



LEWIS COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT/IDA
ANNUAL REPORT
2019



NATURALLY
LEWIS
LEWIS COUNTY, NY

LEWIS COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Mission

Our mission is to attract and enhance industrial and economic development, help create jobs and maintain economic stability within Lewis County. We work to promote and enhance the economic conditions, recreational opportunities, prevent unemployment and economic deterioration, and ensure the prosperity of our businesses, industries, communities, and citizens, leading to an overall better quality of life.

Staff



Eric Virkler | Executive Director
Brittany Davis | Marketing & Communications
(named Interim Director December 23, 2019)
Cheyenne Steria | Finance Technical Specialist
Tim Petersen | Business Development

Board Members

Joe Lawrence | **Cornell University**, Chairman
Jared Thisse | **Lowville Sport & Farm** Vice Chairman
Christina Schneider | **Purcell Construction**, Secretary/Treasurer
Gagan Singh | **Key Bank Financial Services**, Board Member
Jerry Cayer | **Lewis County Health System**, Board Member
Tom Gillette | **Retired Dairy Farmer**, Board Member

LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

2019 was an incredibly busy year for Lewis County Economic Development. The highlight revolved around the Center for Business building. In May, we moved our offices into that facility. After a few months of renovation, the office space was well laid out for a shared location that included the Lewis County Chamber of Commerce. The Lowville Journal and Republican also leased an office and the economic development team began to develop a coworking / shared work space. Brittany Davis and Cheyenne Steria did a great job designing the offices and the project developed very strong interest from the community. And then.....an offer was received to purchase the entire Center for Business building. The Lewis County IDA negotiated with Ox Industries and sold the facility in October. This is a great opportunity to create long term manufacturing jobs in this building. While it was hard to change course on the new office space and the planned small business incubator space, this was a good decision to make. The Economic Development team continues to remain in the building while seeking another location to replicate the Center for Business in the future.

Another significant project during 2019 was reacquisition of the Harrisville lumber mill property. After almost seven years of inactivity, the LCIDA acquired the property and then resold it to the Development Authority of the North Country. DANC immediately began to enhance the facility to be used as a regional recycling center. This center will provide a benefit to the North Country and will create a small number of jobs in the near term and more growth in the future.

Lewis County Economic Development launched a small business grant program using NYS CDBG funds. The first round of funding occurred in late 2019 with two businesses receiving grants to benefit their start up operations. Our Naturally Lewis Business Leaders Breakfasts continued to be a strong draw for members of the community.

With the writing of this report, I have moved on to a new position as Lewis County Treasurer. The Economic Development team is in great hands with the Lewis County IDA Board of Directors and staff. Significant progress is occurring with our manufacturing companies, small businesses and entrepreneurs and with a proactive approach, we will continue to support economic growth in Lewis County.



Eric Virkler
Former Executive Director



A MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN

As in 2018, adaptability and collaboration continue to be key attributes to moving forward with our economic goals and were once again prominent themes to our work in 2019.

It was another year of exciting change. Perhaps not what we thought the outcome would be when we embarked on a new journey with the purchase of the former Climax property just one year ago but we are very pleased that we were able to return the facility to private sector jobs. While the location was nicely taking shape as our Center for Business the ultimate goal of economic development is private sector job growth which the sale of the property to Ox Industries achieves.

We are still very excited about the momentum that has been generated around the Center for Business and look forward to finding a new home to continue building this vision in 2020.

We said goodbye to two tremendous advocates for Lewis County as our Executive Director, Eric Virkler moved on to help the county in another capacity as the newly elected county Treasurer. We certainly had mixed feelings about Eric's decision to run for the office as it meant losing him from our team but we also supported his efforts and are glad he will continue to put his talents to good use in helping the county.

Christina Schneider stepped down from our board as she shifted gears and entered a new phase of life, Tina's knowledge and contributions will be missed for sure.

I continue to be grateful for the incredible team we have in place and look forward to the new energy and talent that will be added to the group as we work to fill the openings we have at the staff and board level.

