

St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce
Economic Development Council

2024–2025 QUARTER 4 REPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The quarter started with a much-anticipated St. Johns County Legislative update. This Economic Development Council (EDC) Breakfast brought together key state and local leaders to provide insights into the outcomes and regional impacts of Florida's recent legislative session. Senator Tom Leek led off the event, outlining the wins and challenges of the past legislative session. He was followed by Representative Kim Kendall, Representative Sam Greco, and Legislative Aide to Judson Sapp Shorty Robbins, who provided their insight on this past session. St. Johns County Commission Chair Krista Joseph, City of St. Augustine Mayor Nancy Sikes-Kline, and City of St. Augustine Beach Mayor Dylan Rumrell provided local updates.

In August, local business leaders, educators, and government officials gathered for the "Manufacturing and Technology" roundtable, hosted by the St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce and St. Johns County Economic Development Department. The meeting brought together a diverse group of stakeholders to address pressing issues facing the County's manufacturing sector, including workforce development, technical education, and the need for affordable housing and industrial land.

On September 16, 2025, the St. Johns County Board of Commissioners convened to review two major proposals for the redevelopment of the World Golf Hall of Fame property, with both plans aiming to transform the area through a mix of recreational, commercial, and community-focused facilities. This property has been vacant since the PGA Golf Hall of Fame withdrew, and it remains a key development piece in the heart of the County. Interested developers submitted two proposals, which were both approved to proceed to the next step of review.

Governor Ron DeSantis appointed three new members to the St. Augustine Airport Authority Board of Directors after three sitting members resigned earlier in the year. The office of the governor announced the appointment of Gerald Dedge, Mario Dipola, and Nick Primrose to the St. Johns County Airport Authority's board on September 30. The appointments remain subject to confirmation by the Florida Senate. The airport plays a critical role in the county's economic development.

We ended the quarter with a second EDC Breakfast on September 26 at the Renaissance World Golf Village Resort. The event featured key guest speakers, including Sara Pleasants of the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT), St. Johns County Administrator Joy Andrews, and Public Works Director Greg Caldwell, who shared valuable updates on infrastructure initiatives shaping the County's future. There are many projects currently underway that will enhance and alter traffic patterns in St. Johns County to make travel more efficient.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL: PURPOSE & ROLE

PURPOSE

The purpose of the Economic Development Council is multifaceted. It promotes the economic growth of St. Johns County by attracting new businesses and industries, enhancing the growth and expansion of existing ones, and fostering entrepreneurialism and innovation. It also supports workforce development and business education programs. Additionally, the Council serves as the ESF 18 business and industry lead for emergency response and disaster recovery, working in coordination with St. Johns County Emergency Management and Economic Development departments.

ROLE

The Economic Development Council (EDC) provides support to business owners, executives and entrepreneurs who seek to start, expand or relocate enterprises in St. Johns County.

Our efforts are leveraged by collaboration and cooperation with federal, state, regional and local partners, including St. Johns County Government and the St. Johns County Board of County Commissioners

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT EDUCATION & EFFORTS

EDUCATIONAL TRAINING & ACTIVITIES

Educational Training & Activities – Throughout the first quarter Chamber Staff participated in educational training and activities with partner agencies including:

Jul. 10	Federal Reserve Update – Jacksonville Office
Jul. 10	JAXUSA Partnership Meeting
Jul. 14	IDA Meeting
Jul. 17	Coastal Storm Risk Webinar
Jul. 25	JAXUSA Business Development Meeting
Jul. 30	JAXUSA Investor Roundtable
Aug. 1	Pinellas County Affordable Housing Meeting
Aug. 13	JAXUSA Talent Advancement Network
Aug. 14	Upward Community Presentation
Aug. 21	Local Mitigation Strategy Meeting
Aug. 21	Coastal Storm Risk Webinar
Aug. 26	Air-X Business Development Meeting
Aug. 28	FDOT I-95/World Golf Parkway Project Update
Sept. 8	IDA Meeting
Sept. 13	First Coast Technical College Career Fair
Sept. 18	Black History Museum Appropriation Presentation
Sept. 25	Florida Chamber Federation Webinar

BUSINESS EDUCATION TRAINING & COMMUNITY OUTREACH EFFORTS

The Chamber provides training, business education, networking opportunities and outreach activities for its members and the community.

