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Leavenworth County Educational Campaign on Economic Development FAQ

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Who is Leading the Leavenworth County Educational Campaign on Economic Development?

Who is leading the Economic Development Educational Campaign?

[Leavenworth County Port Authority](#)

How do the Leavenworth County Port Authority and Leavenworth County Development Corporation serve Leavenworth County?

Leavenworth County Port Authority is a quasi-governmental agency established under state statute in 1969 to guide and direct port development. Today, it owns and manages land on behalf of the community - land designed to support job creation. The Leavenworth County Port Authority also plays a role in advocating for the development of property and infrastructure for industrial and commercial projects that increase capital investment and job creation. The Leavenworth County Port Authority consists of seven appointed board members who contracts with Leavenworth County Development Corporation for marketing services and staff work.

Leavenworth County Development Corporation is the lead organization responsible for business attraction, retention, expansion, and economic development coordination in Leavenworth County. For example, the Leavenworth County Development Corporation-meets with site selectors and realtors representing businesses, showing them sites and buildings that are available in Leavenworth County, connecting them with workforce and government leaders, and playing a role in helping to bring a project to Leavenworth County. It is common practice for each community in the U.S. to have a designated economic development team to handle this process. Leavenworth County Development Corporation staff also visit approximately 40 businesses per year, listening to their concerns, connecting them to resources, and helping them overcome any barriers to success so they can stay and thrive in Leavenworth County. These face-to-face meetings provide business leaders with hands-on support and show them that the County wants their business. Leavenworth County Development Corporation provides a public-private organization for all of Leavenworth County with full-time, credentialed staff, dedicated to pursuing economic development for the county and the communities within it.

How are Leavenworth County Port Authority and Leavenworth County Development Corporation accountable to the public?

The Leavenworth County Port Authority operates under the Kansas Open Meetings Act, with meeting agendas, notes, and recordings posted online. Leavenworth County Port Authority is accountable to elected officials who appoint board members. There are representatives on the board from communities in Leavenworth County, along with a countywide representative, and local leaders. Board members are volunteers interested in ensuring Leavenworth County has a strong economy and are not paid for their time. Open Meetings laws dictate that when board members get together, the meeting is documented, recorded and available for the public to watch, ensuring complete transparency.

Leavenworth County Development Corporation is not a government organization. Leavenworth County Development Corporation is a public-private organization accountable to its members and investors. Leavenworth County Development Corporation does not take or manage taxpayer funds directly. It does not offer companies financial incentives either. Instead, Leavenworth County Development Corporation does the work of economic development and plays a key role in initiating economic development conversations with local governments.

How are Leavenworth County Port Authority board members selected?

A Leavenworth County Port Authority board member is a volunteer position with no compensation. The Leavenworth County Port Authority has a board of seven members appointed jointly by the Board of County Commissioners and the Commissions of the cities of Leavenworth, Lansing, Tonganoxie and Basehor and serve three-year terms.

How are Leavenworth County Development Corporation board members selected?

A Leavenworth County Development Corporation board member is a volunteer position with no compensation. The Leavenworth County Development Corporation Board consists of 18–27 members, including representatives from the county and three cities, with a five-member executive committee. Past members generally have been CEOs and business leaders, but general community members are encouraged to express interest. Board members must be Leavenworth County Development Corporation investors. They are appointed annually in January to serve 3-year terms.

Board members may serve on both boards, but it's not required.

Is there any conflict of interest with board members benefiting from economic development projects?

No. Board members with both organizations are volunteer positions with no compensation. Board members are not “getting in on economic development project deals.” This is a common misconception. Oversight by public officials ensures transparency and fairness. In addition, the Open Meetings Act ensures that all meetings are recorded and available to the public. The public can attend meetings or listen at any time. In addition, the Leavenworth County Port Authority’s obligation to abide by the Open Meetings Act ensures that all their meetings are recorded and available to the public. The public can attend meetings or listen at any time. Members of the public who attend meetings will get information at the same time as the board.

The boards are made of community-minded individuals committed to responsible economic growth. In 2024 alone, 44 volunteers committed nearly 675 hours of their time to Leavenworth economic development, saving approximately \$35,000 that would have been paid out to private contractors instead.



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Why is the Leavenworth County Port Authority launching an Educational Campaign?

How are the Leavenworth County Port Authority and Leavenworth County Development Corporation funded?

Historically, Leavenworth County directly funded the Leavenworth County Port Authority and the Leavenworth County Development Corporation. However, three years ago, the County shifted to funding only the Leavenworth County Port Authority. Under this structure, the Leavenworth County Port Authority now has the discretion to allocate funding to Leavenworth County Development Corporation as needed.

Leavenworth County Port Authority receives funding from Leavenworth County. Previously, county funding for both organizations was around \$365,000 annually. In recent years, that amount has declined significantly and re-directed to other County budget items. For the upcoming budget year, Leavenworth County Port Authority funding from the County is expected to fall between \$25,000 and \$75,000.

