

Wyoming County Business Center, Inc. Annual Report

Accomplishments and Objectives December 2023



*Economic Development in
Wyoming County*



President's Message:

On behalf of the Board of Directors of the Wyoming County Business Center (WCBC), I proudly present to you the 2023 Annual Report. The WCBC celebrated its 17th year and has continued to make tremendous contributions to furthering the growth of Wyoming County's economy.

The WCBC's Business Accelerator Academy and the Business Mentorship programs continue to prove their value to our small businesses that are striving to attain additional business growth. The programs continue to receive great reviews from the participants and each of the programs have reached enrollment capacity since they were created. The development of technical assistance programs for early-stage businesses has served a huge need and going a long way in strengthening businesses, some of which may have been on the verge of going out of business or were just stagnant in their growth.

The Wyoming County Business Fast Track program, our flagship entrepreneurship training program, wrapped up its 13th consecutive year of service in Wyoming County. The program strongly supports our economic development strategy of growing and cultivating our own new businesses in Wyoming County. Both the spring and fall classes were at capacity with no shortages of entrepreneurs with innovative business concepts.

Work has continued on preparing for the former Emkay Brownfield site in Arcade cleanup with help from a \$500,000 EPA Brownfield Cleanup Grant that will be used to demolish and dispose of most of the structures at the site. The RFP has been issued and a contractor will be in place by the end of March 2024 to begin the work. Plans are also in place to turn the property over to a designated developer who will finish remediating the brownfield site and has plans to revitalize the site with new development.

This past year we have seen the Federal Reserve raising the prime interest rate again and again. This rapid increase in the cost of money, and the conservative approach to lending by banks has driven a great deal of interest in the WCBC lending programs that for the most part have kept our interest rates well below market level.

As we move into the new year the WCBC will continue to provide a very important role in economic development. Thank you to everyone who has played a role in the WCBC and our collective work to improve the economic viability of Wyoming County. I also want to thank the Board of Directors of the WCBC for the privilege of allowing the Wyoming County IDA, on a contractual arrangement continue the vital services of the organization.

Sincerely,
James Pierce

Mission: The Business Center provides opportunities for business growth by promoting and assisting economic development projects that result in capital investments and job creation and retention in Wyoming County.

Introduction

The Wyoming County Business Center (WCBC), Inc. was established in 2006 by the Wyoming County Board of Supervisors to become an economic development organization that could provide business services such as micro-lending for retail businesses, business attraction marketing and become the lead organization for encouraging and supporting the development of entrepreneurs in Wyoming County. In addition, the WCBC was created to get involved in the remediation and redevelopment of environmentally challenged properties on behalf of Wyoming County.

The WCBC is co-located and works with our development partners the Wyoming County Industrial Development Agency (IDA), Wyoming County Planning, Wyoming County Chamber of Commerce and Tourism, and the Wyoming County Business Education Council.

Board of Directors 2023

- Sam Gullo, Chairman
- Dan Leuer, Vice Chairman
- James Brick, Treasurer
- Brianna Stone, Secretary
- Richard Fish Jr., Board Member

Contact Information:

James Pierce, President

Wyoming County Business Center

36 Center Street, Suite D

Warsaw, NY 14569

Website: www.wycoida.org Telephone: (585) 786-3764

Email: jpierce@wycoida.org

WCBC ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES



An Entrepreneurship Development Program- *"Growing Our Own Jobs"*

A key component of Wyoming County's economic development strategy is supporting and assisting with entrepreneurship, new business startups, and business expansions. This is a significant source of job growth for Wyoming County. The Wyoming County Business Fast Track Program (Fast Track) guides participants to develop sound business plans and get new businesses started on the right foot.

The Wyoming County Business Fast Track Program, built on the Kauffman Foundation's platform, is designed to help entrepreneurs fine-tune the skills needed to create, manage and grow a successful business. Participants develop and refine their business ideas through each step of the business planning process throughout the program - moving from concept to reality in an interactive group setting.

