



NATURALLY
LEWIS
LEWIS COUNTY, NY

2023 REPORT

A MESSAGE TO THE COMMUNITY

2023 was a year of exciting change and laying the foundation for a future of growth at Naturally Lewis. Over the past year, we've achieved remarkable progress, including the successful establishment of a new not-for-profit organization dedicated to advancing our community's prosperity. By merging economic development with our Chamber of Commerce, we've created a seamless platform and one-stop-shop to support businesses and foster growth. With dynamic board of directors at Naturally Lewis, the LCIDA, LCDC and Chamber of Commerce and a five-person staff leading the way, strategic funding partnerships with entities like Lewis County and Invenergy/Number 3 Wind to launch new services and programming, and a commitment to grassroots engagement, we're laying the foundation for a thriving future. As we look ahead to 2024, I am confident that together, we will continue to build upon our successes and make Lewis County an even better place to live, work, build business and thrive.



BRITTANY DAVIS | Executive Director of Naturally Lewis, Inc.

NATURALLY LEWIS, INC. BOARD OF DIRECTORS

- Eric Virkler, President
- Christie Andrus-Nakano, V. President
- Ryan Piche, Treasurer
- Joe Lawrence, Secretary
- Lisa Hetzner
- Casandra Buell
- Jessica Clemons
- Megan Dolhof
- Larry Dolhof
- Shellie Marks
- Nick Mir
- Scott Morgan
- Vacant Board Seat
- Vacant Board Seat



Photo by Kara Dry Photography LLC



OUR STAFF



Brittany Davis
Executive Director



Cheyenne Steria
Director of Development



Jenna Lauraine
Director of Programs & Partnerships



Kristen Aucler
Director of Tourism



Kaylee Tabolt
Economic & Tourism Development Specialist

Naturally Lewis, Inc. is an independent 501(c)3 organization leading economic development and administering the services of the County of Lewis Industrial Development Agency, the Lewis County Development Corporation, and the Lewis County Chamber of Commerce.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES
2021-2023

1

DEVELOPING PARTNERSHIPS

2

DEVELOPING POLICY

3

RESEARCH & EDUCATION

4

OUTREACH & VISIBILITY

5

STRATEGIC FUNDING DEVELOPMENT

These internal focuses lead to public facing results:

Business Development & Support Services | Property & Site Developments | Tourism Development & Promotion | Placemaking |
Sustaining the Organization | Marketing & Promotion of Lewis County | Membership Services | Events & Collaboration with Communities



Naturally Lewis' staff

FORMING NATURALLY LEWIS, INC.

Naturally Lewis, Inc., a new not-for-profit leading economic development efforts for Lewis County, was developed in October of 2023. This effort is a result of a growing partnership between the Lewis County IDA, Lewis County Development Corporation and the Lewis County Chamber of Commerce. The multi-year initiative, led by staff to consolidate services and maximize resources to provide Lewis County with a one-stop-shop for business, tourism, and economic development, is a reflection of our communities; it is a direct result of its needs.

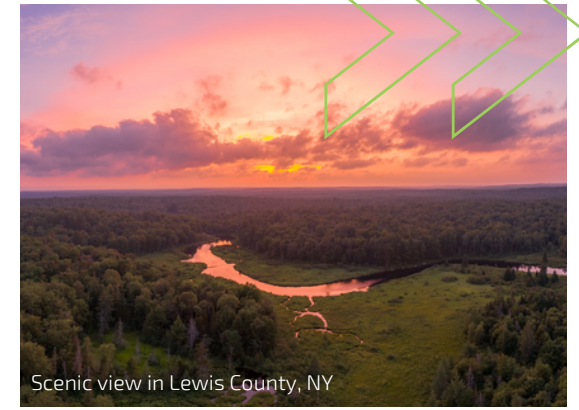


"Our talented staff and dedicated board members for the LCIDA, LCDC and Chamber of Commerce work incredibly well together. This transition will ensure this cooperative approach continues. There is momentum in the Lewis County economy and Naturally Lewis, Inc. will continue to drive that momentum forward."