Leavenworth County Development Corporation is funded through a combination of public and private sources:

Support from the Port Authority:

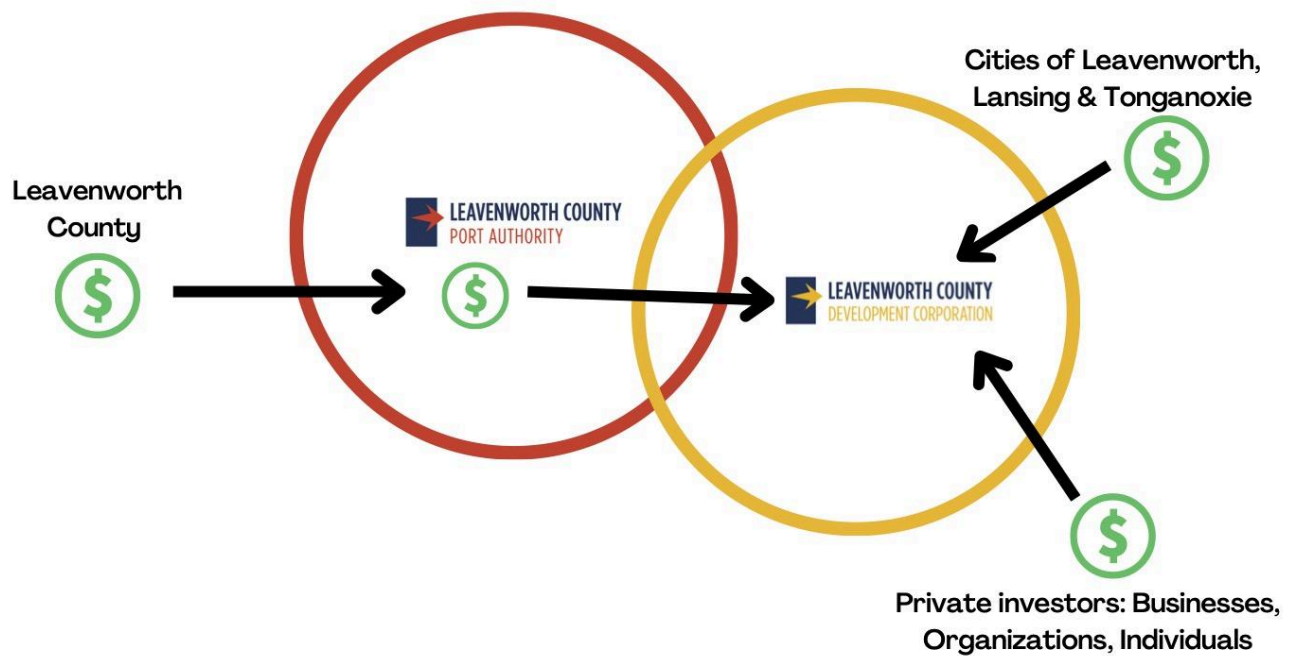
The largest portion of current Leavenworth County Development Corporation funding comes from the Leavenworth County Port Authority.

Public Funding:

Leavenworth County Development Corporation receives annual contributions from each of the three cities in Leavenworth County: Leavenworth, Lansing, and Tonganoxie, accounting for approximately 31% of its annual budget. The amount each city contributes is determined by a formula that considers property valuation and population size, meaning the City of Leavenworth typically contributes the most. These contributions must be formally requested and approved each year.

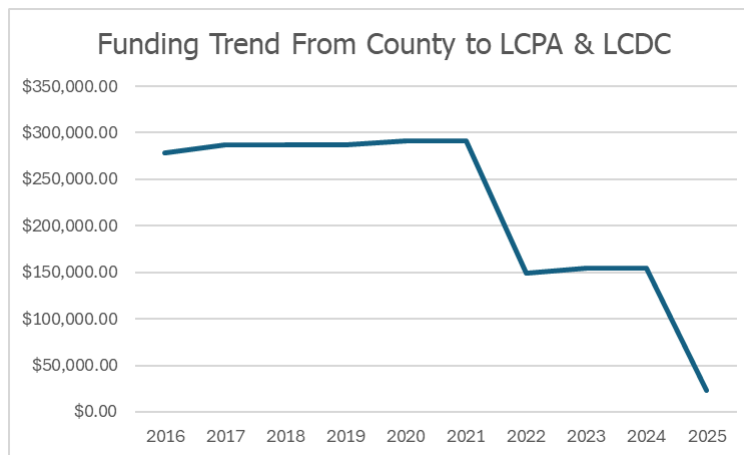
Private Investment:

Leavenworth County Development Corporation also receives funding from private sector businesses through tiered investment levels, accounting for approximately 21% of its annual budget. These funds help support economic development programs, outreach, and business services across the county.



Why is the Campaign necessary?

