

DRAFT SURVEY PACKET

DISCUSSION FINAL DRAFT: 02-08-2026

INTRODUCTION **INTERVIEWS WITH COMMUNITY LEADERS**

1. ONE-ON-ONE INTERVIEWS WITH COMMUNITY LEADERS

One-on-one (1-on-1) interviews with community leaders provide high-value, in-depth insights, building trust and strengthening relationships to foster collaboration and engagement. These personalized, confidential sessions uncover community assets, motivations, and hidden issues while allowing for detailed exploration of topics that group discussions might miss. They are essential for mapping local power structures and identifying key stakeholders.

One-on-one face to face interviews is in many ways mini 'immersions', as the researcher goes into people's homes combining interview with observation, so they have lots of value.

For more information:

Social Work Skills for Community Practice, 2nd Edition

Chapter 2: Entering the Community and Using Interviewing Skills to Understand People, Issues, and Opportunities

https://connect.springerpub.com/highwire_display/entity_view/node/165211/content_details

The Guide to Interview Analysis

<https://atlasti.com/guides/interview-analysis-guide/face-to-face-interview-research>

2. CIVIC COMMONS

Urban spaces periodically need to be rethought and renewed by their communities,

The City of Sebastopol has this unique opportunity to revitalize the heart of its downtown, a challenge that so many small towns now face.

Sebastopol usually has limited levers to materially influence its economic vitality. Reimagining our use of public spaces into as a new civic commons is the most powerful and immediate lever our community can use to boost

economic vitality and give our community a significant community-gathering place.

We believe the new civic commons will inspire people from all over Sebastopol, Sonoma County and the Greater Bay Area to come, enjoy the space, and experience all that our beautiful downtown has to offer—shopping, dining, entertainment and leisure.

Building the Sebastopol Commons focuses on revitalizing public spaces—like parks, libraries, and trails—to build social capital and trust

For more Information on Civic Commons and Public Spaces see:

Why America Needs a Strong Civic Commons

<https://civiccommons.us/app/uploads/2024/10/Why-America-Needs-a-Strong-Civic-Commons.pdf>

How Cities Are Getting Creative To Reclaim Public Space for People

<https://usa.streetsblog.org/2024/09/03/how-cities-are-getting-creative-to-reclaim-public-space-for-people>

Why public spaces are a basic need for cities (*World Economic Forum*)

<https://www.weforum.org/stories/2015/04/why-public-spaces-are-a-basic-need-for-cities/>

Public spaces could better meet community needs: survey

<https://www.smartcitiesdive.com/news/public-spaces-could-better-meet-community-needs-survey/744346/#:~:text=He%20suggested%20that%20streamlining%20bureaucratic,2023:%20chief%20public%20realm%20officer.>

What public spaces inspire you? The nonprofit Project for Public Spaces asked more than 700 public space stakeholders that question in a survey to mark its 50th anniversary. Respondents named 375 public spaces or placemaking projects around the world. U.S. locations ranged from Soldotna Creek Park in Soldotna, Alaska, which the city website calls “our community’s back yard,” to a “place of celebration” in front of Casa Museo Ismael Rivera in San Juan, Puerto Rico, in the words of architect Omayra Rivera Crespo.

PART 1. DICSCUSSION GUIDE

Interviewee Name:

Title / Organization:

Interviewer:

Date:

Directions for Use

This discussion guide is designed to facilitate conversations with community leaders. While the questions are structured by area of focus, we've included supplemental questions on topics that you may add if relevant and time permits.

Be flexible and allow the discussion to evolve organically, even if it leads to areas outside of the pre-listed questions. Valuable insights can often emerge from these less structured exchanges.

1. ICE BREAKERS:

How long have you lived in Sebastopol?

Please tell me about your organization and your role within it.

What are the top 3 changes your organization has encountered in the past two years?

From your organization's perspective, what are the top 1-3 critical challenges facing Sonoma County and its residents today? (e.g., housing, workforce, education, aging population)

Are you working at your/your organization's full potential?

What are the obstacles in the way of your accomplishment of your full potential?

