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55 YEARS

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Danbury leads Connecticut in economic results under the leadership of mayor Boughton

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The City of Danbury had another strong year in economic development in 2013. Overall, Danbury continues to lead the state of Connecticut in most vital economic statistics including unemployment rate, jobs created and retained, and retail sales tax revenue. A prominent regional economist recently said Danbury has "business policies that make sense, and smart government." Under the leadership of Mayor Mark Boughton, the city is pro-business and offers aggressive tax incentives and expedited permitting processes. Danbury also benefits from a AAA financial rating, low taxes, a good mix of retail, manufacturing and professional services, an excellent Chamber of Commerce, and proximity to New York City.

Danbury has had an estimated \$500 million in completed or ongoing construction projects over the past 3 years. These include a \$200 million expansion by the Western Connecticut Health Network (Danbury Hospital) that will have a new 300,000 s/f 12-story patient tower with expanded ER and critical care units, and several additional medical-surgical patient care floors. Western Connecticut State University has finished a new \$97 million Visual and Performing Arts Center, including a 350-seat concert hall, 350-seat theater, art gallery, recording studio and state-of-the-art rehearsal, classroom, and studio art facilities. Belimo Aircontrols is constructing a \$40 million 200,000 s/f building with plans to double its 250 member workforce. The U.S. Army Reserve has nearly completed a \$34 million facility that includes a 95,000 s/f facility on 17 acres that will provide a weekend training facility for 600-700 soldiers, employing 75 people. The Regional Hospice and Home Care of Western Connecticut is building a \$12.5 million hospice and office facility, one of only two resident hospices in Connecticut. The 12 patient suites will be private, and 35 new jobs will be created. All these facilities will open in 2014.

In other commercial activity, Boehringer-Ingelheim signed an 8 year renewal of its lease at Matrix Corporate Center, increasing its footprint from 230,000 to 327,000 s/f. Valued at \$90 million, it was the largest commercial real estate transaction in the region last year, with 900 jobs retained. Danbury Sports Dome, a 95 foot high air-supported dome with 120,000 s/f of floor space for indoor sports training, also opened.

A number of companies have started or expanded operations in Danbury. Pitney Bowes is bringing another 100-200 jobs to its Global Technology Center in Danbury. NewOak Capital of New York City announced their expansion into Connecticut with a long-term lease at Matrix Corporate Center. The company will invest \$16 million in a new division, creating 100 new financial service jobs. (Notably, most of the jobs will be for younger employees, including recent college graduates.) Macromark, a direct marketing company, is also moving to Matrix from Putnam County NY, bringing 45 jobs. Perosphere, a new pharmaceutical company, is currently building a new \$3 million, 16,000 s/f R&D/manufacturing facility that will employ 25-50 people to start.

Danbury is also making significant progress in the revitalization of CityCenter, the downtown business district. Greystar, a national developer, recently announced plans to invest \$70 million to construct a 375-unit market-rate apartment complex in downtown Danbury. The project, a cornerstone of downtown revitalization, will bring several hundred new residents to CityCenter and contribute significantly to additional investment in the area.

As part of an effort to become "the technology hub of Western Connecticut," the city invested \$600,000 to refurbish space at the Danbury Library for the new Danbury Innovation Center. The DIC will house the Danbury Hackerspace and SCORE business counselors and will foster entrepreneurship and corroboration, especially in the technology community. Long term, a technology incubator is planned. The city also produced the first annual Mad Hackers (www.madhackers.com) event and plans to grow it into the largest technology festival in Western Connecticut. Additionally, several recommendations from a three year downtown task force study have been implemented, including ordinances for entertainment licenses, reduced permitting fees and the formation of a Main Street Partnership to focus on downtown growth and development.

In residential, Toll Brothers continues work on a 244 acre residential project which was begun in 2007, with 1,080 units planned over six phases. The entire project will take another 10 years. BLT is developing 470 residential units nearby, and has plans for a potential 600,000 s/f commercial building in the same area.

In retail, Danbury Fair Mall and its tenants have invested an estimated \$180 million in recent years for renovations, upgrades and provisioning. Sales per s/f remain among the highest nationwide for a covered mall. Additionally, the 81,000 s/f Shops at Marcus Dairy, with anchor tenant Whole Foods, opened last year.

In infrastructure, state projects for major Danbury retail areas at Interstate 84 Exit 6/North St. and Exit 8/Newtown Rd. have been approved and funded, with construction in 2015/2016.

Finally, after a three year process, a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) was developed for Western Connecticut. The CEDS is an important step for the region, and for Danbury, in terms of future state and federal funding and development opportunities. It will enable us to compete even more effectively in the years to come.

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