Eric Virkler
Chairman of the Board

LEADING A REGIONAL TOURISM EFFORT

With the development of Naturally Lewis, Inc. Lewis County's tourism development and promotion efforts are improving. In 2023, Naturally Lewis facilitated discussions with the tourism promotion agencies of Jefferson County, Oneida County, and Oswego County, and the Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust and the Tug Hill Commission to propose a streamlined, united effort to promote the Tug Hill Region.



Scenic view in Lewis County, NY

ASSISTING WITH LOWVILLE DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION INITIATIVE BID

Naturally Lewis, Inc. has partnered with the Village of Lowville and Lewis County Planning & Community Development to submit an application to the NYS Downtown Revitalization Initiative program on behalf of the Village of Lowville. The application included various small business and tourism development projects, resulting in an improved quality of life for residents that will produce a ripple effect of positive change. The Village of Lowville application was selected to receive \$10million!



Rendering of proposed DRI project

CREATING A SENSE OF COMMUNITY

As a placemaking initiative, Naturally Lewis partnered with local business, Rags & Rivers, to host its inaugural *Art in the Park* event at the Lyons Falls Riverside Park. *Art in the Park* is an outdoor art exhibit bringing artists together to create a sense of community. Launched in conjunction with Food Truck Fridays, this event brought over 20 artists and over 500 community members together!



Art in the Park event graphics

ADDITIONAL PARTNERSHIP ACHIEVEMENTS:

- ✓ Continuing our regional partnership with ANCA as a Center for Businesses in Transition liaison
- ✓ Leading monthly Economic Development Partner Meetings
- ✓ Hosting the Jefferson-Lewis Manufacturers Alliance with Jefferson County Economic Development
- ✓ Engaged with new partners through events and outreach
- ✓ Continuing our regional partnership with Jefferson & St. Lawrence Counties through Drum Country, NY





Naturally Lewis' Director of Development, Cheyenne Steria, speaking on a panel at the 2023 Naturally Lewis Conference
Photo by Kara Drey Photographs, LLC

STAFF TRANSITIONS TO NATURALLY LEWIS, INC.

Naturally Lewis, Inc., the new not-for-profit leading economic development in Lewis County, has developed operational policies with its formation. Included with this, there are now Staff Service Agreements in place where Naturally Lewis, Inc. is contracted by the Lewis County IDA, the Lewis County Development Corporation, and the Lewis County Chamber of Commerce, to administer the services of those entities. We now have a staff of 5, and are looking to grow the team by adding a Finance & Operations Manager in early 2024.

CRAFTING POLICY LEADING TO IMPACT

A PILOT (Payment in Lieu of Taxes) is an agreement between the Lewis County IDA, a public authority of the state created to provide incentives, and a business or property owner. The business, upon successful expansion, makes payments to the LCIDA at an abated rate, which then are disbursed to the affected taxing jurisdiction. PILOT policies are important in rural areas because they can encourage businesses to invest and operate there by offering tax incentives. In rural areas where economic development may be more challenging, PILOT policies can help attract businesses, create jobs, and stimulate local economies. These policies can also provide much-needed revenue for essential services like schools and infrastructure, helping to support the overall well-being of rural communities.

