

From: Lisa Bush [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, July 27, 2026 6:41 PM
To: City Council <citycouncil@cityofsebastopol.gov>
Subject: Please approve Grocery Outlet - version #2 - small typo corrected

Dear City of Sebastopol City Council Members,

I have lived about one-half mile outside of the City of Sebastopol for 42 years, since the time that Carlson's sold Levi's, underwear, and shoes, the Pine Cone was still the Pine Cone, and the only place to get good coffee was a little kiosk inside Copperfield's. Over these years Sebastopol has changed dramatically, but not because of formula businesses. Now there's no shortage of yoga and pilates studios, crystal shops, overpriced restaurants, and expensive boutiques that seem to draw plenty of tourists. But Sebastopol seems to have forgotten that there are a lot of local residents who can't afford or have no use for these things. I am not opposed to tourism, as Sebastopol clearly needs the tax revenue that it brings, but this town no longer seems like it belongs to those that live here.

Many letters from the anti-Grocery Outlet campaign describe a fear of losing Sebastopol's unique, small-town character if more formula businesses come in, but did having Rite-Aid (a formula business) here negatively affect anyone's life and does Sebastopol suddenly have a more unique character now that it's gone? I don't think so. Would life be better for Sebastopol's residents if Safeway and Lucky disappeared? Probably not.

Sebastopol is home to people of varied income levels and is within reach of Russian River communities, which are generally lower income. I'll bet a lot of people from other West County communities would very much like to have an affordable grocery store to shop at in Sebastopol, rather than having to drive to Santa Rosa.

The City's General Plan, Policy LU 7-10 states: "Maintain Zoning Ordinance controls on formula businesses that strengthen the City's **unique character, support the local economy, and ensure the provision of needed goods and services.**" Grocery outlet would undoubtedly strengthen Sebastopol's economy, at least a lot more than a large, empty building, and would ensure the provision of needed goods: namely affordable food. Would having Rite-Aid replaced by Grocery Outlet weaken the City's unique character, which in and of itself is entirely subjective? I really can't see how, nor would it do anything to weaken the General Plan.

Most formula businesses are not prohibited and Sebastopol's Formula Business Ordinance states: "With a couple of exceptions, the formula business ordinance does not ban formula businesses except for "formula motels and hotels, formula restaurants, formula offices on the first floor of a structure (allowed on upper floors)."

Frankly, I don't think formula businesses are ever going to dominate Sebastopol's downtown. Nor do I think they degrade Sebastopol's "unique character," whatever that is.

I ask you to listen to the residents who have voiced a need for more affordable shopping options and support filling a large, empty storefront with a store that would be beneficial for many Sebastopol residents and folks from neighboring communities. I have been in Grocery Outlets twice in my life. Would I shop in one in Sebastopol? Maybe, and to those residents who are opposed – don't shop there, it's your choice.

Sincerely,

Lisa Bush