FUTURE IN FOCUS

LEWIS COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Draft Community Profile

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LEWIS COUNTY NEW YORK

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INTRODUCTION

A community profile is a comprehensive assessment of a community's existing conditions, including population trends, housing, economy, transportation systems, public infrastructure, natural resources, land use patterns, community facilities, and quality-of-life indicators. It provides a factual baseline that helps describe who lives in the community, how the community functions today, and the opportunities and challenges it faces.

For Lewis County, the community profile serves as the foundation for the Comprehensive Plan Update by identifying key trends and conditions that influence future planning decisions. It helps policymakers and residents understand issues such as population change, workforce needs, housing conditions, agricultural viability, infrastructure capacity, environmental resources, and economic development opportunities. Using this information, the County can establish realistic goals, prioritize investments, and develop strategies that respond to local needs while preserving the rural character, natural resources, and quality of life that define Lewis County.

1. Historical Overview

The County is located within three distinct landscape regions.

1. The Tug Hill Plateau, which is characterized by extensive forests, heavy snowfall, recreation, and timber resources.
2. The Black River Valley, which operates as the historic, agricultural, and population center of the county.
3. The Adirondack Foothills, which are defined by mountainous terrain, natural resources, and proximity to the Adirondack Park.

Lewis County was established in 1805 from portions of Oneida County and named after Morgan Lewis, the 3rd Governor of New York. As settlement increased, villages and hamlets developed as centers for commerce, government, education, religious institutions, and services for the surrounding rural population, with Lowville emerging as the County's principal population and governmental center.

Early development was driven by transportation infrastructure, including the Black River Canal, which was completed in 1855 and connected the region to the Erie Canal system, and the railroads beginning in the mid-1800s, which eventually replaced canal transportation.

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The County's economy historically centered on dairy farming in the Black River Valley, forestry and wood products in the Tug Hill and Adirondack areas, and industrial activities such as paper manufacturing lumber processing, furniture production, and other related industries.

2. Regional Context

Agriculture is central to Lewis County's regional identity and economy. The County is one of New York State's leading dairy-producing counties and a major center of maple production. Dairy farms, agricultural support businesses, and related industries connect Lewis County to agricultural markets both within, and outside of, New York State. Similarly, maple production is a significant part of the County's identity, with Croghan serving as the home of the International Maple Museum and Hall of Fame.

Lewis County is situated within one of the most significant lake-effect snow regions, with the Village of Copenhagen having been named the snowiest populated place in the United States twice since 2014.

The eastern portion of Lewis County is closely connected to the Adirondack Park, which was established by New York State in 1892. Portions of the towns of Croghan, Diana, Greig, Lyonsdale, and Watson are located within the Adirondack Park's boundary, commonly known as the Blue Line.

Lewis County also has strong economic and workforce connections to Jefferson County and the Watertown–Fort Drum area. Fort Drum is one of the North Country's major employment and economic centers, influencing regional housing demand, workforce patterns, transportation, business activity, and population change.

Regional transportation connections are important to Lewis County's accessibility and economy. NYS Routes 12 and 26 serve as the County's primary north-south transportation corridors, connecting Lewis County with the Utica area to the south and Watertown and the Thousand Islands region to the north. Other state and county highways, like NYS Route 812, which begins in Lowville and ends at the Canadian border, connect the County's villages, hamlets, employment centers, agricultural operations, recreational destinations, and neighboring communities.

A number of regional and state organizations influence planning and investment within Lewis County. These include the New York State Tug Hill Commission, Adirondack Park

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Agency, Development Authority of the North Country (DANC), regional economic development organizations, neighboring counties and municipalities, and state and federal agencies.

3. Previous Plan Analysis

a. Lewis County Comprehensive Plan (2009)

Purpose:

The Lewis County Comprehensive Plan establishes a long-term vision, policy framework, and implementation strategy to guide county decision-making, economic development, infrastructure investment, land use planning, environmental stewardship, and community development. The plan was developed to help Lewis County preserve its rural character and natural resources while strengthening its economy, supporting agriculture and forestry, improving quality of life, and coordinating efforts among municipalities over a 10-15 year planning horizon.

Key Findings:

- Lewis County's vision is to become the "premier rural county in New York State" while protecting its rural character, natural resources, agricultural heritage, and quality of life.
- The county identified seven primary policy areas: Tourism & Recreation, Economic Development, Infrastructure & Transportation, Community Resources & Housing, Agriculture & Forestry, Natural Resources & Environment, and Regional Coordination.
- Population growth had largely stagnated by 2000, with projections indicating future population decline and continued aging of the population.
- The county identified the loss of younger adults, workforce challenges, and an aging population as major concerns.
- Agriculture and forestry were recognized as the county's foundational industries and major economic drivers.
- Tourism and recreation were identified as significant opportunities for economic diversification, particularly through four-season outdoor recreation.
- Housing challenges included an aging housing stock, affordability concerns, weatherization needs, and limited housing choices for seniors and families.
- Village centers were identified as critical community and economic hubs requiring revitalization and investment.

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- The plan emphasized renewable energy development, including wind, biomass, hydroelectric, and emerging energy technologies.
- Infrastructure limitations, particularly transportation, water, wastewater, and telecommunications, were recognized as constraints to future growth.
- The plan promoted intermunicipal cooperation, shared services, and regional partnerships as strategies for improving efficiency and service delivery.
- Environmental resource protection, including farmland, forests, watersheds, wetlands, and open space, was identified as essential to preserving county character and economic viability.

What does this mean for the Comprehensive Plan Update?

- The 2009 plan's vision and policy framework remain largely relevant, but the update should reflect current realities, including population decline, workforce shortages, housing challenges, and changing economic conditions.
- Demographic trends suggest a need to prioritize strategies that attract and retain young families, workers, and entrepreneurs while supporting an increasingly older population.
- The county's longstanding strengths in agriculture, forestry, tourism, and recreation remain central to its identity and economy, but should be supported through modern workforce, business development, and value-added industry initiatives.
- Housing has become a much more pressing issue than anticipated in 2009, requiring stronger policies focused on rehabilitation, affordability, senior housing, and workforce housing development.
- Recent flooding events and other natural hazards highlight the need for greater emphasis on resilience, hazard mitigation, watershed protection, and infrastructure adaptation.
- Continued investment in village centers, broadband, transportation, and public infrastructure will be critical to supporting economic growth and maintaining community vitality.
- The update should evaluate which recommendations from the 2009 plan were completed, which remain unfinished, and establish a refreshed implementation strategy for the next 10 to 20 years.

b. Analysis Of Impediments (AI) to Fair Housing Choice (2016)

Purpose:

Evaluated barriers to fair housing opportunities in Lewis County and identified actions needed

to improve access to housing for protected populations, including seniors, individuals with disabilities, families with children, and low-income households.

Key Findings:

- Lewis County has an aging population and a higher-than-average rate of residents with disabilities, increasing demand for accessible housing.
- Housing affordability has become more challenging, particularly for renters, due in part to pressure from Fort Drum and increasing home values.
- Nearly half of renter households are cost-burdened.
- Much of the housing stock is old, often predating modern building standards, accessibility requirements, and lead-paint regulations.
- Affordable rental housing, housing rehabilitation programs, and code enforcement remain significant challenges.
- Limited fair housing education, tenant protections, and enforcement capacity were identified as ongoing concerns.

What does this mean for the Comprehensive Plan Update?

While previous planning efforts often focused heavily on economic development and infrastructure, this study demonstrates that housing should be elevated as a central countywide issue. The ability to attract and retain residents depends not only on jobs and services, but also on the availability of housing that meets the needs of families, seniors, young professionals, and individuals with disabilities. The Comprehensive Plan should therefore support a broader range of housing types, encourage rehabilitation of aging housing stock, promote accessibility and universal design, and identify opportunities for affordable and workforce housing development. Additionally, improving housing quality and availability can support economic development goals by ensuring that workers have suitable places to live within the county. The report's emphasis on education, code enforcement, housing rehabilitation, and support for vulnerable populations further suggests that housing policy should be integrated with community development, public health, and quality-of-life initiatives

c. Southern Lewis County Regional Water Feasibility Study (2018)

Purpose:

Evaluated public water systems in the Towns of Lewis, Leyden, and Lyonsdale, and the Villages of Constableville, Lyons Falls, Port Leyden, and Turin. The study assessed infrastructure conditions, future water demand, regional interconnections, and opportunities for shared operations.

Key Findings:

- Water systems are aging, with some facilities dating back more than 100 years.
- Population decline and aging demographics make it difficult for municipalities to independently finance needed infrastructure improvements.
- Existing water systems require significant capital investment to remain compliant with regulatory requirements and support future economic development.
- The study strongly recommends greater intermunicipal cooperation and creation of a regional water resources agency or district to improve efficiency and reduce long-term costs.
- Reliable water infrastructure is identified as essential for tourism, lodging development, agriculture, business growth, supporting existing residential and businesses assets, maintaining property values, and reducing community blight.

What does this mean for the Comprehensive Plan Update?

For the Comprehensive Plan update, this study reinforces the need for a countywide approach to infrastructure planning. Rather than viewing water systems as isolated municipal responsibilities, the plan should recognize public water as a critical regional asset that supports economic development, tourism, housing, agriculture, and community health. The study's recommendation to pursue shared services, regional coordination, and potentially a regional water resources agency aligns closely with the County's longstanding goals of improving efficiency and reducing duplication of services. It also highlights that future development opportunities are most likely to occur in places where infrastructure capacity already exists or can be expanded cost effectively. Consequently, the Comprehensive Plan should continue to promote strategic infrastructure investment while encouraging collaboration among municipalities to meet shared challenges and capitalize on regional opportunities.

d. Lewis County Public Health Asset Distribution Plan (PHAD) (2019)

Purpose:

The Lewis County Public Health Asset Distribution Plan (PHAD) establishes the framework for receiving, staging, storing, and distributing critical public health assets during emergencies and disasters. The plan outlines how Lewis County will coordinate with local, state, federal, healthcare, public safety, and community partners to rapidly deploy medical supplies, pharmaceuticals, vaccines, and other resources in response to public health emergencies that exceed local response capacity.

Key Findings:

- Lewis County maintains a formal emergency distribution system to receive and distribute state and federal public health assets during emergencies, including disease outbreaks, pandemics, bioterrorism incidents, and other public health crises.
- The County's goal is to begin distributing public health assets within four hours of receiving them from state authorities.
- Emergency response relies on extensive coordination between Lewis County Public Health, Emergency Management, law enforcement, healthcare providers, schools, transportation agencies, volunteer organizations, Fort Drum, and private-sector partners.
- Lewis County General Hospital serves as the primary County Staging Site (CSS) for emergency medical supplies, with Lowville Academy and Central School designated as a secondary staging location.
- The County has established agreements for facility use, security, transportation, and emergency operations to support asset distribution during emergencies.
- Local law enforcement agencies, including the Lewis County Sheriff's Office and Lowville Village Police Department, provide security and transportation escorts for critical public health assets.
- The plan identifies vulnerabilities related to limited local resources, potential competing demands from neighboring jurisdictions, and the need for multi-agency staffing during prolonged emergency operations.
- Lewis County regularly updates, trains, and exercises its emergency distribution system to maintain preparedness and operational readiness.

What does this mean for the Comprehensive Plan Update?

The PHAD Plan demonstrates the importance of emergency preparedness and interagency coordination in protecting public health and community resilience. The COVID-19 pandemic further underscored the need for robust emergency response systems capable of distributing medical supplies, vaccines, and critical resources quickly and efficiently. As Lewis County

updates its Comprehensive Plan, resilience and emergency preparedness should remain important planning priorities, including support for healthcare infrastructure, emergency communications, transportation networks, and community facilities that can serve critical functions during disasters and public health emergencies. The plan also highlights the value of strong partnerships among local governments, healthcare providers, schools, public safety agencies, and community organizations in responding to future emergencies and strengthening the county's overall resilience.

e. Lewis County Public Health Emergency Preparedness & Response Plan (PHEPRP) (2019)

Purpose:

The Lewis County Public Health Emergency Preparedness and Response Plan (PHEPRP) provides the framework for preparing for, responding to, recovering from, and mitigating public health emergencies and disasters. The plan establishes the roles, responsibilities, coordination procedures, and emergency response functions of Lewis County Public Health and its partner agencies under an all-hazards approach that addresses natural disasters, disease outbreaks, hazardous materials incidents, mass casualty events, and other threats to public health.

Key Findings:

- Uses an all-hazards approach to emergency preparedness, response, recovery, and mitigation.
- Identifies flooding, severe weather, pandemics, hazardous material incidents, and mass casualty events as the county's primary public health risks.
- Lewis County's aging population, Amish community, migrant workers, and residents with access and functional needs require specialized emergency planning.
- Lewis County General Hospital serves as the county's primary healthcare and emergency response facility.
- Emergency response depends on strong coordination among public health, emergency management, healthcare, law enforcement, schools, and community organizations.
- Climate-related hazards, including flooding, extreme weather, heat, and severe winter storms, are expected to remain significant risks.
- Regional partnerships and mutual aid agreements are essential because large-scale emergencies can exceed local capacity.

- Seasonal tourism associated with snowmobiling and ATV recreation increases emergency planning and response demands.
- Maintaining public health functions such as disease surveillance, public communication, shelter operations, and medical countermeasure distribution is a critical county responsibility during emergencies.

What does this mean for the Comprehensive Plan Update?

The PHEPRP highlights the importance of incorporating resilience and emergency preparedness into future planning efforts. As Lewis County faces risks from severe weather, flooding, public health emergencies, and an aging population, the Comprehensive Plan should support investments in critical infrastructure, healthcare access, emergency services, and hazard mitigation. The plan also emphasizes the need for strong regional partnerships and coordinated emergency response systems that can protect residents, businesses, and visitors during disasters.

f. Agricultural Enhancement Plan (2021)

Purpose:

The Lewis County Agricultural and Farmland Enhancement Plan provides a strategic framework for strengthening agriculture as one of the county's most important economic drivers. The plan seeks to improve the profitability, sustainability, resilience, and long-term viability of farming while supporting agricultural economic development, farmland protection, local food systems, and the next generation of farmers.

Key Findings:

- Agriculture generates over $153 million annually and remains a cornerstone of the county economy.
- Dairy is the dominant sector, but maple, beef, Christmas trees, and value-added agriculture are growing.
- Farm numbers have declined while farm size and consolidation have increased.
- Aging farmers and limited succession planning threaten long-term agricultural viability.
- Farmland fragmentation and scattered residential development are placing pressure on agricultural lands.
- Broadband, processing, storage, and distribution infrastructure remain key needs.

- Climate change is increasing the importance of farm resilience and soil conservation practices.
- The plan prioritizes farmland protection, agricultural diversification, value-added production, and workforce development.

What does this mean for the Comprehensive Plan Update?

The plan supports continued recognition of agriculture as a primary economic and land use priority for Lewis County. The Comprehensive Plan should emphasize farmland protection, support agricultural business growth and value-added industries, expand broadband and infrastructure investments, and encourage policies that attract new farmers while strengthening long-term agricultural resilience.

g. Housing Needs & Market Analysis (2022)

Purpose:

The Housing Needs & Market Analysis evaluates Lewis County's housing supply, affordability, market conditions, demographic trends, and future housing demand to identify housing challenges and recommend strategies that support a diverse, affordable, and sustainable housing market. The study focuses on housing preservation, expanding housing choice, and addressing the needs of seniors, low-income households, workers, and vulnerable populations

Key Findings:

- Lewis County's population has remained relatively stable, but the population is aging rapidly and the number of senior households is increasing.
- Housing options are limited, with nearly 80% of units consisting of single-family homes and relatively little multifamily or rental housing.
- Nearly two-thirds of the housing stock was built before 1980, and 46% of homes are more than 60 years old.
- Aging housing stock requires substantial rehabilitation, maintenance, accessibility improvements, and lead hazard mitigation.
- Rental housing is limited and affordability remains a challenge, with nearly half of renters considered housing-cost burdened.
- The county lacks sufficient housing options for seniors, workforce households, and lower-income residents.

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- Housing demand is projected to shift toward smaller homes, townhomes, senior housing, and rental units, while demand for large-lot single-family homes declines.
- By 2040, renter households are projected to increase while owner-occupied households decline.
- The study estimates a need for approximately 680 additional housing units by 2040 through new construction, rehabilitation, and reoccupation of vacant units.
- Local zoning regulations and development patterns may limit accessory dwelling units (ADUs), small-scale multifamily housing, and housing diversity.
- There is a need for housing growth across all categories, including market rate housing aimed at moderate income residents.

What does this mean for the Comprehensive Plan Update?

The study identifies housing as one of the County's most significant long-term challenges and opportunities. The Comprehensive Plan should support a countywide housing strategy focused on preserving and rehabilitating existing housing stock, encouraging a broader range of housing types, and expanding housing opportunities for seniors, workforce households, young families, and low-income residents. The Plan should also encourage zoning and land use policies that support accessory dwelling units, small-scale multifamily development, senior housing, and aging-in-place design. Continued investment in housing rehabilitation programs, adaptive reuse, broadband expansion, and partnerships with housing organizations will be critical to maintaining community vitality, supporting economic development, and meeting future housing demand.

h. Central Lewis County Regional Water Supplemental Study (2022)

Purpose:
Examined water systems serving the Towns of Lowville, Watson, Denmark, Martinsburg, and the Village of Copenhagen, with a focus on water quantity, water quality, operational capacity, and opportunities for regionalization.

Key Findings:

- Water quality concerns, particularly disinfection byproducts (THMs and HAAs), are among the region's most significant challenges.
- Several communities face water supply limitations, while others possess excess capacity that cannot currently be shared because of a lack of interconnections.

- Lewis County possesses abundant groundwater resources capable of supporting future growth and economic development.
- Climate change and migration from metropolitan areas could increase future population and business attraction opportunities if infrastructure is available.
- The study recommends development of county-led water cooperatives, shared services agreements, groundwater exploration, and new municipal interconnections.

What does this mean for the Comprehensive Plan Update?

For the Comprehensive Plan, these findings suggest that water infrastructure should be viewed as a strategic investment rather than simply a public utility. The ability to provide reliable public water can influence where housing is developed, where businesses locate, and where tourism-related investment occurs. The study also reinforces the importance of climate resilience and resource protection, noting that Lewis County's water resources may become increasingly valuable as water scarcity affects other regions. The Comprehensive Plan should therefore support protection of groundwater resources, identify priority growth areas where infrastructure exists or can be expanded, and encourage regional partnerships that improve service delivery while reducing long-term costs. The recommendations for intermunicipal cooperation, shared services, and county leadership in infrastructure planning provide a strong framework for future policy direction.

i. Lewis County Fair Housing Plan (2022)

Purpose:

The Lewis County Fair Housing Plan was developed to promote awareness of federal and state fair housing laws, ensure equal access to housing opportunities, establish procedures for addressing housing discrimination complaints, and coordinate local efforts to support fair and equitable housing throughout the county. The plan also fulfills requirements associated with Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding and outlines the County's commitment to affirmatively furthering fair housing.

Key Findings:

- Lewis County recognizes that public education and awareness are critical to preventing housing discrimination and expanding fair housing opportunities.

- The Director of Planning and Community Development serves as the County's Fair Housing Officer and coordinates complaint intake, education, outreach, and partnerships.
- The County conducts annual fair housing education and outreach activities, including Fair Housing Month observances, public information campaigns, training, and website resources.
- Housing discrimination protections extend to race, color, religion, national origin, sex, disability, familial status, and other protected classes defined by federal and state law.
- Lewis County maintains partnerships with organizations that provide housing assistance, advocacy, accessibility services, homelessness prevention, and affordable housing programs.
- Lewis County Opportunities provided housing assistance to approximately 1,300 families and distributed significant rental assistance resources, demonstrating ongoing demand for affordable housing support.
- Snow Belt Housing Company plays a central role in affordable housing development, housing rehabilitation, and community revitalization efforts throughout the county.
- The Office for the Aging and NRCIL identify ongoing needs related to aging in place, accessibility improvements, and housing accommodations for residents with disabilities.
- Fair housing efforts rely on broad collaboration among local government, nonprofit housing providers, social service agencies, advocacy organizations, and HUD.

What does this mean for the Comprehensive Plan Update?

The document supports continued efforts to expand housing opportunities for low- and moderate-income households, seniors, people with disabilities, and other vulnerable populations. The emphasis on aging in place and accessibility is particularly significant given the county's aging population and growing demand for housing that can accommodate changing physical needs. The plan also suggests the need for continued coordination between housing, social services, public health, community development, and economic development initiatives to ensure that all residents have access to safe, affordable, and appropriate housing. More broadly, the Fair Housing Plan reinforces the principle that future housing policies should promote equal opportunity, reduce barriers to housing choice, and encourage diverse housing options that support residents at all stages of life.

j. Lewis County Public Health Continuity of Operations Plan (2022)

Purpose:

The Lewis County Public Health Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP) establishes procedures to ensure that essential public health services can continue during emergencies, disasters, pandemics, or other events that disrupt normal operations. The plan identifies critical functions, establishes leadership responsibilities, outlines emergency staffing and relocation procedures, and provides a framework for maintaining public health services while protecting employees and the community.

Key Findings:

- Public Health has identified essential services that must continue during emergencies, including disease surveillance, outbreak response, vaccinations, public communications, and emergency coordination.
- The plan assumes major emergencies may significantly reduce staff availability and require reassignment of personnel.
- Remote work capability, redundant communications systems, and access to digital records are critical to service continuity.
- Emergency response depends on coordination among Public Health, Emergency Management, healthcare providers, and state agencies.
- Lewis County Public Health may relocate operations to alternate facilities, including the Lewis County Office of Emergency Management or County Board Chambers, if primary facilities become unusable.

What does this mean for the Comprehensive Plan Update?

The COOP highlights the importance of resilience and preparedness as countywide planning priorities. The plan demonstrates that reliable communications infrastructure, public facilities, healthcare services, and coordinated emergency management systems are essential to maintaining community functions during disruptions. For the Comprehensive Plan update, these findings support policies that strengthen emergency preparedness, expand broadband and telecommunications capacity, maintain critical public facilities, and promote collaboration among public agencies and healthcare providers. The plan reinforces the need to build resilient communities that can adapt to public health emergencies and other unforeseen events.

k. Medical Countermeasures (MCM) Clinical Operations Plan (2022)

Purpose:

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The Medical Countermeasures (MCM) Clinical Operations Plan establishes how Lewis County Public Health will distribute vaccines, medications, and other emergency medical countermeasures during a public health emergency, bioterrorism event, disease outbreak, or other incident requiring rapid population protection. The plan outlines staffing, dispensing sites, logistics, communications, and emergency response procedures needed to protect county residents.

Key Findings:

- Lewis County maintains emergency plans for rapidly distributing vaccines, medications, and other medical countermeasures through Points of Dispensing (PODs).
- The County uses a combination of open PODs and closed PODs serving hospitals, schools, first responders, government employees, and major employers.
- Lewis County's rural geography and dispersed population influence POD locations and emergency response strategies.
- Emergency response relies on partnerships among Public Health, healthcare providers, schools, emergency services, local employers, and volunteers.
- The County has an established Medical Reserve Corps with both medical and non-medical volunteers to support emergency operations.
- Plans emphasize accessibility for vulnerable populations, including individuals with disabilities, limited English proficiency, and transportation challenges.
- Public communication, electronic registration systems, and coordinated emergency management are critical to successful response operations.
- The plan identifies the need for suitable public facilities, transportation access, communications infrastructure, and emergency staffing capacity.

What does this mean for the Comprehensive Plan Update?

For the Comprehensive Plan update, the plan supports policies that strengthen emergency management capabilities, enhance broadband and telecommunications infrastructure, maintain strategically located public facilities, and improve transportation access to essential services. The emphasis on serving vulnerable populations and overcoming geographic barriers also reinforces the need to consider accessibility, mobility, and equitable service delivery in future planning efforts. More broadly, the plan supports countywide strategies that improve resilience to public health emergencies and other hazards while protecting community health and safety.

l. Economic & Fiscal Impact of OHV Activity (2022)

Purpose:

This study evaluates the economic and fiscal benefits generated by off-highway vehicle (OHV) recreation in Lewis County. The report quantifies visitor spending, employment impacts, business activity, and tax revenues associated with the County's OHV trail system to better understand its contribution to the local economy.

Key Findings:

- Lewis County's OHV trail system attracts an estimated 6,086 riders annually, generating more than 102,000 user days.
- Approximately 70% of users are non-local visitors who travel to Lewis County specifically because of the trail network.
- Non-local OHV users spend approximately $6.6 million annually in the county on lodging, dining, fuel, equipment, shopping, and other purchases.
- OHV-related spending supports an estimated 97 jobs, $2.8 million in earnings, and $8.3 million in countywide economic activity each year.
- OHV activity generates approximately $140,000 annually in local property, sales, and occupancy tax revenue.
- Visitor satisfaction is extremely high, with 95% of respondents rating their experience as good or excellent.
- The most commonly requested improvements include additional trail mileage, stronger trail connections to neighboring counties, and expanded trail access.
- Securing and expanding private landowner access was identified as the most important long-term priority for protecting the trail system.
- OHV visitors also support restaurants, attractions, events, and other local tourism-related businesses.

What does this mean for the Comprehensive Plan Update?

The report supports strategies that protect and expand the County's trail network, strengthen connections to neighboring counties, improve wayfinding and visitor amenities, and encourage tourism-related business development. The findings also highlight the importance of maintaining partnerships with private landowners whose properties are essential to the success of the trail system. More broadly, the study supports continued investment in outdoor recreation as a means of attracting visitors, generating economic activity, and diversifying the rural economy.

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m. Community Health Assessment Community Health Improvement Plan (2022 - 2024)

Purpose:

The Community Health Assessment evaluates the health status, health disparities, and community conditions affecting Lewis County residents. The assessment identifies priority public health issues and establishes a framework for improving health outcomes through coordinated action among healthcare providers, public agencies, schools, and community organizations.

Key Findings:

- Lewis County identified three priority health concerns: chronic disease prevention, healthy and safe environments, and mental health/substance use prevention.
- Poverty is a major factor influencing health outcomes and disparities throughout the county.
- Obesity, smoking, binge drinking, opioid misuse, and suicide rates exceed state goals and contribute to poor health outcomes.
- Residents face barriers related to healthcare access, transportation, affordable housing, and healthy food availability.
- Lewis County has shortages of primary care, dental, and behavioral health providers.
- Older adults, low-income households, and individuals with disabilities experience disproportionately greater challenges accessing services and maintaining health.
- The assessment recommends increased physical activity opportunities, mental health support, chronic disease prevention efforts, and improvements to community health infrastructure.

What does this mean for the Comprehensive Plan Update?

The assessment supports policies that expand access to healthcare and community services, improve mobility and transportation options, enhance parks and recreational opportunities, increase housing affordability and accessibility, and address the impacts of poverty. The report also reinforces the importance of creating age-friendly, accessible communities that support healthy lifestyles and equitable access to services for all residents.

n. Climate Smart Communities Certification Report (2023)

Purpose:

The Climate Smart Communities (CSC) Submission documents Lewis County's actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, improve climate resilience, promote sustainable development, and advance clean energy initiatives. The submission supported the County's achievement of New York State Climate Smart Communities Bronze Certification in 2023, recognizing local efforts in climate planning, energy efficiency, resilience, transportation, land use, and public engagement.

Key Findings:

- Lewis County achieved Bronze Climate Smart Communities Certification in 2023, earning 168 points across 28 completed actions.
- The County established a Climate Smart Communities Task Force and designated a Climate Smart Coordinator to guide implementation efforts.
- A government operations greenhouse gas inventory was completed to track emissions and inform future reduction efforts.
- The County installed a 2.5 MW solar array containing approximately 8,500 panels to offset municipal energy use.
- Energy efficiency improvements include LED lighting upgrades, energy benchmarking, and fleet inventory management.
- Lewis County adopted a Complete Streets Policy and expanded public transportation services, shelters, and ridesharing opportunities.
- Climate resilience initiatives include hazard mitigation planning, cooling centers, floodplain education, culvert upgrades, green infrastructure projects, and watershed management efforts.
- The County has implemented projects to improve stormwater management, water quality protection, and flood resilience.
- Economic development initiatives support local agriculture, local purchasing, clean energy financing, and brownfield redevelopment.
- Public education and outreach efforts promote sustainability, climate awareness, conservation, and environmental stewardship.

What does this mean for the Comprehensive Plan Update?

For the Comprehensive Plan update, the submission supports policies that promote energy efficiency, renewable energy development, sustainable transportation, resilient infrastructure, watershed protection, and hazard mitigation. The County's investments in solar energy, culvert upgrades, green infrastructure, and public transportation highlight opportunities to reduce

long-term infrastructure costs while increasing resilience to flooding, extreme weather, and other climate-related risks.

The document also reinforces the importance of balancing environmental stewardship with economic development. Efforts such as brownfield redevelopment, local agriculture support, buy-local initiatives, and clean energy financing demonstrate how sustainability objectives can complement community revitalization and economic growth. As the Comprehensive Plan is updated, climate resilience and sustainability should be integrated throughout all planning elements rather than treated as stand-alone initiatives, helping ensure that Lewis County remains environmentally, economically, and socially resilient over the long term.

o. Lewis County Shared Services Plan (2023)

Purpose:

The 2023 Lewis County Shared Services Plan was developed through New York State's County-Wide Shared Services Initiative (CWSSI) to identify opportunities for municipalities to collaborate, reduce costs, improve service delivery, and increase operational efficiency. The plan outlines a series of shared equipment, staffing, technology, and service initiatives intended to provide long-term savings for local governments across Lewis County.

Key Findings:

- The plan identifies an estimated $4.86 million in projected savings through shared services initiatives among county and local governments.
- Many proposed projects involve shared equipment and infrastructure, reducing the need for individual municipalities to purchase specialized equipment.
- The County proposes expanded shared GIS services (ArcGIS licensing) to improve local planning, mapping, and data management capabilities.
- Municipalities face ongoing workforce challenges, prompting proposals for a shared truck technician, assessor services, and data collection staff.
- Shared public works equipment, including a green waste grinder, jet/vacuum machine, and loader-mounted snowblower, would improve efficiency and reduce service costs.
- Regional cooperation is being used to address infrastructure maintenance needs, including water system improvements and solid waste management services.
- Healthcare cost containment remains a priority through participation in a regional Medicare Advantage purchasing alliance.

What does this mean for the Comprehensive Plan Update?

The document supports policies that encourage intermunicipal cooperation, shared infrastructure investment, and coordinated service delivery. The proposed shared staffing arrangements also reflect growing workforce challenges affecting local governments and suggest a need for continued regional approaches to maintaining municipal capacity. Investments in shared equipment, GIS technology, and infrastructure maintenance support broader goals related to efficient government operations, fiscal sustainability, and resilient public services. Overall, the plan reinforces the importance of collaborative governance as a strategy for maintaining service quality while controlling costs across Lewis County's towns and villages.

p. Center For Community Studies Surveys North Country Residents Regarding Current Issues (2023)

Purpose:

The JCC Center for Community Studies Current Issues Survey was conducted to assess resident perceptions of emerging community issues across the North Country, including Lewis County. The survey examined housing, workforce development, childcare, recreation, food security, community services, and quality-of-life concerns to provide data that can help local governments make informed policy and planning decisions.

Key Findings:

- Housing emerged as one of the most significant concerns facing residents. One-third of North Country residents reported difficulty affording housing costs, and only 37% felt there were adequate quality homes available for purchase.
- Rental housing quality is a major issue, with 56% of respondents expressing dissatisfaction with available rental housing.
- Homelessness is viewed as a growing concern, with 51% agreeing it is a major community issue requiring attention.
- Lewis County residents support addressing homelessness but remain divided on facility siting, with support for homeless services exceeding support for locating shelters in individual neighborhoods.
- Childcare availability and affordability are critical workforce issues. Eighty percent of respondents indicated that employer-supported childcare makes jobs more attractive.

- Workforce challenges persist despite labor force improvements. While workforce exits declined from 2022 levels, residents continue to identify workforce availability, job opportunities, and childcare as interconnected issues.
- Mental health services are perceived as inadequate, with only 37% regionally believing that sufficient resources are available.
- Food affordability remains a concern, with 20% reporting difficulty affording food following the expiration of SNAP emergency allotments.
- Lewis County residents expressed strong support for recreational investments, particularly non-motorized trail development (77%) and intermunicipal cooperation on recreation projects (71%).
- Senior services received strong public support, including broad support for government investment in senior community centers.
- Residents generally expressed dissatisfaction with the condition and maintenance of roads, streets, and sidewalks.

What does this mean for the Comprehensive Plan Update?

Results suggest that the Comprehensive Plan Update should emphasize housing, workforce, childcare, and quality-of-life investments as key factors affecting the county's ability to attract and retain residents.

- Housing: Expand affordable and workforce housing options, improve rental housing quality, and address homelessness through coordinated housing strategies.
- Workforce & Childcare: Treat childcare as an economic development priority, as residents view access to childcare as essential for workforce participation and employer recruitment.
- Community Services: Improve access to mental health, senior, and other support services while addressing gaps in local infrastructure and maintenance.
- Recreation & Tourism: Build on strong public support for trails, outdoor recreation, and shared municipal recreation investments to enhance quality of life and tourism opportunities.
- Regional Resilience: Coordinate housing, workforce, transportation, recreation, and community service initiatives to strengthen long-term economic vitality and population stability.

q. Lewis County Pandemic Viral Respiratory Disease Response Plan (2023)

Purpose:

The Lewis County Public Health Pandemic Viral Respiratory Disease Response Plan establishes a framework for preparing for, responding to, and recovering from a respiratory disease pandemic. The plan outlines how Lewis County Public Health and its partners will coordinate emergency response activities, protect public health, maintain essential services, support vulnerable populations, and minimize social and economic disruption during a pandemic.

Key Findings:

- Developed in 2023 using lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Future pandemics are expected to strain healthcare systems, emergency services, and critical infrastructure for extended periods.
- Lewis County may need to rely heavily on local resources because outside assistance could be limited during a widespread outbreak.
- Maintaining essential services and workforce continuity is a primary response priority.
- Strong coordination between public health, healthcare providers, schools, municipalities, businesses, and community organizations is essential.
- The plan identifies vulnerable populations, including Amish and Mennonite communities, migrant farm workers, low-income residents, homebound individuals, and those with mental health needs, as requiring targeted support.
- Transportation access, public communication, and healthcare accessibility are critical components of emergency response.

What does this mean for the Comprehensive Plan Update?

The plan highlights the importance of building community resilience and emergency preparedness capacity throughout Lewis County. Future planning should support strong public health infrastructure, emergency coordination, healthcare access, and continuity of essential services.

The findings also emphasize the need to improve access to services for vulnerable populations through investments in transportation, communications, and community partnerships. Incorporating resilience strategies into land use, infrastructure, public facilities, and community service planning will help Lewis County better withstand and recover from future public health emergencies.

r. Complete Streets Plan (Draft) (2023)

Purpose:

The Lewis County Complete Streets Plan provides a framework for creating safer, more accessible, and better-connected transportation networks for people of all ages and abilities. The plan promotes context-sensitive improvements to sidewalks, crosswalks, bicycle facilities, trails, transit access, and streetscapes that support public health, community mobility, economic development, and tourism across Lewis County's villages and hamlets.

Key Findings:

- Many communities throughout Lewis County lack connected sidewalk, crosswalk, and bicycle infrastructure, limiting safe walking and biking access to schools, businesses, parks, healthcare facilities, and community services.
- Public outreach consistently identified sidewalk connectivity, pedestrian safety, traffic speeds, and crosswalk improvements as top priorities.
- Lewis County's aging population, residents with disabilities, and households without reliable vehicle access would particularly benefit from improved multimodal transportation options.
- The plan links transportation design directly to public health outcomes, noting high rates of obesity and physical inactivity and the need for more opportunities for active transportation.
- Many villages already have foundational pedestrian infrastructure that can be expanded through targeted gap closures, trail connections, and traffic calming measures.
- Recreation, tourism, and downtown economic development can be strengthened through better connections between village centers, parks, trails, historic sites, and commercial areas.
- The county currently has very limited electric vehicle charging infrastructure and opportunities exist to expand the network in key communities and travel corridors.
- Flooding, roadway safety, and infrastructure maintenance are recurring concerns that should be incorporated into future transportation investments.

What does this mean for the Comprehensive Plan Update?

The Complete Streets Plan supports a countywide vision of creating healthier, safer, and more connected communities. The Comprehensive Plan should reinforce investments in sidewalks, crosswalks, bicycle facilities, trails, transit access, and streetscape improvements that improve mobility for residents of all ages and abilities.

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The findings also highlight the importance of linking transportation planning with public health, aging-in-place strategies, economic development, and tourism. Improved connections between neighborhoods, schools, community services, downtowns, recreation destinations, and historic assets can enhance quality of life while supporting local businesses and visitor activity.

Finally, the plan emphasizes the need for transportation investments that are resilient, context-sensitive, and coordinated across municipalities. Future comprehensive planning efforts should incorporate multimodal transportation, EV infrastructure, safety improvements, and flood-resilient infrastructure as part of Lewis County's long-term growth and development strategy.

s. Central Lewis County Regional Water Supplemental Study (2023)

Purpose:

The Central Lewis County Regional Water Supply Study Supplemental Report evaluates groundwater resources, regional water supply needs, and opportunities for intermunicipal water system connections. The study examines the long-term viability of regional water supply strategies, identifies areas with potential water shortages or excess capacity, and recommends projects that could improve water system reliability, support future development, and encourage shared services among municipalities.

Key Findings:

- The county's strongest groundwater resources are concentrated in glacial outwash areas east of the NY Power Authority corridor and west of the Adirondack Blue Line.
- Copenhagen/Denmark, Lowville, and Port Leyden have the most significant identified needs for additional water supply capacity.
- Several communities, including Watson, Martinsburg, Lyons Falls, Turin, and Harrisville, have excess water capacity that could support regional service sharing.
- Six priority projects were identified to improve regional water system interconnections and reliability.
- Extending public water service into sparsely populated rural areas is generally not cost-effective.
- Greater intermunicipal cooperation is needed to improve system resiliency, leverage existing capacity, and secure infrastructure funding.
- The report recommends a county-led or regional cooperative to coordinate future water supply planning and investments.

What does this mean for the Comprehensive Plan Update?

The study highlights the importance of long-term water infrastructure planning as a foundation for future growth and economic development. The availability of reliable public water service will continue to influence where residential, commercial, and industrial development can occur throughout the county.

The findings support a strategy of targeted growth in areas with existing or expandable water infrastructure, particularly around communities with adequate capacity or identified groundwater resources. At the same time, the study underscores the challenges and costs associated with extending public water service to low-density rural areas.

The report also reinforces the value of intermunicipal cooperation and shared services. Future updates to the Comprehensive Plan should encourage regional infrastructure partnerships, coordinated utility planning, and investment in system interconnections that improve resiliency, reduce costs, and strengthen the county's ability to accommodate future population and economic growth.

t. 2027 Update to 2024-2027 Goals and Objectives – Lewis County Community Services

Purpose:

This update describes progress made on the goals and objectives of the 2024 Community Services Annual Report. 20 of the objectives have been completed which leaves only four remaining. This update indicates a targeted completion date of July 2027 for all four.

Completed goals include:

1) Work with community partners to address the needs of Lewis County residents living in instability;
2) Increase understanding, utilization, and access to Office of People with Developmental Disabilities and respite services; and
3) Development of a multi-year data-informed plan for utilization of the [opioid litigation and abatement] funds.

What does this mean for the Comprehensive Plan Update?

This progress made on the goals and strategies suggests that the County prioritizes plan implementation and meaningfully tracks actions. The report also suggests that additional service is needed to develop a relationship with Drum County,

u. Downtown Design Guidelines (2024)

Purpose:

The Lewis County Downtown Design Guidelines provide a framework for preserving and enhancing the character of the county's downtowns and village centers. The document promotes historically sensitive building rehabilitation, quality streetscape improvements, attractive storefront design, and coordinated public realm investments to support downtown revitalization, economic development, tourism, and community identity.

Key Findings:

- Lewis County's downtowns are among the county's most important historic, economic, and community assets.
- Historic buildings should be repaired and reused whenever possible rather than altered with inappropriate materials or facade treatments.
- Upper-floor vacancy presents an opportunity for adaptive reuse and new housing in village centers.
- Walkable, pedestrian-oriented downtowns are critical to supporting local businesses and community life.
- Streetscape features such as landscaping, seating, wayfinding, public art, and lighting improve downtown attractiveness and usability.
- Transparent storefronts, appropriate signage, and quality building maintenance strengthen commercial vitality.
- Consistent design standards can help communities leverage state revitalization programs and historic preservation funding.
- Downtown revitalization depends on coordinated public and private investment.

What does this mean for the Comprehensive Plan Update?

The guidelines reinforce the importance of village centers and traditional downtowns as the focus of community development and revitalization efforts.

The Comprehensive Plan should support adaptive reuse of upper floors for housing, preservation of historic buildings, and façade improvement programs that strengthen downtown economic activity and increase residential density in existing population centers.

The document also supports continued investment in streetscape improvements, public gathering spaces, wayfinding, landscaping, and public art to enhance downtown attractiveness, tourism appeal, and quality of life.

Finally, the guidelines provide a foundation for encouraging consistent design standards and preservation practices across Lewis County's villages and hamlets, helping communities maintain their unique character while pursuing revitalization and grant funding opportunities.

v. Lewis County Public Health Volunteer Management Plan (2024)

Purpose:

The Volunteer Management Plan establishes procedures for recruiting, credentialing, training, activating, deploying, supervising, and demobilizing volunteers who support Lewis County Public Health during emergencies and disasters. The plan is intended to ensure that volunteer resources can be safely and effectively integrated into emergency response and recovery operations

Key Findings:

- Lewis County relies on the Central New York Medical Reserve Corps (CNYMRC) to supplement local staffing during public health emergencies and disasters.
- The county anticipates increased demand for trained volunteers during natural disasters, disease outbreaks, and other emergency events.
- Volunteer management is integrated into the Incident Command System (ICS) and county emergency management framework.
- Volunteers require credential verification, training, and coordinated deployment before participating in response activities.
- The plan recognizes that large-scale emergencies can generate spontaneous, unaffiliated volunteers who also require management and oversight.
- Regional partnerships with neighboring counties, healthcare providers, emergency management agencies, and volunteer organizations are essential for emergency response capacity.

- The county maintains procedures for volunteer notification, communication, health monitoring, safety, and demobilization following emergency operations.

What does this mean for the Comprehensive Plan Update?

- The plan highlights the importance of maintaining a strong emergency preparedness and disaster response network, particularly as Lewis County continues to face flooding events, public health emergencies, and other hazards.
- The findings support continued investment in public health capacity, emergency management coordination, and regional mutual aid partnerships that strengthen community resilience during emergencies.
- The plan also reinforces the value of community volunteerism and civic engagement as important assets that help expand local response capabilities during disasters and public health crises.

w. Lewis County Non-Motorized Winter Recreation Plan (2025)

Purpose:

The Lewis County Non-Motorized Winter Recreation Plan provides a strategic framework for expanding and enhancing non-motorized winter recreation opportunities, with a primary focus on the County-owned Commons trail system in the Towns of Greig and Lyonsdale. The plan seeks to diversify Lewis County's recreation economy by developing amenities and infrastructure that support cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, winter hiking, fat biking, and ice skating while complementing the county's existing motorized recreation assets.

