

ANNUAL REPORT 2020

LEWIS COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT





CONTENTS

OUR 2020 IMPACTS



SOARING INTO THE FUTURE

- Completed **2021-2024 Strategic Plan** & established key priorities



STRENGTHENING OUR BUSINESS COMMUNITIES

- Awarded **\$170,000** in Microenterprise Grant Funds to local businesses
- Created **Reboot LC, mynny.biz and the Winter Design Challenge Program** in response to COVID-19



LEADERSHIP IN OUR COMMUNITY

- Leading initiatives on a local, regional and state level
- Making strides with **Smart Solar Growth**



MARKETING & COMMUNITY OUTREACH

- **Over 5,000 Followers** across our social media platforms
- Received feedback from 43 businesses from our **Business Retention & Expansion Program**



STRATEGIC ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

- 3 approved PILOT projects with \$24 Million in project investments

2020

AT A GLANCE

JAN

\$170,000 Microbusiness Grant Program made available to Lewis County businesses

FEB

Business Leaders Breakfast; began Strategic Planning Process

MAR

Davis, named IDA Executive Director

APR

Steria, promoted to Director of Finance & Incentives

MAY

Reboot LC initiative to get COVID-19 Guidance to businesses

JUN

Provided free Reboot LC Kits with PPE and signage to local businesses

JUL

Staff grows, Kraeger, named Economic Development Specialist

AUG

Launched mynny.biz website platform

SEPT

Moved to new office at 7551 S. State Street, Lowville

OCT

Hosted hybrid Winter Industry Roundtable Event

NOV

LCIDA revised UTEP to promote Smart Solar Growth

DEC

Launched Winter Design Challenge Grant Program

BUSINESS HIGHLIGHTS



70% OF BUSINESSES SURVEYED PLAN ON EXPANDING IN THE FOLLOWING AREAS IN THE NEXT THREE YEARS



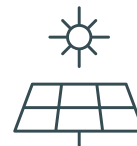
NEW IN 2020

zoom

VIRTUAL MEETINGS



STRATEGIC PLAN



SOLAR SPECIFIC UTEP



PROMOTIONAL VIDEOS



FINANCES AT A GLANCE

LEWIS COUNTY IDA | 2020

INCOME

Project Fees	\$298,970
Contracts	\$209,750
Other	\$52,280

TOTAL \$561,000

EXPENSES

Payroll	\$155,960
Operations	\$31,140
Professional Services	\$27,560
Marketing	\$25,360
Project Costs	\$55,750

TOTAL \$295,770

LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

No one would have ever expected a year like 2020, but we all must take a moment to reflect on where we have been and where we plan to go in 2021. I enter this new year with gratitude and motivation, as 2020 has brought us a new team, innovative initiatives, resilient businesses, new board members and a refreshed sense of who we are as the economic development entity of Lewis County as we launch our 2021-2023 Strategic Plan. I can say that I have never been prouder to be a part of this community and organization.

In 2020, Eric Virkler and Tim Petersen, two economic development staff members left the organization as they sought out different career opportunities. We quickly went from four staff, to two staff. The board shifted our leadership, promoting myself to Executive Director, and Cheyenne Steria to our Director of Finance and Incentives. Over the summer, we hired a new Economic Development Specialist, Jenna Kraeger, who we were able to attract back home from Rochester, NY. I can honestly say I have never felt luckier to work with a group of confident and empowered women.

As the pandemic hit our world, Lewis County Economic Development quickly shifted gears to make sure we were fully supporting our business community in every way possible. We launched our Reboot LC initiative, in partnership with the Lewis County Chamber of Commerce, to ensure that we were ready to reboot our business community in every way possible. We were able to launch and implement innovative projects and initiatives throughout that time, and to this day. We focused on clear and concise communication and information sharing, hosted a number of informative webinars and informational sessions, launched a new e-commerce and website platform, mynny.biz, in partnership with Coughlin, to allow every small business to have access to a high quality, low cost website, hosted industry specific virtual round table events, and launched the Winter Design Challenge grant program to assist our businesses.

