

BLUEPRINT FOR BETTER OUTCOMES

FLORIDA HOUSING SUMMIT

Hosted by Florida Policy Project

Wednesday, May 14, 2025 from 7:30 AM – 4:00 PM

The James Museum in St. Petersburg, FL

Host Message



Jeff Brandes & Amy Maguire Florida Policy Project

Welcome to the second annual Florida Housing Solutions Summit. We are honored to have you join us as we gather leaders, innovators, policymakers, and advocates from across the state and nation to address one of Florida's most urgent challenges—housing affordability and access.

As your hosts, we are proud to bring together a diverse group of voices and expertise to explore actionable, forward-thinking solutions for Florida's housing future. Whether you're here to share data, challenge assumptions, or collaborate across sectors, your presence is vital to shaping a more resilient and responsive housing landscape.

This Summit is designed to highlight the issues and to drive real outcomes. We welcome your feedback and ideas.

Additionally, we are pleased to announce that today, the Florida Policy Project will be launching Florida's only housing digital newsletter. The Foundation, will be distributed on the second Wednesday of each month. Plus, we will keep subscribers up to date on real issues impacting housing in Florida. The Foundation will include data, best practices research and solutions, interviews with industry experts, and more. Please [subscribe here](#) to see the first edition.

Thank you for being part of this important work.



Jeff Brandes

Jeff Brandes
Founder & CEO

Amy Maguire

Amy Maguire
Executive Director



FLORIDA
HOUSING
SUMMIT

Thank you to our Sponsors

Platinum Sponsor



**Florida Manufactured
Housing Association, Inc.**

Gold Sponsors



STEARNS WEAVER MILLER



Silver Sponsors



Florida Trend
FLORIDA'S BUSINESS AUTHORITY



Table Sponsors



Lisa Miller & Associates
Business Development, Government Consulting, Public Relations



Agenda

DESCRIPTION	SPEAKERS
7:45 am-8:15 am <i>Rise & Register</i> Check-in, coffee, and conversation	
8:30 am-8:45 am <i>Words of Welcome</i>	Jeff Brandes , Florida Policy Project Founder & President, Former Florida State Senator Matt Walsh , Founder, CEO, Owner, The Observer Media Group
8:45 am - 9:15 am <i>Through the Lens: Rethinking Market Realities</i>	Kevin Erdmann , Author, "Shut Out: How a Housing Shortage Caused the Great Recession and Crippled Our Economy" and "Building from the Ground Up: Reclaiming the American Housing Boom"
9:15 am - 10:00 am <i>Unlocking Solutions: Live Local, impact fees, and preemption, to name a few</i>	Adrian Moore , Vice President of Policy, Reason Foundation Kody Glazer , Chief Legal and Policy Officer, Florida Housing Coalition Elizabeth Strom , Associate Professor, University of South Florida Doug Wheeler , Director of the George Gibbs Center for Economic Prosperity, James Madison Institute
10:00 am - 10:15 am <i>Fuel Break: Ideas and Caffeine</i> Generously sponsored by AFP Florida	
10:15 am - 10:45 am <i>The Winning Code for Relentless YIMBY Success</i>	Patrick Slevin , NIMBY Crisis Expert, SL7 Consulting
10:45 am – 11:45 am <i>The Fed Files: U.S. dollars to make housing sense</i>	Michelle Dennard , Vice President and regional executive of the Jacksonville Branch of the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta Domonic Purviance , Subject Matter Expert within the Supervision Regulation and Credit Division at the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta
11:45 am – 12:45 pm <i>Midday Mingle</i> Lunch provided by Inside the Box	

