

Economic Development, Workforce, and Transportation

Context

In recent years, New Haven has undergone a dramatic private development boom, experienced job growth, and pioneered transportation investments. Although the City has made great strides, wealth inequality, underemployment, and traffic safety issues continue to hold New Haven back from being the “community where all can thrive” envisioned by Mayor Elicker. New Haven also faces the challenge of \$6.6 billion in untaxed property owned by Yale and Yale New Haven Hospital. Going forward, New Haven’s residents, institutions, businesses, and other stakeholders need to strive to grow together for the benefit of all. To help accomplish this, the administration can implement a new economic development strategy that builds on all its assets, including the entrepreneurial potential of its residents, the enduring strength and proud spirit of its neighborhoods, and the world-class strength of its educational, biomedical research, and healthcare institutions. Through a united strategy for truly inclusive economic resilience and growth, New Haven can foster the kind of development capable of creating good jobs that translate into meaningful future opportunities for local residents and encourage the Grand List growth necessary for the longer-term fiscal stability of the municipal government. The administration’s guiding principle in this area should be inclusive growth. It should prioritize community planning and development that is resident-led and invests in the City’s most vulnerable populations through skills training, educational opportunities, and access to municipal resources.



First 100 Days

Recommendation 1: Announce an Inclusive Growth Initiative.

As soon as possible, initiate a community-led plan for shared economic growth. Foundational to this effort is a plan to close the revenue gap with Yale and Yale New Haven Hospital (see Budget and Finance recommendations). The process should include residents, institutions, businesses, and community organizations—everyone invested in the economic success of the City and its residents. The single most important thing the City can do for economic development is create a common, unifying narrative that residents and institutions can come together to plan and work together to achieve. The plan should specify what sectors the growth efforts should focus on, and it should define goals, including what a “good job” entails, how institutions can help provide good jobs for City

residents, how to facilitate tangible opportunities for certain vulnerable (e.g., formerly incarcerated) and underrepresented (e.g., persons with disabilities) groups, how to grow green jobs, and how to ensure that New Haven contractors are preferred for construction work. Further, the initiative should create a dialogue on how the educational resources in the region can support access to new growth sectors, and it should acknowledge structural barriers that prevent residents from taking advantage of opportunities. Central to this initiative is appointing a permanent Economic Development Administrator to reimagine the Economic Development Administration around principles of “Community Planning and Development”—principles that encourage human flourishing as opposed to wealth extraction by elite groups. The long-term goal should be to produce and provide “Housing For All” with “All Hands On Deck” coordination among private, nonprofit, government, and amateur groups and individuals.

Recommendation 2: Set the goal to create a robust multimodal transportation network.

Declare the intent to transform the City transportation infrastructure through collaborative planning and new investment. The plan will incorporate efforts to:

- Make all City streets Complete Streets—that is, safe for pedestrians, cyclists, motorists, and mobility-assistive devices;
- Encourage transit-oriented development along transit corridors and at major stops;
- Pursue coordination between all bus and shuttle transit systems in the region to create an efficient and attractive transportation alternative to driving;
- Seek green and sustainable transport options;
- Facilitate safe, convenient access to and from Union Station and Long Wharf via multiple transportation modes;

- Support faster service to and from New York along Metro-North;
- Expand service at Tweed Airport, with the goal of attending to neighborhood concerns and reducing airport reliance on municipal subsidies; and
- Encourage direct bus, shuttle, or rail service between New Haven and Bradley Airport.

Two Years

Recommendation 1: Orient the City toward inclusive growth and fiscal stability.

Engage stakeholders in a shared long-term plan to encourage inclusive growth. Besides closing the revenue gap with Yale and Yale New Haven Hospital, the administration should plan to:

- Support land use regulations, development policy, and housing programs to maximize participation in a “Housing For All” initiative;
- Promote the City’s existing zoning provisions, Citywide Tax Assessment Deferral Program, Home Repair Fund, and Tax Abatement Program to local residents and homeowners;
- Reevaluate the Tax Deferral Program based on leasing data from recent development projects;
- Prioritize the use of funds generated from the Tax Deferral Program for City residents’ projects;
- Work with Dwight, Edgewood, and West River residents and homeowners in preparation for the planned Neuroscience Center;
- Support a New Haven Community Land Bank and Trust;
- Adopt a Local Preservation Ordinance to prevent the unnecessary demolition of historic and potentially historic structures; and
- Task a Zoning Enforcement Officer with addressing issues involving non-owner-occupied residential property owners who use dwelling

units for short-term rentals, such as Airbnb, and support zoning amendments to allow homeowners to rent out vacant bedrooms as a way to benefit from the market for places for short-term stays.