As we embark on a new chapter in 2021, we lead with confidence in our new 2021- 2023 Naturally Lewis Strategic Plan. Lewis County Economic Development is continuing to work on behalf of our businesses and communities to fight, advocate and pursue innovative and creative opportunities to make Lewis County the ideal place to live, work and build business.

Lastly, I would like to thank the IDA Board of Directors for their support during an unprecedented year. Their forward-thinking approach will only continue to help us in being nimble and taking calculated risks that will move our community forward for years to come.



Brittany Davis
Executive Director



A MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN

I concluded last year's comments with the following, "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." I strongly believed this when I wrote it and that belief has only deepened after the events of 2020.

I am so proud of our team, their ability to adapt and the innovative role they took in supporting our community as everyone tried to navigate the pandemic. Not only was their work invaluable to our community, but their innovation was quickly noticed across the region and state. To think, coming into 2020 we thought our biggest challenges would be rebuilding our team and finding a new home. While those were still significant tasks, we took on a new perspective relative to what was in store for us.

We entered the year with an interim Executive Director, an open board seat and the announcement that another key member of our team, Tim Petersen, would be leaving us to pursue other opportunities. We had a very impressive group of applicants for the open position of Executive Director, as one board member pointed out at the time 'a true testament to the energy around our organization'. From this impressive pool, a familiar face quickly rose to the top and we were incredibly pleased to have Brittany Davis, our former Marketing Specialist, accept the position of Executive Director. Fortunately, this matter was settled before the pandemic took hold of our community, as was the board vacancy with the valuable addition of Darlene Rowsam to our team.

Later in the year we lost another tremendous voice from our board, Jared Thisse, as he needed to focus all his attention on the family business during the pandemic and felt it necessary to step back from his work with us.

As the year concluded we feel fortunate to have our team whole once again. We thank Tim and Jared for their valuable contributions and are excited to welcome Jenna Kraeger and McKenzie Lehman to the team. Jenna returned to her home community and joined us as our new Economic Development Specialist and has made an immediate impact. In December, McKenzie was appointed to our board. We are very excited by these additions to our team and look forward to their contributions.

While many have expressed delight that 2020 is behind us, we know that the challenges will continue in 2021 and beyond. We also know that we are up for the challenge, both in addressing the immediate needs of the pandemic and in keeping our eyes on the larger goals we have set for ourselves and Lewis County.



Joe Lawrence
Board Chairman
Lewis County IDA



LEWIS COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Mission

Lewis County Economic Development, through its board, the IDA and its brand, Naturally Lewis, are championing the growth of a community where people want to live, work, build business and play. We foster forward thinking and relationship building, connecting people, businesses, partnerships and resources to effectively and efficiently grow our county.

Board Members

Joe Lawrence | Cornell University, Chairman

Gagan Singh | Key Bank Financial Services, Vice Chairman

Ron Burns | Lewis County Legislator, Board Member

Jerry Cayer | Lewis County Health System, Board Member

Tom Gillette | Retired Dairy Farmer, Board Member

McKenzie Lehman | BCA Architects & Engineers, Board Member

Darlene Rowsam | ParentSquare, Board Member

Staff

Brittany Davis | Executive Director

Cheyenne Steria | Director of Finance & Incentives

Jenna Kraeger | Economic Development Specialist





SOARING INTO THE FUTURE

STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

Phase 1: Discovering the Strengths, Opportunities & Aspirations for the Future

Lewis County Economic Development hosted a Business Leaders Breakfast with 100 attendees to discuss and brainstorm opportunities and strengths in Lewis County!



Phase 2: Building a Plan with Aspirational Results

The LCIDA Board and Staff reviewed the input from the community and built upon the strengths, opportunities and dreams to draft a plan and finalize the Strategic Plan. The process was delayed due to the pandemic, but was finalized in October 2020.