Agenda

12:45 pm - 1:15 pm <i>Modular, Mobile, and Mixed Solutions</i>	Jim Ayotte , CEO of the Florida Manufactured Housing Association (FMHA)
1:15 pm - 1:45 pm <i>Best Practices: Housing Solutions and the Missing Middle</i>	Matt Walsh, Founder, CEO, Owner , The Observer Media Group Bryan Eastman , City Commissioner, City of Gainesville Christina Mojica , Land Use and Housing Policy Analyst, Reason Foundation Félix De Portu , Urbanist Policy Advocate, AURA: An Austin for Everyone
1:45 - 2:00 pm <i>Fuel Break: Ideas and Caffeine</i> Generously sponsored by John Burns Research & Consulting	
2:00 pm - 2:30 pm <i>Permit to Build: Cutting Red Tape in Florida & Beyond</i>	Jake Cremer , Shareholder, Stearns Weaver Miller Charles Gardner , Research Fellow, Mercatus Center
2:30 pm – 2:45 pm <i>Beyond the Front Door</i>	Bemetra Simmons , President and CEO, Tampa Bay Partnership
2:45 pm - 3:15 pm <i>Small Homes, Big Impact: ADUs for Aging & Affordability</i>	Zayne Smith , Senior Director of Advocacy, AARP Florida Iana Blumsack , Economic Policy Analyst, Americans for Prosperity
3:15 - 3:45 pm <i>Building a Better Florida: A Case Study</i>	Scott MacDonald , Partner, Blue Sky Communities Jeff Brandes , Florida Policy Project Founder & President, Former Florida State Senator
3:45 pm Where do we go from here? Turning ideas into action	

Speakers

Matt Walsh, Business Observer

Matt Walsh is founder, CEO and owner The Observer Media Group Inc. Walsh and his late wife, Lisa, started the company in 1995 with the purchase of the Longboat Observer. The company publishes seven newspapers, four websites, four lifestyle magazines, multiple social media channels and one podcast.

The company's newspapers include the Longboat Observer, Sarasota-Siesta Key Observer and East County Observer; the Business Observer; the 120-year-old West Orange Times and Observer and Southwest Orange Observer near Orlando; and the 115-year-old Jacksonville Daily Record.

Their publications reach more than 432,920 readers a week.

Jeff Brandes, Florida Policy Project

Jeff Brandes is founder and president of the Florida Policy Project, which he began following his accomplished service in the Florida Legislature from 2010 to 2022. He represented Senate District 24, which covered a majority of Pinellas County. He was known for his innovative and independent policy-making. Throughout his tenure, he consistently advocated for solutions to address Florida's most challenging issues.

Brandes is a business owner and serves on the boards of several community organizations. Senator Brandes lives in St. Petersburg and is dedicated to making Florida a better place to live, work, and raise a family.

Speakers

Kevin Erdmann, Author

Kevin Erdmann is the author of “Shut Out: How a Housing Shortage Caused the Great Recession and Crippled Our Economy” and “Building from the Ground Up: Reclaiming the American Housing Boom.”

Also, he has published numerous studies and briefs in his role as a senior affiliated scholar with the Mercatus Center at George Mason University detailing how obstructions to housing supply and homeowner financing have created a housing crisis. He covers these ideas and the current marketplace at his Substack newsletter, The Erdmann Housing Tracker. His work has appeared on C-Span, Bloomberg’s “Odd Lots” podcast, in the Wall Street Journal, the National Review, Politico, Barron’s, USA Today, US News, and others.

Adrian Moore, Reason Foundation

Adrian Moore, Ph.D., is vice president of policy at Reason Foundation. He has testified before Congress and state legislatures countless times, and regularly advises federal, state and local officials on ways to improve policy outcomes and reduce costs.

Dr. Moore is author of several books, most recently Megacity Mobility: Integrated Urban Transportation Development and Management (2022) as well as many academic journal articles and policy reports. He has served on several government commissions at local, state and federal levels. He currently writes a monthly column for the Sarasota Observer.

Prior to joining Reason, Dr. Moore served 10 years in the Army on active duty and reserves as a noncommissioned officer and officer and left the military as a Captain. He earned a Ph.D. in Economics from the University of California, Irvine. He holds a Master’s in Economics from the University of California, Irvine and a Master’s in History from California State University, Chico.