Key Findings:

- Lewis County is nationally recognized for snowmobiling and motorized recreation, but demand for non-motorized winter recreation is growing locally and nationally.
- The Commons contains approximately 1,226 acres of County-owned land and has significant potential to become a regional destination for non-motorized winter recreation.
- Existing winter recreation opportunities in Lewis County include cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, downhill skiing, tubing, and ice skating, but opportunities remain limited compared to the county's motorized recreation network.

- Community engagement found strong support for groomed cross-country ski trails, snowshoeing routes, winter hiking, family-friendly recreation, warming facilities, and improved winter access.
- Approximately 80% of survey respondents reported limited familiarity with the Commons trail network, highlighting a need for improved marketing, signage, and wayfinding.
- Shared use between motorized and non-motorized recreation creates conflicts related to safety, noise, trail conditions, and user experience.
- Only one existing trailhead is plowed and accessible during winter, limiting public access to the trail system.
- Major recommendations include dedicated groomed cross-country ski trails, enhanced trailheads, improved signage and wayfinding, rerouted snowmobile access, expanded backcountry amenities, future trail connections, and development of a unique forest ice ribbon attraction.
- The plan identifies non-motorized recreation as an opportunity to increase tourism, improve public health, expand year-round recreation, and diversify the county's outdoor economy.

What does this mean for the Comprehensive Plan Update?

This plan highlights the growing importance of non-motorized outdoor recreation as both a quality-of-life asset and an economic development opportunity. While snowmobiling and ATV recreation remain important components of the county's tourism economy, the plan demonstrates increasing demand for winter activities that appeal to families, residents, beginners, and visitors seeking quieter outdoor experiences.

The recommendations support broader county goals related to tourism diversification, public health, outdoor recreation, and year-round visitation. Investments in trail infrastructure, wayfinding, accessibility, and recreation amenities can help expand Lewis County's outdoor recreation brand while reducing seasonal dependence on traditional motorized recreation.

The plan also reinforces the need for coordinated recreation planning, balancing motorized and non-motorized uses, improving access to public lands, and strengthening the connection between outdoor recreation assets and local economic development. As part of the Comprehensive Plan update, recreation should be viewed as a major driver of community vitality, resident retention, and tourism growth.

x. Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan (2025)

Purpose:

The Lewis County Human Services Coordinated Transportation Plan evaluates transportation needs, existing transit services, service gaps, and coordination opportunities to improve mobility for seniors, individuals with disabilities, low-income residents, and other transportation-disadvantaged populations. The plan also establishes strategies for improving access to employment, healthcare, education, and community services while supporting future transportation funding opportunities.

Key Findings:

- Lewis County's rural geography and declining, aging population increase transportation challenges, particularly for seniors and residents without reliable vehicles.
- More than 5% of households have no vehicle available, while many others have only one vehicle.
- Lewis County Public Transportation has significantly improved mobility through fixed routes, connector services, and demand-response transportation.
- Employment transportation, healthcare access, first-mile/last-mile connections, and on-demand transportation remain significant unmet needs.
- Transportation barriers continue to affect workforce participation, especially for low-income residents and employers facing labor shortages.
- The county lacks traditional taxi, Uber, and Lyft services, limiting transportation options.
- The plan identifies microtransit and expanded regional coordination as priorities for future service improvements.

What does this mean for the Comprehensive Plan Update?

The plan highlights transportation as a critical quality-of-life and economic development issue. The Comprehensive Plan should support continued investment in public transit, microtransit, and regional transportation partnerships to improve access to jobs, healthcare, education, and essential services. Particular attention should be given to the mobility needs of seniors, low-income households, people with disabilities, and residents in rural areas. Improving transportation connectivity will help strengthen workforce participation, support aging in place, and enhance access to community resources throughout Lewis County.

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y. Industry Market Potential: Data to "Attract What We Want" in Lewis County (2025)

Purpose:

The purpose of this report is to provide an economic development strategy and market analysis that helps Lewis County identify the types of industries, businesses, and investments it should prioritize attracting, retaining, and expanding. The report was prepared to help Naturally Lewis and its partners understand the county's competitive strengths, emerging economic trends, business needs, workforce conditions, and real estate constraints so that resources can be directed toward opportunities with the greatest long-term return.

Key Findings:

- The report finds that Agriculture and Forestry Production and Processing and Food and Beverage Manufacturing are Lewis County's strongest economic sectors. Agriculture and forestry account for approximately 12% of county jobs and nearly 17% of Gross Regional Product (GRP), while food and beverage manufacturing accounts for over 10% of GRP and experienced 16% employment growth between 2019 and 2024. Both industries are far more concentrated in Lewis County than in most parts of the country.
- The Clean and Renewable Energy sector grew by 31% between 2019 and 2024 and offers some of the highest wages in the county. The report highlights opportunities related to renewable energy infrastructure, energy storage, electrical contracting, and regional energy investments. Stakeholder interviews specifically identified energy storage facilities and renewable energy-related growth opportunities.
- Lewis County has had virtually no available industrial space since 2017 and no available office space since 2018. The county's industrial inventory is very small compared to peer counties, limiting business recruitment and expansion opportunities.
- Stakeholders repeatedly identified infrastructure limitations, including energy transmission, sewer service, utilities, and distribution networks, as barriers to growth. The report suggests that infrastructure deficiencies could constrain economic opportunities if not addressed.
- Across every major industry cluster, employers reported difficulty finding workers with the necessary skills. The report points to workforce shortages, demographic challenges, and skills gaps as significant constraints on future growth. Stakeholders emphasized workforce training in manufacturing, meat processing, skilled trades, and agricultural technology.

- overall population has declined since 2010. The county remains one of the most rural counties in New York, with the lowest population density among comparison counties and relatively low educational attainment rates.
- Although tourism is an important employer, the report concludes that it is underperforming relative to peer counties. Tourism employment declined, wages are low, and the county has not captured the same level of economic impact seen elsewhere. However, trends such as agritourism, outdoor recreation, wellness tourism, and experiential travel align well with Lewis County's assets.
- Supporting and expanding existing businesses will likely generate greater returns than focusing primarily on recruiting new firms. Many of Lewis County's largest employers and most productive industries already exist within the county and face challenges related to modernization, succession planning, workforce recruitment, and expansion opportunities.

What does this mean for the Comprehensive Plan Update?

The "Attract What We Want" report confirms that Lewis County's greatest opportunities lie in building upon its existing strengths in agriculture, food processing, manufacturing, and emerging clean energy industries. The analysis highlights the need for strategic investments in workforce development, housing, infrastructure, site readiness, and business retention to support long-term economic competitiveness. These findings should help guide the Comprehensive Plan's vision, goals, and implementation priorities while ensuring future growth is aligned with the county's rural character and economic assets.

z. Lewis County Public Transportation Rider's Guide (2026)

Purpose:

The Lewis County Public Transportation (LCPT) Rider's Guide provides residents and visitors with information on county transit services, including fixed-route bus service, Dial-A-Ride transportation, regional connector routes, Fort Drum service, college transportation, seasonal routes, fares, schedules, and rider resources. The guide demonstrates how public transportation supports access to employment, education, healthcare, shopping, and regional destinations throughout Lewis County and beyond.

Key Findings:

- Lewis County operates a countywide public transportation network that includes five core fixed routes, a Lowville Loop, Dial-A-Ride service, connector routes to Utica and Watertown, Fort Drum service, and seasonal Old Forge transportation.
- Transit service provides critical connections between rural communities and major destinations including Lewis County General Hospital, social services, shopping centers, educational institutions, Fort Drum, Watertown, and Utica.
- LCPT offers demand-responsive Dial-A-Ride service and ADA accommodations, increasing mobility options for seniors, residents with disabilities, and people without access to personal vehicles.
- Affordable fare structures, discounted student fares, monthly passes, and reduced fares for seniors and Medicaid/Medicare recipients improve transportation accessibility.
- Regional connector routes provide access to Jefferson Community College, MVCC, SUNY Poly, Utica University, Watertown International Airport, and employment centers outside Lewis County.
- Public transportation plays an important workforce development role through specialized routes serving Fort Drum, Old Forge seasonal employment, and regional job centers.
- The county has expanded mobility options through digital trip-planning tools, transit information services, text alerts, and a vanpool partnership program.

What does this mean for the Comprehensive Plan Update?

Lewis County Public Transportation has become an important component of the county's transportation and mobility network, providing residents with access to employment, education, healthcare, shopping, and other essential services throughout Lewis County and neighboring regions. The system demonstrates the importance of maintaining transportation options in a rural county where long travel distances, an aging population, and limited transportation alternatives can create barriers to opportunity and quality of life. As Lewis County updates its Comprehensive Plan, public transportation should be recognized as both a critical community service and an economic development asset that supports workforce mobility, improves access to regional job centers such as Fort Drum, Watertown, and Utica, and helps residents remain connected to vital services. The continued success of the transit system also reinforces the importance of concentrating housing, healthcare facilities, and community services within villages and population centers where they can be efficiently served and remain accessible to residents of all ages and abilities, a key principle of smart growth.

DEMOGRAPHICS AND SOCIOECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS

1. Demographics

Demographic characteristics provide insights into who lives in Lewis County today and the trends that could shape its population in the future. Variables such as age, income, and educational attainment act as indicators of socioeconomic status and impact the demand for housing, healthcare, and schools. The demographics of the population also affect the local economy, influencing consumer spending, the availability of labor, and tax revenue.

Data from the U.S. Census Bureau indicate that the Lewis County population has been relatively stable over the past thirty years. Between 2010 and 2020, the number of residents in the County declined by 1.9%, with a slightly faster rate of decline, 2.2%, in the North Country region. In contrast, the state population increased by 4.2%. ESRI, a proprietary source of market data, estimates the County's 2025 population at 26,186.

Lewis County's population reached its peak in 1880 at 31,416. Historically, the focus of development in the County was along the Black River, which served as an important transportation corridor. Even today, the Black River Valley is home to most of the County's population, as well as its major commercial and industrial facilities. Other areas of the County are more sparsely populated and support such activities as agriculture, forestry, and outdoor recreation.

Table 1. Population Trends, Lewis County

	Population	% Change
1990	26,796	-
2000	26,944	0.60%
2010	27,087	0.50%
2020	26,582	-1.90%
2025 (estimate)	26,186	-1.50%
2030 (projection)	25,874	-1.20%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau (1990-2020) and ESRI (estimates and projections).

a. Age

In 2020, Lewis County had a median age of 42.6 years, considerably older than the New York State median of 39.0 and a median age of 38.8 nationwide. Several counties in the North

Country region have populations that are among the oldest in the state; Jefferson County is an outlier due to the presence of military personnel at Fort Drum.

Table 2. Median Age Comparison

County	2020 Census	2025 Estimate
Lewis	**42.6**	**42.6**
Clinton	41.4	42.3
Essex	47.5	47.5
Franklin	41.9	42.4
Hamilton	57.0	57.5
Jefferson	33.9	34.8
St. Lawrence	38.8	39.7

Source: U.S. Census Bureau (2020) and ESRI (2025 estimates)

Children and youth under the age of 18 represent the largest age group in Lewis County, making up 23.2% of the population in 2020 and an estimated 22.5% in 2025. Like many parts of upstate New York, however, the County has been experiencing a rapid increase in its senior population. In fact, the *only* population growth to occur in Lewis County between 2010 and 2020 was among individuals ages 55 and over. As more residents reach the age of retirement, the prime working-age cohort (ages 25-54) is shrinking, reducing the available supply of labor.

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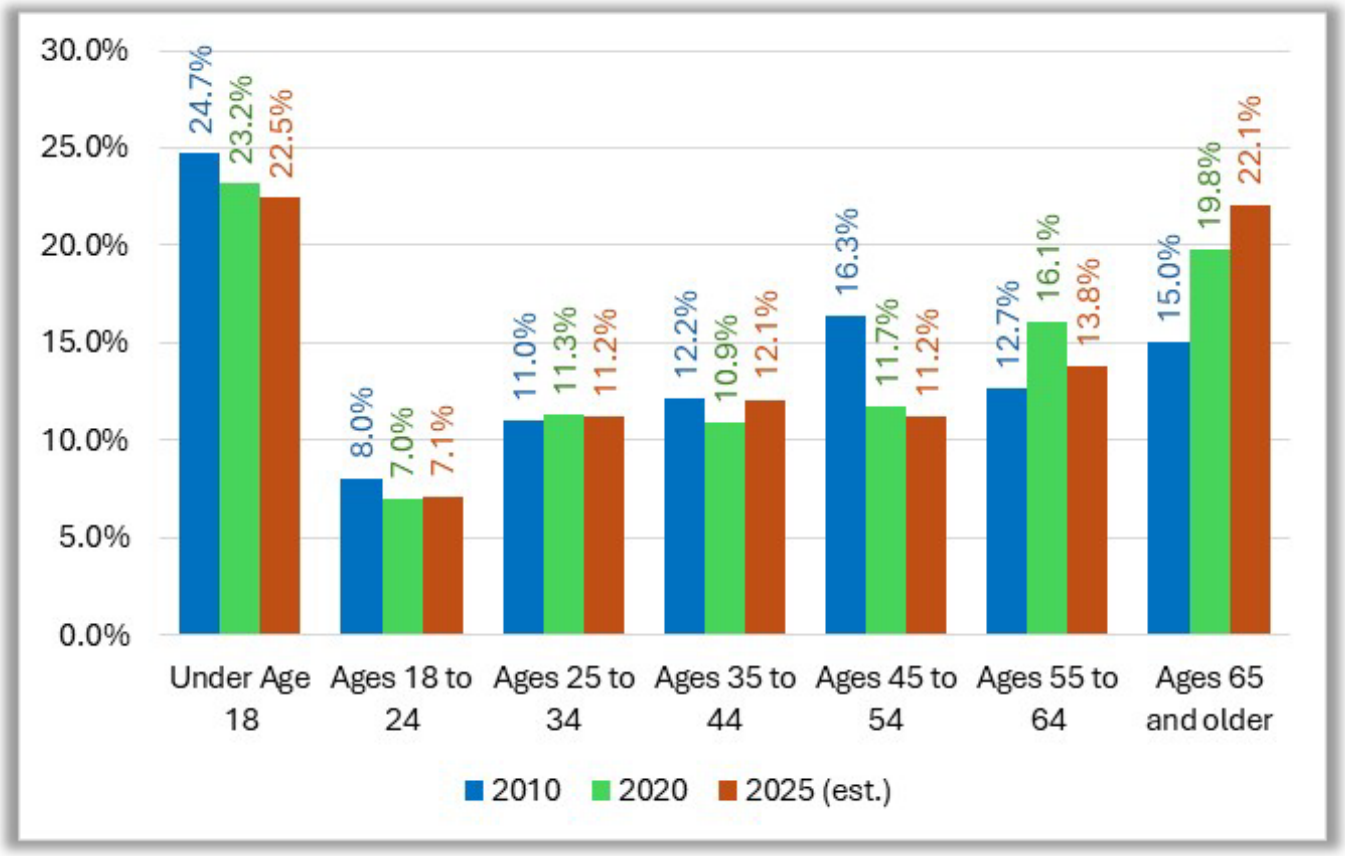


Figure 1. Population by Age Cohort, Lewis County
Source: U.S. Census Bureau (2010 and 2020) and ESRI (2025 estimates)

b. Race/Ethnicity

Lewis County has a predominantly white population, with 94.5% of residents identifying themselves as white in the 2020 Census. To some degree, however, it has become more diverse, with an increase in the number of people who characterize themselves as multiracial. The County's Hispanic population increased by nearly 30% between 2010 and 2020, but less than 2% of all residents are of Hispanic origin.

Table 3. Population by Race and Ethnicity, Lewis County

	2010 Census		2020 Census		2025 Estimates	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
White Alone	26,465	97.70%	25,121	94.50%	24,615	94.00%
Black Alone	184	0.70%	109	0.40%	131	0.50%
American Indian Alone	53	0.20%	57	0.20%	80	0.30%
Asian and Pacific Islander Alone	91	0.30%	87	0.30%	85	0.30%

Some Other Race Alone	56	0.20%	184	0.70%	200	0.80%
Two or More Races	238	0.90%	1,024	3.90%	1,075	4.10%
Hispanic Origin (Any Race)	*357*	*1.30%*	*460*	*1.70%*	*498*	*1.90%*
Total	**27,087**	**100.00%**	**26,582**	**100.00%**	**26,186**	**100.00%**
Source: U.S. Census Bureau (2010 and 2020) and ESRI (2025 estimates)						

c. Educational Attainment

Educational attainment levels in Lewis County are typical of rural communities. An estimated 93% of County residents age 25 and older have at least a high school diploma or its equivalent, while 20.2% have a bachelor's degree or higher. Less than 9% have earned a graduate or professional degree.

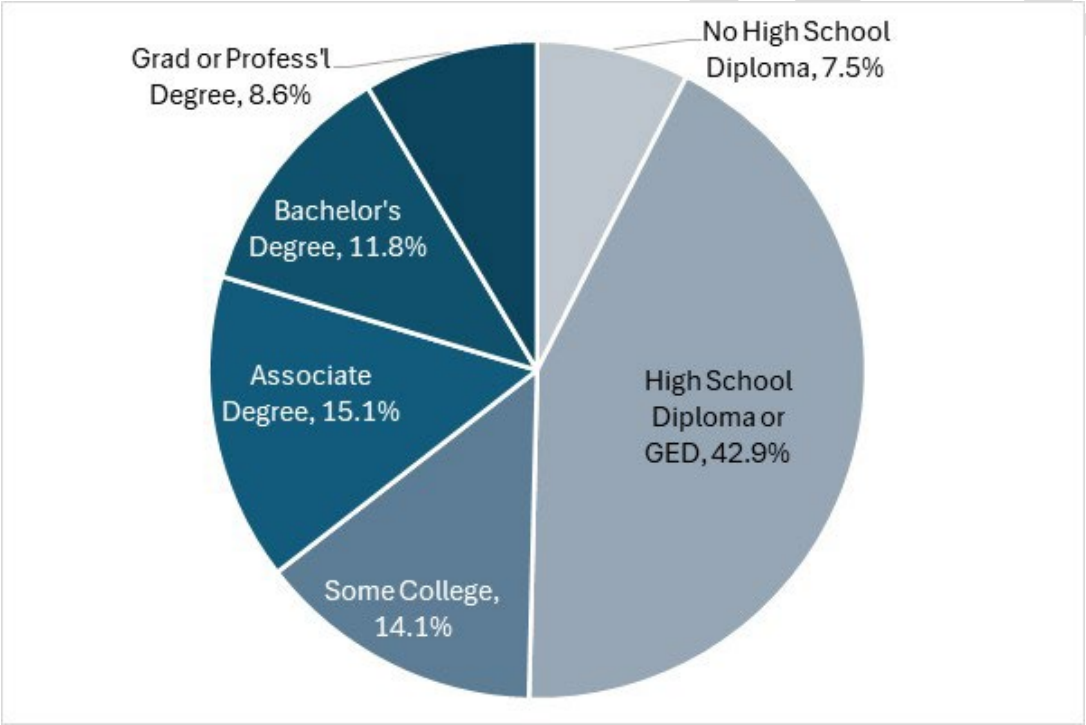


Figure 2. Educational Attainment, Population Age 25 and Older, Lewis County
Source: ESRI (2025 estimates).

d. Towns and Villages:

i. Population

Lewis County's 17 towns range in population from 116 in Montague to 4,800 in Lowville, according to 2025 estimates. Most towns lost population between 2010 and 2020, albeit at varying rates. The most significant decline in percentage terms was in the Town of Leyden, at the County's southern end, while the largest net decline was in the Town of Denmark. The Towns of Croghan, Harrisburg, Montague, Osceola, and West Turin all added population over the period, though three of these towns - Harrisburg, Montague, and Osceola – started from a very small base.

Approximately one-quarter of Lewis County's population is concentrated in its eight incorporated villages, the largest being Lowville. (A ninth village, Harrisville, was dissolved in 2018.) These communities have been losing population for decades. New investment may be needed to revitalize these areas and attract new residents.

Table 4. Population Change, Lewis County Towns and Villages

	2010 Census	2020 Census	% Change 2010-20	2025 Estimates
Lewis County	27,087	26,582	-1.9%	25,874
Towns				
Croghan	3,093	3,197	3.4%	3,265
Denmark	2,860	2,626	-8.2%	2,540
Diana	1,709	1,610	-5.8%	1,540
Greig	1,199	1,179	-1.7%	1,157
Harrisburg	437	480	9.8%	451
Lewis	854	844	-1.2%	831
Leyden	1,785	1,572	-11.9%	1,556
Lowville	4,982	4,888	-1.9%	4,800
Lyonsdale	1,227	1,170	-4.6%	1,071
Martinsburg	1,433	1,316	-8.2%	1,285
Montague	78	97	24.4%	116
New Bremen	2,706	2,785	2.9%	2,814
Osceola	229	243	6.1%	265
Pinckney	329	313	-4.9%	315
Turin	761	768	0.9%	754
Watson	1,881	1,793	-4.7%	1,739
West Turin	1,524	1,692	11.0%	1,687
Villages				
Castorland	351	334	-4.8%	334
Constableville	242	293	21.1%	298
Copenhagen	801	631	-21.2%	630
Croghan	618	639	3.4%	690

Lowville	3,470	3,272	-5.7%	3,255
Lyons Falls	566	570	0.7%	570
Port Leyden	672	554	-17.6%	543
Turin	232	197	-15.1%	193
Source: U.S. Census Bureau (2010 and 2020), ESRI (2025 estimates).				

ii. Median Age

At the municipal level, the Town of Grieg has the highest median age, at 50.8 years, followed by the Town of Montague at 47.5. All but three of the towns and all but one of the villages in Lewis County have a median age of 40 or above, exceeding their state and national counterparts (39.8 and 39.6, respectively). The Village of Castorland, in the Town of Denmark, has the lowest median age at 35.0.

Table 5. Selected Demographic Characteristics, Lewis County Towns and Villages

	Median Age	Average Household Size	Median Household Income	% of Population Below Poverty Level
Lewis County	42.6	2.33	$68,799	12.3%
Towns				
Croghan	43.1	2.39	$70,197	14.4%
Denmark	38.2	2.43	$72,619	16.7%
Diana	44.7	2.21	$68,428	11.5%
Greig	50.8	2.07	$64,092	14.8%
Harrisburg	41.4	2.56	$81,429	9.2%
Lewis	44.4	2.47	$83,557	13.9%
Leyden	43.4	2.35	$65,013	13.9%
Lowville	42.1	2.19	$68,718	16.2%
Lyonsdale	46.9	2.31	$62,202	10.4%
Martinsburg	38.3	2.44	$66,811	5.2%
Montague	47.5	2.15	$67,680	5.4%
New Bremen	41.1	2.46	$63,142	6.3%
Osceola	47.1	2.09	$97,202	14.2%
Pinckney	38.9	2.63	$88,117	10.6%
Turin	40.6	2.48	$80,884	7.0%
Watson	44.9	2.26	$66,177	8.6%
West Turin	43.3	2.40	$75,155	13.2%
Villages				
Castorland	35.0	2.72	$61,378	17.9%
Constableville	42.9	2.19	$64,129	18.1%

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Copenhagen	45.0	1.96	$78,648	20.0%
Croghan	44.1	2.13	$63,486	19.1%
Lowville	43.1	2.02	$66,131	17.5%
Lyons Falls	43.4	2.19	$68,106	10.2%
Port Leyden	44.2	2.16	$61,224	15.8%
Turin	41.3	2.41	$77,421	6.1%
Source: ESRI, 2025 estimates, except poverty rates, U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2024 Five-Year Estimates.				

iii. Household Size

Household sizes have been declining over the last few decades due to a rise in single-parent households, smaller family sizes, and more people living alone. Between 2010 and 2020, Lewis County's average household size decreased from 2.55 persons per household to 2.45, and since then has dropped further to 2.33.

At the municipal level, the average household size is smallest in the Village of Copenhagen, at 1.96, followed by the Village of Lowville at 2.02 and the Town of Grieg at 2.07. On the flip side, households in the Village of Castorland and the Town of Pinckney are among the largest, averaging 2.72 and 2.63 persons per household respectively.

iv. Median Household Income

The median household income in Lewis County is estimated at about $69,000 per year, nearly $14,000 less than the New York State median ($85,744)[1]. It also lags the U.S. median household income ($81,624).

At the town level, median household incomes range from a low of $62,202 in the Town of Lyonsdale to a high of $97,202 in the Town of Osceola. Income levels in Lewis County's villages are generally lower, starting at approximately $61,000 in the Villages of Castorland and Port

[1] Lewis County's population includes a significant number of seasonal residents whose incomes are not reflected in Census and American Community Survey data. In several communities where resident income data have been collected as part of water and wastewater infrastructure improvement projects, surveys of year-round residents have revealed lower median household incomes and higher poverty rates than Census estimates suggest. While federal datasets remain valuable for understanding broad demographic trends, local survey results indicate that economic conditions experienced by permanent residents may differ from those reflected in regional datasets, underscoring the importance of supplementing Census data with local knowledge and community-specific information.

Leyden. The Village of Copenhagen has the highest median income among incorporated villages at $78,648.

v. Poverty

Based on American Community Survey (ACS) Five-Year Estimates produced by the Census Bureau, 12.3% of Lewis County residents have incomes below the federal poverty level. This is comparable to the 12.5% poverty rate in the U.S. and considerably lower than the statewide rate of 18.3%

Within the County, the highest poverty rates are found in the Villages of Copenhagen (20.0%), Croghan (19.1%), and Constableville (18.1%) and the Town of Denmark (16.7%), while the Towns of Martinsburg and Montague have the lowest rates of poverty, just over 5%.

vi. Conclusion

Demographic trends in Lewis County highlight critical issues including ongoing population decline, an aging resident base, and below-average income levels. These conditions will affect future demand for housing, infrastructure, public services, and workforce development, though variable local trends suggest that strategies should be tailored to the needs of individual municipalities. Going forward, the County will need to consider policies and programs to attract and retain working-age households, support aging in place, encourage reinvestment in population centers, and strengthen communities facing the greatest demographic and economic pressures.

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LOCAL AND REGIONAL ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS

This chapter presents a discussion of key economic characteristics in Lewis County, including employment levels, dominant industries and major employers, labor force participation and unemployment, and commutation. Comparisons to the North Country region – defined as the counties of Clinton, Essex, Franklin, Hamilton, Jefferson, Lewis, and St. Lawrence – are provided where appropriate. The chapter also highlights industries identified as regionally significant or strategic. Additional information on the Lewis County economy can be found in the Economic Conditions section.

1. Employment Levels

In 2024, the total employment count in Lewis County was just shy of 7,000.[2] The County accounted for about 5% of all jobs in the North Country region, the smallest share after Hamilton County. Two-thirds of the jobs in Lewis County were in private industry.

Between 2010 and 2019, employment in Lewis County ranged from about 6,400 to 6,600. In March 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic began to take hold, resulting in a national recession that impacted the local economy. On average, there were 350 fewer jobs in Lewis County in 2020 than in 2019; the North Country region lost more than 12,000 jobs.

Although regional employment has not yet returned to its pre-pandemic levels, the data indicate that Lewis County exceeded them (see Figures 3 and 4). Total employment was at historic highs in 2023 and again in 2024. Annualized data for 2025 is not yet available, but County employment during the first three quarters of the year averaged 7,013.

[2] The Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW) is used here and in the Economic Conditions Analysis other sections on because it offers the most comprehensive, reliable, and granular data available. It includes all employment covered by unemployment insurance. Annualized rather than quarterly data is used to avoid the effects of seasonal fluctuations in employment.

About 70% of the County's private sector employment is concentrated in five industry sectors: manufacturing, retail trade, health care and social assistance, accommodation and food services, and agriculture, forestry, fishing, and hunting. Additional information on employment by industry can be found in the Economic Conditions Analysis.

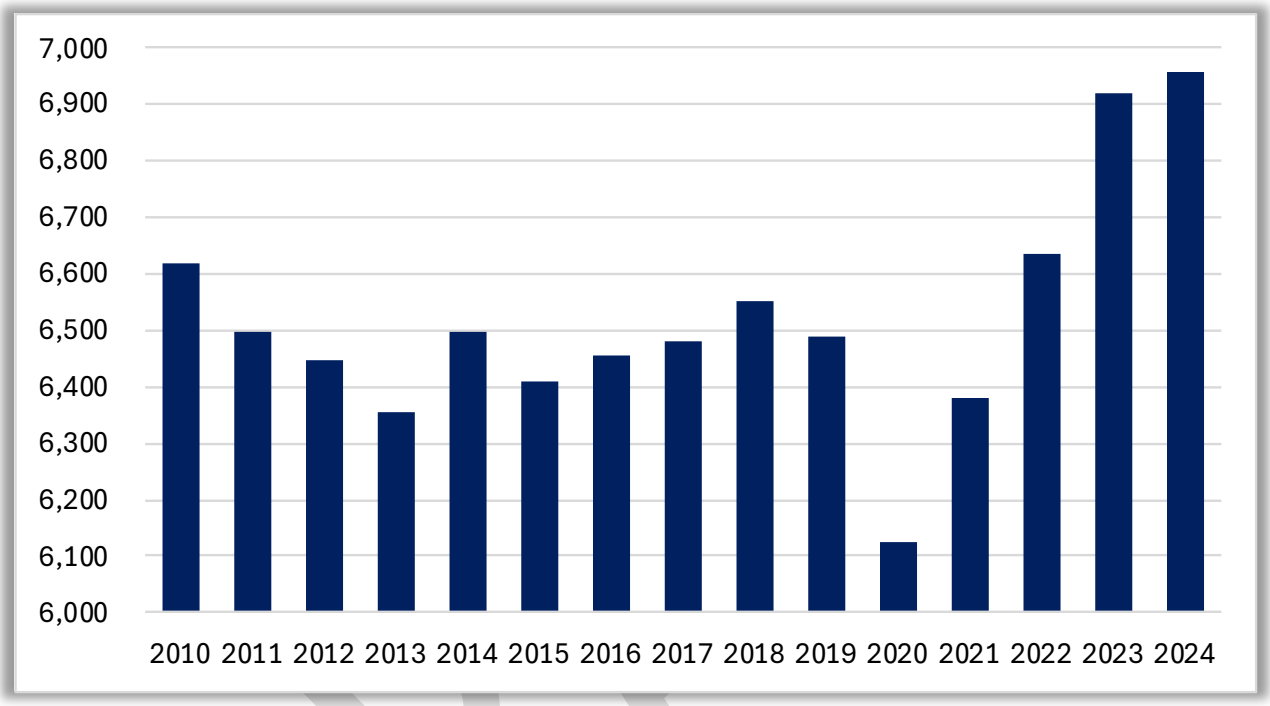


Figure 3. Annual Average Employment, Lewis County
Source: NYS Department of Labor, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages.

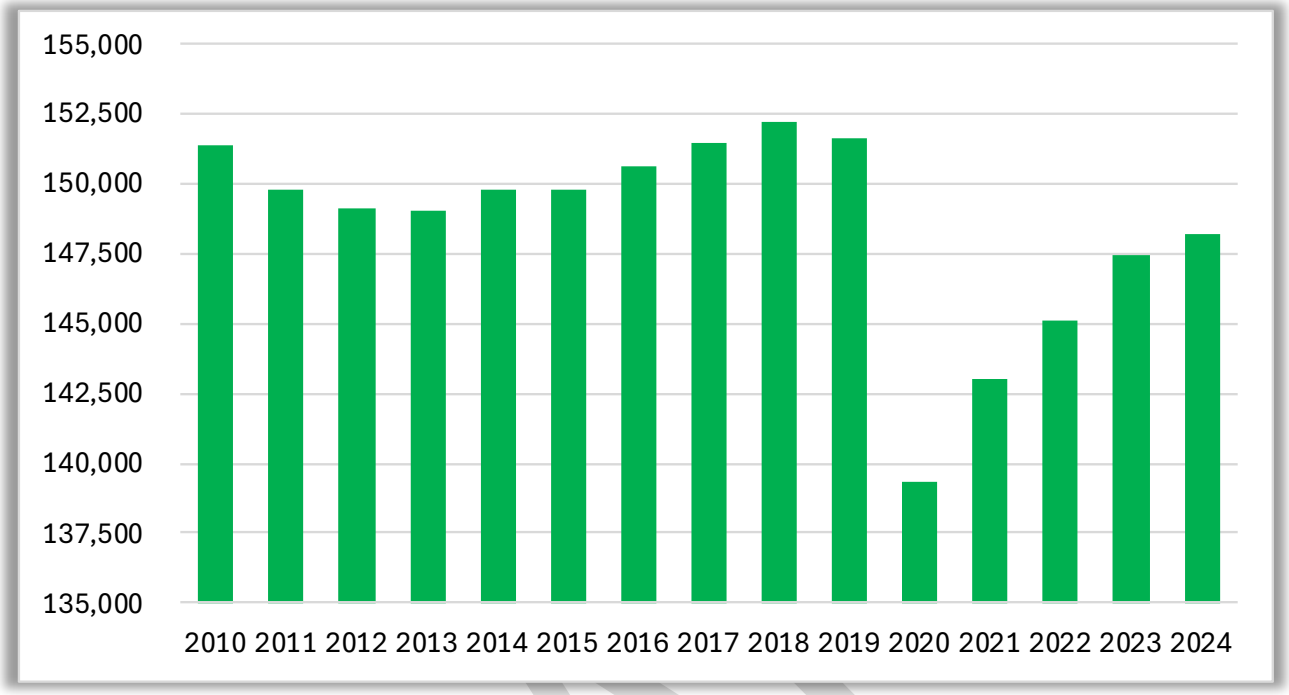


Figure 4. Annual Average Employment, North Country Region
Source: NYS Department of Labor, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages.

2. Dominant Industries

Lewis County's dominant industries are largely based on its natural resources, with agriculture, manufacturing, tourism, and green energy serving as the primary economic drivers.

The County has a strong focus on agriculture and a proud heritage of dairy farming with over 23,000 milking cows. The milk produced by local farms supplies food processors in Lewis County and throughout the North Country.

Lewis County is home to 11 large manufacturers that make a variety of products, from bowling pins to specialty paper. These companies have access to raw materials like clean water and healthy forests. The food and beverage manufacturing industry is one of the largest employers in the County and region and continues to grow.

Tourism is another leading industry in Lewis County connected to its natural resources. The County is a popular destination for outdoor recreation in all four seasons with abundant public

lands and hundreds of miles of trails. In 2024, visitor spending in Lewis County reached $64.2 million, supporting an estimated 9.8% of all jobs in the County.[3]

Lewis County has identified green energy as a dominant industry and a target for continued investment. With its ample wind, water, and land resources, the County has become a hub for renewable energy development, supporting wind, solar, and hydropower.

3. Major Employers

The industry mix in Lewis County is reflected in its list of major employers, which are concentrated in manufacturing, education, and health and human services (Table 6). The largest employer is Lewis County General Hospital, a full-service, 25-bed critical access facility in Lowville. Established in 1931, the hospital is owned and operated by the County under the umbrella of the Lewis County Health System. It shares its main campus with a hospice, a certified home health care agency, and 160-bed nursing home. The hospital also operates outpatient health clinics in Beaver Falls, Copenhagen, and South Lewis. According to the Healthcare Association of New York State (HANYS), Lewis County General Hospital generates approximately $212 million in economic activity through employment and the purchase of goods and services.[4]

Kraft Heinz's Lowville plant is the County's largest private employer. The company has produced Philadelphia Brand Cream Cheese at this location for decades, processing raw milk from local dairy farms. Lowville hosts a well-known Cream Cheese Festival every year to celebrate this staple of the economy. Kraft Heinz was slated to receive a $22 million federal grant in 2025 to make its manufacturing facility more energy-efficient, but the U.S. Department of Energy ultimately rescinded the funding. The company was awarded a $3.75 million grant from New York State, however, to help the plant reduce its greenhouse gas emissions.

Table 6. Major Employers in Lewis County

Employer	Industry	Employment Range
Lewis County General Hospital	Health Care (Public Sector)	350-675
Kraft Heinz	Manufacturing	375-450
County of Lewis	Local Government	280-300
Lowville Academy	Education (Public Sector)	240-260
South Lewis Central School District	Education (Public Sector)	240-250

[3] Tourism Economics, *The Economic Impact of Visitors in New York 2024 – Adirondacks Focus*.

[4] Healthcare Association of New York State, Inc., "Economic and Community Benefits: Lewis County General Hospital," December 2025.

Oneida/Lewis ARC	Social Services	175-200
WalMart	Retail Trade	175-200
Beaver River Central School District	Education (Public Sector)	160-170
Otis Technology	Manufacturing	150-160
Viking-Cives	Manufacturing	140-150
Neenah Paper	Manufacturing	125-135
Qubica/AMF	Manufacturing	110-120
Copenhagen Central School District	Education (Public Sector)	90-100
Source: Naturally Lewis, Inc.		

Most of Lewis County's roughly 500 employer establishments are small and midsized businesses that also play a role in the local economy. According to the NYS Department of Labor, approximately 96% of the private establishments in the County have less than 50 employees, while 74% have fewer than 10.

4. Resident Labor Force and Unemployment

Labor force participation rates represent the share of the population age 16 and over that is currently employed or unemployed and seeking work. It is one indication of whether more people might be drawn into the labor force if suitable jobs were available or wages were higher. In contrast to employment data, the information is reported by place of residence rather than place of work.

The North Country region is characterized by a shrinking, aging workforce, with significant pandemic-related declines that have not fully recovered. Driven by demographic shifts, rural counties have generally faced more rapid declines in labor force participation than urban and suburban counties.

Table 7. Labor Force Participation Rates	
County	Rate
Jefferson County	65.40%
Lewis County	58.80%
Clinton County	58.60%
Essex County	55.20%
St. Lawrence County	54.10%
Franklin County	52.50%
Hamilton County	49.30%
New York State	63.00%
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2019-24 Five-Year Estimates.	

Official civilian labor force participation rates from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics are not available at the county level, but estimates are provided through the ACS. The ACS shows that

Lewis County has a labor force participation rate of 58.8%, below the statewide rate of 63.0%, but higher than all other counties in the region except Jefferson. Low participation rates may signal a significant retired population.

Data from the NYS Department of Labor further show that the size of Lewis County's labor force has not decreased as sharply as it has in other parts of the region. The County accounted for 7.2% of the North Country's resident labor force in 2025, up from 6.5% in 2010.

As shown in Figure 5, unemployment rates in Lewis County between 2010 and 2020 were as much as 1.9 percentage points above the state. In the last few years, however, rates of unemployment in the County have been at or below statewide averages. In 2025, unemployment in Lewis County averaged 4.3%; this was the same as the rate for the North Country region and identical to the New York State unemployment rate.

While low unemployment usually signals a strong economy, it can also make it challenging for Lewis County to attract new businesses and for employers to expand and hire workers unless more people enter the labor force or workers are recruited from other locations.

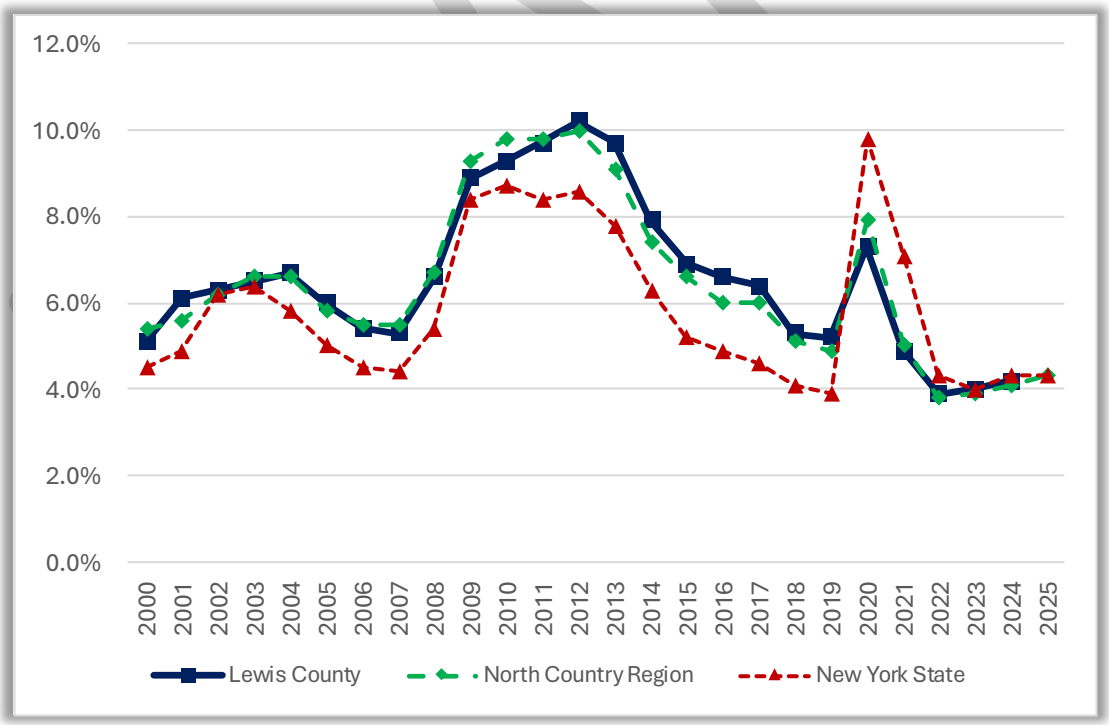


Figure 5. Annual Average Unemployment Rates
Source: NYS Department of Labor, Local Area Unemployment Statistics.

5. Resident Commutation Patterns

Data on commuting patterns point to where jobs are located relative to where workers reside. This information can be used to better understand Lewis County's laborshed (the home locations of people who work in the County) and commuteshed (the workplaces of County residents who are employed).

The Lewis County laborshed is a rather compact area. As shown in Table 8 below, nearly two-thirds of the jobs in Lewis County are filled by County residents, while 25.8% are held by residents from adjacent counties, with the largest share from Jefferson County. Less than 10% of the workforce is comprised of residents coming from other locations.

Table 8. Commutation Patterns, Lewis County

Origins of Lewis County Workers (Inflow)		Destinations of Lewis County Residents (Outflow)	
County	Share	County	Share
Lewis	65.3%	Lewis	45.1%
Jefferson	11.4%	Jefferson	20.3%
Oneida	6.2%	Oneida	7.5%
St. Lawrence	5.0%	St. Lawrence	3.3%
Oswego	1.8%	Oswego	2.4%
Onondaga	1.7%	Onondaga	5.9%
Herkimer	1.3%	Herkimer	1.4%
Essex	0.7%	Essex	0.3%
Monroe	0.6%	Monroe	1.4%
Clinton	0.5%	Clinton	0.3%
All Other Counties	5.5%	All Other Counties	12.1%
Distance Traveled from Home to Work			
Less than 10 miles	41.6%	Less than 10 miles	30.9%
10 to 24 miles	33.3%	10 to 24 miles	28.7%
25 to 50 miles	12.3%	25 to 50 miles	16.5%
Greater than 50 miles	12.8%	Greater than 50 miles	23.8%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, OntheMap Application and LEHD Origin-Destination Employment Statistics.
Data is as of 2023, the most recent available.

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About 75% of individuals who hold jobs in Lewis County travel less than 25 miles from home. Roughly 13% have commuting distances of 50 miles or more; however, there are fewer long-distance commuters than there used to be.

Approximately 45% of Lewis County residents who are employed hold jobs in the County, while 35% commute to workplaces located in neighboring counties. Jefferson County is the most common destination among out-commuters. One in five employed residents in Lewis County commute to jobs in other locations in the North Country, Central New York, and beyond.

