



Ojai
California

City
Manager



Recruitment Services Provided by Ralph Andersen & Associates

A Unique Opportunity

This top professional will thrive in an environment that embraces an entrepreneurial spirit and approach to local government, sets high expectations, and demands a high level of customer service and responsiveness. The selected City Manager will also bring an inclusive management style with a commitment to equity and inclusion, combined with a hands-on approach to day-to-day operations.

Collaboration skills and a passion for best practices in managing municipal services are key characteristics the City Council will be looking for in the next City Manager. Additionally, a thorough understanding of municipal finance, budgeting, community planning, public works, and contracting for a wide range of services is of high importance to the City Council. Although the City is primarily built-out, opportunities and challenges will likely arise in the future centered around meeting housing needs, addressing long-term capital improvement program priorities and projects, overseeing existing City services and programs aimed at maintaining and enhancing the City's high quality of life for its residents.

The new City Manager will be focused on overseeing the organization's ability to build trust among the elected officials, continue to deliver excellent customer service and responsiveness to support an active, engaged, and vocal community.



The Community

The City of Ojai is set in a picturesque valley on the edge of the Los Padres National Forest, approximately 12 miles north of the City of Ventura and the Pacific Ocean. At approximately 4 square miles and a population of 7,400 people, Ojai is the smallest city in Ventura County; however, it is also the focal point of the entire Ojai Valley, which includes communities such as Meiners Oaks, Oak View, and Mira Monte. The population of the Ojai Valley is approximately 35,000. Ojai is located about 80 miles northwest of downtown Los Angeles and 35 miles east of Santa Barbara.

To the residents of the Ojai community, their city is unique and highly treasured. Ojai has a rich Chumash history, its name derived from the Chumash word 'awha'y meaning "moon." Today, Ojai is known for its creative culture, environmental sensitivity, and spiritual focus. It exists as both a beautiful natural environment and as an authentic, intact representation of a past era in California, characterized by one-lane, tree-lined streets and friendly local businesses. The natural habitat, punctuated by patches of rich farmland, is memorable for its peaceful mornings and "pink moment" sunsets.

Ojai is home to a wide array of festivals and events, distinctive Mission Revival architecture, Mediterranean climate, and striking views of the surrounding Topa Topa Mountains. Residents and visitors alike take advantage of a very walkable, hikeable, and bikable community. Ojai is "chain-store free." Downtown Ojai houses charming boutiques, art galleries, outdoor dining and is enriched by historic Libbey Park and programs at the adjacent Libbey Bowl amphitheater. Visitors have a choice of resorts, such as the renowned Ojai Valley Inn, and local hotels and bed & breakfast retreats. In fact, Ojai is a health vacation destination that attracts visitors worldwide. Ojai's engaged population is served by a network of public safety and healthcare services, parks and trails, excellent public and private schools, and a very caring nonprofit community. It is a community that treasures and protects its unique character and looks forward with a thoughtful approach to growth and change.



Vision

Ojai is a sustainable and resilient city that preserves and protects its quality of life.

Goals



Preserving and Improving our Community Quality of Life:

Preserve, protect and enhance the quality of life within our community, and foster excellence by providing safe access to environmental, cultural, and recreational opportunities.



Being Good Stewards of the Environment:

Protect and improve the quality of the City's water, land and air, and the City's rural, natural environment.



Increasing Organizational Efficiency:

Develop a strong customer service culture.



Ensuring Prudent Financial Planning:

Maintain adequate and stable financial resources, and ensure an appropriate City financial reserve that will allow the City to provide consistent and high-quality municipal services, even in challenging times.



Strengthening Our Infrastructure:

Enhance our infrastructure through effective planning, prioritization and efficient use of funding, including innovative and sustainable options, while ensuring the City retains its role in protecting and preserving the environment and natural resources.



Effectively Coordinating with County, State and Other Agencies:

Promote effective communications with County, State, and other public entities.



The Organization

The City of Ojai operates under a Council-Manager form of government. The Mayor is elected at-large by the voters every two years. The remainder of the five-member City Council are elected by district to serve four-year staggered terms. The community also elects a City Clerk and City Treasurer. The City Council appoints the City Manager and City Attorney. City Attorney services are provided capably through contract by the Colantuono, Highsmith & Whatley, PC, law firm. The City Council holds regular meetings on the 2nd and 4th Tuesdays of the month. The Council also appoints 4 citizen advisory commissions – the Planning, Recreation & Parks, Historic Preservation and Arts Commissions.

The City Manager operates as the executive head of the organization, authorized by the City Council to supervise or perform all administrative, personnel, and purchasing duties of the organization. The City Manager is responsible for appointment of a management team that includes the Assistant City Manager, Community Development Director, Finance Director, Parks & Recreation Manager, and Deputy City Clerk. Other key management positions include the I.T. Project Manager, Special Events Manager/PIO, Management Analyst (HR), and Homeless Services Manager. Police Services are provided by contract with the Ventura County Sheriff's Office. Fire Services are provided by the Ventura County Fire Department. Ojai is also part of the Ojai Valley Sanitary District.

The City of Ojai's adopted General Fund budget for FY2023/24 is approximately \$14.9 million. The total of all budgets is just shy of \$30 million, including approximately \$11 million for Capital Projects. The largest sources of revenue include Transient Occupancy Tax, Sales Tax, Property Tax and Charges for Services. The City maintains an unallocated reserve of more than 35%. After a pause caused by the COVID pandemic, the City is diligently re-establishing its maintenance of the capital infrastructure. The City has recently obtained State certification of its Housing Element and continues to work toward update of the Ojai General Plan.

