

Root for Rock County revival



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What General Motors plant?

Janesville, Beloit and the rest of Rock County have moved past the painful loss of the giant auto and truck manufacturer five years ago.

And better times appear ahead.

The Janesville Gazette just reported seven Rock County economic indicators improved

in the third quarter, compared to the previous year. That's only the second time that's happened in any quarter during the last three and a half years.

"More residents are working and buying cars," a [newspaper editorial last week highlighted](#). "More people are buying or selling homes — and at higher average prices. Retailers are busier. Bankruptcy and foreclosure filings are falling."

Beloit officials offered similar optimism this month during a meeting with the State Journal editorial board.

While Beloit still posts the second highest unemployment rate in the state (10.9 percent, behind only Racine), that's a big improvement from the 17.4 percent rate of 2009. City officials say 13 private building projects are underway. That includes the four-story Phoenix development downtown, with retail space and high-end apartments. And that's on top of \$70 million in eight school projects, including a new middle school and pool.

Gov. Scott Walker and state Superintendent of Public Instruction Tony Evers teamed Monday to tout Beloit Memorial High School's technology education program. They toured programming space for student training in welding, machining, cabinetry and millwork.

Companies such as Kettle Foods, United Alloy, Universal Recycling Technologies, SSI Technologies and Kerry Ingredients have expanded in Rock County. At the same time, NorthStar Medical Radioisotopes and SHINE Medical Technologies continue to pursue high-tech production facilities in Beloit and Janesville, respectively.

Beloit College has launched a \$30 million fundraiser to transform a century-old power plant on the Rock River into a campus recreation center. The city's YMCA plans to move back downtown.

Beloit continues to pursue a casino, which offers more flash than solid financial footing. Yet we understand the city's interest in finding new sources of jobs. Wall Street bond rating agencies [just credited Rock County](#) for diversifying its economy.

Rock County has come a long way since it lost GM, with a lot more ground to cover. Here's to more prosperity in the future.