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THE ST. AUGUSTINE RECORD

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 24, 2026

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Foster hometown pride to grow civic engagement



Regular community events, from farmers markets to fireworks, build emotional ties to a place. GETTY IMAGES

Local patriotism one cure for sour feelings about politics

Sean Richey
Georgia State University | THE CONVERSATION

Eileen Higgins won a historic victory in December. She became the first woman ever elected mayor of Miami, as well as its first Democratic mayor since 1997. • Although the stakes in the city's Dec. 9, runoff election were high, interest was not – 4 in 5 registered voters stayed home.

Low turnout is common in municipal elections across the country. While much of the nation's political attention stays focused on Washington, the leaders who control the nation's streets, schools and neighborhoods are typically chosen by a small fraction of citizens.

Although many Americans can identify their U.S. senators or members of Congress, far fewer can name even one of their local elected officials, such as a city council member. To cite one example, a North Carolina study found that 86% of state residents could not identify their own elected leaders, including local government officials.

See LOCAL PRIDE, Page 2A



Turnout in local elections regularly falls below 20%, often leaving critical decisions in the hands of small, unrepresentative groups, creating an electorate that's disproportionately White, elderly and affluent.

GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

People who loved their town were more likely to attend city council meetings, contact local officials, volunteer for campaigns and discuss local issues with friends. The same pattern held for civic participation – from volunteering with community groups to organizing neighborhood cleanups.

St. Johns County celebrates Schools Week

Lucia Viti
St. Augustine Record
USA TODAY NETWORK

The St. Johns County School District joins public schools across America in celebrating National Public Schools Week Feb. 23-27.

Educators, students, families and community partners are recognized for their work in building strong communities and a skilled workforce.

According to a news release, 85% of Florida's families choose public schools and public charter schools to educate their children.

See SCHOOLS, Page 2A

New luxury senior living community coming

Lucia Viti
St. Augustine Record
USA TODAY NETWORK

A new luxury senior living community is on the horizon.

HarborChase of Beachwalk, located in the Beachwalk master-planned development in St. Augustine, will offer 172 residences, including 82 independent-living apartments, 66 assisted-living units and 24 memory-care suites.

Residences will be available in studio and one- and two-bedroom floorplans. Onsite amenities include signature HarborChase dining options such as Fusion Lounge, Counter-Offet Café, The Grill Room, Signatures, Zest and Chef's Studio. Other features include a salon and spa, arts and crafts studio, movie theater, billiards room, fitness center, golf simulator, tearoom and

See SENIOR, Page 2A

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