- Jul. 1 Ambassador Meeting
- Jul. 8 Pitch Factory
- Jul. 9 EDC Executive Committee
- Jul. 10 Chamber at Noon – Hurricane Preparation, Kelly Wilson
- Jul. 11 EDC Legislative Update
- Jul. 15 Pitch Factory “Final Pitch Night”



- Jul. 17 Tourism and Hospitality Council – SJC Cultural Events Update
- Jul. 17 LSJ Business and Government Day
- Jul. 29 Chamber Board of Advisors Meeting
- Jul. 30 Chamber Board of Directors Meeting

- Aug. 2 Chamber Radio Hour



- Aug. 5 Chamber Foundation Board Meeting
- Aug. 8 Mobile Visitor Information Center
- Aug. 8 Historic St. Augustine Area Council – Infrastructure in St. Augustine
- Aug. 12 Ponte Vedra Division Meeting
- Aug. 13 EDC Executive Committee Meeting
- Aug. 14 Manufacturing and Technology Roundtable
- Aug. 21 LSJ Tourism and Cultural Day
- Aug. 21 BizzED – Branden Barkema, Conquer Annual Planning
- Sept. 3 Board of Directors Retreat

Sept. 4 Women with Vision – Stephanie Hollis, CEO Synergy Power Solutions



Sept. 6 Chamber Radio Hour

Sept. 10 Chamber After Hours – City of St. Augustine

Sept. 10 Leadership St. Johns Graduation

Sept. 11 EDC Exec. Committee / Public Policy Committee – Chirstian Whitehurst

Sept. 11 Chamber at Noon – Tracey Phillips, Reach Success Systems



Sept. 26 EDC Breakfast – Infrastructure and Growth in St. Johns County

RIBBON CUTTINGS, GRAND OPENINGS & GROUNDBREAKINGS

Jul. 9 Metro Diner ribbon cutting

Jul. 15 Game Over Escape Room ribbon cutting

Jul. 18 Raices Fast Casual Mexican ribbon cutting



Jul. 18 Castillo St. Augustine Beach Resort ribbon cutting

Jul. 23 KeHE Distributors ribbon cutting

Jul. 24 Fura Furniture ribbon cutting



RIBBON CUTTINGS, GRAND OPENINGS & GROUNDBREAKINGS CONTINUED

- Aug. 14 The Hot Spot Studios ribbon cutting
- Aug. 14 Pour! DIY Candle Studio ribbon cutting
- Aug. 19 Goodwill Shoppes at Aberdeen ribbon cutting
- Aug. 22 Goodwill Epic Village ribbon cutting



- Aug. 22 Manders 22 ribbon cutting

- Aug. 27 Niva Health ribbon cutting



- Sept. 15 Liberty Landscape Garden Room



- Sept. 18 Evolve Chiropractic and Wellness ribbon cutting

ST. JOHNS COUNTY LEGISLATIVE UPDATE



Senator Tom Leek addresses the sold-out crowd

The St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce hosted the annual Economic Development Council (EDC) Legislative Update Breakfast, bringing together key state and local leaders to provide insights into the outcomes and regional impacts of Florida's recent legislative session. Senator Tom Leek led off the event outlining the wins and challenges of the past legislative session. He was followed by Representative Kim Kendall, Representative Sam Greco, and Legislative Aide to Judson Sapp Shorty Robbins who provided their insight on this past session. St. Johns County Commission Chair Krista Joseph, City of St. Augustine Mayor Nancy Sikes-Kline and City of St. Augustine Beach Mayor Dylan Rumrell provided local updates.



Representative Kim Kendall talks with Howard Holley, CEO of TouchPoint Innovative Solutions and Ben Sedrine, President of Keiser University

Legislators highlighted the \$9.8 million secured for St. Johns County, supporting a range of priorities including water infrastructure, affordable housing, career and technical education programs, and a new airport-based student training initiative. Discussions also focused on workforce readiness, including the launch of the Exceptional Student Program aimed at supporting neurodivergent students through employment-focused workforce badges, and the approval of two new Charter School USA campuses.

