

From: Luke [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, August 17, 2026 9:57 AM
To: City Council <citycouncil@cityofsebastopol.gov>
Subject: Public Comment: SUPPORT Grocery Outlet

Dear Councilmembers,

Sebastopol often speaks proudly about spirituality, sustainability, ethics, inclusion, and building a community that works for everyone. I believe this is an important moment to ask what those values look like in practice.

We have an opportunity to bring in a grocery store offering natural and organic foods, higher-quality meat and produce, and other healthy options at prices that may be more accessible to ordinary working people. I understand the desire to protect local businesses and preserve Sebastopol's character. But I also believe there has to be a balance between those goals and making the community economically livable for the people who actually live and work here. Grocery Outlet has been a pinnacle of my economic survival in Sonoma County during my ten years living here

For many residents—including families, young people, teachers, service workers, caregivers, and small-business owners—food prices are already a significant burden. Healthy, high-quality food should not become a luxury available primarily to people with six-figure incomes. When you add in Sebastopol's record level sales tax levels (third highest in the country), regular people are getting crushed here.

Supporting local farmers and businesses and providing affordable grocery options do not have to be opposing values. We can value both. We can buy affordable commodities at Grocery Outlet and have more money for fresh locally grown produce at Community Market. We can have a franchise store that puts price pressure on the large corporation grocery stores already in Sebastopol (Amazon Wholesale Foods, Safeway, Lucky).

If we genuinely care about sustainability, inclusion, health, equality, and community, those values must include people living paycheck to paycheck. Sustainability isn't sustainable if ordinary people can't afford it, and inclusivity isn't inclusive if the price of admission is wealth.

I respectfully ask the Council to consider the broader question of **food access and affordability**, rather than allowing opposition to chains to overshadow the needs of the community as a whole.

We should be careful that in trying to protect the character of Sebastopol, we don't inadvertently protect exclusivity instead.

Thank you for considering this perspective.

Thank You,
Luke Holderfield

