



MAYOR JUSTIN M. ELICKER
CITY OF NEW HAVEN

March 1, 2024

My fellow residents,

In accordance with our City Charter, I'm pleased to submit my proposed budget for the Fiscal Year 2024-25.

The proposed **\$680.4 million budget** represents an increase of 2.66 percent, or \$17.7 million, from the previous year's budget, below the current rate of inflation.

It's an exciting time in the Elm City. New Haven is a growing city, with an estimated population of nearly 139,000 residents and counting. Since 2020, we've had a population growth rate of approximately 1.8 percent per year, as New Haven is a place where more and more people want to continue to live, relocate to, work, visit, start a business, and raise a family. Importantly, as we grow, we're committed to growing inclusively, equitably, and sustainably. This budget seeks to help ensure just that.

To this end, my budget proposes to continue to strengthen the city services and programs that are helping to ensure we have a growing local economy, our residents have access and pathways to good paying jobs, our children receive a high-quality education, our streets and neighborhoods are safe, our citizens enjoy a high-quality of life with great parks and great public transportation and commuting options, and our environment and climate are protected.

With a growing population, the need and demand for city services is also growing. To ensure we're maintaining a high-quality of life for all our residents, I am proposing the following for your and the Board of Alders' consideration:

- **Housing:** An increase in the number of housing code inspectors and housing staff (seven total positions) to help ensure our tenants (which represent over 70 percent of our city's population) are living in safe, healthy, and affordable housing. We currently have 13 housing code inspectors for an estimated 43,000 rental units. This averages out to about 3,300 units per inspector. We must increase the number of housing inspectors and staff so that we can get the job done for our residents. I'm also proposing to move the Livable City Initiative's (LCI) housing development work to a new Office of Housing and Community Development within the Economic Development Administration to better integrate our development and affordable housing initiatives. This will also allow LCI to focus exclusively on the important work of housing inspections, landlord accountability, and eliminating neighborhood blight.
- **Education:** An increase of \$5 million to New Haven Public Schools to support student learning, the retention and recruitment of a strong teaching workforce, and the expansion of a growing career pathways program. We also anticipate an additional \$4 million in state funds this year to support our schools as well.
- **Parks:** The separation of the Parks Department from the Department of Parks and Public Works so that the Parks Department stands alone to focus on all issues related to city parks. The new Parks Department will include a new district manager model similar to LCI's neighborhood specialist model and the New Haven Police Department's district manager model. The proposal divides the City into three parks districts, each with its own Parks District Manager, so that residents and community members will have an assigned Parks District Manager to their neighborhood that they can engage with on parks-related issues and concerns. Finally, this budget includes additional staff to improve our maintenance of athletic fields to ensure our youth have high quality spaces to play sports.

Every year as we put together the budget, we work hard to balance the services residents demand with our ability to pay for them. As you can imagine, these are difficult, but important choices. Fixed costs continue to rise as do our pension and debt payments because of choices that were made in the past. Finally, we have increased municipal salaries to stay competitive and attract and retain high-quality employees.

To meet all of these obligations and to ensure city services meet our residents' needs, I am proposing a 1.48 mill rate increase, increasing our mill rate from 37.20 to 38.68. The previous two years we've been able to lower our mill rate to ease the impact of rising property values. Also, our tax rate is still lower than many other Connecticut cities, including those of similar size (like Bridgeport, Hartford, and Waterbury) and those in the area (like Hamden and West Haven).

Finally, our budget is much more than numbers. It represents our values. I believe this budget is one that reflects our values, supports our growth, will help uplift more of our residents and will further strengthen our communities to create a city where New Haveners can thrive.

I look forward to engaging with you and the Board of Alders as we work together to finalize our city's budget and chart a path forward of inclusive growth, opportunity, and progress for all.

Always serving you,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Justin Elicker", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Justin Elicker
Mayor, City of New Haven