

## Environmental Forum

December 11, 2025

### Candidates Responses

**Question 1:** Naples City Council increased residents' stormwater-management utility fees by 25%, to fund a city-wide plan to make stormwater improvements and replace aging infrastructure. Over a period of years, the plan is projected to cost \$280 million. Naples residents are questioning the criteria used to determine which neighborhoods will be included, and which neighborhoods are left out of consideration. Some residents who experience significant flooding are questioning why their neighborhood is not a priority. Do you agree with the priorities set out in the Kimley-Horn study that is the basis of the plan? If not, how would you change those draft priorities?

#### **Sally Peterson**

The Kimley-Horn study details the cost/benefit analysis of stormwater improvements in five stormwater basins across the city and categorized them as short, medium and long-term projects. It is very data-driven and thorough. The City then used this information to develop priorities for implementation. However, it does not appear that any quantitative or qualitative assessment of the neighborhood impact of these decisions were considered. That is, resident voices should have been included in the prioritization because there is inequity in the relative impact of major storm events between neighborhoods.

For example, residents who live in the highly prioritized neighborhoods from 11th Avenue S and southward are typically seasonal and/or have the flexibility to travel elsewhere out of harm's way to a second home in anticipation of a major weather event. But what about residents in family-centered neighborhoods like Lake Park, Seagate and River Park East which are much lower on the priority list?

It is far more disruptive for families with school-age children who live in Naples year-round to relocate. And should these family homes sustain significant flood damage, what other housing is available to them? There are significant other costs associated with the City's obligation to sustain and protect these families in the aftermath of such events. I don't think these costs were considered in the analyses,

nor were these residents heard. The City needs to ensure that the \$280M in improvements earmarked for Multi-Basin Implementation Plans are directed equitably across all neighborhoods.

### **Scott Schultz**

The Kimley-Horn study is a reasonable starting point, but it is far from complete. Large areas of our city, especially in the northern neighborhoods and Park Shore were left out entirely. A \$280 million stormwater plan must cover the entire City of Naples. If elected, I will push for a more comprehensive, data-driven review that expands the number of basins studied, reevaluates true flooding risk, and ensures that neighborhoods with repeated flooding are finally treated as priorities. Residents deserve clarity, transparency, and a plan that protects all of Naples, not just select areas.

### **Penny Taylor**

There is a misunderstanding that the Basin Implementation Plan for stormwater improvements city-wide will cost \$280M. The estimated cost will be between \$300-\$500M.

The priorities set out in the Kimberly-Horn study are “industry standards” and are to be used as a guide by the City of Naples - a type of metric, whereby the City can assess the different neighborhoods using this system. There is always opportunity to modify the priority ranking to fit our City’s needs. The Kimberly-Horn study left out several basins within the City’s boundaries, however and I believe that the City is modifying the original draft priorities.

The plan put forward by the Deputy County Manager and Director of Critical Infrastructure, Dr. George Yilmas to the Community Redevelopment Agency on Thursday, December 4th seems to be a sound way forward: conduct a pilot project in River Park and then apply what has been learned to other neighborhoods.

### **John Langley**

My neighborhood, Seagate, was completely left out of the study, which is why I really don't put much faith in the report. No concrete plans were discussed so how could they begin to put an estimate on how much this would cost the city over time. In any event, the city should ask them to redo the report to include Seagate

## **Ray Christman**

Naples City Council recently approved a Multi-Basin plan and vision, developed by staff and consultants, that identified a set of nearly 40 priority stormwater improvement projects to be carried out over the next several decades. City Council subsequently approved a 100% increase in stormwater utility fees, to be phased in over the next four years, that will provide a significant portion of the dollars, approximately \$164 million, required to pay for this investment.

The overall needs identified in the staff/consultant study were \$280 million over the next 20 years and over \$600 million in total. It is certain these numbers will only increase over time.

This action by City Council occurred in the context of a recently adopted Resiliency Plan and Vision for Naples which identified three pillars for building a more safe and resilient city: 1) off-shore protection to reduce the force of storms before they reach land, 2) on-shore protection through building/rebuilding dunes with native plants, and 3) in-land investments in stormwater management to reduce flood risk in the near term. The recently adopted Stormwater investment plan addresses the third pillar of this strategy.

As part of Council's action on stormwater planning and investment (to be funded through the City budget), we also identified opportunities for funding certain priorities identified in the plan through our Community Redevelopment Agency budget. Priority projects in the River Park East, River Park West, and Lake Park areas can and will be funded with CRA dollars, allowing more projects to move forward more quickly.

The CRA, which I currently chair, has already taken action over the past year to initiate important stormwater improvement projects in the River Park West/Design District area. The 10th Street/1st Avenue South project, now under design, will reduce flood risk and provide streetscape improvements for residents of George Washington Carver Homes, Jasmine Cay, and The Jade -- nearly 300 low and moderate-income families -- as well as for the 100 or more small, locally-owned businesses that are located in that area of our city.

