacy of satisfaction of these needs are elements thereof.

This motion was moved by RM Horrell and seconded by Sarah Glade Gurney. Yay's: 8, Nay's: 0, Absent: 1.

Building the Commons Ad Hoc Needs Assessment Subcommittee Report:

The attached DRAFT survey packet is a guide that the ad hoc committee members will be using to conduct one-on-one interviews with community leaders to gather high-value, in-depth insights on community assets, motivations, challenges, partnerships, public spaces, identity, resiliency, and priorities. These personalized sessions will build trust, strengthen relationships, map stakeholders, and uncover opportunities that inform the Commons vision.

Future Items:

It is anticipated that the Committee will complete initial community needs assessments; advance potential site and funding options evaluation; and report back with progress toward a viable commons concept with recommendations at that time for Council discussion and consideration.

STAFF ANALYSIS

The Committee continues refining the vision while working on immediate needs as planning progresses.

CITY COUNCIL GOALS / PRIORITIES / GENERAL PLAN CONSISTENCY

This item aligns with City Council goals:

- Community Vitality: Enhance Sebastopol as a great place to live that values community health and wellbeing; preserve unique character.
- Infrastructure: Maintain high-quality facilities and services, including repairing/replacing outdated city facilities.
- High Performance Organization: Restore public trust; improve public communications.
- Economic Development

And included in the General Plan

- Action CSF 6c–6d: Collaborate with County library system and partners to expand library services/facilities.
- Action CSF 6j: Conduct needs assessments and prioritize public/community facility improvements with extensive outreach.
- Action CSF 6e: Establish innovative funding approaches for cultural, community, and library facilities/services.



Supports Sonoma County Mayors and Councilmembers Association priorities on shared facilities, mental health, homelessness, and emergency preparedness.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

One-on-one leader interviews using the attached discussion guide to gather insights on assets, challenges, partnerships, public spaces, and priorities will be conducted.

PUBLIC COMMENT

As of the preparation of this staff report, no public comments have been received. Any written public comments received after publication of this report will be provided to the City Council as supplemental materials prior to or at the meeting. Members of the public may also provide oral comments during the public comment portion of the agenda item.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Noticed in accordance with the Ralph M. Brown Act; available for public review at least 72 hours prior to the meeting.

FISCAL IMPACT

There is no additional fiscal impact associated with receipt of this informational item.

RESTATED RECOMMENDATION

That the City Council receive the informational report.

OPTION(S)

None. This item is informational only.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Sebastopol Commons Finance Subcommittee Second Quarterly Report to Full Committee, adopted February 10, 2026 (7 pages; includes S.W.O.T., financing analysis, needs summary, and map).
2. Sebastopol Commons Needs Assessment Subcommittee’s Refined Stakeholder Questions, adopted March 10, 2026 (1 page; includes engagement for business or non-profit leaders, community members, and potential partners).

APPROVALS

Department Head Responsible for Agenda Item: Approval Date: 03/24/2026

CEQA Determination (Community Development/Planning): Approval Date: 03/24/2026

The proposed action is Exempt from CEQA pursuant to §15306.

Administrative Services (Financial): Approval Date: 03/24/2026

Costs authorized in City Approved Budget: Yes No N/A

City Attorney Approval: Approval Date: 03/24/2026

City Manager Approval: Approval Date: N/A

Sebastopol Commons Finance Subcommittee

02/10/2026 Report to Full Committee

Subcommittee Members:

RM Horrell (Chair)

Phill Carter (Council Member)

Naomi Hupert

Kent Jenkins

PROCESS and PRIORITIES

The following is the Finance Subcommittee's February Report to the full Committee.

This Subcommittee is focused on serving the community's needs and ensuring the City's financial viability. The Finance Subcommittee invites the full Committee, and indeed the Community, to collaborate in this process.

PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS

Below, this Subcommittee has identified several different options that we are considering as possible locations for a Commons location.