Significant funding was also directed toward tourism and infrastructure improvements, including \$1.8 million to enhance walkability in historic St. Augustine, new investments in conservation lands, and expanded transportation and community development projects. Leaders underscored continued commitments to preserving state parks, advancing aerospace innovation, and strengthening support for Florida's small businesses.

ST. JOHNS COUNTY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE HOSTS INFRASTRUCTURE-FOCUSED EDC BREAKFAST



The St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce hosted another engaging and informative Economic Development Council (EDC) Breakfast on September 26 at the Renaissance World Golf Village Resort. The event featured key guest speakers, including Sara Pleasants of the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT), St. Johns County Administrator Joy Andrews, and Public Works Director Greg Caldwell, who shared valuable updates on infrastructure initiatives shaping the county's future.

Pleasants provided an update on the transformative First Coast Expressway project, which is expected to enhance regional mobility and create new economic opportunities across Northeast Florida. Andrews and Caldwell highlighted several major county projects currently underway, many of which are scheduled for completion next year, with additional projects already in the pipeline.

Attendees learned about a wide range of improvements, including new and upgraded facilities for first responders, park enhancements, the development of the Hastings Community Center and Library, and critical roadway upgrades such as improvements to County Road 2012.

The event underscored the Chamber's ongoing commitment to providing businesses with timely insights into the growth and development of St. Johns County, while fostering collaboration among business and community leaders.

BUSINESS RETENTION AND EXPANSION

ST. JOHNS COUNTY REVIEWS COMPETING PROPOSALS FOR MAJOR DEVELOPMENT PROJECT



On September 16, 2025, the St. Johns County Board convened to review two major proposals for the redevelopment of the World Golf Hall of Fame property, with both plans aiming to transform the area through a mix of recreational, commercial, and community-focused facilities. The first proposal, presented by the Capital Investment Group, outlined a comprehensive vision featuring golf and recreation, entertainment venues, food and beverage spaces, retail, and new as well as renovated facilities. Highlights included plans for mini golf, outdoor seating, a VR golf lounge, play zones, and a spa. The proposal also detailed a phased approach to securing property interests, including a 32-year master lease and subleases, and addressed future challenges such as litigation, deed restrictions, and infrastructure.

The second proposal, from Cross Regions Real Estate and Easy Acquisitions, focused on the Fountains at World Golf Village. This plan emphasized a medical treatment facility, independent living community, retail, restaurants, and commercial space, with a mix of repurposed and new facilities. The team proposed acquiring the property title and highlighted their ongoing negotiations for surrounding acreage, as well as their financing strategy involving equity and partnerships with local banks.

Board members discussed the merits and challenges of each proposal, particularly the complexities of deed restrictions and ongoing litigation affecting the property. One commissioner noted that both proposals appeared viable for moving from conception to construction, supporting the idea of advancing both to the next phase. Each applicant will now submit a more detailed proposal outlining their plans.

GOVERNOR RON DESANTIS APPOINTS THREE NEW BOARD MEMBERS TO AIRPORT AUTHORITY



The office of the governor announced the appointment of Gerald Dedge, Mario Dipola and Nick Primrose to the St. Johns County Airport Authority's board on September 30. The appointments remain subject to confirmation by the Florida Senate. The authority oversees operations and decides on development and funding at the St. Augustine Airport.

The three appointees carry a variety of experience. Dedge was a captain for the St. Johns County Sheriff's Office and a command chief warrant officer for the Florida National Guard. Dedge currently serves as the vice president of the Florida National Guard Foundation and is a member of the St. Johns County Veterans Council.

Dipola brings extensive experience with transportation systems, serving as state transportation leader for North Florida at Gresham Smith and previously worked as a safety services engineer at the Florida Department of Transportation. Dipola is a member of the North Florida Transportation Planning Organization Citizen's Advisory Committee.

Primrose is the Chief of Regulatory Compliance at JaxPort in Jacksonville, overseeing compliance with maritime law and environment policy. Primrose additionally serves on the St. Johns River State College District Board of Trustees.

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WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

ST. JOHNS COUNTY INDUSTRIAL LEADERS TACKLE MANUFACTURING WORKFORCE AND HOUSING CHALLENGES



Local business leaders, educators, and government officials gathered this week for the “Manufacturing and Technology” roundtable, hosted by the St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce and St. Johns County Economic Development Department. The meeting brought together a diverse group of stakeholders to address pressing issues facing the county’s manufacturing sector, including workforce development, technical education, and the need for affordable housing and industrial land.