I believe the stormwater investment plan that was unanimously adopted by City Council is a good one that identifies real needs that exist in every neighborhood of the city. We made the commitment to invest new city dollars through our Stormwater Utility Enterprise Fund to begin to pay for these needs, as well as use CRA funds to carry out projects within the CRA area, such as in River Park East

and West. We will need to attract state and federal funding as well to fully complete the job.

Finally, we need to remember that City Council approved and funded several years ago the long dormant Gulf Shore Boulevard Beach Outfalls project. This \$100 million project, now underway, will reduce flood risk and improve water quality for a 265-acre area of Naples. The Beach Outfalls project pre-dated the recently completed Stormwater Improvement Plan and has been funded with existing stormwater funds as well as through significant state and county funding provided to the city.

Going forward, we now have a plan with priorities and the means to begin to pay for them, something that other local governments in SW Florida unfortunately have not moved forward on with the same intensity. The specifics regarding the implementation of projects within this plan over the next 20 years will be determined by current and future city managements and city councils. We know that our current set of immediate priorities beyond the Beach Outfalls project include projects in areas like Aqualane Shores, River Park East and the River Park West/Design District. I believe these are sound priorities. As funding permits, we can add others to this list.

### **Ted Blankenship:**

The consulting study of some of the storm water basins (small watersheds within the City) is a good start to identifying many of the needs. However it should be meshed with other needs in the other areas of the City and then prioritized by City Staff and City Council based on urgency and the availability of effective solutions.

### **Dan Barone:**

The Kimley-Horn study is based on data-driven assessments of vulnerability. The current plan targets the five most critical basins so we must recognize that this is only the beginning of a larger \$600 million+ city-wide overhaul. We do not have the luxury of time to politicize engineering decisions or delay this overhaul by second-guessing the data. We should move forward immediately with these expert recommendations to secure the most vulnerable areas, while simultaneously establishing a clear timeline to fund and fix the remaining infrastructure city-wide.

**Question 2:** Many Naples city residents are concerned about continued reduction of green space. More concrete exacerbates flooding and drainage, increases heat islands, and reduces the ability to filter pollution before it enters our waters. Our state legislature continues to pass laws that prevent City Council from changing codes that preserve green space. These are called “anti-home rule” or “preemption” laws. The most recent such law is SB180 which curbs the ability of local governments to create new zoning codes that will increase resiliency. Naples City Council joined a lawsuit challenging the preemption sections of that law. Due to considerable statewide opposition, including this lawsuit joined by 25 municipalities, legislators are proposing to “fix” problematic language in that law. Do you support the decision to join that lawsuit? Will you support a city council that uses all tools necessary to fight the erosion of home rule? Explain your answer.

### **Sally Peterson**

Yes, I support the decision for City Council to join the lawsuit. In fact, I pled for them to do so during public comment at the August 20, 2025 City Council Meeting. SB 180 is a “wolf in sheep’s clothing” bill. Ostensibly it was to aid homeowners rebuilding efforts in counties heavily impacted by Hurricane Ian, but it has evolved into an overreach of State government in every county.

The City of Naples has a constitutional right to self-govern, we can’t let the State dictate our building codes. We are a unique coastal community; our entire 8-mile western border is the Gulf of Mexico which puts us at greater risk for storm surge and other severe flooding events. We need to establish codes that protect every Naples neighborhood. This is why it is so important to elect pro-environment candidates who can lead locally and advocate vocally at every level of government.

### **Scott Schultz**

I fully support the decision to join the SB180 lawsuit. Home rule is essential. Naples must have the ability to protect its green space, enhance resiliency, and set standards that reflect our community values. Our city cannot afford to let Tallahassee dictate land-use decisions while we face rising seas, aging infrastructure, and loss of tree canopy. I have strong relationships with officials at every level of government, and I will use those relationships to restore cooperation, not surrender authority. Naples needs a council that will fight for resident control and protect our quality of life.

## **Penny Taylor**

The fight for Home Rule is a noble and important fight. And it is a wise decision to explore all avenues before joining a lawsuit. By a vote of four to three, the City Council voted to join the lawsuit, without having read the lawsuit and without a frank discussion with our legislative delegation about SB180.

This Council decision was a decision based on inexperience in my opinion. Although the legal charges are moderate in this case, the damage to an open communication with our lawmakers in Tallahassee is pronounced. This was not a wise path forward in my opinion. Of course, the Naples City Council must use all tools necessary to fight the erosion of home rule. But those tools must be used wisely and with care.

## **John Langley**

Filing and or joining lawsuits seems to be the way the City Council addresses a lot of issues which could be solved other ways. To start creating new building codes after a traumatic event, like a hurricane, is wrong. To place additional burdens on homeowners whose home was just damaged or destroyed is wrong and the city building code should reflect some compassion in these instances.

