



April 7, 2026

City Manager- Ben Harvey  
City of Ojai  
401 South Ventura Street  
Ojai, California 93023

**Re:** Balay Ko Foundation – \$1 Million Commitment to the Ojai Permanent Supportive Housing Project and Proposed Designation of Five Units for Transitional Age Youth

I am writing to share the extraordinary news of a \$1 million grant commitment to the proposed 30-unit Ojai Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) development at 611 South Montgomery Street on the City's Lower Public Works Yard. This grant is exclusively for the 611 South Montgomery Street project site and requires that five of the thirty units be available for homeless Transitional Aged Youth (TAY) (young people between the ages of eighteen and twenty-five who are experiencing homelessness in Ojai and the surrounding Ventura County region).

We believe this grant opportunity merits the City's attention and enthusiasm and we are grateful for the opportunity to share the Balay Ko Foundation's story, its track record, and the significance of its presence at this pivotal moment in Ojai's achievement of the important goals established by the Housing Element of the City General Plan.

### **About the Balay Ko Foundation**

The Foundation takes its name from the Tagalog phrase meaning "My Home"— a declaration of both purpose and philosophy. Its mission is unambiguous and focused: to support nonprofit organizations across California working to solve housing and food insecurity for those experiencing homelessness and hunger. The Foundation does not accept unsolicited grant applications. It conducts its own research, identifies strategic partners, and invests where it believes the greatest and most lasting impact can be achieved. Its grantmaking spans major capital projects, multi-year operational commitments, and targeted matching campaigns. With total assets exceeding \$139 million and annual grantmaking of approximately \$6.7 million, the Balay Ko Foundation has emerged in just a few years as one of the most consequential private funders addressing homelessness on California's Central Coast. Its geographic heart is the Central Coast – San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, and now Ventura Counties – and its presence in a project signals seriousness, organizational strength, and alignment with best practices in the field.



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## A Proven Partnership: Balay Ko Foundation and DignityMoves

The Balay Ko Foundation's partnership with DignityMoves is one of the defining collaborations in California's response to unsheltered homelessness. Together, they have developed multiple projects across the Central Coast that have moved hundreds of individuals from the street into stability and ultimately into permanent housing. In Grover Beach, in San Luis Obispo County, the Foundation funded permitting, development, and construction costs for the Balay Ko on Barca project, a 30-unit interim housing community built by DignityMoves and operated by the 5Cities Homeless Coalition. In Santa Barbara, the Foundation was a key funding partner for a 35-unit DignityMoves interim housing community developed in partnership with the County of Santa Barbara and Good Samaritan Shelter. In the City of San Luis Obispo, the Foundation contributed to the Calle Joaquin Apartments – a 76-unit Homekey project converting a former Motel 6 into permanent supportive housing – working alongside HCD's Homekey Program, the City and County of San Luis Obispo, and Wells Fargo. In each of these projects, the Balay Ko Foundation has not simply written a check. It has shown up – volunteers from the Foundation have painted sites, prepared rooms, and worked alongside community members to bring dignity into every detail of the physical environment. That ethic of presence and care is as much a part of the Foundation's identity as its capital.

## The \$1 Million Commitment to the Ojai Permanent Supportive Housing Project

The Balay Ko Foundation's \$1 million commitment to the Ojai Permanent Supportive Housing project is a signal – to HCD, to future funders, and to our community – that this project has been evaluated and vetted by one of the most discerning and mission-aligned private foundations working on homelessness in California. The Foundation does not invest lightly, and it does not invest where it does not believe in either the model or the people executing it. **It bears emphasis that this gift is committed specifically to the proposed hacienda-style development at the 611 South Montgomery Street site – it is not a general contribution to homelessness services in Ojai nor it is not transferable to any other project or location within the City.** This investment will directly support the development and implementation of the project, bringing the Foundation's unique combination of capital, community engagement, and institutional credibility to Ojai's effort to permanently house its most vulnerable residents.

## Council Direction and the Path to TAY Designation

Among the thirty units proposed for the Ojai Permanent Supportive Housing development, we are requesting that the City Council provide direction to modify the project to designate five units as Permanent Supportive Housing specifically reserved for TAY.

The City has already taken an important step in this direction. Staff spoke with the California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) regarding the inclusion of five TAY rooms within the thirty-unit development. HCD indicated that they are supportive of this approach, and that they would likely approve an ERF grant application modification requesting the TAY designation – provided the City Council first provides direction to modify the project accordingly. Council action is the necessary first step. HCD's expressed receptiveness to the modification follows from it.



While Ojai has Mesa Ojai – a transitional housing program serving young adults eighteen to twenty-four – the community currently has no permanent supportive housing designated for transitional age youth. Five units of TAY-designated permanent supportive housing within the Lower Public Works Yard development would be, for this community, an entirely new resource – and a gateway to future funding that would not otherwise be available. TAY designation opens eligibility for a range of state and federal funding streams specifically linked to youth homelessness and young adult services. Once the project is complete and operational with designated TAY units, the City and its service partners will be positioned to access those additional resources. Without the TAY designation, that door remains closed. Including these five units now is not only the right thing for the young people who need them – it is a strategic investment in the long-term funding health of the entire project.

The Balay Ko Foundation's commitment to this project reflects its recognition that the TAY designation deepens, not complicates, the project's mission – it ensures that among those who come home, some of the youngest and most vulnerable will be there too.

### **Conclusion**

Ojai has an opportunity before it that few small cities ever receive: a \$1 million private investment from one of California's most focused and mission-driven philanthropic foundations, paired with a proven developer, a community-rooted services partnership, and a population – our transitional age youth – who are ready to come home.

We are grateful for the City's partnership in this effort and for the Council's consideration of direction to modify the project to include five TAY-designated units – a step that would unlock HCD's likely approval of the ERF modification, open the door to future TAY-specific funding, and make five of these thirty homes a lifeline for young people in Ojai who have nowhere else to turn. We welcome any questions, and we look forward to continuing to build this project together.

Respectfully,

*David Grunwald*

David Grunwald  
Managing Director  
DignityMoves