NATURALLY LEWIS STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

DEVELOP PARTNERSHIPS

DEVELOP POLICIES

RESEARCH + EDUCATION

OUTREACH + VISIBILITY

STRATEGIC FUNDING DEVELOPMENT + SPENDING



STRENGTHENING OUR BUSINESS COMMUNITIES

COVID-19 RESPONSE

The Lewis County community came together in March of 2020 to support businesses, neighbors and essential workers as the pandemic forced the world, as we knew it, to stop. Lewis County Economic Development quickly partnered with the Lewis County Chamber of Commerce to launch the **'Reboot Lewis County'** initiative to support the business community.



- Served as the **liaison between Empire State Development** and the business community, providing clear and concise information and communication on guidance from NYS.
- Hosted **6 Reboot LC Webinars** over the course of April and May 2020.
- Partnered with Lewis County to distribute **Reboot Kits** to small businesses that included masks, thermometers, sanitizer, gloves, signage and more.
- **Deferred all loans & leases** with businesses for 3 months.
- Spoke with **local and regional economic development partners** on a weekly basis.
- Created **COVID-19 Guidance** for Employers webpage on naturallylewis.com.
- Assisted with **"Shut Down Shady Ave"** – weekend shut down of a side street in downtown Lowville to allow for outdoor dining to support local restaurants.

CREATING DIGITAL AND E-COMMERCE SOLUTIONS FOR BUSINESSES

LCED partnered with Coughlin to create the **myunny.biz platform** to provide low-cost, high quality digital and e-commerce solutions for businesses. Planning for the platform started in April 2020, and the newly created platform launched in August 2020. In 2020, we were able to **assist 10 small businesses to go digital**, launch an online store, or promote their products.



TALKING TO INDUSTRY EXPERTS TO CULTIVATE IDEAS



While the pandemic halted large in-person events, we were able to communicate and get together in creative ways. In Fall 2020, we hosted a **Winter Industry Roundtable Event**, where 15 people gathered at Osceola Ski & Sport Resort, and 15 people gathered via Zoom. We were able to discuss industry specific needs and ideas, and ways to support each other, and how we can better support our businesses throughout the winter months.

WINTER DESIGN CHALLENGE GRANT PROGRAM CULTIVATES CREATIVE EXPERIENCES



We were able to secure \$10,000 through the Pratt Northam Foundation and \$10,000 through the County of Lewis to create a **\$20,000 grant program for winter based businesses**. The grant program covered 50% of project costs, up to \$1,000, and asked hospitality, tourism and entertainment businesses and not-for-profits to submit proposals for creative indoor or outdoor dining solutions, creative service solutions or unique experiences.

SIX BUSINESSES AWARDED CDBG MICROENTERPRISE GRANTS

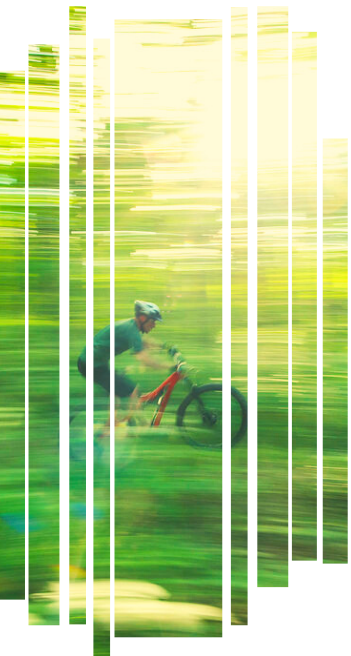
- TUG HILL ARTISAN ROASTERS** —→ **\$25,813**
- OSCEOLA SKI & SPORT RESORT** —→ **\$34,253**
- BLACK RIVER VALLEY NATURAL** —→ **\$34,650**
- CUMMINGS CREAMLINE MILK** —→ **\$35,000**
- BODHI KOMBUCHA** —→ **\$34,000**
- BATEMAN DRAFT HOUSE** —→ **\$6,698**

Six businesses were awarded **Microenterprise Grant Funds**, funded through the NYS Office of Community Renewal. Each grant was awarded to a small business with 5 or fewer employees, met low-to-moderate income guidelines, or created a job to be made available to low-to-moderate income individuals. Priority was given to businesses that fell under dairy and food processing, tourism based business and businesses located within a downtown.