## **Ray Christman**

Over the last several decades, the Florida Legislature has passed a slew of laws and mandates preempting local authority on a wide range of matters. The Florida League of Cities has identified nearly 200 such measures since 2010 alone. Most notable have been recent actions -- such as Senate Bill 250, HB 1-C, and SB 180 -- which have limited the ability of local governments to implement land use planning and regulatory actions. These actions have been tied to legislation purportedly aimed at hurricane recovery efforts, originally aimed at Southwest Florida but now applying statewide through SB 180. SB 180's original purpose was to support and improve the State of Florida's emergency management powers and authority to deal with hurricanes and other natural disasters. But last minute amendments added to the bill broad preemption of local government land use planning and regulatory authority. That represents an egregious overreach by the state legislature and only harms every city and county's ability to plan and invest for its future, especially with respect to resiliency-related matters. In that

sense, the legislation was actually working against its original purpose. It was weakening the state's ability to protect itself against future storm events. In addition the legislation was poorly drafted and lacks definitional clarity regarding how it even should be carried out and implemented. Since SB 180 is statewide in its application, legislators from every city and county in Florida are aware of the opposition that has ensued. We have known that efforts are underway to "fix" the bill in the upcoming session. The only "fix" that makes sense is to strip from the bill the land use preemption language. Naples City Council unanimously passed a motion in opposition to SB 180. We also discussed and agreed by a 4-3 to join a lawsuit challenging the law. I voted not to join the lawsuit, at least at this time. My reasoning was that our participation in the lawsuit, combined with the defamatory rhetoric and personal attacks from several of my City Council colleagues directed toward the members of our state legislative delegation, only diminished the chances of our succeeding in our goals and prevented us from having a "seat at the table" with the legislature in influencing this matter. That has proven to be the case as time has passed. I continue to hope that SB 180 will be properly amended in the upcoming legislative session. If it is not, other courses of action can be considered. Lawsuits should be a last course of action, not a first course. To address the broader question of "home rule erosion", this is really a matter of the philosophy of the Florida Legislature and presumably the voters that elect them. Until candidates run on a different platform embracing home rule and voters begin to elect those candidates, nothing will change. Of most immediate concern in this regard are possible efforts in the next legislative session to reduce the authority of local governments to levy property taxes. Property taxes are the only major statutorily permitted source of revenue available to local governments in Florida. If it were to be reduced or eliminated, it will immediately compromise the ability of the City of Naples to fund our police, fire, and EMS services, maintain our parks, and generally protect our quality of life.

### **Ted Blankenship**

Yes the City should protect the rights of its citizens to make decisions for themselves around what they view as important and what they are willing to pay for. Making broad decisions in Tallahassee that apply equally to the whole state is often not effective as the issues and solutions for areas such as Miami, Orlando, Tampa, the Panhandle, etc. may not be the right choices for Naples.



## **Dan Barone**

We must recognize that the state's interference is in response to local overreach—specifically, unjustified regulatory burdens at the expense of property rights. By governing responsibly for the residents and avoiding these unnecessary regulatory burdens, we remove the justification for state overreach, allowing the city to focus on local issues and the state to focus on state issues. I am generally averse to pursuing litigation where the probability of success is low, and I have reservations about committing public funds to protracted legal expenditures.

**Question 3:** Another example of an anti-local control laws involves who oversees Naples City Airport. The four state legislators who represent citizens in the City of Naples filed legislation that will remove control of that airport from Naples City Council. The legislation gives a vote to all Collier County voters to determine who controls airport decisions. Many residents fear that people who do not live in the city and who will personally benefit from expanding the airport, wish to make the airport regional, and expand the number of flights. It is clear that if the legislation passes, the City of Naples would have legal remedies to challenge the change in control from city council. Do you think that control of the airport should be removed from Naples City Council? If not, do you support engaging in legal action against the legislature, should the proposal pass in this legislative session?

## **Sally Peterson**

I do not support the legislation that gives two seats on the NAA to County residents and requires all five seats be elected by Collier County residents who outnumber City voters 15:1. And I have written to the four state legislators expressing this. It is clear violation of constitutional Home Rule and is an extreme overreach by the State government and disenfranchises Naples residents. If this proposal passes in legislative session, the City should indeed consider legal action.

## **Scott Schultz**

I do not support removing airport governance from Naples City Council. The airport sits in the heart of our city, and residents directly impacted by noise and traffic deserve a voice in its management. If the Legislature proceeds with stripping city control, I will support exploring all legal options available. That



said, it is also clear that communication between the Naples Airport Authority and residents has broken down. The number of annual operations now surpasses 120,000, more than RSW, which is simply not sustainable for a residential city, but I support the airport because it is an asset. Just like building codes don't allow 75 stories, we need this to be compatible with the city. In the last five years, jet flights have increased astronomically, we just need it to be managed. My priority is restoring accountability, transparency, and resident trust.

## **Penny Taylor**

I do not agree that the appointment of Naples Airport Authority members be removed from the control of the Naples City Council. Unfortunately, four members of the Naples City Council abused the statutory appointment privilege of the City Council as defined in the City of Naples Airport Act and appointed members who voted to undermine the operational safety, financial security and best interest of the airport and the Naples citizens.

