



**Jefferson County Local Development Corporation**

800 Starbuck Avenue, Suite 800 • Watertown, New York 13601

2018-2019 Annual Report

Jefferson County Local Development Corporation (JCLDC)

### **JCLDC Mission Statement**

The Corporation was established pursuant to the LDC Act with purposes and powers as set forth within the Certificate, and the Corporation's Mission includes undertaking projects and programmatic initiatives in furtherance of and to advance the job opportunities, health, general prosperity and economic welfare of the people of the County In furtherance of the purposes and powers vested in the Corporation pursuant to the LDC Act, the Corporation shall undertake projects, programs and initiatives to achieve the purposes as set forth within the LDC Act. In addition, and in doing so, the Corporation shall adhere to its adopted policies and applicable statutory requirements, including PAAA, PARA, OML, FOIL, and SEQRA. The Corporation's goals include continued compliance with current obligations and responsibilities associated with ongoing projects and programs, in addition to identifying new projects and programs that will achieve the Corporations purposes and Mission In furtherance of these stated goals, the Corporation will endeavor to comply with all applicable provisions of the Act, PAAA and PARA. With these stated goals established, the Corporations values are to maintain the highest ethical standards applicable to public officials and local authorities.

### **JCLDC Performance Review Measures**

The Corporation shall annually review this Mission Statement and identify whether the Corporation (i) continues to meet its stated mission, goals and values; (ii) can quantify measures of improvement to better meet its stated mission, goals and values; (iii) can become more effective and efficient; and (iv) is meeting the interests of the Corporation, the Agency and the County In furtherance of the foregoing Performance Measures, the Corporation shall further undertake the following annual measures:

- 1) Assure that all current Corporation Members have acknowledged that they have read and understood the mission of the Corporation;
- 2) An annual review and affirmation of the Corporations membership, board, committee and management structure;
- 3) An annual review and affirmation of its policies, along with Corporation appointment of Management of the Corporation, along with articulation of the Respective roles, goals and expectations of each.

## **Activities:**

### **Safety Training & Workshops**

The JCLDC partnered with the Lewis County Industrial Development Agency and CITEC Business Solutions in securing a grant from the NYS Department of Labor's Hazard Abatement Board to again offer a series of free safety training workshops to area businesses.

The 2018-2019 series offered workshops on a variety of topics such as powered industrial tool safety, electrical safe work practices, forming a safety committee and more. The series included two 10-hour OSHA general industry training sessions.

The local program makes it easier for local businesses to obtain the training they need to be OSHA compliant, avoid costly fines from unintentional OSHA violations, and—most importantly—improve workplace safety for their employees.

Under the banner of Jefferson County Economic Development, the agency periodically sponsors workshops designed to provide information to support business growth and development or to promote better understanding of economic development issues.

### **ADVOCATE DRUM / Drum Country Business**

The Drum Country Business initiative includes the Jefferson, Lewis, and St. Lawrence County economic development agencies and the Development Authority of the North Country working together through the Fort Drum Regional Liaison Organization (rebranded to ADVOCATE DRUM) promote the tri-county region's collective assets and its proximity to Fort Drum as a means to attract business investment to the region. Funding from the project partners is matched by a grant to FDRLO by project sponsor National Grid. The initiative includes regional advertising and direct outreach to prospective businesses.

### **North Country Regional Economic Development Council**

JCED staff participates in the Council's work groups and are actively involved in preparing the regional plan submission as part of the Governor's annual competition for economic development funding. Staff has also assisted local businesses and organizations in submitting successful funding applications to the program.

### **North Country Alliance**

The NCA is a private-public alliance of businesses and economic development organizations working together to grow the economy of New York's seven-county North Country region. JCED is a member organization with a seat on the NCA's board of directors. The NCA administers a regional revolving loan fund—often in partnership with local revolving loan funds. NCA is also an advocate for ensuring that the region's economic interests are fairly addressed at the state level.

## **2019 Report on Agricultural Development**

2019 was both a difficult and successful year for our agricultural economic development program. The dairy industry entered its fourth year of operating below the cost of production. Multiple farms closed their doors and our total number of dairy farms hovered around 150, approximately half the number of farms as when we started this effort in 2000. Over the last 19 years, our dairy industry in the United States became a global industry. Dairy exports became a solid portion of our dairy economy with some 15% of our products now sold overseas. Over production and decreasing demand led to declining prices since 2014. Dairy prices began to rise slightly in 2019, bringing a ray of hope for our farms.

Many of the problems in the dairy industry are well beyond our influence at the local level. Our office never loses focus on our dairy farms, looking for every small thing we can do to assist these important businesses. In 2019 we maintained our problem-solving attitude with our farms. Sometimes the small things we do matter most.