BRINGING PROJECTS TO FULL TAXATION

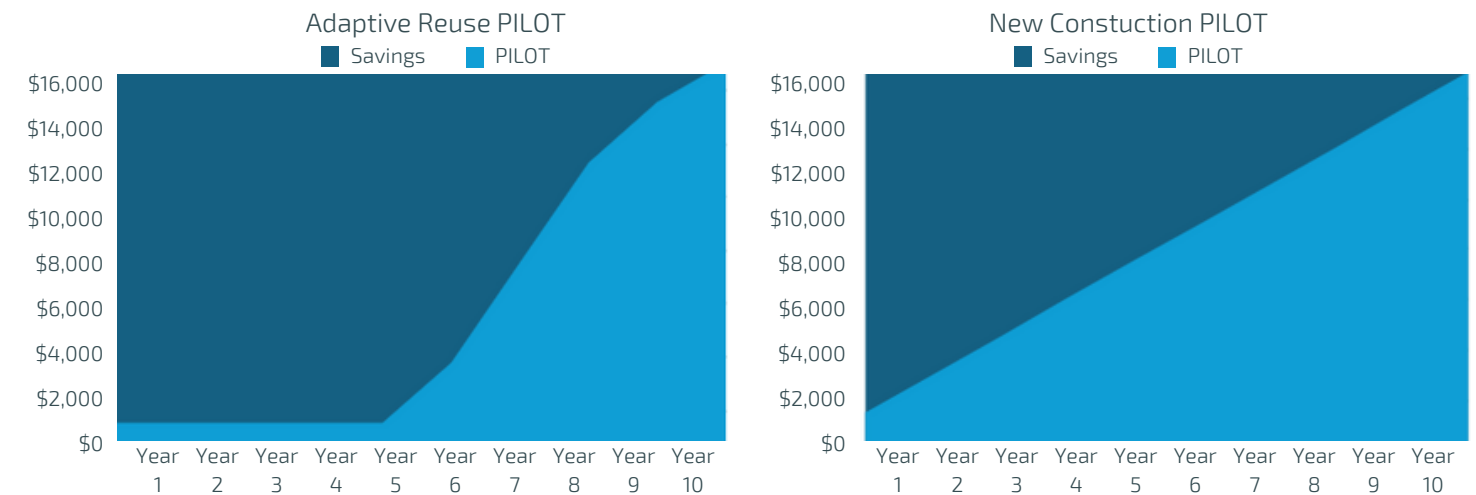
The County of Lewis Industrial Development Agency (LCIDA) scaled two projects into full taxation in 2023! These projects, Red Barn Meats and WPS Beaver Falls, have used Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) incentives to develop a project which otherwise would not have happened in Lewis County, and allowed them sustainable growth as they developed.



\$13,415,000
TOTAL NEW PROJECT INVESTMENT
AS A RESULT OF LCIDA TAX INCENTIVES

UNIVERSAL TAX EXEMPTION POLICY UPDATES

Throughout 2023, Naturally Lewis has been connecting with the community to redevelop its Uniform Tax Exemption Policy (UTEP) to fit our current and future needs. Changes to the policy include tax abatement schedules and incentives for both new construction and adaptive reuse of existing buildings. By implementing these changes, we can spur new development while also preserving our history through revitalization of existing structures. It's expected that this new policy will be approved and implemented in early 2024!



WHAT IS A UTEP?

Universal Tax Exemption Policy (UTEP) is a governmental initiative designed to promote economic development within a region by offering tax incentives to businesses. Under a UTEP, eligible businesses may receive exemptions or reductions on various taxes, such as property taxes or taxes on equipment and machinery. These exemptions are often granted for a predetermined period and are intended to encourage businesses to invest in the local economy, expand their operations, and create jobs. UTEPs are typically implemented at the local level and are tailored to the specific needs and goals of the community.

UTEPs are important tools for fostering economic growth and revitalizing communities. By incentivizing businesses to invest in a particular area, UTEPs can spur job creation, attract new businesses, and stimulate overall economic activity.



Lewis County Leadership Academy Class of 2023

LEWIS COUNTY LEADERSHIP ACADEMY

With our partnership with the Lewis County Chamber of Commerce, Naturally Lewis has begun facilitating the Leadership Academy. We've created a learning community that puts professionals (existing and emerging) in a position to influence and add value to Lewis County. We build pride in our local history and culture, and create highly skilled, motivated, and informed leaders. Using a growth mindset, we are 'open to possibilities' and use our knowledge and networks to enhance our civic infrastructure to create a more vibrant quality of life for all.