The State of Florida created the City of Naples Airport Authority at the request of the Naples City Council in 1969 because of the financial burden the Airport was creating at that time.

The fact that the Naples Airport Authority is a State created agency makes effective legal action by the City of Naples against the State questionable. Anyone can sue anyone for anything, but the question is: how likely is it that the Naples City Council will be able to overturn a decision by Tallahassee regarding legislation created by Tallahassee at the behest of the City of Naples?

I would not support engaging in this improbable legal action against the legislature.

## **John Langley**

I don't agree with the City Council's overreach of the NAA. The control of the airport was given to the NAA in 1969 while the city controls who is appointed to the NAA. Even though the city owns the land at the airport the lease should determine what rights the city council has, if any, over the operations of the airport. I don't have a problem with an election to the NAA with some county representation, as the airport can have an effect on county residents as well. The city is trying to do the same thing to the airport that the "home rule" legislation is

trying to do to the city. I never support legislation, if it can be avoided, and I think in the case of the airport, the city and the NAA should do their best to avoid legal action and work it out on their own.

## **Ray Christman**

I find it odd that a forum purportedly aimed at addressing environmental issues would have a question about the airport, particularly when there are so many other important local, regional and state environmental and conservation issues that the forum is not addressing (a few examples: Everglades restoration, wetlands protection and regulation, state stormwater management rules, conservation land acquisition at local and state level, county growth management policies, etc, etc.). Nonetheless, I will respond.

First, I strongly oppose the proposed airport legislation (HB 4005). I believe the governance authority and responsibility for the airport should remain with the City of Naples through its appointment power for the NAA board members. The airport sits on city-owned land and the city provides key services to the airport. Further, the city has zoning and land use responsibility for the airport. Finally, most observers believe that our airport is one of the best run and operated of any small municipal airport in the country. Something must be going right with the current governance model that has existed for nearly 60 years.

I do not think that changing the selection process for the NAA board members from its current appointment (by Naples City Council) model to an elective model, which would be countywide, is a good idea. 75-80% of airport authority boards nationwide are appointed not elected. This is true for larger and smaller airports alike. The reason is that is more likely to result in independent, qualified people serving in these capacities and it at least diminishes the potential politicization of the NAA board.

If we move to countywide elections of airport board commissioners, it will require candidates to attract the resources to run countywide election campaigns (even the county commissioners do not run countywide but by district), and likely make promises and commitments on actions to be taken even before they take office. It directly politicizes a position that should be occupied by people who are experienced, independent, and interested in making sure the airport is well operated, safe, and serving both its customers and the broader community.

The airport has become a "political football" in Naples tossed back and forth by opposing forces. We know that some of the reasons why this legislation was introduced was the perception that a number of City Council members wanted to relocate (to the Big Cypress Preserve of all places just to make an environmental point) or close the airport and that Council had already appointed several members to carry out this mission. The action by the NAA board to refuse to apply last June for a federal grant that would have allowed the airport to be better maintained and safer only reinforced this perception. I believe that these actions, combined with the inflammatory rhetoric and defamatory comments by some Council members against NAA board members and staff as well as members of our legislative delegation, have only reduced our ability to influence this legislation with our legislative leaders.

Naples City Council unanimously passed a motion to retain a lobbyist to try to stop passage of this bill. That effort is underway and I support it as I did in approving the hiring of our lobbyist.

City Council also approved unanimously to retain special counsel to advise on our legal options should this bill pass. We do not know at this time if there is any reasonable legal basis to challenge this legislation if it does pass. Of course, we do not know yet what that final legislation will look like if it does move forward so it is premature and speculative at this time to support or oppose legal action. We do not know if it is needed, what it would be based on, what it would cost, and what would be its chances of success.

### **Ted Blankenship**

Control of the airport currently rests with the local independent board whose members are chosen by the elected City Council based upon the potential board members' aviation experience, skills, qualifications, residency, etc. To instead elect these board members may have unintended consequences such as over-politicizing the airport board decisions and may result in less qualified people being selected for the board.

### **Dan Barone**

Leadership must immediately prioritize rebuilding trust and if I were on the Council, I would have already reached out to our state representatives to understand the specific criteria required to regain their confidence and develop a

formal, written commitment to appoint balanced, qualified, and non-prejudicial board members moving forward. The path out of this situation is through accountability and cooperation, not through the courts. Again, I am generally averse to using taxpayer dollars for pursuing litigation where the probability of success is low.

**Question 4:** The Naples CRA was created to address conditions of blight and prevent neighborhoods from falling into distress, pursuant to Florida law. The one neighborhood in Naples vulnerable to blight and distress is River Park East. That neighborhood faces serious flooding and drainage problems, yet has received no CRA funds in the past, and no funds are proposed in this upcoming budget. All CRA resources are being directed to already thriving Naples business districts. If elected, will you support reprioritizing CRA funds for critical infrastructure needs in River Park East—especially drainage and flooding mitigation. This is the neighborhood at real risk of decline. How will you ensure that CRA dollars are prioritized to prevent blight and address real infrastructure needs—rather than being concentrated in upscale commercial areas?

