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Growth boundaries may dominate land-use debate

by Barry W. Dugan
Sonoma West editor

SEBASTOPOL — With the possibility of a petition drive to put the issue before voters in November, and two open City Council seats on the same ballot, the volatile issue of urban growth boundaries will likely remain a hotly-debated topic in Sebastopol in 1996.

At the same time, Sonoma County officials are considering a similar measure that could freeze open space between cities for the next 20 years.

In Sebastopol, the City Council recently declined to put the UGB issue on the ballot, leaving it up to interested citizens to gather enough signatures to put the measure before voters.

What is proposed is a 20-year urban growth boundary, which would prevent any further annexation of land outside Sebastopol's existing sphere of influence. The city's sphere of influence, which was reduced by 500 acres during the 1994 General Plan adoption, includes little land that is not already in the city limits.

The city has a UGB in its General Plan already; the ballot measure would simply lock it into in place for 20 years. As it now stands, the City Council can amend the plan, and allow annexations outside the city limits and sphere of influence.

Critics of a 20-year UGB say it leaves the city little flexibility to accommodate growth that may be needed in the future. They also say it takes away the decision-making power from future elected officials.

Proponents of the UGB say it (Please see *Growth* page A9)