LEADERSHIP IN OUR COMMUNITY



LEADING ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIP

Lewis County Economic Development leads monthly economic development discussions with County partners including Lewis County (Management, Planning Department, Parks & Recreation Department), The WorkPlace, Cornell Cooperative Extension - Lewis County, & the Lewis County Chamber of Commerce. Conversations have led to collaborative projects and continued progress in the County.



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.

2020 Success Story: After 10 months of working side-by-side, Tug Hill Vineyards successfully Transitioned ownership from the Maring Family to the Beller Family.



ownanorthcountrybusiness.com

DEVELOPING POLICY TO ADDRESS SOLAR DEVELOPMENT

The Lewis County IDA adopted a new **Uniform Tax Exemption Policy to address solar development** in Lewis County. The new policy works to incentivize the use of marginal land, versus prime, actively farmed land for solar developers looking to develop within the County. This amendment went through a lengthy review process within the IDA Board and local taxing jurisdictions. For more information, visit naturallylewis.com/initiatives/smart-solar-growth.



KEY PARTNERSHIPS



ONE-STOP SHOP FOR BUSINESS SERVICES

We continue to serve the community as a one-stop shop for new business development, tourism and community resources. We moved from the Center for Business location at the former Climax Building to a new downtown Lowville location with higher visibility to the community. This partnership has led to multiple projects and initiatives and a streamlined process for meeting with businesses.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Northern New York is an ideal location for services and support for those looking to start or grow a business. From business planning to funding options, grants to administrative and business support services, local businesses benefit from services offered in Lewis, Jefferson & St. Lawrence Counties. Lewis County Economic Development proudly collaborates with many North Country Partners to create diverse support and funding options.





MARKETING & COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Social Media Following



