BUILDING THE COMMONS COMMITTEE · AUGUST 2026

Four needs.
One decision.
Here is the money.

A library, a senior center, a city hall and a cultural center. Every number on the following pages either comes from an invoice, an adopted budget line, or a model you can move yourself.

No site decision has been made. This is analysis for the Council and the public, not a recommendation of record.

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They are one problem, not four

Each of these is unaffordable on its own. Together they are financeable.

Library

10,000 sq ft. Every study says double it. Alone: a $34M rebuild for one building.

Senior Center

Spread across four addresses. Alone: fundraise and relocate, probably out of town.

City Hall

Cramped; most staff already work from Public Works. Alone: same dollars, no rent to carry it.

Cultural Center

In the flood zone. $555,000 of flood and ADA work adopted — and it will flood again.

Sources: Sonoma County Library Facilities Master Plan (Nov 2023); City Ad Hoc report (May 2024); FY 2026-27 Adopted Budget, CIP 0714-26.03.

Every other site we looked at

Six were studied before the shortlist. Here is why each fell away — and each one gets the same four-quadrant treatment as the live options, on pages 9 to 11.

SITE	WHAT IT WAS	WHY IT IS NOT THE ANSWER
Rite Aid 218 N Main	Downtown adaptive reuse, 15–20,000 sq ft	$10M purchase plus $40k/month rent — roughly $30M all in. Another buyer moved first.
Calder Creek	Downtown civic commons with creek daylighting	Highest impact of any option. Past $60M, and the most complex entitlement path in the study.
Railroad Forest	New construction, ~45,000 sq ft	~$25M and a green-field build. Strong, but slower and dearer than buying what exists.
Tow site 332 Petaluma Ave	3,700 sq ft adaptive reuse	$1.5M — the cheapest by far, and roughly a tenth of the space needed. Useful only as a stopgap.
Pop-top current library site	Second storey on the existing building	Structural cost, construction on an occupied site, and no answer to parking.
Youth Annex	City-owned parcel	Kept for youth programmes. Not treated as saleable or rentable.

Sources: Building the Commons site evaluations 2026; committee comparison matrix. Prices as documented at the time of evaluation and not re-verified since.

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OPTION ONE

Wait and see

STRENGTHS

- No capital decision required this year.
- No site controversy.
- Nothing is disrupted.

WEAKNESSES

- The library stays half the recommended size, indefinitely.
- Four insurance policies, four utility accounts, four maintenance backlogs.
- The Senior Center keeps paying rent it will never own.

OPPORTUNITIES

- Chase grants building by building.
- Patch what breaks, when it breaks.

THREATS

- One more flood past FEMA's threshold and the Cultural Center must meet full floodplain compliance before any repair.
- Escalation has already added about $9M to a library rebuild since 2019.
- Grant and formation windows close while we wait.

Waiting is a choice with a price, not the absence of one. The next page prices it.

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What standing still costs

Every line is a paid invoice or an adopted budget item. Nothing here is an estimate.

Sheet total, three city buildings	$279,660
− Personnel (follows the people, not the buildings)	**−$82,642**
= Facility cost, three buildings	$138,718
+ Library maintenance	+$11,000
+ Cultural Center contribution to operations	+$58,300
Every year, to change nothing	**$208,018**

Personnel is excluded on purpose. Staff costs follow the people, so a move does not save them. That exclusion makes doing nothing look *cheaper*.

TEN YEARS OF IT

$3.22M

On invoices and adopted CIP alone. **$3.66M** if the capital allowance is carried.

And at the end of it, the city owns the same four buildings.

Year two alone carries the Cultural Center's adopted $555,000 flood and ADA project. Operating costs escalate 4.5% a year.

Sources: FY24-25 paid invoices, three city buildings; FY 2026-27 Adopted Budget facility detail; CIP 0714-26.03. The $58,300 remains pending the City Manager's confirmation that it is facility-linked rather than programme funding.

