

"Ojai Alive" 2017-2117

Ojai Unified School District's Chaparral site in the village center's future

Nicholas Oatway, Architect and Associates



Narrative: "Ojai Alive" 2017-2117

Ojai Unified School District's "Chaparral school site" in the village center's future

The Ojai Unified School District board is handing our community a big opportunity. The school board has labeled their Chaparral school site at 414 E. Ojai Avenue, "surplus" public school land. In the near future, the school district board will publish a request for proposals (RFP). They will be looking for an innovative, progressive developer group to reinvent this extraordinary village center site; with this effort the school district wants to stabilize their financial position. Today there are structures on site for district administration and yard maintenance activities, the Chaparral high school and auditorium, and a pre school (A Place to G.

In a recent community meeting many ideas were shared for reuse of the property. A public swimming pool, affordable housing, a hotel, a restaurant, work/live spaces for start up businesses and a community vegetable garden are a few of the ideas mentioned. Everyone present agreed future improvements should be designed with the latest environmental protections saving water, using renewable power generation and saving the existing structures where useful to maintaining the town's character.

Shoulder to shoulder with Ojai's iconic arcaded shopping block along Ojai Avenue, this site will play a powerful role in the life of the town for many years to come. Here is the challenge to our collective imagination. Make a place that promises and provides a lively, inclusive experience for everyone. In concept and construction reflect the diverse cultural and economic lives active in our valley community. Make a beautiful place where people are drawn to a uniquely welcoming and safe small town atmosphere. Make it a place to live, work, learn and play where the physical and social meaning of community is there for all to enjoy and experience.

Here is an enormous opportunity for the School district board and the City council with an inspired citizenry working together to reimagine this site as a unique and dynamic boost to the Ojai community it's deserves to be. The Chaparral property offers the entire community a chance to learn with a capital "L" and work together with a capital "W". Energized by a strong vision and working collectively we can accomplish the amazing and exciting task in front of us.