These are each examples of different approaches:

- a ***new build***, where new construction is needed to create a Commons building;
- the ***repurposing or remodeling*** of an existing structure that would need a moderate to extensive amount of construction to accommodate a Commons; and
- a ***remediation or rebuilding*** of an existing structure that would take minimal to moderate construction to accommodate a Commons.

Please note:

- These are options that we have considered in light of their respective:
 - location, size, availability, proximity to Sebastopol's downtown, and
 - a range of other criteria that we have gathered from members of the Commons Committee as they continue their outreach to the community.
- None of these options has been pursued outside of gathering the information below. We encourage feedback or questions regarding this information, and additional suggestions regarding locations to consider.

S.W.O.T

The following is a preliminary analysis of plausible locations, looking at Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats of each.

	New Build	Repurposed/Remodel	Remediated/Rebuild
Proof of Concept/ Example	RAILROAD PROPERTY	THE TOWING CO. BUILDING/Other brownfield	CALDER CREEK CORRIDOR
STRENGTHS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ~Laguna/forest area ~Beautiful and well treed, ~Centrally located ~Walkable location ~Purchase Price (1.5M) ~Lot is big enough to build a 40,000 sqft building envelope ~Existing building has a footprint of 15k feet and 35k usable interior space. ~ PRIVATE FINANCING more enticing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ~Walkable Location ~Ives Calder Creek Corridor adjacent ~Lowest cost option by far (\$2-4.5M) Fastest acquisition and retrofit timeline (12-18 months) ~Low risk—small investment, reversible decision 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ~Central and close to other city-related institutions: city hall, Center for the Arts ~remediates environmental problems ~Walkable location ~Possible collaboration with ongoing Corridor walkway planning
WEAKNESSES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ~Not city-owned, ~floodplane ~Outside of the heart of downtown Sebastopol ~Likely extended development process for purchase, planning and new construction (Laguna environmental studies) ~Impacts on traffic on the congested 12 and 116. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ~Not city-owned ~Likely extended development process for purchase, planning and new construction ~Existing conditions UNDERSIZED: 3,700 SF existing + space for parking and vs. 20-30k+ SF need— ~Existing requires full renovation or demo Cinderblock construction limits architectural quality ~Difficult to solve for 2 library, Senior Center or CommunityCenter ~Location not central, not environmentally beautiful (Library), nor high-visibility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ~MOST COMPLEX option (building + creek restoration + business relocations) ~City-owned portion limited/existing facilities ~Extensive remediation ~Possible conflict with ongoing Corridor walkway planning ~Likely extended development process and cost for purchase, planning and new construction
OPPORTUNITIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ~Revitalizes the Sebastopol edge of the Joe Rodota Trail ~Accessible via the Joe Rodota Trail for equitable access via bike/foot/bus/car ~ Position Sebastopol as model for nature-integrated civic infrastructure ~Create year-round outdoor programming connection to forest/trails ~Potential partnership with 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ~Revitalizes a Sebastopol derelict property ~Interim solution while planning larger project ~Could become permanent satellite senior activity space ~Low-stakes pilot for city facility operations (Resellable) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ~ Transform downtown identity—becomes 'the creek town' destination ~ Combine grant potential from state/federal climate and CUSP and CalTrans ~Create model for California downtown ecological restoration ~Attract regional visitors and tourism with iconic public space

	Laguna Foundation for stewardship		~Catalyze private investment in adjacent parcels
THREATS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ~Proximity to Joe Rodota Trail and any safety issues connected thereto ~Challenging street crossing at 12 despite crosswalk lighting ~ Laguna flooding /environmental issues could delay or halt project CEQA review ~ Property owner may not sell or may demand premium 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creates distraction from necessary larger investment Consumes staff time and political capital for minimal benefit Community perceives as 'giving up' on real solution Renovation costs could exceed value for such small space May require additional investment just to meet accessibility standards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ~Cost overruns on complex multi-phase project ~Business displacement creates political opposition ~Environmental permitting delays from multiple agencies ~Economic downturn could strand project mid-construction ~Creek restoration could uncover contamination or infrastructure conflicts ~Community fatigue from extended construction period
SCALE:			
SUBTOTAL			
WEIGHT			
TOTAL			
FOLLOW-UP			