Nearly 24% of County residents travel more than 50 miles from home to work. This is a significant drop from 36% reported ten years ago and may be the result of increased employment opportunities locally. In contrast, 30.9% of residents have commutes of less than 10 miles.

As a rural community, Lewis County has a net outflow of workers: there are more employed residents who travel outside the County to work than there are workers commuting into the County from other locations. The volume of this outflow has decreased in virtually all industries. In manufacturing and agriculture, the County has a small net inflow of workers to fill existing jobs.

6. Regionally Significant and Strategic Industries

The NYS Department of Labor has identified 11 significant industries in the North Country region based on various criteria (see Table 9)[5]. According to the NYS DOL, these industries share one or more of the following characteristics:

- Above-average job growth, in either net or percentage terms, between 2018 and 2023;
- Regional employment of at least 1,000;
- Above-average expected job growth based on industry employment projections through 2030; or
- Above-average annual wages of $57,300 or more.

[5] NYS Department of Labor, Division of Research and Statistics. *North Country Significant Industries: A Report to the Workforce Development System*, 2024.

Table 9: Significant Industries in the North Country Region				
NAICS Code	Industry Name	Job Count (Private Sector Only), 2024		
		North Country Region	Lewis County	Lewis County As % of Region
112	Animal Production	1,950	280	14.4%
236	Construction of Buildings	2,072	69	3.3%
238	Specialty Trade Contractors	3,203	217	6.8%
311	Food Manufacturing	1,370	NA	est. 30-35%
541	Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	3,443	118	3.4%
561	Administrative and Support Services	3,153	80	2.5%
611	Educational Services	3,069	10	0.3%
621	Ambulatory Health Care Services	5,838	102	1.7%
624	Social Assistance	6,514	215	3.3%
721	Accommodation	3,013	98	3.3%
722	Food Services and Drinking Places	10,751	423	3.9%
	Total, All Private	**105,597**	**4,612**	**4.4%**
Source: NYS Department of Labor, Quarterly Census of Employment & Wages.				

Many of these industries have a limited presence in Lewis County relative to the broader region. The exceptions are *food manufacturing*, the only industry from the manufacturing sector to make the North Country's significant industries list, and *animal production*, the sole industry from the agricultural sector considered to be regionally significant and an important part of the supply chain for food manufacturers in the County.

In its 2025 Annual Report, the North Country REDC highlights major projects in advanced manufacturing, clean energy, and biotechnology, adding that the region also stands to benefit from historic investments being made in other parts of the state by major companies like Micron, Chobani, and GlobalFoundries. "[T]hese anchors are creating new opportunities across sectors such as dairy processing, precision manufacturing, and logistics — opening doors for regional suppliers and businesses to expand and compete."[6] With recent improvements to broadband service and the development of co-working spaces in the North Country, the region

[6] North Country Regional Economic Development Council, *2025 Annual Report & ACHIEVE Initiative Proposal*, p. 31.

is also targeting what it calls “location-neutral” industries, including professional, scientific, and technical services; finance and insurance; and information technology.

7. Conclusion

The Lewis County economy is characterized by a relatively small but growing employment base anchored by manufacturing, agriculture, public education and healthcare, retail trade, and tourism. The County faces ongoing labor constraints, however, that have the potential to limit business attraction and expansion, including a substantial outflow of workers to other locations and low unemployment. These conditions suggest a need to support existing employers, strengthen workforce availability, improve housing and infrastructure to attract high-skilled workers, and position the County to benefit from broader regional investments in advanced manufacturing, clean energy, food production, and other strategic industries.

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ECONOMIC CONDITIONS ANALYSIS

This chapter provides an overview of economic conditions in Lewis County, with a focus on the structure of its employment base, recent industry trends, entrepreneurial activity, workforce characteristics, and the sector-level strengths that shape future development potential. Drawing on employment, GDP, business formation, and labor market data, the analysis highlights both the County's competitive assets – including manufacturing, agriculture, and public sector stability – and the challenges posed by demographic change, workforce constraints, and uneven industry performance. Together, these findings provide a foundation for evaluating Lewis County's long-term economic resilience and identifying opportunities for strategic growth.

1. Industry Composition

Table 10 below presents employment by industry in Lewis County and the North Country region. Government is the County's largest employer, accounting for more than one-third of the jobs. Most of the public sector jobs are in local government and include local school districts and Lewis County General Hospital.

The largest private industry in Lewis County is manufacturing, with nearly 1,200 workers; it represents 16.9% of total employment in the County but only 6.4% of all jobs in the North Country region. Other major sectors with respect to employment are retail trade, accommodation and food services, health care and social assistance, and agriculture, forestry, fishing, and hunting.

Table 10. Employment by Industry, 2024

Description	Lewis County		North Country Region	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total Government / Public Sector	2,342	33.7%	42,585	28.7%
Manufacturing	1,177	16.9%	9,536	6.4%
Retail Trade	825	11.9%	19,765	13.3%
Accommodation and Food Services	521	7.5%	13,764	9.3%
Health Care and Social Assistance	376	5.4%	23,494	15.9%
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing & Hunting	334	4.8%	2,767	1.9%
Construction	298	4.3%	6,156	4.2%
Other Services (Personal and Repair)	270	3.9%	4,091	2.8%
Transportation and Warehousing	128	1.8%	4,040	2.7%
Wholesale Trade	127	1.8%	2,628	1.8%

Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	118	1.7%	3,443	2.3%
Administrative and Waste Services	87	1.3%	3,653	2.5%
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	67	1.0%	1,606	1.1%
Finance and Insurance	65	0.9%	2,215	1.5%
Utilities	49	0.7%	710	0.5%
Information	32	0.5%	1,319	0.9%
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	31	0.4%	1,507	1.0%
Educational Services	10	0.1%	3,069	2.1%
Mining	NA	NA	304	0.2%
Management of Companies	NA	NA	1,179	0.8%
Total, All Industries	**6,954**	**100.0%**	**148,182**	**100.0%**

Source: NYS Department of Labor, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages.
Note: Government includes local, state, and federal as well as public education and health care.

Lewis County accounts for 4.7% of all jobs in the North Country region, but it represents a higher proportion of regional employment in manufacturing (12.3%), agriculture, forestry, fishing, and hunting (12.1%), and to a lesser extent, utilities (6.9%).

At the more detailed 3-digit NAICS code level (Table 11), the largest private industries in Lewis County are food service and drinking places, general merchandise stores, and animal production (virtually all of which is in dairy cattle and milk production). The table does not list two industries also believed to be among the largest in the County: food manufacturing and fabricated metal manufacturing. The employment data for these industries has been suppressed to protect the confidentiality of specific employers.

Table 11. Largest Private Industries in Lewis County by 3-Digit NAICS Code, 2024

NAICS Code	Industry Subsector	Lewis County	North Country Region
722	Food Service and Drinking Places	423	10.751
455	General Merchandise Stores	379	5,059
112	Animal Production	280	1,950
238	Specialty Trade Contractors	217	3,203
624	Social Assistance	215	6,514
322	Paper Manufacturing	180	1,548
422	Building Material and Garden Supply Stores	147	3,219

Table 11. Largest Private Industries in Lewis County by 3-Digit NAICS Code, 2024			
NAICS Code	Industry Subsector	Lewis County	North Country Region
811	Repair and Maintenance	137	1,140
445	Food and Beverage Stores	109	3,232
424	Merchant Wholesalers, Nondurable Goods	107	1,299
621	Ambulatory Health Care Services	102	5,838
Source: NYS Department of Labor, Quarterly Census of Employment & Wages. Excludes industries for which data was not disclosed.			

2. Employment Trends

Total employment in Lewis County is up by 7.0%, increasing from 6,498 in 2014 to 6,954 in 2024 (Table 12). If only private sector employment is counted, the increase was 11.1%. Employment in some sectors of the local economy experienced a more rapid increase, including administrative support and waste services (+135.1%), arts, entertainment, and recreation (+45.7%), construction (+41.9%), and wholesale trade (+39.6%). Leading the way in absolute employment growth were retail trade (+108), construction (+88), and manufacturing (+85). Utilities, health care and social assistance, and real estate and rental and leasing all experienced a decline in employment from 2014 to 2024.

Overall, Lewis County's performance during this period was better than that of the North Country region, which experienced a net employment decline of 1.0%. In some areas of the economy, like construction, the rate of growth in employment in the County exceeded the regional growth rate. In other areas, including manufacturing, wholesale trade, and arts, entertainment, and recreation, the number of regional jobs declined, while County employment levels increased.

Table 12. Change in Employment by Industry, 2014-24, Lewis County				
Description	Lewis County		North Country Region	
	Change	% Change	Change	% Change
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing & Hunting	27	8.8%	219	8.6%
Utilities	-57	-53.8%	92	14.9%
Construction	88	41.9%	1,042	20.4%
Manufacturing	85	7.8%	-1,092	-10.3%
Wholesale Trade	36	39.6%	-212	-7.5%

Retail Trade	108	15.1%	-1,741	-8.1%
Transportation and Warehousing	32	33.3%	834	26.0%
Information	-7	-17.9%	-474	-26.4%
Finance and Insurance	-9	-12.2%	-9	-0.4%
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	-13	-29.5%	85	6.0%
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	-1	-0.8%	679	24.6%
Administrative and Waste Services	50	135.1%	102	2.9%
Health Care and Social Assistance	-90	-19.3%	1,094	4.9%
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	21	45.7%	-7	-0.4%
Accommodation and Food Services	32	6.5%	-747	-5.1%
Other Services (Personal and Repair)	73	37.1%	-428	-9.5%
Total Government / Public Sector	-5	-0.2%	-1,414	-3.2%
Total, Private Sector Industries	**461**	**11.1%**	**-136**	**-0.1%**
Total, All Industries	**456**	**7.0%**	**-1,550**	**-1.0%**
Source: NYS Department of Labor, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages. Excludes industries for which data was not disclosed.				

The analysis of disaggregated data at the 3-digit NAICS code level helps to further identify local industry strengths, though it is limited because data for some industries is suppressed for privacy reasons. Nevertheless, the location quotients highlight Lewis County's 14 most concentrated industries, which include four in manufacturing, three in the retail sector, two in other services, and two in agriculture, forestry, fishing, and hunting.

Table 13: Location Quotients of 1.20 and Above by 3-Digit NAICS Code

NAICS Code	Industry Subsector	Lewis County	North Country Region
112	Animal Production	23.36	7.63
113	Forestry and Logging	19.84	6.41
322	Paper Manufacturing	11.33	4.57
311	*Food Manufacturing*	*6.31*	0.81
921	Local Government	3.20	1.84
455	General Merchandise Stores	2.59	1.62
332	*Fabricated Metal Product Manufacturing*	*2.40*	0.39
442	Building Material and Garden Supply Stores	2.37	2.43
811	Repair and Maintenance	2.09	0.82
221	Utilities	1.85	1.26
457	Gasoline Stations and Fuel Dealers	1.83	2.35
519	Web Search Portals & Other Information Services	1.72	0.99

Table 13: Location Quotients of 1.20 and Above by 3-Digit NAICS Code			
NAICS Code	Industry Subsector	Lewis County	North Country Region
813	Membership Organizations	1.55	1.53
321	Wood Product Manufacturing	1.30	0.73
Source: NYS Department of Labor, Quarterly Census of Employment & Wages. Numbers shown in italics are estimated based on other sources due to data suppression issues.			

Long-term industry projections prepared by the NYS Department of Labor indicate that the North Country region will add 16,900 jobs, increasing by 10.5%, by 2032. Employment growth is projected to occur in health care and social assistance, government, educational services, accommodation and food services, other services, professional and business services, and arts, entertainment, and recreation. Of the 14 most concentrated industries in Lewis County, only three are expected to add jobs in the region, none at significant levels.

3. Entrepreneurial Activity and Self-Employment

Entrepreneurship plays a pivotal role in the local economy. New businesses have the potential to create jobs, provide essential services, facilitate innovation, and stimulate economic growth. They can also serve as alternative sources of income for individuals who do not earn a regular paycheck through paid employment.

The U.S. Census Bureau produces Business Formation Statistics (BFS) aimed at helping planners, municipal leaders, and policymakers monitor entrepreneurial activity and identify trends in new business formation. The statistics are based on Employer Identification Number (EIN) applications.

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As shown in Figure 6, Lewis County has experienced a rise in entrepreneurial activity in the last few years, consistent with national trends since the pandemic. Between 2014 and 2020, the County averaged about 100 new business formations per year. Since then, the number of EIN applications has been in the range of 175-200 annually.

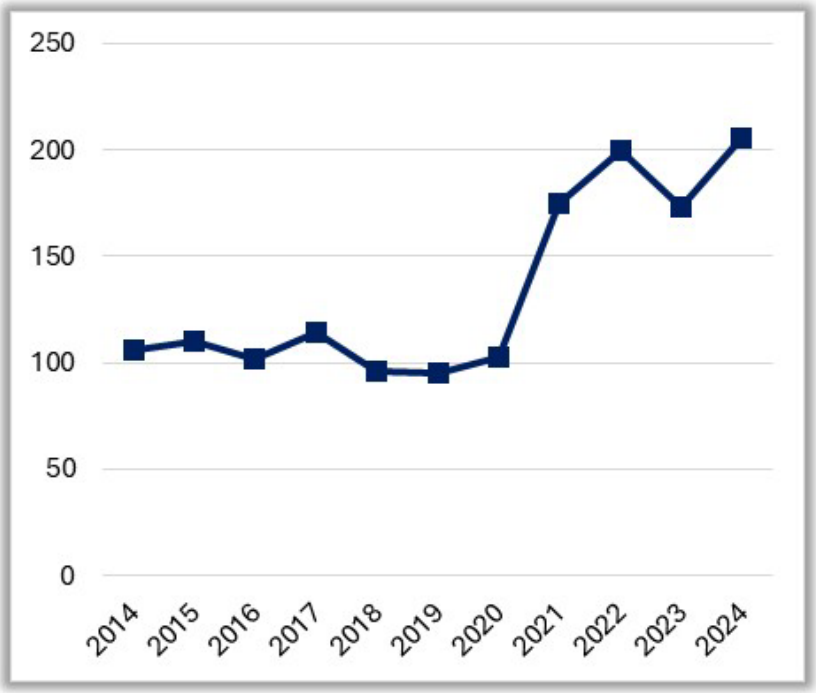


Figure 6. New Business Applications in Lewis County
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Business Formation Statistics.

In 2024, there were 129 business start-ups per capita in Lewis County. Within the North Country region, business formations per capita ranged from 98 in Jefferson County to 177 in Franklin County.

Nonemployer statistics provide data on businesses that have no paid employees and are subject to federal income tax. These establishments are usually sole proprietorships, and include self-employed workers and independent contractors, as well as freelancers and gig economy workers aiming to supplement their earnings from other sources.

Nonemployer establishments are substantially more numerous than establishments with employees. In 2023 (the latest year for which data are available), Lewis County had 1,765 nonemployers and 537 employer establishments. The nonemployers produced $103.8 million in annual revenue, or an average of $58,800. Although nonemployers are represented in virtually every major industry in the County, they are concentrated in construction, real estate, personal and repair services, retail, and professional services. The highest annual average

revenues were in construction ($91,210), transportation and warehousing ($89,541) and wholesale trade ($76,098).

Lewis County had 15.1 nonemployers per 100 residents in 2023. Within the region, per capita rates ranged from 10.2 in Hamilton County to 32.8 in Clinton County. Clinton County also had the highest annual average revenue among its nonemployers ($88,166), with Lewis County ranked second highest.

4. Gross Domestic Product

Gross domestic product (GDP) by county estimates the value of economic output, the goods and services produced in an area. While other types of data use employment as a measure of economic conditions, GDP statistics capture trends in the economic activity of various sectors, providing another tool for determining the strength of the local economy.

Government and real estate are major contributors to GDP in most U.S. counties. Manufacturing also remains essential to county GDP. Despite long-term reductions in employment, manufacturing is the dominant sector in nearly one in three counties based on annual economic output.

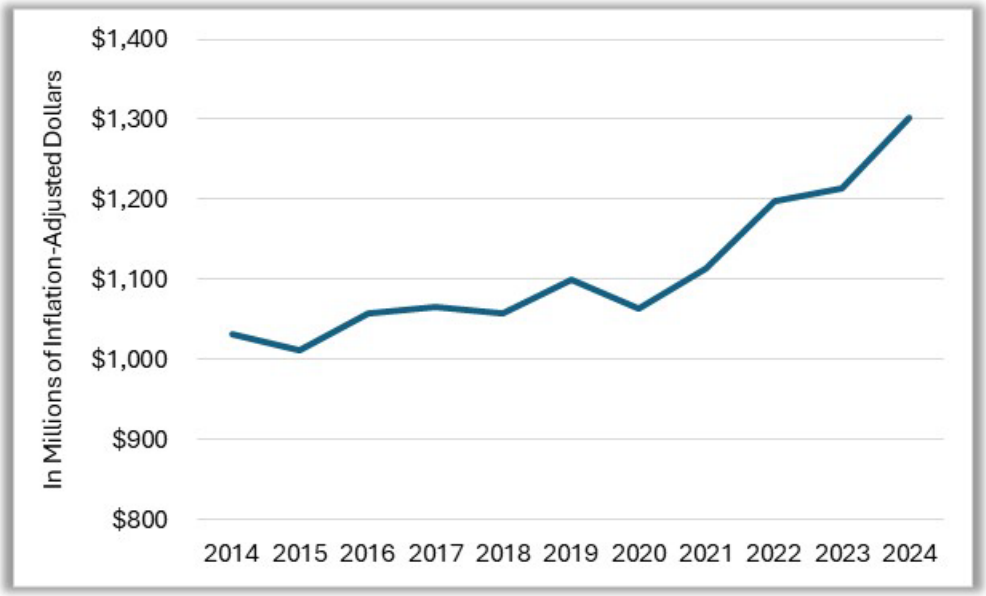


Figure 7. Real Gross Domestic Product in Lewis County: All Industries
Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis.

The Lewis County economy produced $1.302 billion in real GDP in 2024. It ranked 56th of New York's 60 counties in total GDP, ahead of Hamilton, Schuyler, Schoharie, and Yates. Manufacturing contributed the most to the County's economic output, grossing $239.3 million or 17.1% of real GDP across all industries. Approximately 90% of the real GDP in manufacturing was generated in the production of nondurable goods like food products and paper.

The utilities sector ranked second in economic output, accounting for $199.6 million or 15.5% of real GDP. This sector is responsible for very few jobs in Lewis County but has a major impact on the local economy due to the value it generates.

Other leading contributors to GDP in Lewis County include government and government enterprises (15.0%), real estate and rental and leasing (15.0%), and agriculture, forestry, fishing, and hunting (13.9%). The top five contributing industries were the same in 2014.

Between 2014 and 2024, real GDP in Lewis County grew by more than 26%, faster than the state average of 19.8%. The only private industry in the County to experience a net decline in real GDP was mining, quarrying, and oil and natural gas extraction. The highest rates of real GDP growth were in information, manufacturing, agriculture, and other services (personal and repair services), where the rate of growth exceeded state averages.

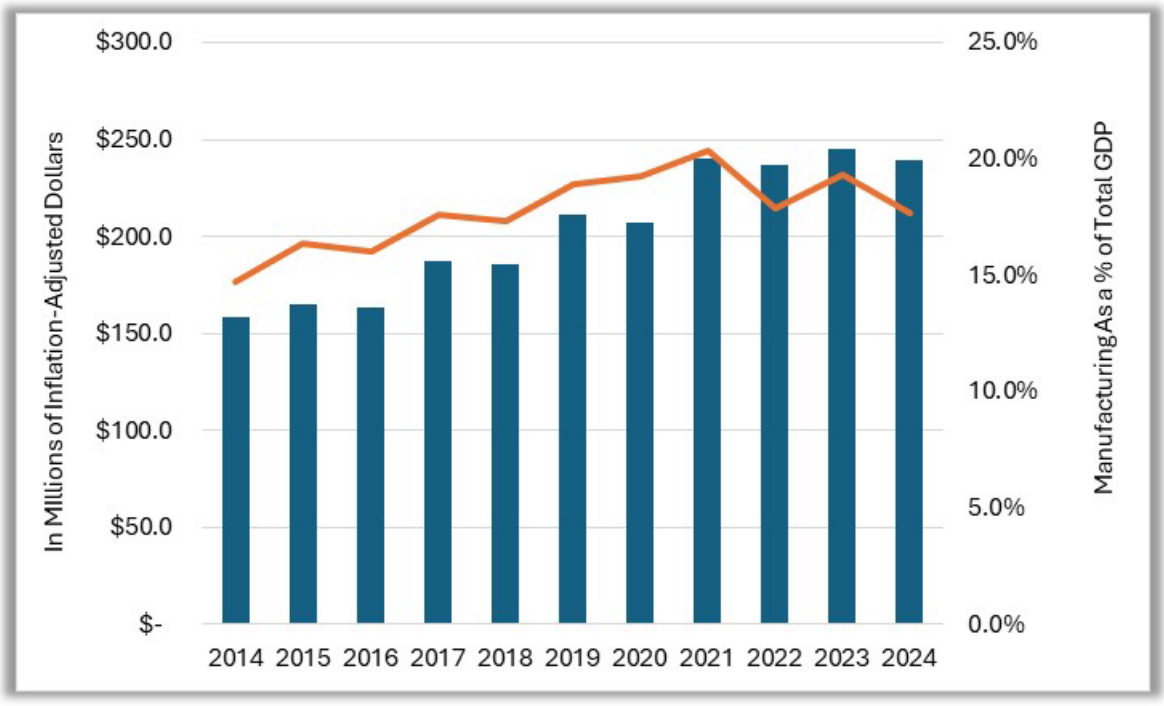


Figure 8. Real GDP in Manufacturing in Lewis County
Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis.

5. The Agricultural Economy

The value of agriculture is underrepresented in employment data. Seasonal workers and family members who work on the farm are often not covered by unemployment insurance; farm workers may be employed through informal arrangements, off the books. Additionally, the federal Bureau of Labor Statistics specifically excludes farmers and farm workers, as well as private household employees, from its jobs and payroll reports. The exceptions are people employed by large, incorporated farming companies, but even then, field laborers are not counted. Two sources can be used to measure the contribution of agriculture to the Lewis County economy: gross domestic product statistics, and information from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Census of Agriculture.

In statistics on GDP by industry, agriculture is part of an industry category that combines agriculture, forestry, fishing, and hunting. In 2024, agriculture, forestry, fishing, and hunting generated $231.0 million in GDP in Lewis County, a 14% share of the total. Not only is the sector one of the largest contributors to the GDP in the County, it is also among the fastest growing. Between 2014 and 2024, real GDP in agriculture and forestry increased 57.1% in Lewis County, much faster than the state average of 14.1%.

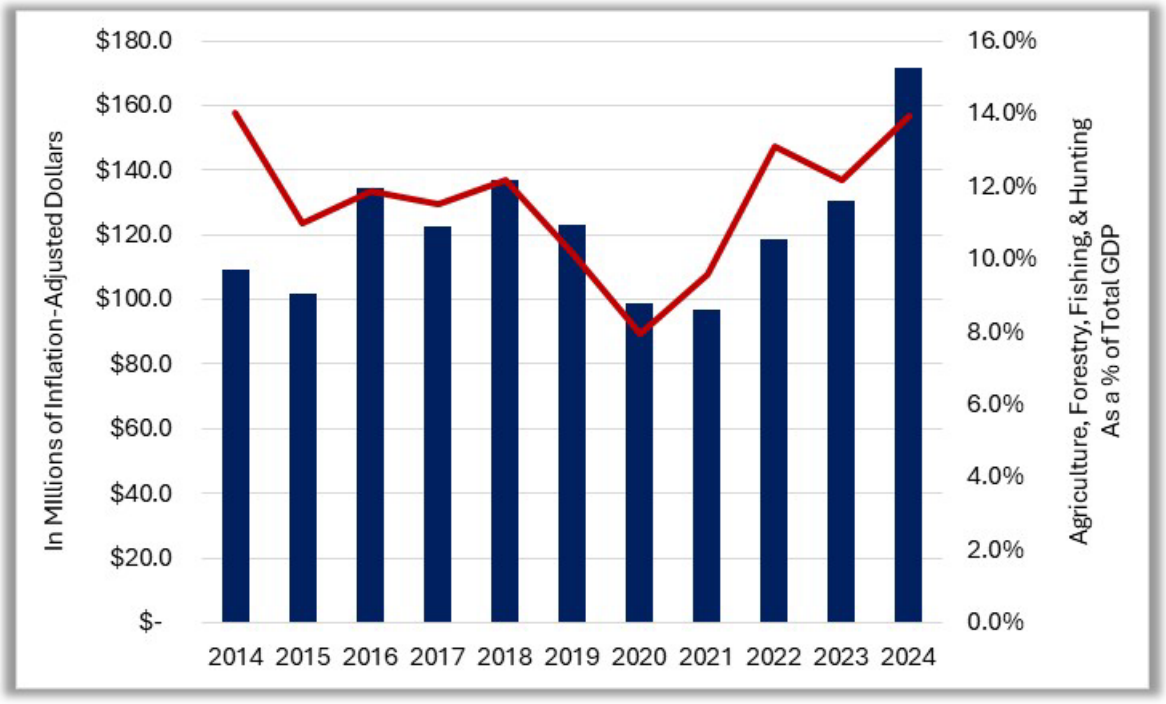


Figure 9. Real GDP in Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, and Hunting, Lewis County
Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis.

When the most recent U.S. Census of Agriculture was conducted in 2022, the sale of agricultural products in Lewis County contributed $178.6 million to the local economy, with 86% of the sales attributed to livestock, poultry, and their products. Average sales per farm in 2022 were $375,220, more than 40% above the New York State average ($262,228).

Lewis County ranked #19 of all New York counties in terms of total farm sales in 2022, down from #15 in 2017. Within the North Country region, it was ranked #4, after Clinton, St. Lawrence, and Jefferson counties.

Milk from cows accounted for more than three-quarters of the agricultural sales in Lewis County. Notably, despite a steep decline in the number of dairy farms, milk sales in Lewis County increased by 6.0% between 2012 and 2022 after adjusting the dollar amounts for inflation. This is largely due to gains in productivity; many smaller farms have been consolidated into larger agricultural operations. In 2022, the average dairy operation in the County had 184 dairy cows, up from 115 ten years earlier.

Nearly 20% of all farms in Lewis County sold agricultural products directly to consumers in 2022, earning $836,000, while 10% of farms sold their products to retail markets, institutions, and food hubs, with $3,145,000 in sales. Both sales practices have increased among local farms. Less than 5% of farms engaged in organic agriculture, with $1,215,000 in sales. Although there are more organic farmers in Lewis County than in the past, organic production is more prevalent elsewhere in the North Country.

Most sales of agricultural products in Lewis County come from a relatively small number of farms. For example, while 12.8% of the farms (61) earned at least $500,000 in 2022, they accounted for 84% of the total sales. Conversely, the 162 farms with less than $10,000 in annual sales represented 34.0% of all farms in the County, but only 0.3% of the total sales.

The average net income realized by farm operations in Lewis County in 2022 was $129,832, well above the state average of $76,781. Approximately 61% of farms in Lewis County, compared to 40% statewide, earned a profit. The average net gains of the profitable farms were $229,140, just below statewide average of $236,202, while the net losses averaged $22,299, compared to $31,688 statewide.

6. Workforce Characteristics and Trends

Various characteristics of the Lewis County workforce – that is, the people who hold jobs within the County - can be assessed with data from the U.S. Census Bureau's Longitudinal Employer-

Household Dynamics (LEHD) program, the same source of the data on commutation patterns presented in the chapter on Local and Regional Economic Characteristics. The LEHD program provides Quarterly Workforce Indicators (QWIs) including employment, new hiring activity, and turnover rates, that can be analyzed by geography, age, gender, and educational attainment.

7. Employment and Age

Approximately 60% of the workforce in Lewis County is between the ages of 25 and 54, prime working-age. As shown in Table 14, 26.2% of all workers, or 23.7% of workers employed in private industry, are aged 55 and over. Industry sectors with above-average percentages of older workers include real estate and rental and leasing (36.4%), transportation and warehousing (32.2%), and personal and repair services (31.0%). In addition, almost one in three workers employed in paper production in Lewis County is aged 55 and over. Industries with a high proportion of workers approaching retirement age may need to plan for accelerated employee recruitment efforts and training programs to address the loss of experienced older workers.

Table 14. Lewis County Workforce Distribution by Age Group

	% 14-24	% 25-54	% 55 and Older	NYS % 55 and Older
Real Estate and Rental & Leasing	NA	NA	36.4%	32.9%
Transportation and Warehousing	5.1%	62.7%	32.2%	24.1%
Other Services (Personal and Repair Services)	11.6%	57.3%	31.0%	30.3%
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	13.9%	55.8%	30.1%	30.5%
Health Care and Social Assistance	11.0%	63.9%	25.3%	28.0%
Information	11.1%	63.9%	25.0%	19.9%
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	18.6%	56.6%	24.8%	20.0%
Retail Trade	21.8%	53.5%	24.7%	22.9%
Finance and Insurance	8.0%	68.0%	24.0%	20.9%
Wholesale Trade	7.7%	69.2%	23.1%	28.8%
Construction	13.5%	63.7%	22.8%	26.1%
Manufacturing	15.3%	62.3%	22.4%	30.9%
>Food Manufacturing	*13.5%*	*71.7%*	*14.7%*	*26.7%*
>Paper Manufacturing	*6.4%*	*58.0%*	*35.6%*	*32.0%*
Accommodation and Food Services	34.7%	50.9%	14.4%	18.5%
All Private Industries	**17.3%**	**59.0%**	**23.7%**	**24.6%**
> Public Health Care and Social Assistance	*8.4%*	*64.9%*	*26.6%*	*28.1%*
All Industries (Public and Private)	**13.7%**	**60.1%**	**26.2%**	**25.2%**

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Local Employment Dynamics Program. Quarterly Workforce Indicators (QWI) data; 2024 averages. Industries listed are private sector only except where noted. Data not available for all industries.

8. Employment by Gender

As illustrated by the data in Table 15, the workforce in Lewis County is about evenly split between men and women. There are, however, several industries in which either men or women predominate. Among the sectors in which men comprise at least 80% of the workforce are utilities (90.6%), construction (88.2%), and transportation and warehousing (84.7%). The transportation and warehousing sector has many jobs in trucking. Conversely, women make up a disproportionate share of the workforce in health care and social assistance (77.6%), accommodation and food services (70.5%), and professional, scientific, and technical services (70.5%).

9. Employment by Educational Attainment

Table 16 presents data on the educational attainment of workers in Lewis County who are at least 25 years of age. Overall, 23.6% of the workforce has a bachelor's degree, graduate, or professional degree. The share of workers with a bachelor's degree or higher varies by industry, however, depending on job requirements. In Lewis County, the highest levels of educational attainment are found among workers in two industries: professional, scientific, and technical services and finance and insurance.

Table 15. Lewis County Workforce Distribution by Gender and Educational Attainment

	% Male	Workers Age 25 and Over			
		Less Than High School	High School Diploma or GED	Some College or Associates Degree	Bachelor's Degree or Higher
Utilities	90.6%	NA			
Construction	88.2%	12.0%	45.4%	26.3%	16.3%
Transportation and Warehousing	84.7%	13.4%	39.3%	31.3%	16.1%
Manufacturing	74.0%	10.9%	40.1%	30.5%	18.6%
> Food Manufacturing	*71.7%*	*12.0%*	*36.3%*	*32.4%*	*19.3%*
> Paper Manufacturing	*80.3%*	*9.1%*	*43.1%*	*29.0%*	*18.8%*
Real Estate and Rental & Leasing	72.7%	NA			
Administrative and Waste Services	69.4%	11.3%	33.8%	30.0%	25.0%
Wholesale Trade	69.2%	9.2%	38.3%	30.8%	21.7%

Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	68.8%	17.2%	37.4%	25.8%	19.5%
Other Services	66.3%	9.0%	39.0%	33.0%	19.1%
Retail Trade	52.2%	11.5%	37.9%	31.4%	19.1%
Information	47.2%	NA			
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	43.9%	12.2%	31.7%	34.1%	22.0%
Finance and Insurance	30.0%	13.0%	26.1%	32.6%	28.3%
Accommodation and Food Services	29.5%	13.0%	34.8%	33.0%	19.1%
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	29.5%	5.7%	22.6%	34.0%	37.7%
Health Care and Social Assistance	22.4%	8.2%	28.8%	39.1%	24.0%
All Private Industries	**57.7%**	**11.1%**	**36.7%**	**31.8%**	**20.4%**
>Public Health Care and Social Assistance	*29.2%*	*7.8%*	*29.9%*	*37.3%*	*25.0%*
All Industries (Public and Private)	**49.5%**	**9.8%**	**34.6%**	**32.1%**	**23.6%**
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Local Employment Dynamics Program. Quarterly Workforce Indicators (QWI) data; 2024 averages. Industries listed are private sector only except where noted. Data not available for all industries.					

Other industries on the list have lower levels of educational attainment. Transportation and warehousing are tied for the lowest, with 16% of workers possessing a four-year degree.

Although each industry relies on a different mix of occupations and skills, understanding the educational attainment of the incumbent workforce in Lewis County can help to identify the minimal requirements for employment.

10. Employee Turnover

The employee turnover rate is a measure of workforce stability; it measures the movement of workers into and out of jobs, including retirements. In 2024, the average annual turnover rate in Lewis County was 8.0%. This was comparable to the New York State turnover rate of 8.2%.

Turnover rates vary by industry and age: for example, teens and young adults tend to have relatively high turnover rates, and employee turnover is generally higher in low-wage industries such as retail and food services. Limited data is available by industry at the County level, but the statistics indicate an annual turnover rate of 13.8% among workers in Lewis County's hospitality industry (accommodation and food services), slightly above the state average of 12.9%. The lowest employee turnover rates in the Lewis County workforce are in manufacturing

(6.1%) and health care and social assistance (6.3%), with the latter well below the state average of 8.2%.

11. Economic Strengths, Weaknesses, and Opportunities

Economic Strengths (Competitive Advantages)

- Dairy production and linkages to manufacturing
- Growth in real GDP, particularly in economic sectors (e.g., utilities, manufacturing) that bring income into the County
- The continued operation of sizable manufacturing establishments, many of which draw on Lewis County's natural resources and export products out of the area
- Extensive opportunities for outdoor recreation
- Food processing industry
- Low employee turnover rates in manufacturing and health care
- A strong concentration of employment in manufacturing relative to the region and nation
- Agriculture and forestry remain major contributors to economic output and local identity
- Public sector employment provides stability in the County's job base
- Recent growth in entrepreneurial activity and business formation
- Above-average nonemployer revenues that suggest capacity for successful self-employment and small business activity

Economic Weaknesses (Competitive Disadvantages)

- Stagnant population and an aging, shrinking labor force
- Limited supply of college-educated labor for high-skill, knowledge-based jobs
- No major research institutions or universities to serve as the basis for innovation and the development of advanced technology industries
- Lack of diversity in agricultural production; the dairy industry continues to dominate, and the County has not experienced strong growth in the production of crops or livestock with market potential
- Shortage of modern/updated rental housing, particularly for households coming from metropolitan areas
- Employment concentrations in legacy industries like wood and paper manufacturing that are vulnerable to economic dislocation

- Low concentrations of employment in professional, scientific, and technical services, information, and other knowledge-intensive sectors
- Small population base that can constrain consumer demand and business expansion
- Reliance on a relatively small number of major employers and industries
- Potential workforce replacement challenges as older workers retire from key sectors

Economic Opportunities

- Agricultural diversification and the attraction of new, young, and/or veteran farmers to the County
- Tourism connected to the region's nascent local food industry, including experiential food tours and events to introduce visitors to farmers and small-scale producers
- Capitalizing on emerging opportunities in the North Country region identified in a 2018 economic study by the Adirondack North Country Association,[7] including "crafted manufacturing," the production of customized or niche products that benefit from the brand and unique assets of the Adirondack region
- Expanded entrepreneurial education and small business development, building on recent increases in business formation and self-employment
- Leveraging outdoor recreation assets to support tourism, hospitality, and related small businesses
- Supporting value-added agriculture and local food and craft beverage manufacturing
- Workforce recruitment and retention strategies aimed at younger workers and in-migrating households
- Housing development that better supports workforce attraction and business investment
- Expansion of renewable energy and utility-related economic benefits
- Business support efforts that help existing manufacturers, farms, and small firms modernize and grow
- Placemaking to make villages and hamlets more attractive for residents and visitors and increase opportunities for commercial activity

Overall, Lewis County's economy demonstrates a measure of resilience rooted in its strong manufacturing base, significant agricultural output, and above-average growth in real GDP over the last decade. Long-term challenges include an aging workforce, slow population

[7] Adirondack North Country Association, *Regional Economic Analysis for the Adirondack North Country: What's Growing? Where Should We Invest?* November 2018.

growth, and a limited base of knowledge-intensive industries. Entrepreneurial activity is a positive sign, but future growth will depend on the County's ability to strengthen and expand its labor force, diversify its economic base, support business development, and build on existing competitive advantages in agriculture, manufacturing, renewable energy, and tourism.

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HOUSING CHARACTERISTICS

A diverse, high-quality housing stock that includes a variety of options is necessary to meet the needs of existing and new residents in Lewis County. The demand for housing is based on demographic and socioeconomic characteristics, such as age, income, household size, and employment status. Some residents have specific needs and require supportive housing, a combination of housing and on-site support services, to help seniors, people with disabilities, and others to live independently.[8]

1. Recent Studies Related to Housing

A Housing Needs Assessment and Market Analysis was prepared for Lewis County in 2022 to understand and quantify the housing challenges facing the County and to develop recommendations to alleviate these challenges. The assessment summarized housing-related planning efforts; presented demographic, housing, and economic data; analyzed residential real estate trends; and offered programmatic and policy approaches to address identified housing needs.

The housing study utilized Envision Tomorrow, a scenario planning tool, to provide projections on the demand and supply of housing in Lewis County by income range, tenure and housing type. The exercise determined that all growth in the number of households by 2040 is projected to occur among renters; owner-occupied households are projected to decline. The most significant increase in projected households is for seniors, age 65 and over, earning less than $10,000 annually. In contrast, the most significant decline is in the working-age population (under age 65) earning $100,000 to $150,000 annually. The study projected that, consistent with national trends, the demand for large-lot single-family homes would decrease significantly by 2040, while the demand for small-lot single family homes and townhouses would increase.

Ultimately, the Housing Needs Assessment concluded that the inventory of available homes is very limited in Lewis County, and that 680 housing units (or 40 units per year) would need to

[8] Information presented in this section is derived primarily from the U.S. Decennial Census and the American Community Survey (ACS). While these datasets provide the most widely used and reliable sources of community-level information, they are estimates rather than exact counts for many variables. ACS data are based on survey samples and are subject to margins of error, particularly in smaller rural communities where sample sizes may be limited. As a result, the data should be viewed as indicators of broader trends and conditions rather than precise measurements, and should be considered alongside local knowledge, stakeholder input, and other available data sources when informing planning decisions.

be added to the existing supply of housing via new construction and the rehabilitation and occupancy of vacant units by 2040. The study recommended several strategies to maintain the existing stock, create more types of housing, and limit the number of homes that are taken out of the housing market, including:

- Improving collaboration between Lewis County and its non-profit housing organizations, Snow Belt Housing, and Lewis County Opportunities, to share resources and explore options for senior housing development, among other tasks.
- Foster a larger contractor pool to respond to housing rehabilitation needs.
- Creating smaller multi-unit housing developments (as opposed to larger-scale developments that are not well-suited to rural communities) with access to case management services.
- Updating municipal zoning laws to encourage accessory dwelling units (ADUs) and universal design standards to accommodate multi-generational households and make housing more accessible to all occupants.
- Considering financial and/or tax incentives to encourage construction and rehabilitation of market-rate housing.
- Exploring the creation of a County Housing Trust Fund and a land bank.

In 2025, as a follow-up to the Housing Needs Assessment, the Lewis County Department of Planning and Community Development commissioned a community survey to understand residents' opinions, attitudes, preferences, and behaviors as they relate to housing access and affordability. The Department contracted with the Center for Community Studies at SUNY Jefferson Community College to design and administer the survey. A summary of the key findings of the survey is listed below; a more detailed discussion of the survey results is provided in the Previous Plan Analysis section of this report.

- Asked about their housing preferences, 90% of respondents indicated that they prefer to live in a single-family home as opposed to an apartment or a mobile home. Three out of four respondents prefer to live in a rural setting outside of a village. Broadband/high-speed Internet access and yard space were identified as most important to their housing choices.
- A majority of respondents expressed concerns about housing affordability in Lewis County, with 22% characterizing it as "very unaffordable." Only 16% of respondents indicated that they were very familiar with local housing affordability programs, suggesting a need to disseminate information about them to County residents.

- The most significant housing challenge experienced by the respondents is housing prices. One in five survey participants have recently feared losing their housing and 13% have had recent difficulty finding suitable housing.
- Respondents generally support the four potential Lewis County housing policies or programs that were listed on the survey, with very little opposition. Funding assistance for home improvements was perceived as most important. Survey participants overwhelmingly believe that support for affordable housing is important to community health and well-being, that additional housing options are needed, and that the County should play a lead role in promoting affordable housing locally.

2. Housing Stock Overview

Data from the 2020 Census indicates a total of 15,464 housing units in Lewis County, an increase from 15,112 in 2010 (Table 16). Housing units increased by 2.3% between 2010 and 2020, a slower rate of growth than in Jefferson County (6.3%) and New York State (4.7%).

The Town of Lowville and the Town of Croghan, the two largest municipalities in terms of population, also have the most housing units. Three of the villages, Turin, Castorland, and Constableville, have the smallest number of units and are among Lewis County's least populated communities.

Few municipalities experienced significant housing growth between 2010 and 2020. On a percentage basis, the largest increases occurred in the Town of Diana (16.5%) and the Town of Croghan (9.3%). In eight of the County's 17 towns and five of its eight villages, the supply of housing increased at modest rates. Seven towns and two villages lost housing units over the ten-year period, led by the Town of Osceola, the Village of Copenhagen, and the Village of Turin.

Most housing units in the County are owner-occupied rather than renter-occupied, with 76.6% of households living in homes that they own. Single-family residences make up the bulk of the local housing stock, as they often do in rural communities. Among municipalities, rates of owner-occupancy range from 53.0% in the Village of Lowville to 92.7% in the Town of Pinckney. Homeownership is generally less prevalent in the villages than in the towns.

Approximately 24% of all housing units in Lewis County are classified as seasonal or recreational. These units are typically not weatherized or have other features that make them unsuitable for year-round occupancy. Seasonal units are mainly located in the towns outside

the villages. More than half of the housing units are seasonal in the Town of Montague (77.8%), the Town of Osceola (64.7%), and the Town of Greig (51.0%).

