

Dear Council and City Staff,

In order to maintain Sebastopol's unique downtown character and to protect locally owned businesses, I urge you to have clarity with the formula business ordinance.

The ordinance should be clear that new formula businesses should not be permitted if they are in direct competition with existing local businesses.

Grocery Outlet is an example of this. Grocery Outlet is a billion dollar, publicly traded company. It would be in direct competition with locally owned grocery stores such as Community Market, Fircrest and Pacific Market.

The formula business ordinance should be promoting economic vitality and fostering synergetic relationships among businesses.

In some cases, a formula business like a hotel might actually help local downtown businesses. As there is only one hotel in Sebastopol and hotels require a tremendous amount of capital, a Hilton or other upscale hotel might actually be beneficial to the Mom and Pop stores.

Policies which impact growth and development should be written to support economic vitality as the economic landscape changes.

Please consider an formula business ordinance which looks at the current commercial landscape and uses that as a criteria versus blanket prohibitions, which might not be applicable as the commercial corridor changes over time.

For instance, the ordinance could say "No Formula Businesses in Sebastopol's commercial corridor if the Formula Business is in direct competition with a locally owned, small business (classified as a business with less than 20 locations and is privately held)."

Please create a policy that preserves local businesses and is also long-range in creating economic vitality.

Thank you,
Kate Haug