Recommendation 2: Reestablish municipal government as a leader in exemplifying and promoting local hiring and living wages.

Announce a relaunch of the City as an anchor employer committed to New Haven hiring. Embrace the principle that “One Job Should Be Enough,” and expect all employers to provide living wages, benefits, and a fair process for workers who want to unionize. Establish a shared measure of what constitutes a good job. Evaluate the supply and capacity of the area’s current construction training and pipeline programs by trade, facilitate collaboration among programs to maximize utilization and benefit to residents, and explore mechanisms to infuse private development deals with local hiring clauses. Promote the City’s pipelines to every employer, and share resources for identifying qualified candidates for open positions. Ensure that those tasked with serving vulnerable and underrepresented communities are engaged in this effort. Facilitate collaboration between employers and pipeline organizations that identify and support job candidates. Engage pipeline and training organizations in the early stages of project development and land disposition agreements.

Recommendation 3: Begin work on a comprehensive multimodal transportation network plan.

Engage representatives from the Engineering, Transportation, City Plan, Police, and Public Works Departments, the community, and the Board of Alders in plan development. Coordinate routine street maintenance with planning efforts. As an initial focus, the administration can:

- Deploy and test temporary traffic-calming devices like curb extensions, intersection bump-outs, and neckdowns with paint, delineator tubes, and planters;
- Prioritize transportation planning on Whalley Avenue, Whitney Avenue, State Street, and Route 34;
- Engage the Connecticut Department of Transportation to make Complete Streets investments on state roads like Route 80 and Route 10;
- Promote Yale University’s free shuttle service to non-Yale affiliates;
- Encourage coordination of bus and shuttle transit services among CTtransit, Yale University, the Greater New Haven Transit District, and major employers that operate private shuttles;
- Envision state-owned land adjacent to major transit facilities as opportunities for transit-oriented development and reduction of local congestion and pollution;
- Seek a more favorable Bike Share program agreement to better attract users; and
- Explore creating a Tweed Airport Impact Zone to make investments in Complete Streets, house soundproofing, noise barriers, and other community benefits.

Longer Term

Recommendation 1: Become a city where development is driven by residents.

Restructure the Economic Development Administration to focus on community planning and development. Seek to address the underlying causes of property abandonment, vacancy, neglect, absenteeism, and demolition of structures. Prioritize opportunities to develop vibrant neighborhood commercial corridors, with attention to vacancies. Diversify the local economy beyond education, health services, and biomedical

research, fields that may change in the future. Provide incentives for City employees to live in New Haven by developing a home ownership program accessible to employees at all pay levels.

Recommendation 2: Invest in an inclusive entrepreneurship strategy with a focus on local entrepreneurs.

As a first step, streamline how entrepreneurs interact with City programs, policies, and requirements by revising the City website and processes for entrepreneurs to create a seamless user experience for navigating City requirements. Provide regular office hours when entrepreneurs can schedule one-on-one time for tailored support by phone or in person. To understand what existing businesses need, hold a business census to include a public survey and “door-to-door” outreach. In later steps:

- Partner with Yale and other universities and colleges to leverage funding, mentorship, space, and other supports for entrepreneurs;
- Establish a structured, cohort-based entrepreneurship program that deeply supports new entrepreneurs with the skills, resources, and confidence to build their businesses;
- Support existing businesses with critical marketing and storefront support, especially immigrant-, Latinx-, and black-owned businesses;
- Establish a local business agreement between Yale and New Haven that includes an annual commitment to source local products, a commitment from Yale University Properties to offer affordable storefront space, and an impact loan fund for small businesses and entrepreneurs rooted in the community;
- Invest in new ownership models by creating cooperative support and education programs;
- Reduce the cost of electricity for small businesses by exploring a partnership with United Illuminating and advocating for state legislation to allow Community Choice

Aggregation—that is, shared electricity-buying power through an aggregator to increase options and reduce costs; and

- Support an accessible biotech industry through investment in K-12 and college-level science education and workforce development programs to ensure that New Haven residents can participate in and be the primary beneficiaries of economic benefits associated with the biotech industry.

Recommendation 3: Strive to become a multimodal City.

A multimodal New Haven will have Complete Streets that are safe and convenient for all transportation modes and users of all abilities; downtown streets designed for local trips at off-peak times, not just rush-hour commuting; coordinated planning for street maintenance and multimodal transportation investments; access to a robust bus transit system consolidated from many previously uncoordinated services; development that encourages transit use and supports improvements to transit service; and connectedness within the City, between the City and its regional neighbors, and beyond the region to the wider world.



Photo: Tom Breen