### **Sally Peterson**

I have spent time touring River Park with Community Leader James Whittaker and empathize with his feeling of being forgotten by the City. That said, I do see that in the 2025-2026 CRA Budget (p 163) of the City's Adopted Budget shows two line items earmarked for River Park. Of the \$15.284M requested budget, \$1.725M is for River Park E and River Park W Multi Basin Projects and \$100K for tile and resurfacing of the Aquatic Center. These projects add up to merely 12% of the CRA budget. The Multi-Basin Project should by definition alleviate some flooding, but there are other water quality, infrastructure and quality of life issues that need to be addressed.

I believe that at a bare minimum, the TIF revenue calculated for properties located in River Park East and West should stay in River Park East and West and that these residents should decide how that money is allocated. This is a form of participatory budgeting and it is very empowering for communities. But that's not all; River Park has been short-changed for years and an increased investment from CRA is needed now and in the future to make up for the shortfall. For example, there

remain immediate infrastructure improvements for draining, flood mitigation, dredging and water quality issues that need to be addressed.

In addition to this, and in accordance with the City's Comprehensive Plan, funding should be available to develop an updated neighborhood plan for River Park. This neighborhood plan would identify priorities such as what to do with Stillwater Cove Apartments; a property which the City made the prudent financial decision earlier this year to end its pursuit of purchasing as an attempt to build workforce housing. A new neighborhood plan could identify whether workforce housing is feasible as well as ensure recreational areas such as the Community Center and the Aquatic Center provide robust programming and ongoing maintenance.

Finally, the creation of a new neighborhood plan would necessarily bring together City leaders and the River Park community in a collaborative dialogue providing an opportunity to build trust and new relationships. If elected, I will be a strong voice for River Park and ensure their priorities are heard and acted upon.

### **Scott Schultz**

I do not support removing airport governance from Naples City Council. The airport sits in the heart of our city, and residents directly impacted by noise and traffic deserve a voice in its management. If the Legislature proceeds with stripping city control, I will support exploring all legal options available. That said, it is also clear that communication between the Naples Airport Authority and residents has broken down. The number of annual operations now surpasses 120,000, more than RSW, which is simply not sustainable for a residential city, but I support the airport because it is an asset. Just like building codes don't allow 75 stories, we need this to be compatible with the city. In the last five years, jet flights have increased astronomically, we just need it to be managed. My priority is restoring accountability, transparency, and resident trust.

### **Penny Taylor**

The record will show that I was a strong advocate, while on the Naples City Council 2000-2010 for the River Park Community. My position hasn't changed. The City of Naples funneled CDBG money into the neighborhood at that time, under the façade that the City was taking care of River Park.

After the death of a resident fleeing from police pursuit in 2002, the City built the Community Center and the River Park Pool.

According to Councilman Christman in an 2/8/21 email, only 2.5% of CRA capital funds had been spent in the River Park Community through 2019. This is an egregious injustice to the neighborhood that was instrumental in establishing a CRA district in the City of Naples.

The City needs to create an economic report on where River Park is today in the allocation of CRA capital funds. That report should be delivered to every stakeholder within the CRA district with an invitation to a scheduled meeting in the City Hall chambers. Led by the CRA and the CRA Advisory Board, this meeting should define the path forward to ensure that the River Park neighborhood receives its fair share of CRA funds. It is important to work for consensus of the path forward among all of the stakeholders.

It is important that this consensus occur before any more CRA revenue is encumbered by projects outside of the River Park area.

## **John Langley**

I will support reprioritizing CRA funds for any neighborhood that needs help. My neighborhood, Seagate, suffered severe flooding from Ian and we have not had any support from the City. The city of Naples should have a plan of action for the entire city.

## **Ray Christman**

The Naples Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) was created in 1995 through the efforts of leaders primarily concerned with the condition of our main business district, Fifth Avenue South, which was blighted and deteriorating. The original objective was to create a redevelopment area that included Fifth Avenue but also other contiguous areas of Naples (including River Park East). Efforts began with the redevelopment of Fifth Avenue.

The effort to renew Fifth Avenue succeeded for a number of reasons, including the construction of two public parking garages that were paid for with CRA funds. The economic success of Fifth Avenue has over time generated the



incremental property tax revenue that has and will fund investments in other parts of the CRA.

All areas of the CRA suffer or suffered at one time in the past from blight, whether when the CRA was originally created or still today. Certainly, the area east of Rt 41 and west of Goodlette-Frank Road now known as the Design District was and still is a case study in redevelopment. It is a mixed use district with publicly subsidized housing (currently housing some 300 families) combined with long-time, locally owned small businesses, and newer higher end residential and commercial buildings. In my view, the CRA needs to continue make this area a priority, investing in infrastructure improvements to reduce flood risk and improve the above ground environment as well.