Professional guest speakers enhance the learning experience by offering real-world expertise on topics including business formation, market research and reach, understanding cash flow and financial statements, hiring employees, acquiring funds, and more. Class participants gain access to a network of resources. The Fast Track program is offered twice a year, in the spring and fall. The classes, which are intentionally kept small in size, are facilitated by two local entrepreneurs trained and certified by the Kauffman Foundation.

The Wyoming County Business Center, Inc. is greatly appreciative of the generous program sponsors, **Tompkins Community Bank, Complete Payroll, Community Bank N.A., Robert D. Strassel Esq., Five Star Bank, Wyoming County Board of Supervisors** and the workforce development resources available to participants through **Community Action for Wyoming County.**



The Fast Track Program is accredited under the New York State Eligible Training Provider List in compliance with the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. The program has educated more than 200 entrepreneurs on overcoming barriers and challenges common in starting and growing a business. Over 60% of the participants create a business. Fast Track continues to help entrepreneurs transform their innovative business ideas into viable career options, and move their ventures to reality or new levels of growth.

A testimonial from one of the participants summed up the program this way...

"I would highly recommend taking the class to get an understanding of what it takes to start a business and to see if you have what it takes (desire and commitment) to make it happen."



Wyoming County Business Fast Track Spring 2023 Graduates



L-R Front Row: Carrie Johnson, Executive Director, Community Action for Wyoming County; Beth Caton, Sr. Manager Employment & Training, Community Action for Wyoming County; Sierra Browne; Vanessa Davis; Macey Dahl; Daniel Zerbe

L-R Back Row: Jeff Fitch, Fast Track Program Co-Facilitator; Jennifer Tyczka, Fast Track Program Manager; Ben Kibler; Jeremy Dominesey; Tim Brick; Brian Lawrence; Rachel Murray; Mike Cook; Amy Titus; Lindsey Fuller; Ron Fuller; Mike Fitch, Fast Track Program Co-Facilitator
Missing from photo- Reagan Fontaine; Carrie Graham



Spring Class Business Concepts

Produce/Regenerative Micro-Farm
Vinyl Graphic and Design
Farm Expansion/Milk Processing
Gourmet Mushroom Farm
Holistic Reiki Healing

Tap House
Distinctive Ornamental Tree Care and Sales
Farm Cidery with Fresh-Cut Flower Fields
Gas/Convenience Store with Pizzeria
Health and Wellness Nontoxic Bulk Retail Store



Wyoming County Business Fast Track Fall 2023 Graduates



L-R Front Row: Francene Bertozzi; Lisa Romesser; Leslie McGirr; Leigh Dillon; Constance Bartram

L-R Back Row: Jeff Fitch, Fast Track Program Co-Facilitator; Beth Caton, Sr. Manager Employment & Training, Community Action for Wyoming County; Jennifer Tyczka, Fast Track Program Manager; James Bertozzi; Anthony De Jesus; Christian Henrici; Jessica Dillon; Jason Bragg; Landon Nickerson; Mike Fitch, Fast Track Program Co-Facilitator

Fall Class Business Concepts

Coffee Shop with a Pug Play Lounge
Specialized Railroad Safety Device
Professional Photographer
Mobile Phlebotomy Service

Event Planning and Party Rental Business
Vehicle Detailing Service
Unique Customized Gifts
Residential & Commercial Cleaning Service

