
Town of
LEWIS
Plan

ADOPTED BY TOWN BOARD RESOLUTION FEBRUARY 19, 2024

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Introduction

PURPOSE of the Plan

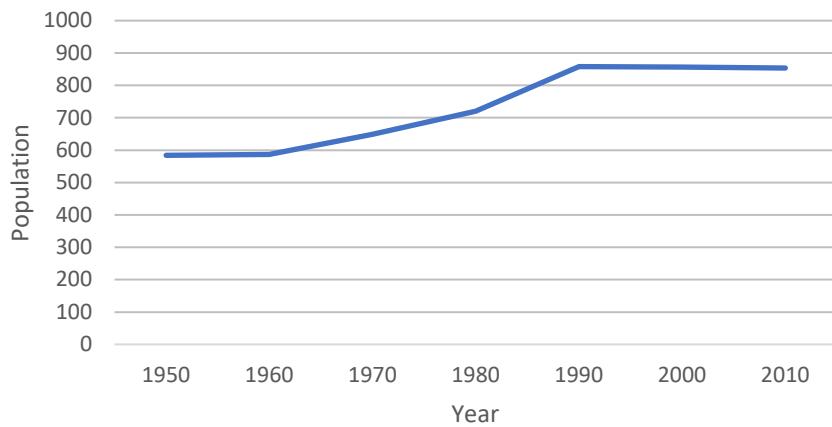
The purpose of the plan is to provide guidance for the physical development of the Town of Lewis for the future. It is based on and reflects the planning ideals laid out in the Planning Accord for Tug Hill and the Tug Hill Reserve Act. The plan is intended to provide a framework for land development and land subdivision controls. It will also help assure that the growth of the area will be in concert with plans for infrastructure and road development, and will not negatively impact natural resources and rural character. Finally, it is hoped that other governments (state, county, and other local governments) will find the plan useful in shaping their future development activities. It is the purpose of this plan to create a vision for the community's future that is a shared vision of the citizens of Town of Lewis.

PERIODIC REVIEW and Update of the Plan

It is recommended that this plan be reviewed and updated every five to eight years by the Town Board and others, as designated by the Town Board. A periodic review will refresh the Board's perspective on the longer range issues affecting Lewis, and help to reinforce the link between day-to-day development decisions and longer range town policies. In addition, a periodic update will keep the plan current with the ever-changing conditions of the town without the need for large-scale planning efforts.

Town of Lewis Demographics Profile

POPULATION TREND



POPULATION characteristics

The Town of Lewis's population increased steadily from 1950 to 1990. Then, however, population growth stopped and levelled off. Between 2000 and 2010 Lewis lost three people (-0.4%), while the county and state saw a population gain. The number of households increased by a larger proportion than usual for the area, while average household size decreased dramatically.

In the same time period, the median age of residents increased by a large amount compared to the county and state. There was a net loss of one housing unit, a similar percentage as Lewis County.

	2000	2010	Change	Change in Lewis Cty.	Change in NYS
Population	857	854	-0.4%	+0.5%	+2.1%
Number of Households	296	329	+11.1%	+4.7%	+3.7%
Average Household Size	2.90	2.58	-11.0%	-4.1%	-1.5%
Median Age	33.7	39.9	+6.2 years	+3.4 years	+0.4 years
Housing Units	440	439	-0.2%	-0.1%	+5.6%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau (Full Census)

