

Date: April 8, 2026

To: Sebastopol City Council

From: Wendy Hilberman

Dear Sebastopol City Council,

I am a long-term resident who loves our vibrant community and the many local businesses and people who make Sebastopol warm, welcoming, and unique.

I was disappointed to read that Grocery Outlet has signed a lease to take over the Rite-Aid retail space downtown. I am opposed to the Rite-Aid space being leased to Grocery Outlet for several key reasons.

Oversaturation

Sebastopol currently has 7 grocery stores within a 3-mile radius that provide nutritious, affordable, and convenient options for our population of 7,500 residents. I shop locally as much as possible, and I can tell you from experience we have great grocery options in our community at a variety of price points. We also have a Trader Joes, and Grocery Outlet within 8 miles of downtown Sebastopol.

In Sebastopol's crowded grocery market, opening a new store shift—not increases local demand. This shift often impacts local grocers most, as they have smaller margins and invest more in the community.

General Plan Priorities

Grocery Outlet, while they may be independently owned, operate as a formula business within a national corporate framework. Sebastopol's General Plan calls for a careful review and cautious decision-making regarding formula businesses to ensure that new businesses support the long-term vision for Sebastopol's downtown. The plan prioritizes supporting local businesses, promoting shopping locally, avoiding oversupply of similar businesses, maintaining Sebastopol's unique character and ensuring that development contributes positively to the community.

Grocery Outlet does not seem to meet any of the General Plan's priority areas for growth and development for the long-term vision of Sebastopol's downtown.

In conclusion, I urge the City Council and the Planning Department to conduct a rigorous review of the use permit for Grocery Outlet to ensure that the applicant meets the criteria for Sebastopol's long-term vision for the downtown. I urge the City Council to

continue to support our local businesses and protect the spirit of the small-town character that we all love.

Thank you for your time and consideration

Wendy Hilberman