	Renovate/Remodel	Renovate/Remodel	Repurpose
Proof of Concept/ Example	The Rite Aid Building Adaptive reuse	CURRENT LIBRARY BUILDING	O'RILEY BUILDING
STRENGTHS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ~Downtown location (50 yards from current senior center) ~Fastest timeline of renovation options (18-24 months) ~30'+ ceiling height enables dramatic loft library design ~Solves site vacancy problem if Grocery Outlet permit is denied ~Supports downtown businesses and walkability, near current assets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ~No land acquisition cost—city owned ~Downtown location preserves library's current central role ~Maintains continuity with existing civic campus identity ~Could integrate City Hall modernization in single project ~Avoids 'abandoning downtown' political narrative 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ~Protected outdoor open space ~Multigenerational safety and access ~Walkable location, but outside of Central downtown ~Ample parking already on-site—no parking crisis to solve ~On protected walking train from Analay to location ~Proximate to new 80-home Canopy project Single-site consolidation of ~ALL civic functions (library, senior center, commons, potentially City Hall)

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ~Existing building infrastructure significantly reduces construction costs vs. new build ~Turnkey - Low entitlement risk (existing commercial use, minimal regulatory hurdles) ~Highway 12 visibility provides strong regional access and wayfinding ~Partnerships with private office medical or Sonoma County
WEAKNESSES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ~UNDERSIZED for cost?: 36K+ SF community need if city subsidized property leveraged ~Substantial retrofit required (HVAC, interior build-out, accessibility, acoustics, parking) ~Grocery Outlet wildcard (outcome by August 2026) ~Not purpose-built, compromises on library/senior center design ideals (Not as stunning as new build) ~Structural condition and true retrofit costs uncertain until acquisition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ~Existing buildings cannot support additions—FULL DEMOLITION required ~Parking crisis: Current lot already strained; doubling size makes it worse ~Downtown businesses harmed by 2-3 year construction disruption ~Operational transition nightmare: Where does library/City Hall operate during rebuild/cost?? ~Site constraints limit optimal building layout and future expansion ~May NOT solve Community Center and Senior Center Needs ~FINANCING: Zero asset sale potential + adds temporary relocation costs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ~Not city-owned ~Sidewalk improvements needed between Main Street and location ~Not downtown—perceived disconnect from Main Street commercial core ~Requires relocating library from current downtown location (political/emotional resistance) ~May require significant interior build-out, or commercial kitchen addition ~Lease/acquisition private partnership negotiations for supportive leasing of unused space
OPPORTUNITIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ~Quick win: Could be operational before other new build renovation options ~Demonstrate city commitment to downtown investment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ~Modernize City Hall infrastructure simultaneously ~Redesign site for better pedestrian/traffic flow ~Signal commitment to downtown core ~Potential for more downtown underground parking (expensive) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ~Separates traffic flow to allow less traffic congestion ~Proximal to Analy highschool ~Bikable stop on the West County Trail ~School pickup alternate site ~High elevation site during flooding episodes/alternate evacuation site ~Fire-resistant construction and on-site generator
THREATS	~Grocery Outlet permit	~Construction costs	~Downtown businesses may

	<p>approved or → option disappears entirely ~Retrofit costs exceed estimates once building is opened up ~Creates 'good enough' complacency that prevents visionary solution ~Divides community support between this and transformational options ~Property owner may not accept city's offer price</p>	<p>escalate during extended timeline ~Temporary relocation costs add significantly to budget ~Downtown businesses suffer during multi-year disruption ~Community opposition to demolishing familiar buildings ~Project creep as City Hall needs expand scope Senior or Community center STILL not solved even after \$20M spent</p>	<p>oppose losing library foot traffic ~Community perception: 'abandoning downtown' narrative could gain traction ~Building owner may decline to sell on City's terms ~Economic downturn could reduce City's ability to absorb costs or city bond capacity</p>
SCALE:			
SUBTOTAL			
WEIGHT			
TOTAL			
FOLLOW-UP			

FINANCING STRATEGY ANALYSIS

Each option's assessment for development costs, operations during build, fundraising ability and incorporation of city owned property (usage or sale proceeds).