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OPTION TWO

Rebuild downtown

STRENGTHS

- Keeps the library in the core, which the community has consistently asked for.
- A real feasibility study already exists.
- A donor base already exists.

WEAKNESSES

- Solves one of the four needs.
- No rental income and no tax increment to help carry it.
- Several years of construction on an occupied site.

OPPORTUNITIES

- State Library construction programmes.
- A capital campaign with twenty years of goodwill behind it.

THREATS

- Parking on that block is unpriced and unresolved.
- Escalation keeps running while the money is raised.
- About $2.1M a year of debt service crowds out everything else.

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The LANTERN estimate, and what it buys today

Alameida Architecture, May 2019 — the only fully costed library scheme anywhere in the record.

2019 estimate	**$25.1M**
2026 at +35%	**$33.9M**
2026 at +45%	**$36.5M**

Why it moved. Bay Area construction escalation ran 6–10% a year through 2021–23. Half Moon Bay built 22,000 sq ft for $36M in 2018. Walnut Creek, 30,250 sq ft for $33M in 2012.

What $25.1M bought: 21,600 sq ft over two storeys — a net gain of 11,600. Expanded reading room, children's and teen zones, meeting rooms, staff areas, rooftop solar, new steel frame. **$1,164 per square foot, all in.**

Parking.

No parking count and no parking cost appears in the 2019 study, or in any City document for this site. The committee's own site review recorded parking on this block as a **crisis**.

Also absent, and each one unpriced

- Interim library space through several years of construction.
- CEQA, public bidding and prevailing wage.
- The Senior Center, City Hall and Cultural Center — three of the four needs left standing.

Two questions for the committee: does the 2019 scheme still park, and who pays for the answer?

Source: Alameida Architecture, Expansion Feasibility Study (May 2019) — $25,142,400 over 21,600 SF. Escalation band from Bay Area cost index history 2019–2026.

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OPTION THREE

Buy the O'Reilly campus

STRENGTHS

- One purchase houses all four needs.
- Rental income carries the loan from year one.
- Built in 2001 — occupiable almost immediately.

WEAKNESSES

- It is not downtown. Walking, biking and transit from the core genuinely get worse.
- Roof replacement is a real near-term cost.
- The city becomes a commercial landlord.

OPPORTUNITIES

- The tax increment district retires the debt years early.
- Selling City Hall puts that site back on the tax roll.
- Grant-eligible resilience upgrades.

THREATS

- Tax-exempt borrowing limits private business use to roughly 10% — leasing 40,000 sq ft may break it. Unresolved with bond counsel.
- The rent assumption has no written broker opinion behind it.
- The window depends on a willing seller at current pricing.

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THE SIX THAT FELL AWAY · ONE OF THREE

The two downtown schemes

Neither is a live proposal. Both are here in the same frame as the options above, so the shortlist can be checked against what it beat.

Rite Aid 218 N Main

Downtown adaptive reuse, 15–20,000 sq ft. Ruled out: another buyer moved first.

STRENGTHS

- Downtown, on the spine, and already standing — no green-field construction.
- 15–20,000 sq ft under one roof, with ground-floor frontage that suits a library.
- Walkable from the core, which is what the community has asked for.

WEAKNESSES

- Roughly $30M all in: $10M to purchase plus $40,000 a month in rent.
- That rent buys nothing the City ever owns.
- Still short of housing all four needs.

OPPORTUNITIES

- Would have held a large civic use on Main Street rather than a vacancy.

THREATS

- Moot. The site is spoken for; any return depends on a resale the City does not control.

Calder Creek

Downtown civic commons with creek daylighting. Ruled out: past $60M, and the longest path in the study.

STRENGTHS

- The highest civic impact of any option studied — by the committee's own reckoning.
- Daylighting the creek is a real public amenity, not a by-product.
- A genuine downtown commons rather than a building with a car park.