FURTHERING OUR ENTREPRENEURIAL ECOSYSTEM

Naturally Lewis has worked to develop Lewis County into an "entrepreneur-friendly" community. By transitioning our DBA Lewis County initiative from a program into what we do, we have streamlined connectivity to further our entrepreneurial ecosystem. By assisting member and non-member clients, Naturally Lewis has cultivated an ecosystem that everyone can be a part of and everyone can take pride in.

84
NEW CLIENTS IN 2024



MODERNIZING MEMBERSHIP

Prior to the official development of Naturally Lewis, Inc., the Lewis County Chamber of Commerce partnered with the Lewis County Industrial Development Agency to "soft launch" our partnership through its membership. With this, the benefits of the membership network were reconfigured to best serve our modern business community and provide more streamlined services, truly making our office a one-stop shop for business development in Lewis County.

HOSTING *EMPOWERED*. EVENTS

Hearing the needs of our business and community leaders, Naturally Lewis began hosting an educational series of events, *empowerED*. The *empowerED*. educational series brings outside speakers to a roundtable discussion, allowing small business owners and entrepreneurs to discover a supportive learning environment and resources to grow responsibly.

CONNECTING LEADERS WITH RESOURCES

Throughout 2023 Naturally Lewis hosted a variety of people-focused events. From the Lewis County Economic Development Conference to Business & Community Leaders Breakfasts, these events focus on educating our business and community leaders and connecting people with local resources.



Jenna Lauraine, staff, consulting with an entrepreneur

168 MEMBERS IN OUR FIRST YEAR



An *empowerED*. event discussion



Audience at the LC Economic Development Conference

Photo by Kara Dry Photography LLC

COUNTLESS RESOURCES CONNECTED

REVIVING THE LOWVILLE BUSINESS ASSOCIATION

In a bid to inject vitality into the local business landscape, a group of the Lewis County Leadership Academy Class of 2023, under the guidance of Naturally Lewis, took on the initiative of analyzing the Lowville Business Association (LBA) for revitalization. Once dormant, the LBA was reinvigorated through the group's strategic SOAR analysis, leading to an infusion of fresh energy.

The community has embraced the LBA's vision, recognizing its value in fostering community and local pride. With a committed board and community support, the LBA is well on its way to becoming a pivotal force once again, driving economic growth and unity in Lewis County.



Audience members engaged in a roundtable discussion at the Lewis County Economic Development Conference

Photo by Kara Dry Photography LLC

HOSTING THE LC ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CONFERENCE

Naturally Lewis hosted its second annual Lewis County Economic Development Conference in 2023. The theme, From the Ground Up, understood the roots of our economy and our businesses and provided how to use this foundation to develop a thriving rural economy. The conference attracted over 120 attendees from across New York State, and highlighted Lewis County as the natural choice.

120+
ATTENDEES & SPEAKERS

21
EVENT SPONSORS

BRANDING TOURISM

As Naturally Lewis, Inc. developed and our partnership with the Lewis County Chamber of Commerce solidified, the opportunity for tourism promotion was ever present. Naturally Lewis developed a digital brand for tourism promotion, Discover Tug Hill, which will be used to intentionally market recreational opportunities.

This brand was developed in 2023 with an official launch slated for early 2024!



REVITALIZING TOURISM PROMOTION

The Naturally Lewis team is upgrading its tourism promotion assets in order to attract more visitors. Through a fresh look, we are attracting people and making it easier to learn about attractions & experiences, and explore the Adirondacks-Tug Hill region.



New Discover Tug Hill trade show booth setup

PROMOTING OUR BRAND ONLINE

Naturally Lewis promotes Lewis County as the natural choice to live, work, and build business. In 2023 our marketing strategy shifted as we transitioned into a nonprofit organization; Naturally Lewis promotes its programming, events, initiatives, and Lewis County. Here's a look at our 2023 Meta analytics:



100%
INCREASE IN ORGANIC REACH

7.1K
UNIQUE INTERACTIONS

54K +
TOTAL USERS REACHED

3.2K
UNIQUE FOLLOWERS

275%
INCREASE IN META CONVERSATIONS

500%
INCREASE IN META CONTACTS

52.2%
INCREASE IN LINK CLICKS



Introducing Naturally Lewis, Inc. post

Photo by Kara Dry Photography LLC

f Instagram **TOP POST OF 2023**

ENGAGEMENT
IS ON THE RISE

ADDITIONAL OUTREACH ACHIEVEMENTS:

