

From: [Kate Haug](#)
To: [Mary Gourley](#)
Subject: Comment on Relaunch Proposals - Public Comment 1/19/22 Meeting
Date: Tuesday, January 18, 2022 9:12:24 AM

Dear Council Members,

In reviewing the RFPs for the Revitalize Sebastopol contract, I have a few comments which I hope you will take under consideration.

The first is that \$86,000 is very little funding for all the targets which the RFP presents. Thus all of these proposals have terrific ideas but it seems a bit unrealistic that the teams could bring all their plans to fruition given the amount of funding. Typically, \$86,000 would pay for the salary of a consultant and then there would be specific funds for media buys, event implementation, marketing, physical asset building, web development and social media campaigns.

I hope Council selects a few key areas which all the proposals mention such as cleaning up downtown Sebastopol, creating art and music events and publicity. How much money do candidates need, outside of the cost of their time, to make these important aspects of revitalization possible?

For instance, the Townie Media proposal has wonderful ideas about visually connecting the Barlow to downtown via murals and signage. How much would it cost to implement those ideas? If it costs \$30,000 then that should be noted as part of the plan. The Townie Media proposal has a great idea for the Ives' Park anniversary celebration but no specific budget. How much would it cost to host an anniversary event?

Deborah Burnes has many good ideas for beautification of downtown and community events but no budget itemized for them. How much would her ideas cost to bring into reality?

I hope that as the Council reads all the proposals, they will settle on a few core projects which can be executed and paid for within the 12 month time frame.

It would be prudent to ask candidates to break down objectives with specific amounts of money such as:

Downtown Connective Mural Campaign - \$15,000

Money to Public Works to Keep Downtown and the Plaza Clean (remove graffiti and stickers from posts, replace worn signs and benches, refresh plantings, seasonal plantings and decorations) - \$15,000

Art/Music Events - \$15,000

Media Buys - \$7500

Support for Soropotomist and Rotary clubs to sponsor a "Civic Spaces Program," small, targeted clean up days focused on civil spaces like clean up and planting around the library, post-office, City Hall and the new public art sculpture garden - \$5000.

Consultant Fee for PR Campaigns, business contacts, branding, social media organization- \$28,500

Total \$86,000

On another note, the Peacetown Proposal seems to stray from Mr. Corbett's core competency, which is organizing and hosting music events. Also, I would be very reluctant to "brand" Sebastopol as Peacetown as the Peacetown brand might appeal to a particular demographic of older white people but not appeal to younger people, international residents and communities of color. The Bay Area is extremely diverse and international.

While Sebastopol consists mostly of older white people who seem to relate to the history of the "Summer of Love," for younger audiences and people not part of the "boomer" generation it can be a bit cliched and not hold a wide appeal. This might be especially true for business owners who need to have a wide range in terms of clientele to make their businesses viable.

If you look at successful location based branding campaigns, they tend to use graphics and physical assets to anchor the brand such as Healdsburg = fine dining, Santa Cruz = the beach, Los Angeles = the movies, Napa = wine, the Barlow = outdoor market place. Brand propositions tend to stay away from "value" systems and instead concentrate on assets that have a wide appeal.

As you think about the "Peacetown" proposal, you might want to do some demographic research on the people who visit Sonoma County, their country of origin, age and social media profiles. Your consultant can run A/B testing on social media targeted at specific demographics such as families in the 94122 zip code with household incomes over \$100K to see how branding concepts appeal to demographics you want to attract. With social media data, you can reach very specific groups with marketing campaigns.

Another issue with the Peacetown Campaign is that it wants to address affordable housing. Sebastopol already is close to its affordable housing RHNA numbers and if the Woodmark Apartments on Bodega Avenue go through, Sebastopol will have met those targets. In addition, Sebastopol has more transient resources than any other City in Sonoma County.

Sebastopol has 45 transient beds at the Sebastopol Inn, 85 people housed at Park Village, 6 Safe Parking Spots at the Community Church and now 22 spots at the SAVS RV Village. $45+85+28 = 158$ transient beds, which equals one transient bed per every 47 residents, which is extremely high per capita of transient beds.

Windsor, population 27,000, would need 574 transient beds to meet this ratio; they will have no beds after they shut down their Roomkey hotel. Rohnert Park, population 42,000, would need 893 beds to match our ratio; they currently have zero. Santa Rosa, population 179,700, would need 3823 beds!

Our high ratio of transients is not appealing to businesses who need customers. In order to operate, businesses position themselves in areas where the demographics support their financial operations. In California, the high cost of rent, wages, tax and business operation means that many new businesses can only function if they are able to reach a particular income demographic.

We do not have any tourist accommodations in our downtown. Instead, we have over 100 beds for transients which impacts Sebastopol's appeal to bring in new businesses, attract visitors, and increase foot traffic. Occidental, a town of 800 people, has more tourist beds than downtown Sebastopol. Healdsburg has many hotels.

Hotels are vital economic engines as they bring in new customers, foot traffic, transient occupancy tax, sales tax and property tax.

When Sebastopol lost the Sebastopol Inn, it lost vital foot traffic and brand exposure. If each tourist spent \$20-\$100 dollars in Sebastopol, ate at a local restaurant and visited a local merchant, that is an incredible amount of exposure and foot traffic. Businesses can generate new customers through tourists. Tourists cycle through the town on a regular basis and therefore a great asset to local businesses.

Sebastopol needs a hotel downtown and any campaign for economic vitality should include creating a City brand and atmosphere that will attract a hotel downtown. Our current downtown is not appealing to any hotel as there is a vacant lot in the middle of downtown that seems to be serving as a storage facility for Ned Kahn, whose work I like but the lot is unkempt and the pieces are not well position on the site and it's blocked off from public access. Our town square needs a cosmetic facelift. Our main street needs to be tidy, clean and visually unified through plantings and seasonal decorations.

In addition, Peacetown is part of Mr. Corbett's business brand and it seems a bit specious to tie the brand of a City, which is diverse in its history and appeal to a particular brand. In the same way that Disneyland is synonymous with Walt Disney and his particular brand, Peacetown has its own brand which is very viable for its own purposes but not necessarily suitable for attracting a wide range of tourists and businesses into Sebastopol.

The Peacetown Proposal would be much more appealing and relevant if it were simply Mr. Corbett organizing and promoting 15-20 free, musical events at different locations in and around Sebastopol such as in Ives' Park, at Willard Libby, at the Youth Park, at the Cultural

Center, at the Arts Center, at the Luther Burbank Experimental Garden, at the Cemetery, at Ragle, at the Arts Center and other public locations. He could organize holiday musical events such as strolling singers or a "second line" for Mardi Gras 2023. This would use his very successful record of organizing and promoting musical events to the City's advantage. It also seems that he could reasonably accomplish this for \$86,000

Best regards,
Kate Haug