Beat: Miscellaneous

“THE USEFUL VOTE”: HOW JORDAN BARDELLA (RN) USES TOWNS TO PREPARE 2027

FAR RIGHT RN WINS 24 MAYORS 60 CITIES

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USPA NEWS - On the local elections map, the RN uses the first round of the 2026 elections to consolidate and extend its territorial base. According to figures given by vice president Sebastien Chenu, the party and its allies have already won 24 communes outright and are leading in around 60 others going into the second round.
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At barely over 30, Jordan Bardella, leader of RN (National Rally, Far Right Marine Le pen’s party) is already the central figure of the French far right and, in many scenarios, the natural favourite for the 2027 presidential election if Marine Le Pen is declared ineligible after her convictions over the misuse of European parliamentary funds. He would then become, if elected, the youngest president of the Fifth Republic, even younger than Emmanuel Macron, who entered the Elysee at 39.

This article is written from the field by our accredited wheelchair using senior political reporter, with part of the election results gathered on site at several party headquarters and the remaining figures drawn from official sources, including the French Interior Ministry and Public Senat, and it draws on her experience and expertise as a senior political correspondent to examine the political implications of the local election results.

JORDAN BARDELLA’S MUNICIPAL STRESS TEST FROM 24 FAR RIGHT STRONGHOLDS TO A PRESIDENTIAL POSTURE BUILT ON “SINCERE RIGHT WING” ALLIANCES

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A YOUNG LEADER INCREASINGLY ACTING LIKE A PRESIDENT

Born and raised in Saint Denis in a modest family with Italian roots, he plays heavily on this biography to contrast himself with the Parisian political establishment. At the same time, his critics underline his lack of experience outside politics: he has never run a ministry or a city, and his entire professional life has been built inside the National Rally, which he now leads, and the European Parliament, where he was elected in 2024 after Macron’s risky dissolution plunged the National Assembly into chaos.
In a speech in Beaucaire, Bardella drew a clear conclusion: “I am pleased that several outgoing RN mayors have been re elected this evening in the first round.” For him, these results prove that the RN is no longer just a protest force but a governing party, capable of managing municipalities over multiple terms and offering what he calls “serious and stable local teams”.

24 TOWNS TAKEN, 60 MORE IN PLAY

On the local elections map, the RN uses the first round of the 2026 elections to consolidate and extend its territorial base. According to figures given by vice president Sebastien Chenu, the party and its allies have already won 24 communes outright and are leading in around 60 others going into the second round. Its long standing strongholds of Henin Beaumont and Perpignan are comfortably retained, as are other emblematic towns such as Beaucaire, Hayange and Frejus. In Bruay la Buissiere, Ludovic Pajot is re elected with more than 81% of the vote; in Hénin Beaumont, Steeve Briois secures another crushing victory with close to 78%. The far right also secures new gains, such as Cagnes sur Mer, where MP Bryan Masson wins the mayoralty.

“EXTENDING A HAND TO SINCERE RIGHT WING LISTS”

Beyond these numbers, Bardella’s key message on election night is directed at the traditional right. “Where local circumstances allow it, the National Rally is extending its hand to sincere right wing lists,” he declared, calling on voters and candidates who do not want left wing or far left mayors to join forces with the RN in the second round. He urged them to see his party as “the useful vote” against both the left and the macronists, repeating: “The more you vote for the RN, the more patriotic representatives you will have to defend you.”

Sebastien Chenu (RN , MP, Vice President of National Assembly) translated this strategy into concrete terms on RTL, explaining that in some towns “there is a danger coming from the left” and that, in those cases, the RN is offering to work “case by case” with rival right wing lists that cannot remain in the race. He cited Marseille, Nimes, Carcassonne, Toulon, Agde, Valenciennes and Douai as examples and argued that in these places the RN is “the best bulwark against the left and the far left”. In Marseille, he accused LR/Renaissance candidate Martine Vassal of bearing a “heavy responsibility” if she refuses to stand aside for RN candidate Franck Allisio and allows Socialist mayor Benoit Payan to stay in power.

