

# Apopka's Road Map

Thank you for taking the time to read through my Road Map to right the ship of the City of Apopka.

This Road Map is not a collection of talking points, political promises, or abstract ideas. It is a governing framework, built from lived experience, years of service, listening to residents, and witnessing firsthand where the City of Apopka is succeeding and where it is falling short. It is honest about where we are today, clear about where we must go, and realistic about the work required to get there.

Apopka is no longer the small town it once was, yet it is also not being led like the growing, complex city it has become. Rapid population growth, unmanaged development, rising utility costs, strained infrastructure, and declining trust in city government have created real and daily negative impacts on our residents' quality of life. These challenges did not appear overnight, and they will not be solved overnight. Pretending otherwise would be irresponsible.

This Road Map exists because residents deserve more than reactionary decision-making and vague assurances. They deserve transparency, accountability, and leadership that plans proactively rather than governs reactively. They deserve a city government that communicates openly, budgets honestly, manages growth responsibly, and places residents not politics at the center of every decision.

Throughout this document, you will see clear priorities laid out, beginning with immediate structural changes that restore trust and fiscal responsibility, followed by long-term investments in infrastructure, neighborhoods, public safety, economic development, and quality of life. Each section explains not only *what* needs to be done, but *why* it matters and *how* it will be approached.

This Road Map also acknowledges an important truth: progress is rarely linear. There will be obstacles, legal, financial, political, and logistical. Recent state legislation has limited local control. Years of deferred maintenance and mismanagement cannot be undone instantly. Some decisions will be difficult, and some changes may be uncomfortable. But leadership is not about avoiding hard conversations, it is about confronting them honestly and responsibly. This Road Map does just that.

Thank you again for taking the time to review an in-depth view of how I will restore confidence, govern equitably and efficiently and turn the city around.



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# Development, Utility Rates, Flooding & Infrastructure

## Development

The City of Apopka has experienced massive population and development growth over the last few decades with a major uptick in recent years. This development should have been mitigated and properly managed to ensure the City of Apopka could implement plans for improved infrastructure, water/waste water management, parks and traffic, to name a few. Unfortunately, this never occurred and my advocacy in recent years for a moratorium is no longer an option due to recent legislation (Senate Bill [SB] 180) approved on June 26, 2025 by our State of Florida Legislature. This legislation has taken away Home Rule and our ability as local elected officials to do what is best for our residents: properly planning for and slowing development.

Once elected, I will have the City of Apopka join more than two dozen other Florida jurisdictions in the lawsuit that challenges parts of SB 180. This legislation has also impacted our updated Comprehensive (Comp) Plan that worked to increase green space requirements, protect our natural resources and define our goals as a city for the future. Additionally, I will work with local larger property owners that have not sold to developers to have the City of Apopka obtain their development rights. By acquiring these rights, it ensures that the large tracts of land cannot be developed – ever. Thus, protecting our natural resources, slowing development, and controlling how we want our city to look.

## Water / Reuse Water / Sanitation

The City of Apopka has increased its water rates by double digits two years in a row. Cost of living for city residents (and residents that are outside of the city limits but are served by the same water) has gotten out of control. This is due to mismanagement:

- Moving money from the Water Enterprise Fund (millions of dollars in FY 25/26 alone!) to subsidize the General Fund with no accounting of why, other than ambiguous explanations. This has effectively bankrupted the Water Enterprise Fund and drained the reserves.
- Not properly managing where water meters are installed.
- Not accounting for billions of gallons of water every year.
- Lack of small and manageable (1.5%-3%) increases over the previous year.

Millions of dollars have been unjustifiably transferred annually from the water, wastewater and sanitation (Enterprise Funds) fund to the general fund to “balance” the budget and build reserves, while simultaneously draining the enterprise fund’s reserves to either \$0 or into a negative position (where the city owes more than they currently have in the account).

Once elected, I will work to make immediate reductions in water rates through proper meter repairs / readings (no more estimated bills!). I will stop the subsidizing of our general fund and budget based on the true scenario associated with the general fund. I will properly itemize (not based on estimates but true numbers) and illustrate all transfers to and from each account. I will work to reduce our water rates, as those rates should be based on actual costs and not false or misleading stories and I will empower our Staff with the resources they need to properly and efficiently serve the residents.

#### Flooding Mitigation / Pond Maintenance

The City of Apopka has been experiencing flooding issues throughout the city in recent years. These issues have plagued neighborhoods, roads, and businesses. Lack of proper maintenance with our water management systems has contributed to these ongoing issues as well as development without proper oversight. These systems include dry retention stormwater ponds that are key to ensuring flooding does not occur throughout our city. These ponds require regular maintenance to ensure water is properly seeping into the ground and empty within 72 hours of rain. Many of these ponds throughout and around our city have failed and do not allow water to flow back into the aquifer after being naturally filtered. These ponds working properly are the key to ensuring we do not have flooding in our neighborhoods.

