

Three challengers try to unseat Fresno Council Member Clint Olivier in District 7 race

BY GEORGE HOSTETTER

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Fresno Council Member Clint Olivier **JOHN WALKER** — The Fresno Bee [Buy Photo](#)

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Geography is turning into a key issue in the Fresno City Council District 7 campaign.

Incumbent Clint Olivier wants a second term.

"I feel so strongly about the good that can be done in this district," Olivier said. "I've proven I can get results."

Three opponents say the June 3 primary is the perfect time for a change:

-- Art Gonzales is in real estate sales and is a former law enforcement officer who said there's too much government waste.

"There are a lot of consultants," Gonzales said. "The work is something city staff can do."

-- Mauro Saldate is an emergency medical technician who said he'll work hard.

"I don't just put in my time," Saldate said. "When it's time to do something, I'll do it."

-- Mike Wells is a community advocate who said neighborhood collaboration will revitalize the district.

"We've had such poor urban design over the last 50 years," Wells said. "Better planning will make the district a much more family friendly, pedestrian-friendly area."

Olivier was supposed to be the campaign's pivotal issue. He voted to privatize the city's residential trash service. That led to a debate on the nuances of trash collection unprecedented in Fresno history.

Voters in a special election last June narrowly rejected privatization. Officials in several city unions vowed to make Olivier a one-term council member.

Wells and Saldate said they're running against Olivier's record. They and Gonzales add that their decision to run was based on personal conviction, not union influence.

Olivier's campaign is focused on political realities.

"When you're isolated, you're not serving your constituents," Olivier said.

District 7's location puts unique pressures on its council member.

In the council-city manager era, Fresno had six council districts. The mayor was elected citywide and served as the seventh council member. That meant each district council member represented a portion of the city's edge (new neighborhoods) and center (older neighborhoods).

The alliances necessary to get something done were often strained. But everyone knew it was dangerous to burn bridges for ideological reasons. A council member who viewed a colleague's pet project as unacceptable sprawl might find the tables turned a month later.

Things changed in the mid-1990s when Fresno went to the strong mayor-council system. Executive power now resided in a mayor, not a city manager answerable to the council.

A seventh council member had to be found. The led to District 7, cobbled together with pieces from other districts.

The result has been twofold.

District 7 has never found a brand or identity. It touches the edge of Fashion Fair shopping center, the edge of downtown, the edge of southeast Fresno.

And the other six council members now face issues (such as growth at the edge of the city) that never hit District 7. That has forced the District 7 council member to be a horse-trader.

Henry R. Perea (now a Fresno County supervisor) was a master diplomat in his six years in the District 7 seat. That's how Manchester Center, not Fulton Mall's north end, got a movieplex in 2000. Henry T. Perea (now an Assembly member) was just as shrewd in his eight years in the District 7 seat. That's how the No Neighborhood Left Behind infrastructure project was pushed through despite worries over the bond debt.

It took him awhile to learn, Olivier said. For example, he said, he should have taken a softer approach toward animal control. Olivier started the public spat with the Central California Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, but it was Mayor Ashley Swearingin who settled things.

Still, Olivier said, he did learn. He said he got long-planned Martin Ray Reilly Park off the drawing board. He said he lowered fees that will encourage developers to build on small inner-city lots. He said he helped save Bus Rapid Transit by reforming the plan to suit the Fresno market.

Olivier said he'll focus on revitalizing the First Street and Fresno Street corridors in a second term.

"There are 73,000 people in District 7," Olivier said. "They're counting on their council member to get things done."

Wells said he supports the 2035 general plan update that calls for 45% of growth to be infill. He said there should be no compromises that weaken this mandate. He said he trusts the advice of expert planners.

"We must stop subsidizing sprawl," Wells said. "The new developments on the edge of town aren't paying for themselves."

Wells said he would strengthen code enforcement, paying particular attention to bad landlords.

"Property values would go up," he said.

Wells said he supports economic growth that leads to good-paying jobs.

Gonzales said the city should sell or rent its unused buildings. He said would put a police substation at Manchester Center.

Saldade said he wants more green space and infill development, and he supports public safety.

Fresno City Council District 7 candidates:

NAME: Clint Olivier

AGE: 38

OCCUPATION: City Council Member

EDUCATION: Associate of Arts, general studies, Orange Coast College

FAMILY: Married, two sons

WEB: www.voteclint.com

FACEBOOK: clintolivier

TWITTER: @clintolivier

NAME: Art Gonzales

AGE: 58

OCCUPATION: Real estate sales/examiner for IRS

EDUCATION: Bachelor's degree, criminology, Fresno State

FAMILY: Single, three sons, one granddaughter

WEB: None

FACEBOOK: Art Gonzales

TWITTER: None

NAME: Mauro Saldate

AGE: 39

OCCUPATION: Emergency medical technician

EDUCATION: Associate of arts degree, computers, Heald College

FAMILY: Married, four daughters, one son, one grandson

WEB: None

FACEBOOK: facebook.com/saldate4council

TWITTER: @saldate4council

NAME: Mike Wells

AGE: 46

OCCUPATION: Community advocate

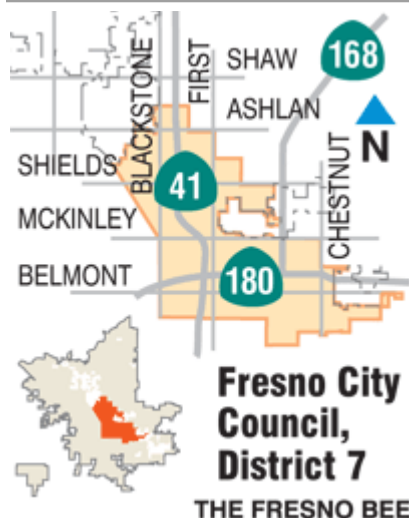
EDUCATION: Bachelor's degree, intercultural studies, Biola University

FAMILY: Married, two daughters, one son

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