

Dear Council Members, City Staff, Chamber, and SDA,

Please start, in earnest, the revitalization of Sebastopol, which was the campaign promise of Measure U, the increased sales tax.

As summer and all of its earnings potential is rapidly approaching, I urge the City to work closely with the Chamber, The SDA and local nonprofits to commit to cleaning up downtown, Ives park, our public spaces and public buildings to make Sebastopol a welcoming, safe and fun destination for locals and tourists.

The City needs to show leadership in this area and the community needs to show pride in the City.

All parts of the City Staff – planning, economic development, City organizations – need to convene around making Sebastopol inviting and attractive to spur economic development.

I ask that the City Staff work on a plan and involve various groups within our community to tackle the following issues:

- 1) Cleaning up downtown with a concentration on picking up trash, cleaning graffiti, cleaning sidewalks, washing windows, and removing stickers and posters from utility boxes, signposts, bus stops and other surfaces. Cleaning up public parking lots. Enhanced cleaning can be a two-pronged attack involving Public Works and monthly volunteer cleanups in association with groups and organizations such as Rotary, Climate Action, Chamber, Senior Center, Analy High School, local churches, Public Art, and West County Community Services. The Economic Development director should have a 3-year calendar with a group taking one to two spots per year. It is important to partner with groups to show that Sebastopol has pride in its City and the citizens are invested in keeping it clean.
- 2) In March and April, have 2 public walks downtown with the Planning Commission, Chamber, SDA, business owners and community members to identify simple, low-cost solutions to make downtown more attractive. As we are getting new trash cans, this could be part of the discussion. Low-cost solutions should be built into the 2024-2025 capital improvements budget.
- 3) Create an events calendar that coordinates City, business, nonprofit and regional events. The calendar should be posted on all non-profit websites and have prominent placement on the City website.
- 4) Survey local businesses on how the City can help them and ask them what businesses they would like to see come into Sebastopol. Main Streets are an eco-system and businesses can support one another. What types of new businesses would help Main Street and Sebastopol thrive?
- 5) Contact landowners about blight, junk vehicles, graffiti, poor maintenance and panhandling on their properties. I have personally contacted Rite Aid, Safeway and the Redwood Market place regarding blight and junk vehicles associated with their properties. You can look up any property owner by doing an address search here:
<https://common3.mptsweb.com/mbc/sonoma/tax/search>

- 6) Earmark funds to green up public spaces such as the Town Square, Main Street, City Hall and the parking lot across from the Arts Center. City Hall does not show any pride of ownership. Plant some simple, easy to maintain landscape like lomandra del sol (<https://www.urbantreefarm.com/product/lomandra-confertifolia-del-sol/>), which are green and full year-round around City Hall. Make sure the Capital Improvement budget includes money for City Hall landscaping and for potted plants and other greenery along Main Street.
- 7) Make sure that Sebastopol participates in regional events like restaurant week and has a good calendar of events in a variety of its public and private spaces. Use existing networks to promote events. Consider publishing a yearly paper calendar to be distributed or posted at the Chamber, stores, restaurants and hotels that features Sebastopol events like the documentary film festival, apple blossom, Halloween, etc with a guide for restaurants and lodging.
- 8) Budget to replace fencing in Ives. While there is a \$15,000,000+ plan to re-imagine Ives via the Park Master Plan, there is no funding for a change of this scale. Instead, replace the fence which is over 50 years old and is falling apart. If you fix the fence, the pathway and add a mural to the exterior of the pool facility, Ives would be a good shape for the next decade. Perhaps the Public Art Committee has enough money to produce a mural of the West County hills with oak trees, lupine and poppies in conjunction with ArtStart. <https://www.artstart.us>
- 9) Planning Commission, Chamber, SDA, business owners and public works should walk down Main Street and remove any signage and/or newspaper boxes that are not in use. Remove excess clutter. See if new benches are needed. Can we get new benches from the new trash hauler?
- 10) Economic Development director should be contacting commercial property owners to see what is needed to get vacant store fronts rented.

2025 should be the dawn of a new era in Sebastopol where the City, the businesses and the nonprofits are working together toward economic viability.

Measure U ran on the campaign slogan "Revitalize Sebastopol." Let's see all hands-on deck toward this goal of economic viability and revitalization. Start with the basics like making Main Street pretty and inviting.

Put beautification into the budget so there is money to support the economic development. I would say that \$5000 for greening downtown, \$10,000 for landscaping City Hall, \$12,000 for escalated cleaning downtown and community cleaning days, \$120,000 toward Ives Park renovations and mural and \$15,000 to invest in event PR and yearly printed calendar would be money well-spent and would yield positive results for the business community and residents in the form of a more pleasant downtown and more sales tax revenue. \$162,000 is less than a salary and would have a lasting impact for the community. The Capital Improvement budget and upcoming budget need to include money for economic revitalization.