LIMITS AND SETBACKS

The evening nevertheless reveals clear limits to the RN’s strategy. In Lyon, a major symbolic target, UDR/RN candidate Alexandre Dupalais fails to reach the second round, staying around 7–8%, while the duel for the city’s leadership remains between Green incumbent Gregory Doucet and businessman Jean Michel Aulas, supported by the traditional right and the centre. In Paris, “the most difficult city for the RN”, as Chenu himself admits, Thierry Mariani scores barely more than 1.5%, far behind Reconquete candidate Sarah Knafo, who has managed to embody the main far right challenge in the capital.

Elsewhere, the RN’s presence in the second round often places it in a position to influence, rather than dominate, local power. In Lille, for example, its candidate Matthieu Valet crosses the 10% threshold and can stay in the race, but the real fight is between Socialist incumbent Arnaud Deslandes and LFI challenger Lahouaria Addouche, with the Greens as potential kingmakers. In many cities, whether the RN can tilt the balance will depend on its ability to convince right wing voters that it is more than a protest option and truly represents order, authority and change

FACING A DIVIDED LEFT AND HOSTILE GREENS

On the left, the response is fractured. Socialist leaders insist they remain the main local force and accuse France Unbowed of weakening the left by attacking incumbent mayors while still demanding “antifascist fronts” in the second round. Green leader Marine Tondelier has chosen a harder line, calling on voters to “eliminate the right and the far right” in every run off and criticising Place publique’s Raphaël Glucksmann for refusing alliances with LFI. “In the first round you choose, in the second you eliminate… and I know exactly who should be eliminated in the second round: the right and the far right,” she said on TF1, accusing Paris based leaders of giving instructions that could make left wing towns swing to the right and prevent right wing towns from swinging to the left.

For Jordan Bardella, this polarisation is an opportunity: the more he is attacked from both the traditional left and the Greens, the easier it becomes to present the RN as the only “real opposition” to a discredited “system” that includes both Macron’s camp and the old parties.

A PRESIDENTIAL FRONT RUNNER BUILT ON LOCAL POWER – AND ON SAND?

National polls published in early March confirm Bardella’s central role in the 2027 race. An Ifop Fiducial survey gives him around 36% of first round intentions, ahead of Marine Le Pen herself in hypothetical scenarios and far above any candidate of the so called central bloc, which struggles to cross the 20% mark. For many voters, he has become the default face of the RN’s third attempt at the Elysee, combining loyalty to Le Pen with a new style that feels younger and less abrasive. Some admirers even compare his ability to connect with crowds and his physical presence to a modern Jacques Chirac with Italian roots.

Yet the same elements that make Jordan Bardella attractive also fuel doubts. He has never governed anything beyond his party and a parliamentary group in Strasbourg; he has never been tested in the day to day management of a major city or a ministry. If the municipal cycle of 2026 confirms the RN’s territorial rise and offers him a catalogue of re elected mayors to showcase, it still leaves open a simple question: are these local bastions a solid springboard for a man who could soon be the youngest president in French history, or a stage set resting on sand?

In other words, the 24 towns won and the 60 where the RN is leading may give Jordan Bardella the footage and the narrative he needs to act presidential. But they will not, by themselves, answer the question that will haunt the final weeks of the 2027 campaign: will French voters be ready to hand the Élysée to a leader whose only real executive experience so far has been to say, on election nights, that “the RN is extending its hand to sincere right wing lists” and that “the more you vote for the RN, the more patriotic representatives you will have to defend you”? Source: ministry of Interior, Public Senat, france TV,C news TV

This editorial does not claim to provide definitive answers, but to offer one informed viewpoint, grounded in years of reporting and analysis, in the hope of clarifying what is really at stake behind the day to day headlines.

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