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Table 16. Housing Units, Lewis County Towns and Villages					
	2010 Census	**2020 Census**	**% Change, 2010-20**	**% Owner-Occupied, 2020***	**% Seasonal, 2020**
Lewis County	15,112	15,464	2.3%	76.6%	23.6%
Towns					
Croghan	1,629	1,781	9.3%	79.8%	21.9%
Denmark	1,209	1,179	-2.5%	70.5%	5.3%
Diana	1,201	1,399	16.5%	79.5%	42.6%
Greig	1,228	1,213	-1.2%	87.3%	51.0%
Harrisburg	239	242	1.3%	85.1%	24.8%
Lewis	439	441	0.5%	88.5%	20.9%
Leyden	816	797	-2.3%	79.4%	8.0%
Lowville	2,133	2,225	4.3%	58.0%	1.3%
Lyonsdale	697	682	-2.2%	82.1%	22.6%
Martinsburg	667	653	-2.1%	73.5%	17.0%
Montague	259	270	4.2%	82.4%	77.8%
New Bremen	1,140	1,186	4.0%	84.3%	5.9%
Osceola	429	397	-7.5%	85.2%	64.7%
Pinckney	248	261	5.2%	92.7%	44.1%
Turin	440	454	3.2%	82.1%	24.2%
Watson	1,395	1,296	-7.1%	86.9%	36.3%
West Turin	943	988	4.8%	80.9%	24.5%
Villages					
Castorland	137	139	1.5%	56.3%	2.2%
Constableville	134	136	1.5%	78.1%	5.1%
Copenhagen	371	343	-7.5%	50.3%	0.0%
Croghan	317	335	5.7%	58.4%	1.8%
Lowville	1,613	1,673	3.7%	53.0%	1.1%
Lyons Falls	269	279	3.7%	68.5%	0.4%
Port Leyden	288	278	-3.5%	61.4%	2.9%
Turin	125	116	-7.2%	72.4%	12.1%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau.
* Indicates percentage of occupied units, not total units.
The Village of Harrisville, which dissolved in 2018, is not listed.

Housing Characteristics

Detailed data on housing characteristics is available from the Census Bureau's American Community Survey (ACS). Characteristics like housing type and age, tenure (ownership and

rental), vacancy rates, and cost all impact the availability and affordability of housing in Lewis County.

According to the latest five-year estimates (2024) from the ACS, single-family homes remain the predominant housing type in Lewis County, representing about 80% of all housing units. Roughly 10% of the units in the County are mobile homes. Less than 10% of housing units are in multifamily housing, with most of them in two- to four-family structures rather than large apartment buildings. In comparison, multifamily units make up about 26% of the housing supply in Jefferson County.

Lewis County has a relatively high proportion of older housing. Approximately 58% of all housing units were constructed prior to 1980; only 17% were built in 2000 or later. Although many residential properties are well-maintained, units in older buildings are much more likely to require structural repairs and upgrades to meet the expectations of prospective homebuyers and tenants.

Vacancy rates are among the factors used to assess the availability of housing choice, with opportunities for households to find units that meet their needs. Generally, a vacancy rate of about 5% indicates that there is an adequate supply of housing available. According to ACS estimates, the for-sale housing vacancy rate in Lewis County is 0.5%, while the rental housing vacancy rate is 2.7%, suggesting a relatively tight housing market. The comparable rates in Jefferson County are 1.9% and 4.4%, respectively.

3. Housing Costs and Affordability

a. Housing Costs

Home values tend to reflect both the age and condition of housing. In the ACS, the housing value represents an estimate of what the home would sell for if it were for sale. The median value of owner-occupied housing is $166,100 in Lewis County, below the value in Jefferson County ($188,200) and much less than the New York State median value ($423,800), which is influenced by the downstate housing market.

The median gross rent, defined by the Census Bureau as the contract or asking rent plus the cost of utilities, is estimated at $837 in Lewis County. Again, this is well below the median gross rent of $1,213 in Jefferson County, where modern rental housing has been constructed to support operations at Fort Drum.

The Housing Needs Assessment noted that between 2010 and 2019, the County's median gross rent increased by 29.1%, from $595 to $768 per month. Since then, it has risen an additional 9.0%. In Jefferson County, where the median rent increased 28.3%, it increased by an additional 22.9% between 2019 and 2024.

A standard measure of housing affordability is cost burden. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) considers a household to be cost burdened if it pays more than 30% of its gross income for monthly housing expenses, including mortgage or rent payments, utility costs, and property taxes. The greater the proportion of income spent on housing costs, the less households have to afford basic necessities, like groceries, transportation, and medical care.

Of the households in Lewis County that own a home and pay a mortgage, 23.5% are cost burdened. The rate of cost burden is much lower, 11.9%, among owner households without a mortgage. The extent of housing cost burden is similar in Jefferson County, with rates of 24.5% among homeowners with a mortgage and 12.2% among those without a mortgage.

Although there are fewer renters than homeowners in Lewis County, renter households face a higher risk of cost burdening due to their lower income levels. The ACS reports that almost one in three renter households in the County (32.3%) spends more than 30% of their income on housing costs. The rate of cost burden is higher in Jefferson County, at 47.8%, but the relatively limited supply of rental housing in Lewis County exacerbates the situation, as these households have fewer housing options.

A housing affordability analysis conducted as part of the Housing Needs Assessment concluded that, "home ownership is relatively attainable for many Lewis County residents," with the exception of extremely low-income households, those earning 30% or less of the HUD Area Median Family Income (HAMFI).[9] Renting is far less affordable, though, for extremely low-income and very low-income households, those earning less than 50% of HAMFI, regardless of household size.

b. Existing Supply of Housing for Low- and Moderate-Income Households

[9] Lewis County Housing Needs Assessment, p. 45.

The inventory of affordable rental housing in Lewis County includes both subsidized and assisted units. These properties are managed by non-profit housing organizations, like Snow Belt Housing, or by private management companies

Table 17. Housing for Low- and Moderate-Income Households

Name	Location	# of Units	Type	Owner
Valley View Courts	Lowville	80	Senior/Disabled	Lowville Housing Authority
Lowville Heights and Lewis Apartments*	Lowville	40**	Family	Snow Belt Lowville Housing Development Fund Company, Inc.
Karcher Country Estates	Castorland	24	Senior/Disabled	Castorland Housing Development Fund Company, Inc.
Steeple View Courts*	Croghan	20	Senior/Disabled	Croghan Housing Development Fund Company
Harris Court	Harrisville	20	Senior/Disabled	Two Plus Four Management
McNeil Park Apartments	Copenhagen	15	Senior/Disabled	Copenhagen Happy Achers Housing Development Fund Company, Inc.
High Falls Apartments	Lyons Falls	12	Senior/Disabled	Lyons Falls Housing Development Fund Company, Inc.
Whitton Place Apartments	Port Leyden	12	Senior/Disabled	South Lewis Housing Development Fund Company, Inc
Millcreek	Lowville	10	Family	Snow Belt Housing
Center Street	Lyons Falls	6	Family	Snow Belt Housing
Pinecrest Manor	Croghan	4	Family	Snow Belt Housing
Elm Street Apartments	Lowville	3	Family	Snow Belt Housing
Sunburst	Copenhagen	2	Family	Snow Belt Housing
Domingo House	Lowville	2	Family	Snow Belt Housing
Snow Belt Headquarters	Lowville	1	Family	Snow Belt Housing
Trainor	Lowville	1	Family	Snow Belt Housing

** Denotes properties that have exited the Section 515 program and are no longer bound by USDA affordability restrictions.*
*** 33 units are subsidized.*

Several rental housing complexes for low- and moderate-income families in Lewis County were constructed using financing from the Section 515 Rural Housing Program, a U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) direct loan program. Loans are amortized over 30 to 50 years at a subsidized 1% interest rate. As these loans reach maturity or are paid off, however, property

owners are no longer bound by USDA affordability restrictions; they may increase monthly rents or convert the buildings to market-rate housing, putting low-income tenants at risk of displacement. Lewis Apartments and Steeple View Courts have both exited the Section 515 program. McNeil Park and Valley View Courts are scheduled to exit the program in 2028 and 2035, respectively.

Two affordable housing projects in Lewis County are in the pipeline. In Lyons Falls, TopView Apartments Lewis LLC is converting the former Lyons Falls Elementary School into 20 new apartments and commercial space. Construction is expected to be completed by December 2026. In addition, New York State recently awarded grant funding to support the development of General Martin Apartments in Martinsburg. This project will also utilize a former elementary school and build an extension to the structure, creating 63 new units. The state also awarded funding to support the rehabilitation of four existing apartment buildings with 40 units at the Lowville Heights and Lewis Apartments in Lowville.

c. Recent Residential Real Estate Sale Activity (Utilizing the 2022 Lewis County Housing Strategy)

Residential sale prices are a more accurate measure of market values than the estimated housing values provided in the ACS. According to the NYS Association of Realtors, the median selling price of homes sold in Lewis County in 2025 was $183,720, a 22.5% increase above the median of $150,000 reported in 2021. In comparison, the median selling price in Jefferson County in 2025 was $230,285.

Using real property transfer data, the sales prices associated with arm's length home sales in Lewis County from 2021 through 2025 were compiled. ("Arm's length" refers to real estate transactions in which buyers and sellers act independently and in their own interest, without undue pressure on either party.)

According to the data, 177 single-family, year-round homes[10] in Lewis County sold in 2025, with a median selling price of $178,000. The sales price reflected a 27.2% increase compared to $140,000 in 2021. There were also 25 residential properties with mobile homes sold in 2025, with a median price of $75,000, up from $45,000.

d. Conclusion

[10] Property classification codes 210 and 240.

Taken together, the data presented in this chapter depicts a housing market in Lewis County that is tight, limited in variety, and increasingly difficult for some households to navigate. The County's housing stock continues to be dominated by single-family homes, while the supply of rental and multifamily options remains relatively small. Rising sale prices, low vacancy rates, and persistent affordability pressures create challenges for renters, lower-income residents, and older adults. These findings point to the importance of broadening the range of housing choices, rehabilitating older units, and developing policies and programs that make it easier to create affordable and workforce housing in both villages and rural areas – all strategies recommended in the Housing Needs Assessment.

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BUILT ENVIRONMENT AND LAND USE

1. Land Use Patterns: Property Type Classification Codes

While land use regulation in New York state is generally a function of cities, towns, and villages, counties provide important oversight and planning direction. To support with advisory and understand county-wide land use challenges and opportunities, this section outlines the land use make up of Lewis County using 2025 Property Tax Assessment data. Note that there may be discrepancies between the county and local municipal assessor and this information is intended to illustrate general themes and trends.

Wild, forested, conservation lands and public parks:

The predominant property type class in Lewis County is comprised of forest lands, publicly-owned outdoor recreation, wetlands and all other wild or conservation lands. These lands total approximately 413,955 acres and 2,775 parcels. Relative to all lands in the County, wild, forested, conservation lands and public parks comprise approximately 51% of land in the County. Protected lands also fall within this category. Two of the largest areas are the Independence River Wild Forest, which is a State Conservation Area that stretches across the towns of Watson and Greig and encompasses 76,530 acres. The second largest is the South Easement of Fish Creek that touches the towns of West Turin, Lewis and Osceola. This easement is approximately 30,217 acres.

In 2009, the same property type class accounted for approximately 48.5% of land in the County.

Agricultural:

The second largest land use in Lewis County is Agricultural with properties assessed as agricultural comprising approximately 17% of land in Lewis County. This category is broad and considers all properties used for the production of crops or livestock. Agricultural lands are generally distributed throughout the County. The amount of land assessed as agricultural has decreased by approximately 2.6% since the 2009 Comprehensive Plan. A more detailed review of agricultural lands in Lewis County is found in Section XX (link to Nan's content).

Residential:

Residential lands, which include one-, two-, and three-family homes, seasonal residences, and manufactured homes, make up approximately 17% of Lewis County lands. While residential

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properties are found throughout the County, they are concentrated in the County's villages and hamlets while. One family year-round residences make up the largest share of assessed properties at approximately 57%. This is followed by seasonal residences at 20%.

It should be noted that the NYS Department of Taxation and Finance's definition of a "seasonal residence," differs from that of the Census, which can lead to inconsistencies when reporting this type of dwelling. The former emphasizes structure and defines a seasonal residence as, "dwelling units generally used for seasonal occupancy; not constructed for year-round occupancy (inadequate insulation, heating, etc.)." The Decennial Census considers seasonal residences as part of the, "seasonal, recreational, or occasional use," count and utilizes census interviews to inform classification.

Vacant:

Vacant lands make up approximately 10% of all lands in the County. If used at all, these properties are temporarily used and do not have permanent improvements. This category also includes underwater vacant lands, lands in rural areas, villages, and hamlets, and properties where structures may be framed but are not finished inside. While vacant lands are generally assessed differently than forest lands, there are instances in the County where large tracts of forest lands are identified as vacant. Namely, the western portion of the Town of Martinsburg.

Recreation & Entertainment:

At less than 1% of lands in the County, this category includes both indoor and outdoor recreation uses like theatres, racetracks, YMCA/YWCAs, indoor sports, swimming clubs, parks, playgrounds, and athletic fields. Recreation and entertainment lands are not concentrated in a particular area, although two larger areas include the Snow Ridge Ski Resort in Turin and the Ledges Golf Course.

Commercial:

These lands comprise less than 1% of all lands in the County and are generally concentrated in the village and hamlet areas, or near State roadways. Commercial lands include a range of operations and businesses, including but not limited to, hotels and motels, restaurants, trucking terminals, office buildings, and junkyards. This category also includes apartments, manufactured home parks, and older mixed-use buildings where apartments are situated above commercial uses.

Community Service:

Community Service parcels in the County account for approximately 3% of land. These uses are typically public or institutional and include schools, places of worship, hospitals, government buildings, recreational facilities like trails and bike paths, and cemeteries.

Industrial:

At less than 1% of all lands in the County, Industrial properties are utilized for light, heavy, and high-tech manufacturing, mining, and resource extraction and processing. Generally located in (need description).

Public Service:

This category includes utilities and infrastructure like water treatment facilities, telecommunications, landfills, electric power generation facilities, substations. Public Services comprise just over 1% of lands in the County.

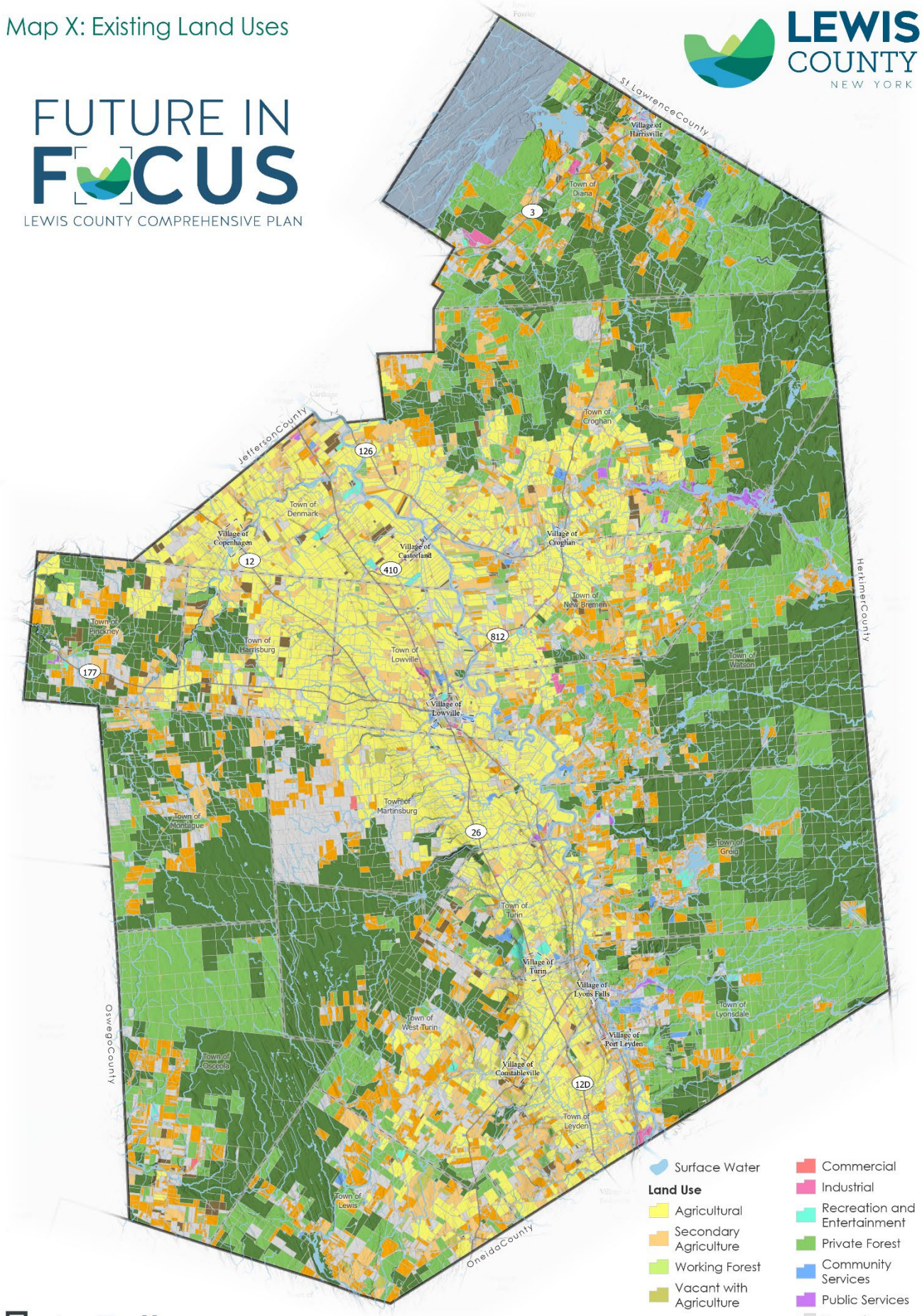
2. **Development Impacts:** Consideration of cumulative impacts of development trends on natural, agricultural, and resources lands

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Map X: Existing Land Uses

FUTURE IN FOCUS
LEWIS COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

LEWIS COUNTY
NEW YORK



Land Use

- Surface Water
- Agricultural
- Secondary Agriculture
- Working Forest
- Vacant with Agriculture
- Abandoned Agriculture
- Residential
- Commercial
- Industrial
- Recreation and Entertainment
- Private Forest
- Community Services
- Public Services
- Vacant
- Fort Drum
- Protected Land

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Community Planning and Environmental Associates
E.M. Pemrick & Company
Economic Planning & Development Services

Map is for reference and planning purposes only and should not be used for legal determinations or navigation

0 1 2 4 6 8
Miles

Data Sources: Municipal boundaries and roads: NYS GIS Program Office 2018; Land Use: Lewis County Parcel Data 2025; Surface water: USGS National Hydrography Dataset 2025

This map is funded in part with funding from the New York State Environmental Protection Fund's Smart Growth Community Planning Program

NEW YORK STATE Department of State

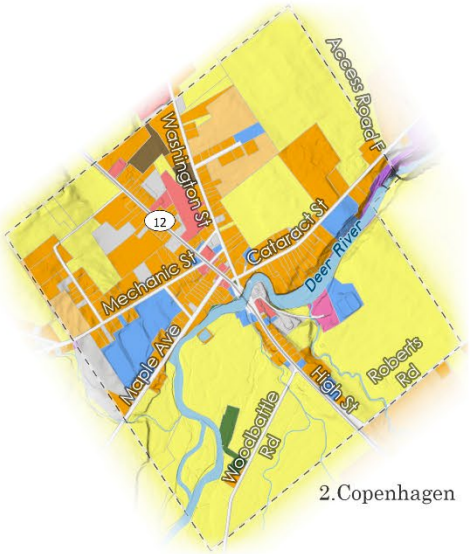
Map X: Existing Land Uses: Villages

LEWIS COUNTY NEW YORK

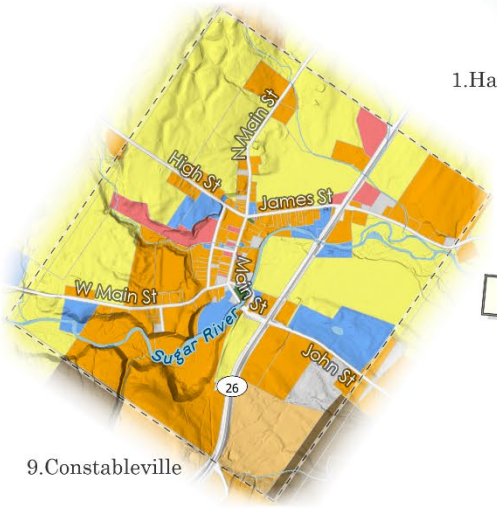
FUTURE IN FOCUS
LEWIS COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN



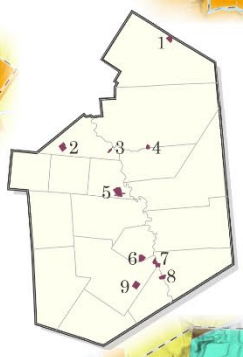
1.Harrisville



2.Copenhagen

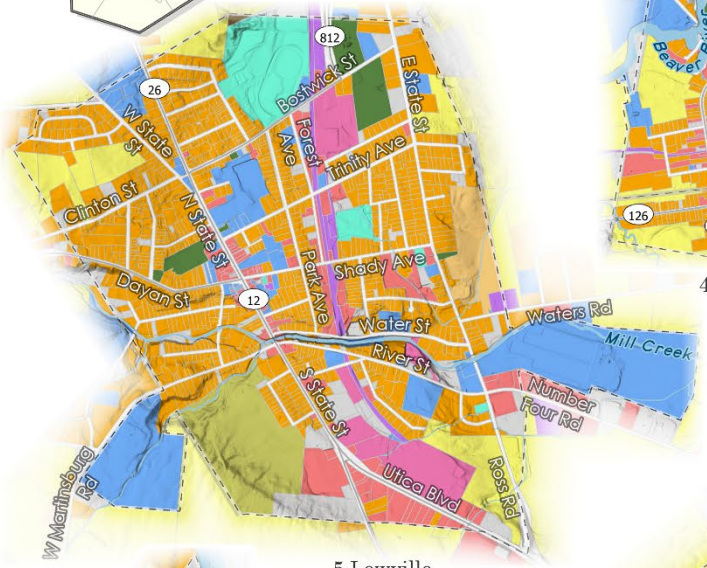


9.Constableville





4.Croghan



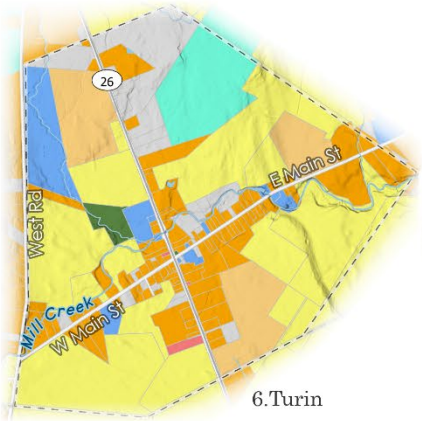
5.Lowville



8.Port Leyden



3.Castorland



6.Turin



7.Lyons Falls

Surface Water

Land Use

- Agricultural
- Secondary Agriculture
- Working Forest
- Vacant with Agriculture
- Abandoned Agriculture
- Residential
- Commercial
- Industrial
- Recreation and Entertainment
- Private Forest
- Community Services
- Public Services
- Vacant
- Fort Drum
- Protected Land

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Mapping by Upstate GIS

Community Planning and Environmental Associates

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Map is for reference and planning purposes only and should not be used for legal determinations or navigation

0 0.25 0.5 1
Miles

Data Sources: Municipal boundaries and roads: NYS GIS Program Office 2018; Protected Lands: Lewis County Parcel Data 2025; Surface water: USGS National Hydrography Dataset 2025

This map is funded in part with funding from the New York State Environmental Protection Fund's Smart Growth Community Planning Program

NEW YORK STATE Department of State

LOCAL PLANNING AND REGULATORY ENVIRONMENT

1. Comprehensive Plans

Table 18 lists the comprehensive planning efforts of the towns and villages within Lewis County. Of all towns and villages in Lewis County, the Town of Lyonsdale is the only local municipality without a comprehensive plan. Most other Towns and Villages have adopted or updated their plans within the last ten years with only a few being older than ten years. The Town of Croghan has the oldest Plan (1990).

Table 18. Comprehensive Plan Status for Local Municipalities

Municipality	Comprehensive Plan
Castorland, V.	Joint Comprehensive Plan with Town of Denmark, Village of Castorland and Village of Copenhagen. Adopted 01/2026
Constableville, V.	Adopted 04/07/2025
Copenhagen, V.	Joint Comprehensive Plan with Town of Denmark, Village of Castorland and Village of Copenhagen. Adopted 01/2026
Croghan, V.	Community Development Plan adopted 01/2012
Croghan, T.	Land Use Plan adopted 10/1990
Denmark, T.	Joint Comprehensive Plan with Town of Denmark, Village of Castorland and Village of Copenhagen. Adopted 01/2026
Diana, T.	Adopted 02/2019
Greig, T.	Adopted 03/2026
Harrisburg, T.	Adopted 01/2023
Harrisville, V.	May 15, 2018 – residents voted to dissolve the village. December 31, 2018 – dissolution took effect
Lewis, T.	Adopted 02/2024
Leyden, T.	Adopted 05/2017
Lowville, V.	Joint Town and Village Comprehensive Plan adopted 10/2022
Lowville, T.	
Lyonsdale, T.	NA
Lyons Falls, V.	Adopted 06/2010
Martinsburg, T.	Adopted 03/2026
Montague, T.	Adopted 07/2024
New Bremen, T.	Adopted 04/2026
Osceola, T.	Adopted 02/2023
Pinckney, T.	Adopted 10/2023
Port Leyden, V.	Adopted 04/2026

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Table 18. Comprehensive Plan Status for Local Municipalities	
Municipality	**Comprehensive Plan**
Turin, V.	Adopted 07/2022
Turin, T.	Adopted 09/2024
Watson, T.	Adopted 12/2020
West Turin, T.	Adopted 02/2021

2. Local Zoning, Site Plan, Subdivision, and other Land Use Regulations:

Zoning regulations are slightly less common than comprehensive plans. The Towns of Turin, West Turin, and Lyonsdale, and the Villages of Copenhagen and Castorland are without a zoning ordinance at the time of writing this report. Other land use regulations, like Site Plan Review laws, and regulations related to renewable energy, are in-effect in many of the Towns and Villages.

The concentration of renewable energy laws between 2019 and 2026 is not coincidental. Unlike traditional land uses such as residential, agricultural, or commercial development, large-scale solar facilities and energy storage technologies have only recently become significant development interests within Lewis County and across New York State. State climate and clean energy initiatives, technological advances, declining costs of renewable energy infrastructure, and increased demand for utility-scale projects have created development opportunities that many local zoning codes were never designed to address. Most existing zoning ordinances were adopted decades before solar arrays, battery storage systems, and compressed air energy storage facilities became common land use considerations.

Table 19. Land Use Laws and Regulations for Local Municipalities				
Municipality	**Land Use Laws and Regulations**			
	Zoning Law	**Subdivision Regulations**	**Site Plan**	**Other**
Castorland, V.			Enacted 1985	
Constableville, V.	Adopted 06/02/2025			
Copenhagen, V.		Enacted 1985, last updated 2003	Enacted 07/2019	Outdoor Wood-Burning Furnace Law enacted 2005; Property Maintenance Law enacted

Table 19. Land Use Laws and Regulations for Local Municipalities				
Municipality	**Land Use Laws and Regulations**			
	Zoning Law	**Subdivision Regulations**	**Site Plan**	**Other**
				09/2010, last updated 09/2025; Junkyard Law enacted 02/2024.
Croghan, V.				Property Maintenance Law enacted 08/1994 and updated 08/2007
Croghan, T.	Enacted 01/2025, updated 10/2025 to include CAESS regulations.			Solar Energy Overlay District; Manufactured Home and Travel Trailer Law enacted 09/1986, updated 10/2025; Flood Damage Prevention Law enacted 03/2019
Denmark, T.	Enacted 09/2003, last updated 2019.	Adopted 11/1985, last updated 2003.		12 Month Moratorium on Commercial Energy Storage Systems, BESS, and/or CAESS enacted 02/2026
Diana, T.	Enacted 2002, updated 05/2021, update in progress.			
Greig, T.	Enacted 05/1990, last updated 09/2025. Update underway.	Updated 12/2025.		Residency Relief for Certain Public Officials updated 12/2024. Commercial Renewable Energy Moratorium enacted 01/2026; On-Site Sewage Treatment and Dispersal Law enacted 06/2005.
Harrisburg, T.	Enacted 04/1988, last updated 10/2022	Enacted 1985.		
Harrisville, V.				

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Table 19. Land Use Laws and Regulations for Local Municipalities				
Municipality	**Land Use Laws and Regulations**			
	Zoning Law	**Subdivision Regulations**	**Site Plan**	**Other**
Lewis, T.	Land Use Law enacted 05/2025	Enacted 2024		Moratorium on Renewable Energy Systems enacted 03/2026.
Leyden, T.	Enacted 01/2014			Moratorium on Solar and BESS enacted 05/2025 and valid to 12/2025; Solar Energy Systems Local Law enacted 11/2022; Flood Damage Prevention Law enacted 10/2018
Lowville, V.	Enacted 05/2025 and update in progress.	Enacted 10/1976, updated 08/1984 and over time.		
Lowville, T.	Enacted 11/1995 and updated periodically.	enacted 06/1994 and updated periodically.		Flood Damage Prevention Law enacted 03/198 and updated periodically; Alternate Energy Production last updated 2013?
Lyonsdale, T.			Enacted 10/1994	Flood Damage Law enacted 05/1987; Moratorium on Solar and BESS enacted 12/2025.
Lyons Falls, V.	Enacted 03/2019			House Trailers and Tourist Camps Local Law enacted 1984; Strategic Investment Plan 12/2023; BOA Implementation Strategy 10/2019.
Martinsburg, T.	Enacted 02/1980 and amended over time. currently being updated.	Enacted 10/2025.		Moratorium on Solar and BESS enacted 11/2025.
Montague, T.	enacted 06/1987 and most	Enacted 1986.		Mobile Home Park and Campground Law enacted 10/1996.

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Table 19. Land Use Laws and Regulations for Local Municipalities				
Municipality	**Land Use Laws and Regulations**			
	Zoning Law	**Subdivision Regulations**	**Site Plan**	**Other**
	recently updated 07/2005.			
New Bremen, T.	Enacted 2024 and updated 05/2026.			Mobile Home Local Law enacted 1996, last updated 9/2025; Clutter, Litter & Debris Control Law enacted 1994; Outdoor Furnace Law enacted 2009 and updated 2010; Unsafe Buildings and Collapsed Structures Law enacted 2000; Flood Damage Control Law enacted 07/2000, updated 10/2020.
Osceola, T.	Enacted 12/2023, update in progress.	Enacted 11/2023, update in progress.		Recreation Camping Vehicle Law enacted 02/2016
Pinckney, T.	Enacted 06/1987, last updated 01/2018	Enacted 06/1987		Solar Energy Law enacted 04/2019
Port Leyden, V.	Update in progress.			Mobile Home Law enacted 08/1980
Turin, V.	Enacted 2002, new code enacted 10/2025			
Turin, T.		Enacted 12/1998, last updated 02/2016		Rural Development Law enacted 12/1998 and last updated 01/2025 and update in progress; Moratorium on Development on Seasonal Roads 07/2025; Driveway Installation Law enacted 07/2025

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Table 19. Land Use Laws and Regulations for Local Municipalities				
Municipality	**Land Use Laws and Regulations**			
	Zoning Law	**Subdivision Regulations**	**Site Plan**	**Other**
Watson, T.	Enacted 05/1998	Enacted 09/2008		Moratorium on Utility-Scale Energy Systems enacted 04/2026; Compressed Air Energy Storage Systems Supplemental Law enacted 11/2025; Campgrounds Law enacted 04/2020; Solar Law enacted 10/2021; Dog Law enacted 11/2024; Telecommunications Tower Law 02/2025.
West Turin, T.		Enacted 06/2002		BESS Local Law enacted 10/2025; Driveway Installation Law enacted 12/2020; Seasonal and Minimum Maintenance Roads Local Law enacted 11/2024;

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PARKS AND RECREATION

1. County-Owned Trails/Parks and Recreational Facilities

Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) Trail System

Lewis County has a countywide OHV trail permit system of approximately 100 miles of offroad trails and 450 miles of access roads to ATV trails (or ATV areas) that encompasses dirt bikes, ATVs, and side by sides up to 2000 lbs. Income from the permit system is deposited in a dedicated recreational trails fund and used exclusively for the establishment, enforcement, maintenance and operation of the trail system.

OHV trails generate significant economic activity in the County. A 2022 study conducted by Jefferson Community College and Camoin Associates of Saratoga Springs found that riders spend $6.6 million yearly in Lewis County, with non-local OHV users spending on average more than $90 a day.

Lewis County Non-Motorized Winter Recreation

Per the County's 2025 Non-Motorized Winter Plan, the County manages approximately 4,586 acres of recreational land and oversees 506 miles of snowmobile trails and 97 miles of OHV trails. Existing trail network constraints identified by this plan included:

- Shared use conflicts between non-motorized and motorized users
- Limited dedicated non-motorized trails
- Signage and grooming are oriented towards motorized users creating a lack of clarity for non-motorized users.

This plan notes the need for a more resilient and diversified recreation economy that is less dependent on snow conditions and motorized recreation alone.

Rail Trail Initiative

In 2025, Lewis County acquired former railroad property to advance a countywide trail initiative. The county is currently working to convert approximately 25 miles of former rail corridor into a multi-use public trail system connecting the Villages of Croghan, Lowville, and Carthage. This corridor would include views of the Black River, 17 water crossings, historic railroad infrastructure, and connections between communities.

2. State-Owned Parks and Lakes

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Table 20. State Parks in Lewis County		
Public Land / Park / Wildlife Management Area	**Location**	**Acres**
Baker Woods Preserve	Natural Bridge	585
Balsam Creek State Forest	Croghan	559
Beartown State Forest	Wilna and Croghan	7,205
Clear Pond	Lewis	9
Cobb Creek State Forest	Harrisburg	2,185
Cottrell State Forest	Lewis	473
Croghan Tract Conservation Easement	Croghan and Watson	12,816
East Branch Fish Creek North Conservation Easement Tract	Montague, Martinsburg, Osceola, and West Turin	14,110
East Branch Fish Creek South Conservation Easement Tract	Lewis, Osceola, and West Turin	22,200
East Branch Fish Creek State Forest	Osceola, West Turin, and Lewis	1,350
East Osceola State Forest	Osceola, West Turin, and Lewis	1,975
Francis Lake	Watson	18
Frank E. Jadwin State Forest	Diana and Croghan	20,412
Granger State Forest	Pinckney	734
Grant Powell State Forest	Montague, Pinckney, Harrisburg, and Martinsburg	8,077
High Towers State Forest	Lyonsdale	729
Hogsback State Forest	Diana	624
Independence River State Forest	Greig and Watson	673
Indian Pipe State Forest	New Bremen and Watson	597
Lake Bonaparte	Diana	1,248
Lesser Wilderness State Forest	Turin, West Turin, and Martinsburg	13,793
Long Pond	Croghan	146
Lookout State Forest	Pinckney and Harrisburg	3,915
Lowville Forestry Demonstration Area	Lowville	98
Mohawk Springs State Forest	Lewis and West Turin	1,210
Onjebonge State Forest	Diana	1,835
Otter Creek State Forest	Greig	1,206
Payne Lake	Watson	19
Raywood Unique Area	Lewis	307
Sand Bay State Forest	Diana	326
Sears Pond State Forest	Montague	5,648
Swancott Mill State Forest	Lewis	744

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Tug Hill Wildlife Management Area	Montague	5,100
Watson East Triangle Wild Forest	Lowville	13,000
Whetstone Gulf State Park	Martinsburg	2,100
	Total	**146,026**

Table 21. State Parks that Cross County Lines

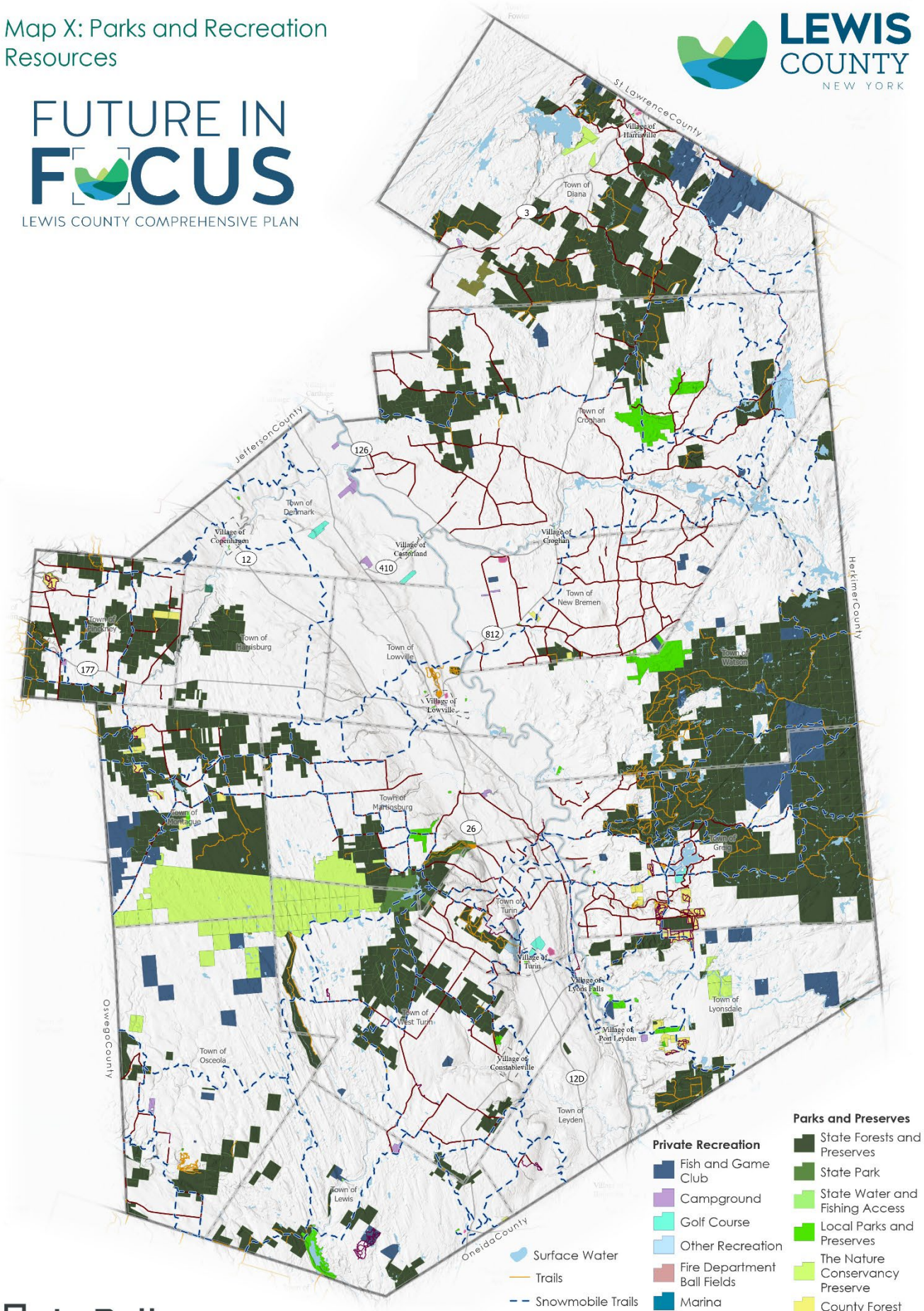
Public Land / Park / Wildlife Management Area	Location in Lewis County	Location outside Lewis County	Acres
Aldrich Pond Wild Forest	Diana	Pitcairn, Fine, Webb	26,702
Big Brook State Forest	Lewis	Florence	3,879
Black River Wild Forest	Lyonsdale	Ohio, Webb, Russia, Forestport, Remsen, Morehouse	127,135
Five Ponds and Pepperbox Wilderness	Diana	Fine, Clinton, Webb, Long Lake	107,230
Ha-De-Ron-Dah Wilderness	Greig	Webb	26,600
Line Brook State Forest	Osceola	Redfield	1,116
Tug Hill State Forest	Pinckney	Rodman and Worth	12,242
Sand Flats State Forest	Lyonsdale	Boonsville	2,532
Line Brook State Forest	Osceola	Redfield	1,116
Independence River Wild Forest	Greig and Watson	Webb	78,600
Bonaparte's Cave State Forest	Diana	Pitcairn	1,435
Pinckney State Forest	Pinckney and Denmark	Rutland	2,091

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Map X: Parks and Recreation Resources

FUTURE IN FOCUS
LEWIS COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

LEWIS COUNTY NEW YORK



Parks and Preserves
- State Forests and Preserves
- State Park
- State Water and Fishing Access
- Local Parks and Preserves
- The Nature Conservancy Preserve
- County Forest
- Other Preserves
- Federal Preserve

Private Recreation
- Fish and Game Club
- Campground
- Golf Course
- Other Recreation
- Fire Department Ball Fields
- Marina
- Fairgrounds
- Schools with Ball Fields

- Surface Water
- Trails
- Snowmobile Trails
- Off-Road ATV trails
- Roads open to ATVs

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Mapping by Upstate GIS

Community Planning and Environmental Associates

E.M. Pemrick & Company
Economic Planning & Development Services

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Data Sources: Municipal boundaries and roads: NYS GIS Program Office 2018; Parcels: Lewis County 2025; Surface water: USGS National Hydrography Dataset 2025; Trails: Lewis County, 2026; Uses: Parcel data and NYPAD

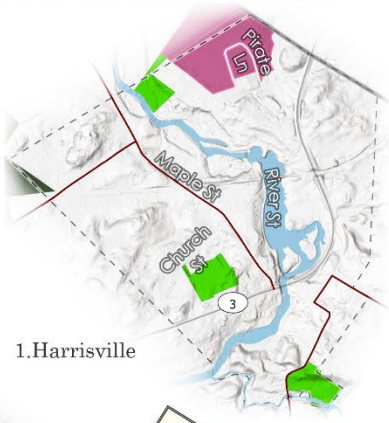
This map is funded in part with funding from the New York State Environmental Protection Fund's Smart Growth Community Planning Program

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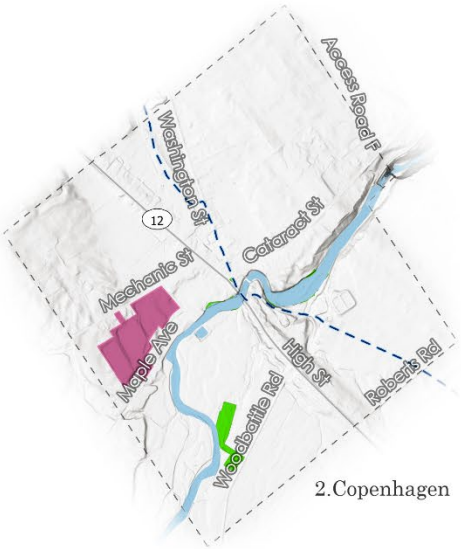
Map X: Parks and Recreation Resources: Villages

