

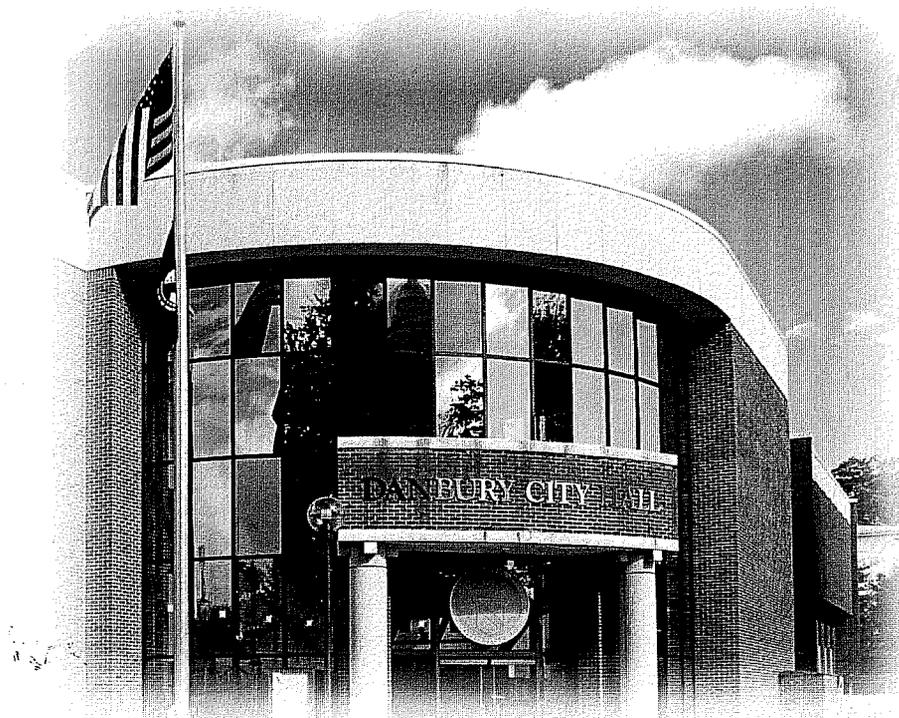
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# 2008-2009 ADOPTED BUDGET

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**MARK D. BOUGHTON, MAYOR**

**CITY OF DANBURY  
CONNECTICUT**

## A BRIEF HISTORY OF DANBURY

“Danbury’s location has been the key to its success.” This statement remains as true today as it was when Danbury served as a supply center during the American Revolution. The first residents were eight families who moved to Danbury from the Norwalk and Stamford areas in 1685. Trade flourished between Danbury and the coastal towns. As Danbury grew, local farmers were unable to supply all of the goods required by its residents, which early on established a need for a turnpike. Later, as farms were being established in outlying areas, paths and trails branched out from the original main street of the town. Eventually, Danbury became a hub for travel and business, being equidistant from New York and Hartford, and at the intersection of the north-south route from Litchfield County to Long Island Sound.

Originally a farming community in the late 1700’s, Danbury acquired the nickname: “The Hat City” (but was also known as the Hat City of the World) because of its hat manufacturing industry, which began during the early 1800’s and lasted up until the 1980’s. In its most prosperous days, it is estimated that the City’s hatting industry produced over 5,000,000 hats per year. Most of the factories were located along the banks of the Still River, which was an important part of the hat manufacturing success since large quantities of water were needed for the process. A general economic slowdown in the 1890’s precipitated a gradual decline in the hatting industry. However, the industry was somewhat revived by orders from the federal government during World War I and the fashion trends of the 1920’s. The Great Depression was the beginning of the final decline of the hat industry.

