

Wyoming County Business Center, Inc. Annual Report

Accomplishments and Objectives December 2024



*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 2024 Annual Report. The WCBC celebrated its 18th year and has continued to make tremendous contributions to furthering the growth of Wyoming County's economy. When reflecting back on 2024 there are 3 major areas that stand out as great accomplishments, our entrepreneurship initiatives, our lending activities, and the brownfield cleanup project.

The WCBC's Fast Track program, our flagship entrepreneurship training program, wrapped up its 14th consecutive year of service in Wyoming County. The program strongly supports our economic development strategy of growing and cultivating our own new businesses and creating jobs in Wyoming County. The addition of the Business Accelerator Academy and the Business Mentorship programs over the last few years has enhanced the Fast Track program and has filled a huge void in the arena of technical assistance that is needed by small growing or struggling businesses. These programs have been embraced

Going hand-in-hand with the entrepreneurship programs are the financial resources to help launch or grow a small business. This past year our Rapid Start Loan Program and our Micro Loan program received and approved several loan applications ranging from \$10,000-\$50,000. These loan programs are in most cases awarded to new small business startups of businesses with less than 5 employees. These are high risk loans with very attractive interest rates and terms in comparison to the high interest rates currently being charged by banks.

The Wyoming County Business Center and its affiliate the WCBC North LLC, concluded the first major phase of the brownfield cleanup of the former Emkay facility located at 58 Church Street in Arcade. All the buildings on the 15 acres site have been demolished and the asbestos that was found throughout the site has been removed, thanks to a \$500,000 EPA Brownfield Cleanup Grant. The once abandoned brownfield site is now in the hands of a designated developer who will take the cleanup at the site into the final phase through the NYS Brownfield Cleanup Program and the first phase of redevelopment with a proposed market rate senior housing project.

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 WCBC Board of Directors and the Wyoming County Board of Supervisors for the privilege of allowing the Wyoming County IDA, on a contractual arrangement continue the vital services of this organization.

Sincerely, James Pierce, President

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 2024

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

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WCBC ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES



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

Supporting entrepreneurship, new business startups, and business expansions are vital to Wyoming County's economic development strategy, driving significant job growth within the region. A key initiative in this effort is the Wyoming County Business Fast Track Program (Fast Track), which helps participants create effective business plans and launch new ventures with a strong foundation.

The Wyoming County Business Fast Track Program, based on the Kauffman Foundation's framework, is designed to assist entrepreneurs in developing the essential skills required to create, manage, and grow a successful business. Throughout the program, participants refine their business ideas through each phase of the planning process, progressing from concept to reality in an interactive group setting.

The program features professional guest speakers who offer valuable real-world insights on topics such as business formation, market research, financial management (including cash flow and financial statements), hiring employees, securing funding, and more. Participants also access a wide network of resources supporting their entrepreneurial journey. The Fast Track program is held twice a year, in the spring and fall, with intentionally small class sizes. The courses are facilitated by two local entrepreneurs who have been trained and certified by the Kauffman Foundation.

The Wyoming County Business Center, Inc. extends its sincere appreciation to the generous sponsors of the program including, **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**.



Accredited under the New York State Eligible Training Provider List in accordance with the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, the Fast Track program has educated more than 200 entrepreneurs, equipping them to overcome common challenges and barriers in starting and growing a business. Over 60% of participants go on to launch a business. Fast Track continues to support entrepreneurs in transforming their innovative ideas into viable career opportunities, helping them elevate their ventures to new levels.

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 2024 Graduates



L-R Front Row: Beth Caton, Sr. Manager Employment & Training, Community Action for Wyoming County; Dawn Greene; Asha Kiff; Chris Zimmerman; Lisa Zimmerman

L-R Back Row: Jeff Fitch, Fast Track Program Co-Facilitator; Jennifer Tyczka, Fast Track Program Manager; Aidan Pankow; Mary Ann Meeker; Monica Jett; Carrie Graham; Rick Malik; Deanna Malik; Mike Fitch, Fast Track Program Co-Facilitator

Missing from photo Ann Everts

Spring Class Business Concepts

Customized Fishing Tackle & Charter Boat Tours

General Machine and Tool Fabrication Shop

General Store with a Gift Boutique

Dry Cleaner with Added Value Services

End-of-Life Planning and Care

Hair Salon with Tanning Services

Natural Remedies for Healing



“
I had such an incredible experience in this course. I had the ability to expand my current business while thinking through the next steps in my future business plan. I would absolutely recommend this course to entrepreneurs.