Once elected, I will bring in other government agencies that have oversight of the water management in our city to ensure all systems are properly functioning and being maintained as they should and fine those that are not properly maintaining their ponds. Many HOAs and private companies do not know of the requirements to maintain these ponds. My administration will provide education to these entities to ensure they are aware of their maintenance requirements and give time to come into compliance with those requirements.

For neighborhoods that have excess water from surrounding neighborhoods being funneled into their ponds or lakes, I will create an agreement with the governing agencies to implement a flood protection system. This system will be permanently installed to areas we know are prone to flooding and stay flooded (more than 72 hours). When the waters get too high, the system will remove water from that specific pond to ensure no damage is done to neighboring properties. With advocacy and vision, solutions like these can be implemented efficiently and at no additional cost to the neighboring property owners.

#### Road & Sidewalk Maintenance

The City of Apopka has not prioritized maintenance of our current roads and sidewalks. I have advocated for years that the current administration needs to allocate more funding to properly maintain our roads and sidewalks. Those funds I advocated for have continually been redistributed elsewhere to “balance” the budget.

Once elected, I will have an audit of our roads and sidewalks completed, followed by a phased plan with allocated funds. We will then expend the funds to fulfill the phased plan (versus using those funds to “balance” the budget) – budgeting based on need, not on what may be left over.

### Traffic

The City of Apopka is experiencing increased traffic due to lack of planning and foresight with the increase in development throughout our city and neighboring cities. With all the new developments being approved the city implements an archaic way of designing roads that dates back to the 1960s with a dated priority list. Our roads are currently being designed to only move vehicles around the city at an average to below average rate. We must redesign our roads to efficiently move vehicles and pedestrians.

Once elected, I will implement new design standards for our roads that places the priorities improve quality of life, not just for the drivers but walkers, cyclists, runners, those on scooters, etc. These include but are not limited to correcting the timing of traffic signals, implementation of traffic calming devices and increased pedestrian and bike lanes to name a few.

## Budgeting Process & Budget Transparency

### Overspending/Mismanaged Budget/Lack of Accountability

The City of Apopka finances have been less than ideal in recent years. We continue to hear that taxes are low, reserves are strong, and that we are fiscally sound. But when I look at my monthly cost of living, my local utility costs far outweigh any kind of savings that may have occurred. Government funds are being expended on pet projects, put into a slush fund, pulled from the water/wastewater and sanitation funds to “balance” the budget, approved staff positions left unfilled to “balance” the budget and sparingly spent on maintenance and updates to our city assets and infrastructure (just to name a few of the major issues we are experiencing specific to the budget).

The budget process has been clear as mud the last few years where department budgets haven’t been provided until the day of their budget workshop. Staff are required to do last minute changes right before Council Workshops; Commissioners are required to review a budget with less than an hour to do so and expected to make decisions with limited information. Residents do not know where their taxpayer dollars are going and this ambiguity has led to overspending, wasteful spending and has broken trust with our residents.

Once elected, I will ensure the release of monthly updates of our current financial position. This will include all income (and where it came from), all expenses (what account they were paid out of, as well as what the expense is for), bank statements, and an update on

investment positions. These updates will also track which departments are over/under budget, provide the reason for the change, and what we are doing as an administration to pivot for each department as we move through the fiscal year.

The Budget Process will start in January of every year with a resident-led advisory committee who will review the previous year's budget and advise on what additional items need to be added or removed from the budget to the benefit of the residents. The budget will be split into two foci: one that is exclusively items that only the government can manage / core services (road/sidewalk additions and maintenance, parks and recreation, sanitation, water and wastewater, fire department, police department, etc.) and a second budget of items that are not specific to a government's purview or can be completed by a 3<sup>rd</sup> party (events, specialty projects, camps, business development, etc.). Then the resident-led advisory committee will advise on those items. Once that occurs the Commission will begin to meet with department heads starting in April of each year. This will allow open conversations and input from the Commission as well as the advisory committee and the department heads. Once those meetings occur, we will finalize all budgets through the Budget Workshops that occur in July & August of each year.

#### General Fund Management

The City of Apopka General Fund under the current administration has been handled as a slush fund – holding hostage millions of taxpayer dollars over the policy-dictated amounts. This created a scenario that all expenditures that were not budgeted for or presented to the residents or the Commissioners during the vague Budget Workshops could be spent hastily and with limited oversight. The General Fund has also been subsidized by most residents within the city and many outside the city limits through their water, wastewater, and sanitation fees/bills.