Can you suggest potential partners with whom you could experience synergy and/or build collaboration towards your goals?

Do you know of any missing element for others that you might also experience or not experience?

If you could add any service that would enhance our community, what would it be and who would provide it?

2. PLACES IN SEBASTOPOL

Trusting spaces indicate whether people have places to meet and connect with neighbors. We assess that in two ways.

Can you provide me with examples of “third spaces” known to foster conversation and exchange in or within ¼ mile of a neighborhood?

Can you provide me with examples of green or public spaces in or within ¼ mile of a neighborhood?

What are examples of small-scale projects that enhance the quality of life for residents can result in meaningful impact in rural communities. Using the following questions, think through the places that are not only unique, but significant to your community’s identity.

Where is the place that is most representative of our community’s identity?

What spaces in our community best reflect our collective identity?

Where are the places in our community that we bring our visitors to experience the best that we offer?

3. PARTNERSHIPS TO HELP BUILD THE CIVIC COMMONS

Successful and sustainable community building efforts are driven by the collaboration of community leaders, elected officials, nonprofits, small businesses, and other stakeholders in the community – but most importantly those efforts are typically driven by people who love their community. Using the following questions, identify the stakeholders and partners in your community that can help you achieve your goals.

Who are the partners involved in our small-scale and large-scale community projects?

Who are our community champions or changemakers?

Who are the individuals that are effective spokespersons for our community, find funding opportunities, and push for new projects?

What organizations are the glue of our community?

Who can be involved in this initiative as a partner, sponsor, or volunteer?

4. STRENGTHS AND ASSETS OF OUR COMMUNITY:

We don’t have to start from scratch when it comes to community placemaking. Leveraging the strengths and assets already in place can be a great place to start for small-scale community building projects.

What are the best things about our community?
What are elements of our community that we want to preserve and maintain?
What are some small-scale projects that could help enhance our community?

5. TIMELINE

When considering your answers to this survey consider the following questions to assess a realistic timeline:

Where should we start?
What are specific activities that can be completed within one year?
When do we want to have our goals accomplished?

6. OPPORTUNITIES

Based on your answers to the questions above, identify your view of our opportunities:

What are the gaps that we need to fill?
What impact could we have, even with a small-scale effort?

II. SUPPLEMENTAL TOPICS

If time allows or interest is expressed the following are some addition areas of discussion.

We would like you opinion on any one or all of the following Optional Interview Questions:

1. COMMUNITY RESILIENCY: Community resilience is the sustained ability of a community to utilize available resources to prepare for, withstand, adapt to, and recover from adverse situations, such as natural disasters, economic downturns, or public health emergencies. It involves strengthening social, economic, and infrastructure systems to minimize disruption, promote equity, and ensure rapid, proactive recovery.

"How do you rate our community's resilience?" This question seeks to your assessment of our community's ability to address, social, economic, or environmental challenges

2. SEBASTOPOL AS A SELF-HEALING COMMUNITY: A self-healing community is a locality that uses data, cross-sector collaboration, and local leadership to proactively address the root causes of adversity—such as trauma and Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)—to foster long-term resilience and

well-being. By changing cultural norms and improving social connections, these communities create safe, stable, and nurturing environments.

Based on recent community planning documents, surveys, and local initiatives, Sebastopol is actively working toward becoming a self-healing and resilient community, with specific focus on environmental sustainability, mental health support, and trauma-informed care/ Areas of improvement?

What is your assessment of Sebastopol as a self-healing community

3. INFORMATION COMMONS: An information commons are a shared, collaborative, and often physical space—typically within libraries or academic institutions—designed to provide free or easy access to digital resources, technology, and information services. It serves as a hub for learning and research, bridging traditional information resources with modern, digital, and collaborative tools.

What is your opinion on the value of an information commons to our community? Describe you vision of such an information hub.

PART 2: GUIDE FOR THE PEOPLE CONDUCTING INTERVIEWS

Hello,

Thank you for contributing such a strong list of influential community leaders for the upcoming interviews. We have a robust list of over ____ names.