River Park East was long a neglected and overlooked part of the CRA. In the 25 years before I joined Council, it received limited CRA funds and attention. Some positive achievements are noteworthy such as the construction of Anthony Park and the more recent renewal and improvement of the park. The current Council and CRA have worked to increase attention and investment in River Park East, with some successes but much more work still to do.

With respect to the issue of resiliency (flooding and drainage), it is not accurate to say that there are no funds in this year's CRA budget for these purposes in River Park East. In fact, there are over \$1.7 million in the budget specifically earmarked for three separate flood mitigation and drainage projects on 5th Avenue, 13th Street and 14 th Street. These are projects that were priorities in the recently completed Resiliency Plan approved by Council. Action on them was delegated to the CRA Board so they could be fast-tracked. In addition, the CRA requested our Public Works Department leadership to identify "emergency/temporary pump station placements" that could be installed prior to the next hurricane season to provide flood protection until these other permanent projects can be completed.

We know, beyond these initial projects that have already been identified and funded, that additional stormwater and drainage work and other utilities improvements are needed in River Park East. In its recent meetings, the CRA has discussed a process for developing a broader "resiliency demonstration program" for River Park East that could be implemented over time as a lead priority for City Council and the CRA. This will be presented and discussed at a future CRA meeting in Q1 2026.



## **Ted Blankenship**

The River Park East neighborhood actually has received significant funding in the past to address streets, Anthony Park construction, lighting, storm resiliency and police support. Any additional needs such as flooding prevention should also be evaluated and prioritized for future funding.

## **Dan Barone**

I applaud the Riverpark residents who, just last week, went before the CRA to bring their neighborhood's issues to the forefront. By making their voices heard, they successfully gained the attention of the council, which committed to prioritizing their neighborhood—the only residential portion of the CRA—for investment. Furthermore, the CRA meeting demonstrated that these investments in River Park East offer a significant city-wide benefit: concurrent improvements to critical infrastructure address an urgent local need now, while also showcasing how working together on neighborhoods throughout Naples benefits the overall long-term health and sustainability of the entire city.

**Question 5:** If control over development is restored to city council, how will you address the need to review and rewrite building codes, with the goals of:

- Preserving green space on commercial and residential property
- Incentivizing energy efficiency, and clean energy options
- Changing requirements for seawall construction to take into account sea level rise and protection of land and sea life
- Ensuring that building construction does not result in drainage onto adjacent properties, or unfiltered into adjacent waterways?

## **Sally Peterson**

I have gone door to door over the last several weeks and the number one issue residents raise by far is overdevelopment. Residents are concerned that the City is not doing enough to manage the consequences of overdevelopment, especially congestion and threats to resiliency. At the same time, residents don't want their property rights undermined.

I think our building codes should provide incentives for homeowners to voluntarily build within the setbacks to create more green space and pervious surfaces. In such a case, a homeowner could receive annual rebates on their water bill as an incentive for doing so. Other ideas include incentives for rain gardens or the installation of retention basins under homes. These help protect neighbors as well.

And speaking of neighbors, if elected to City Council, I would create a Citizen Resiliency Task Force. Some of our best ideas for resiliency come from our residents who know our community best; from sharing best practices in landscaping, to establishing neighborhood drain clearing protocols, to collective advocacy for a more efficient flood panel permitting process.

Naples draws its strength from nature — our beaches, lakes, trees, and open spaces define who we are and enhance our charm and character. Overdevelopment in the county undermines local resiliency. We need to invest locally and intentionally now and in the future to counter its impact.

## **Scott Schultz**

Our Planning Advisory Board unanimously recommended conducting the 2045 Survey and Public Engagement Sessions during January–March, when the majority of our residents are here in Naples. Council rejected that recommendation. The 2045 Vision & Master Plan is one of the most important efforts our city will undertake. It will guide how Naples grows, looks, and functions over the next 20 years — including decisions on zoning, transportation, resiliency, parks, density, and overall quality of life. The public engagement sessions are meant to gather resident feedback on what our community should look like in 2045.

I voted to prioritize resident input during the months when our taxpayers are actually in Naples, and I stand firmly by that vote.

If elected, I will ensure that all major studies, master plan updates, and resiliency projects are scheduled when our city is full — not during the slowest months of the year. Naples is an informed, engaged community, and our residents deserve to have their voices at the forefront of every major long-term decision.

Residents first. Always.

## **Penny Taylor**

I am in support of the four areas described above. We will need to follow the process to make sure any improvements to the codes are lawful and do not infringe upon the property rights of the landowners. Public engagement in this process is highly desirable and every effort should be made to include all stakeholders.

Excess water that is discharging into our neighbor's property, our streets, the Gordon River and Naples Bay is contaminated water and needs to have filtration before being discharged. This is not always possible with current building codes that allow (almost) lot-line-to-lot line building coverage. Stormwater conveyance mechanisms should be inspected with to ensure functioning systems and that environmental standards are met.

