



Sustainable technology cuts yearly costs by \$138K for a New York county

Heating, lighting, air conditioning and building controls from Centrica Business Solutions provide long-term building management blueprint for Columbia County.



Unlocking savings and efficiencies

Columbia County in upstate New York, located between the Hudson River and the Catskill mountains to the west and the state border with Massachusetts to the east, is home to around 60,000 citizens. This number grows substantially in the summer months as metropolitan New Yorkers make the 100-mile trip north.

With budgets tight and made up predominantly of tax dollars, a key responsibility for the Board is to spend wisely and sustainably, maximizing value for money and capitalizing on opportunities to make savings and efficiencies. So, when Centrica Business Solutions showed up with a solution that utilized guaranteed annual energy cost savings to pay for necessary infrastructure improvements, the Board was very interested in exploring this option.

Making decisions for the long term

“Finding room in our budget for capital projects is always a challenge, and it’s been a struggle to maintain some of our buildings,” explains Ronald Knott, Deputy Chair of the Board of Supervisors and Chair of the Public Works Committee. “Historically, the County has been quite reactive, fixing problems as they occur, but putting off decisions about those buildings that could produce longer-range benefits for citizens, for staff, for the environment, and for our finances.”

A great place for the County to begin a fresh approach to building repairs and maintenance was at their large, public safety facility in Greenport just outside the city of Hudson, home to the Sheriff’s office, the 911 response service, and the county jail with more than 50 inmates.



annual savings



utilities payment secured



Centrica Business Solutions monitored the performance of the equipment for a period of time to make sure we were achieving the projected savings and efficiencies. The project was delivered on budget, everyone is very happy, and the results are coming through.

Ronald Knott, Deputy Chair of the Board of Supervisors, Chair of the Public Works Department, Columbia County

Says Ronald Knott: “This is a busy, 30-year-old building that operates around the clock, and much of its equipment was old and needed upgrading. But the question for the county was, ‘how do we make this happen?’”

When Knott explained his aspirations for the facility, Centrica Business Solutions developed a proposal, with a variety of funding options, to replace the building’s aging and inefficient heating, lighting, air conditioning and ventilation systems with the latest, easy-to-control and maintain energy-efficient technology.

Centrica Business Solutions’ calculations, based on a detailed survey and assessment of current usage and costs, projected immediate and substantial savings, ultimately paying back all of the county’s investment. In the process, the revitalized sustainability performance of the refurbished building would provide a template for the county’s approach to all their public facilities.

“There were lots of low-hanging fruit in this building, lots of opportunities for improvements and upgrades, and when we put the details of the project together it required a substantial investment of \$2.7 million. But our Board of Supervisors and Financial Controller could see the economic strength of the case put forward by Centrica Business Solutions - that we could cut our energy usage and our repairs and maintenance costs and use that money for the bond to pay for the project.

“Centrica Business Solutions’ engineers did a great job designing and specifying the project, and its contractors worked really well within tight parameters - remember, one of the facility’s main uses is as a jail. It’s a tough building to work in and there were access hurdles to overcome to ensure that we maintained control and security during the installation. They achieved all of that during COVID-19, when we had even more restrictions in place, which was very impressive.

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Customer results

The \$2.7 million project is generating annual utility savings of \$76,500 and annual repair and replacement savings of \$61,800, for an annual saving of more than \$138,000.

Centrica Business Solutions then supported a Columbia County application for a financial contribution from one of New York’s utilities incentive programs, designed to cut energy use in public buildings, which ultimately resulted in an \$80,000 payment, against an initial estimate of \$52,000. “Centrica Business Solutions identified the right program for us and completed all of the paperwork,” explains Knott.

On top of the financial advantages of the project, County staff at the public safety facility are now enjoying a more comfortable working environment. Sophisticated controls for the new heating, air conditioning and ventilation systems, accessible via a laptop or mobile device, are not only reducing energy use, but are also enabling maintenance crews to adjust the equipment’s settings to provide the environment best suited to each part of the building.

Even complaints about cold cells in the jail have been addressed and the county now has the documentation to prove that it is delivering on their legal requirements to inmates.

Says Ronald Knott: “I would certainly recommend Centrica Business Solutions - and I already have recommended them to some of the towns in the county, where they needed help with smaller projects. Lots of county governments don’t have the people or resources to do long-term planning or develop major projects like this, so having Centrica Business Solutions’ engineering staff along with us has been invaluable.”

With the success of the project at the public service facility, Columbia County is already discussing a second phase of activity with Centrica Business Solutions, with the aim of achieving similar results at a large former school building, home to a number of the county’s key departments and agencies.