

Support Grocery Outlet's Sebastopol store proposal

From: Renee Johnson [REDACTED]

To: City Council

Dear Council Members,

As a lifelong Sebastopol resident, born and raised here, I have written to the City Council only twice. Both letters have been recent, and both have concerned local businesses, an issue that I believe deserves greater attention. A thriving business community is essential to a healthy city, and I believe the Council should actively support both existing businesses and opportunities to attract new ones.

I am writing to express my strong support for bringing a Grocery Outlet to Sebastopol.

Many Sebastopol and West County residents currently drive to Rohnert Park or Windsor to shop for more affordable groceries. Every trip outside our community represents lost business and, where applicable, lost local sales tax revenue. At a time when our city faces ongoing budget challenges, every tax dollar matters.

There are environmental benefits as well. Fuel is expensive, and longer drives contribute to greenhouse gas emissions. Having a Grocery Outlet closer to home would reduce vehicle miles traveled, save residents money on fuel, and support our community's sustainability goals.

Grocery Outlet is also well known for giving back to the communities it serves. Our local nonprofits are always looking for new community partners and sponsors. Grocery Outlet has a strong history of supporting schools, youth sports, and charitable organizations. When was the last time you saw Safeway, Lucky, or Whole Foods sponsoring a Little League or soccer team? Our locally owned businesses have long supported community organizations, and Grocery Outlet would be another valuable partner.

Sebastopol's population is aging, and many residents live on fixed or limited incomes. We also have affordable housing for seniors and working families. These residents deserve access to quality groceries at lower prices without having to leave town. An affordable grocery option would be a meaningful benefit to many members of our community.

Whole Foods, Safeway, and Lucky are all corporate-owned stores. At the same time, our independent local grocers—Andy's Produce, Pacific Market, and Fircrest Market—provide exceptional service and will continue to enjoy the loyalty of many local shoppers. Grocery

Outlet would complement, not replace, these businesses while introducing healthy competition that helps keep grocery prices in check.

Finally, what other business is realistically suited to occupy such a large vacant space in the heart of downtown? We cannot afford another long-term empty storefront like the former CVS location in Redwood Marketplace. Grocery Outlet is well positioned to fill that space, create jobs, attract shoppers, and bring new energy to our downtown.

A Grocery Outlet on Main Street would benefit Sebastopol in many ways. It would demonstrate that the Council supports local economic development, affordable access to groceries, environmental responsibility, seniors and working families, and a vibrant downtown business district.

I respectfully urge you to support this opportunity for our community.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Renee Roberts Johnson

A solid black rectangular box used to redact the signature of Renee Roberts Johnson.