Sincerely

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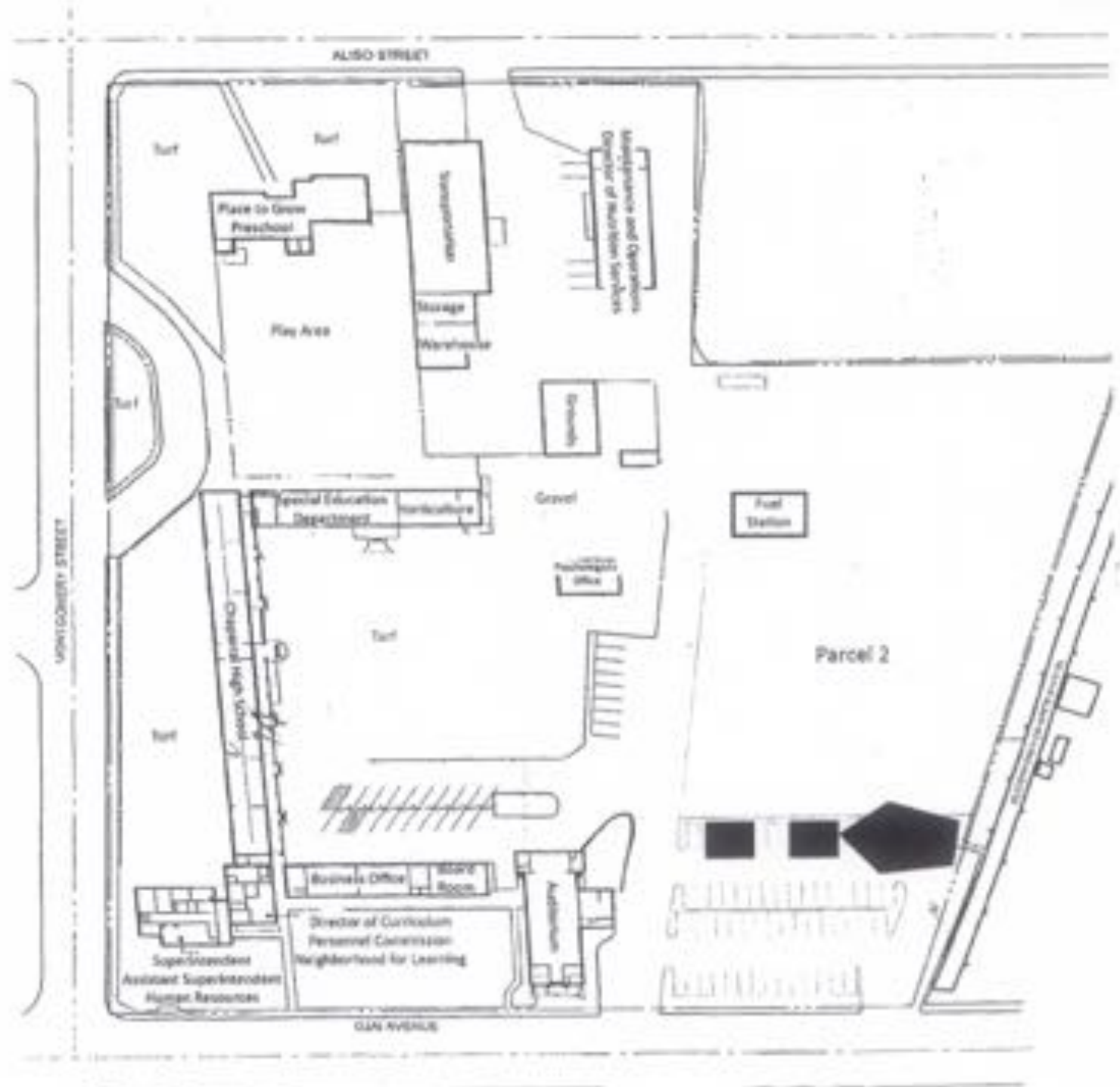
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