

Opposition to the Centennial Plaza Proposal at Ives Park

Ives Park should remain a welcoming, green, publicly accessible community space—not become a commercialized, hardscaped plaza.

The proposed Centennial Plaza raises significant concerns about public access, environmental priorities, cost, and the long-term character of Ives Park.

1. **Protect our remaining green space.** As housing becomes denser and private yards and shared outdoor spaces become more limited, public parks become increasingly important. It is well documented that access to open space in communities significantly promotes wellbeing. Open, undeveloped green spaces provide places for people of all ages to relax, play, connect with neighbors, and support community well-being. We should preserve these spaces rather than replace them with additional pavement.
2. **A commercial plaza is not the same as a community recreation area.** A cement plaza designed around food sales and concessions shifts the emphasis from nature, informal recreation, and community gathering toward commercial activity. The City does not need to “develop” this public recreational space with natural features into a commercial entity.
3. **Keep recreation genuinely public.** Sebastopol already has an abundance of recreation facilities with fences, fees, or other limits on access. Ives Park’s open green areas are a valuable public resource. We should preserve and safeguard opportunities for residents to enjoy recreation without having to pay for activities.
4. **Demand financial accountability.** Before committing public resources to this proposal, the City should clearly disclose total construction costs, funding sources, ongoing maintenance expenses, and any future operating obligations. The opportunity cost matters: money spent building and maintaining a hardscaped plaza cannot be spent on creek restoration, habitat, trees, trails, or other community priorities.
5. **Do not undermine decades of work toward restoring Calder Creek.** The City has invested in planning for creek naturalization and has identified restoration as consistent with General Plan Conservation and Open Space Policy COS 3-3. A plaza design that conflicts with the creek restoration plan risks undermining that investment and sacrificing long-term ecological benefits for a built environment.
6. **Preserve the character of Ives Park.** Ives Park’s value lies in its natural setting, informal public use, and role as a shared community refuge. A substantial paved plaza and commercial focus could diminish its green character and affect the quiet, residential atmosphere of the surrounding neighborhood.

Recommendation: Reject any the Centennial Plaza proposal to prioritize open green space, public access, Calder Creek restoration, and low-impact recreation. Sebastopol should protect the scarce open parkland it has left, not turn our precious resource into a commercialized, hardscape destination.

Respectfully Submitted,
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