FUTURE IN FOCUS
LEWIS COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

LEWIS COUNTY NEW YORK



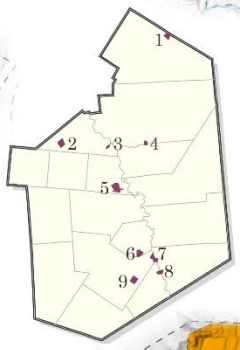
1.Harrisville



2.Copenhagen

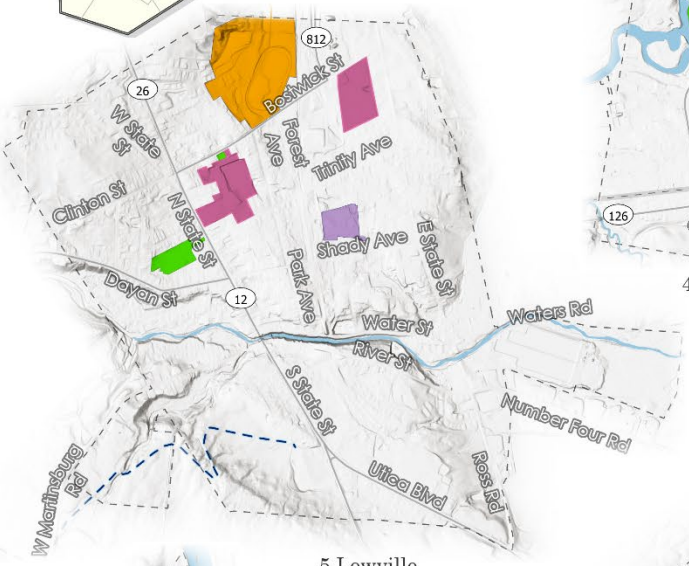


9.Constableville

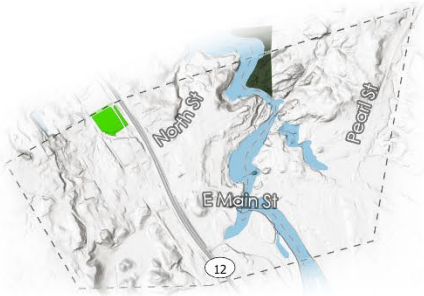




4.Croghan



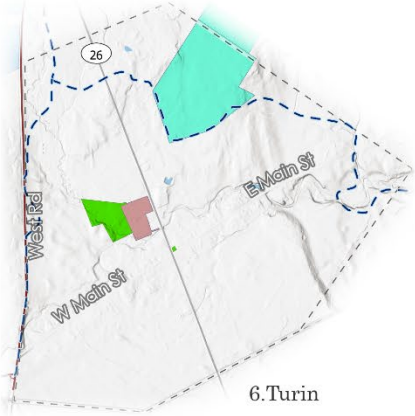
5.Lowville



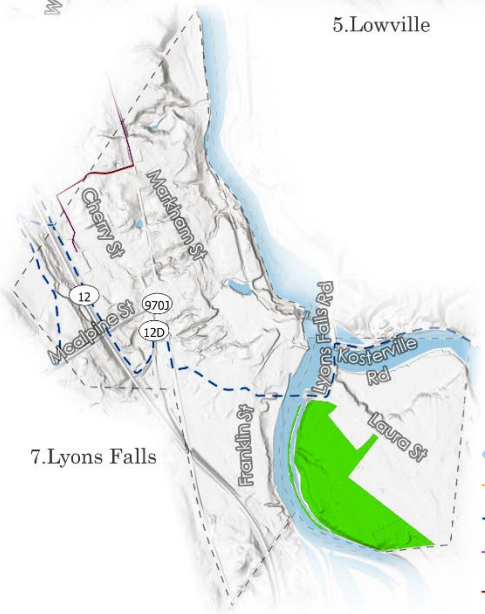
8.Port Leyden



3.Castorland



6.Turin



7.Lyons Falls

Parks and Preserves
- State Forests and Preserves
- Local Parks and Preserves

Private Recreation
- Campground
- Golf Course
- Fire Department Ball Fields
- Fairgrounds
- Schools with Ball Fields

- Surface Water
- Trails
- Snowmobile Trails
- Off-Road ATV trails
- Roads open to ATVs

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Miles

Data Sources: Municipal boundaries and roads: NYS GIS Program Office 2018; Parcels: Lewis County 2025; Surface water: USGS National Hydrography Dataset 2025; Trails: Lewis County, 2026; Uses: Parcel data and NYPAD

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HISTORIC, CULTURAL, AND SCENIC RESOURCES

1. Historic Sites

Table 22. Historic Sites in Lewis County			
National Register of Historic Places Listings	**Date listed**	**Location**	**Town or Village**
Franklin B. Hough House	10/15/1966	Collins St.	Lowville
Constable Hall	3/7/1973	John Street	Constableville
Edmund Wilson House	11/26/1973	Rte. 12d, Talcottville, NY	Talcottville
Gould Mansion Complex	4/19/1978	Main St.	Lyons Falls
Constableville Village Historic District	9/15/1983	Main, N. Main, W. Main, Church, High, West and James Sts.	Constableville
Methodist Episcopal Church of West Martinsburg	9/15/1983	W. Martinsburg Rd.	West Martinsburg
Jonathan C. Collins House and Cemetery	11/9/1988	West Rd.	Constableville
Bateman Hotel	2/18/1994	7574 S. State St.	Lowville
Alpina Archeological District	11/2/1995	Fort Drum	Diana
Lewisburg Archeological District	11/2/1995	Fort Drum	Diana
St. Mark's Church	8/6/1998	Jct. of West Main and Elm Sts.	Port Leyden
Martinsburg Town Hall	3/21/2001	NY 26 Main St., E	Martinsburg
Lewis County Fairgrounds	2/14/2002	Bostwick St.	Lowville
Forest Presbyterian Church	9/24/2004	4109 Center St.	Lyons Falls
Osceola Town Hall	12/22/2005	N. Ocseola Rd.	Osceola
Lowville Presbyterian Church	6/27/2007	7707 North State St.	Lowville
The Pines	6/27/2007	3998-4000 Lyons Falls Rd.	Lyons Falls
Gen. Walter Martin House	7/24/2008	6575 Main St.	Martinsburg
Lowville Masonic Temple	9/19/2008	7552 S. State St.	Lowville
Lewis County Soldiers' and Sailors' Monument	7/29/2009	Village Green, NY 26 and Bostwick Sts.	Lowville
Pine Grove Community Church	8/20/2009	Austin Rd. & Pine Grove Rd.	Pine Grove
Croghan Island Mill	7/30/2010	9897 S. Bridge St.	Croghan
Moser Farm	7/30/2010	8778 Erie Canal Rd.	Kirschnerville
Stoddard–O'Connor House	6/23/2011	5431 Shady Ave.	Lowville
Wildwood Cemetery and Mary Lyon Fisher Memorial Chapel	6/27/2011	River Rd.	Lyonsdale
Harry and Molly Lewis House	11/21/2012	9520 E. Main St.	Beaver Falls
Collinsville Cemetery	5/7/2014	4061 East Rd.	Collinsville

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Pinckney Corners Cemetery	9/10/2014	Pinckney Rd.	Copenhagen
Beaver Falls Grange Hall No. 554	12/1/2015	9577 Main St.	Beaver Falls
Leyden Common School No. 2	6/21/2016	6606 School Rd.	Talcottville
Old Lowville Cemetery	8/22/2016	5515 Jackson, 5575 River Sts.	Lowville
First Lewis County Clerk's Office	10/27/2017	6660 NY 26	Martinsburg
Talcottville Cemetery	12/8/2017	2052 NY 12-D	Talcottville
Basselin House	2/8/2022	9757 NY 812	Croghan
Martinsburg Common School District #4	11/10/2022	6503 Ramos Rd.	Martinsburg
Lowville & Beaver River Railroad Historic District	11/18/2024	Railway corridor from Lowville to Croghan, New York	Lowville; Beaver Falls, Croghan

2. Scenic Resources

Black River Trail Scenic Byway

This byway runs from the City of Rome through Lewis County. Scenic resources include:

- The Black River's gorges, pools, rapids, and river vistas
- The Black River Valley located between the Tug Hill Plateau and Adirondack Mountains
- Pastoral agricultural landscapes
- Quaint river communities
- Maple Ridge Wind Farm in Lowville

Olympic Trail Scenic Byway

Travels from Lake Ontario to Lake Champlain, with a small portion running through the northern tip of Lewis County. Scenic resources include:

- Forestland and foliage
- Lake Bonaparte and Oswegatchie River
- Gateway landscape marking the transition from the Tug Hill region into the western Adirondacks

Maple Traditions Scenic Byway

The segment of this byway that travels through Lewis County runs from Lowville to Harrisville. Scenic resources include:

- Working rural landscape including dairy farms, traditional maple sugar bushes, and Amish farms
- Forest landscapes including both undeveloped areas and working areas supporting maple syrup and timber industries
- Harrisville Scenic Overlook and Grandview Island Park

3. Museums/Cultural Organizations

Table 23. Museums and Cultural Organizations in Lewis County		
Adirondack Mennonite Heritage Farm Museum	Croghan	https://mennoniteheritagefarm.com/
Brantingham Greig Reading and Technology Center	Greig	http://bhmgreads.org/
Double Play Community Center	Lowville	http://doubleplaycc.com/
Maple Ridge Center	Lowville	http://mapleridgecenter.org/
Town Hall Theater	Lowville	http://mytownhalltheater.com/
Constableville Library	Constableville	http://www.cvillelibrary.org/
Beaver Falls Library	Lewis	https://beaverfallslibrary.org/
Constable Hall Museum	Constableville	https://constablehall.org/
Lewis County Historical Society Museum	Lowville	https://historicallylewis.org/visiting-us/location/
Storms-Bailey Home Museum	Lyons Falls	https://lyonsfallshistory.org/post.php?pid=2
Lyons Falls Free Library	Lyons Falls	https://lyonsfallslibrary.org/
American Maple Museum	Croghan	https://maplemuseumcentre.org/
Railway Historical Society	Croghan	https://rhsnny.weebly.com/
B. Elizabeth Strong Memorial Library	Turin	https://turinlibrary.org/
Croghan Free Library	Croghan	https://www.croghanfreelibrary.org/
American Legion Military Museum	Lowville	https://www.facebook.com/LowvilleAmericanLegion/

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Lowville Farm and Craft Market	Lowville	https://www.facebook.com/lowvillefarmandcraftmarket/about
Town of Diana Historical Museum	Harrisville	https://www.facebook.com/Town-Of-Diana-Historical-Museum-696220583840423/
Harrisville Free Library	Harrisville	https://www.harrisvillefreelibrary.org/
Lowville Free Library	Lowville	https://www.lowvillefreelibrary.org/
Lyons Falls History Association	Lyons Falls	https://www.lyonsfallshistory.org/
Martinsburg Historical Society	Martinsburg	https://www.martinsburghistory.org/
William H bush Memorial Library	Martinsburg	https://www.martinsburglibrary.org/
Railroad Society of Northern New York	Croghan	https://www.newyorktrains.com/
North American Fiddlers' Hall of Fame and Museum	Osceola	https://www.nysotfa.com/
Osceola Public Library	Camden	https://www.osceolapublic.org/
Port Leyden Community Library	Port Leyden	https://www.portleydenlibrary.org/
Oswegatchie Educational Center	Croghan	http://www.oswegatchie.org/
Lowville Village Community Band	Lowville	https://www.facebook.com/LowvilleVillageBand1826/
Lewis County Humane Society	Glenfield	https://lewiscountyhumanesociety.org/
Elks Lodge 1605	Lowville	https://www.elks.org/lodges/home.cfm?lodgenumber=1605
Brantingham Community Associate	Brantingham	http://www.brantinghambca.com/#/
Lowville Lions Club	Lowville	https://e-clubhouse.org/sites/lowvilleny/
Volunteer Transportation Center	Watertown (Serves Lewis County)	https://volunteertransportationcenter.org/
Black River Valley Hour Wheeler Club	Turin	https://blackrivervalleyfourwheelerclub.com/
Lewis County Memorial VFW Post 6912	Lowville	https://www.bluepageswiki.org/wiki/VFW_Post_6912

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Marine Corp League 754	Lowville	https://www.mcleaguelibrary.org/detachment-locator-2/?l=23699244
Lewis County Emerging Professionals	Lowville	https://lewiscountyep.com/
Cornell Cooperative Extension Lewis County	Lowville	https://ccelewis.org/
Lewis County Snowmobile Association	Various	https://membership.nysnowmobiler.com/regions/23

4. Sites with Historic Markers

Table 24. Sites with Historic Markers in Lewis County		
Name	**Location**	**Town, Village or Hamlet**
Freedom Wright's Tavern	Rt. 26	Denmark
Hough's Cave	Rt. 26	Martinsburg
Sara Simonet Site	Main St.	Croghan
Agers Falls	Lyonsdale Rd.	Lyonsdale
Black River Canal	McAlpine Street	Lyons Falls
Lock 96 Black River Canal	Rt. 12	Port Leyden
Pahud Grist Mill	River St.	Harrisville
Moser Homestead	Erie Canal Rd.	Kirschnerville
Harrisville Railroad Depot	Depot St.	Harrisville
Chair Factory	River St.	Harrisville
Original Forest Church	Lyons Falls Rd.	Lyons Falls
Historic New York Black River Country	Rt. 12	Denley
Forest Fire	Sandpoint Rd.	Watson
The French Emigres	Rt. 3	Diana
Saint Patrick's Maple Ridge Cemetery	Maple Ridge Rd.	Martinsburg
Mohawk River	Rt. 26	West Leyden
Jerdan Falls	Jerdan Falls Rd.	Croghan
Talcottville Cemetery	Rt. 26	Talcottville
Leyden Hill Cemetery	Rt. 26	Locust Grove
Three-Way Bridge	Lyons Falls Rd.	Lyons Falls

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Staring Cemetery	Staring Cemetery Rd.	Martinsburg
Houseville Cemetery	Rt. 26	Houseville
Martinsburg Cemetery	Cemetery Rd.	Martinsburg
Chillus Doty Tavern	Rt. 26	Martinsburg
Advent Church	West Rd.	West Martinsburg
West Martinsburg Cemetery	West Rd.	West Martinsburg
Cornfield John Cemetery	Borkowski Rd.	Martinsburg
Riverside Cemetery	Cataract St.	Copenhagen
Salem Church	Beaver Falls Rd.	Beaver Falls

5. Event Spaces and Venues

- 1812 House, Lowville
- 3 Willows, Lyons Falls
- Breezy Knoll Farm, Lowville
- Florissante, The Mansion, Lyons Falls
- The Hayloft at Moonshine Farm, Port Leyden
- The Maples, Lowville
- Tug Hill Estate, Lowville

6. Events, Festivals, Traditions

- AdironDuck Race hosted by the Oswegatchie Educational Center
- Annual North Country Chili Cook-Off held by the Volunteer Transportation Center
- Black River Valley Concert Series organized by the Lewis County Historical Society
- Constable Hall Events
    - Constable Hall Easter Egg Hunt
    - Constable Hall Father's Day Craft Fair and Drive-In Car Show
- Constableville Color Run
- Cream Cheese Festival hosted by the Lowville Business Association
- Croghan Bologna and Croghan Smoked Breakfast Sausage, originating in Croghan in 1888
- Holiday Events
    - Lowville Village Band/Lowville Jazz Orchestra Christmas Concert
    - Lamplighter Service at West Martinsburg Church
    - Lowville FFA Tractor Lighting Contest

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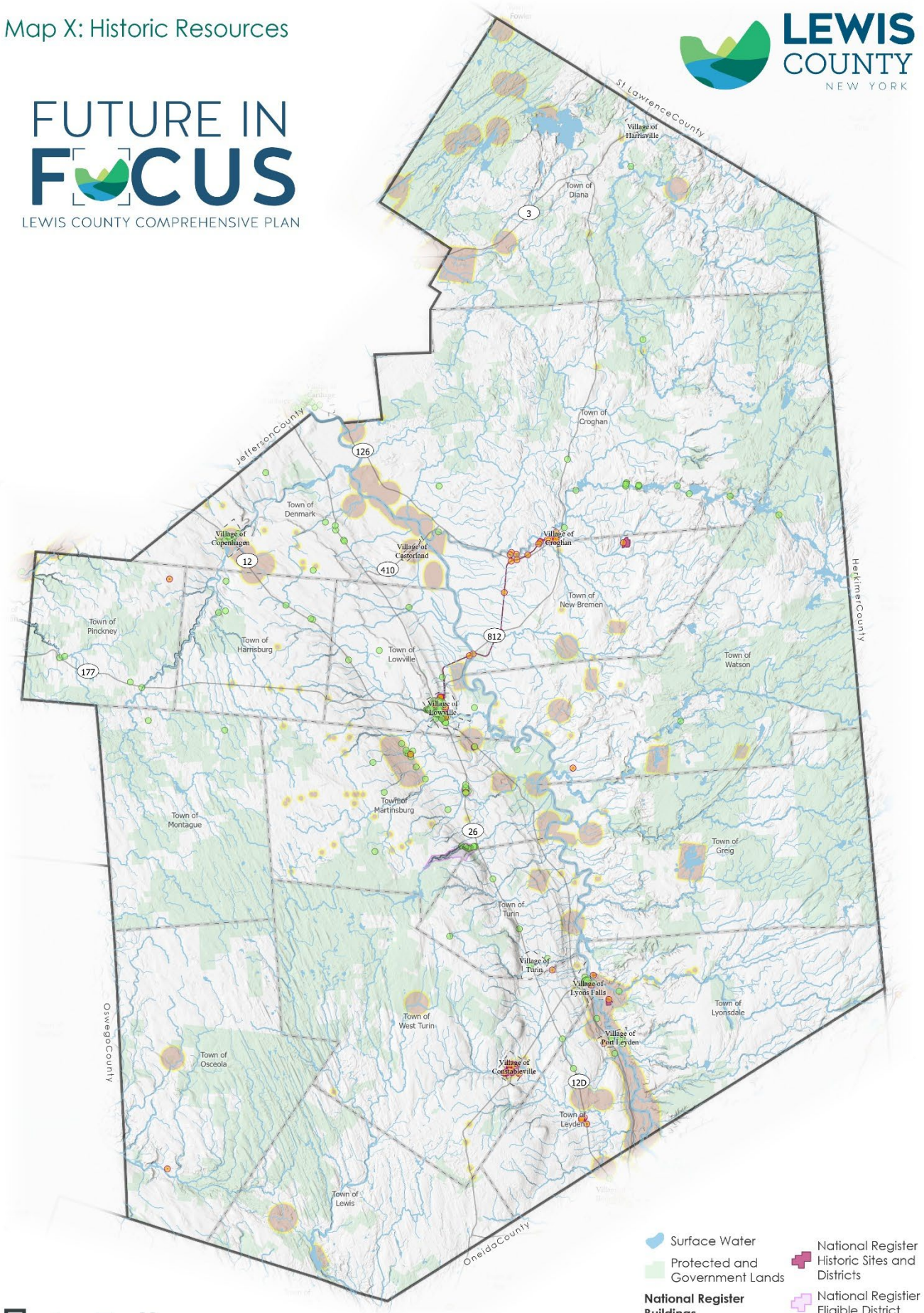
    - Lewis County Historical Society Annual Holiday Festival
    - Tree lighting, caroling, bonfire, giving tree, toys for tots
- Hopenhagen Farms Lavendar Festival
- July 4th Parades and Memorial Day Ceremonies (Cemetery Military Honors)
- Lewis County Cuisine Trail through Lowville, Croghan, Castorland and Copenhagen
- Lewis County Dairy Princess Pageant held by the Lewis County Dairy Promotion Program
- Lewis County Fair organized by the Lewis County Agricultural Society
- Lewis County Night Out
- Lewis County Pride Picnic held by the Lewis County Pride Committee
- Lewis County Renaissance Faire organized by the nonprofit Youth of Lewis County
- Lewis County RiverFest held by Naturally Lewis
- Lowville Village Band Summer Concert Series (200 year)
- Martinsburg Day hosted by the Martinsburg Historical Society
- Naturally Lewis Food Truck Fridays
- NYS Maple Weekend Events at participating farms (Moser's Maple, Yancy's Sugarbush, Snyder's Sugar Shack, champion Peak Maple, Pierce's Sugar Spigot)
- Osceola Hotel Turtle Races at the World Famous Osceola Hotel
- Polka Dancing hosted by the Polish American Citizens Club
- SNIRT Run at Barnes Corners
- Tuesday Night Music in the Park held in the Village of Lowville
- Tug Hill Blueberry Festival
- Watercross Races at the Flat Rock Inn
- Zwanzigstein Summer/Harvest Fest at Mennonite Heritage Farm

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Map X: Historic Resources

FUTURE IN FOCUS
LEWIS COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

LEWIS COUNTY NEW YORK



Surface Water
Protected and Government Lands

National Register Buildings
- Eligible
- Listed

National Register Historic Sites and Districts
National Registier Eligible District
Archaeological Buffer Areas

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Community Planning and Environmental Associates
E.M. Pemrick & Company Economic Planning & Development Services

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Data Sources: Municipal boundaries and roads: NYS GIS Program Office 2018; Parcels: Lewis County 2025; Surface water: USGS National Hydrography Dataset 2025; Historic districts and buildings: NYS OPRHP, 2026

This map is funded in part with funding from the New York State Environmental Protection Fund's Smart Growth Community Planning Program

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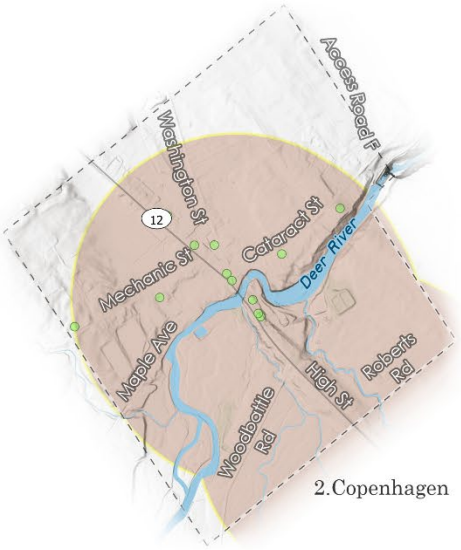
Map X: Historic Resources: Villages

FUTURE IN FOCUS
LEWIS COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

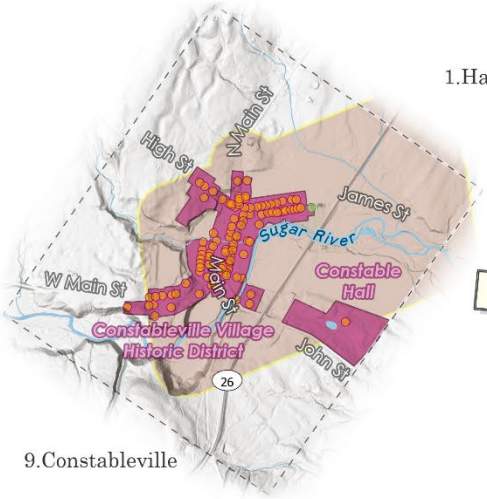
LEWIS COUNTY NEW YORK



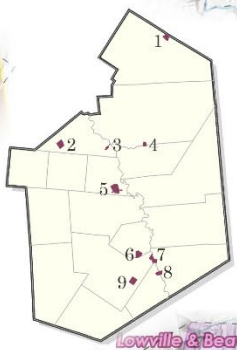
1.Harrisville

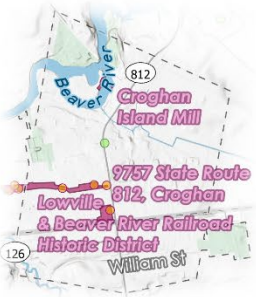


2.Copenhagen

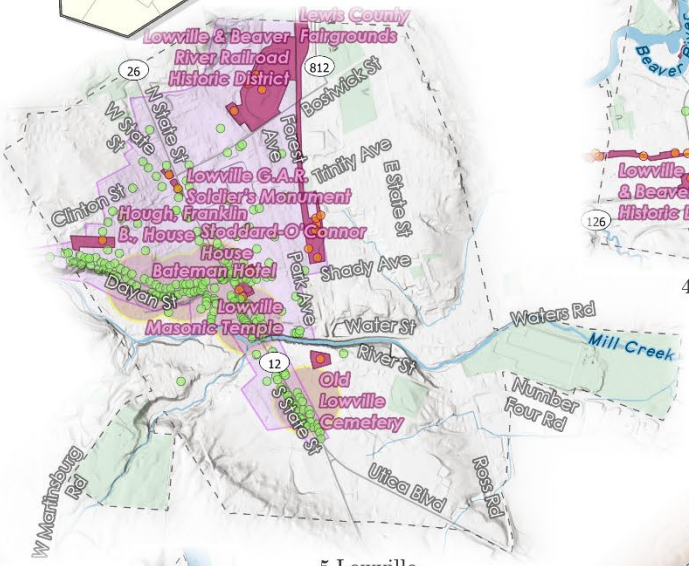


9.Constableville





4.Croghan



5.Lowville



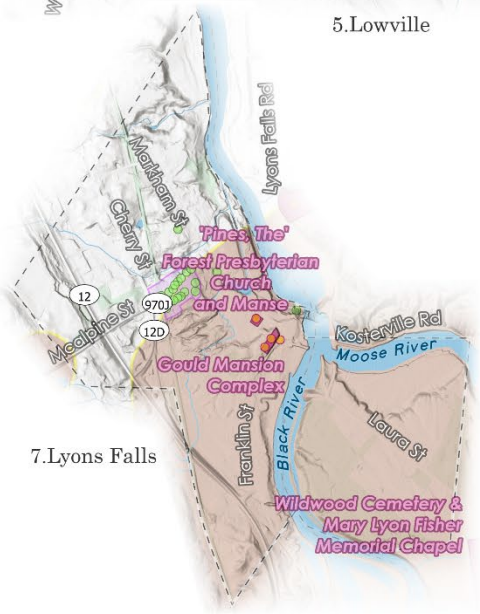
8.Port Leyden



3.Castorland



6.Turin



7.Lyons Falls

Surface Water
Protected and Government Lands

National Register Buildings
- Eligible
- Listed

National Register Historic Sites and Districts
National Registier Eligible District
Archaeological Buffer Areas

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COUNTY FISCAL PROFILE

1. **County Government Fiscal Resources and Capital Investment Trends**
2. **Analysis of Tax-Exempt Lands:** State Forests, Fort Drum
3. **Revenue Sources:** Sales Tax Distribution and Federal Aid Dependency
4. **Municipal Debt Burdens**

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COMMUNITY RESOURCES AND ORGANIZATIONS

1. Housing Providers

a. Snow Belt Housing Company, Inc.

- Snow Belt Housing Company, Inc. (SBHCI) was originally established as part of Lewis County Opportunities, Inc. before incorporating in 1982 as an independent private, non-profit Rural Preservation Company. SBHCI's mission is to expand access to safe, decent, and affordable housing for low- and moderate-income residents while partnering with others to support community revitalization throughout Lewis County. The organization operates with a staff of six full-time and three part-time employees based in Lowville and is governed by an eight-member volunteer Board of Directors.

2. Service Providers

a. Lewis County Department of Social Services

- Based in Lowville, the DSS administers supports and services that focus on the well being and safety of children, adults, and families in Lewis County. Programs include foster parenting, employment and training support, home energy assistance, Medicaid, and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

b. Points North Housing Coalition

- The PNHC is a Continuum of Care (COC) planning body that makes decisions about local funding for homeless programs and coordinates services and housing designed to support unhoused people. The COC is comprised of a cross-section of agencies including community advocates, healthcare providers, people with lived experience, emergency housing providers and non-profits, and local and state government officials.

c. Joseph P. Dwyer Veteran Peer Support Program

- Based in Lowville, this organization connects Veterans, service members, military families, caregivers, and survivors with peer support, community engagement and local resources. Built on a peer-to-peer model, participants can connect with those with lived and shared experiences. Programs offered include, peer support groups, social and recreational activities, resource navigation and referrals,

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community events and outreach, family and caregiver engagement opportunities, wellness and enrichment activities and connections to local services and support networks.

3. Non-Profit Organizations

a. Lewis County Opportunities, Inc.

- Based in Lowville, the LCOI supports low income families and victims of domestic violence. LCOI offers a number of services including a food pantry, victim services, financial management training, car seats and housing assistance. In 2011, LCOI opened the Opportunity Knocks Thrift Store. Run entirely by volunteers, Opportunity Knocks stocks clothing and accessories, shoes, housewares, and other goods.

b. Northern New York Community Foundation

- While not located in Lewis County, the Northern New York Community Foundation is a non-profit philanthropic organization that awards and administers funding and grants to communities across Jefferson, Lewis and St. Lawrence counties. The NNNCF was established in 1929 and is based in Watertown, NY.

c. United Way of Northern New York, Inc.

- Also located in Watertown, NY, but serving Lewis County is the United Way of Northern New York, Inc. This organization supports human service programs through health, education, and income initiatives including for Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed (ALICE) families and individuals, food programs for families and schools, and partnering with local businesses and organizations for charitable events and causes.

d. Northern Regional Center for Independent Living (NRCIL)

- The NRCIL is a disability rights and resource center with an office Lowville. Independent living services, family peer support, and long term care among its programs and offerings.

e. THRIVE Wellness and Recovery

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- While based in Watertown, NY, THRIVE has established a dedicated suite of human-centered services for the Lewis County community. THRIVE Wellness and Recovery provides a comprehensive range of person-centered services focused on mental health, substance use treatment, and overall wellness for individuals and families. Core services include outpatient and residential treatment programs, care management, supportive and transitional housing, and community-based services tailored to children, adolescents, and adults.

f. Pratt-Northam Foundation

- The Pratt-Northam Foundation funds community projects that align with its mission to improve the quality of live in Black River Valley communities from Boonville to Carthage. Financial support is provided to non-profit organizations and government agencies through a grant process. Additionally, three youth programs are offered:
- The Workership Program provides college students with paid summer employment that offers hands-on experience aligned with their field of study while supporting youth-serving organizations.
- The Careers Here Program connects students with paid internships in the private sector, helping them gain career-relevant experience through partnerships with local businesses.
- The Youth Advisory Councils (YACs) engage high school students in leadership and philanthropy by empowering them to review, fund, and oversee community projects that benefit youth. Together, these programs promote skill development, career readiness, and active participation in community improvement.

Table 25. Non-Profit Organizations in Lewis County

Non-Profit Name	Local Municipality Where Located
Lewis County Search and Rescue Inc.	**Lowville**
Lewis County Head Start	**Lowville**
Lewis County Humane Society	**Lowville**
Lewis County Development Corp	**Lowville**
Lewis County Agricultural Society	**Lowville**
Lewis County Hospital Foundation Inc.	**Lowville**
Marine Corps League – 754 Lewis County Detachment	**Lowville**
Friends of Lewis County Hospice Inc.	**Lowville**

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Lewis County Chamber of Commerce	**Lowville**
Lewis County Historical Society	**Lowville**
Veterans of Foreign Wars of The United States Dept Of New York — Lewis County Memorial Post 6912	**Lowville**
Valley Snow Travelers of Lewis County Inc	**Lowville**
Lewis County General Hospital Auxiliary	**Lowville**
Lewis County Taking Care of Our Own	**Lyons Falls**
Loving Lewis County	**Lowville**
Youth Of Lewis County Inc	**Copenhagen**
Lewis County Amateur Hockey Association Inc	**Lowville**
Lewis County Dairy Princess Committee	**Turin**
Civil Service Employees Association — 0825 Lewis County	**Lowville**
New York Farm Bureau Lewis County	**Lowville**
Lewis County Homeschool Connection	**Lowville**
Cooperative Extension Assoc in The State Of New York — Lewis County	**Lowville**
Grange Patrons Of Husbandry New York State Grange Inc — 30 Lewis County Pomona	**Lowville**
The Lowville Food Pantry	**Lowville**
The Arc Oneida-Lewis Chapter	**Lowville**
Literacy of Northern New York	**Lowville**
Disabled Persons Action	**Lowville**

4. Youth Organizations

a. Lewis County Youth Bureau Advisory Board

- The Lewis County Youth Bureau Advisory Board was established on February 5, 1997, through a resolution adopted by the Lewis County Board of Legislators. The Board includes representatives from government, non-government organizations, the broader community, and student representatives from across Lewis County. Its primary function is to oversee the allocation of funding from the New York State Office of Children and Family Services and the County to programs and organizations that serve youth.

b. Youth of Lewis County

- Serving ages 13-21, Youth of Lewis County is an organization dedicated to supporting youth in the community. Programs include community engagement,

safe hangouts, and resource connection. Youth of Lewis County holds weekly Youth Drop-Ins where attendees can play games and interact with peers. Special events and festivals are also organized.

c. 4-H

- As the Youth Development program of the Lewis County Cornell Cooperative Extension, 4-H provides hands-on learning opportunities to help young people build leadership, citizenship, and life skills. Through clubs, schools, camps, and community activities, youth of varying ages and interests engage in projects while developing confidence, relationships, and a sense of responsibility to their communities.

5. Seniors Organizations

Lewis County's Office for the Aging provides resources to caregivers, transportation services, health insurance information and assistance, legal services, and health and wellness programming. There are also recurring support groups, information sessions, and other events intended to support seniors, their caregivers and their families.

Senior Citizens community groups are located throughout the community and organize social events and activities to build community cohesion.

1. Beaver River Senior Citizens
2. Lewis-Oneida Senior Citizens
3. Harrsville Senior Citizens
4. Lowville Senior Citizens
5. "The Dependables" Senior Citizens
6. Singing Waters Senior Citizens
7. Training And Education

6. Training and Education

a. Jefferson-Lewis-Hamilton-Herkimer-Oneida Board of Cooperative Education Services (BOCES)

- Continuing and technical education and professional development workshops are offered at the Howard G. Sackett Technical Center in Glenfield. While not in Lewis

County, BOCES has three campuses in Watertown that are approximately 45 minutes from Glenfield by vehicle that offer additional courses.

b. Mohawk Valley Community College (MVCC)

- While MVCC campuses are in Utica and Rome, Lewis County's proximity to these cities offer students a viable option. MVCC offers numerous courses in community education, workforce development and corporate training, all of which are geared to a range of ages.

c. Jefferson Community College

- Located in Watertown, JCC offers a range of courses and programs aimed at upskilling the workforce for high-demand and high-growth occupations. JCC also offers numerous online programs including professional development training and two platforms for online career training.

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AGRICULTURE, FORESTRY AREAS, AND OPEN SPACE

1. Agriculture, Forested, and Open Space

Lewis County's economic history has been tied closely to the area's abundant supply of water, wood, and farmland soils. A majority of the county's earlier growth occurred along the Black River Valley, with links to the Erie Canal in Rome, NY via the Black River Canal System. The Black River Valley provides a large alluvial plain with high-quality soils and relatively flat topography — good for growing crops and providing grazing lands for cattle.

In addition to the dairy and agricultural corridor along the Black River Valley, the County's vast forestry base contains the Tug Hill Plateau to the west and the Adirondack foothills to the east. A majority of the land in these areas is unsuitable for farming due to soil, climate, and topography, making it well-suited for forestry and recreational uses.

a. Agriculture History

Before European-American settlement, the region was occupied and utilized by Indigenous peoples, particularly the Haudenosaunee Confederacy and related Native communities, who hunted, traveled, and used the Black River corridor seasonally. Permanent European-American agricultural settlement accelerated after the American Revolution as land companies promoted northern New York for farming and timber extraction. Agricultural development occurred alongside logging, which provided both income and cleared land for cultivation. The Black River and its tributaries became important corridors for timber transport and settlement expansion.

Lewis County was formally established in 1805 from part of Oneida County. Small hamlets and villages emerged to support agricultural communities with mills, blacksmith shops, churches, and trading centers. By the mid-1800s, farming had become the dominant land use in much of the county outside the heavily forested uplands.

Early in its history, Lewis County was dominated by sheep farming. Wool production became an important source of cash that supplemented grain and livestock farming. Maple sugaring also emerged as a seasonal agricultural activity by the mid-1800's.

Increased competition, declining wool prices, and improved transportation systems gradually moved the County from sheep to dairy. By the late 19th century, dairy farming became the dominant agricultural operation in the County with abundant hay, pasture, and silage crops to support it. This continued through the 1950's and continues to influence Lewis's rural identity.

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Like many other areas in New York State in the 1950's, significant changes in the agricultural industry caused the number of farms to decline and to consolidate. Agriculture remained central to the county's economy, and today, the area remains heavily dominated by dairy production, although there is greater diversification occurring. Beginning in the 1970's, Amish farming communities established themselves in the County, and continue to contribute to local produce markets, cheese and specialty food production, preservation of rural landscapes, and other enterprises such as furniture and woodworking. Today, large dairy operations coexist alongside smaller family farms, diversified and value-added operations, and Amish enterprises.

Agriculture in the County was highly supported by several organizations and institutions:

A local "farmers' institute" held in 1903 is recognized as the earliest recorded attempt to bring farmers together in an effort to share information and improve methods of operation. In 1917, the New York State Food Supply Commission, the predecessor of the Cornell Cooperative Extension and the Farm Bureau Association, opened an office in Lowville. In 1918, the Cornell Cooperative Extension was formally created, with the official spin-off of the Farm Bureau taking place in 1955. The Cooperative Extension and the Farm Bureau provide meaningful information to farmers and farm families on topics ranging from cattle raising and improved methods of milk production to improvements in the growth and harvesting of crops.

In addition to institutions that enhance and promote farming activities, the Home Bureau was organized in 1920 to improve activities done within the household. The Home Bureau was eventually absorbed by the Cooperative Extension as the Home Economics Division, and covered various community projects such as improved nutrition awareness, cooking skills, parenting, and household needs, and survives today as the Community and Family Education Program.

The Lowville Farmer's Cooperative was founded in 1920 to provide goods and services to the farming community. An additional cooperative, the Lowville Producers Dairy Cooperative, was established in 1936. Located on Route 12 in Lowville, this co-op is made up of over 220 member/owner farms that produce in excess of 310 million pounds of milk per year. In addition to coordinating much of the county's milk production, the Lowville Producers Cooperative also has a retail store and markets the county's cheese, maple syrup, and Croghan Bologna.

b. Agriculture Today

Agriculture remains a dominant land use in the County, with approximately 200,621 acres having some level of agricultural activity. There are 2,014 fully active agricultural parcels on about 148,060 acres, indicating a very large and geographically significant active farming base. Secondary agricultural uses add substantial acreage: 727 parcels and approximately 46,578 acres contain agriculture mixed with residential, vacant, forested, commercial, industrial, public, or institutional uses, suggesting that agriculture is deeply integrated into the broader rural landscape rather than isolated only to large commercial farms. There is an additional 5,933 acres permanently protected through agricultural easements. The presence of 70 agricultural easement parcels demonstrates a meaningful commitment to long-term farmland protection.

Agriculture has long been considered the largest industry in Lewis County. The 2022 Census of Agriculture indicates total agricultural sales of approximately $178 million from 476 farm producers. While market value has increased over time, the number of farms and land in farms has declined: The number of farms decreased 24% between 2017 and 2022, and land in farms decreased by 17%. The per farm market value and net cash farm income have increased, while farm production expenses have risen dramatically.

In 2022, about 32% (151 farms) had $100,000 or more in sales, followed by 21% (98 farms) having less than $2,500 in sales. About 16% (77 farms) had sales valued between $10,000 and $24,999. Most farms are sized between 50 and 500 acres, with more smaller farms than larger. 27 farms had greater than 1,000 acres.

The 2022 Census of Agriculture shows that Lewis County is 5th in the State for cultivated Christmas trees and short rotation woody crops, 8th in other crops and hay, 12th in the State for livestock, poultry, and products overall, and 11th in the State for cattle, calves, and milk from cows. A large proportion of farmed acres (50,867 acres) is used for forage crops (hay/haylage), followed by 23,474 acres for corn silage/greenchop, 5,929 acres for corn for grain, 1,972 acres for soybeans, and 1,136 acres for oats for grain.

There is an increasing number of farms that sell produce directly to consumers (92 farms in 2022 compared to 78 in 2017), an increased number of farms selling directly to retail markets and food hubs (48 in 2022 compared to 30 in 2017, and an increasing number of farms that have value-added sales (37 in 2022 compared to 26 in 2017). This reflects the ongoing diversification of farming in the County.

In terms of Livestock inventory, as of December 1, 2022, there were 48,525 cattle and calves, which far surpass all other livestock in the County. In terms of numbers of other livestock,

laying chickens and broiler/meat chickens dominate, but goats, hogs/pigs, horses/ponies, sheep/lambs, and turkeys are all raised in Lewis County. The inventory also includes the following:

Table 26. Other Livestock Inventory in Lewis County (2022)	
Broilers and other meat-type chickens	1,382
Goats	362
Hogs and pigs	209
Horses and ponies	419
Layers	2685
Pullets	469
Sheep and lambs	665
Turkeys	107

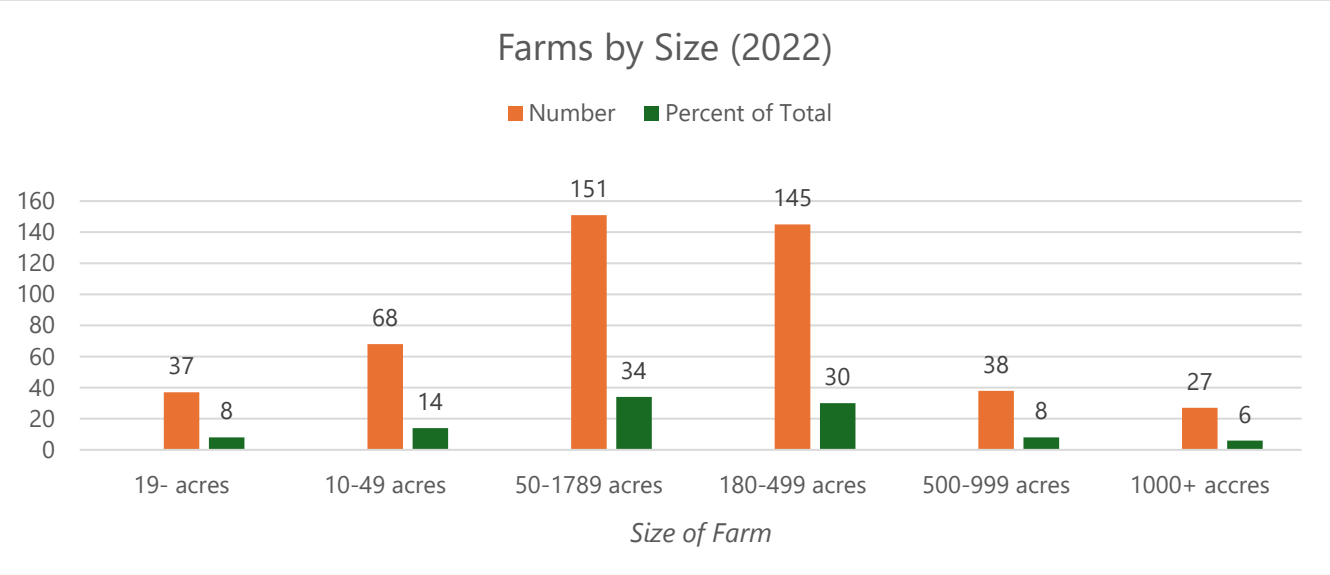


Table 27, below, details that field crops have the largest number of parcels in the County (743), but that lands used for dairy have the most acreage (64,284 acres). A wide diversity of agricultural crops are produced in the County including livestock, working forests, nursery and greenhouse, and specialty farms. Vineyard, aquaculture, orchard, and honey/beeswax are other commodities on one farm in the County.

Table 27: Farm types, number of parcels, and acreage of farms in Lewis County.		
Farm Type	**Parcels**	**Parcel Acreage**
Dairy products	696	64,284
Field crops	743	52,531

Secondary Agricultural Use	649	42,824
Agriculture - Likely Hay	474	20,766
Cattle, calves, hogs	111	9,311
Abandoned Agricultural	137	4,872
Working Forest	50	3,753
Horses	29	668
Livestock	11	509
Nursery and greenhouse	6	475
Specialty farms	3	271
Grain and feed	1	174
Fish, game, and wildlife preserves	3	102
Vineyard	1	39
Aquatic farms	1	31
Orchard	1	8
Honey and beeswax	1	2

c. Agricultural Land Uses

Most agricultural operations are found in central Lewis County along the Black River valley. The 2025 real property tax parcel data shows 2,014 parcels and 148,060 acres of land having agriculture as their primary land use (See Table 2, below). An additional 727 parcels and 46,578 acres have agricultural uses associated with other land uses (secondary agriculture in Table 1, below).

