A monthly update on where Pattern has been and where we are going

Astorino, Odell and Day tout reshaped governments at Pattern Breakfast

The lower Hudson Valley's three county executives detailed how they've consolidated services and cut expenses to realign government during a Pattern For Progress breakfast May 15 at Pace University in Pleasantville. About 130 attendees heard Westchester County Executive Robert Astorino, Putnam County Executive MaryEllen Odell and Rockland County Executive Ed Day explain how innovation has resulted in savings and efficiencies.

The three criticized Gov. Andrew Cuomo for failing to require school districts -- which account for the largest share of property tax bills -- to participate in efforts to identify methods to share services among governments to save money.

Astorino cited significant savings by privatizing Playland Amusement Park, efforts to privatize Westchester County Airport and business growth expected from a $1.2 billion science and technology hub planned in Valhalla. Odell described a program in which Brewster would tap into Danbury, Conn.'s sewer system -- a move that also could inspire commercial business growth along that route. Day provided an update on how Rockland's finances -- described as "stressed" by the state comptroller each of the last three years -- have improved. He also pointed to an effort to improve housing and apartment quality via code enforcement and zoning scrutiny. The leaders also discussed how to stem the opioid epidemic.

Pattern President and CEO Jonathan Drapkin moderated; other questions came from students in Pace University's master's in public administration program. They asked about topics such as demographic changes in Rockland; the impact of the proposed "American Health Care Act" on Westchester's budget; and the Trump Administration's efforts to enlist local authorities in enforcing immigration law.


Six superintendents talk budget and more with Pattern

Public schools superintendents oversee action and thought processes, big and small, that are essential to day-to-day operations and strategic planning. By periodically meeting with superintendents, Hudson Valley Pattern for Progress' Center For New Models in Education stays on top of trends and learns about districts' priorities and themes -- particularly as they relate to urban/city districts in communities that are part of our Urban Action Agenda. Pattern's goal is to identify areas where it may assist the districts.

Pattern President and CEO Jonathan Drapkin moderated a discussion May 22 with six superintendents, our second meeting in a series inaugurated in February. The 90-minute program examined issues such as state funding, recent approval of district budget votes and demographic changes in communities.

Upcoming Events

JUNE 22 - Chris Gibson headlines leadership luncheon during Fellows graduation

Chris Gibson, whose career has taken him from being an Army colonel to Capitol Hill and then to the halls of academia, will speak on leadership qualities during a Pattern For Progress special event June 22 at the Poughkeepsie Grand Hotel.

Gibson's address, open to the public, is part of a graduation commencement for Pattern's Fellows Program, a training initiative celebrating its 10th anniversary. The program enhances leaders' abilities to address issues from a regional perspective. It has had more than 200 graduates.

"Chris Gibson's exceptional blend of experiences, from his military service to his work in Washington and now at Williams College, where he teaches leadership, will offer outstanding insights to our Fellows," Pattern President and CEO Jonathan Drapkin said.

Gibson was in Congress from 2011 to 2016. He now is a visiting professor of leadership studies at Williams College in Williamstown, Mass. He served in the Army from 1986 to 2010. He earned four Bronze Stars, a Purple Heart and two Legions of Merit awards. His forthcoming book is "Rally Point: Five Tasks to Unite the Country and Revitalize The American Dream."

The program is from 11 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. The Poughkeepsie Grand Hotel is at 40 Civic Center Plaza in Poughkeepsie. Registration is $45 for Pattern members; $55 for non-members; and $35 for elected and appointed officials and employees of local governments, including boards and school districts. For Fellows alumni, the fee is $25. Visit PatternForProgress.org or call (845) 565-4900. Contributions to fund future scholarships are welcome.

Sponsors are D.J. Consulting, Inc. and the State University of New York at New Paltz. Additional sponsorship and advertising opportunities are available.

Attendees were, clockwise from bottom left, John Xanthis of Valley Central schools in Orange County; Dr. Roberto Padilla of City of Newburgh schools; Dr. Kenneth Eastwood of Middletown schools; Dr. Paul Padalino (in front of dry-erase board) of Kingston schools; Tammy Mangus of Monticello schools; and William Silver of Liberty schools.
Why are you, and your business, based in the Hudson Valley?