Speakers

Kody Glazer, Florida Housing Corporation

Kody Glazer is the Chief Legal and Policy Officer of the Florida Housing Coalition. Kody spearheads the Coalition's legal and policy initiatives and provides technical support to local government staff, elected officials, builders, community groups, and other affordable housing stakeholders on regulatory reform, funding, land use, innovative policy, and the law generally as it relates to affordable housing. Kody leads the Coalition's policy design and housing affordability advocacy efforts, as the lead of the Sadowski Affiliates, and has expertise drafting state legislation and local housing ordinances and policies. Kody is an Adjunct Professor at the Florida State University Department of Urban and Regional Planning.

Elizabeth Strom, University of South Florida

Elizabeth Strom is an Associate Professor in the School of Public Affairs at the University of South Florida. She previously served as the Director of USF's Office of Community Engagement and Partnerships. She has published on urban development, the role of arts and tourism in cities, and affordable housing issues in several leading academic journals.

She teaches urban planning masters and undergraduate students with a focus on policy and equity issues in the field of urban planning.

She holds a PhD in Political Science from the City University of New York (1996), a Masters in City Planning from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (1985), and a BA from Swarthmore College (1980). Prior to joining USF, she was Associate Professor of Political Science at Rutgers University-Newark.

Speakers

Doug Wheeler, James Madison Institute

Doug Wheeler is Director of the George Gibbs Center for Economic Prosperity at James Madison Institute. Wheeler has previously served as President of D. Wheeler Strategies, President & CEO of the Florida Ports Council (FPC), and Vice President with the Florida Chamber of Commerce and the Southeast Political Manager for the Associated Builders and Contractors (ABC).

Wheeler serves as an Executive Committee and Board Member of the Economic Club of Florida; Board member of the Network of Entrepreneurs & Business Advocates; Is a graduate of the Jim Moran Institute for Global Entrepreneurship – Small Business Executive Program; and a Leon County Honorary Sheriff's Deputy. Doug is a graduate of The Florida State University with a degree in Political Science, and lives in Tallahassee with his wife, Ami, and their two children.



Patrick Slevin, SL7 Consulting

Patrick Slevin has earned a national reputation as a NIMBY crisis expert. Over the span of his career, he has educated, instructed, and counseled thousands of real estate executives concerned with the consequences of NIMBY opposition.

Slevin was elected the youngest mayor in the history of Safety Harbor, Florida in 1996 at the age of 27. He is a two-time Amazon bestselling NIMBY author and a nationally recognized YIMBY speaker and consultant. Patrick's integrated public affairs firm, SL7 Consulting, is headquartered in Tallahassee, Florida. His website is www.PatrickSlevin.com.



Speakers



Bemetra Simmons, Tampa Bay Partnership

Bemetra Simmons is the president and CEO of the Tampa Bay Partnership. Previously, she served as the chief strategy and operations officer for United Way Suncoast, and she has held leadership and executive leadership roles at Mutual of Omaha Bank, Wells Fargo, and BB&T.

She is active in our community and holds leadership roles throughout the state, including the board of directors for the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta's Jacksonville Branch, the board of trustees for St. Leo University, the Tampa Bay Sports Commission, and the St. Pete Free Clinic. Bemetra is a graduate of Leadership Tampa Leadership Florida Cornerstone Class XXXVIII. She is a proud member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.

She earned a B.S. from Christian Brothers University in Memphis, where she attended on a basketball scholarship and then received her M.B.A. from Wake Forest University.



Michelle Dennard, Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta – Jacksonville Branch

Michelle Dennard is vice president and regional executive of the Jacksonville Branch of the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta. She is responsible for the Branch's Board of Directors and the District's Advisory Council on Transportation and Logistics. In her role, she provides regional input into the Atlanta Fed's monetary policy process.

