

From: [REDACTED]
To: [City Council](#)
Subject: Please Distribute to Council Members & Planning Commissioners
Date: Friday, September 11, 2026 4:27:48 PM

Dear Council Members, Planning Commissioners & Staff,

While I appreciate all the work that the Commons Committee has done, I do have some reservations about their recommendations.

There are so many factors that would need to come together just right for the Commons concept to work. In other words, there's a lot that could potentially go wrong if the City chooses to go down the path leading to the Commons.

Donors would need to consistently and generously donate.

Reliable, long-term tenants would need to be secured to fill the large spaces.

Property values would need to rise in that neighborhood for revenue to materialize from the E.I.F.D. With the new St. Vincent DePaul supportive housing and the Dollar Store likely renting the old CVS site, this is questionable.

The City would need to hire a manager, at a minimum, to manage a large, complicated situation.

The O'Reilly buildings need new roofs. The estimates for retrofitting the existing buildings seem unrealistically low.

The Senior Center, Library and maybe Community Center properties would need to sell for high prices. It's not hard to imagine a buyer wanting the Senior Center. The others?

If any of these factors don't work out, the City is on the hook financially, as the landlords of this large property. In addition to all the financing costs, there are maintenance/cleaning costs, insurance costs, etc. These don't go away if the on-site bookstore goes belly-up.

I keep hearing about all the things that could happen at the Commons site, like a maker space and an art center. We already have a wonderful maker space right in town called Chimera. They are happy where they are. Ditto for Sebastopol Center for the Arts.

The main function of the Community Center as an event venue is problematic at the O'Reilly site because there is housing so close by. Events are usually loud.

We are a very small city. We have many needs that the City must meet, such as water, sewer, roads, police, parks, etc. These may not be as exciting or appealing, but they are City responsibilities and they must be paid for. Taking on such a complex and risky endeavor as "The Commons" would be putting the City on risky financial footing. We don't know how our economy will fare in the future.

Sonoma County Library is proceeding with creating a sizable library branch in Occidental, which should take some of the pressure off our Sebastopol branch. Expansion of library services in Graton and/or Forestville could also help. Since so many library users live outside city limits, the County Library system should be shouldering more of the library responsibility. It's not the responsibility of the City of Sebastopol to provide a library space for all of West County.

We don't need to spend the fix-up costs that the Committee is saying we will need to spend if we "do nothing". Pouring big resources into the Community Center, for instance, would be a fools errand.

I keep hearing from members of the Commons Committee that we don't have a downtown, but instead we have three commercial areas that are within City limits, and that the area we've called "downtown" should really be called "midtown". Seriously? Downtown has many pedestrians walking around. The commercial strips along 116 north and south are almost only served by motorists. Who would want to walk along highway 116?

Another thing I keep hearing from Committee members is that the number of people who would be within walking distance of the Commons library and the downtown library would be the same. This just isn't true. Please see the images below from the City parcel map. In both images, the libraries are at the center. I simply slid the map and did not zoom in or out. The library downtown is surrounded by densely populated neighborhoods, whereas the O'Reilly site is not.

Lastly, the library brings substantial vitality to downtown each day, with many library users supporting and walking to nearby businesses. Our library provides a safe, welcoming public space for people of all ages, right in the heart of town.

If the Senior Center does relocate, which looks very likely, there should be ample parking for the library. The Senior Center is a strong organization with a wide and growing donor base. I expect they will find a bigger space and be OK.

Thank you,
Lisa Pierce

