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Lindsey Piersol
Wood County
Economic Development

Lindsey Piersol joined the Wood County Economic Development office as its Executive Director in March 2016. Prior to this, Piersol served as the Public Affairs Liaison for the State of Ohio Treasurer, where she was responsible for 23 counties in Central and Southeast Ohio. She also served as the Economic Development Specialist for the City of Delaware, Ohio – the fastest growing city in the fastest growing county in Ohio. Piersol is a graduate of The Ohio State University and currently resides in Williamstown, West Virginia with her husband and son.

Exciting Times in Wood County and the Ohio River Valley

I am in my seventh year serving as Wood County’s Economic Development Director. As each year passes, I’m more optimistic than ever about West Virginia’s future. I recently read an article in the Charleston Gazette Mail that quoted State Secretary of Economic Development, Mitch Carmichael. According to Carmichael, “From 2017 to 2021, West Virginia generated \$6.2 billion in private capital investment.” Then, he said, the state generated \$6.2 billion in 2022 alone. In one year, the state beat four years’ worth of private capital investment. Exciting times!

The excitement is alive and well in the Ohio River Valley, too. Not only are nearby counties getting large projects like BHE Renewables and Nucor, Wood County also has its fair share of projects in the pipeline and recently completed projects which I’ll discuss below.



Discovery World on Market, opened. The museum represents a \$12.8 million dollar investment by the Ross Foundation, with more dollars to follow for future plans. Since opening, Discovery World has seen 34,000 visitors, including guests from Honolulu and Iceland!

Project planning takes time. Bringing a project to fruition takes time. Let’s talk about some of the projects that are in the pipeline in Wood County.

In June of 2023, West Virginia University at Parkersburg (WVUP) announced it will be heading through two courts (bankruptcy and

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In early 2023, the new FedEx Distribution facility opened in Wood County. This 250,000-square-foot facility was built on a greenfield and resulted in a \$45+ million investment. Economic development is often referred to as a marathon, not a sprint. My office started working on the FedEx project when I was about to go on maternity leave with my son in September of 2020.

On April 2, 2023, downtown Parkersburg’s STEAM-oriented children’s museum,

estate) to purchase the former Ohio Valley University (OVU) campus in Vienna, West Virginia. When OVU declared bankruptcy and closed in December of 2021, the community experienced a bit of panic about what would become of the approximately 255-acre campus. Once the school closed and a receiver was announced, a group of us toured OVU in August 2022, and the idea to bring WVUP to the table become a reality. A dream and a generous donation will turn a vacant campus into a future hub of technology for the Mid-

Ohio Valley. The Ross Foundation provided WVUP with a \$10 million gift (the largest in the institution's history) to turn the campus into the future WVUP Technology Center. The center will be a place where the college will focus on growth of degrees in computer science, computer information technology, the Bachelor of Applied Technology in cybersecurity and networking, as well as opportunities for growth in degrees like mechanical engineering. In addition, the college hopes to add a space for 25 technology-based incubators to operate in the same facility as the students.

In July of 2023, Chemours shared their intentions publicly to spend almost \$1 billion in Washington, West Virginia to expand and produce material for the semiconductor industry to meet the growing demand for domestic chips production, as well as other key supply chains, such as EVs and batteries. The expansion at Chemours could bring 200 permanent jobs to the area, as well as temporarily employ hundreds, if not closer to a thousand, construction workers.

There are several other transformational projects in various phases being explored in Wood County. These projects range from EV battery-related companies to distribution entities to residential and retail prospects. Our office works with local, state, and federal officials to bring these projects to fruition. In 2023, our office has hosted multiple international prospects, filled out more Requests for Information (RFIs) than I can count, and are focusing on site readiness and the local residential inventory for future projects.

In July, Wood County was officially designated as a West Virginia BUILD district. The WV BUILD designation – short for Better United In Long-term Development WV – will allow us to offer residential developers an incentive to



build in Wood County, which will be an opportunity to attract young families and new employers to the area. With a 99.2% occupancy rate for residential housing, that has been a challenge in recruitment. Qualifying projects will be eligible to receive a sales and use tax exemption for building materials and a 10-year property value adjustment refundable tax credit to offset building costs. The new exemptions can be combined with a business and occupation tax exemption,

which municipalities can authorize. The City of Parkersburg, our county seat, did authorize such an ordinance in 2021.

I'm excited to see where Wood County and West Virginia will be next year in terms of private capital investment and net new jobs. I think everyone can agree that we need more high-paying career opportunities for our young people. The future is bright! 