

State of the City - 2019
Mayor Benjamin Blake

Everyone who lives in Milford or who has attended the DMBA's Pirate's Day is familiar with the lore of Captain Kidd's hidden treasure.

As legend has it, Captain William Kidd sailed into Milford from New York in 1699, he walked into town in a bold and uncivilized manner, grabbed a young Milford woman named Patience Tuttle by the waist and he kissed her.

The story further suggests that he left a stash of buried plunder behind before sailing to Boston to face piracy charges.

Unfortunately for the captain, he was shipped off to England where he was tried and hanged for piracy in 1701, and the exact location of the pirate booty has remained a mystery ever since.

Treasure hunters have searched the shores of Milford for the hidden fortune until now – but the secret is finally out and the cherished prize that Captain Kidd discovered more than 300 years ago has been revealed to the world.

Over the last few months, newspapers, magazines and preeminent news organizations have published articles and exposés, which uncover the location of this most closely-guarded treasure - not a chest that is full of diamonds and gold, but the extraordinarily rich and vibrant community that is Milford.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I'm here to tell you that the State of our fine City is ship shape, pieces of eight.

But that be my job. I'm Milford's advocate-in-chief - it's my responsibility to zealously promote the Small City with a Big Heart with all me hearty of hearts.

So, instead of simply accepting my word for it, aye be going to spend me time today reading off the headlines from the last few months and I'm going to let you determine for yourself the State of arrr fine City.

So here's all the news that's fit to print as well as a few other Black Pearls of wisdom:

An April 25th Bloomberg News' article "Where US Millennials Are Moving Most" reports that "Younger Americans voting with their feet are most heavily favoring moves to Milford" while The New York Times May 29th piece entitled "Milford, Conn.: A Pretty New England City That's 'Just Big Enough'" explains how "Milford is especially appealing to second-home buyers, retirees and empty-nesters."

A separate New York Times Travel story from July 10th highlights Milford as a road-tested, summer day trip for "Buttery lobster rolls, a not-so-crowded beach and a remote promise of finding a pirate's buried treasure," which makes sense in light of the poll released on July 3rd which voted Milford's Walnut Beach as News 12 viewers #1 favorite Road Trip.

On July 5th Wallethub named Milford to its 2019's best beach towns to live in, while Connecticut Magazine's June 24th write-up countered with "Milford's Many Charms Make It More Than Just a Beach Town" and detailed "why it's such a wonderful place to live, and a great place to spend a spectacular Saturday. Walking on the beach, appreciating nature and history, eating great food, enjoying a drink in a bar full of regulars — if it's not home to you, it can start to feel that way in no time."

So let me clear the arrr and point out that while the April 4th SafeHome.org report ranks Milford as one of the safest cities to raise a child – and, U.S. News & World Report lists Foran and Law amongst the nation's Best High Schools for 2019, it was Homesnacks' May 19th evaluation that named Milford the #1 place to live in Connecticut based on low crime and solid schools, as well as factors such as low unemployment and an abundance of things to do.

Yo, ho ho and a bottle of rum – the ayes have it and Milford is kicking boat!

True to the headline hype, the wind is at our back and the state of our city is stronger than ever.

On the education front, we can take great pride in the success of our schools. With new initiatives like 1 to 1 Chrome Books for students across the district, a civic and global engagement pathway in our high school curriculum, sports clinics for middle school students, and the introduction of world languages at the elementary level, our system continues to excel as we teach and develop our youngest citizens.

Speaking of young Milford citizens, 41 years ago when I came into the world, my port of entry was the delivery room at Milford Hospital – and ever since, I’ve harbored strong feelings for my place of birth.

In June, Milford Hospital formally tied the knot with Bridgeport Hospital-Yale New Haven Health.

This merger is a sea change for health care in the community as it brings state of the art resources and exceptional clinical partnerships to the city.

I’d like to thank Milford Hospital interim CEO Mark Tony, and Milford Hospital’s Board of Directors, for captaining this important transition.

And of course, the tremendous medical professionals and staff of Milford Hospital whose longstanding legacy of caring steadied the ship and made it all happen.

Also important to the wellness of the community are the available opportunities for healthy activities.

So, avast ye mateys, it’s been all hands on deck as we’ve prioritized new health and recreational amenities all over town - new playgrounds, beachside bathrooms, more miles of walkable sidewalks, rehabbed tennis and basketball courts, and revamped ball fields.

With new and improved facilities as far as the eye can see, our Public Works crew has been particularly focused on developing the greater-Eisenhower Park corridor into a world class recreation hub for all our residents to enjoy.

Last summer we completed projects like the splash pad and pickle ball courts, and we've just finished up a series of new upgrades:

1. New lights, as well as field and parking improvements were added to the softball complex at Foote field.
2. We enlarged the dog park on the West River side of Eisenhower Park and developed it into the "Augusta National" of canine recreation.

Also along West River, we're in the process of re-grading and beautifying the parking lot and entrance to the 100 acre Solomon Woods hiking trails for all those who prefer a short walk through a wooded path to a long walk off a short plank.

Another ongoing open space project focusing on access to nature is the reconstructed 1,100 foot boardwalk across the 41 acre Beaver Brook trail which had burnt down several years back but is now ready to hike.

Back on the North Street side of Eisenhower Park, we're in the process of developing the Platt Orchard by converting the rustic barns and farmhouse into arts and event space.

Within the epicenter of Eisenhower Park, one of our local Eagle Scout candidates, Marco Buschauer, is working with his troop and the Milford Public Library to construct a Story Walk trail.

But for those swashbuckling readers looking for stories without the walking, the Milford Public Library will be expanding its programming space in the Children's Department and constructing new conference rooms for its crew of devoted and grateful patrons.

Ladies and Gentlemen, we're able to make these investments in our public infrastructure and add new recreational amenities because the wind is at our back and because of our solid financial position as a city.

Milford maintains a AAA bond rating – the highest credit score a city can receive. We've earned this evaluation by battening down the hatches and streamlining the way arrr government operates in order to make things more efficient and effective than ever before.

And that's paid off with huge dividends as Milford is in the middle of an enormous economic expansion as a tidal wave of new businesses sail into town. Just this past year, 465 new businesses have made Milford their home port.

Obviously, that's great for our tax base –Milford has the largest Grand List in New Haven County and one of the largest in the State – the growth has allowed us to accomplish much for the community.

And through blood, sweat and privateers, the City of Milford has taken out its cutlass to cut taxes 4 consecutive years in a row.

No other town or city in the state can boast back to back to back to back tax cuts – these tax decreases arrr unprecedented.

Shiver me timbers, I could go on for some time and talk about the many exciting things that make Milford a whale of good time - our farmers markets, our craft breweries, the piano on the green, the Chamber's Friday night concerts, Walnut Beach's Sunday concerts, and all the other examples of groups and individuals who bring jolly roger good times, energy, culture, and caring to our community.

What's quite clear is that we are running a tight ship that's perfectly positioned to meet any challenge or opportunity which may arise on the high seas.

We are an unsinkable, boat-iful city with lots of charm and we will continue to seas every opportunity to make Milford even better.

So with that, I will thank you for your time and ask that you raise your glasses for a final pirate toast: *Here's to all you Milford pirates who bring our community pride, may your sails remain full with a favorable tide.*