

Open Letter to the Citizens of Manatee County

Dear Neighbors,

I'm writing to you today as the chair of the Manatee County Democratic Party, but also as a fellow citizen deeply invested in the future of our community. Whether you identify as Republican, Democrat, or Independent, we all share one thing: a love for this county and a desire to see it thrive. And yet, under the current leadership, many of us feel like we've been left behind.

Hurricane Debbie's devastation wasn't just the result of natural forces. Unchecked development and poor planning have left us vulnerable, exposing the gaps in leadership's commitment to our long-term safety and sustainability. The emphasis on national political issues has distracted from what really matters: our local needs. This community deserves leadership that puts Manatee County first, not personal power or the influence of a few well-connected developers.

And now, as the local Republican Party falters, mired in internal conflict and disconnected from the concerns of everyday citizens, we are at a crossroads. But it doesn't have to be this way.

We can come together—Republicans, Independents, and Democrats alike—because this isn't about party lines, it's about building a future that works for all of us. We need to refocus on local issues: smart development that prioritizes quality over quantity, infrastructure that reduces traffic and improves our roads and bridges, and real investment in small businesses that form the backbone of our economy. We can't afford to continue pandering to the interests of a few developers while the rest of our community struggles to keep up.

Together, we can create a sustainable environment for debate and compromise—the way government should work. By focusing on solutions that work for everyone, we can build a stronger, more resilient Manatee County. This is the moment for change, and we can make tomorrow better for all of us by reinvesting in our citizens and our community.

So, I urge you, when you step into the voting booth this year, remember: it's okay to vote for the candidate who has the best interests of our community at heart. It's okay to vote for local Democratic candidates who are committed to smart growth, improving our roads and bridges, and investing in our future. This isn't about loyalty to a party. It's about loyalty to Manatee County.

Let's work together to build the future we all deserve.
With hope and determination,

Chris Wetherington

Chair, Manatee County Democratic Party

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