Ms. Dennard joined the Jacksonville Branch in 2023. An attorney and member of the Florida Bar, Ms. Dennard has nearly 20 years of experience in workforce and economic development serving in state-level positions to provide strategic leadership and shape policy.

Speakers

Domonic Purviance, Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta – Jacksonville Branch

Domonic Purviance is a Subject Matter Expert within the Supervision Regulation and Credit Division at the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta. In this role, he is primarily responsible for conducting an ongoing assessment of risks associated with residential real estate markets and the potential impacts they may pose to the financial system. This includes analyzing conditions within individual markets as well as the impacts of external forces on real estate. In addition, Mr. Purviance is responsible for developing real estate related analytical reports and tools utilized internally throughout the Federal Reserve System to aid in risk surveillance and banking supervision as well as external tools such as the Home Ownership Affordability Monitor (HOAM).

Jim Ayotte, Florida Manufacturing Housing Association

Jim Ayotte is the CEO of the Florida Manufactured Housing Association (FMHA) in Tallahassee. Jim has worked in the manufactured housing industry for over 30 years and has held executive management positions at the Manufactured Housing Institute in Washington, D.C., and the Ohio and New England manufactured housing associations.

Jim holds a B.A. degree from the University of Massachusetts and an MBA degree from Babson College. Jim is a Certified Association Executive (CAE) through the American Society of Association Executives

Speakers



Bryan Eastman, City of Gainesville

Bryan Eastman is Mayor Pro Tempore and District IV Representative for the City of Gainesville, Florida. As Commissioner, Bryan spearheaded single-family zoning reform in the City of Gainesville that increased the allowable density of homes in single-family zoned areas, reducing lot sizes, setbacks, and giving more flexibility to lot dimensions. A long-time housing advocate, Comm. Eastman served as vice-chair of Gainesville's homeless shelter, GRACE Marketplace, advocated for the passage of the city's heralded ADU law, and the elimination of parking minimums in the city.



Christina Mojica, Reason Foundation

Christina Mojica is a Land Use and Housing Policy Analyst. She writes about zoning, land use, housing supply, and tenant-focused programs, such as housing vouchers. Her work emphasizes practical, market-based solutions to expand access to housing.



Félix De Portu, AURA: An Austin for Everyone

Félix is a Visual Communications Strategist and Urbanist Policy Advocate based in Austin, where he serves on the city's Zoning and Platting Commission. Originally from San Juan, Puerto Rico, he brings a decade of lived experience in Austin's evolving urban landscape and champions thoughtful policy approaches that enable the creation of walkable, resilient, mixed-use neighborhoods. His work bridges design and policy, using storytelling and strategy to advance more inclusive, sustainable urban futures.

Speakers

Jake Cremer, Stearns Weaver Miller

Jake Cremer counsels developers, investors, and landowners in their interactions with the government on land development issues.

Recently, much of Jake's work has focused on the Live Local Act, which has been hailed as one of the country's most significant pro-housing policies. Jake has been intimately involved in improving the Act, processing applications statewide, and litigating with local governments intent on blocking new housing.

A sixth-generation Floridian, Jake grew up in Palatka working in his family's timber operations. This informs his perspective in long-term strategic land planning with clients in agriculture, silviculture, and heavy industries to unlock alternative income streams.

Charles Gardner, Mercatus Center

Charles Gardner is a research fellow at the Mercatus Center at George Mason University. His research focuses on planning law and housing affordability. He has testified before several state legislatures and frequently advises local government officials on zoning matters. He has also served as a local elected official and as an active participant in state policy making on the Connecticut Advisory Committee to the US Commission on Civil Rights and on the Commission on Connecticut's Development and Future. He received his JD from Vanderbilt University Law School.

Speakers

Zayne Smith, AARP

Zayne Smith is the Senior Director of Advocacy at AARP Florida. Zayne brings a wealth of experience to her role, with a background in policy development and advocacy at both the state and national levels.