- ✓ Hosted Membership Awards Night at Tug Hill Estate, naming Scott Gilbert, South Lewis Central School District, Hopenhagen Farm, & Tug Hill Roasters as annual award recipients
- ✓ Continuing the regional "Drum Country" marketing collaborative
- ✓ Featured on a monthly radio segment, 'Naturally Lewis: Moving Lewis County Forward' with The Moose & The Blizzard
- ✓ Began working with a content creation team to develop assets for our Discover Tug Hill brand
- ✓ Featured with a monthly column, 'Naturally Lewis: Moving Lewis County Forward' with the Lowville Journal & Republican



Liam Carney, owner of Cogumelo Mushrooms, recipient of Launch LC funding

COMMUNITY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

The Lewis County Community Economic Development Program, funded through a Host Community Agreement between the LCDC and Invenergy, is the mechanism for investing in initiatives that build a great quality of life, sustainable employment and collaborative plans that make Lewis County a community to thrive at work and at home. In 2023, Naturally Lewis opened three grant programs - the Small Things, Big Impacts Fund, the Building Business Fund, and the Community Connections Fund - to invest \$150,000 annually in Lewis County. Recipients of CEDP funds include, but are not limited to:

- Red Barn Meats
- Tug Hill Estate
- EMM Heating Services
- Hopenhagen Farm
- HumbleBee Farm
- Open Sky Wellness, LLC
- Azahar Roast House
- Coughlin Printing
- Foothills Market, LLC
- Grand Slam Safety
- Greet on Repeat, LLC
- Osceola Tug Hill XC Ski Center
- HumbleBee Farms
- International Maple Museum Centre
- Judge's Quarters B&B
- Lowville Free Library
- Maple Ridge Center, Inc.
- Snyder's Sugar Shack, LLC
- Transitional Living Services of NNY
- trishMichael, Author



VACANT PROPERTY REVITALIZATION

Naturally Lewis, in partnership with Lewis County, created the Vacant Property Revitalization (VPR) Fund to target vacant and potentially unsafe or blighted properties within downtown and surrounding areas to turn them into usable spaces for business development opportunities. The LCDC, through its Round 1 Application process, approved nine projects, granting a total of \$690,965 in VPR funds.