WEAKNESSES

- Past $60M — more than twice the top of the O'Reilly range.
- The most complex entitlement path of anything evaluated

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- No rent line and no increment to help carry the debt.

OPPORTUNITIES

- Reaches grant categories no other option can: creek restoration, flood resilience, urban greening.

THREATS

- Entitlement and CEQA risk measured in years, with escalation running the whole time.

Sources: Building the Commons site evaluations 2026; committee comparison matrix. Costs as documented at the time of evaluation and not re-verified since. Quadrants are drawn from the evaluation record, not from new analysis.

THE SIX THAT FELL AWAY · TWO OF THREE

The build, and the stopgap

One was the closest thing to a rival on cost. The other was the closest thing to a bargain, and answers a tenth of the question.

Railroad Forest

New construction, about 45,000 sq ft, ~$25M. Ruled out: slower and dearer than buying what exists.

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STRENGTHS

- Purpose-built to fit — no compromises inherited from someone else's floor plan.
- About 45,000 sq ft, enough to hold more than one of the four needs.
- Meets current code and efficiency standards from the first day.

WEAKNESSES

- ~$25M for a green-field build, before site work.
- Every dollar is an unbuilt dollar, so escalation applies to all of it.
- Trades an existing open, wooded character for a building pad.

OPPORTUNITIES

- Could be phased, and a new build is the easiest case to design around resilience grants.

THREATS

- Design, bid and build lands in the same 5–8 year band as a downtown rebuild.

Tow site 332 Petaluma Ave

3,700 sq ft adaptive reuse, $1.5M. Ruled out: roughly a tenth of the space needed.

STRENGTHS

- $1.5M — cheaper than every other option by an order of magnitude.
- On the spine, and small enough to move on quickly.
- Low risk: a small cheque, a short timeline.

WEAKNESSES

- 3,700 sq ft against a need in the tens of thousands.
- Answers no single one of the four needs in full.

OPPORTUNITIES

- Genuinely useful as a stopgap, or as one service's annex, while a larger decision is made.

THREATS

- Spending $1.5M on a tenth of the answer can retire the urgency without retiring the problem.

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Sources: Building the Commons site evaluations 2026; committee comparison matrix. Costs as documented at the time of evaluation and not re-verified since.

THE SIX THAT FELL AWAY · THREE OF THREE

The two that need no purchase

Both are already the City's to use. Neither is free.

Pop-top second storey, current library site

Ruled out: structural cost, construction on an occupied site, and no answer to parking.

STRENGTHS

- No site decision, no relocation, no change of address.
- Satisfies the stated preference for the core by default.
- The smallest footprint change of any option; the parcel stays in civic use.

WEAKNESSES

- Adding a storey to a building not designed to carry one is a structural cost, not a finish cost.
- Construction over an operating library.
- No answer to parking on that block.

OPPORTUNITIES

- Reaches the same State Library programmes and donor base as any other downtown scheme.

THREATS

- Interim library space is unpriced here too — and it solves one need of four.

Youth Annex

City-owned parcel. Kept for youth programmes: not treated as saleable or rentable.

STRENGTHS

- Already owned. No purchase price and no willing-seller risk.

WEAKNESSES

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- Committed to youth programmes, and held out of the analysis as an asset.

- Well short of the space the four needs require.

OPPORTUNITIES

- None claimed as a Commons site. It stays what it is, which is the point.

THREATS

- Counting it as an asset means displacing a youth use — a cost that would never appear on the balance sheet.

Sources: Building the Commons site evaluations 2026; committee comparison matrix. The Youth Annex was excluded from the disposable-asset list by the committee, not by this analysis.

What a square foot costs

All-in cost divided by the finished square footage each option delivers. Lower is better.

