
Choose this walkable downtown Sebastopol Commons site instead

From M.MILLS-THYSEN [REDACTED]

Date Tue 8/11/2026 10:16 AM

To John Jay <jjay@cityofsebastopol.gov>; Victoria Henkel <vhenkel@cityofsebastopol.gov>; City Council <citycouncil@cityofsebastopol.gov>

Marghe Mills-Thysen
[REDACTED]

To:

Planning Commission Public Comment: jjay@cityofsebastopol.gov

Permit Technician: vhenkel@cityofsebastopol.gov

City Council: citycouncil@cityofsebastopol.gov

August 10, 2026

To Our City Representatives,

Why, as our representatives, you plan to throw immense amounts of taxpayers' money at the library's extensive and likely un-ending mold, urine and deterioration problems and, in addition, paying for a non-downtown location for Sebastopol's dream Commons is alarming.

I am writing to formally oppose the Grocery Outlet project that is proposing to move into downtown Sebastopol, to respectfully urge the Planning Commission and the City Council to refrain from moving forward with that application and instead to work on a more positive use for that downtown property.

Using the vacant RiteAide property for our city Commons is a LOCAL solution. We can not move vital city services way out on 116 where non-driving residents will be so disregarded and disadvantaged. Making non-drivers take cumbersome public transport for every visit to the library, city offices, etc. is a cruel move. Adding vast amounts of automobile trips' exhaust to our environment is horribly irresponsible.

Now is the time for you to step up and claim the ideal remedy to so many of our city's problems: Have our city negotiate to claim the currently large DOWNTOWN empty Rite Aide property for our Building the Commons project: give as your legacy a non mold-invaded library and solve our cramped city offices, police department building, etc. You will find Sebastopol residents getting excited, energized and rallying to this inspiring project.

Sebastopol's economy depends heavily on its locally rooted businesses, its independent downtown environment and its distinctive community identity. It is this very distinctive quality of our city that attracts and holds businesses and residents, yet it is the elements of this very quality that are undermined and jeopardized by chains like Grocery Outlet that seek to capitalize on the vitality they would sap.

Sebastopol's General Plan emphasizes preserving downtown vitality, supporting local businesses, and protecting the city's unique character, elements which are not easily replicated or replaced when destroyed.

As representatives and custodians of our beautiful city, it behooves you each to resist the false promise of shiny new tax dollars and jobs, a promise that will fade with their shoddy employment practices and the loss of funds and support for our community service organizations, at-risk residents, and non-profits that have long benefited from our existing local groceries.

Sebastopol's economic viability is closely tied to maintaining a trustworthy, vibrant and local business ecosystem that supports and is supported by independent merchants, local investment, tourism, and honorable community connections.

Approving another national chain grocery retailer in an already saturated market would move the city further away from the long-term vision residents have worked so hard to preserve. It is not financially wise to rush and grab a dishonorable renter rather than exercise caution and work more actively and creatively to attract a decent tenant that will truly fit, honestly respect, and nurture the local environment it seeks to enter.

We can do this. Residents will come up with creative ideas, sources of support, solutions, and unexpected possibilities. The dark shadow of another chain store being allowed to insinuate itself into our common downtown will be removed. Residents will be excited and feel our council members are finally moving in a positive direction.

For all these reasons, as a long time Sebastopol resident and Public Arts chair emeritus, I urge the Planning Commission and City Council to stop the the Grocery Outlet chainstore incursion, keep this predatory business out of our city.

I urge you each to think positively and realize the ways this Sebastopol Commons Rite-Aid building dream solution can be attained.

Sincerely,
Marghe Mills-Thysen