



Publisher's notebook

Believe it: region's time for turnaround has arrived

It is hard for those of us who reside in northern Chautauqua County — me included — to truly embrace that things are changing for the better. We've been punched in the gut so often with economic woes that whenever there is a glimmer of hope, many of us cannot help but be skeptical.

At the same time, most of us would not trade living here for anywhere else in the nation. This is home. We enjoy the four seasons, our neighbors and truly appreciate the fact that a traffic jam is most often due to traveling behind a school bus.

John D'Agostino

But a better economy for northern Chautauqua County — and future — seems closer now than ever before. Local officials, for the most part, are working together and speaking in one voice. They understand our county can accomplish more in a partnership rather than divided into 27 towns, 14 villages and two cities.

On Jan. 27 in Dunkirk's City Hall, Mayor Willie Rosas put together one of the most upbeat State of the City addresses this region has ever seen. What's happening in the city that's worth noting? Here's

just a short list:

- Waterfront — For years, especially at our manufacturing heyday, the city took Lake Erie for granted. Not anymore. Dunkirk is becoming a destination thanks to its access to the water. Known regionally for its Music on the Pier, a second air show will again grace the skies in early July. In addition, the Great Lakes Experience, which was missing from the city's calendar last year, will be back on June 17 in the lot between the Clarion and Tim Hortons on Lake Shore Drive. City officials also are working to secure a new

hotel. More tourism is a good thing.

- Athenex's arrival — Some of the city's bounce back began in February 2016 when Gov. Andrew Cuomo came to town to announce a project that could bring 900 jobs to the area by 2020. Within the next couple of months, activity will increase off Route 5 for the major project. As we noted last year in our Vision 2016, this development will likely change the Route 5 corridor from Dunkirk to Silver Creek.

- We all scream — One of the most impressive developments has been the expansion of the Fieldbrook Foods facility, which is a major producer of ice cream. With even more good news likely to come in the coming months, the facility has increased employment by more than 110 in the last year.

- Drinking to that — It has taken some time, but the north county water district is a reality. This is something that Athenex has praised — as well as a number of other major manufacturing companies, such as Cott and Nestle Purina. Dunkirk is the

chief supplier of the water and once the district is in operation, it will bring stability to the users as well as the rates.

Some other successes, that must be noted, include the investment near the waterfront with a new marina operator and the building purchases by Allan Steinburg that have included Rookies, the Kettle N' Keg as well as the former Yellow Goose convenience site that is now open as the Mad Hatters and More apparel shop. Parks improvements — from Wright Park to Point Gratiot — also continue.

Buffalo has been the focal point of Western New York's turnaround in the last five years. That's a good thing for the region, since it is our largest city.

For Dunkirk and northern Chautauqua County, however, the momentum is just beginning. Enjoy the ride.

John D'Agostino is the OBSERVER publisher. Send comments to jdagostino@observertoday.com or call 366-3000, ext. 401.

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