Guest Speakers Enhance the Learning Experience



RD Strassel, Strassel Law



Rick Fish, Complete Payroll



Tom Lyon, Lyon Global

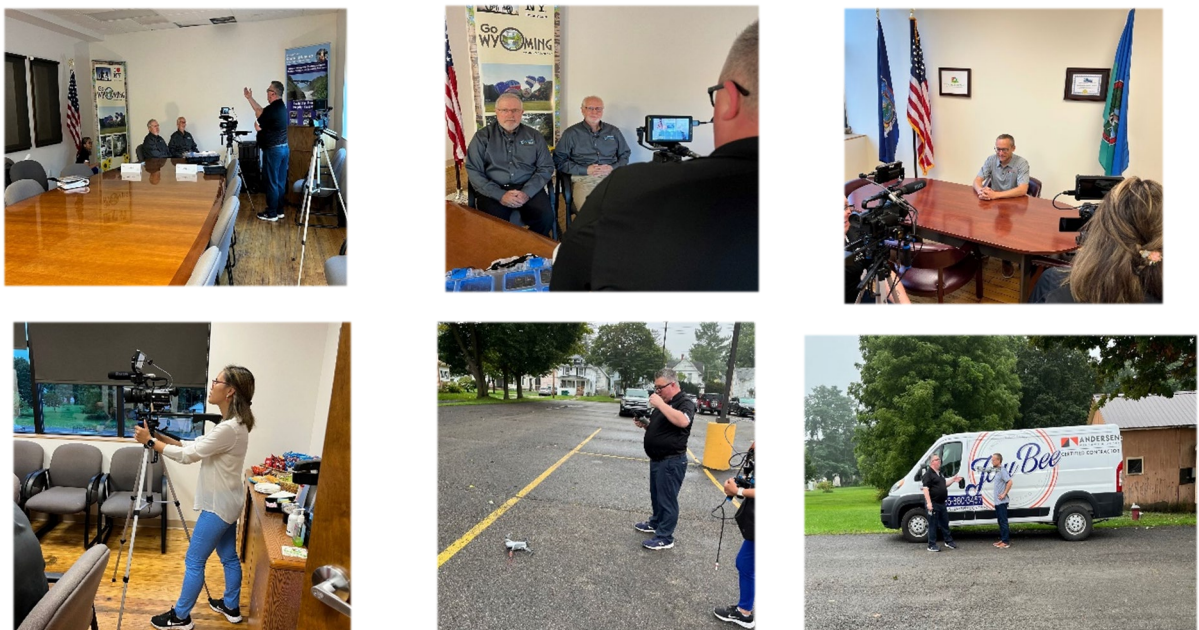
Wyoming County Business Center, Inc. Entrepreneur Scholarship

In collaboration with the Wyoming County Business Education Council, the Wyoming County Business Center provided two students and future business leaders, the opportunity to attend the Wyoming County Business Fast Track Program with a full scholarship. Reagan Fontaine, a Pioneer Central High School graduate attended the spring class focusing on a micro-creamery and Landon Nickerson, a Warsaw Central High School graduate attended the fall class looking to scale his auto detailing business.



Updating Marketing Material

The Wyoming County Business Center engaged with Lyon Global, a digital marketing agency, to develop new and fresh social media advertising, videos to be used for both paid and organic content, and best practice support and guidance for the Wyoming County Fast Track program and the Wyoming County Business Accelerator Academy. The updated marketing content can be found on the new and refreshed website, the Wyoming County Economic Development Facebook and Instagram page, and YouTube channel.

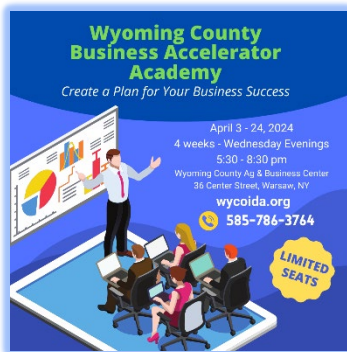


Wyoming County Business Accelerator Academy



"Advance Your Business to the Next Level"

This 4-week interactive program was developed to better equip business owners with the tools, resources, and knowledge to advance their business to greater financial success and long-term sustainability. The program is targeted at existing business owners who are looking to overcome barriers to growth and develop strategies to move their businesses to the next level. This program aligns well with the Wyoming County Business Center's commitment to providing programs that are geared to support the development and growth of businesses in Wyoming County.