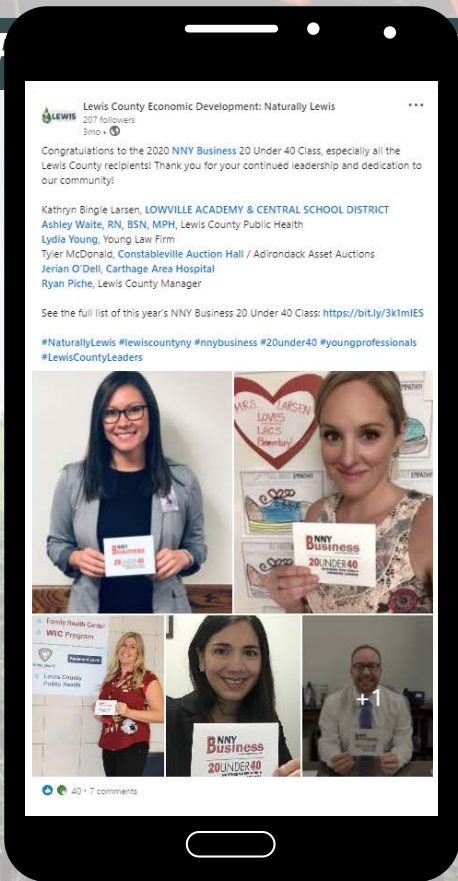
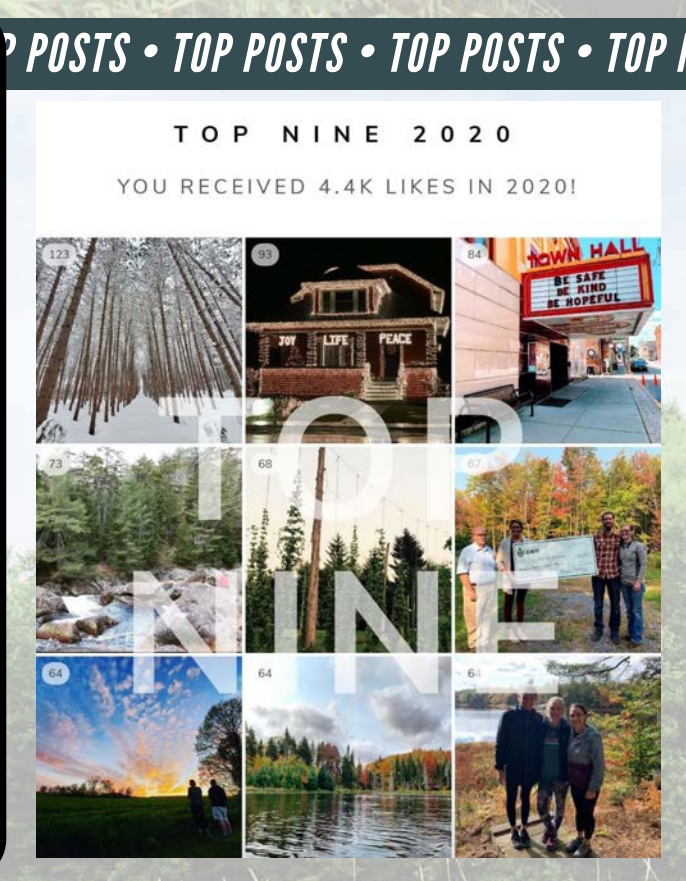
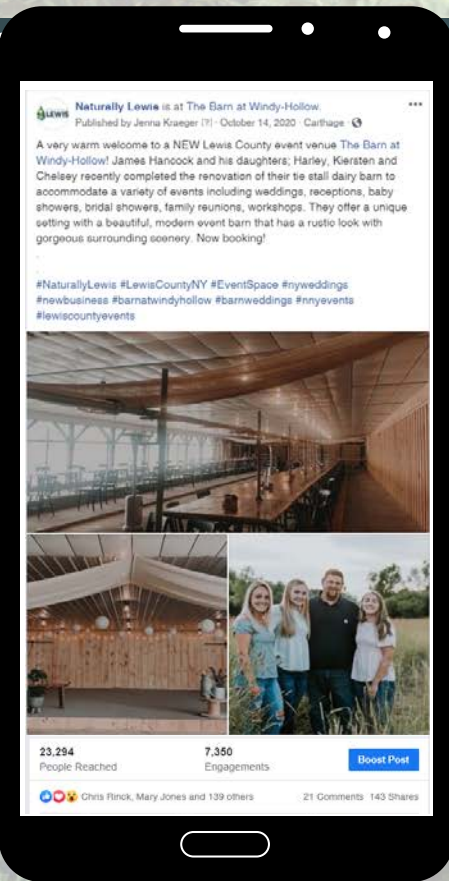
2,100
Followers
↑ from 1,600



980
Followers
↑ from 630



206
Followers
↑ from 150



New Business

Recreation

Professionals



198
Views
New in Fall 2020

LAUNCHED A NEW SERIES OF VIDEOS!



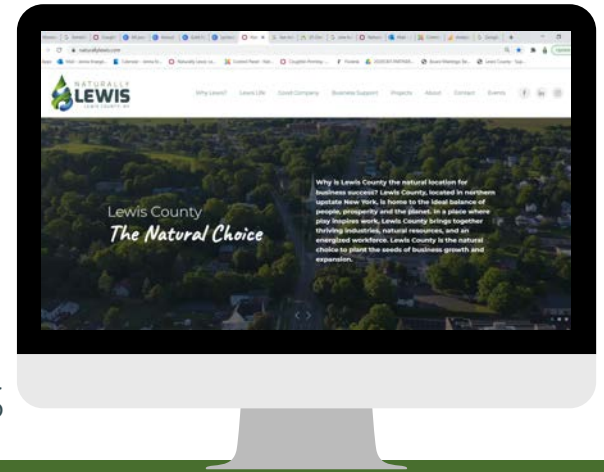
Why Lewis County?