The current administration has continually moved millions from different accounts to the General Fund with limited information on why. At best, the Commission and residents receive ambiguous answers as to why and were pushed off as a nuisance when more clarifying questions are asked.

Additionally, the artificially low and subsidized millage rate is kept at its current rate due to approved staffing positions within the City of Apopka being budgeted and approved by the Commission but intentionally being left unfilled to “save” money.

Once elected, I will stop the unjustified subsidizing of the General Fund and reveal the true state of our city's finances. From there, the Commission, staff, and residents will work together to come up with a truly balanced budget based on facts. The days of ambiguous funding are done – I will bring confidence back to the residents on our city's finances.

## Business Attraction & Retention

The City of Apopka has gone years without any kind of leadership specific to Economic Development. The current administration only added an Economic Development Department after the previous Vice Mayor, Kyle Becker, pushed for one for years. After finally establishing the department, it then took months to fill the position, which eventually became vacant after less than a year.

Once elected, I will provide autonomy and the proper resources to our Economic Development Department to ensure the department thrives. The Economic Development Department should be advisory many of the decision-making that occurs, as their department is impacted by almost every decision. Local business owners will directly benefit from the resources that the department will have, including access to grants, networking, and relationship that have been built. To have a strong downtown, neighborhoods and community we must retain, promote, and grow our current businesses.

While we continue to nurture our current businesses through education and access to growth assistance, the Economic Development Department will be able to focus on outreach to other businesses outside the City of Apopka. They will be able to promote the City of Apopka as an economic hub for Central Florida. As the Mayor, I will empower our departments through proper resource allocation, proper staffing, and providing autonomy. This will build confidence within each department, increase services provided to our residents, create a healthy working culture, and allow our city to flourish.

## New & Improved Staff Positions

### Communications Director

The City of Apopka government has lost the trust of those it serves, caused by the lack of honest and transparent communication.

Once elected as Mayor of Apopka, I will allocate funding and ensure a proper, independent hiring process of a Communications Director.

This position will make sure that information impacting our residents is disseminated to the public in a timely and transparent fashion – our residents deserve this. This timely dissemination of accurate information will allow the residents to petition their elected officials with the same information the elected officials have.

### Grant Writing

The City of Apopka is wasting taxpayer dollars every year in the form of grant funds that are available through the state and federal government that are not being tapped into. These grants can go to additional sidewalks and repairs, protecting/conserving/improving green

space, assisting with roadway improvements, and assisting with water and wastewater projects (which would result in lower utility bills), to name a few.

Once elected, I will ensure a Grant Writer is properly positioned with resources provided to identify, apply for and be granted funding that benefits our residents and saves taxpayer dollars. We currently have grants being written by staff that are wearing multiple hats and only applying for grants when time allows. We need a full-time grant writer to collaborate with our state and federal partners to maximize to efficiently utilize taxpayer dollars to the exclusive benefit of the taxpayer.

#### Personnel Increases / Competitive Compensation

The City of Apopka has experienced a massive increase in population but the staffing levels throughout the city have plateaued. Many departments have not seen the proper staffing with incremental increases that they should have during this massive growth phase in our city. Many department heads are long-term “interim” leaders, which does not provide stability for their department’s staff or our city. Turnover has been immense with the current administration getting involved and ruining the hiring process. One department head that was hired exclusively by the current Mayor quit within two weeks of starting. We have an interim City Administrator that was appointed after the previous Administrator was erratically and emotionally fired by the current Mayor. The turnover costs have been massive.

Our Fire Department and Police Department need many additional members to their respective departments (of which, I have consistently advocated for). Our Public Works department has staff wearing multiple hats – many are overworked and getting burned out.

Once elected, I will properly staff each department to reflect the growth the City of Apopka has experienced and will continue to experience. With these staff increases, staff will have the resources and power to serve our residents to the level they expect, deserve, and pay for.

While we are hiring, I will ensure we are the most attractive to prospective employees through compensation, retirement, insurance, paid time off and organizational culture, to name a few. For the current staff that are serving the residents day-after-day, I will ensure the city is competitively compensating them and providing opportunities and resources for their desired growth.

### Quality of Life Improvements

#### Parks and Rec / Camp Wewa / Events

The City of Apopka has some of the best park spaces within Central Florida. From sprawling landscapes to rolling topography, the city has something for everyone to enjoy.

The issues this department is facing include: lack of proper staff, underfunding, and no plan for the future.

