

Cody Davis
Collier County Commissioner District 2
Jeffersonian Party Chairman
CodyForCollier.com

1. Please provide a brief overview of your background, qualifications and reasons for seeking office?

My name is Cody Davis and I'm a historian and election law expert running for Collier County Commissioner of District 2. I grew up in Illinois but have been visiting Southwest Florida since I was very young. My grandparents were snowbirds in Ft. Myers and I would fly down with my family to see them sometimes. In 2019, I moved to Naples full-time along with my family and grandparents, who had also relocated nearby.

After growing frustrated with the corruption of major-party politics, I created the Jeffersonian Party of Florida, a new political party that advocates for federal, constitutional, American government. We got ballot access in October 2024 and I'm now running as the Party's first candidate. Instead of paying lawyers to draft all the legal documentation to achieve ballot access, I spent hours reading Florida Statutes and put together dozens of pages of paperwork, which ultimately made its way to the Office of the General Counsel of the Florida Department of State, which declared the documentation "legally sufficient".

I want to keep Collier's character, restore Conservation Collier, and ensure fairness in land-use decisions.

2. What experiences have best prepared you to serve in this role, and how will they influence and inform your approach to leadership and decision-making?

I've been a member of and familiar with the Strong Towns nonprofit for some years now, which was started by a civil engineer named Chuck Marohn to build and replace what is viewed as a broken post-WWII development pattern. They are against sprawl, and promote bottom-up, walkable, mixed-use development, and fiscal sanity. Their work has contributed to the revitalization of many towns throughout America, and encouraged and educated millions of Americans to exercise their right to self-government.

Like Strong Towns, I believe the development pattern in Collier County is broken, and a new direction is needed to ensure financial solvency and beautiful places to live. I want to promote bottom-up, community-driven development rather than top-down government impositions.

I focused my history studies on, among other things, American history, American legal history, and history of American development.

In addition to founding the Jeffersonian Party of Florida, I also founded the Collier County Jeffersonian Executive Committee, which is the only third party recognized by the Collier

Supervisor of Elections, and the qualifying officer indicated to me that I am the first local third-party candidate in Collier County, ever.

These experiences taught me how to navigate complex government bureaucracy and law, and my studies of how American communities developed and declined over time inform my view of where Collier County is headed and how to change course.

3. What do you believe should be Collier County's top priorities over the next decade and how would you work to advance them?

I would like to see the County move away from its heavy reliance on custom developer projects, and towards a universal zoning code that applies equally to everyone.

Context: Land-use tools like PUDs (Planned Unit Developments) and SRAs (Stewardship Receiving Areas) are used by developers to receive custom zoning codes that only apply to their specific projects from the County government. So developers get one set of rules if they can afford to navigate the costly and time-intensive PUD negotiation process, and everyone else gets red tape.

I would like to take incremental steps and proactively plan towards a more fair and transparent zoning code.

One example of this could be an ordinance to allow HOAs to opt in to a corner store program that allows a small portion (maybe 2-5% of total units) of small-scale commercial uses within otherwise wholly residential zones. This promotes internal capture, thereby improving the traffic problem and giving elderly and young residents places to get to without driving.

4. A strong local economy depends on the success of businesses of all sizes. What policies, investments or strategies would you support to encourage job creation, entrepreneurship and long-term economic opportunity in Collier County?

Many otherwise viable business models are artificially priced out of the market because of rigid zoning rules that prevent infill development and desirable redevelopment, instead favoring urban sprawl implemented through arduous PUD negotiations. The risk and time involved in those negotiations result in costs that ultimately get passed onto future buyers and consumers. Instead, having a consistent, clear zoning code that applies equally to everyone and allows responsible by-right development in suitable, pre-designated locations, will promote small and mid-size developments and businesses that could never exist under the current zoning paradigm.

In other words: the current zoning paradigm imposed by the government is a cliff, with big developers at the top making all the money, and everyone else at the bottom. Instead of a cliff, I want a staircase, where small and mid-sized businesses have an opportunity to participate.

5. Employers throughout our region continue to report challenges attracting and retaining qualified workers. What do you see as the biggest workforce challenge facing Collier County and what strategies would you support to strengthen the talent pipeline and prepare residents for future career opportunities?

Affordability. A household of four that makes “only” \$125,000 a year in Collier qualifies for affordable housing, so this is a problem that impacts the vast majority of the workforce, not just the poor and middle class.

As for strategy, the problem is multi-faceted (See my answer to question #6).

6. Access to affordable housing remains a top concern for employers throughout our community.

What policies or strategies would you support to create housing options for working families, essential workers and seniors in Collier County?

Federal, State, and local policies have rewarded land speculation, and housing has become something like an investment instrument rather than a basic need. Increasing supply in a vacuum places downward pressure on property prices. But Commissioners can place upward pressure on property prices too. Walkable, mixed-use development commands premiums, and promoting sensible, by-right development in pre-designated locations cuts out the costs of arduous PUD negotiations and allows small and mid-sized developers to participate when they otherwise would not be able to. Placing upward and downward pressure on housing prices simultaneously stabilizes the market, rather than allowing it to crash or skyrocket.

Increasing housing supply is not just politically constrained, but it is also structurally constrained. Existing transportation infrastructure is overburdened, and the County is incapable of building required road capacity faster than developers build units. Walkable, mixed-use development promotes much higher rates of internal capture and more efficient pipe networks for services like water and sewer, easing the traffic constraint, lowering infrastructure maintenance costs, and lowering the rates taxpayers pay on those utilities.

7. As Collier County continues to grow, what infrastructure investments and planning strategies are needed to support economic growth, maintain quality of life and strengthen resilience before and after natural disasters?

