

**First Place (Tie): Andrew Johnson, Grade 7
Gulf Coast Classical Academy, City of Clearwater**



Pictured above: Florida League of Mayors Executive Director Scott Dudley and First Place Winner Andrew Johnson.

If I were elected Mayor, I would strive to make my city a safer and better place to live by making the best decisions for it based on its particular needs. I would ensure that our city council is responsible with its resources so that taxpayer dollars are not wasted.

As Mayor, I would first focus on issues concerning the recent population increase in my city. I would develop new ways to make housing more affordable by reforming zoning laws and attracting investors and businesses to our area to construct these accommodations. I would improve transportation by repairing broken roads and highways, increasing public transportation and supplying sidewalks where needed.

I would also propose to employ more police officers in order to lower the crime rate, keep roads safe and ensure the safety of all city residents. I would prioritize school safety by supplying needy schools with resource officers and improving employee training to ensure safety for the schools' students.

In 1968, Home Rule was passed in Florida. This means residents elect officials who live within the municipality itself and thus can make choices depending on the community's specific needs. Home Rule is the foundation of how our city runs, and it is necessary that we put it to use so that our city's government may function well.

As Mayor, I would always stand by the law, and it would be my duty to accomplish these things to benefit my city and the lives of my fellow residents.

**First Place (Tie): Aayushi Kamdar, Grade 7
Coral Springs Middle School, City of Coral Springs**



Pictured above: Commission Members of the Coral Springs City Commission, along with Florida League of Mayors Executive Director-Designate Jeff Branch (second from right), Coral Springs Mayor and Florida League of Mayors President Scott J. Brook (fourth from left) and First Place Winner Aayushi Kamdar (fifth from left).

If I were elected Mayor, my primary focus would be on community engagement, sustainability and tailored development, all made possible through the principles of Home Rule. I would initiate regular town hall meetings, ensuring that the diverse voices within our community are heard and integrated into decision-making processes. By fostering an inclusive environment, we can collectively shape our city's future.

Sustainable development would be a priority, with a commitment to green infrastructure and renewable energy projects. Home Rule enables us to address our city's unique ecological challenges and opportunities, creating a greener more environmentally conscious urban space.

Education and public services would also take center stage. Home Rule allows for the customization of policies, enabling us to improve schools, invest in vocational training and ensure access to quality healthcare. Tailoring economic development strategies to our city's strengths would attract investment and generate employment opportunities.

Moreover, I would prioritize public safety through evidence-based policing strategies. By collaborating with local stakeholders, we can address specific concerns within our community. As Mayor, I would leverage Home Rule to create a city that is not only well-governed but also a true reflection of the aspirations and values of its residents, making it an exceptional and unique place to live.

**Second Place: Marialucia Hernandez, Grade 8
Emerald Cove Middle School, Village of Wellington**



Pictured above: Some members of the Wellington Village Council pictured with Florida League of Mayors Executive Director Scott Dudley (third from left) and Second Place Winner Marialucia Hernandez (fourth from left).

If I were elected Mayor, I would prioritize public transportation. Public transportation can aid many citizens, especially elderly people who can't drive and minors under the age of 16 who can't get a driver's license yet. Public transportation can additionally help better the local economy, since one dollar invested in public transportation is estimated to generate 5 economic dollars back. Public transportation would be advantageous for essentially everyone.

Furthermore, I would also concentrate on affordable housing. Astronomically high prices for homes can be lowered by making tax delinquent property and publicly owned land available for development for affordable housing. I would also make sure to take measures to prevent the loss of existing affordable housing and provide down payment assistance to help families afford their homes. Pushing for the idea of affordable housing will allow for financially struggling residents to move in with ease into the community.

Home Rule can help a city become more independent and allows flexibility in a city. Home Rule grants locals to make autonomous decisions without having to ask the legislature for permission. Home Rule allows for cities to grow and become more self-sufficient as they flourish; Home Rule gives a sentiment of individuality to the city's locals.

To conclude, if I were to be elected Mayor, I would focus on improving the quality of life, fostering community growth and promoting economic development. I vow to lead the community with integrity and utilize Home Rule to meet civilian's needs.

**Third Place: Maya Morrison, Grade 7
Coral Springs Middle School, City of Coral Springs**



Pictured above: Commission Members of the Coral Springs City Commission, along with Florida League of Mayors Executive Director-Designate Jeff Branch (second from right), Coral Springs Mayor and Florida League of Mayors President Scott J. Brook (fourth from left) and Third Place Winner Maya Morrison (fourth from right).

If I were elected Mayor, my mission would be to turn our city into a safer, greener and more empowering haven for all. School security wouldn't just be about locks and alarm; it'd be about creating a community where every student feels secure and supported. I'd introduce mentorship programs, connecting older students with younger ones, fostering a sense of unity that acts as the first line of defense against any challenges our schools may face.

Recycling wouldn't just be a chore; it'd be a city-wide celebration of environmental responsibility. We'd organize neighborhood clean-up events, turning trash into treasure with community art installations made from recycled materials. I'd work closely with schools to educate students about the impact of their actions, making them eco-warriors at a young age.

Home Rule would be our secret power. It means we get to decide what's best for our city, shaping policies that truly reflect our values. I'd encourage town hall meetings where everyone, from students to grandparents, can voice their ideas. Imagine a city where every citizen feels heard and knows they have the power to make a difference.

In my city, being Mayor wouldn't just be a title; it would be a call to action. My mission would be to create a city that has schools where students feel secure and are environmentally friendly. Through the principles of Home Rule, together, we'd build a city where every resident, young and old, plays a part in creating a brighter future.