EMPLOYMENT/INCOME

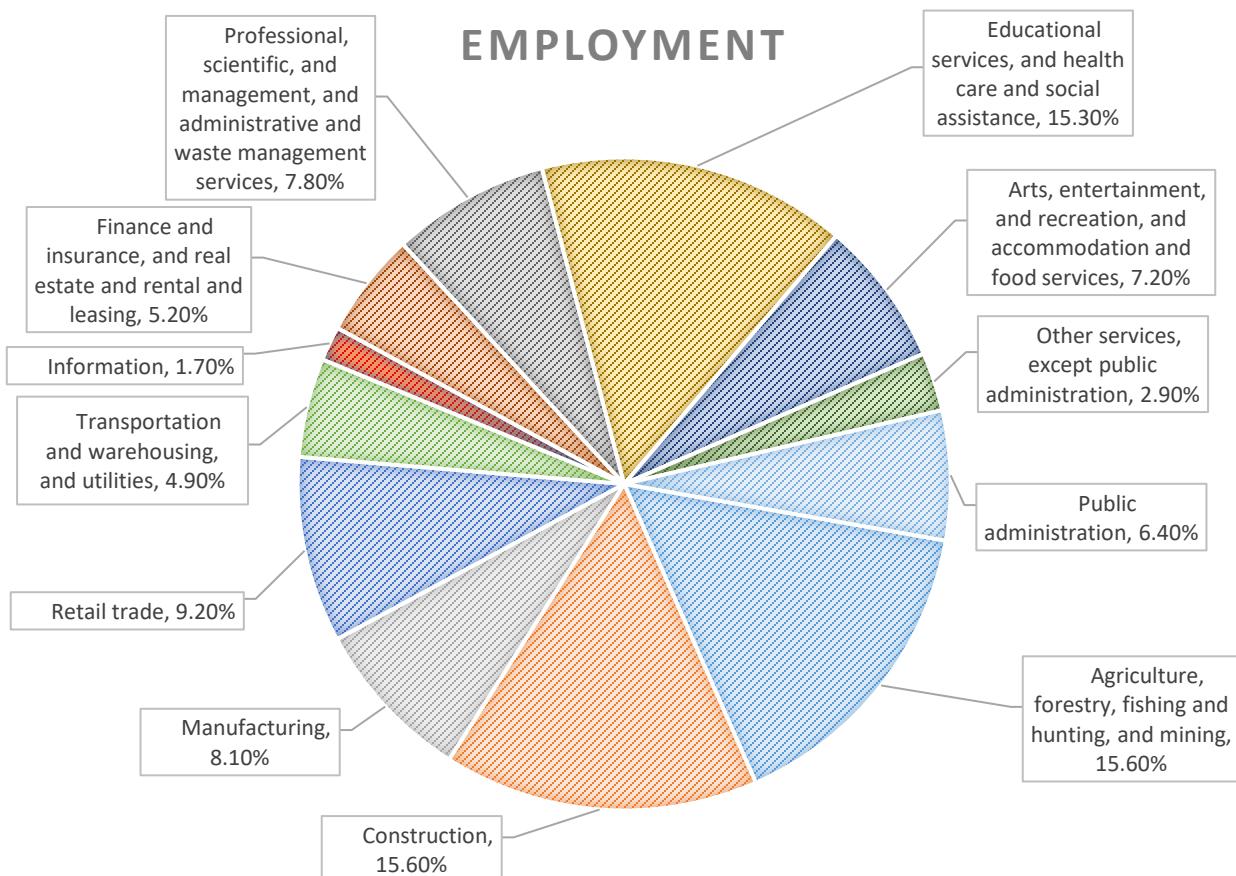
characteristics

Lewis's median income was nearly half its median housing value in 2015, which is considered generally healthy. However, about 15.8% of the population is below the poverty line.

2015 Median Household Income	\$42,132
2015 % of Population Below Poverty Line	15.8%
2015 Median Housing Value	\$94,700
2015 Mean Travel Time to Work	33.7 min.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau (American Community Survey)

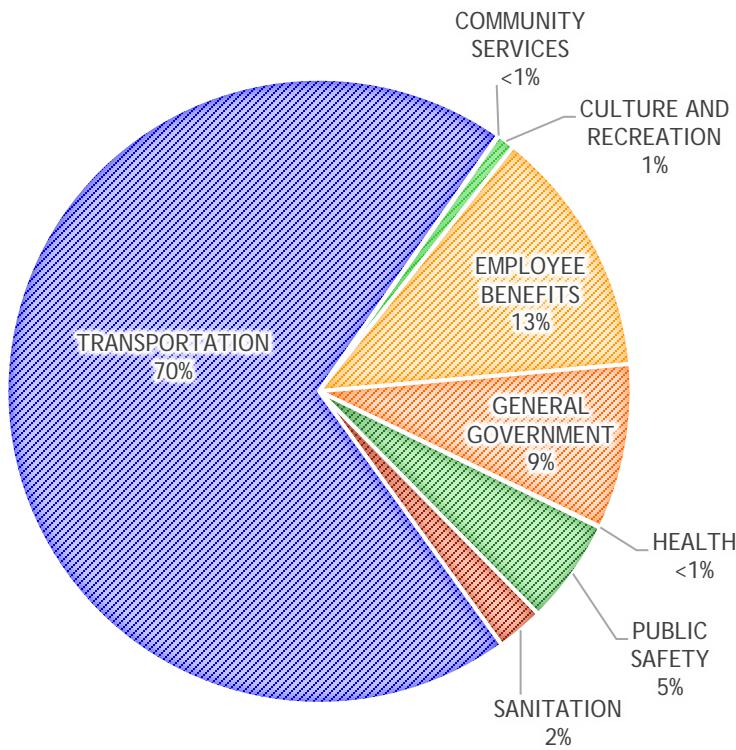
The average travel time to work in 2015 was estimated to be about 34 minutes. About 66.4% of residents worked outside Lewis County (Lewis town is on the southern boundary of the county). Residents of Lewis were employed in a variety of fields, the largest being agriculture related (15.6%), construction (15.6%), and educational/health care services (15.3%).