O'Reilly campus 90,258 sq ft confirmed · $12–23M	**$133–$255/sf**
Rebuild downtown committee basis · 20–30,000 sq ft	**$433–$1,000/sf**
LANTERN scheme, all-in Alameida 2019 · 21,600 sq ft	**$1,164/sf**

Buying a building that already exists is cheaper per square foot than building a new one, because the concrete, steel, roof, wiring and parking lot were paid for in 2001.

Correction, stated openly. Earlier versions of this chart carried a row reading “O'Reilly, if it is 45,000 sq ft.” That figure came from one place only — the auto-generated minutes of the March 10, 2026 committee mee ctual error. The campus is

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90,258 sq ft: 41,781 + 41,781 office and 6,696 warehouse, and the broker's own arithmetic ties exactly. The row has been struck.

Sources: LoopNet listings for 1003, 1005 and 1007 Gravenstein Hwy N; Keegan & Coppin brochure; Alameida Architecture (2019). The downtown range is the committee's construction-cost basis; the LANTERN row is the study's own all-in basis — they are not the same measure and are shown separately for that reason.

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How long until the doors open

From a Council decision to people walking in.

Buy the O'Reilly campus	**20 months**
Rebuild downtown	**5–8 years**
Wait and see	**no end date**

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A rebuild finishes somewhere between **2031 and 2034**. The O'Reilly option opens in **2028**.

For someone turning eighty this year, that gap is not abstract.

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O'Reilly — move the levers

Rent and increment stacked against what the loan costs each year. Everything below is an assumption, not a commitment.

All-in project cost — **$18.0M**

Rent — **$1.75** per sq ft per month

Gifts, grants & campaign — **$3.0M**

- [x] Sell the City Hall site for $4M
- [x] Include the 60 new homes in the district
- [x] Form the EIFD

AMOUNT BORROWED
$11.0M

YEARLY PAYMENT
$666,594

YEAR-ONE SHORTFALL
$0

LOAN CLEARED
5

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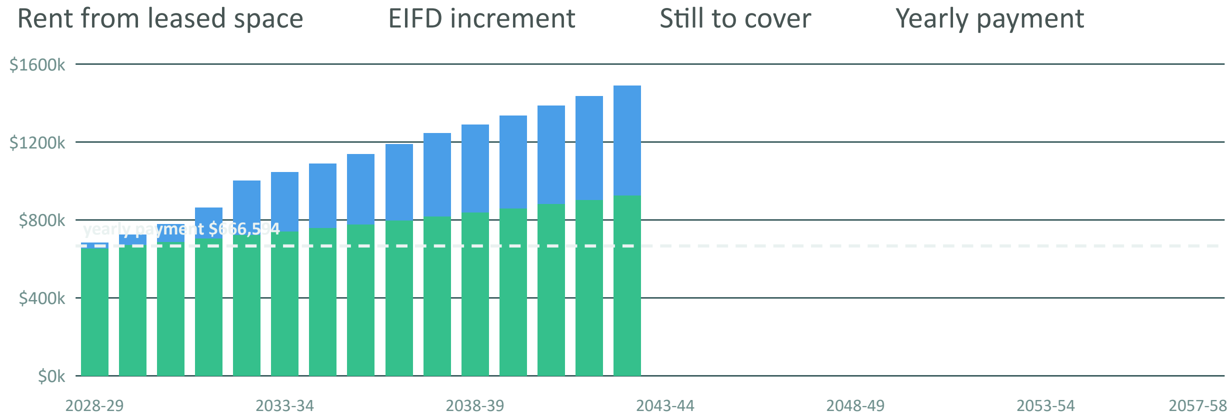

Rent and the increment cover the payment from the very first year. The City never has to cover a shortfall. Putting every surplus dollar against the balance, the loan is paid off in **year 15 of 30**.

Loan: IBank ISRF 4.39%, 30 years, level payment with every surplus dollar applied to principal. Rent assumes 40,000 sq ft leased, 22% off for vacancy and operating cost, rising 2.5% a year. Rent is a placeholder pending a written broker opinion. Year 1 = FY2028-29.