Resiliency efforts should be championed and led by local government whenever and wherever viable, rather than delegated to the State, and certainly not to the Federal government. The US Army Corps of Engineers spent several years conducting a major study to help with resiliency and they canceled it recently because of defunding, and now the County is left without information and without well-considered plans for resilience. The County should exercise its right to self-government and take charge of its own resiliency rather than relying on the federal government to “save” us.

The legislature recently passed SB 302, which directed the Florida Department of Environmental Protection to develop guidelines and more effective permitting processes for nature-based coastal resiliency projects which are more effective and cheaper than the traditional “gray” projects the County has previously implemented for coastal resiliency. I want to pursue those more effective methods of coastal resiliency.

[question 8 was absent from the questionnaire as received]

9. Collier County’s natural resources are central to our economy and quality of life. How should local leaders balance environmental stewardship, future growth and economic opportunity when making policy decisions?

There must be proactive planning to establish clear, principled guidelines on where and how it is appropriate to build. Sensitive land (such as land that provides significant hydrological value) must be protected, and land suitable for development or redevelopment should be clearly designated and the rules must apply equally to everyone.

10. Access to affordable, high-quality healthcare is important to residents, employers and the local workforce. What do you see as the most pressing healthcare challenges facing Collier County and what strategies would you support to address them?

Much of the healthcare industry is regulated by State and Federal agencies, as well as private markets, rather than local government, but one major area that Commissioners do have influence on is emergency access.

The Windward Landing PUD was recently before the Board of County Commissioners, and one of the applicant’s “deviation” requests was to waive a fire safety and emergency access law regarding the length of cul-de-sacs. The limit was doubled from 1,000 ft to 2,000 ft, at the request of the developer. I brought this concern before the Commissioners, stating that this raised serious concerns about whether the neighborhood would be able to accommodate emergency scenarios, but they ignored my comment and unanimously approved the item on the summary agenda (the summary agenda is reserved, by law, for “routine, administrative items”).

11. Tourism remains a key driver in Collier County’s local economy and supports businesses throughout the community. How should the community strengthen this industry while also preserving the quality of life and community character that make Collier County unique?

The same qualities that make Collier desirable to live in, like preserved natural and community character, walkable spaces, and authentic community, are what attract visitors. My approach to land use and development is oriented around preserving and enhancing those qualities, which serves residents and tourism simultaneously.

12. Public officials are often asked to balance competing economic, environmental and community priorities. How do you approach these decisions and what principles guide your decision-making?

Equal application of the law. It's important to listen to those involved, and allow the public process to play out fully, instead of deciding prior to public engagement.

13. What role should collaboration between business leaders, educators, nonprofit organizations and government agencies play in addressing community challenges and how would you foster those partnerships if elected?

I think it's good to take a holistic approach to government, encouraging civic engagement from all areas. Public-private partnerships can be a great thing, if done well and to the benefit of the people, rather than to a select few.

The County often defers environmental concerns to US Fish and Wildlife, and excuses itself by saying it doesn't have in-house expertise, but the Commissioners regularly hear from all kinds of environmental groups, such as the Conservancy of Southwest Florida and Audubon Western Everglades, who do have expertise, and could be onboarded to assist the County in managing environmental concerns on its own rather than relying on the Federal government to handle its local problems.

14. County residents often support lower taxes, but local government must also fund infrastructure, public facilities, environmental initiatives and essential services. If revenues fall short of community needs, what spending reductions, efficiencies or new revenue sources would you support to close the funding gap while preserving essential services and long-term investments?

Nature-based coastal resiliency efforts have recently been streamlined by the legislature, and they are cheaper and more effective than "gray" resiliency projects which the County has previously implemented.

Walkable, mixed-use development promotes much higher rates of internal capture and more efficient pipe networks for services like water and sewer, easing traffic constraints, lowering infrastructure maintenance costs, and lowering the rates taxpayers pay on those utilities.

In a personal conversation with Commissioner Kowal, he indicated to me in passing that the Conservation Collier program uses "stasis" conservation rather than "dynamic" conservation. If that is true, then I would advocate for transitioning to dynamic conservation, because it produces better conservation outcomes and significantly reduces costs of conservation.

Proactive planning and incremental movement towards a more form-based, by-right-priority zoning code drastically reduces the need for staff review, reducing many of the government-side costs of new development.

Net present value accounting helps the County navigate infrastructure maintenance costs and avoid scenarios like the one recently where the County had to contract \$64 million in emergency debt to fund stormwater management, a necessary government service. Setting aside money for known maintenance costs avoids the price of servicing the debt's interest.

15. In November, Florida voters will be asked to consider a constitutional amendment that would substantially expand Florida's homestead exemption and reduce property tax revenue available to local governments. Do you support the amendment? Please explain your position and how the benefits and potential impacts should be balanced against local government's ability to fund infrastructure, public safety and other essential services?

I don't like property tax, because it disincentivizes improvement of property. If someone makes improvements on their property, they are "penalized" by having to pay higher tax on the higher property value. Instead, I would prefer a land value tax, which taxes the value of the land, rather than the property. Unfortunately, the Florida Constitution de facto bans land value taxes, and the proposed constitutional amendment this November does not address that. Instead, it guts local government funding while keeping intact all of the costs of government services, centralizing authority in the hands of Tallahassee and attacking Floridians' right to self-government. There is certainly waste in local government. It's also certain that state and federal governments are far more wasteful per capita than local governments. Governor DeSantis' touted "surplus" is projected to be met by a massive and growing deficit in the coming years. For these reasons, I oppose the amendment.