Participants can expect to develop new business strategies and tactics to promote growth and profitability; identify their businesses' distinct competitive advantage and tap into new markets; increase online marketing and hear from a digital marketing expert, and learn how strategic thinking can dramatically improve their business performance.

Classes are offered in the spring and fall and are facilitated by the same facilitators as the Fast Track program.

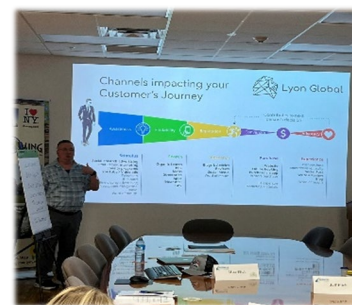
Specialized guest speakers bring valuable insight to business owners.



*Brianna Stone,
Tompkins Community Bank*



*Kim Brown-Webster,
Complete Payroll*



Tom Lyon, Lyon Global

The Wyoming County Business Accelerator Academy is sponsored and supported by the **Wyoming County Business Center, Inc. Board of Directors** and the **Wyoming County Board of Supervisors**. Program funding resources were provided by a competitive grant awarded from the **Marjorie and Charles Van Arsdale Family Fund** at the **Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo**, and sponsorship from **Key Bank**.

Wyoming County Business Accelerator Academy- Spring Participants



“This class overall was a great experience and I learned new things that I hadn’t even thought of.” -Tammy Hobson, Office Manager of Arcade and Attica Railroad

L-R: Jeff Fitch, Wyoming County Business Accelerator Academy Program Co-Facilitator; Tammy Hobson, Office Manager of Arcade & Attica Railroad; Emily Smithgall, Owner of Next Generation Farms; Ashley Jones, Owner of Colour Your World, LLC; Mike Fitch, Wyoming County Business Accelerator Academy Program Co-Facilitator

Wyoming County Business Accelerator Academy- Fall Participants

L-R Front: Josey Brewer, Gypsy Girl Equine Rehab and Conditioning; Jessica Scheidt, Sunshine Speech Therapy, PLLC; Ryan Coveny, Coveny Construction and Renovations

L-R Back: Jeff Fitch, Wyoming County Business Accelerator Academy Program Co-Facilitator; Rick Ryan, Rix Carpet Cleaning, LLC; Joshua Lawrence, Lawrence Automotive Detailing; Mike Fitch, Wyoming County Business Accelerator Academy Program Co-Facilitator (missing from photo Stephanie Yargeau, Creekside Fabrics, Quilts & Yarn)



“Thank you so much. I’m taking away so much from this course. I appreciate it more than I can say.” -Jessica Scheidt, Owner of Sunshine Speech Therapy

Wyoming County Business Mentorship Program

Are You Ready... for What's Next?

What does the future hold for my business?

Am I moving in the right direction?

When should I hire an employee?



The Wyoming County Business Mentorship Program was developed to connect experienced Business Mentors with Small Business owners with up to 8 hours of no-cost, one-on-one consultation.



Participants explore the issues that matter most to their growth; analyze and prepare their business operations to overcome obstacles; improve their existing practices in response to the changing environment; learn how to build and sustain momentum in their business; develop new strategies for growing their business, and learn how to open new markets and gain new customers.

Thirty businesses have enrolled in the program since its inception.



This program is incredible! The mentors have helped me me nail down the problem solving process for the challenges we all face as entrepreneurs. They offer valuable insights, advice and a fresh perspective based on real-life experiences combined with current business and market trends.

RICK RYAN, RIX CARPET CLEANING
Business Owner & Business Mentorship Participant



Wyoming County Business Center's Micro-Loan Program



The Wyoming County Business Center, Inc. administers a micro-loan program utilizing grant dollars provided by the Wyoming County Board of Supervisors that were originally sourced from grant dollars from the NYS Office of Community Renewal.