Participants discussed the upcoming launch of an advanced manufacturing program at St. Augustine High School, supported by a \$600,000 state grant. The program aims to equip students with hands-on skills and connect them with local employers through internships, apprenticeships, and advisory boards. Representatives from First Coast Technical College and St. Johns River State College also highlighted new and expanded training programs, including a manufacturing prep course and project management certification.

A recurring theme was the challenge of attracting and retaining skilled workers, particularly for technical and hourly positions. Speakers emphasized the importance of changing perceptions about manufacturing careers, engaging parents and students early, and providing clear pathways from education to employment. The group also addressed the critical shortage of industrial and commercial land, as well as attainable housing for the local workforce.

Chamber leaders urged attendees to advocate for policy changes and participate in coalitions to ensure space for both businesses and affordable homes. Export opportunities were another focus, with Select Florida representatives outlining grants and support available to help local manufacturers reach international markets. The Chamber will be hosting an ABC’s of Exporting Workshop in December for local business owners.

The meeting concluded with a call for ongoing collaboration among businesses, educators, and policymakers to sustain economic growth and maintain St. Johns County’s quality of life. For more information on upcoming programs and how to get involved, contact the St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce.

2026 PROPOSED WORKERS COMP RATES SEE AVERAGE 6.9 PERCENT DECREASE

The Florida Chamber of Commerce met with the National Council on Compensation Insurance (NCCI) to review a proposed 6.9% decrease in workers' compensation insurance rates for new and renewal policies, effective January 1, 2026. NCCI files a rate filing on behalf of the majority of Florida's workers' comp carriers. If approved, this decrease will contribute to a cumulative reduction of 78 percent since the reforms the Florida Chamber championed over two decades ago in 2003, when Florida had the highest workers' comp rates in the country.

Factors influencing this year's rate filing include a continued reduction in both the frequency and severity of claims, which is also a national trend. This improvement is attributed to employers' ongoing commitment to enhancing workplace safety, which has resulted in a reduction in workplace injuries and facilitated quicker return-to-work processes for employees.

The Office of Insurance Regulation (OIR) is expected to hold a public hearing sometime in mid-September and will approve or request a modification of the rate request sometime in October or early November. This timeline will allow the rates, once approved by OIR, to take effect as proposed for new policies and policy renewals starting January 1, 2026.

25TH LEADERSHIP ST. JOHNS CLASS GRADUATES

The 25th Leadership St. Johns Class recently celebrated their graduation. Since 2000, more than 430 community leaders have graduated from Leadership St. Johns. The program provides structured, interactive programs and activities emphasizing local economic, education, government and volunteerism issues, among others.

Leadership St. Johns accelerates the development of leadership skills for business, government and community professionals by building relationships and enhancing their knowledge of St. Johns County. Participants at all levels of career advancement establish themselves as key players in the county's business landscape as they make connections with a diverse group of civic, business and community leaders, professionals and advocates to build a powerful network.

With representation from every business sector in St. Johns County, employers of LSJ participants value the experience and knowledge gained as participants use these new tools to advance the organizations' goals and make an ongoing positive difference in the community. Meeting one day a month, the leadership cohort explores St. Johns County through curated themed days. Examples include Social Services Day, Law Day, First Responder Day, Healthcare Day, Education Day, Tourism and Culture Day, Business and Government Day, and Agriculture and Environmental Day.

LSJ is the cornerstone program of the [St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce Foundation](#), a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to strengthening the local business community through leadership opportunities, economic development programs and continuing education.



Photo Credit: First Sight Films

ENTREPRENEURSHIP

ST. JOHNS COUNTY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE SEES ANOTHER SUCCESSFUL PITCH FACTORY PROGRAM

The Pitch Factory 6-week entrepreneurship program came to an end with 17 participants choosing to “Pitch” their concept. Scott Maynard, Director of Economic Development for the St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce said, “This was a great cohort, and their ideas were amazing. It was exciting to see how each participant developed their business concept over the six weeks and then experience the final pitch at the end. I believe that many of these ideas and start-ups will grow into viable businesses soon and others that are already operating will continue to grow and expand.”