As we enter a new decade and think about our future, locally and globally, it is becoming increasingly clear that tweaking old systems is not going to cut it anymore, the coming decade needs to be transformative in how we cultivate a successful economy and live our lives. The past decades have not exactly been favorable to rural areas but there is reason for real optimism in the role rural areas and our team can play in making the most of the changes coming at us.



Joe Lawrence
Chairman
Lewis County IDA Board



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ACHIEVEMENTS

The **Center for Business**, a multi-tenant facility, was created in the former Climax Manufacturing Facility. Until the sale of the building to Ox Industries in August of 2019, there were six office tenants and two industrial tenants, including Lewis County Economic Development and the Chamber of Commerce, who co-located to create a one-stop shop for business services in Lewis County.



In October 2019, the **Center for Business** was sold to **Ox Industries**, a paperboard company from Pennsylvania. Ox, who also purchased Carthage Specialty Paper in 2018, continues to warehouse in this facility and plans to open a conversion operation and create new jobs in the building. The property was sold to Ox from the LCIDA for \$900,000.00, ultimately put the building back on the tax rolls.

After seven years of inactivity, the LCIDA acquired the former **Harrisville Dry Kiln facility**, and immediately resold the property to the Development Authority of the North Country, who is currently revitalizing the site to create a tri-county recycling center. It is expected that it will begin operations in 2020.



US Light Energy broke ground on a 5 megawatt community solar facility in the Town of Denmark, where they received a Payment in Lieu of Taxes from the LCIDA. The project site is approximately 72 acres, and energy generated from the facility will be exported to the National Grid distribution network for daily electrical consumption. Benefits from this project include energy bill credits to those that subscribe and live in the territory, an increase in direct and indirect employment, and new purchases of goods and services locally.

The **Copenhagen Wind Project** finished construction on a 40 tower wind farm, located in the Town of Denmark and Town of Lowville. The project created approximately 175 construction jobs, and approximately 5 service/maintenance jobs. The wind farm is currently in full operation.



The LCIDA renewed the PILOT agreement with **Flat Rock Wind**, to ensure its financial stability and the security of approximately 35 local service jobs into the future. The 195 tower wind project, located in the Towns of Martinsburg, Harrisburg and Lowville, was constructed in 2007, and continues to provide revenue in the form of PILOT payments, to the affected taxing jurisdictions and school districts.

Through the assistance of the LCIDA and other related parties, **Black River Valley Natural**, the first small scale creamery in Lewis County, started producing artisan butter in 2019. The creamery, located on the Lyons Falls Mill Site, has also become a location for co-manufacturing of other dairy products by outside customers. The owners of BRVN invested approximately \$80,000 in renovations to the building, and have created 3 new jobs in 2019.



The **Lewis County Cuisine Trail**, a state sanctioned trail, was launched in June 2019 after a three year effort by Lewis County Economic Development, Lewis County Chamber of Commerce and Cornell Cooperative Extension. The fifty mile trail travels through back roads of Lewis County, showcasing 12 producers or retailers of locally produced foods and cuisine native to Lewis County. A website was created [www.cuisinetrail.com], and the project will continue to boost sales of local foods and agri-tourism.

BUSINESS ASSISTANCE INITIATIVES



Met and consulted with over 80 small businesses in 2019

We have partnered with a number of local, regional and state organizations, and continue to utilize their services, to better serve our own businesses.



We promote local foods through the Lewis County Cuisine Trail, and 'Naturally Lewis Made' labels.



Launched the Lewis County Microenterprise Grant Program; \$200,000 in small business grants, funded through NYS Homes & Community Renewal



Hosted multiple seminars:

- Marketing Series 101
- Aspiring Entrepreneurs
- CFA Grant Seminar
- Naturally Lewis Marketing Seminar

We continue to promote and assist businesses through IDA incentives, such as PILOTS, Sales-Tax and Mortgage Tax abatement and equipment financing.



Manufacturing visits are conducted 1-2 times per year. In conjunction, we work with manufacturers on training and other needs. We also coordinate **Manufacturing Day**, which works to expose high school students to careers in manufacturing.