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Three levers, three outcomes

The same model, photographed at three settings. These follow the sliders on the previous page.

Lever 1 — City Hall

Sell it, or keep it?

Setting	SELL	KEEP
Borrowed	**$11.0M**	**$15.0M**
Payment	**$666,594**	**$908,991**
Year-one gap	**$0**	**$224,153**
Cleared	**Year 15**	**Year 19**

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Lever 2 — the campaign

Do the gifts land?

Setting	RAISED	NOTHING
Borrowed	**$11.0M**	**$14.0M**
Payment	**$666,594**	**$848,392**
Year-one gap	**$0**	**$163,554**
Cleared	**Year 15**	**Year 18**

Lever 3 — the district

Is the EIFD formed?

Setting	FORMED	NOT FORMED
Borrowed	**$11.0M**	**$11.0M**
Payment	**$666,594**	**$666,594**
Year-one gap	**$0**	**$11,394**
Cleared	**Year 15**	**Year 21**

Read it this way: the first two levers change what the city borrows. The third changes when the debt ends.

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Why setting up the district still matters

Rent pays the bills. The EIFD ends the debt.

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RENT ALONE, NO EIFD

FY2048-49

Loan cleared in year 21. Interest paid: $6.7M.

Rent covers the scheduled payment and little more. The loan runs most of its full term.

RENT PLUS THE EIFD

FY2042-43

Loan cleared in year 15. Interest paid: $4.7M.

The EIFD saves $2.0M in interest — and keeps producing for decades after the debt is gone.

What the district is not. It cannot buy the building — it never accumulates $18M in time. It is the repayment engine: rent carries the early years when the increment is small, and the increment retires the debt early. These two boxes follow the sliders on page 14.

EIFD increment reconstructed from the district model's published anchors. At the default settings this reproduces the analysis of record — year 15 with the district, year 21 without. An earlier draft quoted year 17 and year 27; those figures came from a 1%-a-year rent escalation rather than the 2.5% used here and throughout this page.

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Downtown — move the same levers

Boxes with no figure move nothing. That is the point, and the chart shows it.

Escalation 2019 → 2026 — **+35%**

to a start — **0 years**

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MOVES IT UP

[x]	Cultural Center flood + ADA still required	+$555,000	*adopted CIP*
[ ]	Parking mitigation on the Bodega Ave block	$?	*no figure*
[ ]	Interim library through construction	$?	*no figure*
[ ]	CEQA, bidding and prevailing wage	$?	*no figure*
[ ]	Senior Center solved separately	$?	*no figure*
[ ]	City Hall solved separately	$?	*no figure*