The St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce, in collaboration with the JAX Chamber’s Jacksonville Women’s Business Center, offers the Pitch Factory course throughout the fiscal year to all St. Johns County residents at no cost. We owe a special thanks to **DLP Bank** for sponsoring this year’s Pitch Factory and to Ascension St. Vincent’s Hospital for hosting the program each week.



Everyone took something away from the program. The top winners included Arin Adams with Jacksonville Play Studio Educational Gymnastics. She said, “The goal of my company is to help children and families thrive through gymnastics.” She plans to use her winnings to purchase mobile play equipment to help launch their mobile program.

Ivy Boyter with Full Throttle SEO placed second. She said, “This will allow me to obtain additional software to access additional data my customers need. I am thrilled to have had the support and to participate with such an amazing group of people.” First place went to Amy Purciarele with the Purciarele Group. In her pitch, Amy said, “We solve HR chaos with clarity, compliance and confidence.” After winning the grand prize she added, “Pitch Factory has provided me with the tools and resources to grow my company more effectively and efficiently.”

Originally inspired by the JAX Bridges program (www.jaxbridges.com), the Pitch Factory entrepreneurial education course seeks to help St. Johns County entrepreneurs elevate their businesses through an intensive training program designed to assist with developing and refining the entrepreneur’s value proposition. Entrepreneurial education modules focus on the value proposition, business model, capability statement, and honing the pitch. Class discussion topics include understanding basic financial concepts, crafting a business model, marketing, and the various types of pitches.