Other Notable Projects:

- **Hand in Hand Early Childhood Center** | Worked with the organization to put a building transition plan in place, initiating a lease-back agreement from the IDA to full ownership
- **Osceola Sport & Ski** | Assisted with funding and grant sources to plan and build new cross country ski center in Southern Lewis County



Marketing & Communications

Promoting Lewis County as a great place to live, work build business & play.

BUSINESS LEADERS BREAKFAST EVENTS

- January 15** | Brain Gain | International Maple Museum | 60 Attendees
- June 12** | Creating Meaningful Connections | Lowville Elks Lodge | 70 Attendees
- September 12** | Health & Human Services Workforce Opportunities | 70 Attendees
- November 14** | Rethinking Agriculture | Snow Ridge Wax House | 70 Attendees

OTHER NATURALLY LEWIS EVENTS

- March 21** | Business After Hours | Tug Hill Vineyards | 85 Attendees
- May 7** | Leadercast LIVE | Tug Hill Vineyards | 35 Attendees



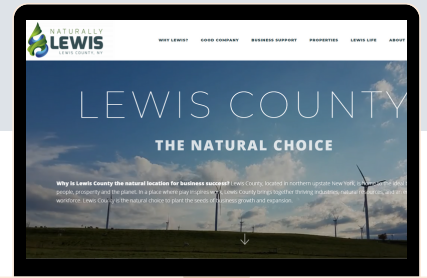
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Followers



630
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150
Followers



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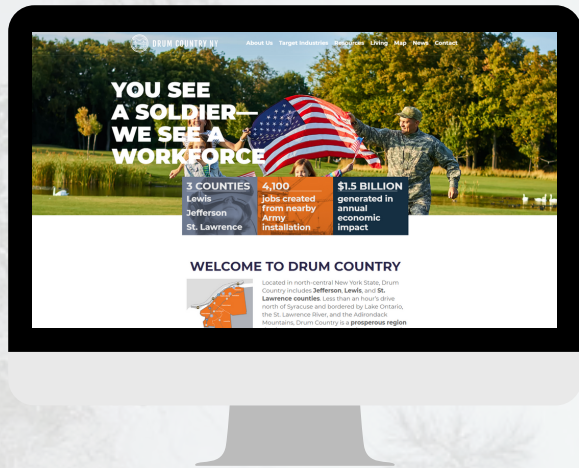


FEATURED IN OVER 20 LOCAL & REGIONAL PUBLICATIONS IN 2019

Featured on a monthly radio segment, *'Naturally Lewis: Moving Lewis County Forward'*



KEY PARTNERSHIPS



DRUM COUNTRY, NY

Drum Country is a tri-county partnership between Lewis, Jefferson & St. Lawrence Counties to promote our region as an ideal place to live, work and do business, focusing on Fort Drum as our economic engine and future workforce.

For more information, visit www.drumcountryny.com.

CENTER FOR BUSINESSES IN TRANSITION

A North Country regional partnership working to combat closure of thousands of businesses due to a lack of successor or succession plan. We provide match-making services and the resources businesses need to successfully transition.



ONE-STOP SHOP FOR BUSINESS SERVICES

With the creation of the Center for Business, we co-located with the Lewis County Chamber of Commerce to create a 'one-stop shop' for businesses, and to continue our work together as economic development and tourism organizations. This partnership has led to multiple projects and initiatives and a streamlined process for meeting with businesses.





FINANCES AT A GLANCE

LEWIS COUNTY IDA | 2019

INCOME

Project Fees	\$207,500
Center for Business	\$153,485
Other	\$180,843

TOTAL **\$541,828**

EXPENSES

Payroll	\$135,926
Operations	\$42,200
Professional Services	\$32,250
Marketing	\$13,962
Center for Business	\$231,545
Project Costs	\$81,100

TOTAL **\$536,983**



Lewis County Economic Development
7840 State Route 26, Lowville NY | naturallylewis.com