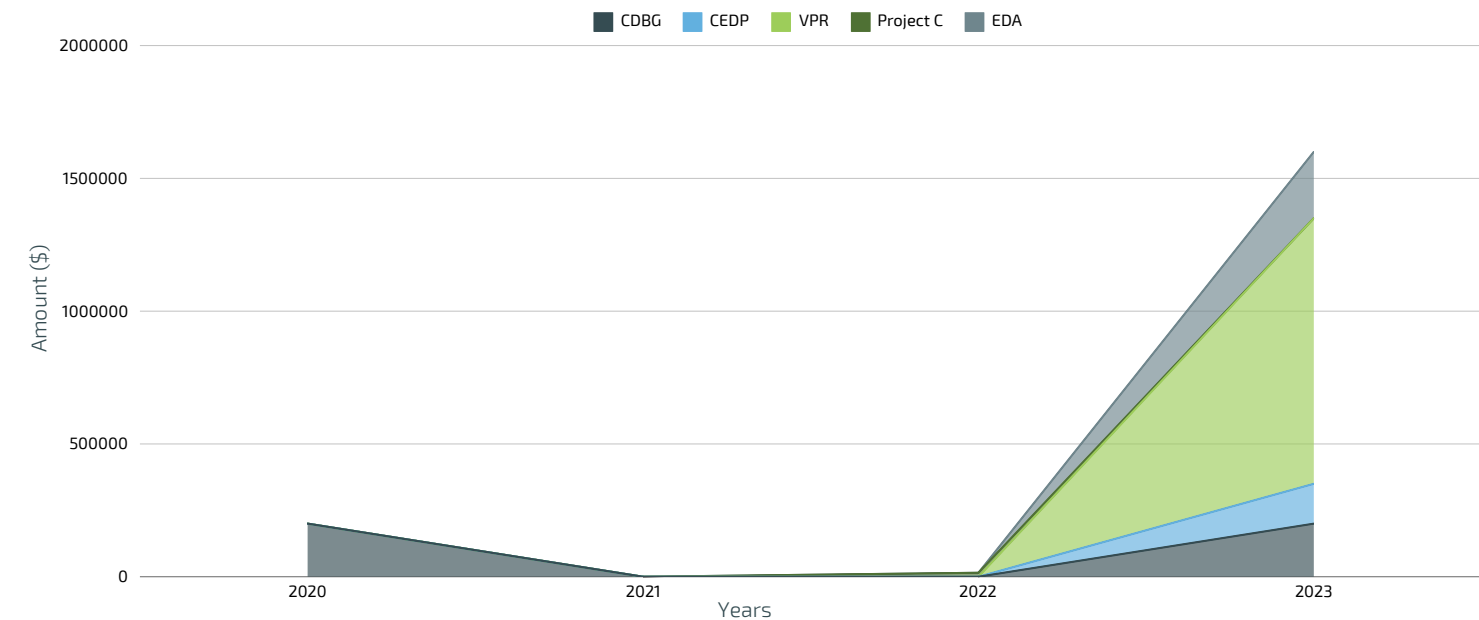
GLENFIELD SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT

Naturally Lewis, in partnership with Lewis County, requested expressions of interest for the development of the former Glenfield School in 2023. This request led to a connection with and winning proposal from the Rochester's Cornerstone Group, who plans to develop and revitalize the former school into a affordable senior living facility. This external investment has great economic potential for the community of Glenfield, and Lewis County as a whole.



SECURED GRANT FUNDS

In 2023 Naturally Lewis secured a number of outside sources of funding for business & tourism development initiatives. Our funding resources include the NYS Office of Homes & Community Renewal Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), Invenergy/Number Three Wind Host Community Agreement for the Community Economic Development Program, Lewis County American Rescue Plan Act funds for Vacant Property Revitalization, National Grid Project C, and the NYS EDA Tourism Partner Sub-Awards Grant Program.



