

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**  
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## **Pitt County Receives \$1.5 Million from Golden LEAF Foundation SITE Development Program**

Funds to be used for water system improvements



**PITT COUNTY, N.C.** – Pitt County has been awarded funds from Golden LEAF Foundation’s SITE Development Program in the amount of \$1.5 million. The project supports public water system improvements adjacent to the Ayden Rail Site.

“Pitt County is grateful to receive this Golden LEAF Foundation grant. This award reflects our continued commitment to collaboration with our partners to enhance infrastructure for smart and sustainable economic growth in Pitt County,” says Janis Gallagher, Pitt County Manager.

Golden LEAF’s SITE Development Program provides funding to extend public utilities to publicly controlled sites or to conduct clearing and rough grading of publicly owned sites. The Ayden Rail Site is comprised of nearly 390 acres under option by the Town of Ayden, N.C.

“The Golden LEAF Board of Directors established the SITE Program to help rural communities make sites available for development to attract new businesses and create opportunities for existing businesses to expand” said Scott T. Hamilton, Golden LEAF President, Chief Executive Officer. “This project will help Pitt County be prepared for future industry recruitment and expansion opportunities.”

The site was originally identified through the Electricities’ Smart Assist program, in collaboration with the Town of Ayden, as an industrial growth opportunity for Ayden and Pitt County. It was recently certified by the Electricities’ Smart Sites program after a thorough due diligence process.

“As shovel-ready sites are in high demand for industrial projects, the development of this site is crucial to Pitt County’s ability to compete, as it is the only rail-adjacent site in Pitt County this near shovel-ready,” says Kelly Andrews, Director, Pitt County Economic Development. “Prospect activity for this site has been very high this year, and we expect that it will continue to draw industrial prospects as we make these necessary improvements.”

Although the focus of the Golden LEAF award is the property that meets the requirements of the SITE Development Program, the public water line that will be upgraded will have the added benefit of serving all new development in the Ayden Industrial area. This includes projects underway, such as the new Minges Bottling Group facility, estimated at \$35 million, and CMI Plastics’ \$5 million expansion. Both projects will continue to reside in Minges Corporate Park in Ayden and will retain their existing workforce as well as add new jobs.

In addition, the Eastern North Carolina Food Commercialization Center broke ground in November 2022 with plans to develop a 12,000 square foot facility in Worthington Industrial Park. The park has 50 acres available for industrial development.

“This project is an example of what can happen when government entities work together with the private sector to improve the economic development opportunities for Ayden, Pitt County and eastern North Carolina,” says Mallory Denham, Economic Developer, Town of Ayden.

Work will begin immediately on the Ayden water project and the water line should be completed by December 2023.

The Mission of Pitt County Government is to enhance the health, safety, and well-being of our community by advocating for and providing quality services in a friendly and cost-effective manner. Learn more: [www.PittCountyNC.gov](http://www.PittCountyNC.gov)

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21. **Publicity:** All publicity and printed materials regarding projects or activities supported in whole or in part by this grant should contain the following language: **“This project received support from the Golden LEAF Foundation.”** The Golden LEAF logo is to be displayed in all of the Grantee’s publicity and printed materials relating to this grant. The Golden LEAF Brand and Publicity Guide can be accessed at [www.goldenleaf.org/brand-and-publicity-guide/](http://www.goldenleaf.org/brand-and-publicity-guide/). For assistance with publicity, including review of all press releases, please contact Golden LEAF staff ([news@goldenleaf.org](mailto:news@goldenleaf.org)).