

# Public Safety

---

## Context

Public safety services are at a transition point. New Haven maintains top-notch staff and leadership across Fire, Police, and Public Safety Communications Departments. Yet distrust between public safety departments and the community remains a challenge, with high-profile incidents of excessive force on record and a new Civilian Review Board just installed. Once a model for community policing, in recent years New Haven focused less on community policing as an operating philosophy. This led to a weakening of the foundations of partnerships and collaborative problem-solving. Budgets are also squeezed, necessary capital projects are deferred, and morale is low. Overtime costs across the public safety departments remain unacceptably high. Recent efforts have begun to turn these trends around and must be strengthened via renewed focus on building community trust, delivering necessary services while reining in costs, supporting officers' wellness, and establishing a sustainable long-term capital plan.

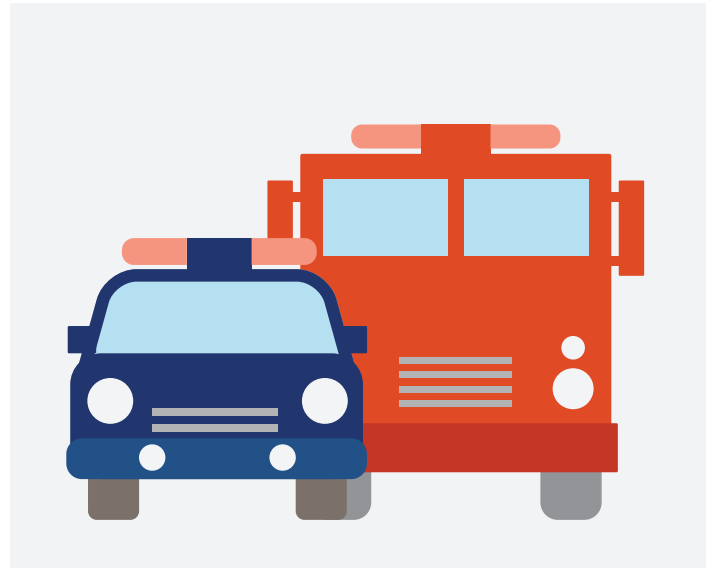
## First 100 Days

### Recommendation 1: Commit to reimagine community policing.

Announce public support for a revamped community policing strategy that emphasizes partnership, collaboration, and problem-solving as the basis for positive relationships between the police and the community.

### Recommendation 2: Support the Civilian Review Board.

In order to enhance trust between public safety departments and the community, as well as provide independent and prompt resolution of resident



complaints, provide all necessary support to the board from City, Police, and Fire Departments. This will facilitate proper oversight of officer misconduct.

### Recommendation 3: Establish a plan to reduce overtime costs.

While some overtime is unavoidable, current costs are excessive. Actions to take: Enforce existing policies on overtime disbursement and budget overtime by division within each department. Audit the distribution of overtime work, and improve the management of overtime that is governed by public safety contracts.

## Two Years

### Recommendation 1: Align community policing with community needs and expectations.

As initial steps, work with every member of the Police Department to create strong, effective partnerships with community residents, businesses, and stakeholders. Ensure that efforts are in place

to eliminate bias in policing and that officers treat all residents with respect, no matter their race, neighborhood, or economic bracket. Encourage upper command to be frequently visible in the community. Challenge officers to build, embrace, and strengthen relationships that are fundamental to their service as community guardians.

### **Recommendation 2: Develop mechanisms for ongoing police officer and firefighter input.**

The concerns of line officers and firefighters often do not reach department heads, leaving the heads without a full sense of the impact of City decisions. Actions to take: Establish advisory processes within the Police and Fire Departments so frontline insights are regularly shared with departmental leadership and the Mayor's Office.

### **Recommendation 3: Craft an officer morale, health, and wellness program.**

The overall wellness of public safety officers affects all community stakeholders. The phrase "I got your six" is among the most meaningful promises that members of the law enforcement community make to one another: the unconditional promise to have each other's back. That promise can be fulfilled with a holistic wellness program. Investigate where stressors exist, recognize and commend high-quality work, and develop recognition initiatives. New health and safety tools, as well as officer fitness initiatives, can help manage risks and increase officers' quality of life and overall safety.

### **Recommendation 4: Prevent excessive force.**

Assess Police and Fire policies, procedures, and practices for ways to better prevent misconduct. Implement measures to identify rogue officers before harm occurs. Recognize and reward officers for nonaggressive behavior under trying circumstances.

### **Recommendation 5: Ensure the effectiveness of the Civilian Review Board.**

Research best practices in other jurisdictions, such as investigation processes and discipline frameworks. Host listening sessions for police officers, Civilian Review Board members, City officials, and residents.

## **Longer Term**

### **Recommendation 1: Design an adequate and transparent capital budgeting process.**

The process for capital improvements is shrouded in mystery. One department official mentioned being unable to secure capital funding for equipment necessary to meet legal requirements. Others mentioned severe delays in maintenance and replacement of capital assets. The obvious step is to establish a clear and open capital budget process that takes into account large and small planned expenses and the replacement of equipment at the end of its life.

### **Recommendation 2: Cultivate future leadership by improving officer recruitment, training, and succession planning.**

Create pathways to employment as public safety officers, starting in high school, with efforts to increase the diversity of candidates and the number of candidates who are New Haven residents. Advocate for public safety staff development via high-quality, progressive training that follows best practices. Because routine and dangerous situations are more likely to be resolved positively if first responders and support personnel have received appropriate and consistent training, commit to strategic succession planning, to ensure continued effectiveness during personnel transitions. This includes supporting leadership practices that teach, promote, and reinforce critical core values and a positive organizational culture.

### **Recommendation 3: Better utilize technology, equipment, and social media.**

Through strategic use of technology, increase efficiency and define clearer channels of internal and external communication. Require the use of body-worn cameras by all officers. Implement anonymous text and voice tip lines, a mobile device application to disseminate information and receive tips, and an online reporting system for minor events. Exploit the analytic capabilities of predictive and data-mining software. Ensure up-to-date equipment distribution to improve policing and the safety of officers and residents.

### **Recommendation 4: Strengthen public safety support services at City Hall.**

Ensure that citywide services can consistently meet the needs of public safety departments. Provide adequate information technology backup and coverage during nights and weekends, with

staff who understand public safety technology. Accelerate hiring timelines, especially when positions are funded and exams completed. Facilitate arbitration when appropriate. In addition, tailor some citywide policies to public safety department needs—e.g., by exempting grants for public safety programs from citywide spending freezes. Flexibility should be established to tweak policies as needed.

### **Recommendation 5: Enhance facilities to better accommodate the community and employees and to reduce costs.**

Consider changes to staffing and operating hours at the Planning/Records Division and the police garage, among other sites, to improve efficiency and services.



Photo: Tom Breen