

To my neighbors, friends, and constituents,

This is my open letter to you, about who I am and why I ran for City Council. So far, I have not responded to the negative and deceitful attacks on my colleagues and me. By this letter, I would like now to address some of those attacks. I remain committed to communication that is professional, civil, sincere, and honest.

I have lived in Ojai for over 50 years. My wife and I chose to raise a family here. My family has deep roots in this community, and has been of service over the decades. I ran for City Council because I love Ojai. It wasn't an easy decision to run or to serve but I wanted to give back to the community that has given so much to me. I remain committed to campaign promises to: provide a safe environment where Ojai residents and businesses can thrive, protecting Ojai's limited water supply, address climate change, achieving a better balance between our lives as residents and the tourism that sustains our economy and providing affordable housing in a manner that preserves Ojai's small town character.

In the 10 months that I have been in office, I'm proud to have voted to protect local renters (who are approximately 50% of my constituents) by placing reasonable limits on annual rent increases and protecting them against no-fault evictions. I have voted to support every affordable housing project that has been presented to City Council since my election. I expect to continue support projects that provide predominantly affordable housing for the Ojai residents in need - like the project advanced by Habitat for Humanity. I will also continue to support the short-term vacation rental ban which protects our existing affordable housing stock and protects our neighborhoods as places where we live next to our neighbors. We also adopted an ordinance that reduces carbon emissions from new construction but does not require any current resident to give up their use of gas appliances (until they decide that on their own).

These are some of the key issues that define me as a City Councilperson. If these are matters you care about as well, then I am the representative for you. I won my seat by a significant margin -the largest margin in the election - which tells me that we as a community are aligned on issues that are important to my district constituents.

The special interests behind the recall ran 4 candidates for City Council last November. They lost 3 of their 4 council races. Now only 9 months into my four-year term, this group is attempting an end-run on the democratic process. Most of this group favors opening Ojai's doors to real estate speculators and prioritize additional construction of new housing without regard to how it will impact the residents who already live in Ojai. They label their projects affordable even though only a small percentage of the construction will be allocated as affordable and even though the majority of the "affordable housing" will cost over \$3,600 per month to rent. That kind of "affordable" does not provide meaningful assistance to our existing renter population that is trying to maintain their foothold in Ojai's difficult housing market.

While I am not against growth, I am concerned that Ojai has a limited capacity to grow. Our water supply is not unlimited, our streets are congested during ever increasing periods of the week. (How often have you said I won't go downtown on weekends)? Ojai's air quality is poor during certain times of the year. Because of these limitations, when we do build multi-unit projects, we need to maximize the truly affordable units derived from the project.

The proponents of the recall don't want Ojai to regulate any aspect of new construction. In fact, by the recall effort they are demonstrating that they don't even want to engage in public debate over our housing future. Having failed to sell their planned build out of Ojai in the November 2022 election, they now want to remove me and install someone on your City Council who will serve the real estate speculators rather than the average person who lives, works and strives to maintain the high-quality of life that Ojai offers.

In my experience Ojai residents don't want to have to watch local politics too closely. They tend to elect representatives they trust to make the right decision for the right reasons. Rather than address the issues head on and attempt to gain the support of Ojai's majority, the opposition is engaged in a campaign to erode trust in anyone who opposes them. As a result, they have engaged in a smear campaign, not only against me, but against the shared vision of Ojai voters that Ojai should protect its small-town character. The strategy to gain control by attacking elected officials has become prevalent on a nationwide basis. It is sad that this conduct has made its way into Ojai politics. I will not participate in these toxic, negative dynamics as I do not believe it is healthy for our democracy nor the goodwill for our neighbors that Ojai has demonstrated for decades.

If you agree with me that Ojai's rural, small-town character is Ojai's most valuable asset – providing our quality of life and essential to our tourist economy - then don't sign the recall petition.

If you agree that the environmental well-being of Ojai is crucial, that traffic is a real problem, that our water future must be protected, and that air quality is paramount, then don't sign the recall petition.

If you agree with me that our limited capacity to grow should be prioritized for housing that allows our low- or average- income residents to remain in Ojai, then don't sign the recall petition. If you agree with me that our existing housing supply should be prioritized for actual residents, not real estate speculators and investors, then don't sign the recall petition.

If you agree with me that Ojai owes a huge debt of gratitude to the decades of leadership that have protected Ojai from being overrun by development (Ojai is not the last small town in Southern California by accident), then don't sign the recall petition.

These are all the things I ran upon, and will continue to prioritize during my service to District 3 of the City of Ojai.

Thank you for taking the time to read this open letter. Please feel free to reach me at Andy@AndyForOjai.com. I welcome your thoughts, questions, and comments. You can find more information about these issues at AndyForOjai.com.