The Ideal Candidate

The City Council is seeking an experienced, creative, and innovative individual to proactively address issues that impact the City Council and the community. The new City Manager will be able to skillfully guide and facilitate discussions from a variety of sources and viewpoints. Also, the new City Manager will embrace the culture of the organization and continue to promote the values held by the community for highly ethical, responsive, and efficient delivery of services. Approachability, attention to detail, patience, caring about outcomes, responsiveness, and follow-through are absolutely key to success in this community. Additionally, equity and inclusion as well as transparency are also critically important to the elected body and residents.

The City Manager will be an “idea” person, able to develop and promote strategic initiatives for the City Council’s discussion and consideration, while incorporating best practices in local government. Additionally, the City Manager will have a hands-on and collaborative approach to management with frequent interaction with staff and the City Council, fostering an open dialogue and strong lines of communication. The City Council seeks a manager who enjoys working in the public sector and appreciates contributions from all sources within the organization as well as from this engaged community.



The Ideal Candidate *continued*

The City Manager will have unquestioned personal integrity, display honesty, and have strong ethics. The ideal candidate will also have excellent communication and interpersonal skills and the ability to address a wide range of issues with a facilitative and inclusive management style.

The ideal candidate will also possess the following characteristics:

- ◆ Genuine concern for preserving the quality of life presently offered to residents of Ojai with an appreciation for the natural beauty of the area and a high regard for the importance of fiscal and environmental sustainability; Results-driven approach to municipal finance and all aspects of municipal service delivery;
- ◆ Appreciation for exceptional customer service that exceeds expectations, effective and efficient operations, transparency, and overall community access;
- ◆ Confident style that will promote candid and open discussions and encourages the review of options and alternatives for the City Council's consideration;
- ◆ Ability to provide leadership to both the City Council and staff with the ability to set goals and objectives, motivate others, and contribute to timely achievement and successful performance; and
- ◆ Strategic thinker, able to be pro-active in a variety of management decisions.

The new City Manager will provide strong leadership and be primarily involved in:

- ◆ Balancing an array of community needs including fostering of trust and increasing the need for a high-level of transparent, frequent, and open communications;
- ◆ Addressing ongoing infrastructure needs; dealing with the policies and programs related to the unhoused; emergency preparedness and responsiveness; and overseeing overall enhancements through effective planning and community development for a built-out environment that cares deeply about fiscal and environmental sustainability; and
- ◆ Active involvement and a high-level of participation in local and regional intergovernmental agencies and boards.

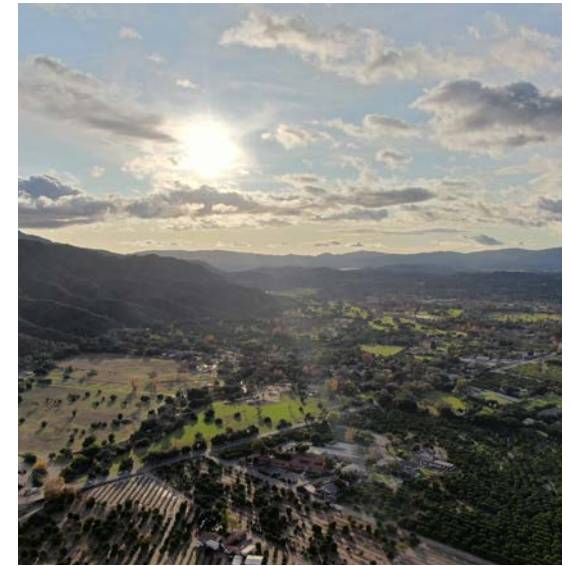
Experience and Education

Review of Qualifying Experience and Education: The full City Council along with the Interim City Manager will be actively involved with Ralph Andersen & Associates in the initial screening and evaluation of resumes to determine the appropriate match of professional experience and education.

- ◆ **Experience:** This position requires a significant (8-10 years or more) of progressively responsible experience in a managerial capacity in a comparable local government agency or organization with similar complexities. Experience working with a contract city structure and engaged elected body is strongly desired. California municipal experience is highly regarded by this City Council. All highly qualified candidates are strongly encouraged to apply. In an effort to find the most suitable candidate, the City Council will consider a broad spectrum of talented individuals with a preference for municipal service in California.
- ◆ **Education:** Ideally, candidates will have a Master's or other advanced degree from an accredited college or university with major course work in planning, public or business administration, or a closely related field.

Compensation

The salary for this position will be up to \$250,000 based on overall career experience and qualifications and will include CalPERS Retirement. A mutually agreeable employment agreement will be negotiated and will include relocation assistance for the selected candidate. Candidates should be aware that the City does participate in Social Security. Further details can be obtained through discussions with Ralph Andersen & Associates.



To Be Considered

Interested candidates may apply for this career opportunity by submitting a resume and a compelling cover letter by **Monday, November 27, 2023** to apply@ralphandersen.com. Candidates should be aware that the City Council desires a smooth transition of leadership and, as a result, the Council along with the Interim City Manager, Mark Scott, will work together to facilitate a smooth transition. Initial interviews with the City Council will be done in mid-December (via Zoom) with a select group of finalists invited to interview in-person by the full City Council in early-to-mid-January 2024. The Interim City Manager will continue to serve in the role until the selected candidate joins the organization, ideally in February 2024 (or sooner).

This is a highly confidential search process. References will not be contacted until mutual interest has been established. Confidential inquiries are welcomed and should be directed to Heather Renschler, Ralph Andersen & Associates at (916) 630-4900.



The City of Ojai strongly supports a vibrant and diverse workforce and encourages all highly qualified candidates to submit for consideration.

www.ojai.ca.gov