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Erie Canal improvements in Fairport officially open

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The new promenade in Fairport is among the major canal improvement projects celebrated on Friday. / ANNETTE LEIN/staff photographer

Written by **Meaghan M. McDermott**
Staff writer

FAIRPORT — When Mayor Fritz May was a boy growing up in the village, the Erie Canal was something few residents gave much consideration.

“We as a village didn’t think much of the canal,” he said. “We ran when the bell rang to signal the lift bridge was going up, but the canal was a dirty ditch running behind the buildings.”

But that attitude’s long in the past, with the canal now what May calls the village’s “second Main Street,” an economic draw that’s central to the community’s quality of life.

On Friday, May and other luminaries gathered on the south bank of the canal, just behind Packett’s Landing, to celebrate the completion of [infrastructure](#) improvements they hope will make the area even more attractive. There’s a new breakwall and a pedestrian promenade, new boat docks, a pocket park, landscaping features and new lighting. Part of the aim is to attract private investment for a residential component on the two-acre waterfront site that used to house the village Department of Public Works.

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All the work was done by the Fairport Industrial Development Agency, which matched grants won from the Canal Corp., Empire State Development Corp. and the Department of State.

New York Secretary of State Cesar Perales said the work showed Fairport used the grant money well.

He touted Gov. Andrew Cuomo's Regional Economic Development Councils, which apportion grant funding to help spur

development.

Canal Corp. director Brian U. Stratton spoke of the overall importance of the Erie Canal [system](#) in making New York an economic powerhouse and its continuing role in spurring tourism and commerce.

"We are a canal community that continually looks for ways to improve ourselves," said May. "And the canal is a super-important part of our lives."

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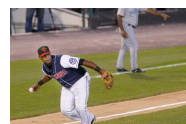
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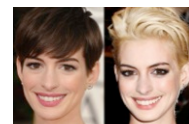
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