

# Danversbank

## Offering a Portfolio of Services Ideally Suited to the Condominium Industry

by Pamela Schweppe

**T**here are some things you can find at any bank: loans, checking and savings accounts, deposit insurance, and so on. But there's one thing that's all too rare: a bank that treats you as a person instead of a number.

One such bank is Danversbank, which, with 25 branch offices, is the neighborhood bank not only in its Danvers, Mass., headquarters area, but also throughout the entire greater Boston area. And while this local focus is key to the bank's philosophy, the people who make the bank what it is are proud to be able to deliver products and services that are competitive with the big national brands.

"The make-up of the bank is more reflective of a larger regional commercial bank rather than a local community bank," says Philip D. Peters, senior vice president for treasury management services. The transition from a mutual bank to a commercial bank dates to the mid-1980s, when a decision was made to develop a more balanced portfolio of the commercial and industrial (C&I) loans, real estate loans and consumer loans.

Along with this strategy of diversifying the bank's portfolio has come an enhanced focus on serving the condominium community.

### Experience Property Managers Can Bank On

Serving associations and property managers is nothing new for the Danversbank team. The bank has put a seasoned team in place to serve the particular needs of the condominium industry.

"It's very important that association deposits stay insured," says Gabrielle A. Piasio, assistant vice president of treasury management business development. That can become complicated, however, because FDIC (Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation) insurance is limited to \$250,000, causing managers to shift funds among several different banks in order to keep them protected under that cap.

Danversbank, on the other hand, also offers DIF (Depositors Insurance Fund) protection — something not every bank is eligible to offer. Many property management companies manage dozens of associations, Piasio points out. Because DIF insurance has no limit, "It saves managers and accountants a lot of time on bookkeeping and reconciliation, because they can keep all deposits in one bank," she says. She adds that, according to the DIF website ([www.difxs.com](http://www.difxs.com)), "No depositor has ever lost a penny in a bank insured by both the FDIC and the DIF."

Ann Mulry Shaw, vice president of the corporate banking group, adds that Danversbank "provides loans with competitive pricing and flexible terms and options, depending on the client's needs. We make the application and closing process as easy as we possibly can."

Even beyond that, she says, the management team offers a "consistent, steady" approach to trustees and property managers — as well as the assurance that a bank with a 207-year history will stand ready to serve them over the long term. "We can give them one-stop banking for capital management, funding, accounting, accounts management and disbursements," adds Peters.

### Leveraging a Range of Products and Technology

One way Danversbank can offer such a range of services is through its commitment to technology. A range of treasury management services are offered — all designed to integrate smoothly into a busy property manager's workflow. "We want property managers to be able to focus on their business, rather than their treasury management service," explains Peters. "At Danversbank, we never set out to reinvent ourselves. We simply leverage the latest technologies — and avail ourselves of common-sense opportunities."

Among the products offered are lock-box processing, Snapdeposit, ECorp online for ACH transaction processing and escrow accounts. Snapdeposit, for example, allows managers to make deposits without physically taking them to the bank, allowing faster access to the funds and later cut-off times. "Not all banks offer this kind of automated service," says Piasio.

There are times when paperwork is necessary, however — and that's another instance when having a neighborhood-style bank helps. Just ask Kathy DuBose, senior financial analyst for American Properties Team, a residential-association management firm based in Woburn, Mass. DuBose found that passage of the USA PATRIOT Act in 2001 posed a special burden on association trustees, who must be the signers on reserve accounts. Under the new law, trustees are required to go into the bank to sign the necessary paperwork. "Trustees are volunteers," DuBose points out. "That's a big imposition."

Once she found Danversbank, however, “things have been great,” she says. Her liaison at the bank, David Fama, even picks up the paperwork and attends meetings when needed in order to obtain the trustees’ signatures. “We’re so happy,” she declares. “It makes the whole process so much easier.”

### **A Relationship-Driven Bank**

That personal touch is an important aspect of what sets Danversbank apart. “Our motto is to deliver exceptional service to employees, customers and the community,” Piasio says. Adds Shaw, “We emphasize relationship, as well as pricing and convenience. We become your banker — it’s a personal relationship.”

It’s a philosophy that’s evident right from a phone call. “You can call and talk to a human being without having to press 32 buttons,” as Peters puts it. “While many of our products are automated, our service is not.”

Another aspect of Danversbank’s focus on service is responsiveness to customers’ needs — something that’s greatly appreciated by Bill Grant, CFO of Cummings

Properties, a real estate development, property management and construction firm based in Woburn, Mass. “We chose Danversbank seven or eight years ago because of the convenience of their branch locations,” he says. “We’ve stayed because the service is outstanding.” He adds that, “When something occurs that you can’t plan for, they’ll do whatever it takes to get the job done. And people answer the phone when you call them.”

Grant and DuBose both expressed appreciation for the fact that they have

a single contact at the bank — someone they can count on to be around for the long haul. “Everyone loves working here,” says Peters. “A lot of people come here from larger banks because they want to recapture what was fun about banking before it got so big.”

The bank also maintains its connection to the neighborhood through the Danversbank Charitable Foundation, which channeled \$430,000 in grant money back into the community last year alone. Employees are further

saw record earnings for the first quarter of 2010. That’s not to say that Danversbank was immune to the struggling economy. Management did make wise decisions, however, such as not engaging in subprime lending and also taking a conservative approach to credit. They also didn’t take any TARP (Troubled Asset Relief Program, a.k.a., “bailout”) money.

If loan customers were struggling, on the other hand, Danversbank worked with them to get through the rough spots. “As we’ve often found, when we do what’s best for our clients, we inevitably do what’s best for us,” Peters says, adding, “We owe the healthy status of our asset quality primarily to the skill and experience of our lending team.”

### **Strengthening Through Growth**

With the economic crisis now in the rearview mirror, Danversbank is looking forward to a period of organic growth — that is, expanding through investment of its own resources rather than acquisition. As it grows its retail presence, however, care will always be taken to ensure that personal service always trumps size.

“A lot of banks just shut down lending during the crisis, but we never did,” says Shaw. “We are well capitalized and work with our customers. Clients expect their banker to be responsive and provide knowledgeable solutions and ideas for their lending needs.” That’s exactly the kind of thinking you’d expect from a bank that considers its customers people, not numbers.

*For more information about Danversbank, call (800) 771-8200 or visit [www.danversbank.com](http://www.danversbank.com).*



Members of the Treasury Management Services Department stand ready to support associations and property managers. Shown left to right: Jonathan Gilbert, Ann Mulry Shaw, Philip D. Peters, and Gabrielle A. Piasio.

encouraged to volunteer for community service with paid time off for that purpose as part of their benefits package.

### **An Investment in Stability**

As important to many customers as the bank’s service is its stability — evidenced not only by its long history, but also by its ability to remain strong and thriving through the economic turbulence of the past year and a half.

Today, the bank is well capitalized. In 2009, assets rose to \$2.5 billion — a 45 percent increase — and the bank