Source: U.S. Census Bureau (American Community Survey)

Note: Data from the American Community Survey is subject to a variable margin of error, and is not exact.

EXPENDITURES



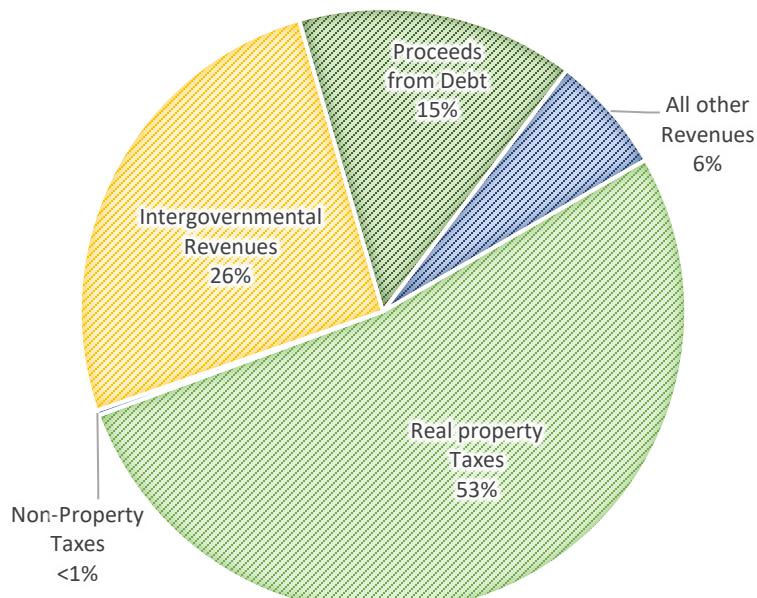
Expenditures (\$)	Lewis
Community Services	400
Culture and Recreation	7622
Debt Service	0
Economic Developments	0
Employee Benefits	108403
General Government	71629
Health	425
Public Safety	45512
Sanitation	20421
Transportation	584213
Utilities	0
Total by Town	838625

REVENUES

TOWN BUDGET characteristics

In 2015, Lewis's total revenue (\$943,931) exceeded total expenditures by \$105,306. Most revenues came from property taxes, accounting for \$497,964. Intergovernmental revenues (\$244,017) and proceeds from debt (\$140,000) also contributed.

The greatest expenditures were Transportation (\$584,213), Employee Benefits (\$108,403) and General Government (\$71,629), together accounting for 91% of total expenditures.