IDA INCENTIVES RECIPIENTS

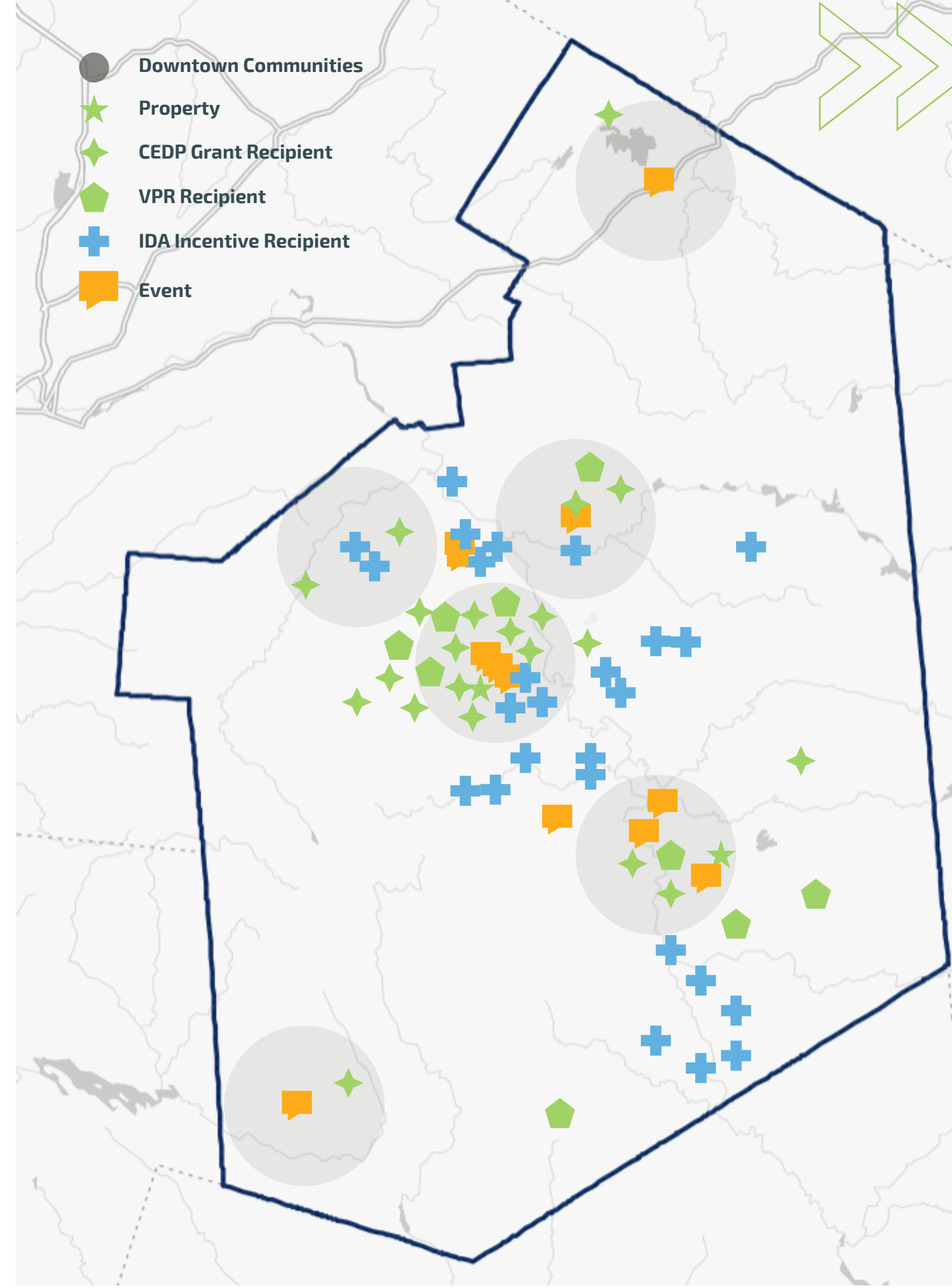
- + **Brandt's** | Carthage, NY
- + **Carthage Solar Fund LLC** | Carthage, NY
- + **ClearPath Energy LLC Farney** | New Bremen, NY
- + **ClearPath Energy LLC Zehr** | New Bremen, NY
- + **Copenhagen Wind** | Copenhagen, NY
- + **Domagala Solar** | Port Leyden, NY
- + **Duke Energy Renewables Leyden Solar** | Leyden, NY
- + **Flat Rock Solar Fund LLC** | Martinsburg, NY
- + **Flat Rock Wind** | Martinsburg, NY
- + **GSPP 9557 E Rd s, LLC** | Denmark, NY
- + **GSPP 9605 E Rd, N, LLC** | Denmark, NY
- + **Johnson Lumber** | Carthage, NY
- + **Lakeside** | Beaver Falls, NY
- + **Maple Tap Solar LLC** | Glenfield, NY
- + **Martinsburg CSG LLC** | Martinsburg, NY
- + **McRez Packing International LLC** | Lyonsdale, NY
- + **MDBB Enterprises** | Castorland, NY
- + **Number Three Wind** | Lowville, NY
- + **NY USLE Copenhagen CR194 LLC** | Copenhagen, NY
- + **OTIS Products** | Lyons Falls, NY
- + **Port Leyden Portal** | Port Leyden, NY
- + **Roaring Brook LLC** | Lowville, NY
- + **Tug Hill Artisan Roasters** | Lowville, NY
- + **Turin Highland Lodge** | Turin, NY
- + **Turin Solar Fund LLC** | Turin, NY
- + **Victorian Light** | Lowville, NY
- + **Waters Road N, LLC** | Lowville, NY
- + **Waters Road S, LLC** | Lowville, NY