Residential properties with agricultural activity remain an agricultural resource: there are 610 parcels totaling nearly 39,000 acres that have secondary agricultural activities on them. This indicates the importance of hobby farms, part-time farms, rural homesteads, and small-scale agricultural operations. Some of this land may be important rental farmland for other farmers in the county, too. The diversity of land use categories associated with agriculture demonstrates that farming coexists with many other community functions, including residential development, public services, commerce, forestry, and institutional land uses.

There are 176 parcels on 5,983 acres of land considered abandoned. At least 142 acres of current active agricultural parcels are covered with solar. At least 184 acres of active farmland have been converted to solar since the Lewis County Agricultural and Farmland Enhancement Plan was adopted in 2021. Based on 2024 imagery, at least 193 acres of land have solar.

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Table 28. Agricultural Parcels and Acreage.			
Land Use	**Parcels**	**Parcel Acres**	**Notes About Land Use**
Agricultural	1894	138,373	100 class codes, greenhouses, grain operation, or "vacant" with primarily ag use.
Agricultural under Easement	70	5,933	Same as above with a conservation easement.
Working Forest	50	3,753	Forested parcels with an agricultural assessment (2019) and/or tied to a sugaring operation.
Subtotal of Active Agriculture	***2014***	***148,060***	
Residential with Agriculture	610	38,988	Assessed as residential, but includes active ag land and/or assessed as residential w/agriculture.
Residential with Agriculture under Easement	2	579	Same as above with a conservation easement.
Vacant with Agriculture	78	3,754	Assessed as vacant land, but includes active ag land (<half of total parcel).
Forest with Agriculture	18	1,927	Assessed as private forest, but includes active agricultural land.
Public Services with Agriculture	6	646	Assessed as a public service, but includes active agricultural land.
Industrial with Agriculture	2	280	Assessed as industrial, but includes active agricultural land.
Commercial with Agriculture	4	231	Assessed as commercial, but includes active agricultural land.
Community Services with Agriculture	3	113	Assessed as a community service, but includes active agricultural land.
Religious/Cemetery with Agriculture	4	60	Assessed as religious or cemetery, but includes active agricultural land.
Subtotal of secondary agriculture	***727***	***46,578***	
Abandoned Agricultural	176	5,983	Coded as 105 or 321 with no visible active agricultural land (also includes a recently subdivided parcel with multiple undeveloped lots).
Total (including abandoned ag)	***2,917***	***200,621***	

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Table 28. Agricultural Parcels and Acreage.			
Land Use	**Parcels**	**Parcel Acres**	**Notes About Land Use**
Total (*not* *including abandoned ag*)	**2,741**	**194,638**	

Dairy

According to USDA/NASS data, Lewis County has consistently ranked sixth in New York counties in milk production over the past two decades. Maintenance of this high level of production has continued even in the face of the loss of several dairy farms. According to the 2022 NYS Agricultural Statistics Service, milk sales were $136,051,000 from 114 operations. More recent data (2026) from the USDA shows there were 24,000 cows in the Lewis County inventory, along with 3,100 beef cows. Lewis County's 2022 milk from cows was about $136.1 million, up from about $112.9 million in 2017. (See also Agricultural Economics for more data).

Maple Syrup

The County's Agricultural Enhancement Plan detailed that Lewis County was the 4th largest maple syrup producer in New York State in 2017, with 41,506 gallons, with sales of $1.2 million, and that about 15% of farms in the County produce maple syrup. Current data continues to show that the County remains dominant in the top 5 county producers in the State. In 2007, the 112 maple producers had approximately 171,643 taps that produced 28,786 gallons of syrup, accounting for approximately 13 percent of the state's maple syrup production from 13 percent of its taps. In 2022, there were 243,375 taps, and 86 operations with sales that produced 55,566 gallons, valued at $2,005,000 in Lewis County.

The 2024 data from the US Forest Service estimates there are approximately 2.8 million taps used in New York State, producing 846,000 gallons of syrup, up from 230,000 gallons in 2023. The New York 2022 Census of Agriculture detailed 829,000 gallons of maple syrup produced in New York. There has been, however, a statewide decrease in the number of taps (2.9 million in 2021 to 2.5 million).

The maple syrup industry is supported in Lewis County by the Lewis County Maple Producers Association and Cornell Cooperative Extension. 37 different maple producers are members of the Maple Producers Association. The Cornell Maple Program "works to improve the production and use of maple products by working with producers, consumers, and others." They provide technical and educational assistance. The Lowville Farmers Coop assists with

shipping local maple products, and the International Maple Museum Centre in Croghan helps preserve the history of the industry.

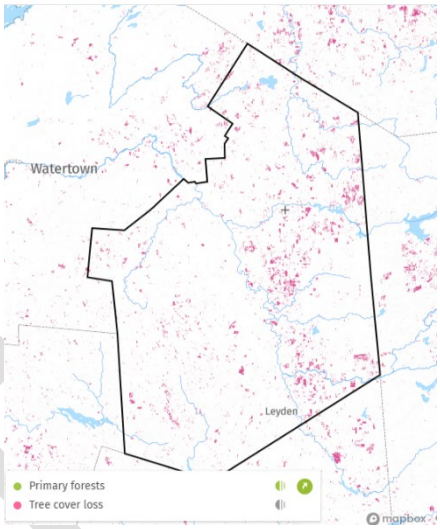
Forestry

Lewis County remains heavily forested, and about 75% of its total land base is covered by forest. This includes parts of 26 New York State reforestation areas, totaling about 82,472 acres. In addition to maple syrup production, forested lands in the County significantly contribute to timber production and Christmas trees. Lewis County ranks #1 in New York State for the sale of cultivated Christmas trees.

Lewis County's forest-based manufacturing system consists of timber harvesting and associated trucking, primary manufacturing, and secondary manufacturing. Large and small operations in the timber harvesting sector cut the trees down and sell the logs and waste products to markets in Lewis County, New York State, and throughout the region. After cutting, timber is rated by quality to determine the ultimate utilization of the wood, which is then trucked to mills throughout the region for processing. Sawlogs, the portions of harvested trees that are large enough to be sawn for lumber, are trucked to sawmills, with the highest value logs shipped to veneer mills that take thin layers from the log to produce products such as plywood. Low-quality timber is predominantly refined by mills to create the pulp used in the manufacture of paper. In addition to pulpwood, low-quality timber is also utilized by the wood energy industry, which takes whole trees or residues such as chips and sawdust from sawmills and uses the material as fuel for the production of electricity via steam-powered generators. In some instances, the steam is also used for manufacturing processes such as dry kilns, greenhouses, or piped to other industrial users.

The Biomass Crop Assistance Program (BCAP) is a USDA Farm Service Agency initiative developed to help landowners in cultivating woody energy crops such as shrub willow, for renewable energy production. Thirty-one recipient owners are involved in the BCAP program from Castorland, Lyons Falls, Turin, Croghan, Beechurst, Lowville, Deer River, Boonville, Carthage, and Port Leyden. The program provides financial incentives to farmers and forest owners that supply materials to the ReEnergy bioenergy facility in Lyonsdale. The ReEnergy facility in Lyonsdale produces 22 MW of electricity from woody feedstocks and forest residues. They have a renewable electricity contract with Fort Drum Army post. There are three willow production areas in Lewis County.

In 2020, Lewis had 240 kha of natural forest extending over 72% of its land area. In 2025, it lost 170 ha, or about 4% of the 2000 tree cover, of natural forest, according to data from the Global Forest Watch (globalforestwatch.org). This reduction in forested area was driven mostly by forestry operations, but agriculture, development, and natural disturbances also contributed to it. Yet, most of the forested areas remain stable over time.



Map showing changes in forest cover in Lewis County between 2020 and 2025, from Global Forest Watch data.

Lands devoted to the forestry industry are owned and managed by logging firms, sawmills, paper mills, finished/secondary wood products processors, and the wood energy industry. In 2025, there was a total of 11,258 million cubic feet of timber products from Lewis County. Twelve softwood and hardwood timber sales took place on State forest lands in 2024. Substantial numbers of residential households also use wood for heating, consuming locally sourced firewood.

Primary Manufacturing

The conversion of trees or parts of trees into lumber, veneer, pulp, or energy starts with the primary manufacturing sectors. In Lewis County and throughout the state, the pulp and paper industry was once the primary end user of the wood harvested. However, the sawmill and wood energy industries are increasingly the major wood users within New York and Lewis County. Lewis County has lost several mills over the years, and two primary pulp and paper mills are still operating.

Secondary Manufacturing

Secondary manufacturing refers to the drying, cutting, and assembly of lumber into parts or finished products. In Lewis County, secondary products include bowling pins, doors, millwork, windows, kitchen cabinets, furniture, countertops, tables, and kitchen accessories. Lewis County is home to AMF Bowling Products, the nation's only location for the production of bowling pins.

d. Agricultural Districts

As defined by the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets:

The purpose of agricultural districts are to encourage the continued use of farmland for agricultural production. The Agricultural Districts program is based on a combination of landowner incentives and protections, all of which are designed to forestall the conversion of farmland to nonagricultural uses.

Lewis County's first Agricultural District was formed in 1975 and included portions of Lewis, West Turin, Leyden, and Lyonsdale. Agricultural Districts 2, 3, and 4 were formed in 1976 and included portions of Lowville, Martinsburg, Harrisburg, Watson, West Turin, Lewis, Lyonsdale, Greig, Martinsburg, Leyden, and Turin. Agricultural District Number 5 was formed in 1978 and included portions of Denmark, Lowville, Montague, Harrisburg, and Pinckney. The previous five existing Agricultural Districts were consolidated as Agricultural District 6 in 2008. Agricultural Districts are required to be reviewed every eight years and recertified by the NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets as viable Agricultural Districts.

There are 252,012 parcels of land within the County Agricultural District (up from 246,141 total acres as detailed in the Lewis County Agricultural and Farmland Enhancement Plan). Of that total, 137,646 acres on 1,845 parcels, or 70%, are in active agriculture (See Table X, below). There are an additional 35,467 acres on 583 parcels that have agriculture along with other land uses. Most of those parcels are considered residential with agriculture. There are 4,265 acres on 125 parcels of land in the Ag District considered abandoned. Total agricultural land, including abandoned agricultural lands in Ag District #6, is 176,780 acres on 2,553 parcels.

The remaining land in the Ag District (75, 232 acres on 5,946) is considered non-agricultural parcels. While a variety of non-farm land uses can be found within the Ag District, most are considered residential (See Table X). About 61% of the non-farm land uses are residential in nature. There are also 418 acres (92 parcels) of commercial uses and 112 acres (6 parcels) of industrial uses. About 15,000 acres (248 parcels) are considered private forest land, 33% (24,804 acres) are classified as vacant land within the Ag District #6. There are also 1,611 acres (54 parcels) that are protected lands within the district.

Table 29. Agricultural and Non-Agricultural Land Uses in Agricultural District #6.

Land Use	Parcels	Parcel Acres	Percent of Total within Ag District #6
Agricultural	1754	129,759	94%
Agricultural under Easement	69	5,932	100%
Working Forest	22	1,356	36%
Subtotal of Active Agriculture	***1845***	***137,048***	93%

Table 29. Agricultural and Non-Agricultural Land Uses in Agricultural District #6.			
Land Use	**Parcels**	**Parcel Acres**	**Percent of Total within Ag District #6**
Residential with Agriculture	486	29,779	76%
Residential with Agriculture under Easement	1	221	38%
Vacant with Agriculture	66	2,927	78%
Forest with Agriculture	17	1,874	97%
Public Services with Agriculture	2	33	5%
Industrial with Agriculture	2	280	100%
Commercial with Agriculture	4	231	100%
Community Services with Agriculture	2	81	71%
Religious/Cemetery with Agriculture	3	42	70%
Subtotal of secondary agriculture	***583***	***35,467***	76%
Abandoned Agricultural	125	4,265	71%
Total (including abandoned ag)	***2,553***	***176,780***	88%
Non-Agricultural Land Uses in Ag District			
Single-Family Residential	2537	7,909	
Rural Residential	353	13,160	
Residential with Easement	7	191	
Residential with Recreation	15	509	
Residential with Commercial	13	200	
Seasonal Residential	223	5,539	
Manufactured Home	406	1,920	
Multiple Manufactured Homes	20	156	
Duplex	20	47	
3-Family Residence	3	5	
Residential Multi-Structure	17	467	
Multiple Residential	8	24	
Living accommodations	5	18	
Apartments	7	9	
Mobile Home Park	6	22	
Residential Subtotal	***3,640***	***30,176***	
Commercial	92	418	
Industrial	6	112	

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Table 29. Agricultural and Non-Agricultural Land Uses in Agricultural District #6.			
Land Use	**Parcels**	**Parcel Acres**	**Percent of Total within Ag District #6**
Recreation and Entertainment	23	1,313	
Government Land	26	147	
Schools	4	120	
Religious	22	118	
Cemetery	40	104	
Other Community Services	66	663	
Community Services Subtotal	**158**	**1,152**	
Public Services	53	572	
Private Forest	248	14,593	
Forest under Easement	9	339	
Vacant	1655	24,804	
Vacant with Easement	1	71	
Wetland under Easement	7	72	
Protected Land	54	1,611	
Total non-agricultural in Ag District	**5,946**	**75,232**	
All Parcels within Ag District	**8,499**	**252,012**	

Prime Farmland Soils

According to the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), prime farmland is:

Land that has the best combination of physical and chemical characteristics for producing food, feed, forage, fiber, and oilseed crops, and that is available for these uses. It has the combination of soil properties, growing season, and moisture supply needed to produce sustained high yields of crops in an economic manner if it is treated and managed according to acceptable farming methods.

Table X, below, details the soil breakdown in Lewis County. About 32% of Ag District 6 is considered prime farmland soil. 57% is considered farmland of statewide importance, and 10% are prime farmland soil if drained. As shown in Table 4, active farmland has the highest proportion of prime farmland.

Table 30. Soil Characteristics in Ag District #6.				
Parcel Category	**Prime Farmland Soil**	**Farmland Of Statewide Importance**	**Prime Farmland Soil If Drained**	**Total Acres**

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Agricultural	39,047	50,764	11,877	101,688
Secondary Agriculture	6,811	13,568	2,530	22,909
Residential	4,626	13,861	1,361	19,848
Vacant	3,776	12,143	1,292	17,211
Private Forest	990	5,833	565	7,388
Abandoned Agriculture	497	1,804	337	2,638
Vacant with Agriculture	488	1,307	212	2,007
Protected Land	252	1,120	152	1,524
Community Services	275	486	88	849
Recreation & Entertainment	347	407	86	840
Working Forest	74	271	35	380
Public Services	88	160	27	275
Commercial	91	143	41	275
Industrial	1	30	4	35
Total Acres	**57,363**	**101,897**	**18,607**	**177,867**

Significant amounts of high-quality agricultural soils are located on non-farm parcels:

- Residential lands contain nearly 20,000 acres with many prime or statewide important soils.
- Vacant lands contain over 17,000 acres with agricultural capability.
- This suggests considerable potential pressure for conversion of productive farmland to non-agricultural uses.

The data demonstrates that important agricultural soils extend well beyond currently active farms and are distributed throughout the broader rural landscape. Private forest lands and vacant lands together contain large acreages of important agricultural soils, which may represent potential future agricultural use, former farmland that reverted to forest, or lands vulnerable to future fragmentation and development.

e. County Agricultural Enhancement Plan

In 2021, the Lewis County Agricultural and Farmland Enhancement Plan was adopted. This Agricultural Enhancement Plan was developed to ensure that agriculture remains one of Lewis County's most important industries. Ultimately, the mission of this Plan is to help promote the sustainability and resiliency of farming in Lewis County. The goal of the Lewis County

Agricultural Enhancement Plan is to outline the positive steps the County and its partners can take to ensure the long-term health of our farms and farming community.

This Plan recognizes that there are still many challenges to overcome to ensure the sustainability of agriculture in the County. Low milk prices, small profits with high costs, difficulty finding and affording labor, taxes and regulations, lack of a next generation of farmers, limited farm processing infrastructure, and limited marketing of the County and of local farm products are weaknesses that were identified and that most must still be overcome.

The Plan envisions that agriculture will continue to thrive and play an essential role as the most important industry in the region's economy; that farms will be environmentally and economically sustainable and profitable; that a local food system will mature to support the health and security of our residents; and that farmland will remain available for farming activities. The Plan also established six primary goals to attain that vision.

These are:

- Increase the profitability, sustainability, and resiliency of agriculture in Lewis County.
- Diversify farm activities and businesses including agri-tourism, food processing, and food distribution. Increase the number of farms with direct sales, online sales, and value-added products.
- Expand opportunities to become a regional leader in local food and agricultural product processing.
- Create a vigorous strategic marketing program for all aspects of agriculture in the County.
- Create a more robust local food system in Lewis County and increase local sales and exports of agricultural products. Continue to provide support infrastructure services to both profit and not-for-profit farms and farmers.
- Expand protection of important farmlands for active agriculture.

Four 'toolboxes' were developed to overcome barriers and help Lewis County attain its goals. These are:

- Policy and Regulatory Tools
- Agricultural Economic Development Tools
- Farmland Protection Tools
- Education and Outreach Tools

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These toolboxes contain 65 different strategies that can be put to work here. Of those, several strategies were identified as a priority. These include providing broadband in all locations in the County, promoting use of farm-friendly land use regulations, effectively aggregating, storing, and distributing local produce, supporting farmland protection programs and use of easements to protect priority farmlands, developing a comprehensive marketing strategy, promoting value-added activities, and supporting programs that attract new and young farmers to Lewis County.

Lewis County has already completed a number of the foundational strategies identified in the 2021 Agricultural Enhancement Plan, particularly in the areas of broadband expansion, agricultural planning, renewable energy policy, farmland protection, and farmer education.

Key accomplishments include advancing broadband infrastructure countywide and integrating broadband access into agricultural and economic development priorities. The County has also actively promoted farm-friendly zoning and local right-to-farm protections, helping municipalities better support agricultural operations and reduce land use conflicts.

Lewis County has further demonstrated leadership in balancing renewable energy development with farmland protection by building upon its 2020 solar development policy and expanding participation in clean energy and climate initiatives. In addition, the County has strengthened agricultural planning and farmland protection efforts by assisting towns with agricultural planning and utilizing Priority Farmland Area mapping to guide preservation strategies.

Economic development efforts have also supported agriculture directly through work to expand local meat processing capacity, including collaboration with Red Barn Meats and efforts to attract additional processing enterprises. Educational outreach has complemented these initiatives through solar development education for farmland owners and expanded online training opportunities for farmers and agribusinesses tied to improved broadband access.

More specifically, the County has accomplished the following actions to date:

Table 31. 2021 Agricultural Enhancement Plan Checklist						
A. Policy and Regulatory Tools to Enhance Agriculture						
#	*Strategy*	*Potential Lead Agency or Organization*	*Potential Partners*	*Potential Cost and Funding Needs*	*Page # Reference in Plan*	*Completed*
Priority Strategies						

A3	Continue to advocate for and support the provision of broadband in all locations of the County and make this a priority infrastructure.	Planning	IDA, DANC	High	24	Y
A7	Support and promote the use of farm-friendly zoning and land use regulations in towns throughout Lewis County.	Planning	THC	Low	28	Y
Important Strategies						
A1	Promote the enactment of right-to-farm laws at the local level	Planning	Towns	Low	24	Y
A6	Build on the County policy (2020 Resolution of the Board of Legislators) relating to solar development in Lewis County to continue to promote renewable energy use in a way that balances landowner, farming, farmland, and renewable energy agendas.	BOL	Planning, ASC, SWCD	Low	25	Y
A9	Build on Lewis County's designation as a "Clean Energy Community" and work to promote participation in the NYS DEC Climate Smart Community Program.	Planning	THC, DANC, ANCA, THTLT, Towns	Depending on the Project	29	Y

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B3	Increase meat processing capacity in Lewis County by working with Red Barn Meats to expand or by attracting an entrepreneur to develop an additional meat processing facility.	ASC, IDA	Financial and technical assistance providers (e.g., USDA, FCE, DANC)	Varies, depending on scope	33	Y
C. Farmland Protection Tools						
Priority Strategies						
C4	Encourage and assist town governments in enhancing local planning to address agriculture.	Planning	THC	Low	47	Y
C9	Use the Priority Farmland Areas map included in this Plan to advance and focus farmland protection efforts.	Planning	THTLT	Low	49	Y
D. Education and Outreach Tools						
Priority Strategies						
D16	Provide solar development education for farmland owners.	Planning	CCE, SWCD, THTLT, IDA	Low	58	Y
Important Strategies						
D9	Enhance broadband services and fully employ opportunities to offer online training and programs for both farmers and agribusinesses.	CCE, Planning	THC, IDA, SWCD, YFC	High for providing broadband infrastructure, Low to Moderate for developing online training	56	Y

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The Parks and Recreation Resources map illustrates the extensive network of public and private recreational lands and facilities throughout Lewis County. The largest concentrations of recreational and conservation lands are located in the northern, central-eastern, and western-southwestern portions of the county, while the more developed Black River Valley corridor through the center of the county contains a greater concentration of community-based recreation facilities and villages.

The map shows that Lewis County's recreation system is strongly tied to its natural landscape. Large blocks of publicly protected land, including state forests, state parks, county forests, federal preserves, and other conservation lands, are concentrated along the county's eastern border adjoining the Adirondack Park and in the northern towns. Additional large protected areas occur in the southwestern portion of the county near the Oswego County line. These extensive forested lands provide opportunities for hiking, hunting, fishing, wildlife observation, snowmobiling, ATV riding, and other outdoor recreation activities. Numerous state water access sites and surface water resources further enhance recreational opportunities associated with rivers, streams, lakes, and reservoirs.

A defining feature of the county's recreation network is its extensive trail system. Snowmobile trails are distributed throughout much of the county, connecting communities and recreational destinations across both public and private lands. Designated ATV trails and roads open to ATV use are concentrated in several areas, particularly in the southern and central portions of the county, creating an interconnected motorized recreation network that contributes to tourism and outdoor recreation. Traditional trail systems are also present throughout the county's forested and protected lands. At the time of writing this report, the County is planning the redevelopment of the 25-mile rail corridor into a trail system for community reuse. Extensive community engagement is ongoing to inform various uses.

Community recreation facilities are generally concentrated within and around villages and hamlets, particularly along the Black River corridor where population centers are located. These facilities include local parks and preserves, schools with athletic fields, fire department ball fields, fairgrounds, campgrounds, golf courses, marinas, and other recreational amenities. Villages such as Lowville, Croghan, Turin, Lyons Falls, Copenhagen, and Harrisville serve as important recreation hubs, providing facilities that support residents and visitors alike.

Private recreational resources are also an important component of the county's recreation system. Fish and game clubs, campgrounds, golf courses, and other privately operated facilities are distributed throughout the county, often located near major natural resources and outdoor

recreation destinations. Together with public lands and facilities, these resources create a diverse recreation network that supports year-round activities and contributes significantly to the county's quality of life, tourism economy, and outdoor heritage.

Overall, Lewis County possesses an exceptional combination of protected natural lands, water resources, trail systems, and community recreation facilities. The distribution of these resources provides recreational opportunities in nearly every part of the county while highlighting the important role that forests, waterways, and open space play in defining the county's character and supporting both residents and visitors.

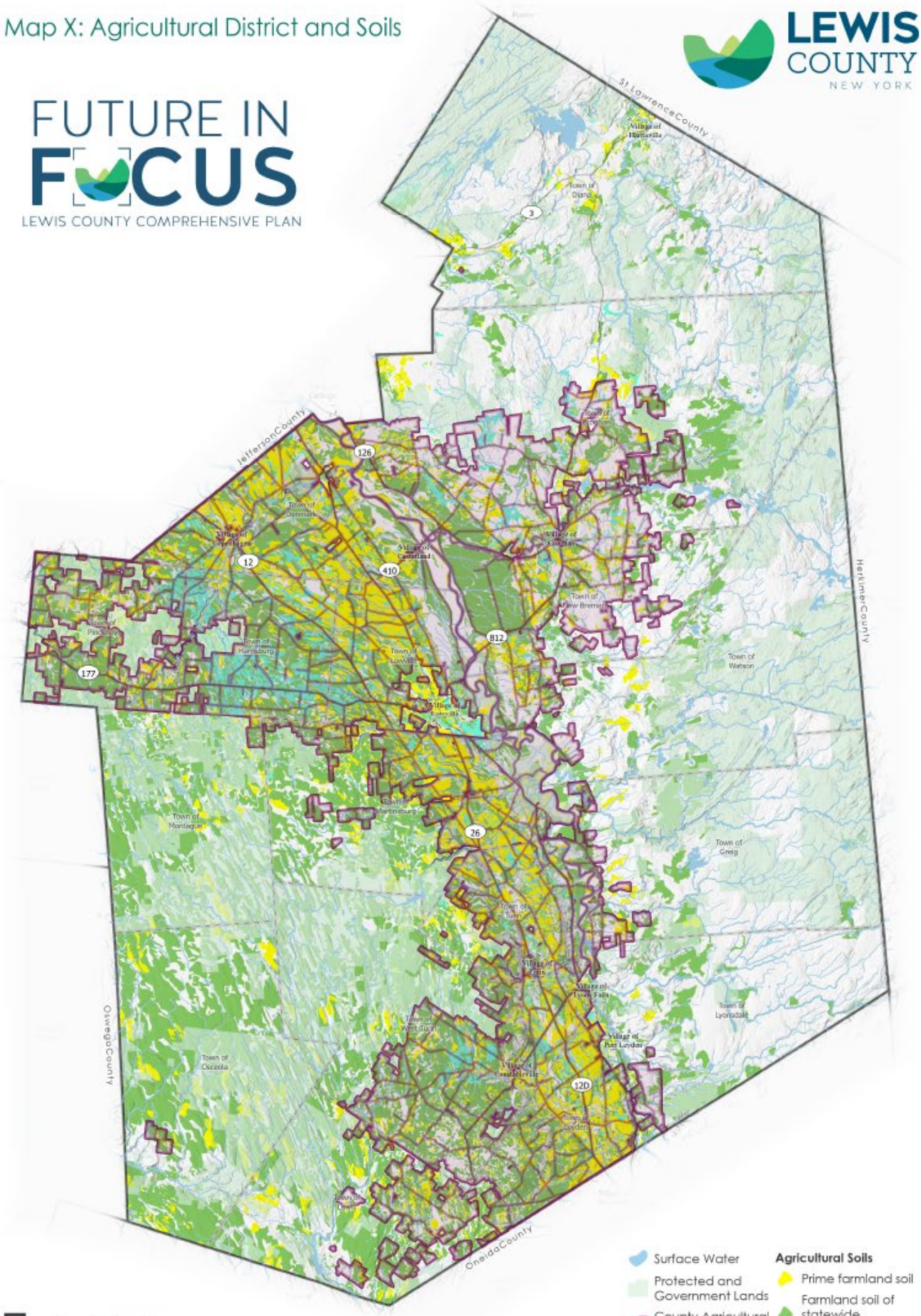
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Map X: Agricultural District and Soils

LEWIS COUNTY NEW YORK

FUTURE IN FOCUS

LEWIS COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN



Surface Water

Protected and Government Lands

County Agricultural District

Agricultural Soils

Prime farmland soil

Farmland soil of statewide importance

Prime farmland if drained

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Data Sources: Municipal boundaries and roads: NYS GIS Program Office 2018; Protected Lands: Lewis County Parcels data 2025; Ag District: Lewis County 2026; Soils: USDA via Esri 2026; Surface water: USGS National Hydrography Dataset 2025

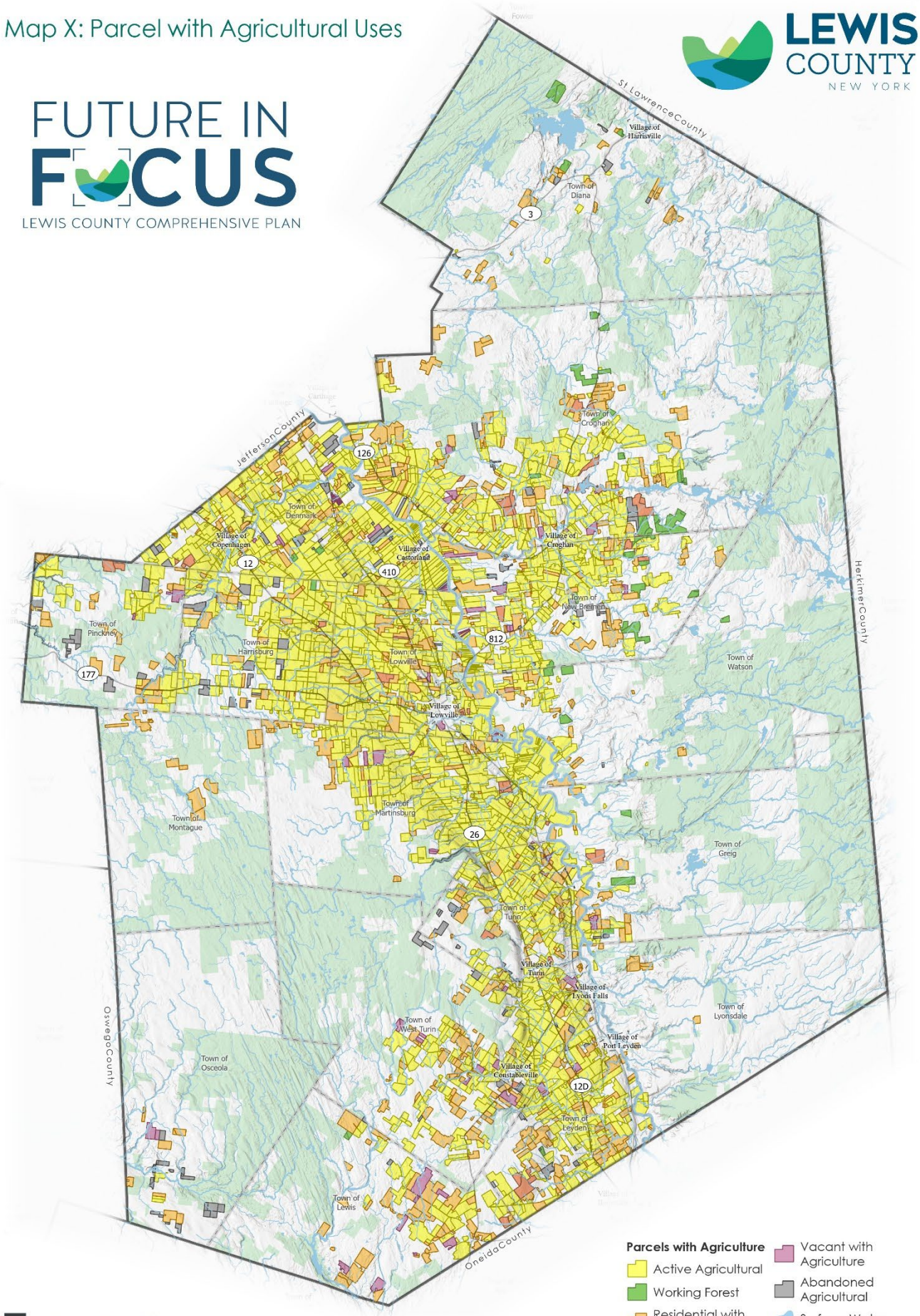
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Map X: Parcel with Agricultural Uses

LEWIS COUNTY NEW YORK

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Parcels with Agriculture

- Active Agricultural
- Working Forest
- Residential with Agriculture
- Other with Agriculture
- Vacant with Agriculture
- Abandoned Agricultural
- Surface Water
- Protected and Government Lands

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Data Sources: Municipal boundaries and roads: NYS GIS Program Office 2018; Protected Lands and Agriculture: Lewis County Parcel Data 2025; Surface water: USGS National Hydrography Dataset 2025

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ENVIRONMENTAL, CLIMATE AND SUSTAINABILITY

1. Natural Resources

a. Waterbodies

Rivers, Streams and Creeks

While Lewis County is defined by its topography, its topography is greatly shaped by the watercourses that run along the land. As discussed previously, the Black River is the primary waterbody within Lewis County. Meandering across a broad, flat alluvial plain, this watercourse flows tranquilly across Lewis County from Lyons Falls to Carthage. Despite its size, however, the Black River is only one of many major rivers and creeks present within the county, with others including the Moose River, Independence River, Beaver River, Deer River, and Fish Creek.

Stream Classification

The Black River is classified as a Class C stream. Many of its tributaries are a higher class of C(T) suitable for trout, or C(ts) suitable for trout spawning. The Salmon River is C (t) in most of its upper reaches, and both the West Branch and Middle Branch of the Oswegatchie River are Class C(t) streams. Overall, these designations reflect good water quality. Parts of the Black River, Mill Creek/South Branch and tributaries, and the Soft Maple Pond and Reservoir are identified as impaired water bodies. Causes for this listing include aluminum in the Black River from industrial uses and acid deposition, nutrients and fecal coliform from agriculture, and low pH due to acid deposition. The Beaver River was previously listed as an impaired waterbody but has been removed from the list due to water infrastructure improvements by the Town of Croghan's wastewater treatment plant. The Black River Nine Element Watershed Management Plan exists to actively mitigate agricultural runoff and sedimentation.

Lakes

Lewis County has many lakes and ponds located primarily in the Adirondack Foothill and Tug Hill Plateau regions. The largest of these include: Brantingham Lake, Copper Lake, Chase Lake, Beaver Lake, Soft Maple Reservoir/Effley Falls Pond, Long Pond, Little Otter Lake, Stony Lake, White Lake, and Lake Bonaparte. Most of the larger lakes are found in the northern portions of the County, and in the Adirondack Foothills. These and the hundreds of other named/unnamed lakes and ponds connect to the county's system of rivers, streams, and creeks, forming watersheds and subwatersheds that move ground and surface waters into, through, and out of Lewis County.

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Priority Waterbody List. The NYS DEC Waterbody Inventory/Priority Waterbodies List (Wi/PWL) tracks

Lake Classification

Not all lakes in Lewis County have lake classifications by the NYS DEC. Of those that do, most are classified as a (C) lake, with some also having a (C)(t) standards (suitable for trout). Chase Lake is classified as an (A) waterbody, and nearby Sand Pond is classified as (B) with (B)(T) standards (suitable for trout).

b. Wetlands and Floodplains

The water resources map shows that wetlands are one of the most widespread natural features in Lewis County and are closely associated with the County's rivers, streams, lakes, floodplains, and low-lying areas. Wetlands occur throughout the County but are especially concentrated in the western and southern portions of Lewis County where broad, poorly drained landscapes are present.

Within Lewis County, there are three primary areas of wetlands. The first is the Tug Hill Plateau, with a heavy concentration of wetlands protected by both the NYSDEC and the USACoE. The second region is the broad alluvial flats flanking the Black River. These areas receive periodic inflows from river flooding and serve to protect the river by filtering incoming drainage. The third area is located in the broad plane located in the towns of Croghan and Diana. This area comprises the largest contiguous wetlands within Lewis County, with much of this region owned by the State for conservation and preservation purposes. Numerous wetlands occur around lakes, ponds, and reservoirs in the northern and eastern portions of the County, creating interconnected aquatic systems. Smaller wetlands are dispersed throughout agricultural and forested landscapes, often following stream corridors and drainageways. Many wetlands are connected to FEMA-designated floodplains, indicating their importance in storing floodwaters and reducing downstream flooding. It should be noted that FEMA flood plain mapping is largely not digitized in the Lewis County region, and that many areas have flood plain mapping that is over 40 years old.

The pattern shown on the map suggests that Lewis County wetlands:

- Are highly interconnected with the County's broader watershed system.
- Occur in both large complexes and smaller isolated pockets.

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- Coincide with areas of unconsolidated aquifers in several locations, indicating important groundwater recharge and filtration functions.
- Provide critical wildlife habitat, water quality protection, carbon storage, and flood attenuation benefits.
- Represent an important natural infrastructure network that supports both ecological health and community resilience.

FEMA 100-year Floodplains

Most of the length of the Black River, as well as other major streams throughout northern and eastern Lewis County, have narrow 100-year floodplains along them. These floodplains are generally quite narrow and do not have extensive floodplains. Except for Copenhagen, all other villages in the County have both river and 100-year floodplain within their boundaries.

c. Unconsolidated Aquifers

Unconsolidated aquifers are a water-bearing underground layer made of loose, uncemented materials like sand, gravel, silt, or clay. Unlike solid bedrock, these underground areas are highly permeable spaces that allow water to flow freely and store easily. These aquifers are used for municipal, agricultural, and private water wells as areas plentiful in water. At the same time, unconsolidated aquifers face threats because they are close to the surface, which makes them vulnerable to surface pollution from agricultural runoff, spills, failed septic systems, over-use, and development that prevents rain from soaking into the ground to replenish the aquifer. The Water Resources map shows a significant area along the Black River and East of the Black River as a large unconsolidated aquifer taking up most of the central portion of the County. Smaller areas with this feature can be found in the northern part of the county south of Lake Bonaparte, and a small area in the southwestern corner of the County in the Town of Osceola. Except for Lowville, all other villages in the County have significant areas within their boundaries identified as unconsolidated aquifer.

d. Unique Geological Features

Four areas are identified within the County as having unique geological features: Canaan Road, Cannan Road – East Martinsburg, Napanee Limestone – Route 12D, and Kings Falls, Deer River in Copenhagen. These represent preserved evidence of long-ago weathering unique in New York State, a unique limestone outcrop, and unique/scenic falls (Kings Falls).

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e. Watersheds

Lewis County is characterized by a complex network of watersheds that drain to several major river systems, reflecting the County's varied topography and its position near the divide between waters flowing toward the St. Lawrence River Basin and those flowing south toward the Mohawk and Hudson River systems. As shown on the Watersheds Map, the County is divided into six major watershed basins: the Black River, Indian River, Mohawk River, Oneida River, Oswegatchie River, and Salmon-Sandy Rivers watersheds.

The boundaries between these watersheds generally follow ridgelines and higher elevations, particularly across the Tug Hill Plateau in the east and the Adirondack foothills in the southwest. Subwatersheds are those areas from which groundwater and surface water drain and contribute to the flow of a larger watershed or drainage basin. The drainage from these watersheds primarily moves west and north into Lake Ontario and the St. Lawrence River, with a small portion of the county draining into the Mohawk River and ultimately into the Hudson River over 220 miles to the east.

Black River Watershed: This is the largest watershed within Lewis County, which drains into the Black River, occupying much of the central and southeastern portions of the County, and covers 61 percent of the County. Numerous tributaries, including the Beaver River, Independence River, Moose River tributaries, Mill Creek, and several branches of the Black River, converge within this extensive watershed. Its 12 subwatersheds vary in size and shape, relating directly to the underlying topographic regions. The subwatersheds in the Adirondack Foothills are narrow and relatively linear, stretching from east to west. The subwatersheds within the Black River Valley and along the Tug Hill Plateau are generally larger and less linear. The Black River Watershed drains into Lake Ontario at the Village of Dexter, and then into the St. Lawrence River on its way to the Atlantic Ocean.

Indian River/Oswegatchie River Watersheds: These two watersheds drain the northern reaches of Lewis County. Representing 18 percent of the overall drainage area of the county, they cover vastly different geographies on their way to Lake Ontario. In the northeastern portion of the County, the Oswegatchie River Watershed occupies a large area associated with the western edge of the Adirondack region. Numerous tributaries, including the Middle Branch, West Branch, and Wolf Creek branches of the Oswegatchie River, drain this rugged and heavily forested landscape. The watershed boundary closely follows elevated terrain, creating a distinct drainage divide between waters flowing north toward the St. Lawrence River and those flowing south and west toward the Black River system.

The Oswegatchie watershed has its origins in the Adirondack Mountains at Cranberry Lake and covers the northern portions of the Adirondack Foothills in Lewis County. Within Lewis County, the Indian River begins in the Town of Croghan near Belfort, and drains a large area of the Lake Ontario plain north into St. Lawrence County. These two rivers meet just a few miles inland of the City of Ogdensburg, draining into the St. Lawrence River as the Oswegatchie River.

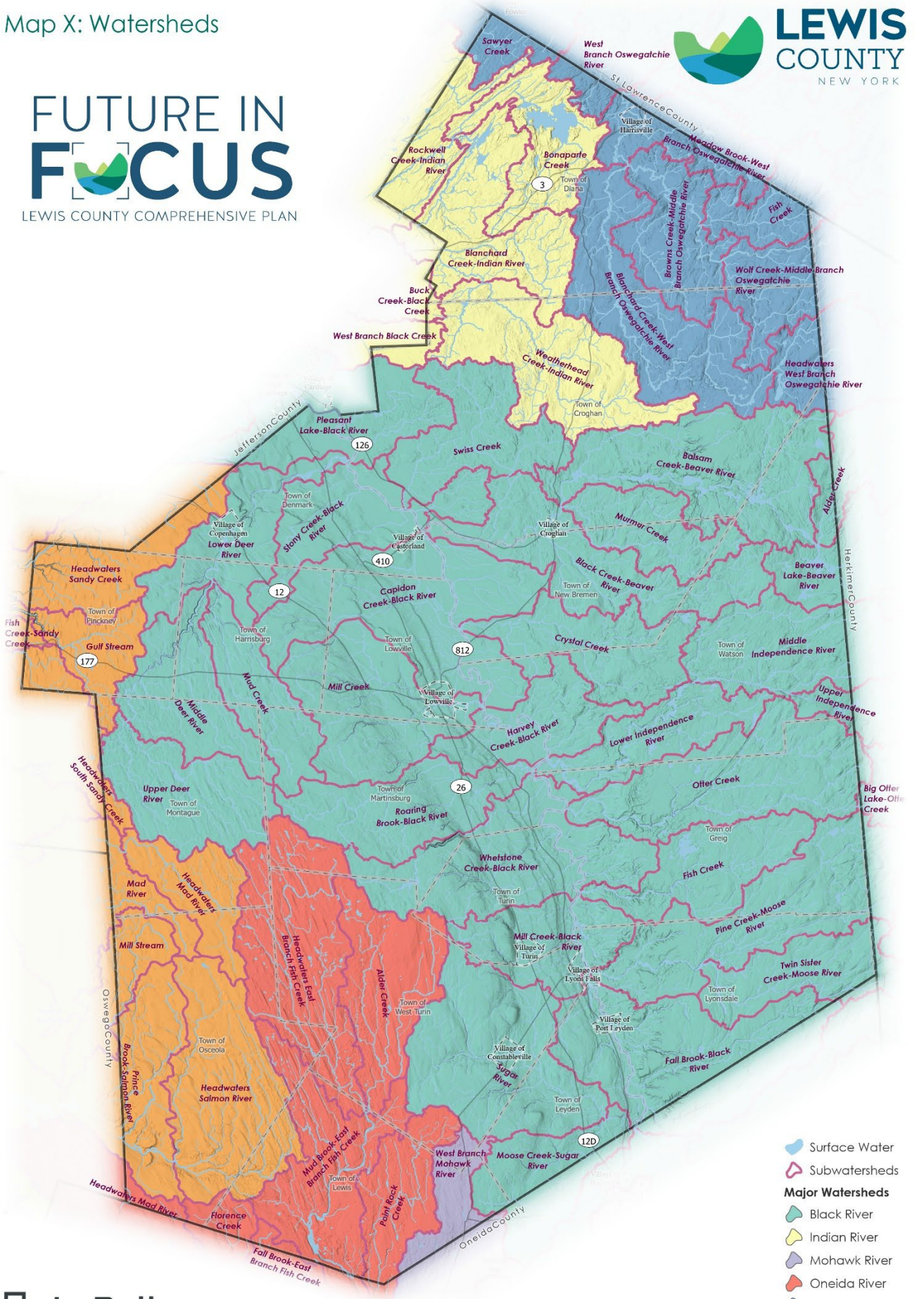
Oneida River/Salmon-Sandy Rivers/Mohawk River: These three separate watersheds drain the majority of the western extent of the county, together draining 21 percent of Lewis County. While these watersheds occupy a similar geographic area, they drain into drastically different basins en route to their final destinations. The Oneida Lake Watershed drains large portions of the Tug Hill Plateau into Fish Creek, flowing south to Oneida Lake and then into Lake Ontario via the Oswego River at the City of Oswego. The Salmon River Watershed drains almost the entirety of the Town of Osceola and the southern portions of Montague on the Tug Hill Plateau. Its two subwatersheds drain into the Salmon River Reservoir as it flows to its destination in Lake Ontario at the Village of Pulaski.