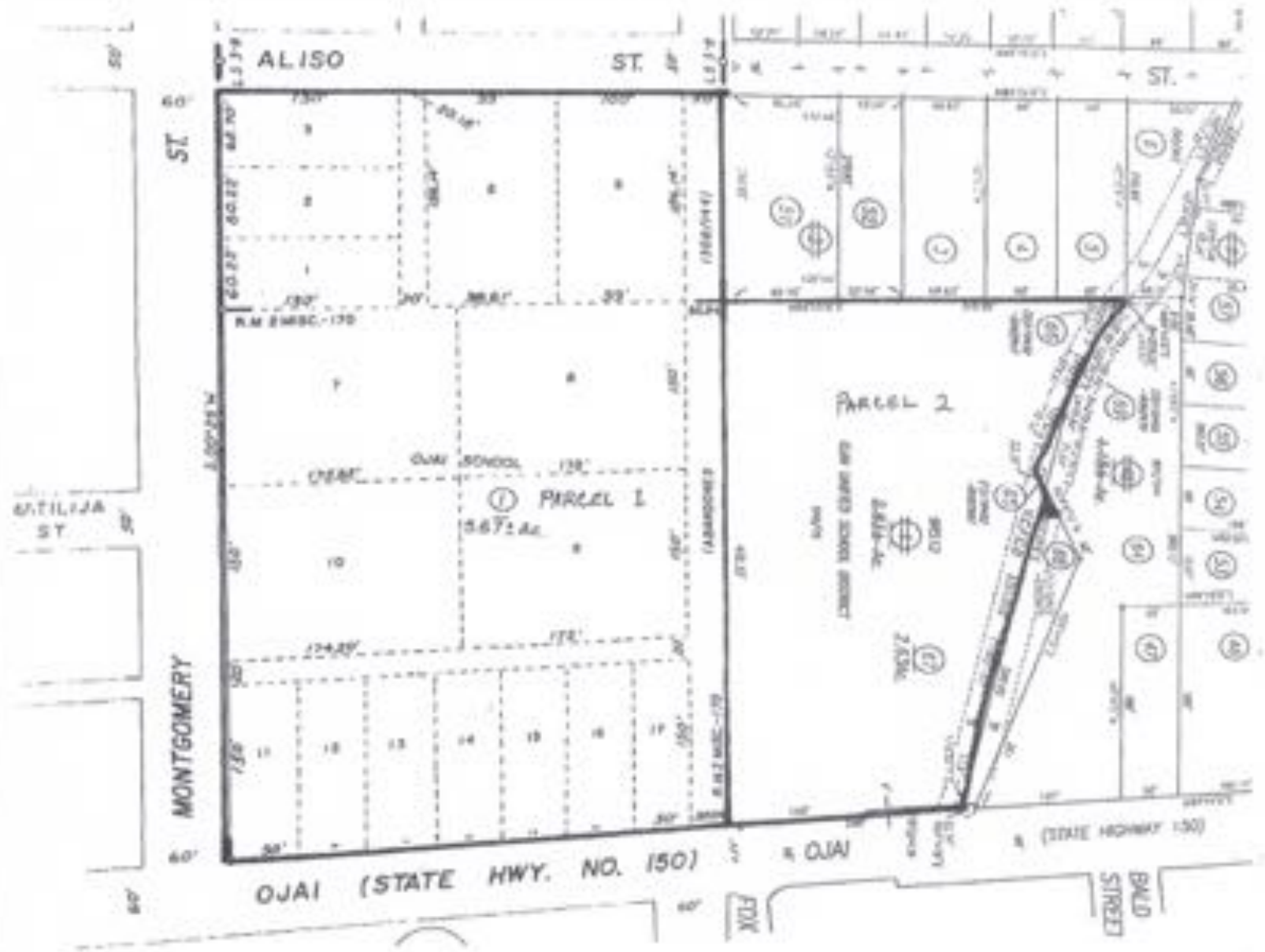
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Google Maps



