

From: Olivia VonDohlen [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, March 23, 2026 10:26 AM
To: City Council <citycouncil@cityofsebastopol.gov>
Subject: Proposal to Limit Excessive Winery Land Ownership and Protect Land for Future Generations

Dear Councilmembers and Local Leaders,

My name is Olivia von Dohlen, and I have grown up in Sebastopol, California, my whole life. I am writing to respectfully ask that local leaders consider adopting policies to limit excessive winery land ownership and to protect remaining land for ecological preservation, open space, and community-centered uses.

This letter is not a request for funding. I am not asking for money, grants, or financial assistance. I am simply bringing forward a community-based policy idea that I believe deserves serious public discussion for the long-term benefit of Sebastopol and the surrounding area.

Over the years, I have watched this area change. I have seen land that should have been preserved for native species, natural habitat, and future community use instead being bought out and converted in ways that have harmed local ecosystems. Land that could have supported preservation, parks, hiking trails, and other community-serving purposes has too often been absorbed into vineyard expansion. These changes do not just affect the appearance of our landscape. They affect biodiversity, ecological health, and the long-term character of the place many of us call home.

I want to be clear that this proposal is not anti-agriculture and not anti-winery. Wineries are part of the region's identity and economy. However, no single industry should be allowed to continue expanding land ownership without limits or without stronger public review of the cumulative impact on the environment and the community. When too much land becomes concentrated in the hands of winery interests, the public has a right to ask whether current policy is truly protecting the broader long-term interests of local residents, native ecosystems, and future generations.

For that reason, I respectfully ask the City and County to consider establishing an acreage threshold beyond which winery businesses may not continue acquiring land without significant review or restriction. I also ask that the local government explore policies requiring that landholdings already above that threshold be addressed through a long-term preservation plan. That could include requiring excess land to be sold or transferred for permanent public preservation, conservation, habitat restoration, or community-serving

open space so that it may be protected for future generations rather than remain indefinitely concentrated in private commercial ownership.

I recognize that any such policy would require legal review and careful implementation, but I strongly believe this issue is important enough to warrant study and placement on a public agenda. There should be a serious conversation about whether land that is already over-concentrated in winery ownership can be gradually returned to public stewardship or permanent preservation in a way that protects the environment and serves the community as a whole.

I also ask that local leaders consider related policies such as cumulative impact review, stronger land-use protections for native habitat, and standards that prioritize ecological preservation and community benefit over further large-scale land concentration. Once land is converted and ecosystems are damaged, restoration is difficult and often incomplete. Once open land is lost, the chance to preserve it for future generations may be gone forever.

Sebastopol is more than a commercially valuable landscape. It is a living place with native species, ecological importance, rural beauty, and deep community meaning. It deserves policies that reflect those values. We should be thinking carefully about what kind of future we are building and whether we are doing enough to preserve land not only for industry, but for the people, wildlife, and generations that will come after us.

I respectfully ask that this issue be placed on a future agenda for study and public discussion. I believe our community deserves the opportunity to consider stronger protections before more land is permanently lost.

I would love to speak more on this matter.

Thank you for your time, your service, and your consideration of this proposal.

Sincerely,
Olivia von Dohlen