For the upcoming budget year, Leavenworth County Port Authority funding from the County is expected to fall between \$25,000 and \$75,000.



With significantly reduced county funding, economic development efforts in Leavenworth County will face serious limitations. The Leavenworth County Port Authority and the Leavenworth

County Development Corporation are the only organizations dedicated solely to driving economic development in the county.

Sustained investment in economic development is essential to ensure Leavenworth County remains competitive with surrounding communities, prepared for future growth, and positioned as a destination of choice. It's about creating lasting opportunities for today's families, their children and grandchildren to build a future and thrive right here at home.

Additionally, the Leavenworth County Development Corporation is the organization responsible for supporting the existing business community, ensuring that obstacles are removed that could hinder their growth or become reasons for relocating to another county. These visits require the Leavenworth County Development Corporation to have a staff person dedicated to supporting businesses. Without funding, it will be impossible for us to do so. These organizations have proven results that include creating new jobs and increasing capital investment, which helps expand the tax base and reduce the tax burden on homeowners.

What will be the result of underfunding the Leavenworth County Port Authority and Leavenworth County Development Corporation?

If the organizations remain underfunded, it will make it more difficult for Leavenworth County to compete with surrounding counties. Having these countywide organizations combines the knowledge and expertise from both the public and private sectors along with a dedicated, full-time team with economic development credentials working closely with our regional partner, Kansas City Area Development Council (KCADC) and our state partners at Kansas Commerce to bring regional and national exposure and help facilitate the creation and retention of jobs and capital investment for Leavenworth County. Reducing funds for these organizations will severely limit future growth in Leavenworth County. In other words, saving money now by cutting funding for economic development can have consequences that last for decades. If we want businesses and jobs to come to Leavenworth County, we need to prioritize attracting them and supporting existing businesses that are here.



What Economic Impact has resulted from the Economic Development Activities of the Leavenworth County Port Authority and Leavenworth County Development Corporation?

What economic development projects have contributed positively to the growth of Leavenworth County?

The Leavenworth County Port Authority and the Leavenworth County Development Corporation have played a role in creating over 400 jobs in Leavenworth County and more than \$558 million in announced capital investment from 2020-2024.

Those results come from land preparation so it's shovel-ready, marketing of available properties, responding to Requests for Information (RFI's), facilitating project development, selling land to businesses creating community jobs, and ongoing work with existing businesses to help them overcome barriers to growth.

From 2020 to 2025, the Leavenworth County Development Corporation also helped existing businesses in Leavenworth County, resulting in 98 retained jobs and over \$40 million in capital investment. From 2020 to 2024, Leavenworth County Development Corporation helped facilitate new business in Leavenworth County, which resulted in 322 new jobs and over \$517 million in capital investment.

In 2024 alone, the business attraction and retention efforts of Leavenworth County Development Corporation resulted in the following.

- The DSM-Firmenich construction project in the Tonganoxie Business Park, expected to reach completion in 2025.
- Project Transport- Croucher and Associates purchased two lots in the Urban Hess Business Center, where they will invest \$2.5 million to build a 25,000 square foot storage and distribution facility for Wind Electrical Construction Supply.
- 59 new Project Leads from regional and state partners and directly from prospective companies.
- Helped existing companies save over \$950,000 through state and local programs which resulted in the creation on 29 new jobs, five retained jobs, and over \$7 million of capital investment.

- Conducted 40 business visits and helped several companies with workforce solutions.

What major economic development successes have the organizations accomplished recently?

In the past two years, Leavenworth County Port Authority and Leavenworth County Development Corporation have helped expand several existing businesses, secured partnerships that led to new job creation, provided support services to existing businesses, maintained operational efficiency with a small, dedicated staff of three, and continued coordination of regional and state economic strategies.

[Hill's Pet Nutrition opened a smart manufacturing plant](#) in Tonganoxie in 2023, bringing 100 new jobs to the community. While the company experiences a tax abatement incentive, it will pay a Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) totaling \$1.9 million over the 10-year period. Once the 10 years are complete, the company will pay over \$3 million in property taxes each year, the equivalent of 595 private homes paying taxes.

And that's the power of economic development. When the Leavenworth County Port Authority and Leavenworth County Development Corporation attract new businesses or help businesses to grow, significant tax revenue is generated, which helps to pay for important services like police and fire, schools, libraries, and more. As a result, individual homeowners carry less of the tax burden.



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How Can I Get Involved in Supporting Economic Development in Leavenworth County?

How can residents get more involved or learn more?

Residents interested in serving on the Leavenworth County Port Authority or Leavenworth County Development Corporation boards, or learning more about projects or the organization, can:

- Attend open meetings.
- View past agendas and minutes - [Leavenworth County Port Authority](#) and [Leavenworth County Development Corporation](#).
- View updates on the [organizations' websites](#).
- [Email Lisa Haack](#) directly or call her at (913) 727-6111 to express interest in board service or ask questions.