Imagery ©2017 DigitalGlobe, U.S. Geological Survey, USDA Farm Service Agency, Map data ©2017 Google 100 ft





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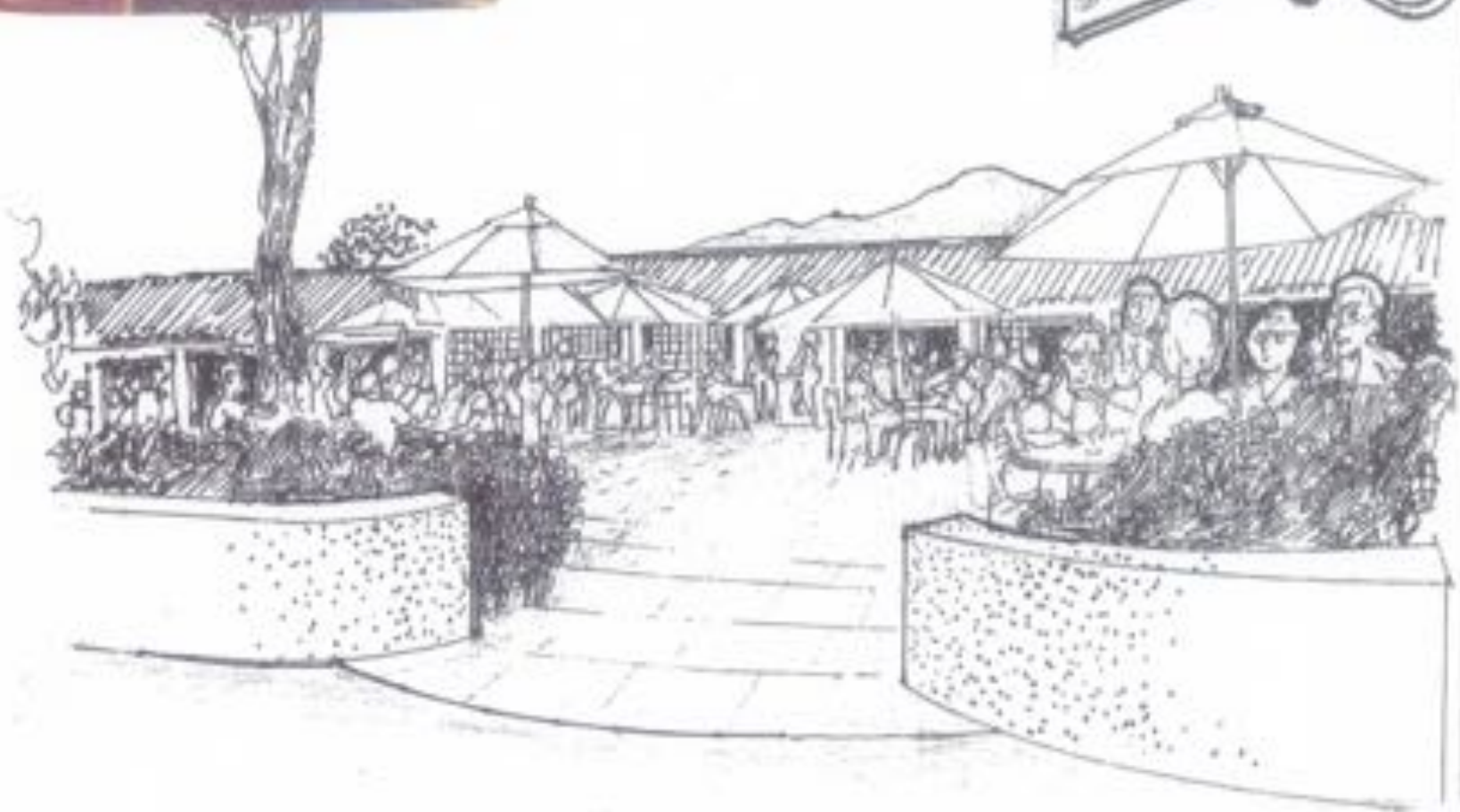