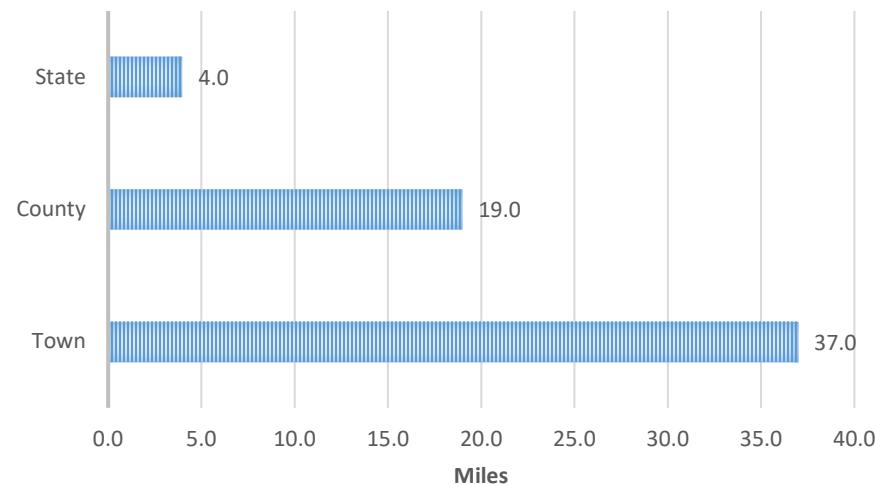
ROAD MILEAGE

LAND USE

characteristics

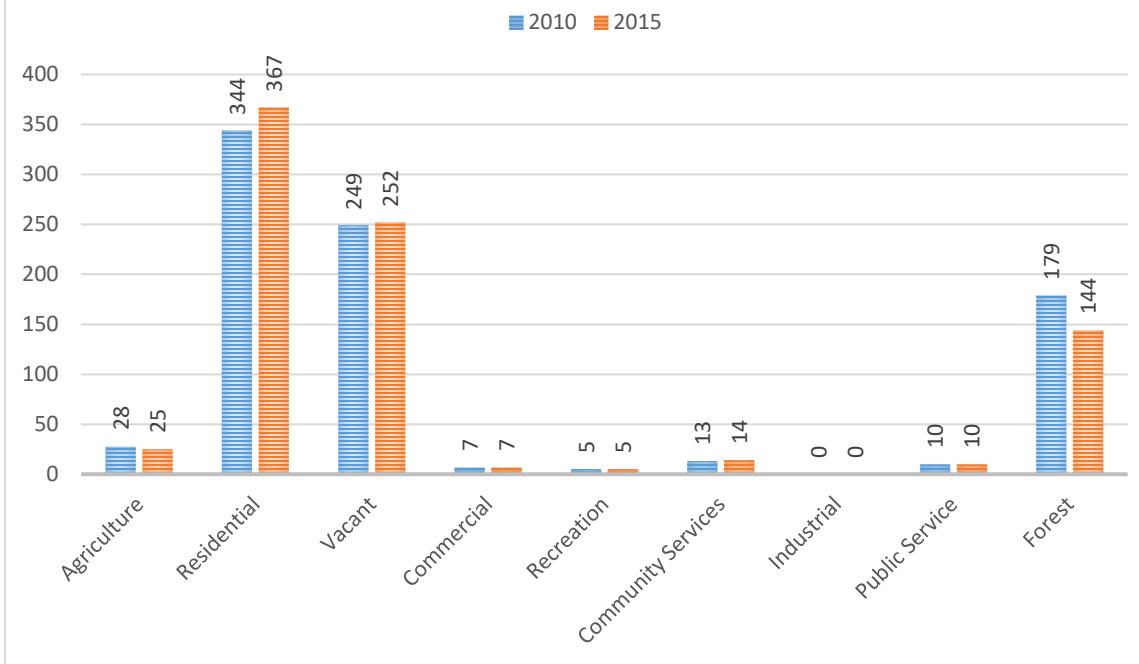
As of 2017, 61.7% of Lewis's roads are owned by the Town, 31.7% by Lewis County, and 6.7% by New York State. Lewis has a total of 60.0 miles of roadway.

Overall, Lewis's properties are mostly residential (44.5%), vacant (30.6%), or forest (17.5%). During the five years from 2010 and 2015, there was an increase of 23 (+6.7%) residential, three vacant, and one community service properties. At the same time Lewis lost 35 forest (-19.6%) and three agricultural properties. Bear in mind that this data only captures the number of tax parcels in Lewis town, not the acreage.



Source: NYS Dept. of Transportation, 2017

TAX PARCELS BY PROPERTY CLASS



Source: NYS Office of Real Property Tax Svcs.

Town of Lewis Community Resources Profile

Lewis is on the southern boundary of Lewis County, bordered by the town of West Turin to the north, Leyden to the east, Ava to the southeast, Annsville and Florence to the southwest, and Osceola to the west. State Route 26 passes through the hamlet of West Leyden inside Lewis town, and is the most heavily travelled road. The busiest segment is between State Route 294 and the southern town boundary, with an average daily traffic of 2,809 vehicles in 2015. The town contains portions of Lewis County Agricultural District #212.08-04-13.100.

