



City of Leavenworth

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Dear Community Members,

Leavenworth, Washington: once a timber town on the brink of decline, transformed itself into a vibrant Bavarian-themed village. Can you imagine the challenges our community faced during that era? The seemingly impossible effort to redefine a struggling community after losing the vital economic pillars of lumber and the railroad?

What saved our small mountain town? A process of vision and determination in the form of the Project LIFE initiative—Leavenworth Improvement For Everyone. Born out of economic desperation, Project LIFE was a beacon of hope. Our predecessors understood that without a new economic engine, the community would wither away. And so, Leavenworth embarked on a journey of transformation.

Now I know that change is not easy or for the faint of heart. It requires the courage to step away from the familiar and embrace the unknown. In the 60s and 70s, our town's leadership exemplified this tenacity by embracing change. They laid the tracks for a new future, turning a dying town into a thriving one. Today, Leavenworth stands as a testament to not only their persistence but the power of collective vision.

As we stand on the threshold of a new era, we find ourselves at a crossroads—the tracks ahead uncharted.

Unlike the boarded-up buildings of the past, our current struggle lies in managing our newfound allure. We are no longer a town in decline; instead, we attract millions of visitors and potential residents. This popularity has brought unintended consequences. Not only are we seeing the cost of living in our area rise at an exponential rate and small businesses struggling to survive, but our sense of community is eroding.

Leavenworth's economic engine is now speeding towards becoming a runaway train. Ironically, what saved us then endangers us now. Let us remember that our economic engine exists to nourish and fortify our community, not overshadow it. Consequently, we must strike a delicate balance between prosperity and preservation.

You may recall during my 2019 mayoral campaign the LIFE 2.0 initiative, though inadvertently sharing a name with a prior endeavor, was never about semantics—it was about igniting a fresh perspective through a grassroots visioning effort. As we stand at this juncture, let us look to other mountain towns that, like ours, have faced similar challenges. Their trajectories, both inspiring and cautionary, encourage us to ask the question of what WE envision for Leavenworth moving forward. We must lay the tracks—together.

Chelan County PUD's commitment to envisioning the next 50 years is commendable. Their strategic foresight process, aptly named "Imagine 2075," mirrors our own need for forward-thinking. Leavenworth's landscape is shifting. The tides of change—driven by climate shifts and evolving workforce demands—require us to step boldly into the future.

Much like the visionaries who built our Bavarian Village against the odds, we too must embrace the spirit of change. So, let us embark on a narrative of empowerment—a collective path forward for our future community.

I wholeheartedly invite you to embark on an exciting revisioning process. Mark your calendars for September 9, 16, and 23, from 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. at the Leavenworth Festhalle. These brainstorming sessions will delve into three crucial topics:

- **Housing a Community:** What should our community look like in 50 years? Shall it be predominantly part-time retirees and the affluent, or a vibrant mix of ages and incomes?
- **Sustainable Tourism:** How can we shape a tourism economy that balances corporate interests with local entrepreneurship?
- **Accountable Stewardship:** Let's explore ways to safeguard our rivers, trails, and the natural beauty of our corner in the Cascade Mountains.

Remember, these revisioning sessions are not about dwelling on the "how it used to be" or getting caught up in a cycle of current criticisms. It's about creative problem-solving—finding a way to preserve what we value as we embrace a new, different future. Together, we can ensure that Leavenworth remains a place where everyone thrives.

On October 14, from 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. at the Chelan County Fire District #3 Station located on the Chumstick, we will consolidate our collective input and define the path ahead.

As we move forward, let us continue to innovate, adapt, and build upon our tracks of success. Our economic engine will not be a runaway train; but rather an adaptive locomotive of hope, pulling us toward a brighter tomorrow.

Let's think boldly and work together to create a Leavenworth that future generations will cherish!
Will you join me in this endeavor?

Respectfully,

Carl Florea
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