As new businesses and manufacturing shops developed in the center of town, they became distinct from the rural community, and Main Street and the surrounding area were granted borough privileges in 1822. Just prior to World War I, most of the growth was in the central business district, while the town remained rural and agricultural. With the introduction of the automobile, improvements were made to main highways and new State routes were constructed. The new roadsides attracted additional business: gasoline stations, repair garages, produce stands, refreshment stands, just to name a few. In the 1920’s and 1930’s, farming declined and the rural areas saw many changes: roads were paved, city people began to build homes in the countryside, and the Wooster School was established. The automobile also gave individuals the option to travel outside of the central business district, and new shopping centers and smaller businesses were developed outside of town. Danbury was incorporated on April 19, 1889, but it was not until 1965 that the Town of Danbury and the City of Danbury merged into what is today’s City of Danbury.

Population in Danbury steadily grew from its first settlement, though the town experienced a decline prior to World War I. Population began to increase again in the 1920’s, jobs increased, and Danbury retained its notoriety as a regional trading center. Candlewood Lake was also created during this decade, which eventually led to the development of homes, seasonal cottages and farms. Lake front acreage was highly sought after by speculators and developers, and subsequently many lakefront communities were established. In 1928, several local aviators purchased land near what is now the Danbury Fair Mall and leased the property to the town for an airport.

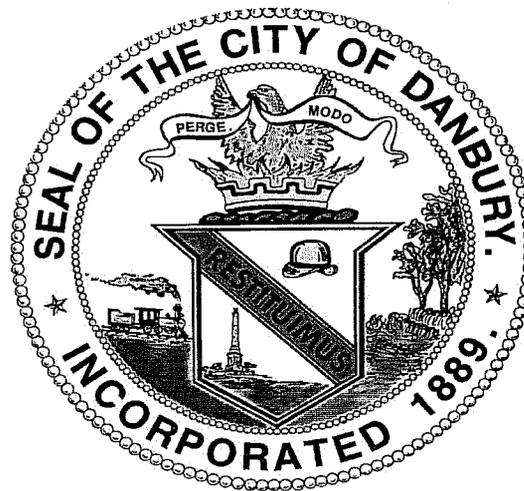
After World War II, Danbury experienced a major housing boom. In two decades, the population increased by 67%. According to the Housatonic Valley Council of Elected Officials, “The boom in residential growth reflected not only the outward expansion of the New York metropolitan area and easy accessibility of the Danbury area for commuting to other centers, but also a significant turnaround in Danbury’s economy.”

From 1756, when the population of Danbury was 1,527, the City's population has grown rapidly to what is now estimated to be 79,285. In 1910, it was estimated that 25% of the population of Danbury was foreign born. According to the 2000 census, the racial makeup of the population was 75.96% White, 15.75% Hispanic or Latino, 6.76% African American, 6.45% Asian, .29% Native American, .03% Pacific Islander, with the remainder from other races.

In the ten-year period between the 1990 census and the 2000 census, the population increased by 14% (state population increased by 3.6%). In today's Danbury, the City must increase and improve its municipal services as more homes, condominiums, and apartment buildings are constructed to meet the increase in population and the growth in economic development.

### Seal of Danbury

"We have Restored" and "Let Us Go Forward" are the mottoes on the official Seal of Danbury. "We have Restored" is the central motto and appears on the red diagonal band across the shield. The second motto appears in the beak of the phoenix rising from the fiery crown at the top of the shield. The seal also depicts: Establishment of the railroad in 1852, the hatting industry (symbolized by the derby hat), Wooster Monument, a reference to the British burning of Danbury in 1777, water symbolizing the flood of 1869 caused by a break in the Kohanza Reservoir dam, and the elm trees signifying Elmwood Park.



SOURCES: Images of America, Danbury, Danbury Museum and Historical Society, wikipedia website - history of Danbury, HVCEO website, "Changing Land Use in Danbury, Connecticut", and looking for adventure website, "History of Danbury, Connecticut."



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This award is valid for a period of one year only. We believe our current budget continues to conform to program requirements, and we are submitting it to GFOA to determine its eligibility for another award.