

From: wildflower [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, August 16, 2026 12:26 PM
To: City Council <citycouncil@cityofsebastopol.gov>
Subject: We want Grocery Outlet!

Dear Councillors,

I wrote to your recently about my reasons for supporting G.O.'s proposal for the Rite-Aid location in Sebastopol.

I shared the contents of that letter on nextdoor (local chapter) and the responses were 99% positive. Seems like the general consensus among ordinary Sebastopol citizens is very supportive of the G.O. proposal! I was actually pleasantly surprised.

I'm going to share a post I found on a Sebastopol page on FB with the author's permission of course. His name is Anthony Cabral.

"I think this is exactly where our priorities have become backwards.(He's responding to another commenter.)

We're talking about food—one of the most fundamental human needs—as though having “too many” places to buy it is somehow the problem.

Walk through downtown Sebastopol. We have stores full of plastic goods, trinkets, decorative items and consumer products that have essentially nothing to do with our health, nourishment or basic survival. We have bars, tattoo shops, boutiques and countless businesses selling things that fall nowhere near the foundation of Maslow's hierarchy of needs.

And I'm not saying those businesses shouldn't exist. I'm pointing out the strange double standard: we don't seem nearly as concerned about having “too many” businesses selling things we can live without, but another affordable source of FOOD is suddenly unnecessary.

Historically, food occupied a dramatically larger share of the American household economy. USDA data show Americans spent about 24% of disposable income on food in 1929 and around 17% in 1960. By 2025, it was 9.7%, with only 4.8% going toward food eaten at home.

That decline has many explanations, but I think it also illustrates something culturally important: food has increasingly become treated as just another cheap commodity rather than one of the foundations of human health and life.

And affordability still matters enormously. Lower-income households devote a vastly greater percentage of their resources to food than wealthier households. So when someone says Sebastopol already has “enough” grocery stores, my question is:

Enough for whom?

Safeway existing doesn’t mean it’s affordable for everyone or that it offers the quality everyone wants. Whole Foods is owned by Amazon, which many people specifically don’t want to support. Grocery Outlet also operates differently from a typical corporate chain: most locations are independently operated by local owner-operators.

The traffic argument doesn’t make much sense to me either. We’re not talking about putting a giant commercial development where there was previously open space. The Rite Aid building was already a large retail business with customers, deliveries and vehicle traffic. We’re talking about utilizing an existing commercial building.

I’d love a beautiful downtown. I’d love an expanded library. I’d love interesting, independent and interactive organizations. Those are worthwhile goals.

But aesthetics and “business diversity” shouldn’t become things we prioritize above whether ordinary people can afford the basic necessities of life.

Food isn’t visual clutter. Food isn’t some unnecessary business category. Food literally builds our bodies, sustains our lives and sits at the foundation of human survival.

So maybe the question isn’t, “Does Sebastopol really need another grocery store?”

Maybe it’s:

How did we build a culture where seven places to buy food sounds excessive, while an entire downtown filled with businesses selling things human beings could survive perfectly well without seems completely normal?

That, to me, says something much bigger about what we’ve been conditioned to value."
Anthony Cabral

Thank you for your time and interest.

Karin Lease

[REDACTED]

Sebastopol

Be a good ancestor.