COMMUNITY BUILDINGS

Lewis Municipal Building	About 2,300 sq. ft. 1039 State Route 26, West Leyden, NY 13489
West Leyden Elementary School	1157 Fish Creek Rd., West Leyden, NY 13489
Post Office	1054 NY-26, West Leyden, NY 13489



Lewis's primary municipal building is in the hamlet of West Leyden on State Rt. 26 facing east. The West Leyden Elementary School is just north where Fish Creek Road meets Osceola Road. A few hundred feet away at the intersection of Osceola Road and State Rt. 26 is a post office.

PUBLIC LANDS

	Cottrell State Forest	• 473 acres
	Mohawk Springs State Forest	• 1,210 acres
	Raywood Unique Area	• 307 acres
	Swancott Mill State Forest	• 744 acres

Lewis contains portions of Mohawk Springs State Forest (State Rt. 26) which protects the headwaters of the Mohawk River. Cottrell State Forest (Kirk Road) is mostly within Lewis on the southern border. The entirety of Swancott Mill State Forest (Swancott Mill Road) is within Lewis, and offers points of fishing access on Fish Creek. Lewis also entirely contains the Raywood Unique Area (Goodhines Road), which protects specimens of the American Beech tree.

Goals for the Future

1.0 Retain the quality of our area's surface and groundwater. These waters are essential to providing individual and municipal water supplies. They are essential to many industries of our area. They are important to the retention of fishing opportunities and wildlife habitat.

- 1.1 Discourage adverse development near major wetlands and concentrations of wetlands.
- 1.2 Discourage adverse development near major stream corridors.
- 1.3 Discourage adverse development near significant springs, wellhead areas of water supply systems, and aquifers.
- 1.4 Continue to identify and map major wetlands, concentrations of wetlands, major stream corridors, significant springs, water supply well head areas, and aquifers.
- 1.5 Raise awareness of the importance of Tug Hill waters.

2.0 Retain major forested areas most important to forest industry, hunting, fishing, and other types of recreation. Major blocks of forest land on Tug Hill are not only important for retaining the area's economy and recreation opportunities, they are also important in providing wildlife habitat and the very character of the area. In addition, Tug Hill's vast reaches of forest are key to maintaining the purity of its waters and to controlling rates of runoff.

- 2.0 Continue to identify major forested areas.
- 2.1 Discourage subdivision and development that would take major forested lands out of productive use for forest industry, hunting, fishing and other types of recreation.
- 2.2 Discourage unreasonable restrictions on forestry activities that adversely affect businesses.
- 2.3 Encourage forestry-related businesses as a means of maintaining a healthy economy, and as a means of retaining large parcels of forestland.
- 2.4 Encourage educational programs that show the importance of forested lands to the area's environment, economy and recreational opportunities.
- 2.5 Promote sound forestry practices for all commercial and private harvesting through the establishment of minimum forest management standards.

3.0 Retain the area's most important wildlife habitat and unique areas to conserve hunting, fishing, and recreational opportunities, and to help retain the character and biological richness of our area. Important wildlife habitat areas and unique areas such as our gulfs are a significant part of the character of our heritage, and can provide important recreational opportunities. They also are of great importance to our economy because of the economic contributions hunting and fishing make to the area, and the economic benefit that comes from the viewing of wildlife and scenery by snowmobilers, skiers, hikers, motorists, and others.

3.1 Discourage adverse development in important wildlife and plant habitat areas, and in and near gulfs.

3.2 Support town-by-town identification of important wildlife habitat and unique areas. Encourage further research to identify such areas.

3.3 Encourage educational programs regarding the importance and benefit of habitat and unique areas for use in schools and with civic and adult groups.

4.0 Retain area's existing farms and best farm soils for farm production. Local action alone cannot retain our farms. This depends on the individual actions of our farmers, the natural economy and state and national farm policy. Locally, we can take actions that help keep good farm land from inappropriate development and help farm diversification.