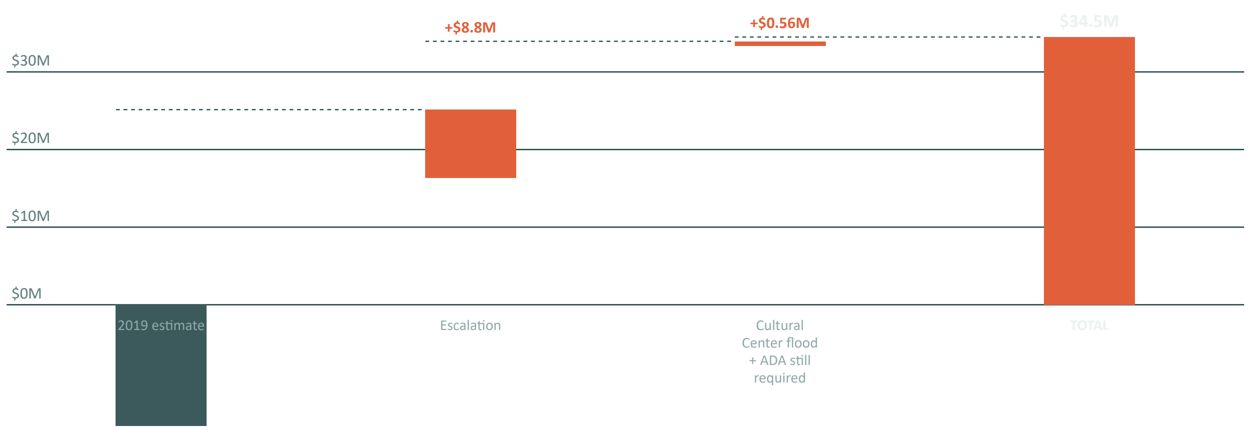
MOVES IT DOWN

[ ]	LANTERN capital campaign	$?	*donor base*
[ ]	State Library construction grant	$?	*status open*
[ ]	County Library capital contribution	$?	*not sought*

ALL-IN PROJECT COST
$34.5M

YEARLY DEBT SERVICE
$2,117,839

2019 estimate Adds to the cost Takes it away Ticked, no figure entered



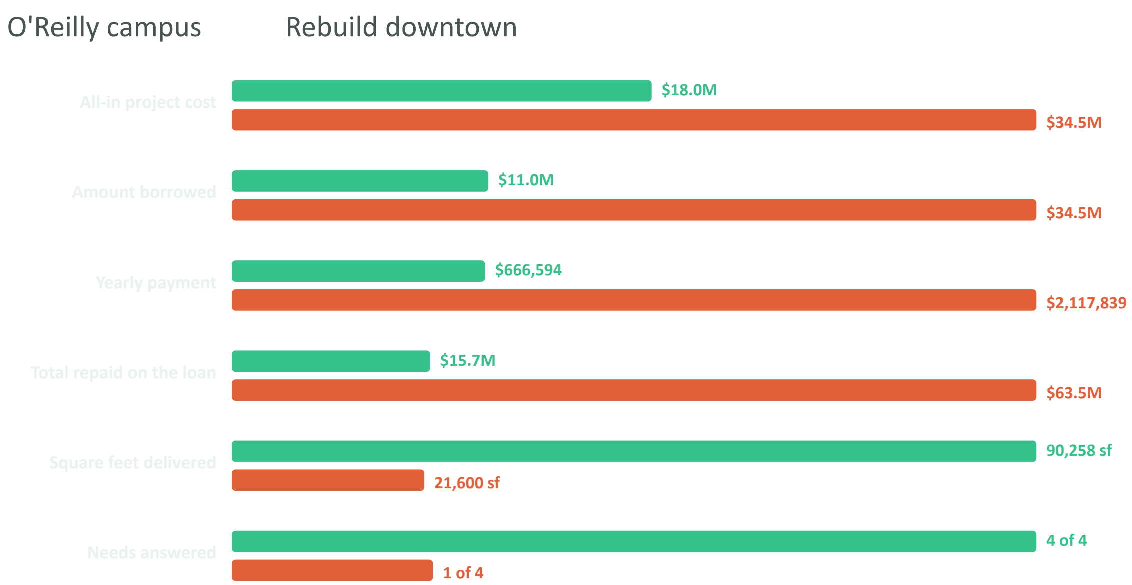
Documented additions: $555,000.

Two lines that cannot be ticked. Rental income: $0 — a 21,600 sq ft library has no leasable space; the whole building is the library. **EIFL** ↓ scroll or press → to advance ned public building generates no assessed-value lift, so there is nothing to capture. No slider position changes either one.

Base: Alameida Architecture (May 2019), $25,142,400. Cultural Center figure is adopted CIP 0714-26.03. Debt service at 4.5% over 30 years. Items shown unpriced have no figure in any City, County or consultant document reviewed — they are named rather than estimated, and shown in gold on the chart so a ticked-but-empty box is visible rather than silent.

Side by side

Both models at whatever you have set them to. Move the levers on page 14 or 17 and these move with them.