The following business received funding from the program in 2023.



Jemgo, LLC d/b/a Butter Meat Co- The loan funding was used to renovate the new space at 39 South Main Street, create additional seating, become handicap accessible, and add another bathroom.



Listed below is the current portfolio of micro-loans that are currently being administered:

1. Canaan's Butcher Block
2. Datum Works, LLC
3. Diner on the Run, LLC
4. JKW Unlimited, LLC
5. Jemgo, LLC d/b/a Butter Meat Co
6. Max's Bakery
7. Sands Restaurant, Inc.
8. Silver Lake Ventures, LLC
9. West's Bookkeeping Services, LLC
10. Windy Brew, LLC

Total Loan Portfolio \$ 254,944.96

In 2023, the following businesses paid the balance of their loan.

Majestic Hill Coffee Roasters, LLC
Wyoming Gas Light Market, LLC

The micro-loan program is specifically designed to help finance startup businesses and higher-risk loans. The program is a very effective tool in helping Wyoming County's entrepreneurs start and grow.

Wyoming County Rapid Start Loan Program

The Wyoming County Rapid Start Loan Program was created by the Wyoming County Business Center as an easy application loan program designed specifically for small businesses in Wyoming County, New York.



Loan funding up to \$10,000 from the program may be used to provide eligible borrowers with:

- Funding to modify or improve current business operations or start a new business.
- Funding to expand an existing business.
- Funds for working capital, furniture, fixtures, equipment, and new products/inventory or diversify the business.

The following business received funding from the program in 2023.

1. Country Belle Farm Store
2. Lawrence Automotive Detailing
3. Madison's Skincare Spa, LLC
4. Melonie's Kustom Kreation, LLC
5. Refresh Hair Studio, LLC
6. Sara's "LiL" Bears Daycare
7. Sunshine Speech Therapy, PLLC



Country Belle Farm Store

Listed below is the current portfolio of Wyoming County Rapid Start loans that are being administered:

1. Country Belle Farm Store
2. Hybrid Design and Construction
3. Invictus Barber & Brand, LLC
4. Jay Bee Contracting, LLC
5. Jemgo, LLC d/b/a Butter Meat Co.
6. Lawrence Automotive Detailing
7. Loch Life, LLC
8. Madison's Skincare Spa, LLC
9. Melonie's Kustom Kreation, LLC
10. Refresh Hair Studio, LLC
11. River Spring Lodge, LLC
12. Sara's "LiL" Bears Daycare
13. Silver Lake Brewing Project, LLC
14. Sunshine Speech Therapy, PLLC
15. The Gainesville Store, LLC
16. The Quilter's Daughter



Lawrence Automotive Detailing

Total Wyoming County Rapid Start Loan Portfolio \$115,019.17

Business Attraction Marketing

One of the important services of the WCBC is to conduct business attraction marketing for Wyoming County. The following marketing activities were undertaken during the year.

1. The Wyoming County economic development team decided we were long overdue for a refresh of our website which is our most important business attraction tool. The annual fee for our old website had been escalating and making changes to the site was overly burdensome. We went with a new website developer based in Rochester to develop a revised site that is fully mobile-capable, responsive, and ADA-compliant. The new website is in strategic alignment with our overall economic development strategy using it as the primary marketing tool. The website is the front door for economic development in Wyoming County and combines our organizations into one front-facing and consumer-friendly website. The new website allows staff to change content and update information quickly through its content management system. New features include a quick navigation menu, a revised sites and building page, incentives and programs offered, success stories and a blog section along with the compliance documents and meetings pages. Another important feature of the new site is that we can track and report website traffic through Google Analytics to see what visitors are viewing most and for how long.



