

sebastopol

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General Plan Update

Sebastopol is about to embark on a comprehensive update of its General Plan.

The General Plan is often referred to as the land use 'constitution' for cities. The General Plan sets forth a long-term vision for the city, and includes policies and programs to work towards that vision.

The General Plan addresses key topics including circulation, development regulations, parks, air quality, noise, urban design, and economic development, as well as other issues. The Plan is implemented through the Zoning Ordinance and development standards, by public works projects, and by other implementation programs.

The current Sebastopol General Plan was adopted in 1994. While its vision of maintaining the special

small-town qualities of Sebastopol remains valid, many aspects of the Plan need updating, and there are significant issues such as climate change that were not considered in the prior General Plan.

This year's City Budget includes funding to initiate a major General Plan update. The City is retaining De Novo Planning Group, a consultant with experience in preparing General Plan updates; will form a General Plan Advisory Committee (GPAC); once the draft Plan is prepared, will draft an Environmental Impact Report (EIR); and eventually, will conduct formal public hearings by the Planning Commission and City Council.

The process will include preparation of technical background reports addressing a wide variety of topics, including traffic conditions, air

quality, noise levels, infrastructure, geotechnical data, and other aspects that provide a picture of existing conditions in Sebastopol.

Stay tuned to the City web site for information about the General Plan Advisory Committee. The City Council wishes to appoint a broad-based Committee whose members represent a variety of interests of the Sebastopol community.

If you are interested in applying to be a member of the GPAC, please contact the Planning Department.

It is anticipated that major work on the General Plan Update will commence in early 2014. The project is expected to take about two-and-a-half years to complete.

To help shape Sebastopol's future, plan on participating!



Wood Smoke: Be Aware

Sebastopol is within the jurisdiction of the Bay Area Air Quality Management District (BAAQMD). The District has regulations controlling wood smoke.

Wood-burning is significantly more polluting than a number of other forms of heating. Smoke is made up of a complex mixture of gases and fine particles produced when wood and other organic matter burn.

Particulate matter is a mixture of solid and liquid particles in the air. The smaller-sized particles – those 10 micrometers or less in diameter (PM10)—are of greatest health concern because they can pass through the nose and throat and lodge deep in the lungs.

Included in PM10 is a subset of very tiny particles 2.5 micrometers or smaller (PM 2.5), sometimes called “fine” particles. For comparison, a particle 10 micrometers in diameter is about one-seventh the diameter of a human hair.

Under certain meteorological conditions—cold, stagnant winter evenings—surface based radiation inversions form quickly in the Bay Area and PM levels rise rapidly.

By the 1980’s, wood smoke became the largest area-wide stationary source of particulate matter in the Bay Area. Studies by the Air District indicated that wood smoke was responsible for an average of one-third of the PM10 in the air basin during the winter months and almost 70 percent of the PM10 in Santa Rosa.

In addition, wood burning generates carbon monoxide and toxic air pollutants such as benzene and dioxin.

The biggest health threat from smoke comes from fine particles (also called particulate matter or PM). These microscopic particles get into your eyes and respiratory system, where they can cause health problems such as burning eyes, runny nose, and illnesses such as asthma symptoms, as well as decreased lung function.

Fine particles also can aggravate chronic heart and lung diseases and are linked to premature deaths in people with these chronic conditions.

With some exceptions (such as when wood-burning appliances are the sole source of heat for a home) the Air District regulations make it illegal to burn wood or fire logs in fireplaces, wood stoves, pellet stoves, outdoor fire pits, or any other wood-burning devices when the Air District issues a Winter Spare the Air Alert.

For more information or to sign up for an email Spare the Air alert, see the BAAQMD web site at www.baaqmd.gov.

As we move into the winter months, please be aware of the need to limit pollution from wood-burning fireplaces and stoves.

Become a Volunteer Firefighter

One way you can help your community is by volunteering for the City’s public safety services. Sebastopol is fortunate to have an outstanding volunteer Fire Department. The Sebastopol Fire Department is looking for men and women, 18 years of age or older, who are interested in providing an essential service to the community.

The Fire Department provides the training and equipment; you provide the desire to use your time to provide a vital service to your community. Application information is on the Fire Department page of the City web site, or you can call the Fire Department at 823-8061 for more information.

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