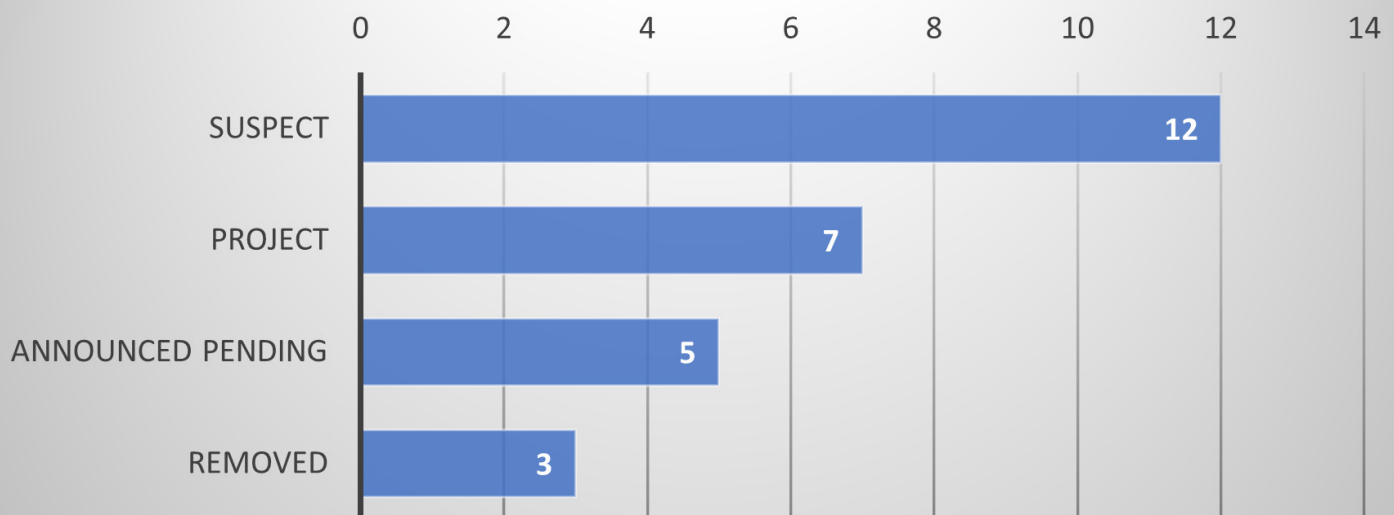
ST. JOHNS COUNTY PROJECT PIPELINE

Q3 – ALL PROJECTS IN THE PIPELINE FOR ST. JOHNS COUNTY

STAGES OF A PROJECT IN THE PIPELINE

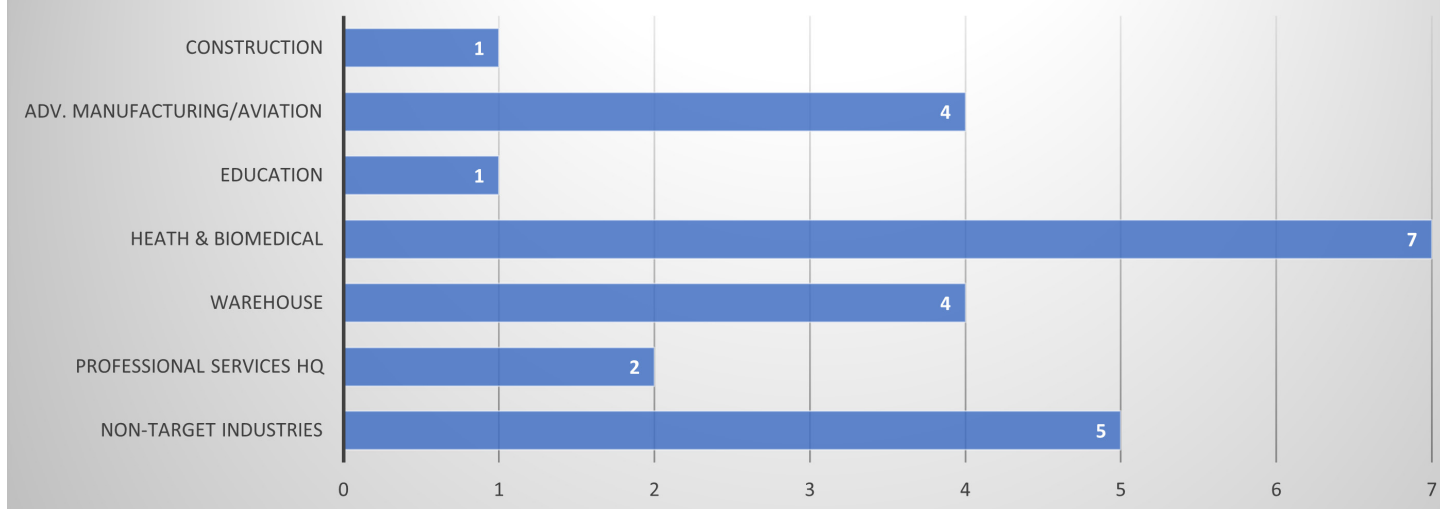
STAGE	DESCRIPTION
Suspect	EFI referrals, JAXUSA referrals, Chamber Member/Local Referrals, and Direct Inquiries with at least a 10% potential of moving forward.
Project	The project has real potential to select St. Johns County for new business, relocation, or expansion. The representative either has an existing business, has visited, or plans to visit St. Johns County.
Imminent	St. Johns County has been shortlisted among other potential locations.
Announced Pending	The project has selected St. Johns County and awaiting final approvals from County and other agencies to move forward.
Announced	The project has selected St. Johns County, and all final approvals are complete.