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Map X: Watersheds

FUTURE IN FOCUS
LEWIS COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

LEWIS COUNTY NEW YORK



- Surface Water
- Subwatersheds

Major Watersheds

- Black River
- Indian River
- Mohawk River
- Oneida River
- Oswegatchie River
- Salmon-Sandy Rivers

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Data Sources: Municipal boundaries and roads: NYS GIS Program Office 2018; Parcels: Lewis County 2025; Surface water: USGS National Hydrography Dataset 2025; Watersheds: USDA NRCS 2022

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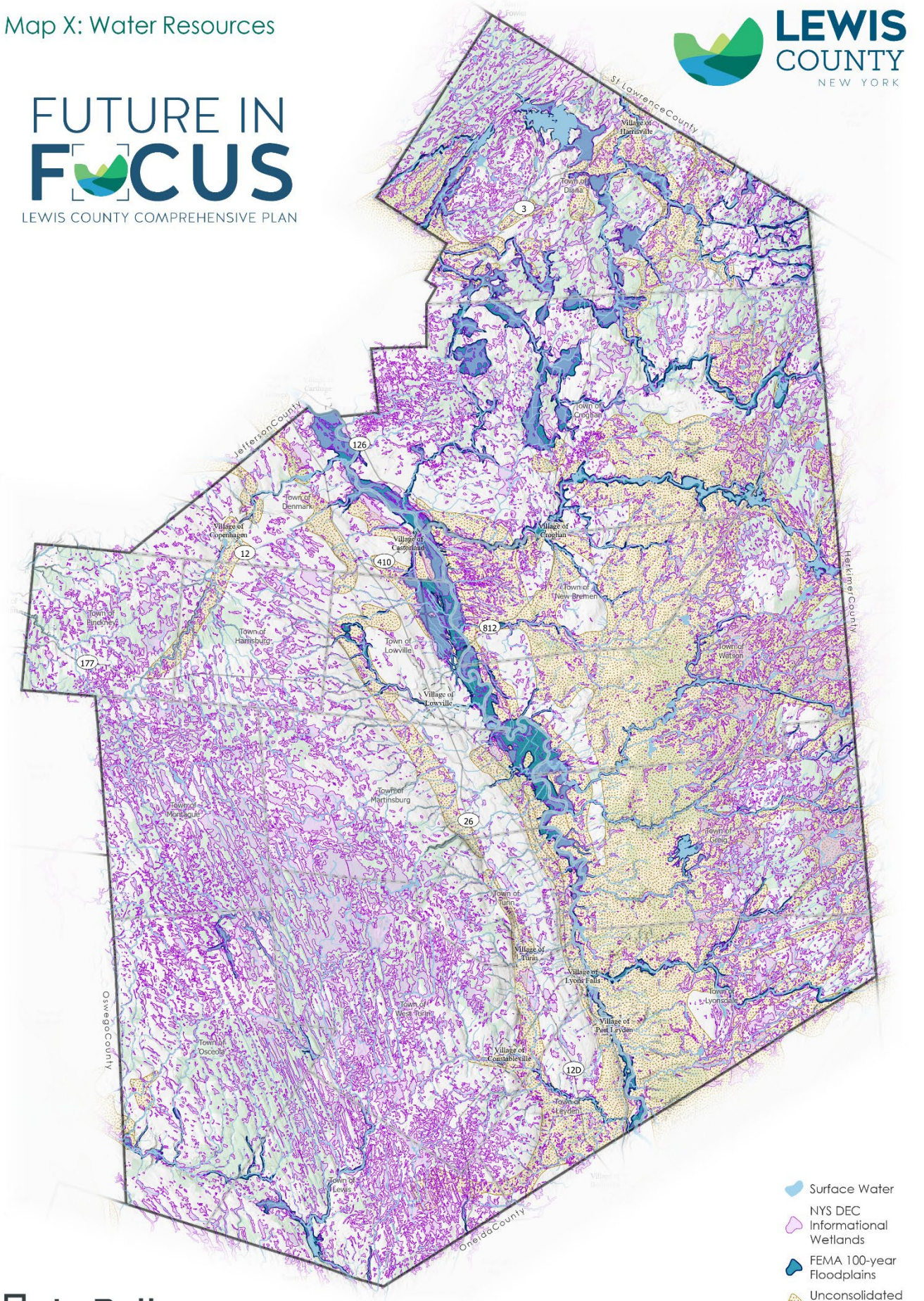
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Map X: Water Resources

LEWIS COUNTY NEW YORK

FUTURE IN FOCUS

LEWIS COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN



- Surface Water
- NYS DEC Informational Wetlands
- FEMA 100-year Floodplains
- Unconsolidated Aquifers
- Protected and Government Lands

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Data Sources: Municipal boundaries and roads: NYS GIS Program Office 2018; Parcels: Lewis County 2025; Surface water: USGS National Hydrography Dataset 2025; Wetlands and Aquifers: NYSDEC 2025 and 2023; Floodplains: Lewis County, digited from FEMA FIRMs

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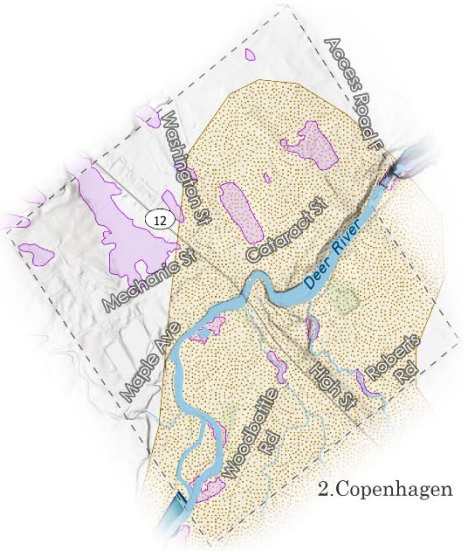
Map X: Water Resources: Villages

LEWIS COUNTY NEW YORK

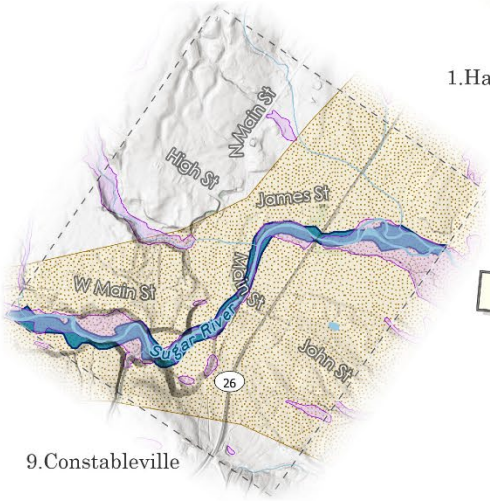
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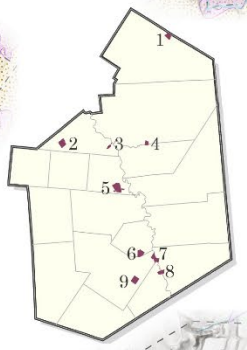
1.Harrisville



2.Copenhagen

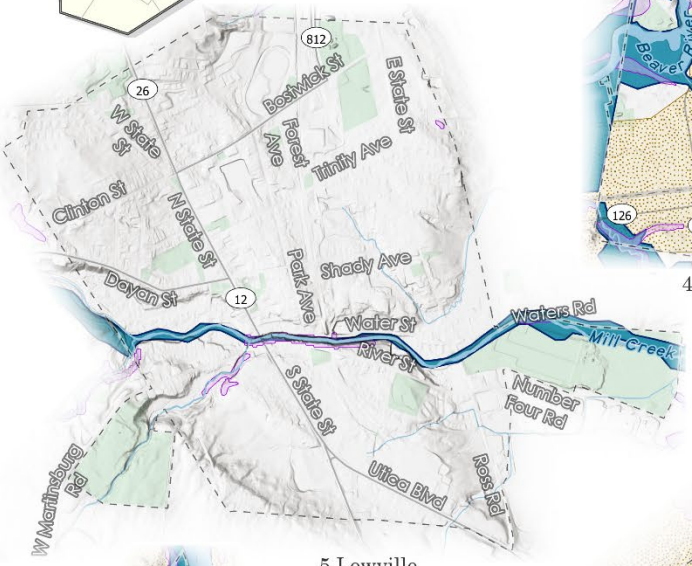


9.Constableville

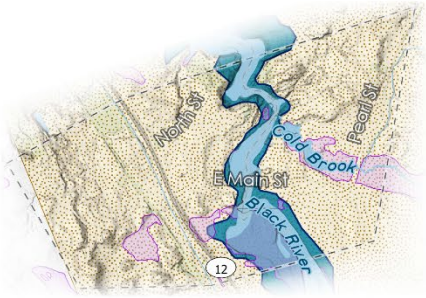




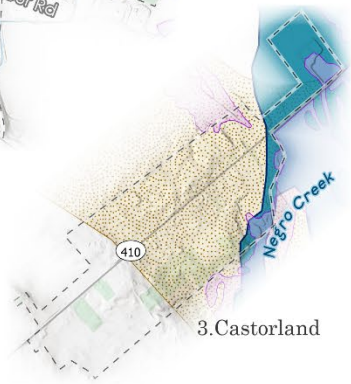
4.Croghan



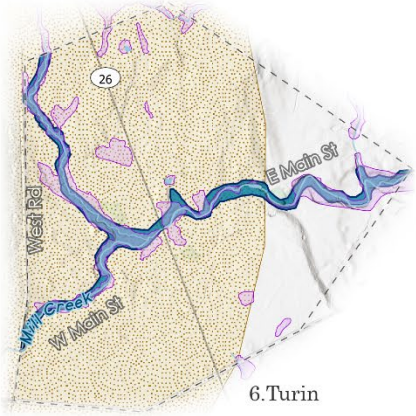
5.Lowville



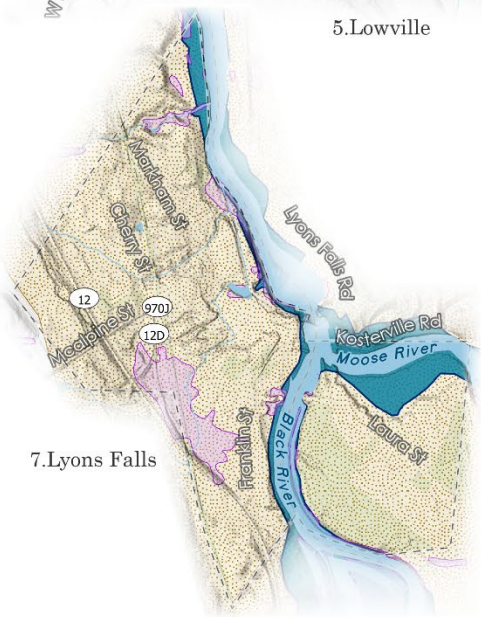
8.Port Leyden



3.Castorland



6.Turin



7.Lyons Falls

Surface Water
NYS DEC Informational Wetlands
FEMA 100-year Floodplains
Unconsolidated Aquifers
Protected and Government Lands

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f. Plant and Animal Ecology

Rare Plants, Animals and Habitats

Imperiled Mussels. There are multiple lake, pond, or wetland locations in Lewis County that are identified as habitats for imperiled mussels. This is important natural resource information needed before any bed or bank disturbance of the following streams:

- Black Creek, Town of New Bremen
- Butler Creek, Town of New Bremen and Watson
- Otter Creek, Town of Greig
- Fish Creek, Town of Greig
- East Branch Fish Creek, Town of West Turin, with some in Osceola
- Alder Creek, Town of West Turin
- Unnamed Stream, Town of Watson, near Austin Road

2. Topography

The Topographic map reveals that Lewis County is defined by three distinct landscape regions: the Black River Valley, the Tug Hill Plateau, and the Adirondack Foothills. Together, these features create a landscape with more than 1,500 feet of elevation change, ranging from approximately 600 feet above sea level in the Black River Valley to over 2,100 feet in the highest portions of Tug Hill and the southwestern uplands. The county's terrain has strongly influenced historic settlement patterns, agriculture, transportation corridors, natural resources, and recreation.

The Elevation and Steep Slopes map also shows how the County is characterized by a strong contrast between broad river valleys and extensive upland plateaus. The Black River Valley forms the dominant north-south topographic feature through the center of the county, creating a broad, relatively flat corridor that has historically attracted settlement, transportation routes, agriculture, and development. Major communities such as Lowville, Croghan, Castorland, Lyons Falls, and Copenhagen are largely located within these lower-elevation valley areas where slopes are gentler, and development constraints are fewer.

Steep slopes (having slopes >15%) are widely distributed throughout Lewis County but are concentrated along valley walls, escarpments, stream corridors, and the margins of the Tug Hill Plateau. The most significant areas of steep terrain occur along the Black River Valley south of Lowville, around Lyons Falls and Port Leyden, and throughout the eastern uplands in the towns

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of Greig, Watson, Diana, and Lewis. Additional steep slopes are present along numerous tributary streams and ravines that dissect the county's upland areas. Slopes exceeding 25 percent are generally limited to narrow bands along escarpments, gorges, and deeply incised stream valleys.

More location-specific details are as follows:

Black River Valley

The Black River Valley forms the county's dominant topographic corridor (about 24% of the County), extending north-south through the center of Lewis County. The valley floor represents the county's lowest elevations and is characterized by relatively level terrain compared to surrounding uplands. The valley serves as the County's principal development corridor and contains many of its most productive agricultural lands. The valley's broad, gently sloping floor has historically supported the county's most productive agricultural lands, transportation corridors, and largest settlements. Major highways, rail corridors, utility infrastructure, and population centers are concentrated within or immediately adjacent to the valley because of the more favorable terrain.

The contrast between the low valley floor and surrounding uplands creates a highly visible landscape framed by steep valley walls and forested hillsides. While the valley floor itself is characterized by gentle slopes, the transition from valley to upland is often abrupt. The map shows extensive areas of slopes exceeding 15 percent along both sides of the Black River corridor, particularly between Lyons Falls and Lowville. In several locations, especially near Lyons Falls, Port Leyden, and the eastern edge of the valley, slopes greater than 25 percent form continuous bands along valley walls. These steep slopes reflect the erosive power of the Black River and its tributaries, which have carved deeply into the surrounding uplands over thousands of years.

Tug Hill Plateau

The Tug Hill Plateau occupies much of the western and northwestern portions of the County (32% of land in the County) and is one of Lewis County’s most defining physical features. Elevations rise rapidly west of the Black River Valley, creating a broad upland landscape that reaches some of the County's highest elevations. On the elevation map, the Tug Hill region is readily identifiable by its higher contour elevations, extensive areas above 1,500 feet, and concentrations of steep slopes along its eastern edge where the plateau descends toward the Black River Valley. On the western side of the escarpment is a relatively flat region near the

pinnacle of the formation at Gomer Hill in the western corner of the Town of Turin. At about 2,100 feet above sea level, this area is more than 1,400 feet above the Black River, and 800 feet above the Adirondack Foothills.

Although often referred to as a plateau, the landscape is not flat; rather, it consists of rolling uplands deeply dissected by streams and river valleys. The eastern escarpment of Tug Hill is a dramatic topographic feature in Lewis County, characterized by a band of slopes exceeding 15 percent and numerous areas exceeding 25 percent. These steep slopes contribute to some of the county's most scenic landscapes, providing panoramic views across the valley and helping define the visual character of the region.

The region's elevated terrain contributes to its nationally recognized lake-effect snowfall, extensive forests, wetlands, and abundant water resources. Tug Hill receives some of the highest snowfall totals east of the Rocky Mountains due to lake-effect snow generated by Lake Ontario. The elevated terrain forces moisture-laden air upward, producing heavy precipitation. These conditions make the region an important source area for water resources and contribute to the health of the Black River watershed and numerous tributaries throughout the county.

Land use on the Tug Hill Plateau differs substantially from that of the Black River Valley. While the valley supports much of the county's agricultural activity and population, the plateau is dominated by forests, working timberlands, outdoor recreation areas, and scattered rural settlements. Large tracts of forest provide wildlife habitat, support the forest products industry, and contribute to recreational activities such as snowmobiling, hunting, fishing, hiking, and camping. The rugged terrain, longer winters, and more limited accessibility have historically constrained intensive development and helped preserve the region's natural character.

Adirondack Foothills

The Adirondack Foothills occupy much of the eastern portion of Lewis County. This portion of Lewis County lies within the Adirondack foothills, a transitional landscape between the Black River Valley and the higher Adirondack Mountains beyond the county boundary. The foothills are characterized by rolling ridges, broad upland forests, and numerous stream valleys that create a rugged but less abrupt landscape than the Tug Hill escarpment. Forests dominate much of the region, interspersed with agricultural clearings, rural residences, and recreational lands. The foothills provide important scenic resources, wildlife habitat, and watershed functions while also supporting forestry and outdoor recreation.

Elevations within the Adirondack Foothills generally range from approximately 1,000 to 2,000 feet above sea level, increasing gradually toward the Adirondack Park boundary. Contour lines on the map indicate a series of parallel ridges separated by stream valleys, producing a highly varied terrain with frequent elevation changes across relatively short distances.

This region forms a transitional landscape between the relatively level Black River Valley and the higher mountains of the Adirondack Park immediately to the east. On the elevation and steep slopes map, this area is evident through its generally higher elevations than the Black River Valley and its widespread pattern of ridges and valleys extending northeast to southwest.

Steep slopes are common throughout the foothills. Areas of slopes greater than 15 percent occur extensively throughout the region, particularly along stream corridors and ridge slopes. The rugged terrain contributes to the scenic quality of the area while also limiting the extent of large-scale agricultural activity and development.

Hydrologically, the foothills are important because they contain numerous headwater streams that flow into the Black River and its tributaries. The combination of higher elevations, forest cover, and abundant streams contributes to high water quality and provides important ecological functions, including groundwater recharge, flood attenuation, and habitat for aquatic species. Many of the streams flowing through the foothills have carved narrow valleys and gorges that contribute to the area's topographic diversity.

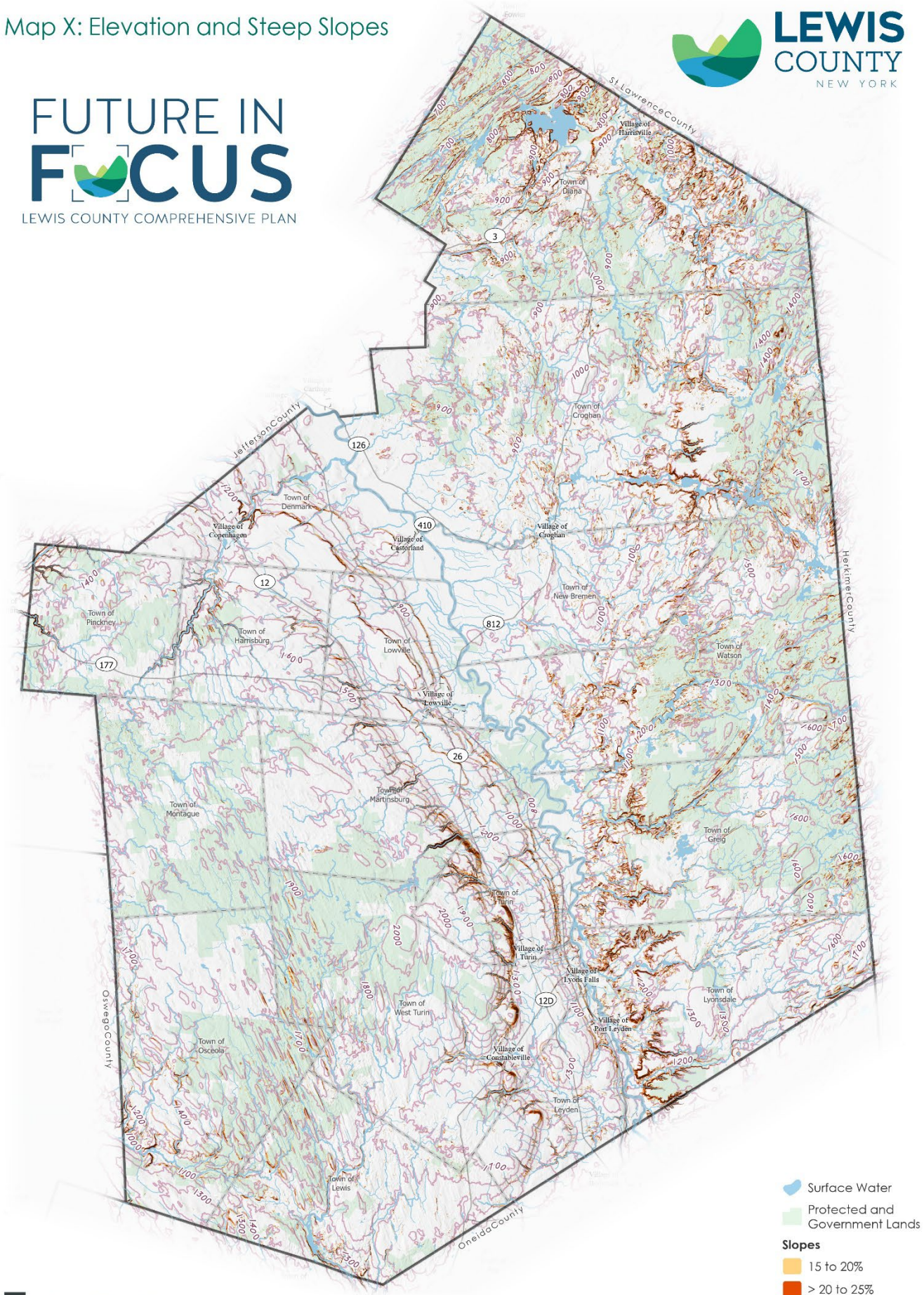
The foothills serve as an important transition zone between the agricultural lands of central Lewis County and the heavily forested Adirondack Mountains. Agricultural activity tends to occur on the gentler slopes, valley bottoms, and upland benches, while steeper slopes remain largely forested. The region supports a strong forestry and forest-products tradition and contains extensive wildlife habitat that connects with larger forest ecosystems extending into the Adirondacks.

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Map X: Elevation and Steep Slopes

LEWIS COUNTY NEW YORK

FUTURE IN FOCUS
LEWIS COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN



Surface Water

Protected and Government Lands

Slopes

15 to 20%

> 20 to 25%

> 25%

100-Foot Contours

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Miles

Data Sources: Municipal boundaries and roads: NYS GIS Program Office 2018; Parcels: Lewis County 2025; Surface water: USGS National Hydrography Dataset 2025; Slopes and Contours: Derived from USGS 10-meter DEM

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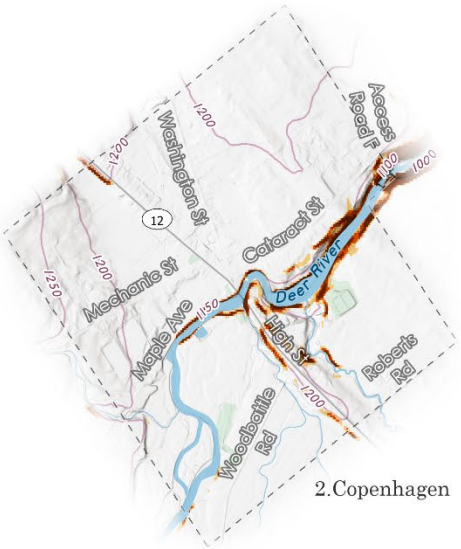
Map X: Elevation and Steep Slopes: Villages

FUTURE IN FOCUS
LEWIS COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

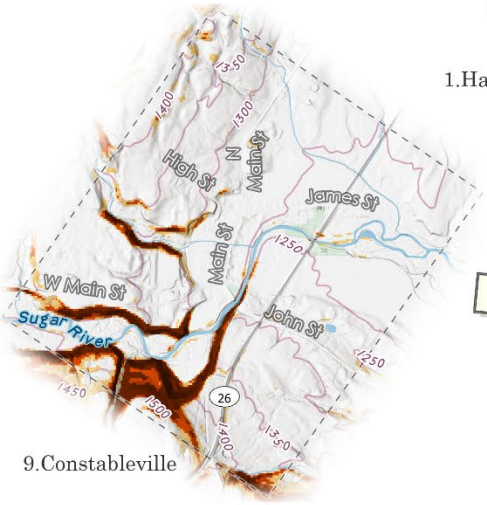
LEWIS COUNTY NEW YORK



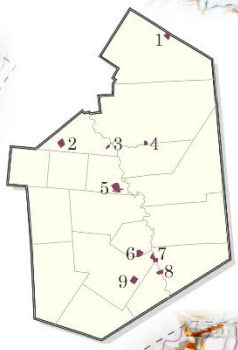
1.Harrisville

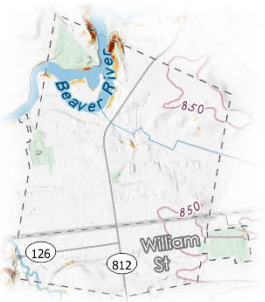


2.Copenhagen



9.Constableville

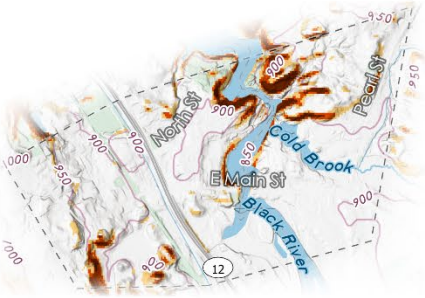




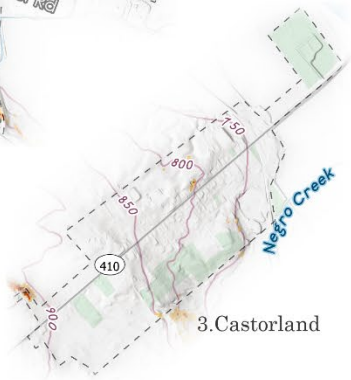
4.Croghan



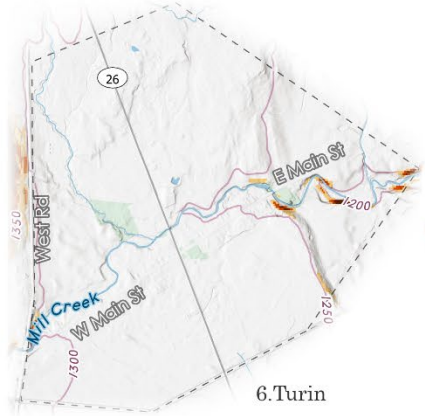
5.Lowville



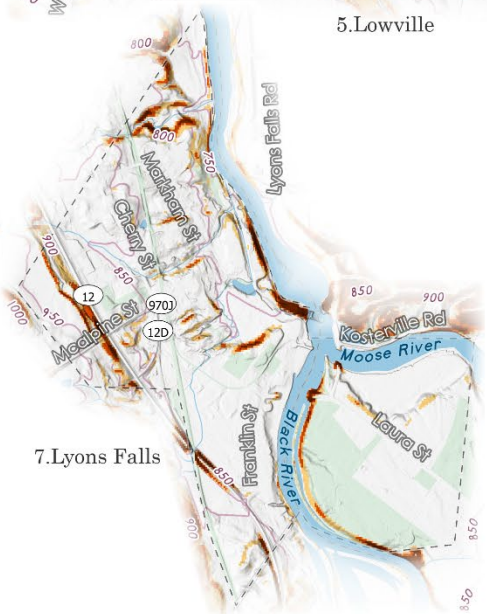
8.Port Leyden



3.Castorland



6.Turin



7.Lyons Falls

Surface Water
Protected and Government Lands
Slopes
Slopes
15 to 20%
> 20 to 25%
> 25%
50-Foot Contours

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Miles

Data Sources: Municipal boundaries and roads: NYS GIS Program Office 2018; Parcels: Lewis County 2025; Surface water: USGS National Hydrography Dataset 2025; Slopes and Contours: Derived from USGS 10-meter DEM

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3. Significant Habitats, Rare, Threatened, and Endangered Species

These are locations identified by the New York Natural Heritage Program having rare or high-quality wetlands, forests, grasslands, ponds, streams, and other types of habitats, ecosystems, and ecological areas. These are identified only where the community type is rare in NY, or when common, is a high-quality example that meets specific criteria for state significance in terms of size, undisturbed and intact condition, and the quality of the surrounding landscape. Three main areas in Lewis County have significant natural communities: northern Lewis County around Lake Bonaparte and along the Oswegatchie River; north of Chase Lake in the Chase Lake Sandplain area, and western/southwestern Lewis County in the towns of Montague and Osceola.

Those significant communities found in Lewis County are:

High Quality Occurrence of Uncommon Community Type

- Beech-Maple Mesic Forest
- Black Spruce-Tamarack Bog
- Calcareous Talus Slope Woodland (Bonaparte Swamp)
- Calcareous Shoreline Outcrop (Whetstone Gulf) (Imperiled)
- Confined River (Middle Branch, Oswegatchie, Deer River, Moose River)
- Dwarf Shrub Bog
- Hemlock-Hardwood Swamp
- Limestone Woodland (Imperiled)'
- Maple-Basswood Rich Mesic Forest
- Marsh Headwater Stream
- Riverside Sand/Gravel Bar Type
- Rocky Headwater Stream
- Sedge Meadow
- Shallow Emergent Marsh
- Shrub Swamp
- Spruce Fir Swamp
- Successional Northern Hardwoods
- Shale Cliff and Talus Community

Communities Of Rare Occurrence

- Boreal Heath Barren

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High Quality Occurrence Of Rare Community Type

- Limestone Woodland
- Medium Fen
- Northern White Cedar Swamp
- Red Maple, Tamarack Peat Swamp
- Rich Graminoid Fen
- Rich Shrub Fen

Rare Plants and Animals

Rare plants and animals have been noted in locations throughout Lewis County. Areas around Beaver River/Beaver Lake, Lake Bonaparte, and lands east of Lowville have concentrations of rare plants and animals.

The following list of rare plants, animals, and significant natural communities is documented from the New York Natural Heritage Program as of June 2026:

Table 32. Rare Plans and Animals in Lewis County

	Common Name	NY State Listing	Ny State Rank*
Bees	Common Loosestrife Oil Bee	Unlisted	S2
Birds	American Three-toed Woodpecker	Protected Bird	S2
	Bald Eagle	Threatened	S2S3B,S2N
	Bay-breasted Warbler	Protected Bird	S2B
	Common Loon	Special Concern	S4
	Common Nighthawk	Special Concern	S2S3B
	Eastern Whip-poor-will	Special Concern	S3B
	Least Bittern	Threatened	S3B,S1N
	Northern Harrier	Threatened	S3B,S3N
	Upland Sandpiper	Threatened	S3B
Dragonflies & Damselflies	Forcipate Emerald	Unlisted	S1
	Gray Petaltail	Special Concern	S2
	Mantled Baskettail	Unlisted	S2
	Ocellated Emerald	Unlisted	S2S3
	Spatterdock Darner	Unlisted	S3
Fish	Black Bullhead	Special Concern	S1

Table 32. Rare Plans and Animals in Lewis County			
	Common Name	**NY State Listing**	**Ny State Rank***
	Blacknose Shiner	Unlisted	S2S3
	Round Whitefish	Threatened	S1S2
Mammals	Northern Long-eared Bat	Endangered	S1
Mayflies	Tomah Mayfly	Endangered	S1
Reptiles	Blanding's Turtle	Threatened	S2S3
Upland/Terrestrial Communities	Beech-Maple Mesic Forest		S3?
	Boreal Heath Barrens		S1
	Calcareous Shoreline Outcrop		S2
	Calcareous Talus Slope Woodland		S3
	Limestone Woodland		S2S3
	Maple-Basswood Rich Mesic Forest		S3
	Riverside Sand/Gravel Bar		S3S4
	Shale Cliff and Talus Community		S3
	Successional Northern Hardwoods		S5
Wetland/Aquatic Communities	Black Spruce-Tamarack Bog		S3
	Confined River		S3S4
	Dwarf Shrub Bog		S3
	Floodplain Forest		S2S3
	Hemlock-Hardwood Swamp		S3
	Inland Poor Fen		S3
	Marsh Headwater Stream		S4
	Medium Fen		S2S3
	Northern White Cedar Swamp		S2S3
	Pine Barrens Vernal Pond		S2
	Red Maple-Tamarack Peat Swamp		S2S3
	Rich Graminoid Fen		S1
	Rich Shrub Fen		S1S2
	Rocky Headwater Stream		S4
	Sedge Meadow		S3
	Shallow Emergent Marsh		S3

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Table 32. Rare Plans and Animals in Lewis County			
	Common Name	**NY State Listing**	**Ny State Rank***
	Shrub Swamp		S3S4
	Spruce-Fir Swamp		S3
Mosses	Anderson's Peat Moss	Unlisted	S1
	Curving Feather Moss	Unlisted	S1
Vascular Plants	Autumn Water Starwort	Endangered	S1
	Bird's Eye Primrose	Threatened	S2
	Broad-lipped Twayblade	Endangered	S1
	Brown Bog Sedge	Threatened	S2
	Creeping Sedge	Threatened	S3
	Dragon's Mouth Orchid	Threatened	S2
	False Hop Sedge	Threatened	S2
	Fragrant Cliff Fern	Endangered	S2
	Green Spleenwort	Endangered	S1
	Hill's Pondweed	Threatened	S2S3
	Jacob's Ladder	Rare	S3
	Mare's Tail	Endangered	S1
	Marsh Horsetail	Threatened	S2
	Marsh Valerian	Endangered	S1S2
Vascular Plants	Northern Bog Aster	Threatened	S2
	Northern Bog Sedge	Endangered	S1
	Northern Ground Cedar	Endangered	S2
	Northern Wild Comfrey	Endangered	S1S2
	Pink Shinleaf	Threatened	S2S3
	Pod Grass	Rare	S3
	Ram's Head Lady's Slipper	Threatened	S2
	Rock Elm	Threatened	S3
	Sheathed Sedge	Endangered	S1
	Small Bur-reed	Threatened	S2
	Southern Twayblade	Endangered	S2

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Table 32. Rare Plans and Animals in Lewis County			
	Common Name	**NY State Listing**	**Ny State Rank***
	Sparse-flowered Sedge	Endangered	S1S2
	Striped Coralroot	Endangered	S1
	Swamp Birch	Threatened	S2
	Wild Sweet William	Endangered	S2

* Conservation status in NYS as ranked by NY Natural Heritage Program on a 1 to 5 scale:

S1 = Critically imperiled
S2 = Imperiled
S3 = Rare or uncommon
S4 = Abundant and apparently secure S5 = Demonstrably abundant and secure
SH = Historical records only, no recent locations, current status unknown.
SX = Presumed extirpated from New York State.
SU = Status not assessed.

B after a rank indicates the status for breeding populations of that species.
N after a rank indicates the status for wintering (nonbreeding) populations of that species.

4. Climate Risk Assessment

a. Analysis of Local Resiliency Against Extreme Weather Events

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TRANSPORTATION AND MOBILITY

1. Transportation Network

Based on the NYSDOT 2025 Local Highway Inventory for Lewis County, the county road system contains approximately 248.6 centerline miles and 497.1 lane-miles of roadways. Most county roads are two-lane rural facilities. Traffic volumes are generally low to moderate.

Lewis County's transportation network is anchored by major state routes such as NY 12, NY 12D, NY 26, NY 126, NY 177, and NY 812. County roads function primarily as collector and local routes, providing access between municipalities including Lowville, Croghan, Copenhagen, Lyons Falls, Turin, Port Leyden, and surrounding rural areas.

Most county roads have roadway widths between 20 and 24 feet and carry average daily traffic volumes (AADT) below 1,000 vehicles per day. Higher traffic volumes are concentrated near Lowville, Copenhagen, Croghan, Lyons Falls, and other village centers.

Cobb Road (County Road 25) and a segment of Number Four Road (County Road 26) experience the highest AADT for County Roads at 3,843 and 3,779 trips respectively.

Cobb Road is in the Town of Harrisburg and begins at NYS Route 177 and ends at NYS Route 12. The segment Number Four Road with the highest AADT begins in the Village of Lowville and ends at County Road 39 in the Town of Watson.

2. Mobility and Circulation Patterns and Regional Connections

The Lewis County Public Transportation (LCPT) system provides a network of fixed-route, demand-responsive, and regional connector services that link residents throughout the county to employment centers, healthcare facilities, educational institutions, shopping destinations, and neighboring communities. The system is designed to serve both rural residents and village centers while improving mobility for individuals who may not have access to personal transportation.

The core transit network consists of five weekday fixed routes that connect many of the county's population centers to Lowville, which serves as the primary transportation hub. Route 560 connects Castorland, Beaver Falls, and Croghan with Lowville. Route 631 serves communities along the western portion of the Black River, linking Lowville with Glenfield, Port Leyden, Lyons Falls, Boonville, and Constableville. Route 632 extends north and provides service between Harrisville, Croghan, Beaver Falls, New Bremen, and Lowville. Route 633 connects

Lowville with Turin, Greig, Brantingham, and Watson. Route 634 links Copenhagen, Martinsburg, Turin, and Lowville. Together, these routes provide residents access to key destinations such as Lewis County General Hospital, the Department of Social Services, shopping centers, healthcare providers, and community services.

Within the Village of Lowville, the Lowville Loop provides local circulation service to residential neighborhoods, healthcare facilities, retail establishments, social service agencies, and community destinations.

The Old Forge Route operates seven days a week in the summer and on Saturdays from September 19 to October 24. This route connects Harrisville to Old Forge and is intended to follow the Enchanted Forest Water Safari's summer schedule. Stops include Lowville, Glenfield, Lyons Falls and Boonville.

Three loops connect Fort Drum to Lewis County Monday to Friday. This Fort Drum Circuit Route makes stops in Lowville, Evans Mills, and Watertown. The Base stop is only open to those with security clearance.

LCPT also operates several regional connector routes that extend transportation access beyond county boundaries. The Utica Connector provides service between Lowville and major destinations in Boonville, Rome, and Utica, including SUNY Polytechnic Institute, Mohawk Valley Community College, Utica University, downtown Utica, and regional transit connections. The Jefferson Community College Connector links Lewis County communities with Watertown, Jefferson Community College, Salmon Run Mall, and Watertown International Airport. These routes provide important access to higher education, regional employment opportunities, healthcare services, and shopping destinations.

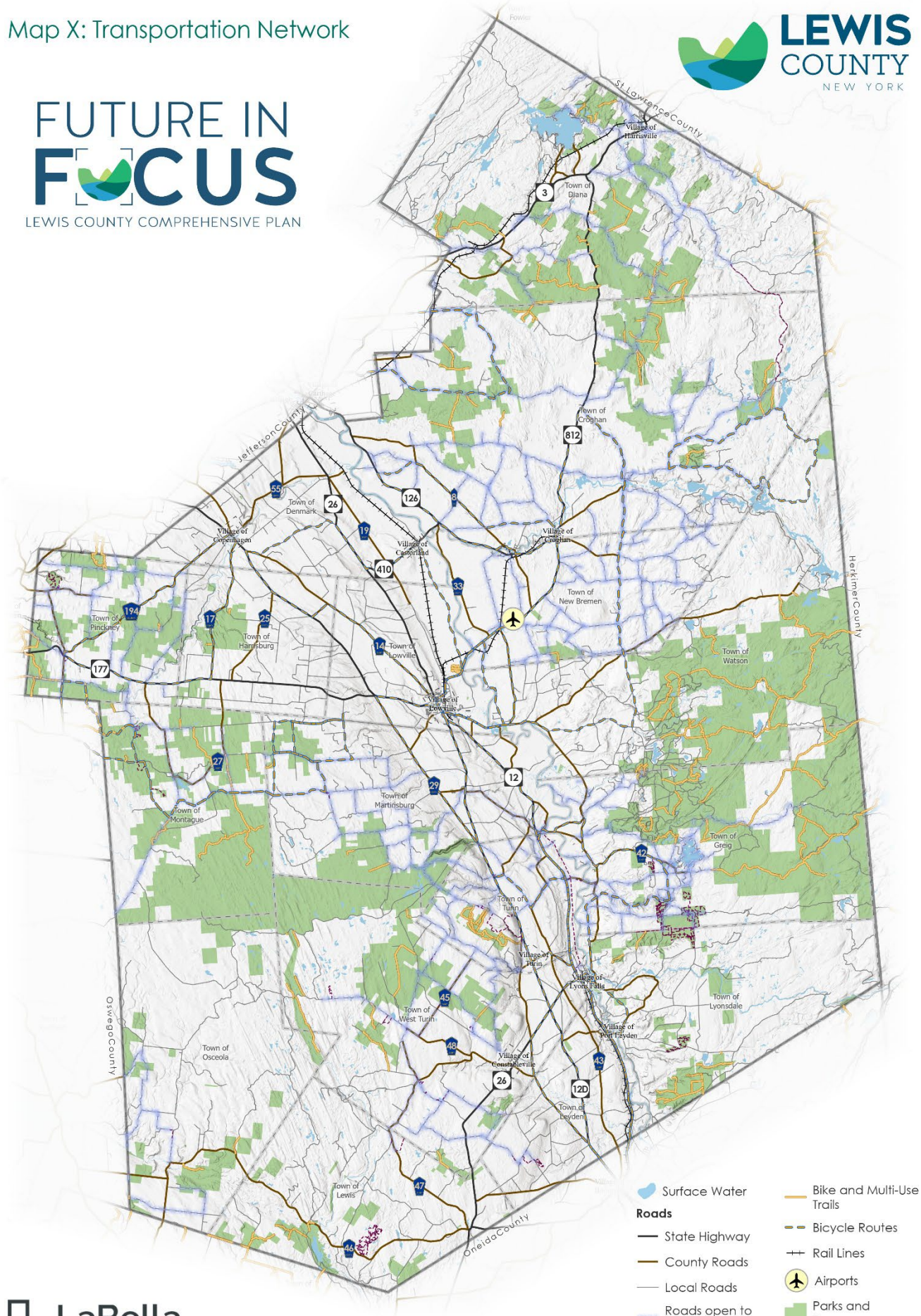
To complement its fixed-route services, LCPT offers Dial-A-Ride transportation and route deviations that provide additional flexibility for residents living outside regular service areas. This service improves accessibility for seniors, individuals with disabilities, and residents in remote areas of the county, helping ensure that transportation is available to a broad range of users.