OLIVIA D'AMATO, STALEY PHOTOS
Business Owner & Fast Track Graduate



Wyoming County Business Fast Track Fall 2024 Graduates



L-R Front Row: Laura VanSickle; Parker Bray; Olivia D'Amato

L-R Back Row: Jeff Fitch, Fast Track Program Co-Facilitator; Jennifer Tyczka, Fast Track Program Manager; Trisan Olszewski; Anna Fraterrigo; Stacey Fraterrigo; Mike Fitch, Fast Track Program Co-Facilitator

Fall Class Business Concepts

- High-quality STEM-based kits designed for engaging, hands-on educational experiences
- Vibrant creative studio & learning hub for artists to explore and expand their craft
- Local roll-off dumpster and hauling service designed to provide efficient waste management solutions
- Bakery dedicated to crafting delicious & creative treats specializing in gluten-free
- Greenhouse featuring a you-pick blueberry farm
- An exquisite selection of farm-fresh handcrafted pies

Guest Speakers Enhance the Learning Experience



RD Strassel, Strassel Law



Rick Fish, Complete Payroll



Tom Lyon, Lyon Global

Wyoming County Business Accelerator Academy



“Advance Your Business to the Next Level”

This 4-week interactive program was designed to equip business owners with the necessary tools, resources, and knowledge to drive their businesses toward greater financial success and long-term sustainability. Targeted at existing business owners seeking to overcome growth barriers, the program helps develop effective strategies for advancing their businesses to the next level. This program aligns with the Wyoming County Business Center’s ongoing commitment to providing programs that support the development and growth of businesses within Wyoming County.



Participants will have the opportunity to develop new strategies and tactics that foster growth and profitability. They will also identify their business's unique competitive advantages and explore new market opportunities. Additionally, the program includes a focus on enhancing online marketing efforts, with insights from a digital marketing expert, as well as training on how strategic thinking can significantly improve overall 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



L-R: Jeff Fitch, Wyoming County Business Accelerator Academy Program Co-Facilitator; Lindsey Beaumont and Nick Pankow, Buried Barrel Hard Cider, LLC; Jacqueline Swaby, Arts Council for Wyoming County; Brian and Rachel Lawrence, From This Valley Farms, LLC; Mike Fitch, Wyoming County Business Accelerator Academy Program Co-Facilitator

Wyoming County Business Center

36 Center St Suite D, Warsaw, NY

4.8 ★★★★★ 6 reviews ⓘ

jhoyt100
1 review

★★★★★ 5 days ago **NEW**

I loved the intimacy of the group I was a part of. It provided a less intimidating atmosphere, which fostered the freedom to share, ask questions, and explore solutions. I also loved working with our two facilitators, Mike and Jeff. They bring a wealth of knowledge and experience to the program, which adds validation to the information presented in the coursework manual.

Although the format of the classes is well structured, and the information presented is academic. It forces participants to use significant critical skills, and the class culture established by our facilitators supports deep learning and valuable takeaways that can be implemented in our business immediately.

The guest speakers also play an essential role in the program as we are presented with everyday, practical information, solutions, up-to-date business operations within the context of the law, best practices, and critical recommendations.

Every business would find value in participating in this class.
Thank you for the opportunity!

Reply Like

Wyoming County Business Accelerator Academy- Fall Participants

L-R: Jeff Fitch, Wyoming County Business Accelerator Academy Program Co-Facilitator; Nate Caito and Nate Hibbard, Signlanguage, Inc. Joshua Russell, Russell Real Estate Holdings; Stephanie Russell, Studio Cafe; Dan Butler, Image Out Graphics; Mike Fitch, Wyoming County Business Accelerator Academy Program Co-Facilitator



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.

Forty-two businesses have enrolled in the program since its inception.



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 businesses received funding from the program in 2024.

From This Valley, LLC – The loan funding was used for costs related to remodeling an existing structure into a new larger mushroom-growing facility.

Titan Properties 243, LLC - Funding helped to finish renovations, upgrades, and purchase new equipment for a pizzeria/ice cream shop at 243 Main Street, Attica, NY.