Zayne has represented AARP Florida on several key coalitions and advisory groups, including the Working Interdisciplinary Network of Guardianship Stakeholders, Guardianship Improvement Task Force, Sadowski Coalition, Professional Fiduciary Council of Florida, Department of Elder Affairs Florida State Plan on Aging Advisory Group, National Energy and Utility Affordability Coalition, and the Florida Don't Text & Drive Coalition.

Zayne holds a B.A. in History and a J.D. from the Thomas Goode Jones School of Law. Born and raised in Dallas, she is a proud member of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma.



Ilana Blumsack

Ilana Blumsack is an Economic Policy Analyst at Americans for Prosperity, where she focuses on a broad range of Economic Progress issues, including housing, state tax policy and welfare policy. Prior to joining AFP, Ilana was a Research Associate at the Cato Institute, where she supported Chris Edwards and Scott Lincicome in work on fiscal and labor policy. She also previously interned at the Heritage Foundation and the Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget.

Ilana holds a B.A. in Economics and Political Science from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem in Israel and M.S. in Applied Economics at Johns Hopkins University.



Speakers

Scott Macdonald, Blue Sky Communities



Scott Macdonald is a Partner at Blue Sky, where he leads project underwriting, manages the firm's debt and equity relationships, and oversees all aspects of project management from closing through completion. He also directs Blue Sky's corporate finance strategy, operations, and asset management.

Mr. Macdonald has successfully closed 34 transactions totaling over \$700 million in project costs. His leadership has contributed to the development and preservation of more than 3,300 affordable housing units.

Mr. Macdonald serves in several leadership positions in this industry. He is on the Board of Directors at Florida Coalition of Attainable Housing Providers (CAHP) where he is chairman of the Insurance Subcommittee. He is also chairman of the Urban Land Institute (ULI) Affordable & Workforce Housing Council. He serves as Vice Chairman of the City of St. Petersburg Affordable Housing Advisory Committee. Also, he is a holder of the Housing Credit Certified Professional (HCCP) designation from NAHB.




Working statewide so communities are livable for people of all ages.

By 2030, one out of every five people in the United States will be age 65 or older. By 2034, the nation will have more older adults than children under 18 for the first time ever. That's why AARP is working with local leaders nationwide to help towns, cities, counties, rural areas and even entire states become more livable for people of all ages.



Learn more about AARP Livable Communities by visiting aarp.org/livable.



STEARNS
WEAVER
MILLER

A FLORIDA-BASED LAW FIRM

We proudly support the Florida Policy Project and the Florida Housing Summit.

Our multidisciplinary **LAND DEVELOPMENT, ZONING & ENVIRONMENTAL** team consists of land use, environmental, property rights, and litigation attorneys, in-house planners, GIS mapping, and Government Affairs professionals working collaboratively to provide effective and innovative legal and business solutions to clients across Florida. We are at the forefront of addressing Florida's housing needs using a variety of approaches including the Live Local Act.

MIAMI ■ TAMPA ■ FORT LAUDERDALE ■ TALLAHASSEE ■ CORAL GABLES
stearnsweaver.com

We make cents of business.

Discover the power of staying informed with the Business Observer



for only **\$1** per week*



PREMIUM ACCESS AND EXCLUSIVE FEATURES

Unlimited digital access to BusinessObserverFL.com
Newspaper app, digital replica of print edition

Mailed print newspaper every Friday (optional)
Newsletter of daily business news

**12 month introductory offer –
subscribe today!**

BusinessObserverFL.com/subscribe



Florida's Business for the State
**Business
Observer**
BusinessObserverFL.com

Questions, please contact us at 877-231-8834
or subscriptions@BusinessObserverFL.com

*Billed as \$4 every 4 weeks for the first 12 months - CANCEL ANYTIME!

KNV22/11

FLORIDA
HOUSING
SUMMIT