We've prioritized the list. In developing this prioritization, we were intentional about ensuring representation across leadership influence, diverse perspectives, and service locations. We believe this approach will help capture a broader and more inclusive range of voices.

To streamline the process, we've pre-assigned interviewers based on service location, role alignment, and areas of expertise.

Attached you'll find:

- Your assigned list of community leaders/contacts to interview. We aimed for no more than two interviews per person.
- Discussion guidelines and questions, organized by category specific to your assigned interview area of focus. Please note that there are option topics guides based on interviewee. Please ensure that you use the correct one.
- Sample invitation/script for outreach.
- Tips for conducting interviews (before, during, and after).

If you're available to take on additional interviews, we'd greatly appreciate the support — please reach out to _____ directly. This will ensure that we do not duplicate our efforts and that our geographic representations are maintained.

Please note that, in addition to the interviews, we will conduct a heavily marketed community survey, to ensure that everyone in the county has an opportunity to share feedback.

Interview timeline: Now through _____. Whenever possible and to create connection, conduct interviews in person, via Zoom, or by phone. Some participants may prefer to review the questions in advance — that's perfectly fine. When completed, please email them to me at _____--.

Thank you again for your commitment to this important effort and for helping us build authentic connections across our community.

Warm regards,
Building the Commons

at

PART 3: SAMPLE LETTER OF INVITATIONS TO COMMUNITY LEADER

Subject line: Invitation to Share Your Insights on Building the Sebastopol Commons.

Hello [Name],

The City of Sebastopol has launched a Building the Sebastopol Commons planning process, an exciting new initiative to better understand the services our community values—both now and in the years ahead. As part of this effort, we’re speaking with key community leaders to gather their insights and perspectives.

WHAT IS A CIVIC COMMONS? A Civic Commons is a network of shared public spaces—such as parks, libraries, trails, and community centers—reimagined to foster social connection, equity, and community resilience. These initiatives aim to transform public assets into places where people of all backgrounds can gather, bridging socioeconomic divides and improving quality of life in cities.

The concept emphasizes that public spaces are not just "nice to have" amenities but essential, critical infrastructure that can combat economic segregation and social isolation. Reimagined spaces are intentionally designed to encourage interaction among diverse groups of people.

Building the Commons" is a City of Sebastopol initiative focusing on community-driven development to address local needs through a three-stage process: initiation, implementation, and sustainability. The project involves an Oversight Committee holding meetings at City Hall, with a recent focus on establishing core values and assessing community assets.

Given your influence we would greatly appreciate the opportunity to speak with you.

Would you be willing to join me for a conversation about Sebastopol's future and how a revisioning of public spaces withing Sebastopol can best support your organization’s mission and the support our community. The discussion should take no more than 45 minutes, and I’m happy to adjust to your schedule.

Thank you for considering this invitation—I hope you’ll be able to participate.

Warm regards,
[Your Name]
[Your Title / Organization]

PART 4

SOME COMMUNITY LEADER INTERVIEW TIPS

Before the interviews:

1. The Building the Commons Committee identified organizations/individuals to be interviewed and assigned interviewers based on location and priority. See interview list.
2. Target date for the completion of interviews is _____ -
3. 3.Suggest that the person you are interviewing spend some time, before the interview, reviewing and thinking about their response to the selected topics.
4. Schedule the interviews in advance. It's a good idea to give prospective interviewees an idea of how long the discussion may last - up to 45 minutes is generally a safe bet.

During the interviews:

1. Use a convent method to record the results of the interviews using the Core and Supplement Topics as desire.
- 2 Your time with the person being interview should as dialogue. not an interrogation.
3. f the interviewee strays from the questionnaire and is providing valuable or relevant Information, embrace the tangent!

After the interviews:

1. Encourage the interviewee to follow up the interview with written and/or recorded comments.
2. Discuss the work of the Building the Common's Committee and inform the interviewee on how he/she could participate in the planning process.
3. Send prompt thank you notes to all individuals who participate and ask them what the best way would be to share the community survey link with their networks.