Option	Time from initial decision	Rough Cost / or realistic budget	City Owned (\$) or City Asset Sale \$1.5, \$4M	Difficulty Funding Site-Development (Scope relative)
O'Reilly Campus	20 months	\$12-\$23M	\$4	Least Difficult (Least inflation sensitive)
Railroad Forest Community Commons	5-10 years	\$12-\$23M	\$4	Medium Difficult- Laguna Permits
Calder Creek Civic Commons	8-15 Years	\$12-50M (w/o Calder Creek Daylight)	\$0-\$3.5	Difficult-Extremely Difficult Creek Opening in city plan / Office Movement
Rite Aid Building Adaptive Reuse	2-5 Years	\$13-20M	\$1.5	Medium Difficult
Current Library/City	5-8 Years	\$13-20M	\$1.5	Difficult - Very Difficult unless

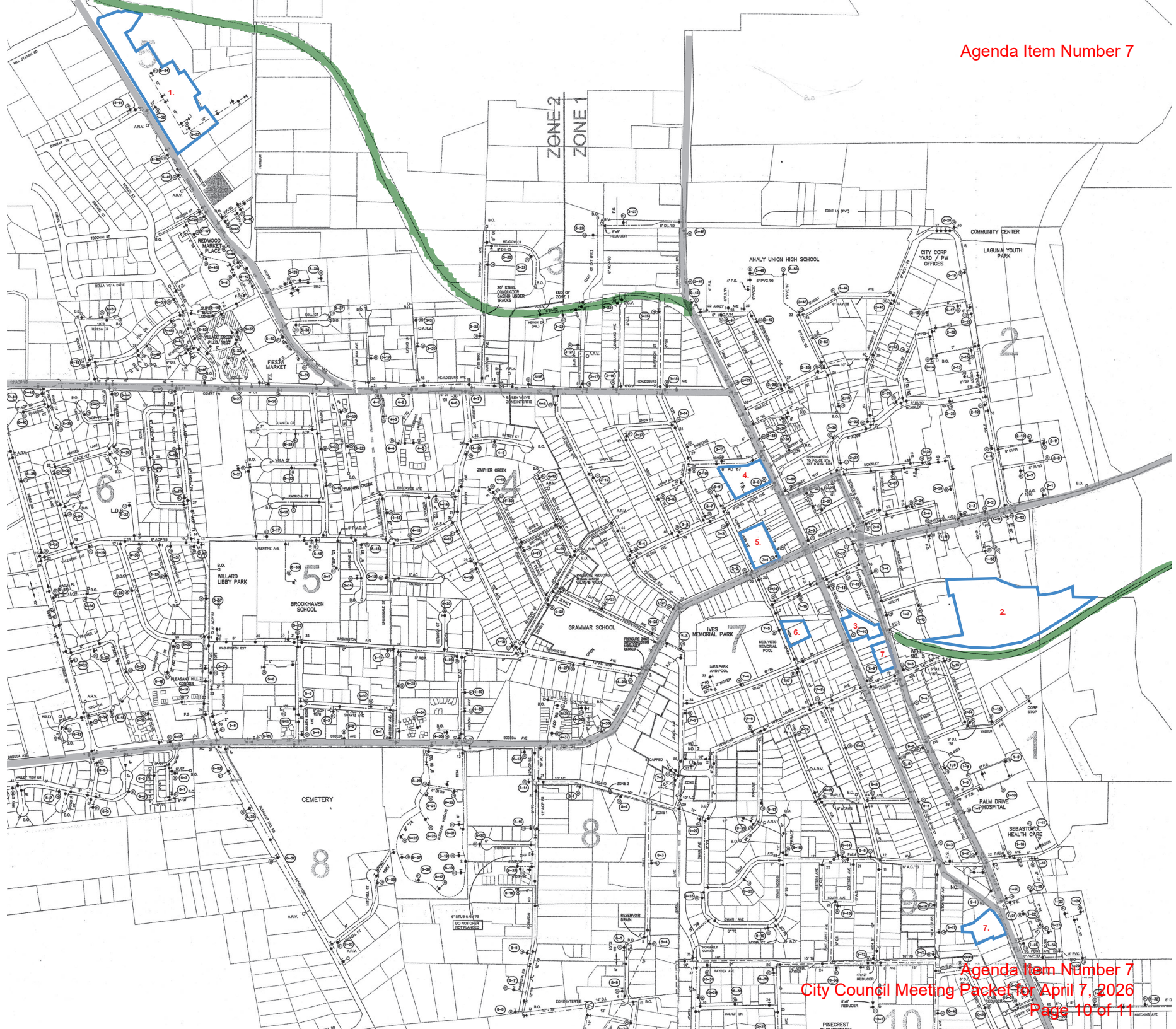
Hall Site Rebuild				parking garage
Tow Building (or other brownfield) 332 Petaluma Ave	2-5 Years	\$13-20M	\$1.5	Medium Difficult