Q4 All Prospects in the Pipeline By Stage



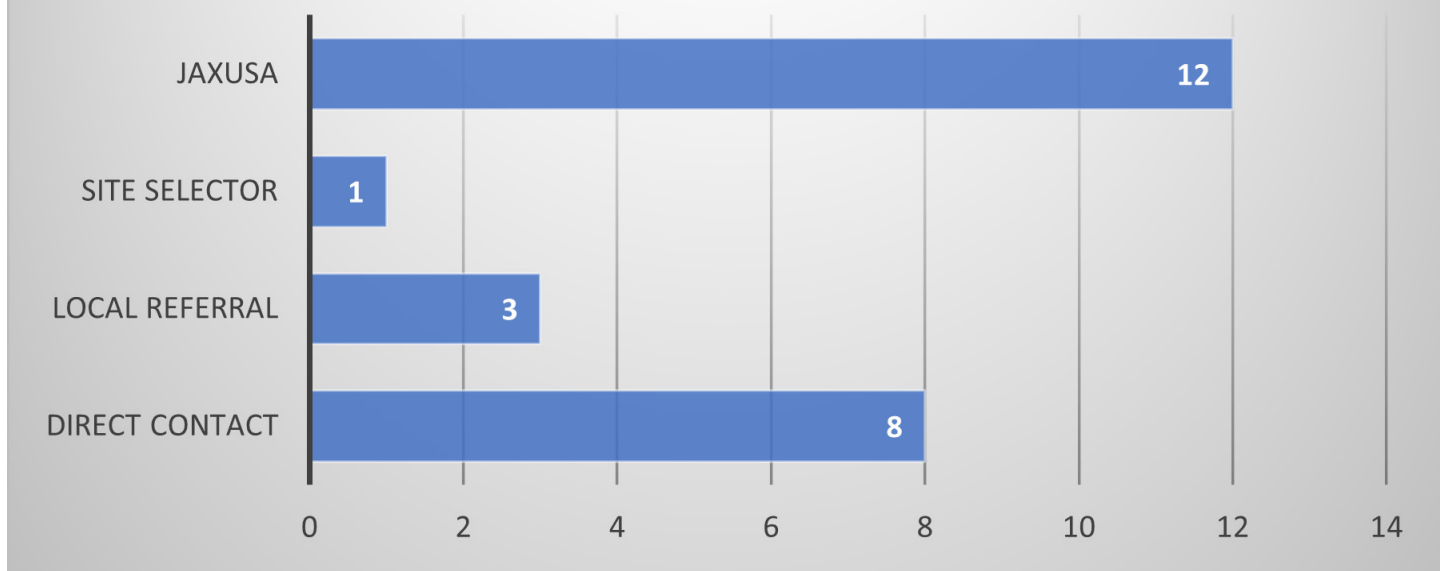
- At the end of Q4, there were a total of 24 active businesses in the pipeline. The announced pending project should be revealed in FY 2025-26.
- These projects represented a wide variety of industrial types.

Q4 All Prospects in the Pipeline By Industry



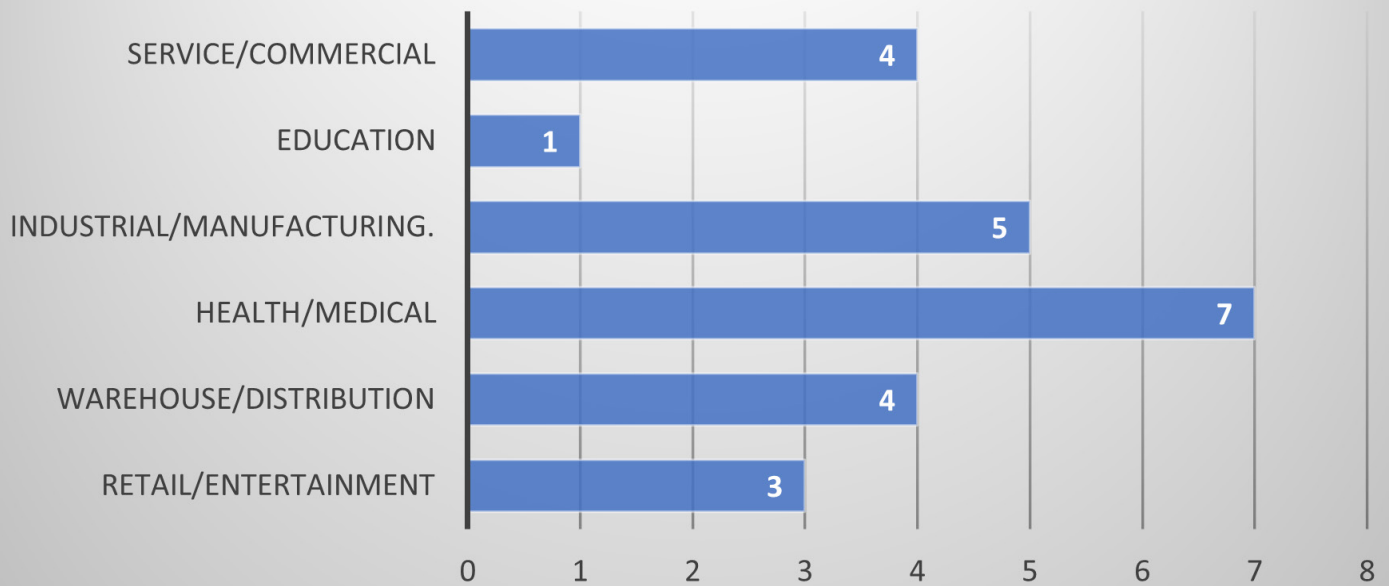
- There are a total of eleven businesses in the pipeline for the targeted industries of Advanced Manufacturing/Aviation (4 projects), and Health and Biomedical (7 projects).
- The Education prospect is also directly related to manufacturing/aviation.