Website

NATURALLYLEWIS.COM

31,500 Page Views!

MOST VISITED PAGE (1,531 VISITS)
COVID-19 GUIDANCE FOR EMPLOYERS



FEATURED IN OVER 20 LOCAL & REGIONAL PUBLICATIONS IN 2020



Radio Segment

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



Email Newsletter

573 SUBSCRIBERS

44 EMAILS



ESTABLISHED

MONTHLY E-NEWSLETTER

BUSINESS RETENTION & EXPANSION Program Launch



BUSINESS OPERATIONS



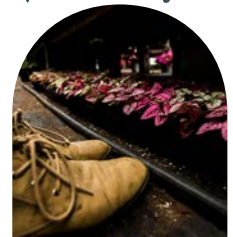
BUSINESS INVENTORY



EXPANSION NEEDS



WORKFORCE NEEDS



IMMEDIATE NEEDS

Lewis County Economic Development launched the first annual BR+E program and survey. We received survey results from **43 businesses, representing 335 employees in Lewis County.** The survey is followed by a visitation program, and survey results will help to formulate workforce and program development within the community.

STRATEGIC ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

2020 IDA PILOTS

[payment in lieu of taxes]



THREE APPROVED PROJECTS



\$24 MILLION IN PROJECT INVESTMENTS



\$86,250 ANNUAL INVESTMENT IN LOCAL COMMUNITIES

OMNI NAVITAS

Two 2.25 Megawatt Community Solar Arrays on the East Road in the Town of Denmark.

DUKE ENERGY

15 Megawatt Solar Array on State Route 12D in the Town of Leyden.

LYONSDALE PROPERTY

The Lewis County IDA acquired the former **46 acre ReEnergy Biomass Site** in 2020. Staff contracted with Camoin310 at the end of 2020 to enter into an RFP process to put the property back into productive use.



LYONS FALLS MILL PROJECT

After a decade of demolition and clean-up, the **six-million-dollar project** at the former Lyons Falls Pulp and Paper Mill has come to an end. The Village of Lyons Falls is looking forward to the next phase of redevelopment and downtown revitalization for the location that had been known as the Village's largest enterprise, and one of the County's largest employers for over a century.

The Lewis County Development Corporation (LCDC) is spearheading the next phase of development by forming an **Ad Hoc Committee** to discuss the future of the Lyons Falls High Falls site and will look to the community for input for Lyons Falls redevelopment.



IDA BUSINESS INCENTIVES

2020 progress report

SIX

ACTIVE TRADITIONAL PILOTS

Amounts paid to local government and schools in place of property taxes.

TWO

ACTIVE SALES TAX EXEMPTIONS

Exemptions are limited to the construction, reconstruction or installation period and cannot cover ongoing operational costs.

FIVE

ACTIVE ENERGY PILOTS

Five current projects active, with five additional applications in process!

TWO

ACTIVE EQUIPMENT INSTALLMENT SALES

Equipment purchased by the IDA and sold back to a business in installments.

SIX

OUTSTANDING SMALL BUSINESS LOANS

Loan funds available for gap financing for small businesses in targeted industries.

ONE

PROPERTY TRANSITIONED BACK TO FULL TAXATION

At the conclusion of a PILOT, properties return to full taxation.



212

JOBS RETAINED
FROM IDA INCENTIVES
IN 2020



13

JOBS CREATED
FROM IDA INCENTIVES
IN 2020



\$6,944,890

COMMUNITY INVESTMENT
FROM PILOT PROCEEDS
IN 2020



LEWIS COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
7551 S. STATE STREET | LOWVILLE, NY
NATURALLYLEWIS.COM | 315.376.3014 | FOLLOW US!