Easy Star Boarding, LLC – The loan funds were used for startup costs related to a new horse boarding business.



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

1. Datum Works, LLC
2. Diner on the Run, LLC
3. Easy Star Boarding, LLC
4. From This Valley, LLC
5. JKW Unlimited, LLC
6. Jemgo, LLC d/b/a Butter Meat Co.
7. Max's Bakery
8. Sands Restaurant, Inc.
9. Titan Properties 243, LLC
10. Windy Brew, LLC

Total Loan Portfolio \$ \$302,200.80

In 2024, the following businesses paid the balance of their loan.

1. Silver Lake Ventures, LLC d/b/a Shenanigans and Gaslight Pizzeria
2. West's Bookkeeping Services, 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 businesses received funding from the program in 2024.

1. Creative Foods Warsaw, LLC
2. Laura's Cakes and More, LLC
3. Build Quality, LLC



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

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



Total Wyoming County Rapid Start Loan Portfolio- \$112,277.72

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 remains dedicated to keeping our website as current and up-to-date as feasible since from a marketing perspective it is our primary tool, our front door so to speak. The website allows staff to change content and update information quickly through its content management system. Features such as a quick navigation menu, an informative site and building page, the most recent incentives and programs offered, success stories and a blog section along with the compliance documents and meetings pages make the site very consumer friendly and easy to use. It also has the ability for our team to track and pull reports on 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 is looking for 5,000 sq. ft. of space. Site submitted July 19, 2024
 - Project Pearl-An advanced manufacturer in the energy innovation sector is looking for 75,000 sq. ft. of space. Site submitted July 18, 2024

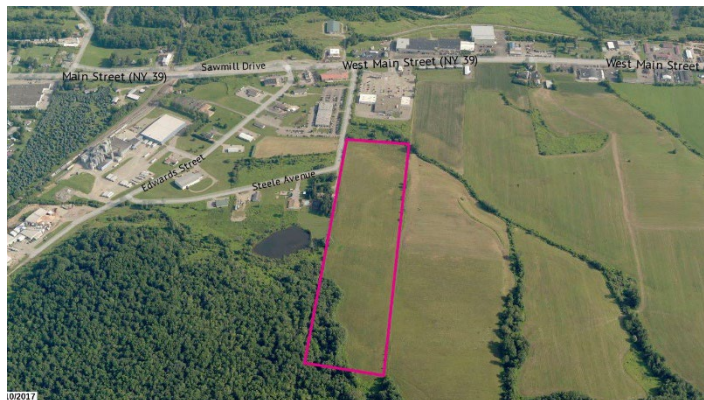
- Project Wheel-An advanced manufacturer looking for green space to build a 100,000 sq. ft. building for manufacturing and assembly. Site submitted August 1, 2024.
- Project Aspen-An advanced manufacturer in the energy innovation industry is looking for 60,000-100,000 sq. ft. of space. Site submitted August 24, 2024
- Project Butler-An advanced manufacturer is looking for 30,000-50,000 sq. ft. of space. Site submitted on November 4, 2024.
- Project Bean-A food and beverage manufacturer is looking for 60,000-85,000 sq. ft. of space. Site submitted on November 25, 2024
- Project Luna-An advanced manufacturer in the energy innovation industry is looking for 30,000-35,000 sq. ft. of space. Site submitted December 18, 2024

The sites that were submitted are matched to the needs of the business prospect and they included the Pioneer Credit Recovery buildings (both Perry and Arcade), the vacant API building (Arcade), the Perry Development Site (Perry) and the Steele Avenue Business Park Parcel A (Arcade).

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

Invest Buffalo Niagara created a couple years back an Industrial Real Estate Development Strategy Committee of which Jim Pierce is a member. The Committee is implementing an Industrial Real Estate Strategy for the 8 county WNY Region. The Committee recently invested funds through an engineering consultant to assess select industrial properties owned by the region’s economic development entities and recommending ways to enhance the amenities of the sites for business attraction marketing. In Wyoming County we were able to submit the Steele Avenue Business Park Parcel A into the mix and it was selected for assessment which has been completed and we now have some recommendations from the initiative to further improve the viability of the site for business attraction.