4.1 Support identification of important farm lands, and updates of existing farm land inventories.

4.2 Update land use controls that would limit farm lands being taken out of production.

4.3 Support voluntary actions taken by individual farmers to keep their farms in production, through tools such as ag districts, and ag land assessments.

4.4 Support programs to help strengthen dairy farming and to help farmers that wish to diversify their operations.

4.5 Encourage educational programs that demonstrate to school students and adults the importance of farming to our area.

4.6 Discourage development which would tend to disrupt agricultural practices.

4.7 Encourage only those land uses which lend support to the agricultural industry.

5.0 Retain private and public hunting and fishing opportunities, and other outdoor recreational activities, in our area.

- 5.1 Support voluntary actions, of private landowners to improve hunting, fishing and other recreational access to public lands designated for these uses, such as the sale of access easements, or involvement in fish and wildlife cooperator programs.
- 5.2 Discourage actions that would lead to the subdivision of lands important to hunting, fishing and other recreation where that subdivision would remove lands from such use.
- 5.3 Identify areas important to recreation. These might include designated public motorized and nonmotorized recreation trails, public roads opened for recreational trail use, and parking areas.
- 5.4 Encourage educational programs that demonstrate the importance of hunting, fishing and recreation to our way of life and our area's economy. Also encourage educational programs and appropriate law enforcement to protect private property rights and to provide safe hunting, fishing and other recreational opportunities.
- 5.5 Direct the development of active recreation facilities and programs to areas near population concentrations where services can be provided more economically.
- 5.6 Encourage the proper design and management of passive recreation activities in the more remote areas in order to conserve the water and forest resources and to minimize change to the area's character.

6.0 Retain historic sites and structures that are important to the character of our area.

- 6.1 Identify historic sites and structures.
- 6.2 Discourage development that would diminish the quality of historic sites and structures through town planning and land use controls.

7.0 Control the costs of public road maintenance.

- 7.1 Discourage new public roads into or across remote areas not now served by public roads, especially in the core forest of our area, in areas that would lead to the breakup of lands important to forest management, wildlife, farming, hunting, fishing and other recreation.
- 7.2 Identify portions of roads that might be appropriate for some form of abandonment, minimum maintenance designation, or seasonal use designation.
- 7.3 Support state legislation that would limit town responsibilities for maintenance on designated remote roads.
- 7.4 Discourage development of year-round residences along seasonal roads.

8.0 Help keep villages and hamlets good places to live.

- 8.1 Plan for village and hamlet improvement projects, and apply for grants to assist in such work.
- 8.2 Direct development, through regulation and other means, into and around already existing hamlets and communities away from those portions of the region where significant physical and economic limitations to growth exist.

Town of Lewis Development Laws

The Town of Lewis Land Use Law was adopted in 1999, and revised twice in 2003. The town also has a subdivision law adopted in 2004.

The town also adopted a law “establishing rules and regulations which shall apply to unsafe buildings” in 1980.

LAND USE & ZONING laws

The Town of Lewis Land Use Law establishes three districts:

- **Agricultural/Forest** – Areas not adjacent to existing permanent roads in which uses require a minimum of five acres of land with a minimum lot width of 200 feet (if landlocked) or a minimum road frontage of 200 feet along seasonal or private roads.
- **Core Forest** – Areas within the Fish Creek and Salmon River watersheds in which uses require a minimum of 40 acres of land with a lot width to lot depth ratio of at least 1:3. This area may include government lands, commercial forest lands, lands subject to conservation easements, and privately owned lands which have been voluntarily included.
- **Rural/Residential** – Areas adjacent to existing permanent roads in which uses require a minimum of three acres of land with a minimum frontage of 200 feet and a minimum lot depth of 400 feet.
- **Hamlet** – Developed to some extent and includes low or medium density residential uses with some commercial and industrial uses.

The law defines general regulations for all districts (and district-specific regulations), such as uses permitted, lot sizes, height, setback from roads, and waste disposal standards. The law outlines processes and procedures and provides rules for amending the law and applying for land use permits.

Agricultural parcels in Lewis are additionally subject to New York State laws such as Article 25AA.

SUBDIVISION laws

The Town of Lewis Subdivision Law regulates the process for creating subdivisions. It provides general design standards and road standards. The Town of Lewis’s authority to maintain development standards and outline development procedures is further protected by this law.