Seawall construction requirements are starting to reflect sea level rise projections and how the seawalls should be constructed to give maximum protection to land and sea life. As costly as Hurricane Ian is to our community, it has provided an opportunity to redraft seawall construction codes locally to incorporate sea level rise.

Green space is visually desirable especially around modern construction that is 'almost' lot-line-to-lot-line. It might be important to explore the incentivization of green space where the current building codes do not support reducing the buildable portion of a property to preserve green space.

Incentivizing energy efficiency and clean energy options has been, in the past, the prerogative of the State and Federal governments through tax credits. This is an area that I would support joining with other like-minded municipalities to lobby these governments to continue these incentives.

## **John Langley**

I have been in Naples for over 20 years and haven't noticed much erosion of green spaces. The few hurricanes we have had has destroyed a lot of trees and the city seems content to just replace them but then doesn't maintain them. The building codes need to be addressed on a regular basis to make modification should the need exist but also the building code needs to make sense.

## **Ray Christman**

The State of Florida Building Code was completely overhauled and modernized after Hurricane Andrew in 1992. By state law, it must be reviewed by the legislature every two years. By general consensus, it is considered one of the strongest and most advanced state building codes in the nation. It should be considering the higher risk Florida faces from storm events.

All local building codes must adhere to the state code and locals can also have higher standards (which is obviously preempted now by SB 25, 180, etc). I think that some (many?) of the examples in this question may require comprehensive plan and zoning changes in addition or instead of building code changes. That said, I believe we should review all of these tools with an eye toward the new and higher demands of resiliency planning.

Our starting point should be the current update of our Comprehensive Plan, which is looking ahead 20 years to 2045. In my view, the most important component of this update is to introduce an intentional dimension of resiliency planning into each of the elements of the comp plan. Once this occurs, it can lead to more clarity around how our zoning code and building code need to be updated and enhanced.

A major part of making this process work is continuing public engagement and outreach. Our residents want a city with a high quality of life and a clean environment. They want a city where we are reducing flood risk for them and improving water quality. But they are not looking for more regulation in and of itself. They are not looking for more hoops to jump through or inordinate delays when they want to build or remodel their homes. They want the city to be a partner, not a barrier, that can assist them in addressing these issues. If we are going to propose new regulations, we need to be able to clearly explain the benefits.

At some point, hopefully sooner rather than later, we will be living in a post-SB 250/180 world. But we should make sure we do not just repeat the mistakes that helped bring about this legislation in the first place: Reckless calls for development and permitting moratoriums immediately on the heels of hurricanes when our residents were most vulnerable; Poorly thought through land use ordinance proposals that would have significantly reduced property values for affected homeowners.

When the SB 250/180 development restrictions are hopefully removed, Naples City Council should undertake a thoughtful process of engagement with our residents, our business community, and builders and developers to consider what actions could be taken that would actually benefit residents. In my view, this would include such actions as modifying our code to allow more flexibility in the location of generators in existing homes (something that can actually be done prior to SB 180 expiration), and providing more relief for small variances and preexisting non-conformities on existing homes (also something that can be done now). Council is already in the process of preparing legislation that would make seawall requirements higher and more uniform in the city. We also should continue to work to make sure that our rules and procedures around flood panel installation in both multi and single-family residences are fair to residents seeking to take these actions while also protecting the broader community from misuse that threaten our flood insurance rating.

Finally, City Council needs to examine again our overall permitting processes including the Planning, Building and Utilities Departments. We have outstanding, hard working staff. But we need to continually make sure our processes and requirements are reasonable, clear, and not redundant or unnecessarily duplicative. It is important that city management instill the right tone in our staff regarding working with residents and businesses. If there is a problem with staff capacity to respond to requests, we need to address that as well, including not just adding staff but adjusting fees if appropriate to help pay for that.

### **Ted Blankenship**

These issues should be addressed collaboratively as we did in my first term on City council regarding overhauling the storm water ordinances. This process included architects, landscape architects, builders and other city residents as well as city staff experts to assess the issues and develop suitable solutions which were then put through an extensive public hearing process with the Planning Advisory Board and City Council. Now that those revised rules have been in place for a few years it is time to review them again through a similar collaborative process to see if they are working as intended or if further changes are needed.

## **Dan Barone**

Modernizing our building codes is not about imposing unnecessary restrictions. Instead, it's about crafting smart, future-proof regulations that ensure our community's long-term sustainability and resilience. To achieve this, the City Council and the Building Department must execute a collaborative, data-driven strategy. This strategy will integrate performance-based standards with powerful economic incentives to meet our goals of resilience, environmental stewardship, and economic viability.

**Question 6:** The unprecedented environmental challenges of sea level rise, severe storms, and pollution are faced by businesses and residents in Naples. Resources are limited. Given that, would you change general city budget priorities, and if so, how?

## **Sally Peterson**

Yes. If elected to Naples City Council, I would want to add an additional 2% of the annual budget (about \$4M) to mitigate flooding and accelerate recovery of family neighborhoods which are not otherwise prioritized in the Multi-Basin Implementation Plan. Local public private partnerships could help fund this.