2. Jim Pierce also continues to serve on the Board of Directors for Invest Buffalo Niagara (IBN), our regional business attraction marketing partner. This appointment helps the WCBC maintain high visibility of Wyoming County as a place to consider for business expansions and relocations. IBN provides the WCBC business leads for projects looking for sites that meet their needs.
3. Jim Pierce remains active with the Greater Rochester Enterprise (GRE) also a regional business attraction marketing partner. GRE provides the WCBC business leads for projects looking for sites that meet their needs.

4. The WCBC submitted development sites for several project leads from both IBN and GRE who uses confidential code names. Below are the project leads that were responded to.
- Project Lighthouse-An advanced manufacturer in the food and beverage industry
 - Project Graphite-An advanced manufacturer in the semiconductor supply chain
 - Project Larvae-An existing manufacturer in the region looking for 10,000-20,000 sq. ft. space.
 - Project Nibble-A food and beverage manufacturer
 - Project Slots-A new warehouse/distribution facility.

The sites that were submitted are matched to the needs of the business prospect and they included the Pioneer Credit Recovery Buildings, the Perry Development Site and the Steele Avenue Business Park Parcel A.

5. The WCBC also has a section in the Wyoming County Business Directory that features all of the entrepreneurship programs and the WCBC business attraction marketing information. The directory is distributed to 20,000 households and businesses.

Industrial Real Estate Development Strategy

The regional business attraction entities of Invest Buffalo Niagara (IBN) and the Greater Rochester Enterprise (GRE) shared with the WCBC and WCIDA several leads during 2023, unfortunately, 90% of the leads are for existing industrial buildings and Wyoming County, like much of Western New York does not have any vacant industrial buildings and as a result, many business prospect leads are lost. This building shortage led to IBN creating an Industrial Real Estate Development Strategy Committee of which Jim Pierce is a member. The Committee was presented with the plan by a consultant and now has moved into the implementation phase of the project and has led to IBN investing funds through an engineering consultant who is looking at assessing properties owned by our economic development entities and recommending ways to enhance the amenities of the site for business attraction marketing.



Steele Avenue Business Park Parcel A

Workforce Development Initiatives

The WCBC continues to play a key role in supporting and developing regional workforce programs to help address the workforce shortages for our existing businesses. Jim Pierce continues to serve on the Board of Directors for the GLOW Workforce Development Board which guides the investment of workforce funding where it is needed in the GLOW counties.



The WCBC in collaboration with GLOW regional workforce service entities have worked on initiatives to help address the skill gaps and attract and raise the awareness of the region's youth for high-growth, high-demand careers in agriculture, manufacturing, and skilled trades.

In 2023 GLOW with Your Hands held its annual career awareness and interactive event in person. GLOW with Your Hands provides an engaging, hands-on, applied experience for students and educators to increase student awareness and interest in local, high-growth and high-demand industries. This year's event was held on September 26, 2023 at the Genesee County Fairgrounds in Batavia and it was a record year!

