
Proposed Grocery Outlet

From Sharon Ahigian [REDACTED]

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To Planning <planning@cityofsebastopol.gov>; City Council <citycouncil@cityofsebastopol.gov>

Hi there,

Thank you in advance for taking the time to read this email, as I'm sure you've already received a lot of feedback regarding the proposed Grocery Outlet moving into the old Rite Aid.

I am one of those residents who is very much opposed to this proposal. I have been a resident of Sebastopol for the better part of thirty years, and like many, I am in opposition to the addition of a Grocery Outlet, which would increase traffic congestion significantly, while also undermining our local grocers. People understandably want lower prices for their food. I certainly would love that, but I also understand that local businesses need to charge a certain amount of money to keep their doors open and to pay their local employees a decent wage. Once a large, non-community-based business like Grocery Outlet is allowed to open their doors here, local markets will have to compete with them, and more intensely with each other, in a situation where Grocery Outlet has a definite financial advantage. I don't want to see our local stores put out of business, or put in a position that necessitates that they take cost-cutting measures, which will only lead to a decrease in customer and employee satisfaction. I might add that this will likely also have a downstream negative effect on our local farms which supply local grocers.

I, like many other long-term residents greatly appreciate my small, friendly town and locally-owned businesses. I absolutely don't want to see the character of our town changed by the sudden inclusion of another large, national chain. We already have a Safeway, a Lucky, and a Whole Foods to serve those who prefer to shop there rather than at our local grocers.

My understanding of the General Plan is that it was formulated to support local businesses, prevent an excess of similar stores, and to protect the local character of our town. I'm sure that I don't need to list all of the food stores which already exist in this town. Furthermore, there are already significant traffic-flow issues in Sebastopol, given the two highways that run through the center of town. Grocery Outlet will attract more people from surrounding towns, which will only increase traffic, and those dollars that Grocery Outlet takes in will not be spent in our community.

I had been more than a little disheartened to hear of a hotel (or is it two hotels?!) that are planned for our small downtown. My understanding is that those plans are on hold for now, and I am still hoping that it won't come to fruition primarily because of the increased congestion it (they) will cause, but also because I am concerned that all of this growth, while bringing more money to the town, will be at a direct cost to quality of life for residents. I was also not happy to see the sudden presence of a Little Caesars here, which I understand was purely due to an accidental oversight by someone working for the city.

Lastly, I'm concerned that once the door to communication has been opened with a large company like Grocery Outlet and the city has already requested various types of information from them, which may require them to invest some money, there is more likelihood that the

Planning Department and/or the Council Members will feel obligated in some way to continue on in the process, but I sincerely hope that this will not be the case. I have no doubt that Grocery Outlet is offering enticing rewards and promises, but I also hope that the Council Members will take all of the above-mentioned significant concerns to heart, and that they will make the best decision in keeping with the General Plan, rather than being swayed by these enticements.

Thanks very much for your time.

Best regards,
Sharon Ahigian