

New Haven Open Street Festival 2026

Location: Church Street, New Haven, CT

Time: Sundays | 1:00 PM – 6:00 PM

- August 9, 2026
- August 16, 2026
- August 23, 2026

Rain Date: August 30th

Presented by:

City of New Haven Economic Development Department

Event Overview

The New Haven Open Street Festival is a vibrant, family-friendly celebration that transforms Church Street into a car-free playground of creativity, culture, and community connection.

For three consecutive Sundays in August 2026, residents, students, and visitors will experience downtown New Haven in a new way — reimagined as a lively public gathering space filled with music, movement, art, sports, food, and community programming.

Timed to coincide with the return of college students and the back-to-school season, the festival will energize downtown businesses while creating a welcoming environment for families, students, and visitors.

The festival will highlight local talent, small businesses, artists, and community organizations, while encouraging residents and visitors to rediscover downtown New Haven as a vibrant destination.

Each weekend features a unique theme, while maintaining core activities that make the event engaging for all ages.

Core Festival Activations (Every Sunday)

Each Open Street event will feature consistent programming to create a lively and welcoming atmosphere.

Entertainment & Activities

- Live music
- DJ sets
- Community hosts / MCs
- Interactive street performances

Family & Kids Activities

- Bounce houses
- Arts & crafts stations
- Interactive game stations
- Chalk art and creative zones

Community Spaces

- Street picnic area
- Lawn games and relaxation zones
- Social seating areas for families and groups

Food & Vendors

- Local food trucks

Weekly Festival Themes

August 9th – Roller Skating Theme + BWS week opening

The opening weekend will include a vibrant roller skating experience paired with a Black Wall Street–inspired cultural celebration, officially kicking off Black Wall Street Week in New Haven.

Highlights

- Pop-up **roller skating rink experience** (all ages welcome)

Goal

Create a **powerful, high-visibility kickoff event** that anchors Black Wall Street Week while drawing strong attendance to the Open Street Festival. This activation is designed to be visually engaging, culturally meaningful, and highly shareable, attracting families, students, and young adults while building momentum for the following weekends.

August 16th – Bazaar Marketplace Theme Day

Downtown New Haven transforms into an open-air bazaar, showcasing the best of local vendors, makers, artisans, and small businesses. Church Street fills with curated market stalls, handmade goods, local food offerings, and one-of-a-kind finds — creating a shopping and discovery experience unlike anything else in the city.

August 23rd – Carnival + Basketball Tournament

The festival closes on its highest note yet, a full-scale carnival atmosphere on The New Haven Green paired with a competitive 3-on-3 basketball tournament that brings out the city's best ballers and biggest fans. Carnival games, street entertainers, and family activity zones fill the street with color and excitement, while the basketball court becomes the main stage for friendly but fierce competition. It's the perfect send-off for the summer — equal parts celebration and competition, drawing crowds of all ages for one last unforgettable Sunday on Church Street.

Marketing & Promotion Strategy

To ensure strong attendance each weekend, the festival will implement a multi-channel promotional strategy focused on reaching residents, students, and regional visitors.

Digital Marketing

- Targeted social media advertising campaigns
- Event promotion on Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok
- Weekly content highlighting performers, vendors, and activities
- Influencer partnerships with local creators and students
- Countdown and teaser videos leading up to each event

Content Creation

- Professional photo and video coverage
- Short promotional reels and recap videos
- Vendor and performer spotlights
- “What’s happening this weekend” content released weekly

Community Outreach

- Partnerships with downtown businesses and restaurants
- Flyers and posters distributed across downtown and campuses
- Cross-promotion with existing downtown events

Media & Public Relations

- Press outreach to local media outlets
- Listings on regional event calendars
- Collaboration with tourism and community organizations

On-Site Engagement

- Social media photo opportunities
- Festival signage and branded visuals
- Interactive activities that encourage sharing online

This strategy aims to build momentum each week and increase attendance as the festival progresses.

Staffing & Operations

To ensure safe and professional event operations each Sunday, staffing includes:

Event Operations

- Event hosts / MCs
- Production and technical crew
- Setup and breakdown staff
- Vendor coordination team

Public Safety

- Police presence for street closures and crowd safety

Logistics

- Equipment transportation
- Vendor setup coordination
- Site management and operations