What $10.0M would buy

O'Reilly	**50,143 sq ft**
Downtown	**6,261 sq ft**

At the rates you have set — **$199/sq ft** against **$1,597/sq ft** — the same $10.0M buys **8.0 times** more floor spac

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These are not the same measure and should not be quoted as if they were. The O'Reilly rate is the cost of buying a finished building that went up in 2001. The downtown rate is the cost of designing and constructing new space today. That difference *is* the argument — but say it that way, not as though a square foot is a square foot.

O'Reilly: $666,594 a year, carried by rent and retired early by the increment — and all four needs answered.
Downtown: $2,117,839 a year from the General Fund, with no rent line and no increment — and three of the four needs still standing.

O'Reilly square footage is the confirmed campus total of 90,258 sq ft. Downtown is the 21,600 sq ft of the Alameida scheme. Rent of $1.75/sq ft/month remains a placeholder pending a written broker opinion, and the private-use question on tax-exempt debt remains unresolved — both would change the O'Reilly column.

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What we still do not know

Open, and material

- **The rent.** $1.75 a square foot is a placeholder. A written broker opinion has not been obtained, and every O'Reilly figure here rests on it.
- **Private use and tax-exempt debt.** Leasing 40,000 sq ft may breach the 10% private-business-use limit and make the borrowing taxable. Bond counsel has not ruled.
- **Parking downtown.** Unpriced, in a scheme whose site the committee itself called a parking crisis.
- **The $58,300.** Facility cost or programme subsidy — the City Manager's confirmation moves the do-nothing case either way.

What would settle them

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- A broker opinion of rent, in writing.
- A bond counsel memo on private use.
- A measured floor plan before any partner is promised a room.
- Surplus Land Act review before any city property is disposed of.

No site decision has been made. The committee recommendation is due September 15.

Building the Commons Committee · August 2026. Every figure on these pages traces to a named source or is marked as an assumption you can move yourself.

ONE LAST THING, AND IT IS ABOUT GEOGRAPHY

Sebastopol is a linear city

Every argument on the pages above assumes a shape for this town. It is worth saying out loud what that shape is, because it changes what the word *downtown* is doing in the sentence.

One street, end to end

Sebastopol is not built around a square. It is built along a line. Highway 116 comes in from the north as Gravenstein Highway, becomes Main Street through the middle of town, and leaves to the south as Petaluma Avenue. Bodega Avenue — Highway 12 — crosses it and runs west into the county and on to the coast. Almost everything this town does happens within a few hundred feet of one of those two roads.

What we call downtown is a **node on that line**. It is the busiest node, and the one with the most frontage and the most history. It is not the geometric centre of anything, and nothing in the town's layout radiates from it.

Every one of the nine sites on the m[illegible] or within a block of it. There was never a shortlist that did otherwise, because there is nowhere else to be.

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What that means for this decision

First, distance here is measured along the corridor, not as a radius. The choice is not between downtown and somewhere else. It is between two points on the same road, about 1.1 miles apart.

Second, the library's catchment is not the downtown blocks. It is west county, and west county arrives along Bodega Avenue. For most of the people who use it, the trip is already a drive down Highway 12 — either way.

Third, and against the first two: linear does not mean walkable. A mile up the spine is a short drive and a real walk, and the pedestrian and cycling experience along that stretch is the weakest part of the corridor. That is a capital cost the City carries whichever site it picks. It sits in the weaknesses column on page 8, and it belongs there.

1 O'Reilly campus — the leading option **2** Library & City Hall **3** Senior Center, 167 N High

4 The Legacy craft store **5** Cultural Center, 390 Morris **6** Rite Aid — ruled out

7 Calder Creek **8** Railroad Forest **9** To\ ↓ scroll or press → to advance

Distances computed from geocoded coordinates. The map is schematic and roughly to scale — it is not a survey, and the road geometry is simplified to make one point: there is no centre to move away from. There is a line, and every option is on it. Building the Commons Committee · August 2026.

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