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: APPROACH & CONTEXT

It is essential to recognize that Sebastopol faces both immediate and longer-term facility needs, each with different urgency levels. This analysis examines six potential pathways for addressing Sebastopol's civic facility needs, each evaluated with sincerity and an open mind toward its merits and challenges.

While this is not an exhaustive inventory of every conceivable alternative—new properties may become available, and creative combinations of these options could emerge—it represents an initial examination of currently viable opportunities. All city-owned property has been assessed. The current civic campus footprint and the Calder Creek corridor represent the only city-controlled sites capable of accommodating expanded facilities. The following table outlines those needs and organizes them into levels of priority:

Priority	Facility	Need	Status
Critical Need	Senior Center	10k+ (15-20k total) SF for expanded services, full kitchen, craft store	Most pressing—current space cannot meet demand, craft store lease renewal near
Immediate Need	Community Center	Significant Building repairs + ongoing operational sustainability. Modernization	Deferred maintenance and budget strain
Future Need	Library	Additional 10k SF would enable full utilization	Functional but constrained; not in crisis
Peripheral Need	City Offices/ Meeting Space	Consolidation preferred; multiple locations not optimal	Some consolidation achieved; workable for now
Subsidiary Need	NonProfit Space	Unconfirmed 5k SF?	



Needs Assessment Subcommittee's Refined Stakeholder Questions

Survey Questions for Business or Non-profit Leaders

- How large is your organization/ business?
 - Number of staff?
 - How many customers/consumers on a monthly basis?
 - Who do you serve?
- Are there major obstacles for your business or organization at this time?
 - If yes, what would help to address them?
- What will help your organization or business succeed in Sebastopol and the West County community?
- Have you or would you considering partnering with another business or organization to achieve your goals?
- If there was a community space to share, what would make it work for you?
 - What resources are needed?
 - What schedule?
 - Amount of space required?
- What size of space and what amenities do you require?

Survey Questions for Community Members

- What do you feel are the most important spaces and services a community needs to thrive?
- Do you feel these spaces are adequately addressed in Sebastopol and in the West County community?
- Where do you live?
- Would you need access to public transportation?
- If not, what would you like to change to make you want to use community spaces?
- Out of the following, which community spaces are you most likely to use?

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Meeting rooms ○ Playgrounds/parks ○ Art display area ○ Community gathering space ○ Gathering spot ○ Community kitchen 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Office space ○ Co-working space ○ Outdoor space ○ Conference room space ○ Childcare facility ○ Other: _____
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Survey Questions for Potential Partners

- Who should be invited to join the Commons?
 - Who needs a new home?
 - Who is willing to join others?
 - What are their space needs and special feature requirements?
- What commercial entities might be a good fit?
- Who would be influential in bringing these people and entities together?
- Who in the greater Sonoma County needs to be involved?
- Who might have access to additional funding sources and/or grants?
- What do you look for when you donate to public or civic ventures?