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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Leadership changes at the St. Lucie EDC



From left, Pete Tesch, Wes McCurry and Rachel Savela

Port St. Lucie/Dec. 5, 2025 – A dozen years after assuming the presidency of the Economic Development Council of St. Lucie County (EDC), Peter J. Tesch will be stepping back into an advisory role. Effective Jan. 1, 2026, Wes McCurry will become the EDC’s president and chief executive officer, and Rachel Savela will be promoted to the new position of chief operating officer.

As Tesch began his tenure in 2014, 53% of the property values in the largest city in the county had been erased during the Great Recession, the county’s unemployment rate was 8.6%, prominent economic development projects had imploded, and the EDC itself was at a critical crossroads.

In December 2025, the picture could not be more different. The unemployment rate is in line with national trends, property values in the county have tripled, from \$23.8 billion in 2014 to \$74.4 billion in 2025, and a total of 24,267 jobs were added from January 2014 through December 2024.

As the county emerged from the recession, under Tesch's leadership from 2017-2024, the EDC supported 85 business expansions and relocations, totaling 16.5 million square feet of new development, helped create 12,935 projected new jobs and retain 6,743 existing jobs. More than \$1.87 billion in capital investment and \$4.36 billion in economic output was added to the county's economy, representing approximately 17% of the total St. Lucie County economy.

"Under Pete's leadership, the EDC has accomplished so much in strengthening our region's economy and partnerships," said EDC Chair Azlina Goldstein. "I'm grateful for his vision, and confident that with Wes McCurry as our new president and Robert Barfield as the new chair - supported by the EDC's talented staff — the organization is poised for even greater success and more opportunities for the community we serve. "

"While the stars certainly aligned along the way, and significant support and investment by the county, the municipalities of Port St. Lucie and Fort Pierce, Florida Power & Light Company, the Fort Pierce Utilities Authority and private investors in the EDC made an enormous impact, navigation along the path for much of the economic development success over the past 12 years was charted and championed by Pete Tesch," said Robert Barfield, the incoming chair of the EDC board of directors.

"After twelve years serving as St. Lucie EDC president and close to 38 years as an economic development practitioner, it is my desire to step aside and relinquish my leadership position. It has been an amazing career journey for me and my very best, most productive and fulfilling years have been here in St. Lucie County," Tesch said.

Tesch will remain with the EDC in a part-time capacity as senior advisor for strategic initiatives. His focus will be on workforce development with Treasure Coast Center for Economic and Educational Development (TCCEED), the 501(c)3 nonprofit incorporated by the EDC in 2023. He will also support a funds development campaign for both organizations.

Prior to joining the EDC, Tesch was president of Peterson Hill Partners, LLC, an economic development consultation and site selection company. He served as president and CEO of Ocala/Marion County Economic Development Corporation from 1997-2012 and was selected as the 2012 Eunice Sullivan

Economic Development Professional of the Year by the Florida Economic Development Council for his outstanding commitment, talent and skill sets in economic development, both at the local and state level.

Tesch was named an Economic Development Rock Star in 2023 by *Southern Business & Development* and as one of Florida's 500 most influential business leaders by *Florida Trend* in 2024. The EDC was commended with an Excellence in Economic Development Award by the International Economic Development Council in 2022.

McCurry appointed president

A little more than three years after joining the EDC as senior vice president leading business attraction and retention, Wes McCurry is prepared to take the helm of the EDC in January as president and CEO.

Previously, the City of Port St. Lucie's community development director, McCurry oversaw the rapid development of the city's jobs corridor. Prior to that he led planning, development and operations for Tradition on behalf of Fishkind & Associates and as president of the Tradition Development Company. McCurry was also vice president and planning director for Core Communities during the master planning phase of Tradition, transforming 8,200 acres of dying orchards and fallow land into one of St. Lucie County's most dynamic communities.

"The EDC has ascended new heights, having its most successful outcomes ever over the past few years and currently has a staff 'dream team' with no peers," said Tesch. "Now is the opportune time to pass the reins to Wes McCurry, a consummate professional and trusted leader. Wes will bring new energy, vision and, most importantly, tangible results to the organization and community."

"I'm honored to step into this role at such a pivotal moment for St. Lucie County. Our community is growing, our momentum is strong, and I'm committed to work alongside our private, public, and education partners to building on that foundation to attract high-wage industries, strengthen our workforce pipeline, and support the businesses that call St. Lucie home," said McCurry.

McCurry served as chairman of the EDC's board of directors in 2018. He graduated from the University of Tennessee with a degree in urban studies.

Savela to become EDC's first COO

Rachel Savela has been appointed as the EDC's first chief operating officer, responsible for business operations for both the EDC and TCCEED, investor relations and development, human resources, and events management.

Savela joined the EDC in April 2022 as business manager and was promoted less than two years later to the new position of director of investor engagement, responsible for growing the EDC's private sector investment and coordinating multiple investor events throughout the year.

"It gives me great pleasure to announce Rachel Savela as the EDC's very first chief operating officer. With Rachel's quiet leadership style and unassuming professionalism, she has already transformed the organization's business operations, significantly upgraded its visibility in the community and heightened our investors' engagement in and enthusiasm for the EDC," said Tesch.

"I'm honored to step into this new role and work alongside Wes and the EDC team as we continue to take the organization to new heights," Savela said. "As someone who has lived in St. Lucie County my whole life, I'm eager for the economic opportunities the EDC will create for our community in the future."

Savela has an MBA from Florida Atlantic University and 12 years of experience in operations management. She also worked for St. Lucie Public Schools for 17 years, starting out as a first-grade teacher. In her final eight years with the school district, she taught career and technology education courses at Northport K-8 in Port St. Lucie.

About the Economic Development Council of St. Lucie County

The Economic Development Council of St. Lucie County (EDC) is a private, not-for-profit organization dedicated to promoting economic vitality in St. Lucie County through the attraction, retention and expansion of businesses in the community. The EDC works in partnership with local governments and the private sector to advance its goals of creating more and better-paying jobs for residents, broadening the tax base and improving St. Lucie County's economic quality of life. Contact the EDC at 772.324.2014, contact@youredc.com or www.youredc.com.