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 2024 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 24, 2024 at the Genesee County Fairgrounds in Batavia and marked the participation of over 5,000 students since GLOW With Your Hands launched in 2019.

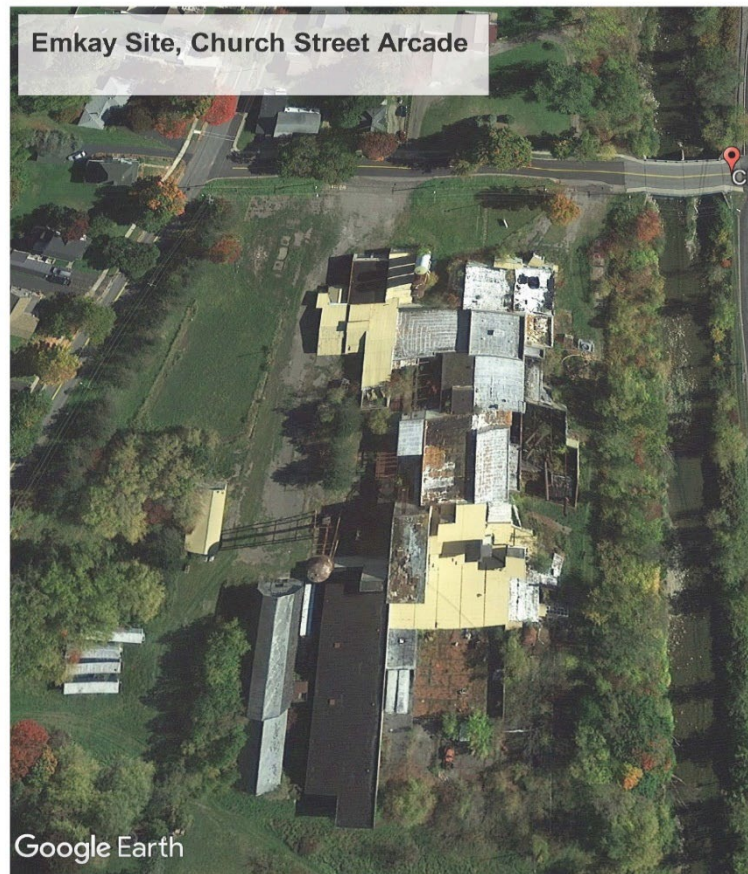


1,000+ students representing 30 school districts from the region attended the interactive event with 65 GLOW vendors from the region representing manufacturers, agriculture businesses, trade unions, contractors, colleges, and other organizations.



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 15.1 acres site had been abandoned for 20 years and had many deteriorated buildings contaminated with asbestos and overall was determined to be a brownfield site.



With support from the WCBC Board of Directors plans were put into place to clean up the site. The WCBC formed a new not-for-profit affiliate entity known as WCBC North, LLC that took control of the site from Wyoming County. 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 (grant consultant) 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

included the demolition and disposal of all the structures on the site and the removal of all asbestos. A Community Engagement Committee was formed for the project with local stake holders that were, on a regular basis, updated on the implementation of the cleanup project and encouraged to offer any comments or concerns before, during and after the project.

A portion of the EPA grant funding was used to engage with a Professional Environmental Services firm to coordinate the work. The firm that was selected following a Request for Proposal (RFP) process was Labella Associates out of Buffalo, NY. The core activity of demolishing and cleaning up the asbestos was factored into another RFP to select a demolition and asbestos contractor experienced with this type of work. This RFP was awarded to Metro Environmental out of Niagara Falls.

Demolition and cleanup work at the site began in the spring of 2024 with the goal of removing all of the structures down to grade level and dispose of all of the asbestos and chemicals found at the site. As with any environmental cleanup project issues pop up that had to be dealt with on a regular basis but the work went ahead rather fast and this phase of the cleanup project was finished in early September of 2024 and right on budget which was \$600,000.

The next phase of the project and final remediation of the site will be the responsibility of Frontier Global Companies, the designated developer who created “58 Church Street, LLC” who now has possession of the site. The plan is for the developer to get the site into the NYS Brownfield Cleanup Program that can offer attractive tax credits for additional remediation of the site, including the removal of 4 underground petroleum tanks that remained there from a former “filling station” that was located on the site back in the 1940s. After the final cleanup, the developer will begin implementing redevelopment plans 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.