John Rath
First Senior Vice President, Lakeland Bank

The Hudson Valley is a beautiful place with a wonderful quality of life. There are great businesses here and it truly has a community feel -- not just one town or village, but the entire Hudson Valley. There are great opportunities here, both personal and business, for those who pursue them.

How does your business help quality of life in the valley?

Lakeland Bank moved into New York two years ago to provide banking services to small- to medium-sized business, including financing projects that provide economic stimulus throughout the region. That’s why we came. Locally, in Highland Mills in the Town of Woodbury, we opened a branch two months ago to provide consumer services to a community that had no local banking services.

What new initiative helped your business grow in the past year?

We expanded our New Jersey-headquartered bank into the Hudson Valley of New York in 2015. This has been a terrific success. While some have retrenched away from the Hudson Valley, we actually see great opportunity for us; this has been proven by how well we have done.

The valley is constantly changing. What best practice would you share to make the most of that evolution?

Be engaged; be involved. Encourage smart development by providing positive input into the dialogue about how we should shape our community.

Briefly describe the Hudson Valley in five years, 2022.

Further development of river cities, which will improve their economic health that will lead to improved job opportunities and increased residential development that will benefit the citizens of those communities.

In addition to "work," "play" counts, too. Something fun folks should know about you or your business?

Love to go to concerts at some of the terrific performing-arts venues in the Hudson Valley. Love to jog with my dog around beautiful Chadwick Lake and hike at Minnewaska State Park.

Your advice on how to ensure a strong workforce?

Improved collaboration between business and educational institutions to make sure we are training for the jobs that we want to attract and that companies need.

What was your first job?

Newspaper route.

Why have you chosen to support Pattern for Progress?

I believe Pattern is the premier independent public-policy organization in the Hudson Valley. Pattern has done exceptional work and is widely recognized for recommending courses of action for towns, villages, counties and organizations that improve and enhance the quality of life of all citizens of the Hudson Valley.

Mark Kastner,
President, The Chazen Companies

Why are you, and your business, based in the Hudson Valley?

I’ve lived in the Hudson Valley my entire adult life. It’s a phenomenal place to live and work. Chazen was founded in Poughkeepsie 70 years ago. While we’ve opened several new offices outside the region over the last 20 years, we will always call the Hudson Valley home.

How does your business help quality of life in the valley?

Chazen has helped shape the face of the Hudson Valley we know today. From the post-World War II expansion, through the IBM boom, to the transformation in the region we see today, Chazen has designed many of the projects and buildings in which we live, work, play, shop, eat and study, as well as much of the infrastructure we rely upon for the quality of life we enjoy.

What new initiative helped your business grow in the past year?

Last year, Chazen opened our first office outside New York, in Nashville. The Nashville area is booming, and in just a short period of time, we have added new staff and expanded our client base. As we become more established in Nashville, we expect that market will drive significant revenue growth for us in the coming years.

The valley is constantly changing. What best practice would you share to make the most of that evolution?

The valley’s population is aging. We need to do more to keep our young people here as well as attract them from outside the area. The city of Beacon has been particularly successful in attracting younger folks, especially from New York City. We need to do a better job marketing ourselves as a region, as this model can be extended to other Hudson Valley cities and communities.

Briefly describe the Hudson Valley in five years, 2022.

We will see a more robust economy as our regional investments in economic development and workforce development continue to pay off. The population will start to grow again as more people see the Hudson Valley as a great place to live, work and raise a family.

In addition to "work," "play" counts, too. Something fun folks should know about you or your business?

First, Chazen is celebrating our 70th anniversary this year. You don’t stay in business that long without doing something right. Second, Chazen has an Employee Stock Ownership Plan – a rarity among professional services firms in New York – that allows all our employees to share in the financial success of the company.

Your advice on how to ensure a strong workforce?

Hire smart people, provide them with development opportunities, foster a thriving culture, provide work-life balance, allow them to give back to the community, and give them a stake in the company they work for. We do all of this at Chazen.

What was your first job?

I did a lot of side jobs to earn money from when I was around 10, including mowing lawns, babysitting, farm chores, whatever. My first “real” job was as a dishwasher in a restaurant. Working alongside the owners nearly every day, I learned a lot about hard work, responsibility, taking care of customers and running a business.

Why have you chosen to support Pattern for Progress?

Pattern’s mission to promote and support smart, sustainable economic growth and improve our quality of life benefits Hudson Valley residents, communities, businesses and not-for-profit organizations alike.