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To: [Mary Gourley](#)
Cc: [Lawrence McLaughlin](#); [Dante Del Prete](#); [Kathy Oetinger](#); [Fernandez, Evert](#); [Varian, Ethan](#); [Camille Escovedo](#)
Subject: Sebastopol- More Transient than Tourist Beds - Public Comment 11/16/21
Date: Monday, November 15, 2021 9:18:42 AM

Dear Council Members,

I'm writing to you in regards to the fact that Sebastopol currently has more transient beds than tourist beds in our downtown. There are 31 beds at the Sebastopol Inn. There are transient RV sites at Park Village. There is Safe Parking for transients at the Community Church. We have more transient resources than Rohnert Park. In comparison, Cotati, a town of similar population, appears to have zero transient resources.

Now Council is considering even more transient accommodations in the form of a transient parking site managed by Sonoma Applied Village Services (SAVS).

Sebastopol's downtown and local, small businesses do not need more transients or more transient accommodations. Our downtown needs tourist accommodations to drive traffic to their businesses. Our City budget needs tourist accommodations to increase sales tax and Transient Occupancy Tax. At this point, there are no beds for tourists in our downtown.

Last December, Sebastopol lost its only downtown hotel, the Sebastopol Inn, to the County. The Sebastopol Inn is now and will be forever Permanent Supportive Housing for transients. This was a huge loss - economically - for Sebastopol and it was also a huge loss for residents as the Inn was part of our community amenities. There is no longer a place for relatives to stay. Council seems to ignore the tremendous impact this has had on our businesses and our community but the impacts are real and will be more pronounced as we transition through the pandemic.

The site for the SAVS transient housing is located near crucial community resources - the Sebastopol Community Cultural Center, the Little League Field, the Youth Park, the Laguna, - and two schools - Greenacres and West County High School. We can not afford to give up more community assets and land to transients. We need to have these valuable community sites open and welcoming to local residents and visitors. We don't need to forfeit more of our City to transients.

Transient services bring in more transients. We see this in Sebastopol; Sebastopol has the Inn and Park Village and now Council is considering yet more services for transients as they see an increase, not a decrease, in the transient population. For the first time in the City's history, Sebastopol hired a \$72,000 homeless outreach coordinator to deal with the increase in the local transient population. Over the last 3 years, the State of California spent \$13 billion dollars in transient funding, which resulted in an increase in the State's transient population. There is no correlation between increased funding and resources for transients

and a decrease in the transient population. In fact, it appears to be the opposite, the more transient resources, the more transients.

In 12-24 months, all the State funding for all these transient housing projects, including the Sebastopol Inn and the SAVS safe parking, will run out. What will happen at that moment, when all the current, temporary programs no longer have funding? What will happen to the residents of this proposed transient village? Will the City of Sebastopol be liable for housing them?

Sebastopol needs a hotel downtown. Sebastopol needs workforce housing downtown. This would help our local economy and help to revitalize our downtown and provide crucial housing for guests and workers. Council should use their precious time trying to fill commercial vacancies downtown and working with developers to build a downtown hotel and workforce housing. That would fulfill the stated mission of the General Plan and ensure long term vitality and sustainability for the City of Sebastopol and its tax paying residents.

If Sebastopol is known for its transients and transient resources, how does that support our local businesses, the development of a new downtown hotel, the development of new local businesses, the development of new housing? How does the SAVS transient parking project benefit Sebastopol, its residents and small businesses in any way?

People pay taxes on good faith that their elected officials are planning for the long term viability of their City and are funding vital public services and infrastructure. Council needs to make sure they are meeting their responsibility to the citizens and business owners of Sebastopol by supporting a thriving downtown that has a hotel and workforce housing. We cannot support any more transient accommodations. We cannot give up any more of our community assets.

Support Sebastopol. Support downtown. Say no to SAVS.

Best,
Kate Haug