



## Overview of Sebastopol's Formula Business Ordinance

Sebastopol has a 'formula business' or chain store ordinance. *Before* you consider opening a new business, we urge you to investigate whether your business is subject to the special formula business review Use Permit process.

In any case, as part of the Business License process, all applicants for new Business Licenses are required to complete a 'formula business checklist.' This helps determine if a Formula Use Permit is required or not.

### ***What types of businesses are regulated?***

With a couple of exceptions, the formula business ordinance does *not* ban formula businesses. It takes a balanced approach to protect the local economy and unique character of Sebastopol:

- allows for some types of formula businesses in several shopping centers without special approval;
- prohibits just a few types of businesses in the Downtown Area;
- requires a special Formula Business Use Permit review process for most types of formula businesses

### ***What is a Formula Business?***

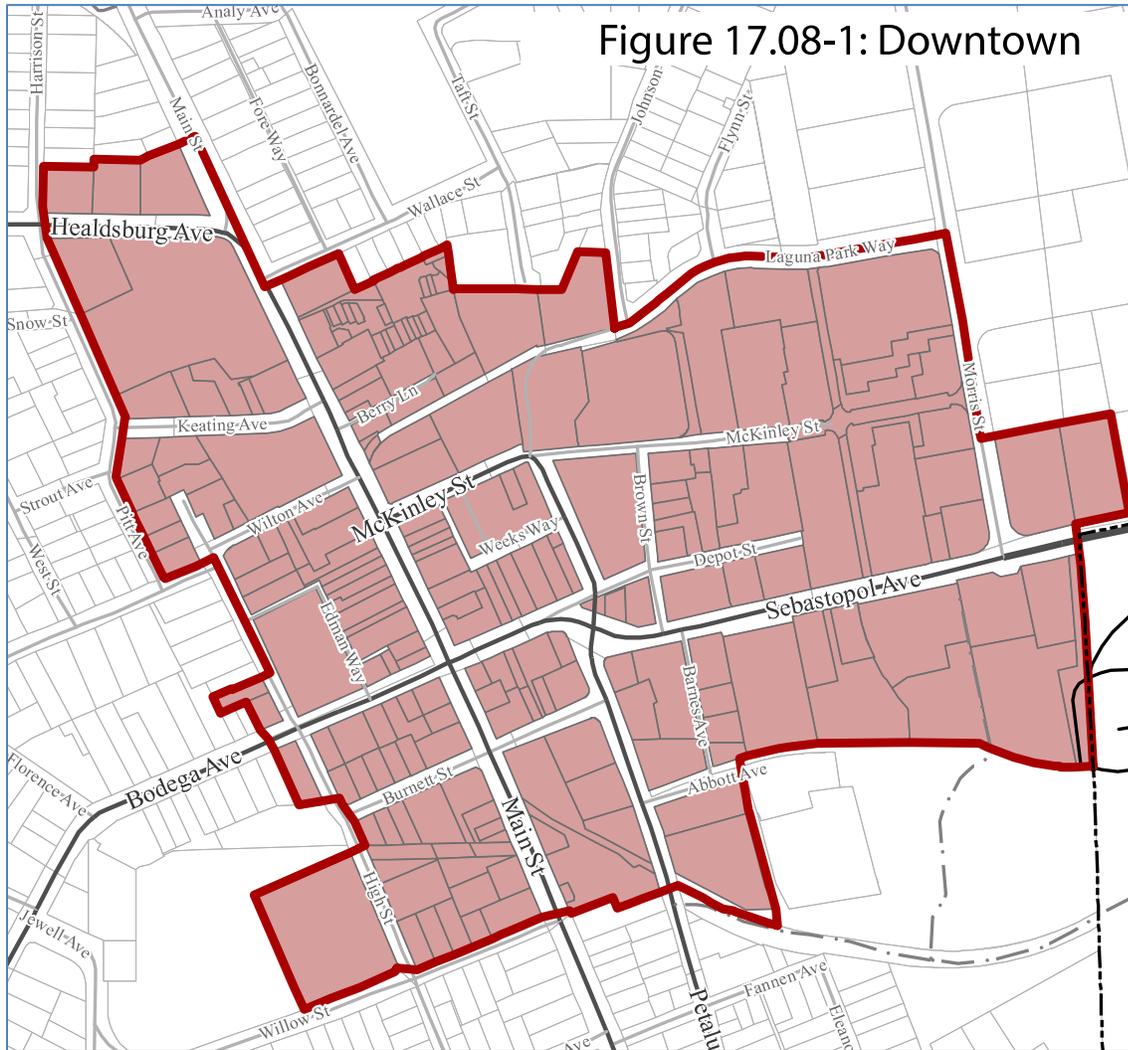
A formula business is defined as a business with 25 or more establishments in the U.S. This may include substantially similar products, signs, decor, uniforms, and other characteristics.

Three types of formula business are prohibited in Sebastopol's Downtown only:

- formula motels and hotels;
- formula restaurants;
- formula offices on the first floor of a structure (allowed on upper floors).

These types of businesses *may* be allowed in other parts of town, either with a use permit or based on location as outlined below.

The Downtown area is defined in the map below:



### **Exemptions**

The ordinance has a number of exemptions. For example, offices outside of downtown, tax preparation services, banks and credit unions, and are *not* subject to the regulations.

In addition, formula businesses of *less than 10,000 square feet* are allowed without a Use Permit at any of four existing shopping centers: Redwood Marketplace; Fiesta; Gravenstein; and Southpoint.

Additionally, existing formula businesses can remodel or construct small additions without triggering the formula business Use Permit requirement.

### **Formula Business Use Permit**

If a business is defined as a formula business and *does not qualify* for one of the exemptions, a formula business Use Permit is required.

This entails filing an application with the Planning Department, including a processing fee, and a discretionary public hearing before the Planning Commission. From filing of a complete application with Planning, and depending on a number of factors, this process may take approximately eight to twelve weeks to obtain a final decision.

### ***Other Regulations***

While a particular business may or may not need a formula business Use Permit, *other permits may be needed*. For more information, or if you have any questions, please contact the Planning Department at (707) 823-6167.