The Parks and Recreation Department is burning out from a lack of staff and resources needed to run the increasingly large City of Apopka parks and their associated events. Many staff members wear multiple hats and are doing their best, but need a helping hand via resources and additional staff. We have an amphitheater that should have large sold-out events every weekend, but often we see that venue empty. We need additional staff, proper allocation of resources, and to have the Economic Development Department come in to assist with attracting events to our various dynamic venues.

Once elected, I will create a Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee. This committee will focus on the City of Apopka's priorities specific to the parks throughout the city. They will advise the Commission on what they see needs to be a priority for the city and what doesn't. Our city is growing and so are the interests of our residents. To thrive we must be able to adapt to the needs and interests of our residents. Every park the city maintains should be kept to the same consistently high standard. The Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee will work with Parks and Recreation Staff to create a Parks and Recreation Standards. These Standards will set a tone throughout the city that we, as elected officials, care. Having this Advisory Committee will be a major step in understanding and implementing positive change to our parks.

Camp Wewa was a purchase that was hopefully made with great intentions. The issue with Camp Wewa is that there is no plan in place to make this park reach its full potential. I understand that most parks are financially "loss leaders" but this park, under the right leadership with vision and ability to act, can showcase this diamond the way it should be. The city has spent millions of dollars trying to bring this park back to life with little to show for the efforts and at a loss of hundreds of thousands of dollars every year.

Once elected, I will properly position this park to be a premier park, camp, and business retreat. I will bring in the Economic Development Department to provide feedback and direction. I will bring in our Advisory Committee to provide feedback and I will define a phased plan that will bring this diamond back to where it once was prior to the City of Apopka purchasing it.

#### City Identity / Neighborhoods

The City of Apopka lost its identity many years ago. The current administration is clinging to a past that no longer exists, not accepting where we as a city are at now, and has no vision for the future. Residents, City Staff, and business owners have expressed concerns of the lack of identity the city has, as well as no plans to create a cohesive city in the future.

Once elected, I will create a Neighborhood Advisory Committee that will work with Staff to create Apopka's new identity through the resident-driven creation of districts or



“neighborhoods.” These neighborhoods will create distinctly themed areas that focus on preserving the history of the area and promoting the future of the area through business attraction and retention, community outreach, and events. The stronger a community within a city, the stronger the city.

#### Instill Council Respect / Confidence / RRO

The City of Apopka City Council Meetings have regressed into a show of limited information, lack of trust, and unprofessionalism with no order. The current administration has been unwilling to run public meetings with any structure or true order.

As the only currently sitting Commissioner running for Mayor, I am the only one that truly knows how our Commission should be properly supported to do the job they were duly-elected to do: serve the residents.

Once elected, I will introduce Robert’s Rules of Order as our official procedure for running all meetings. This alone will create confidence in our Commission so there is no ambiguity with how we conduct business. All will be treated equally. If a Commissioner wants to make a motion the proper order will be provided within Robert’s Rules of Order.

Prior to each Council Meeting I will also be providing a one-hour workshop session to allow the Commission to bring ideas, goals, and platforms that they would like to move forward. This will also serve as a space for the Commission and public to have open dialogue about the issues impacting the city.

I will also be providing dedicated offices and meeting spaces to the Commissioners so they have the autonomy and confidence to work from City Hall, to meet with residents and guests of the city, and not feel they have to work exclusively through the Mayor’s office to accomplish what they were elected to do: serve the people.

Finally, to assist the Commission in their efforts, I will budget a new position of Assistant to the Commissioners that will be dedicated solely to the Commissioners. This new position will assist in balancing time and building efficiencies with the Commissioners to better serve the residents of the City of Apopka.

#### Unhoused Plans

The unhoused community in Apopka is of paramount important. We first need to understand that these individuals are people too; then we can work together for solutions and best courses of action to assist. These individuals have varying strengths, weaknesses, backgrounds and needs. We cannot apply a “one size fits all” approach and expect true change. Some individuals need a helping hand up, others need job training to obtain a secure job, while others suffer from mental challenges. The most efficient way to assist these individuals right now is to partner with local organizations that are already assisting in this arena. We do not need to recreate the wheel — let’s find organizations that are already

helping and come together to create a plan. Matthew's Hope is an organization with a program that helps with mental health, job training, housing, providing food and so many other important services.

Once elected, I will partner with local organizations that are already working in this space. Through those partnerships we will create a Resource Center that will serve residents on every level of need. If we can assist those that are heading towards a housing insecurity situation, we can get ahead of an increase in the unhoused population. These partnerships with local organizations will create efficiencies by supporting established processes, ensuring funds aren't being wasted and duplicate efforts aren't being made.