Legend

- PS Pedestrian Street
- RLT Regional Local Transit
- C Commons
- AH/R Affordable Housing/
Recreation
- WL/C Work Live/Commerce
- OSP Ojai Avenue Social Plaza
- SA/O School Admin./Office
- STH Short term Housing
- AD Arts Development
- AH Affordable Housing
- CP Car Park
- SP Skate Park
- G Grow
- GP Grow Play

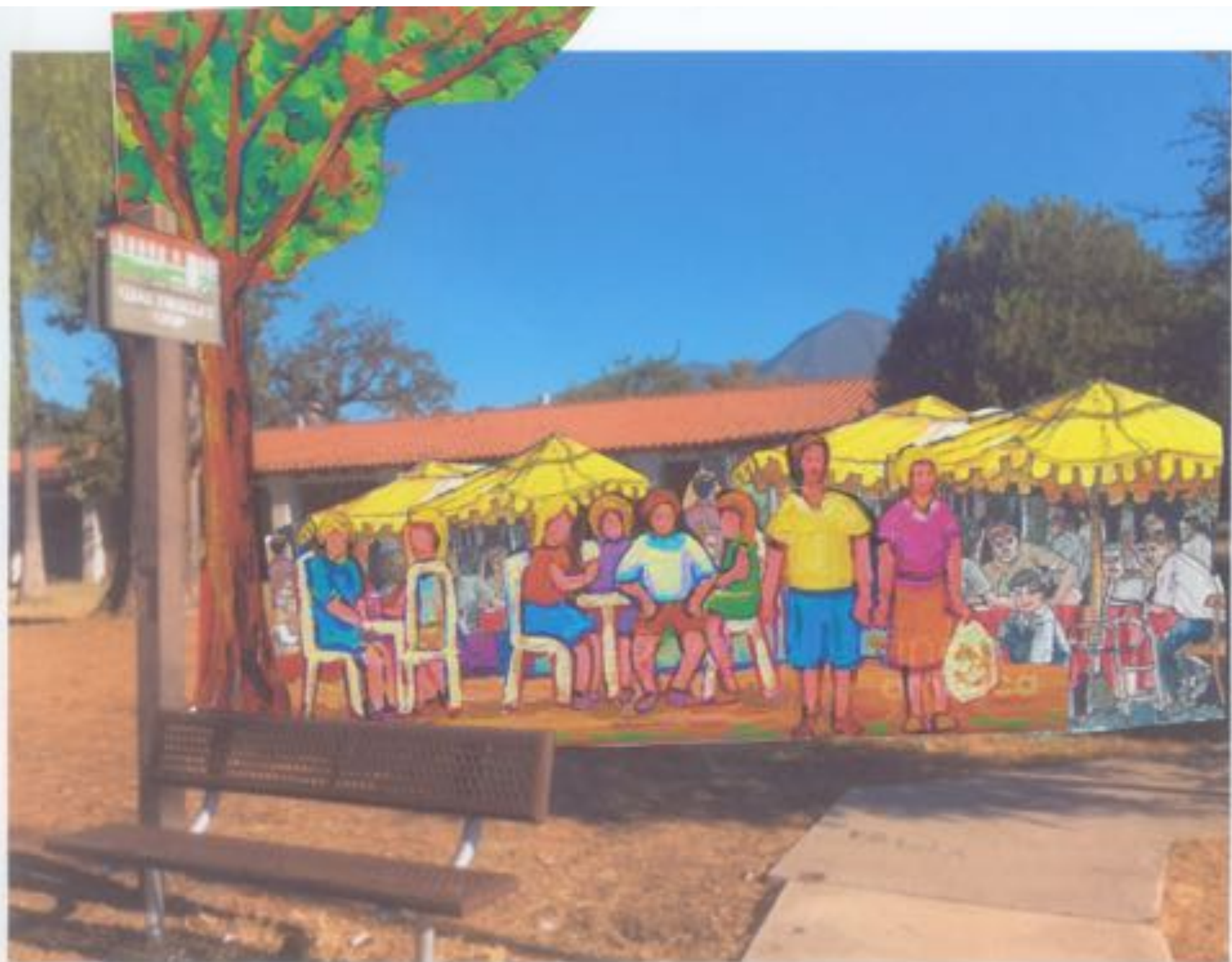


Culinary
Cafe









2. Context

- a. Transportation For over 100 years the horseless carriage has driven the development of towns throughout the country. Ojai is no exception. Today the vast majority of all trips from home that fill the events of our day have us driving in a car and much of the time, driving alone. To work, to the doctor, to the market or the mall...alone is the norm. We have codified this exclusive use of personal motorized transit in our town's zoning rules and general plans, and in our attitudes. Yet, the Ojai trolley and Gold Coast public transit still exist.

Designing for the Chaparral site "Ojai Alive" proposes giving first place to people on foot, on bicycles and those seeking public transit. The idea is that "community" will be stronger more lively, enjoyable and successful where people are together. By plan or spontaneous interaction people together have the best chance to connect, to acknowledge each other...to build strong community.

- b. Ojai culture We are a mix of cultures and interests....indigenous Chumash, Mexican and Spanish colonial, immigrant business and farming populations from other sections of the U.S. and California have all found a home here. Festivals, gatherings for the Arts, for Sport, Health and Renewal and Creative Self expression have been alive and well for decades in Ojai. Strong public and private education facilities thrive in Ojai.

There's plenty of space at the Chaparral site to provide an opportunity to the wide range of Ojai's cultural activities a place to be on parade, to find a way of engaging and informing the community as well as the people visiting.

- c. Housing Providing attractive affordable housing on site, will support a new "alive" quality to the town center. To avoid the profits normally taken from a construction project, non-profit oriented out of the box financing and managing of the work will be needed. "Self-help" and cooperative housing will support the collective will providing a vital element in the success this project.

- d. Social interaction Much of the time we are in town social interaction is scheduled in a meeting with people we know. Yet "Ojai Alive" is suggesting here that the continued health of our community and our own health is in part due to our willingness to meet new people and be open to providing or being the recipient of random gestures of inquiry, curiosity or kindness.

To this end "Ojai Alive" proposes a pedestrian street linking Matilija Street on the west to the Gold Coast transit station on east Ojai Avenue. This street will circle past the "Commons", a green place, with a gazebo hosting outdoor music and theatrical events. The "Commons" is conceived as an open outdoor activity center and rest spot as comfortable for one as it will be for many.

3. Summary

The Ojai Unified School district Chaparral site unique in its location and it's use as a site supporting our community children's education deserves our best effort, It is the work of the entire community that is challenged to come together with a wonderfully imaginative, innovative and doable scenario that benefits the school district and at the same time provides a hopeful and successful alive addition to Ojai's town center. This proposal is given in the spirit of "the greatest good for the greatest number" greatest in debate, in decision and action.

"Ojai Alive" sees our community's public and private resources, expertise, energy and will coming together to reimagine and over time rebuild the Chaparral site as a powerful physical manifestation of our deeper understanding of a human place called "community".

Respectfully submitted,

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