Q4 All Prospects Active By Source



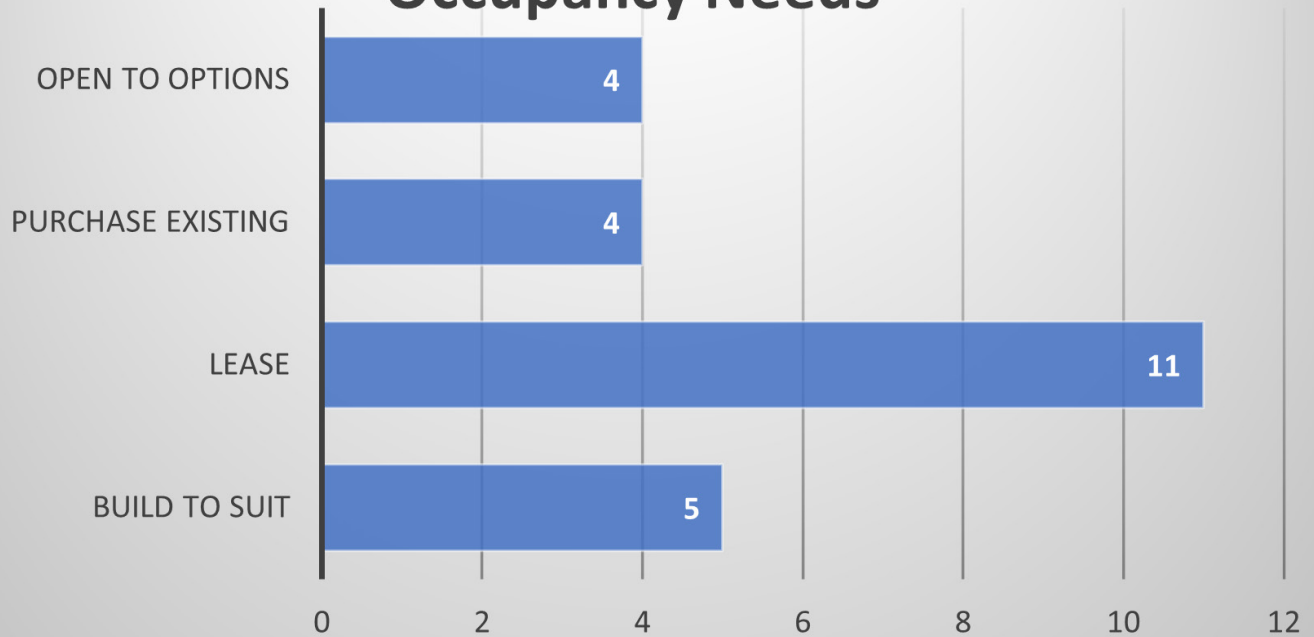
- JaxUSA continues to refer new projects. Quarter four had a significant increase over quarter two and quarter three.
- Twenty-four (24) total projects remained in the pipeline.

Q4 All Prospects in the Pipeline By Facility Function



- Current projects in the pipeline will feature service or commercial space (4 projects), industrial or manufacturing space (5 projects), health or medical facilities (7 projects), warehouse/distribution (4 projects), retail/entertainment space (3 projects) and education/training space (1 project).
- The Foundry Project on World Golf Parkway added 500,000 square feet of warehouse/light industrial space in quarter two of 2025. The 500,000 square foot KeHE project held its ribbon cutting in September.

Q4 All Prospects in Pipeline By Occupancy Needs



- The majority of the current projects in the pipeline seek to lease (11 projects) or build-to-suit space (5 projects).
- Four projects indicated an interest in purchasing an existing building in St. Johns County while the other four were open to exploring all options.



ST. JOHNS
C O U N T Y
CHAMBER
O F C O M M E R C E

Economic Development Council