Our greatest success in 2019 was through a private developer. Lundy Development broke ground on the Thousand Islands International Agribusiness Park when a major farm equipment company our office had been assisting in looking at locations for a major regional dealership, decided they wanted to locate in the Agribusiness Park. The agribusiness park will provide a prime location of agricultural manufacturing and food processing companies to locate. The park provides us a carrot to hold out to attract business to look at Jefferson County. Whether they locate in the agribusiness park or in our other prime industrial locations, Jefferson County benefits.

Our agricultural economic development program has four areas of focus.

### **Identifying Agricultural Needs and Developing Solutions –**

The planting and growing seasons in Jefferson County saw cold wet weather hamper the efforts of farms to get their crops planted in a timely fashion. Farms were planting corn until the end of June, a month later than normal and well beyond the desired planting dates for corn to reach full maturity. Farms came to our office looking for help raising awareness of what could be a severe feed shortage program. Our office received three phone calls from farms that were of an “I’m not sure what I’m going to do next” nature. Office staff were provided basic training on what to do if they received “mental health” phone calls and information was pushed out by our office to let our farm industry know what resources were available to help farms deal with crisis situations. Our office worked with elected officials to raise their awareness of the potential crisis. We arranged a meeting between the Jefferson County Agricultural Development Council and the Commissioner of the NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets, Richard Ball. Together, they strategized on the situation and how to help farms deal with the aftermath. Luckily, as the season extended into late summer and early fall, the crops were able to mature enough to provide some value as feed for livestock. It still is not a great scenario for our livestock operations, but reports indicate they believe they can provide adequate food for their animals.

In 2019 Jefferson County was hit with what we are calling a solar project tsunami. Multiple solar projects above and below the 20 MW size threshold were proposed across Jefferson County. Some of the projects were designated for prime agricultural lands, causing concern about sacrificing the best soils for farming for a 20 to 30-year period during the life of the solar project. An additional concern was the loss of rental land farms were using for crop planting, because of the lucrative solar lease opportunities. Our office began working with other agricultural and natural resource agencies to look at the two issues and hopefully provide guidance to municipalities that helps landowners take advantage of opportunities while conserving our valuable land resources for agriculture.

### **Agricultural Marketing –**

Our office continues to market Jefferson County far and wide as a fantastic eastern seaboard location to bring a food processing and agricultural manufacturing operation. Our Marketing Director and Agricultural Coordinator traveled to the Food Evolution Summit in Palm Springs California to examine west coast food businesses as potential targets for recruitment. The summit also provided an interesting look at east coast food trends that are beginning to impact the northeastern United States.

### **Education and Public Relations –**

Our office is very excited with the continued development of an agribusiness program at Jefferson Community College. This is something we have championed since its infancy. Providing a local and affordable college pathway option for those interested in agriculture is critical to the long-term success of agriculture.

We are more excited to be working with Jefferson – Lewis BOCES to implement their plans for an Environment and Agriculture Academy. This program will offer students an opportunity to participate in programs to learn about agricultural technology and careers and earn college credits while doing so. This is a fantastic opportunity to offer agricultural programming at the High School level, especially for schools that don't have an agricultural program.

To participate in the development of an agribusiness degree at Jefferson Community College; the creation of an environment and agriculture academy at Jefferson – Lewis BOCES; encourage the creation of a sixth high school based agricultural program in the Watertown School District is very rewarding. From its first "brainstorming thought" at the 1998 Agriculture and Natural Resources Conference, a key initiative of our agricultural development program was to ensure that opportunities for workforce development through agricultural programming in our schools was provided. Since that time, our program has played a key role in fostering the growth of agricultural programming in our high schools, BOCES, and Jefferson Community College. Jefferson County Economic views agriculture equally with other sectors of our local economy. Our staff works hard to help our farmers, agribusinesses and manufacturers. We believe agriculture is a key to growing our local economy.

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### **Manufacturing Council**

Carson Lennox (CHAIR), Jain Irrigation

Julie Pecori, Advanced Blasting Systems

George Anderson, Current Applications

Tracy Gyoerkoe, Jefferson-Lewis BOCES

Greg Hart, Workforce Development Institute

Rich O'Connor, Taylor Concrete

Steven Lockwood, CITEC Business Solutions

Rob Oram, Hi-Lite Airfield Services

### **Marketing Council**

Corey Fram, 1000 Islands Tourism Council

Leslie DiStefano, Samaritan Medical Center

Kevin Richardson, Agbotic

Kelly Reinhardt, The BC Group

Kylie Peck, Greater Watertown North County Chamber of Commerce

Cindy Lawrence, Watertown International Airport