CEDP FUNDS RECIPIENTS

- ◆ **Red Barn Meats** | Croghan, NY
- ◆ **Tug Hill Estate** | Lowville, NY
- ◆ **EMM Heating Services, LLC** | Lowville, NY
- ◆ **Hopenhagen Farm** | Copenhagen, NY
- ◆ **HumbleBee Farms** | Lyons Falls, NY
- ◆ **OpenSky Wellness, LLC** | Lowville, NY
- ◆ **Azahar Roast House** | Lowville, NY
- ◆ **Coughlin Printing** | Lowville, NY
- ◆ **Foothills Market, LLC** | Lowville, NY
- ◆ **International Maple Museum Centre** | Croghan, NY
- ◆ **Judge's Quarters B&B** | Lowville, NY
- ◆ **Lowville Free Library** | Lowville, NY
- ◆ **Maple Ridge Center, Inc.** | Lowville, NY
- ◆ **Snyder's Sugar Shack, LLC** | Copenhagen, NY
- ◆ **Transitional Living Services of NNY** | Lowville, NY
- ◆ **trishMichael, Author** | Lowville, NY

EVENTS

- **Community Visitation Day**
- **Business & Community Leaders Breakfast**
- **Lewis County Economic Development Conference**
- **empowerED.**
- **Membership Awards Night**
- **Forest-Trinity Ave Visioning Workshop**
- **Art in the Park**
- **Food Truck Fridays**
- **RiverFest**



COUNTY OF LEWIS INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT AGENCY

About the Organization:

The County of Lewis Industrial Development Agency has been in operation since 1973. The LCIDA is a state authorized public benefit corporation that has the ability to provide certain New York State sanctioned tax benefit programs. The mission of the County of Lewis IDA is to stabilize, strengthen, and grow communities through strategic community partnerships, innovative incentive programs, responsible leverage of our financial resources, and thoughtful policy development to advance economic growth and ensure a brighter and more inclusive future for all.

LCIDA Board of Directors:

- Joe Lawrence, Chair
- Gagan Singh, Vice Chair
- Jessica Moser
- Herb Frost
- Thomas Gillette
- McKenzie Lehman
- Darlene Rowsam
- Kevin McArdle, Board Attorney

LEWIS COUNTY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

About the Organization:

The Lewis County Development Corporation, a Local Development Corporation, is a not-for-profit countywide organization dedicated to utilizing and creating assets for economic and community development. This community-based organization is intended to be proactive, flexible, and able to act decisively and quickly. We will identify research, fund, develop, and manage projects, programs, and businesses that increase economic opportunities for Lewis County and its residents. We recognize the critical need to work together with all agencies and organizations involved in economic development in order to achieve a common goal of increasing the quality of life for all people in Lewis County.

LCIDA Board of Directors:

- Tim Petersen, Chair
- Tyler McDonald, Vice Chair
- Mick Lehman
- Christie Andrus Nakano
- Mike Bradish
- Jessica Clemons
- Larry Dolhof
- Shellie Marks
- Eric Sunderhaft
- Terry Thisse
- Eric Virkler
- Ian Gilbert, Board Attorney

LEWIS COUNTY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

About the Organization:

The Lewis County Chamber of Commerce was organized in 1945 to promote business and economic activity in Lewis County through the efforts of its membership and staff. The Chamber's success lies within the actions of its members; we are only as strong as our member participation. The mission of the Lewis County Chamber of Commerce is to nurture and promote commercial, recreational and community activities, which enhance the quality of life and general prosperity of the people of Lewis County.

LCCC Board of Directors:

- Nick Mir, Chair
- Calvin Company
- Casandra Buell
- Blaine Company
- Jasmine Coffman
- Gus DeStefano
- Lisa Hetzner
- Megan Dolhof
- Evan Jennings
- Jackie Mahoney
- Scott Morgan
- John Exford