In the longer term, I believe that funding the City's 2025 Resilience Plan should be the top priority. The three pillar approach - offshore, onshore, and inland - would make Naples the national model of resilience. Yet, federal funding sources for environmental protection and innovation have been decimated and state funding remains unclear. A graduated increase in water rates gets us partway there, but it is not enough. A non-partisan coalition of elected officials need to continue to lobby for state, federal and grant funding. This is an innovative plan, and it will take leaders with strong voices, at every level of government to see it funded.

## **Scott Schultz**

We need to rethink how Naples approaches budget priorities and long-term planning. Our environmental challenges are not abstract, they affect flooding, mobility, safety, and the future of our neighborhoods. I will support exploring:

1. Smarter traffic solutions, including selective one-way street conversions to improve flow and smart signaling.

2. Working with the county to prevent sprawl at our borders and protect residential quality of life.

3. Funding mechanisms that place more responsibility on developers who profit from growth and streamlining the city's complex permitting and fee systems to reduce inefficiency and cut red tape.

Underlying all of this is a simple principle: residents come first. We must ensure that tax dollars support storm resiliency, drainage, green space, and infrastructure not political favors.

### **Penny Taylor**

The current City Manager, Gary Young, is a strong and knowledgeable fiscal manager, and understands how to develop a budget to make sure that the health, safety and welfare of the residents of Naples is at the forefront of budget planning. Manager Young has shown great acumen in his leadership since his appointment earlier this year in 2025. I would not vote to change the general city budget priorities at this time.

That being said, the Naples City Council cannot continue to keep alienating key state and federal partners who could help us with the financial challenges of building resilience into our City. This continued antagonism with potential state and federal

partners will guarantee that the taxpayers of the City of Naples will shoulder the \$300-\$500M of stormwater basin implementation costs alone or plans will be "temporarily" shelved for lack of funding. The City of Naples must continue to address these unprecedented expenses "head-on" for the City's future and the future of our children and grandchildren.

### **John Langley**

The city should have recognized the need for infrastructure upgrades years ago and should have been funding reserves to handle the cost of the upgrades. But like most things involving the city the city council has chosen to be reactive rather than proactive. I would make sure future budget have a component of savings rather than zero based budgeting



## **Ray Christman**

As I stated in answers to prior questions, Naples City Council has provided leadership on resiliency issues in recent years at a meaningful level that is well ahead of our neighboring jurisdictions. We currently have underway and paid for (over 70% with non-city dollars) the largest infrastructure project in Naples' history -- the Gulf Shore Boulevard Beach Outfalls project. We also have in design what will be the second largest such project - the 10th Street/1st Avenue South Improvement project.

Both of these projects are essentially resiliency-based stormwater management projects aimed at reducing flood risk. But both also provide other important benefits such as water quality improvements, utility line replacements, beach restoration, streetscape improvements, and other enhancements.

Beyond this, again as I have stated in response to prior questions, we also now have in place a Resiliency Vision, Plan and funding program to identify and invest in priority projects over the next twenty years. We will have the ability to carry out many additional projects like the two described above, and if we can continue to generate additional funding from our government partners at the county, state and federal levels, we will be able to even do more.

We have a well-managed city from a fiscal standpoint. The City of Naples has the fifth lowest millage rate among the more than 200 cities in Florida with a population of 5,000 or more. But 80% of our property tax revenue is directed to public safety and quality of life objectives now. And even without some of the potential draconian property tax "reform" measures now under consideration being enacted, local governments are limited by current state law from increasing millage rates beyond limited levels. In other words, we can raise property taxes only by so much.

Our current budget priorities are centered around resiliency, public safety, and quality of life (parks, trees, medians, etc). I think these are appropriate. The action that Council recently took to increase stormwater fees will provide the revenue that is required to carry out the investment program contemplated in our Resiliency Plan.

Longer-term, Naples will continue to identify ways to budget for and support resiliency projects because the threat posed by sea level rise, warming ocean temperatures, and more frequent and intensive storms will be a permanent condition. Given the realities of risk to all coastal areas in Florida, and to the United States more generally, programs will ultimately need to be developed at the state and federal levels to share the costs of resiliency projects.

### **Ted Blankenship**

The budgets should be scrutinized to defer or eliminate "nice to have" items and free up funding for infrastructure needs. Also, the purchasing process should be audited to see if we are getting the best prices and reduce scope creep and subsequent price amendments.

### **Dan Barone**

The most significant budget reprioritization must be the comprehensive rebuild of the city's stormwater infrastructure. Beyond the singular focus on stormwater, budget changes should also target process efficiency and policy enforcement to leverage existing funds better. The City Council must also commit to decisive governance and budget management, eliminating the culture of costly delays that severely inflate project costs. Prioritizing large, impactful projects and then adhering to the approved execution timeline is not merely good management; it is a fiduciary responsibility that directly conserves limited resources while accelerating our capacity to meet the environmental threats facing Naples today.