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Map X: Transportation Network

LEWIS COUNTY NEW YORK

FUTURE IN FOCUS
LEWIS COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN



Surface Water

Roads

- State Highway
- County Roads
- Local Roads
- Roads open to ATVs
- Off-Road ATV trails

- Bike and Multi-Use Trails
- Bicycle Routes
- Rail Lines
- Airports
- Parks and Preserves

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Data Sources: Municipal boundaries and roads: NYS GIS Program Office 2018; Parcels: Lewis County 2025; Surface water: USGS National Hydrography Dataset 2025; Trails: Lewis County, 2026; Uses: Parcel data and NYPAD

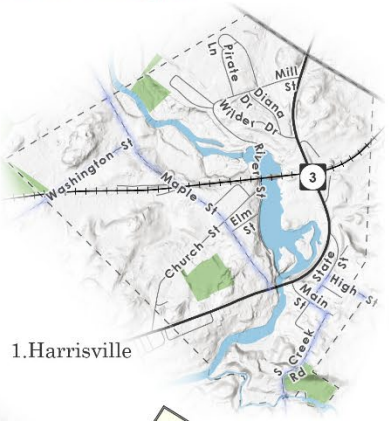
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Map X: Transportation Network: Villages

LEWIS COUNTY NEW YORK

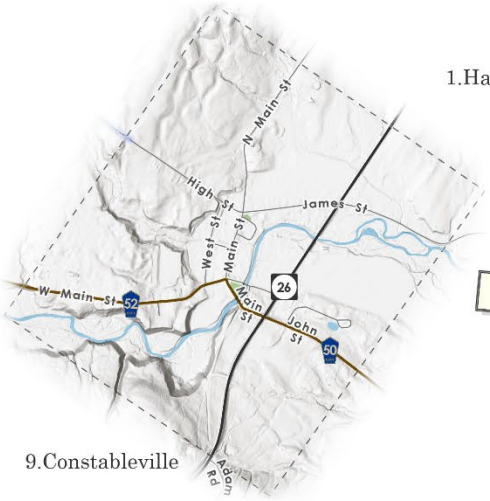
FUTURE IN FOCUS
LEWIS COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN



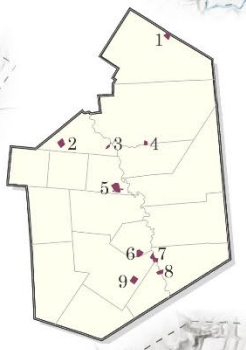
1.Harrisville

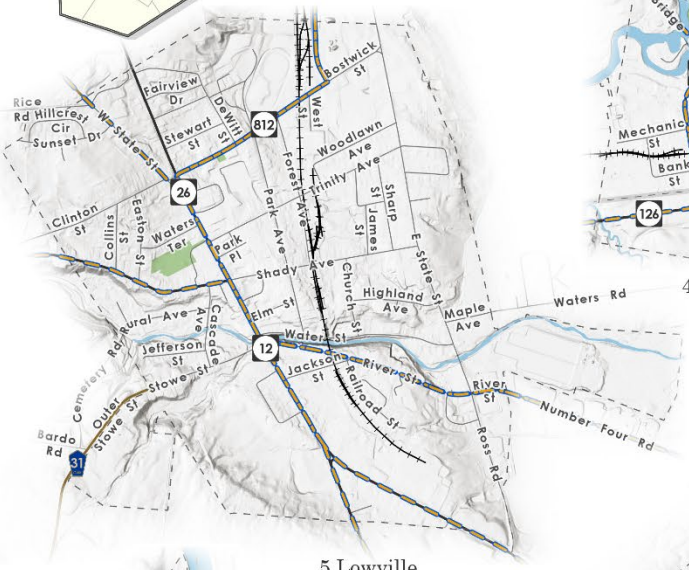


2.Copenhagen

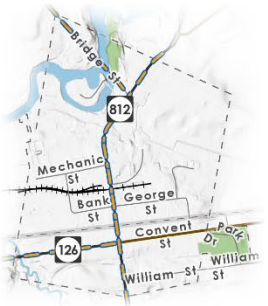


9.Constableville





5.Lowville



4.Croghan



8.Port Leyden



3.Castorland



6.Turin



7.Lyons Falls

Surface Water

Roads

- State Highway
- County Roads
- Local Roads
- Bicycle Routes
- Rail Lines
- Roads open to ATVs
- Parks and Preserves

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COMMUNITY ASSETS AND QUALITY OF LIFE

1. Health and Emergency Services Facilities and Capacities

a. Emergency Medical Services (EMS)[11]

Emergency medical services (EMS) in Lewis County are provided by seven transport-capable agencies based within the county (Table 33 and Table 34). Six of these agencies operate entirely with volunteer personnel, providing service within their designated response areas while also supporting neighboring communities through mutual aid. Lewis County Search and Rescue (LCSR), a private non-profit organization staffed by both paid and volunteer personnel, is the only agency authorized to provide countywide EMS transport services.

Table 33: EMS AGENCIES IN LEWIS COUNTY

Agency Name	Staffing Model	Geographies Served
Beaver Falls Fire Department	Volunteer	Town of New Bremen, Town of Croghan
Constableville Ambulance	Volunteer	Village of Constableville, portion of Town of West Turin, portion of Town of Leyden
J.S. Koster Hose (Village of Port Leyden)	Volunteer	Village of Port Leyden, portion of Town of Leyden, portion of Town of Lyonsdale
Lewis County Search and Rescue (LCSR)	Combination	All of Lewis County
Village of Lyons Falls Fire Department	Volunteer	Village of Lyons Falls, portion of the Town of West Turin, portion of the Town of Lyonsdale, portion of the Town of Greig
Town of Osceola Ambulance	Contracted	Town of Osceola
Turin Ambulance	Volunteer	Town and Village of Turin, Portion of West Turin
West Leyden Ambulance	Volunteer	Town of Lewis

Table 34: EMS AGENCIES OUTSIDE OF LEWIS COUNTY THAT SERVE LEWIS COUNTY

Agency Name	Staffing Model	Geographies Served
Boonville Ambulance	Volunteer	
Camden Ambulance Service	Paid Municipal Service	Town of Osceola
Carthage Area Rescue Squad	Combination	

[11] The 2026 *Emergency Medical Services in Lewis County: Overview of the Current State and Preparing for the Future* report provides a comprehensive inventory and assessment of the County's EMS system, including agencies, facilities, staffing, equipment, service delivery, healthcare resources, and operational needs. Since this information is documented in detail within the EMS study, the Community Profile does not repeat the report's inventory or findings and instead references the study as the primary source for emergency medical services conditions and recommendations.

Table 34: EMS AGENCIES OUTSIDE OF LEWIS COUNTY THAT SERVE LEWIS COUNTY		
Agency Name	**Staffing Model**	**Geographies Served**
Natural Bridge Volunteer Ambulance	Combination	Harrisville

The county's EMS system operates from seven stations strategically located throughout Lewis County, serving approximately 26,570 residents across 1,275 square miles. In addition to serving year-round residents, EMS providers must accommodate seasonal fluctuations in demand associated with tourism and recreation. Lewis County has experienced growing year-round visitation, particularly from users of all-terrain vehicles (ATVs) and utility terrain vehicles (UTVs), as well as attendees of regional festivals and events. Historically, the fall hunting season and winter snowmobiling season generate the highest levels of visitor activity and place additional demands on emergency response services.

As of 2025, thirteen ambulances were based within Lewis County. However, only two to three ambulances were staffed and available around the clock, with the remaining vehicles dependent on volunteer staffing availability. This reliance on volunteers, combined with a large service area and seasonal population increases, presents ongoing challenges for maintaining consistent emergency medical coverage throughout the county.

2. Schools

10 public school districts are present in Lewis County:

1. Adirondack Central School District
2. Beaver River Central School District
3. Camden Central School District
4. Carthage Central School District
5. Copenhagen Central School District
6. Harrisville Central School District
7. Lowville Academy & Central School
8. Sandy Creek Central School District
9. South Jefferson Central School District
10. South Lewis Central School District

Table 35 below details schools in Lewis County.

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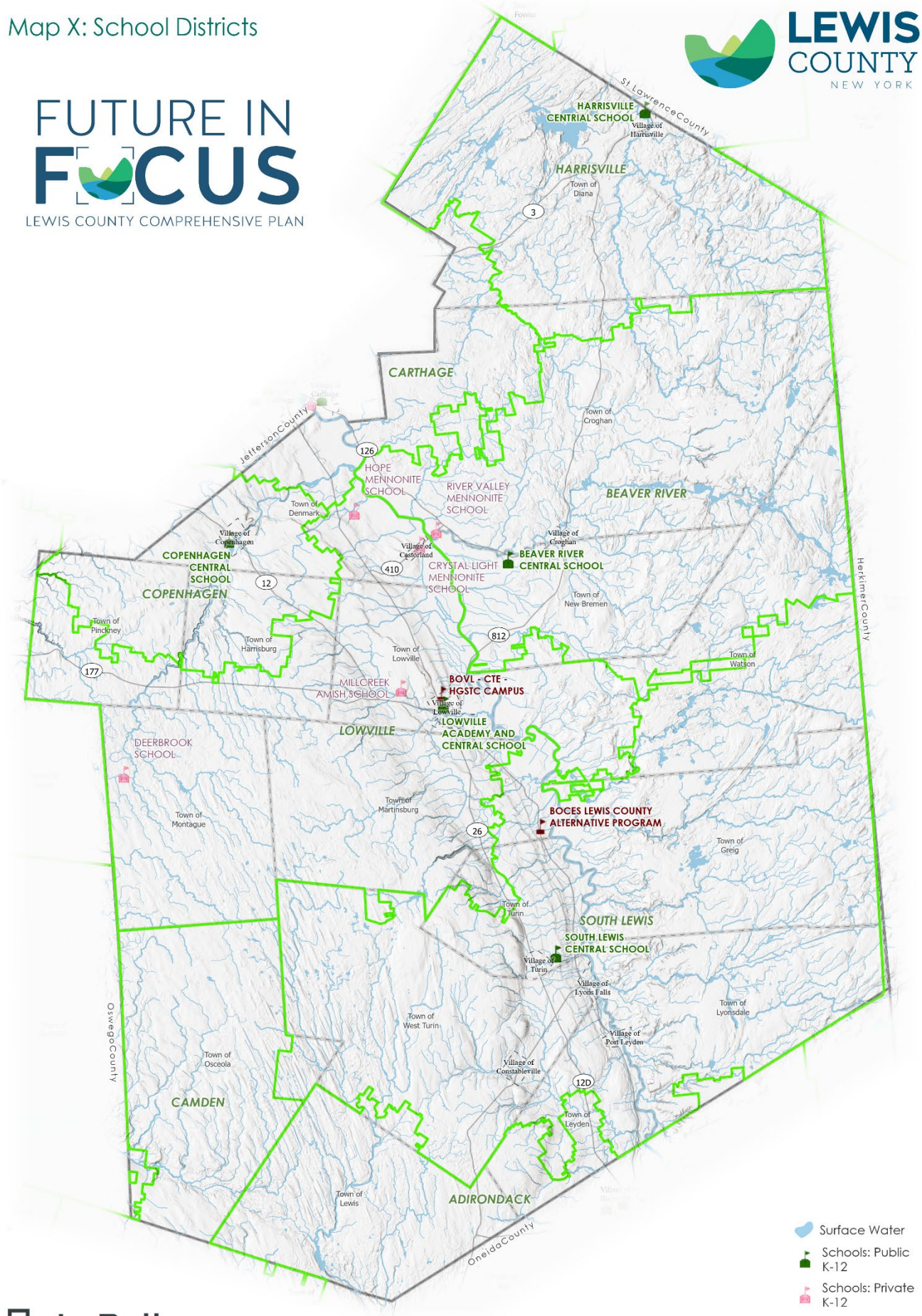
Table 35: Schools in Lewis County		
School Name	**District**	**Public or Private**
Harrisville Central School	Harrisville Central	Public
Beaver River Central School	Beaver River Central	Public
Copenhagen Central	Copenhagen Central	Public
Lowville Academy and Central School	Lowville Academy & Central	Public
South Lewis Central School	South Lewis Central	Public
Hope Mennonite	Private	
River Valley Mennonite	Private	
Crystal Light Mennonite	Private	
Millcreek Amish	Private	
Deerbrook	Private	
BOCES Lewis County Alternative Program	South Lewis Central	Public
BOCL – CTE – HGSTC Campus	Lowville	Public

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Map X: School Districts

LEWIS COUNTY NEW YORK

FUTURE IN FOCUS
LEWIS COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN



Surface Water
Schools: Public K-12
Schools: Private K-12
Schools: BOCES
School Districts

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Miles

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UTILITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE

1. Inventory & Analysis of the Extent, Capacity, Age, and Maintenance Requirements for Public Facilities (based on available information):

a. Water Supply

The 2018 Southern Lewis County Regional Water Feasibility Study notes that water systems are aging, with some infrastructure exceeding 100 years old, and communities have historically deferred maintenance due to financial constraints. Population decline and aging demographics reduce revenue available for infrastructure investment. Overall, the study found that existing water rates were relatively low but unsustainable.

The 2022 Central Lewis County Regional Water Supply Study found that the Village of Lowville and the Town of Denmark require additional supply, while the Towns or Watson and Martinsburg have excess capacity. However, existing infrastructure does not allow water to be transferred efficiently between systems, and development of a large shared regional groundwater source presents technical challenges.

b. Sewage Disposal

To address failing septic systems and protect water quality, Lewis County administers a septic system replacement fund program, which provides grants for eligible septic system replacements near designated priority waterbodies. The program reimburses up to 50 percent of eligible project costs (up to $10,000) and has supported septic system upgrades that improve water quality throughout the County.

Municipal wastewater systems have also received significant state and federal investment in recent years. Notable projects include:

- Village of Lyons Falls: Awarded approximately $1.6 million in Environmental Facilities Corporation (EFC) grants and interest-free financing in 2025 for the planning, design, and construction of wastewater treatment plant improvements.
- Village of Lowville: Completed major wastewater treatment plant upgrades, including rehabilitation of the facility's treatment lagoons, construction of a new chlorine contact tank and sodium hypochlorite storage building, and installation of ultraviolet (UV) effluent disinfection. The Village has also undertaken extensive sanitary sewer repair, replacement, and separation projects to modernize its collection system.

- Village of Castorland: Installed an effluent disinfection system with support from 2023 Consolidated Funding Application (CFA) funding to improve the quality of treated wastewater.
- Village of Port Leyden: Upgraded aging wastewater treatment equipment and replaced deteriorated portions of its sanitary sewer collection system using Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding.
- Town of Croghan: Received CFA funding to install ultraviolet effluent disinfection at the Town wastewater treatment plant, with construction anticipated to be completed in 2026.
- Village of Copenhagen: Received Water Quality Improvement Project (WQIP) funding to install an ultraviolet effluent disinfection system at its wastewater treatment plant.

c. Natural Gas

Gas utility services provided by NYS Electric & Gas (NYSEG) and St. Lawrence Gas (only available in Croghan and New Bremen).

d. Electricity (separate energy audit to be completed – see below)

Electric service throughout Lewis County primarily provided by National Grid.

e. Telecommunications

The County's 2021 Broadband Infrastructure Inventory Study (2021) found that significant portions of Lewis County remain affected by the digital divide, with inadequate access to reliable high-speed internet. Many rural areas remain dependent on DSL, Satellite, and cellular hotspots, and cellular coverage remains inconsistent in rural areas. In the related survey, 23% of respondents reported they had no broadband access, DSL service, or dial-up level service. When satellite and cellular hotspots are included, nearly 49% of respondents lacked reliable broadband service.

To improve broadband availability, the Development Authority of the North Country (DANC) operates the Open Access Telecom Network (OATN), an approximately 2,100-mile fiber-optic network with 32 central offices connecting northern New York to major telecommunications hubs in Syracuse, Albany, and New York City. The OATN functions as a middle-mile network, providing telecommunications carriers with the infrastructure needed to deliver broadband services throughout the region.

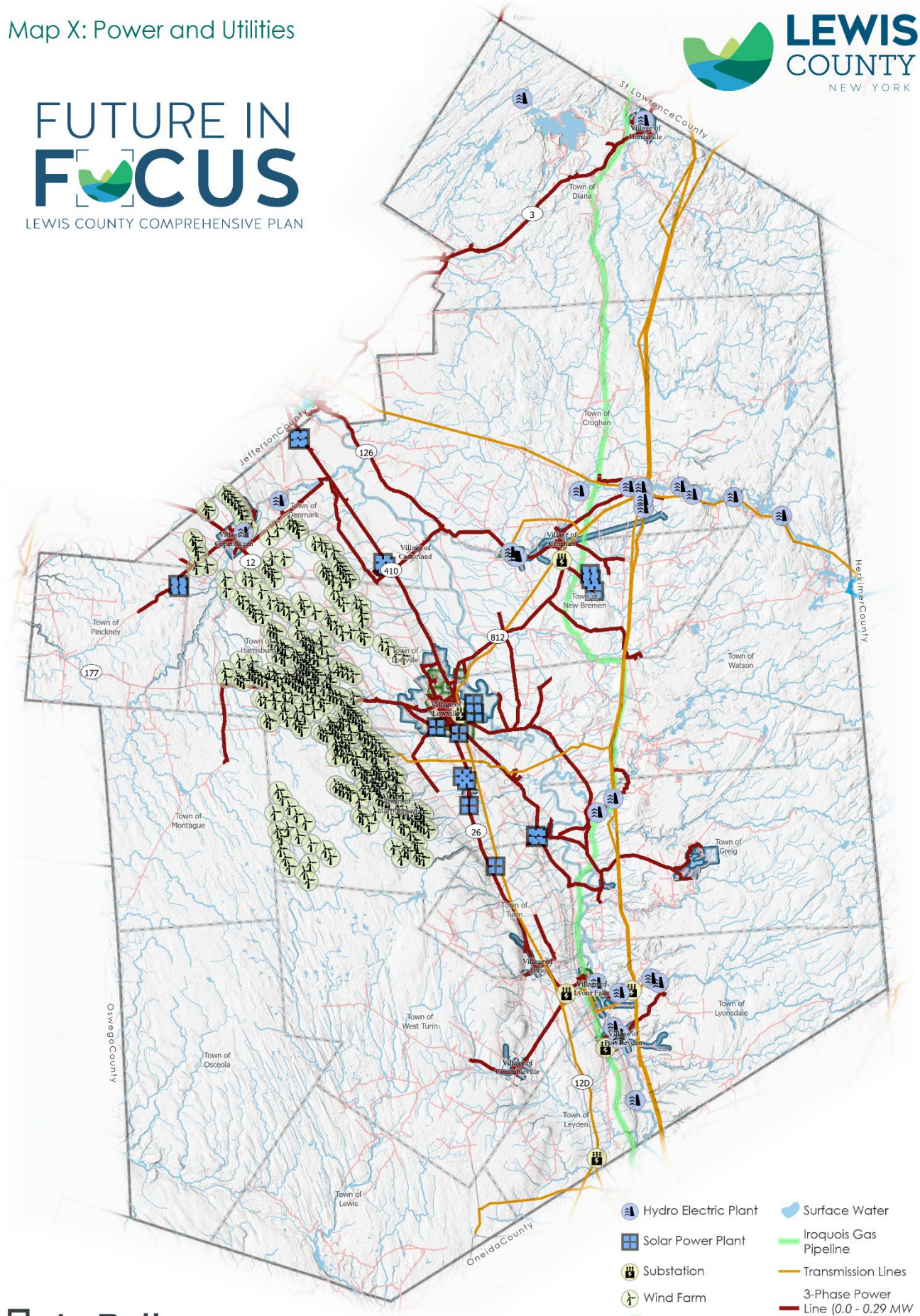
In addition to supporting residential and commercial broadband, the network provides critical connectivity for regional institutions, including approximately 105 healthcare facilities, 70 schools, 40 libraries, and more than 150 cellular tower backhaul circuits.

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Map X: Power and Utilities

FUTURE IN FOCUS
LEWIS COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

LEWIS COUNTY
NEW YORK



- Hydro Electric Plant
- Solar Power Plant
- Substation
- Wind Farm
- Sewer Service Areas
- Water Service Areas
- Surface Water
- Iroquois Gas Pipeline
- Transmission Lines
- 3-Phase Power Line (*0.0 - 0.29 MW capacity*)
- Single-Phase Power Line

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Mapping by Upstate GIS
Community Planning and Environmental Associates
E.M. Pemrick & Company
Economic Planning & Development Services

Map is for reference and planning purposes only and should not be used for legal determinations or navigation

0 1 2 4 6 8
Miles

Data Sources: Municipal boundaries and roads: NYS GIS Program Office 2018; Surface water: USGS National Hydrography Dataset 2025; Facilities: County HazMit Plan, Tetra Tech 2025; Power Lines: NYSERDA; Water and Sewer modified from Lewis County, 2020; Gas Pipeline digitized by Upstate GIS, 2026

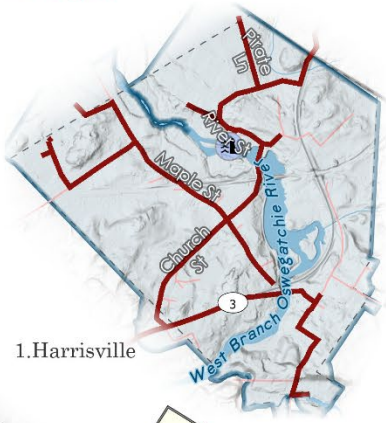
This map is funded in part with funding from the New York State Environmental Protection Fund's Smart Growth Community Planning Program

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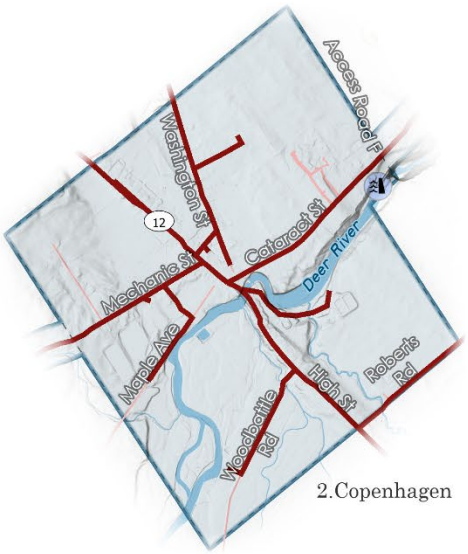
Map X: Power and Utilities: Villages

LEWIS COUNTY NEW YORK

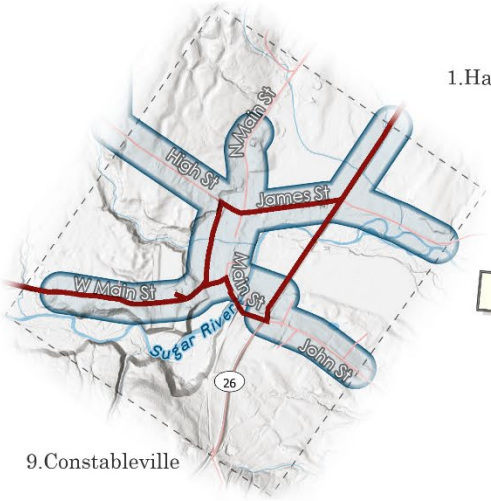
FUTURE IN FOCUS
LEWIS COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN



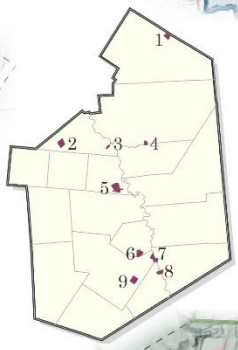
1.Harrisville



2.Copenhagen

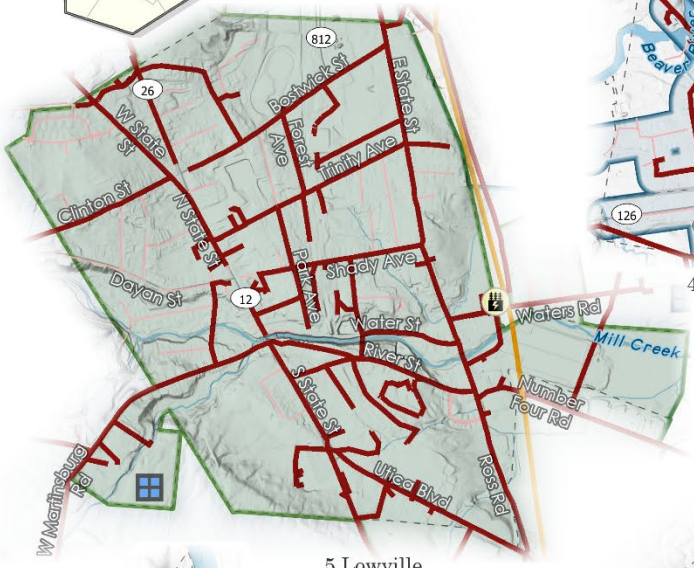


9.Constableville

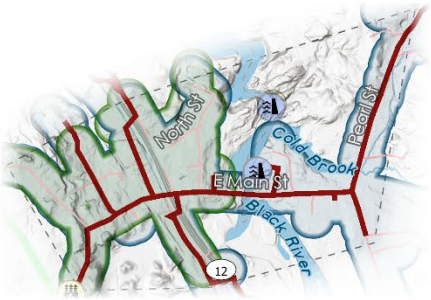




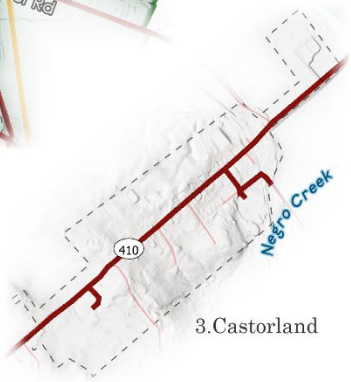
4.Croghan



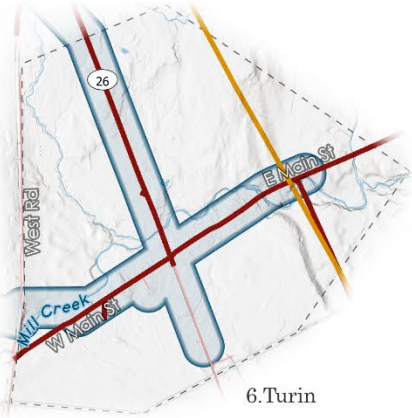
5.Lowville



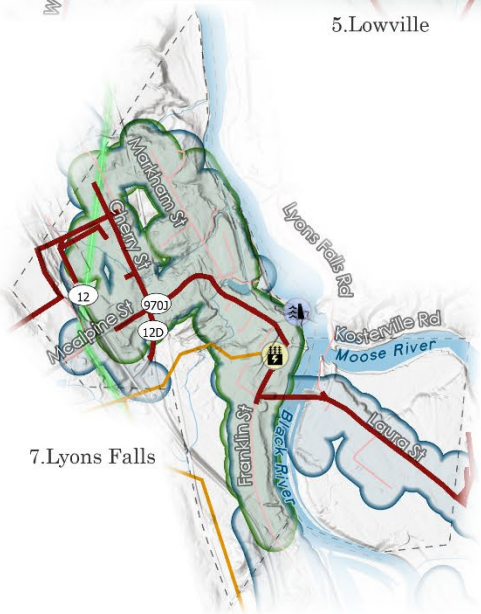
8.Port Leyden



3.Castorland



6.Turin



7.Lyons Falls

- Hydro Electric Plant
- Solar Power Plant
- Substation
- Sewer Service Areas
- Water Service Areas
- Surface Water
- Iroquois Gas Pipeline
- Transmission Lines
- 3-Phase Power Line (*0.0 - 0.29 MW capacity*)
- Single-Phase Power Line

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Miles

Data Sources: Municipal boundaries and roads: NYS GIS Program Office 2018; Surface water: USGS National Hydrography Dataset 2025; Facilities: County HazMit Plan, Tetra Tech 2025; Power Lines: NYSERDA; Water and Sewer modified from Lewis County, 2020; Gas Pipeline digitized by Upstate GIS, 2026

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2. Renewable Resources

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GOVERNANCE AND INTERGOVERNMENTAL FRAMEWORK

1. County Structure

The Lewis County seat is the Village of Lowville, which most of the main offices of the various County services and departments. This includes, Planning and Community Development, Recreation, Forestry and Parks, the Department of Motor Vehicles, Building and Fire Code, the Board of Elections, and Social Services. The Lewis County Courthouse houses the following departments: Treasurer's Office, Real Property Tax Services, Building and Fire Code Enforcement, County Attorney, County Manager and Clerk of the Board, Planning and Community Development, District Attorney, Human Resources, Buildings and Grounds, Probation, and Information Technology (IT).

The Social Services Building (5274 Outer Stowe Street, Lowville) is home to the Department of Social Services (DSS), Office for the Aging, Youth Bureau, Community Services, and The Workplace.

The Highway Department operates from its garage facility located at 7361A East Road, Lowville.

The Outdoor Services Building (7356 East Road, Lowville) houses Lewis County Soil and Water Conservation District and the Recreation, Forestry, and Parks Department.

The Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) and Board of Elections are located at 7513 East State Street, Lowville.

The Solid Waste Department is headquartered at the Lowville Transfer Site (7952 NY-26, Lowville) and also operates a transfer station in Croghan at 10319 NY-812.

The Public Safety Building (5252 Outer Stowe Street, Lowville) houses the Lewis County Jail, Sheriff's Office, and Emergency Management Department.

The Public Health Department is located at 7785 North State Street, Lowville.

There are 10 electoral districts in Lewis County with one County Legislator elected to represent each. Other elected positions in the County are the County Clerk, County Treasurer, District Attorney and Coroner, the County Sheriff and the Chairperson of the Legislature.

There are three standing committees that Legislators serve on:

1. Finance & Rules Committee

2. Human Services Committee
3. General Services Committee

2. Town and Village Governments

There are 17 Towns and 9 Village s within the County. Each local municipality has its own elected board of officials. Towns and respective Villages are as follows:

Table 36. Towns and Villages in Lewis County

Town	Village
Croghan	Croghan*
Denmark	Copenhagen, Castorland
Diana	Harrisville**
Greig	
Harrisburg	
Lewis	
Leyden	Port Leyden*
Lowville	Lowville
Lyonsdale	Port Leyden*, Lyons Falls*
Martinsburg	
Montague	
New Bremen	Croghan*
Osceola	
Pinckney	
Turin	Turin
Watson	
West Turin	Constableville, Lyons Falls*

*Denotes Villages with boundaries that cross Town lines.
**Harrisville was dissolved by resolution in 2018.

3. Shared Services

In 2017, New York State established the County-wide Shared Services Initiative (CWSSI) which was intended to promote collaboration among counties, cities, towns, and villages in the delivery of municipal services to streamline processes and reduce expenditures. As part of the program, Lewis County and its municipalities developed a Shared Services Plan for implementation in 2021, focusing on cooperative efforts such as coordinated LED streetlighting improvements and shared information technology services.

A revised Shared Services Plan was prepared for 2023 and included a variety of projects including shared ArcGIS services, a centralized truck technician, and book de-binding equipment. 2023 CWSSI Plan savings totaled approximately $4,860,200.00.

4. Regional Planning Groups

a. Tug Hill Commission

The New York State Tug Hill Commission is a state agency that provides planning, technical, and administrative assistance to local governments throughout the Tug Hill region, which includes a large portion of Lewis County. Created by New York State in 1972, the Commission was established to help communities balance resource conservation, economic development, and community growth while preserving the rural character of the region.

For Lewis County, the Tug Hill Commission serves as a valuable partner to towns, villages, and the County government. The Commission does not have regulatory authority over local land use decisions; rather, it provides assistance and expertise to help communities make informed decisions consistent with local goals and priorities.

The Commission supports local governments through services such as land use and comprehensive planning, geographic information systems (GIS) mapping, grant writing and project development, community and economic development assistance, natural resource planning, and training for local officials. It also helps coordinate regional initiatives and facilitates collaboration among municipalities through Councils of Government and shared services programs.

b. Adirondack Park Agency (APA)

The Adirondack Park Agency (APA) is a New York State agency responsible for long-range land use planning and environmental review within the six-million-acre Adirondack Park. Created by the State Legislature in 1971, the APA oversees development activities on private lands within the Park and works with other state agencies to guide the management of publicly owned Forest Preserve lands. The Agency administers the Adirondack Park Agency Act, the Freshwater Wetlands Act, and the Wild, Scenic, and Recreational Rivers System Act.

A portion of Lewis County lies within the Adirondack Park, making the APA an important agency for local governments, property owners, developers, and residents in those areas. The Agency reviews certain land use and development projects, administers wetlands and shoreline regulations, and maintains the Adirondack Park Land Use and Development Plan, which

establishes land use classifications and development guidelines for private lands within the Park.

The APA also works closely with local governments through its Local Government Services program, providing technical assistance related to comprehensive planning, zoning, land use regulations, and community development. While local governments retain responsibility for many planning and land use decisions, the APA plays a key role in reviewing projects and ensuring that development within the Park is consistent with state laws and regional land use objectives.

c. Fort Drum

Fort Drum is a U.S. Army military installation located in neighboring Jefferson County, just west of Lewis County. Home to the 10th Mountain Division, the installation is one of the largest military facilities in the northeastern United States and serves as a major center for military training, operations, and support activities.

While Fort Drum is outside Lewis County, its influence extends throughout the North Country. The installation supports thousands of military personnel, civilian employees, and family members who contribute to the regional economy and use housing, schools, healthcare services, transportation networks, and recreational opportunities across the region.

For Lewis County, Fort Drum is an important regional institution and economic driver. Its presence has helped shape employment patterns, business activity, infrastructure investments, and regional planning efforts, making it a significant factor in the county's long-term growth and development.

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SMART GROWTH ANALYSIS

Smart Growth is an approach to planning and development that encourages communities to grow in ways that strengthen existing neighborhoods, support economic opportunity, expand housing choices, protect natural resources, and make efficient use of public infrastructure. Rather than promoting scattered development, Smart Growth focuses investment in areas where roads, utilities, services, and community facilities already exist while preserving farmland, forests, open space, and other important environmental assets.

At its core, Smart Growth seeks to create communities that are livable, sustainable, and resilient by encouraging a mix of land uses, diverse housing options, walkable and accessible neighborhoods, transportation choices, attractive public spaces, and meaningful public engagement. The goal is to balance economic development, environmental stewardship, and quality of life so that communities can meet current needs without compromising opportunities for future generations.

A key element of this Community Profile is an analysis of findings through a Smart Growth lens. All sections of the profile have been evaluated against the ten Smart Growth principles established by the Department of State. The ten principles are:

1. Allow for and encourage neighborhoods with a mix of uses, such as residential, commercial and community spaces. Mixed-use neighborhoods encourage a range of diverse uses that allow people to easily access common needs and amenities. They are generally comprised of residential, commercial, civic, and recreational uses. These uses should be incorporated at a building, street, or neighborhood scale and should facilitate transportation options, like walking, biking, or public transportation.

Lewis County's historic development pattern concentrated population, commerce, and services in villages along the Black River Valley, particularly Lowville, Croghan, Lyons Falls, Copenhagen, and Port Leyden. These villages already function as mixed-use centers with housing, civic services, schools, healthcare, and retail in close proximity. Approximately one-quarter of the County's population resides in villages, and many community facilities remain concentrated there.

However, development remains predominantly rural and dispersed, with most residents preferring single-family homes outside villages. Commercial land accounts for less than 1% of County land area, and many villages have experienced long-term population decline. Limited

housing and reinvestment opportunities have constrained the ability of these centers to grow as vibrant mixed-use hubs.

Smart Growth Opportunities:

- Revitalize village downtowns through mixed-use infill development.
- Encourage upper-story residential units in commercial buildings.
- Support village center redevelopment around public services and regional trail investments.
- Leverage the future rail trail corridor to strengthen village-to-village connections.

2. Enable a diverse mix of housing types, providing opportunity and choice for people of all ages, abilities and incomes. A housing supply that meets needs of current and future residents regardless of income, ability, or age includes diverse types of housing, such as detached single-family, townhomes, apartments, accessory dwelling units, cooperative housing units, and other configurations of housing. Diverse housing types should be integrated into and across communities and neighborhoods.

The County recognizes housing as one of its most pressing long-term challenges. The 2022 Housing Needs Assessment identified a need for approximately 680 additional housing units by 2040 and specifically recommends ADUs, townhouses, senior housing, rehabilitation programs, and smaller-scale multifamily developments.

Current conditions indicate:

- 80% of housing units are single-family homes.
- Less than 10% of the housing stock is multifamily.
- Vacancy rates are extremely low (0.5% ownership; 2.7% rental).
- Most future household growth is expected among seniors and renters.

These conditions conflict with Smart Growth goals of providing housing choice for different household sizes, incomes, ages, and abilities.

Smart Growth Opportunities:

- Promote ADUs and universal design.
- Expand workforce and senior housing.
- Rehabilitate vacant and underutilized properties.
- Encourage mixed-income housing in villages and hamlets.

3. Prioritize infill and redevelopment of existing buildings to revitalize neighborhoods and downtowns, including areas around public transit. Infill development prioritizes the use of underutilized or vacant sites in existing neighborhoods. Such development should complement the surrounding built environment and increase density, add diverse uses, and encourage reinvestment.

Several trends support redevelopment-focused growth:

- Population losses are concentrated in villages and older settlement centers.
- Former schools are being converted into housing in Lyons Falls and Martinsburg.
- Village population decline has left opportunities for reinvestment.
- New housing studies emphasize rehabilitation and reuse of vacant housing

These efforts are highly consistent with Smart Growth principles. However, significant numbers of vacant properties and underutilized village assets remain.

Smart Growth Opportunities

- Prioritize redevelopment of underutilized village sites before greenfield expansion.
- Expand adaptive reuse programs.
- Encourage redevelopment around transit routes and community facilities.
- Establish rehabilitation incentives and land-bank style tools.

4. Provide well-planned, equitable, and accessible public spaces for people of all ages and abilities. Well-planned and designed public spaces, including parks, sidewalks, and buildings, should be designed to provide users of all ages and abilities with the opportunity to use and enjoy these community resources. Age-friendly public spaces should be distributed equitably across the community, extend beyond basic ADA compliance, and provide a range of options and amenities that enable diverse programming and activities.

Lewis County possesses extensive public recreational assets:

- 146,000+ acres of state-owned forests, parks, and recreation areas.
- Hundreds of miles of snowmobile, ATV, and recreational trails.
- Ongoing development of the 25-mile rail trail corridor connecting multiple villages.
- Numerous community parks, libraries, museums, and cultural facilities.

The County's recreation network provides significant public access to natural resources and outdoor activities.

Smart Growth Opportunities:

- Increase accessibility for seniors and residents with disabilities.
- Improve non-motorized recreation opportunities.
- Better connect village residents to parks and trails through sidewalks and active transportation infrastructure.

5. Encourage compact neighborhood design and concentrated development around existing infrastructure. Compact neighborhood design makes efficient use of existing infrastructure and enables easy access to common needs and amenities by locating development in existing neighborhoods. Development should facilitate walking, bicycling, and the use of public transportation.

Most growth has historically occurred along the Black River Valley where infrastructure, transportation, services, and farmland are concentrated. This pattern supports Smart Growth goals.

However:

- Many residents prefer rural housing locations.
- Significant residential development occurs outside village centers.
- Seasonal housing and dispersed development increase infrastructure costs.
- Aging water and sewer systems face financial challenges due to population decline.

Smart Growth Opportunities:

- Direct new development toward villages and existing service areas.
- Encourage higher-density development where infrastructure exists.
- Link housing investment to areas with available water and sewer capacity.

6. Preserve open space, agricultural resources and natural resources. Land preservation directs development toward areas that are already developed, minimizing encroachment on open space and natural resources. Such efforts include actively protecting farms, forests, wetlands, and other sensitive areas from development.

This is one of Lewis County's strongest Smart Growth achievements.

Key indicators include:

- Approximately 51% of County land is forest, conservation land, parks, and open space.
- Agriculture remains one of the County's dominant industries.

- Nearly 200,000 acres are associated with agriculture.
- Over 252,000 acres are within Agricultural District #6.
- Thousands of acres are protected through conservation easements.

The County has also completed a Farmland Enhancement Plan and actively promotes farmland protection, agricultural viability, and conservation planning.

Potential Challenge:

- Conversion of farmland to solar development has occurred and will require careful management to balance renewable energy goals and farmland preservation.

7. Prioritize transportation options that are safe and accessible for everyone, including pedestrians, cyclists and public transit users. Safe, reliable, and diverse transportation options provide access to common needs and amenities for all ages and abilities. Transportation investments should prioritize pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure, as well as access to public transportation.

Lewis County has developed a robust rural transit system, including:

- Five fixed bus routes.
- Regional connections to Watertown and Utica.
- Dial-a-Ride services.
- Transportation services for seniors and disabled residents.

However, the County remains largely automobile-dependent, reflecting its rural character. Limited sidewalks, bicycle facilities, and pedestrian infrastructure reduce transportation options in many communities.

Smart Growth Opportunities:

- Expand pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure in villages.
- Leverage the Rail Trail for active transportation.
- Improve connectivity between housing, employment, and community services.

8. Promote climate resiliency and adaptation, preferably through nature-based solutions, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Nature-based solutions that restore and enhance natural features in the built environment build climate resiliency and reduce the risks associated with extreme weather and a changing climate. Additionally, efforts to reduce

reliance on fossil fuels and promote clean energy and energy efficiency will contribute to long-term resilience.

Several initiatives reflect Smart Growth climate goals:

- Significant renewable energy production including wind, solar, hydropower, and biomass.
- Climate Smart Communities participation.
- Preservation of forests, wetlands, and floodplains.
- Septic replacement programs.
- Wastewater infrastructure upgrades.
- Broadband investments that support remote work and reduce travel demands.

The County's extensive wetlands, forests, and agricultural lands provide natural climate resilience benefits, including carbon storage, flood attenuation, and groundwater recharge.

Smart Growth Opportunities:

- Expand nature-based infrastructure projects.
- Continue balancing renewable energy development with farmland preservation.
- Integrate climate resilience into municipal planning efforts.

9. Build on unique traits to create an attractive and welcoming community with a strong sense of place. Each community has unique attributes, such as historic buildings, natural surroundings, local traditions, or small businesses. Highlighting and caring for these unique traits through good design and improvements to public spaces can create places that are welcoming, distinctive, and rooted in a local identity.

Lewis County possesses a strong and distinctive identity rooted in:

- Agriculture and dairy production.
- Maple syrup industry.
- Amish and Mennonite communities.
- Historic villages.
- Outdoor recreation.
- Forestry and natural resources.
- Regional festivals such as the Cream Cheese Festival and Maple Weekend.

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The County's historic resources, scenic byways, cultural organizations, and recreation assets collectively create a strong sense of place that is highly consistent with Smart Growth principles.

10. Engage in an inclusive, collaborative public planning process that considers the needs and character of the community. Successful community planning engages many different stakeholders, including historically underrepresented populations. Planning processes should be open, accessible, transparent, and welcoming, providing opportunities for public discussion.

Lewis County demonstrates a strong planning culture:

- Nearly all municipalities have adopted comprehensive plans.
- Agricultural Enhancement Plan completed.
- Housing Needs Assessment completed.
- Broadband planning undertaken.
- Recreation planning completed.
- Frequent collaboration with the Tug Hill Commission, APA, DANC, CCE, and other regional partners.

The County has also utilized surveys and outreach efforts to inform planning decisions.

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