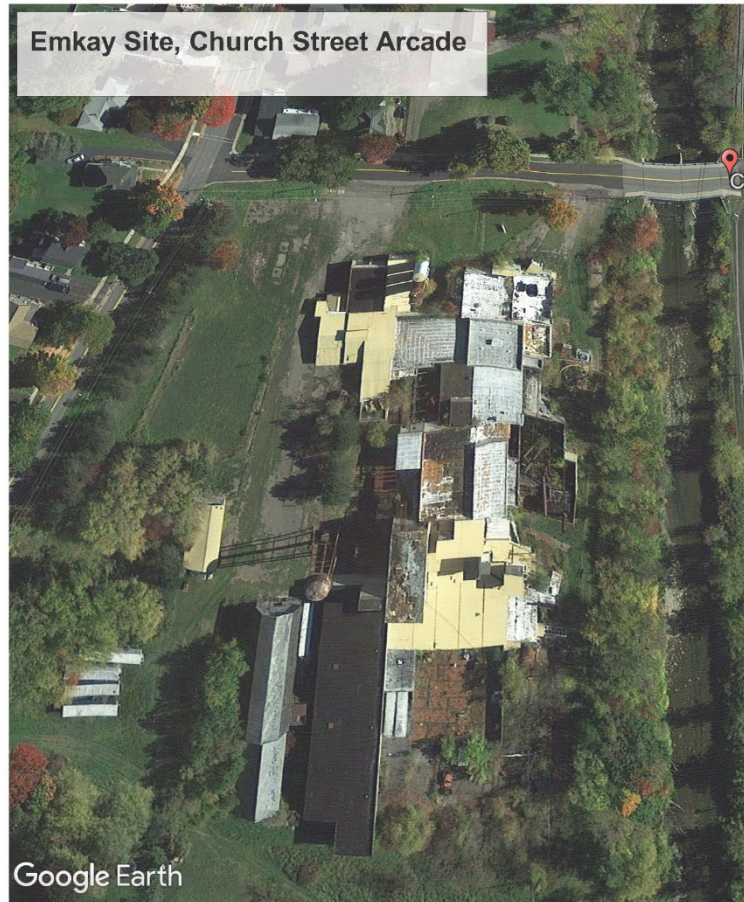


1,000+ students representing 30 school districts from the region attended the interactive event with 65 GLOW vendors from the region representing manufacturers, agriculture businesses, trade unions, contractors, colleges, and other organizations.



Environmentally Challenged Development Sites

One of the roles that the WCBC has historically served in Wyoming County is being the entity willing to investigate and work on plans for the redevelopment of former manufacturing sites that are potentially contaminated with environmental issues. This has led to the WCBC's involvement in the former Emkay cheese processing site located at 58 Church Street in the Village of Arcade. The 10.1 acres site has been abandoned for 20 years and has many deteriorated buildings. It is environmentally challenged and classified as a Brownfield with the completion of Phase I and Phase II Environmental Assessment Study conducted by the WCBC in 2021. There is also another 5 acres of adjacent land added to the site which now encompasses 15.1 acres in the heart of the Village.



To carry out the cleanup work on the site, the WCBC formed a new not-for-profit affiliate entity known as WCBC North, LLC. The entity now owns the site and is coordinating the cleanup and redevelopment plans for the property. The WCBC North, LLC developed a letter of interest and sent it out to regional brownfield developers in the region in hopes of identifying a private sector development partner. This process resulted in finding Frontier Global Companies out of Buffalo and a partnership was formalized with a Designated Developer Agreement.

In the fall of 2021, WCBC North, LLC in partnership with the Frontier Global Companies and Labella Associates applied for an EPA Brownfield Cleanup grant of \$500,000. The grant application required a 20% funding match. The WCBC North, LLC committed to matching \$50,000 and Frontier Global Companies also committed \$50,000.

In May of 2022 news arrived that the EPA had awarded a \$500,000 Brownfield Cleanup grant to WCBC North, LLC for the first phase of the project which will include the demolition and disposal of most of the structures on the site. A Request For Proposal has been developed and was released on February 23, 2024. Bids are due to the WCBC North LLC office on March 22, 2024. The cleanup is expected to begin in the spring of 2024. The next phase of the project and final remediation of the site will be the responsibility of the Designated Developer who will utilize the incentives available through the NYS Brownfield Cleanup Program and will develop plans for redevelopment of the site which most likely will include a mix of housing and commercial development.

Conclusion

The WCBC will continue to play a vital role in the economic development of Wyoming County. The WCBC plays a key role in the assistance of retail projects, development of entrepreneurs, micro lending, marketing for business attraction, and striving for solutions for our workforce needs and work to redevelop environmentally challenged properties.

Ribbon Cuttings for New & Expanding Businesses



Refresh Hair Studio, LLC



Burley Berries & Blooms



Country Belle Farm Store



Parkside Diner



Ralph's Bakery



R&R Salon

Ribbon Cuttings for New & Expanding Businesses



Melonie's Kustom Kreation



Sunshine Speech Therapy, PLLC

