NEWS

"The falling leaves drift by the window, the autumn leaves of red and gold"
AUTUMN LEAVES EVA CASSIDY AND NAT KING COLE

New Haven's lone data center has operated for years before moratorium

BY ISABELLE LING
CONTRIBUTING REPORTER

New Haven is moving to halt new data center development, but one facility has quietly operated in the heart of the Elm City for over a decade.

Last month, the Board of Alders unanimously passed a moratorium on the development of new data centers, citing concerns over the facilities' potential environmental and infrastructure impacts. On the sixth floor of a Meadow Street building, a data center run by telecommunications company Lumen Technologies has been operating since at least 2010.

Unlike the hyperscale data centers powering AI technology, however, Lumen's facility primarily serves as a hub for smaller companies' network connections and data traffic.

"Data centers can be just a server in a tiny server room at Yale, and can be those warehouses full of computers that are processing and storing a lot of data from many, many companies," Julián Posada, an American Studies professor and co-director of the certificate in Computing, Culture and Society, said in a video interview.

The company leases out a floor of the Gateway Center and operates a colocation data center facility — one that is shared by other companies and routes their data on to carriers, cloud providers and other destinations. These centers have existed since the early 2000s to provide backup data storage for servers beyond in-house facilities.

"They're our best tenant because there's nobody here, they don't bother me, and it's rare that there's a problem," Bob Avino, the building superintendent and property manager at Gateway Center, said, referring to Lumen.

Avino said that in the past, the New Haven data center stored information for companies including Dunkin' Donuts.

"It's just a floor with a lot of electrical equipment and storage batteries, and they're independent from the rest of the building," he said.

Lumen's New Haven data center operates at a much smaller scale than AI data centers, which are spurring a nationwide backlash. Lumen's data center uses traditional HVAC infrastructure without water to cool its servers, according to Data Center Map, a global directory.

Avino, who has been in his role since 2010, said that he hasn't seen any community backlash from this data center.

Lumen's facilities are different from larger data centers, according to Stephanie Meisse, the corporate communications director at Lumen.

"Our sites are secure network interconnection and colocation facilities—places where multiple networks and customers connect and exchange traffic," Meisse wrote in an email to the News.

Today's data centers are not entirely unlike computer infrastructure of decades past, Posada said, and computing has always had a physical presence.

Even as computers have grown more efficient, "our needs for data storage and processing have also increased, and that's why the physical presence of computers, computing and processing centers is increasing," Posada added.

Posada said he is less concerned about New Haven's lone data center than larger buildouts around the country. One data center that will soon come online in Northern Virginia has a capacity of up to 300 megawatts, for example. Lumen's data center has a capacity of 10 megawatts, per MLQ.ai, a tech analysis platform.



COURTESY OF RHYS ADAM

Amid a nationwide backlash against hyperscale facilities used for AI companies, New Haven's only data center has run quietly on the sixth floor of a Meadow Street building, providing backup storage for clients like Dunkin' Donuts for over a decade.

"We might be clumping many definitions and many uses and many types of outcomes together," Posada said.

He questioned what a New Haven data center could be used for.

"It could be used for the community, even, it could be running the data, the websites for New Haven," Posada said.

One of the first data centers in the world was the University of Pennsylvania's Electronic Numerical Integrator and Computer, built for the U.S. Army in 1946.

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Gun fires in Yale police officer's attempt to impede self-harm event

BY NORAH MCPARTLAND
STAFF REPORTER

A Yale police officer's gun went off on Wednesday morning as the officer attempted to stop a person from harming themself inside a car near Whitney Avenue.

The Yale Police Department responded to the incident, which took place behind an office building at 205 Whitney Ave., at approximately 9:21 a.m., Yale Head of Public Safety Duane Lovello wrote in a statement to the News. The individual, who was transported to Yale New Haven Hospital, was in critical condition with stab wounds but sustained no gunshot wounds, according to Mayor Justin Elicker.

"Upon arrival, a responding officer encountered an individual locked inside a vehicle who was attempting to harm themselves. In an effort to intercede, the officer broke the vehicle's window using a firearm that discharged," Lovello wrote.

Lovello wrote the person was not struck, and that the responding officer "immediately rendered medical aid for self-inflicted injuries once the individual was removed from the vehicle."

The injured individual was taken to the hospital and the officer is also undergoing medical evaluation, Lovello wrote. The Office of the State Inspector General will manage the investigation into the incident.

"Given that there was the use of deadly force by an officer, the inspector general by state law is required to take over the investigation, which they've done," Elicker said in a Wednesday phone interview.

The New Haven Police Department and Yale Police Department are supporting "whatever the Inspector General's office needs," Elicker said.

The Connecticut Office of Inspector General did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

According to Connecticut's use of force policy for police officers, "deadly force may not be used against any person who poses a threat only to themselves." The policy defines deadly force as "any force that is likely to cause serious injury or death."

Yale Public Safety did not clarify whether the officer intentionally discharged the firearm.

Elicker said he thinks information about the officers' use of force and its legality will emerge "once the investigation is much further down the road."

According to NHPD Public Information Officer Christian Bruckhart, city police went to the site of the incident to assist with traffic control. A Yale ALERT notification delivered at 9:21 a.m. said the area of Whitney Avenue between Sachem Street and Humphrey Street had been closed to traffic.

Elicker said he arrived at the scene of the incident "well after" it had occurred and said detectives had arrived by that point. A representative from the State's Attorney's office arrived about half an hour after him, Elicker said.

"Things felt very under control" at the scene, Elicker said.

An initial Yale ALERT notification at 9:10 a.m. stated that police were responding to an incident in the area of 205 Whitney Ave. A final update at 9:37 a.m. stated that there was no threat to the community at that time.

Yale Public Safety sent an all-clear update at 7:05 p.m. on Wednesday.

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NORAH MCPARTLAND / CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHER

While using his gun to break through a car window to prevent a person inside from harming themself, a Yale police officer's firearm discharged. The incident temporarily closed a segment of Whitney Avenue on Wednesday.

Connecticut citizens prepare proposal to alter state property tax system

BY ALEX HUNGS
CONTRIBUTING REPORTER

Ordinary Connecticut residents participating in the state's first-ever citizens' assembly came together for the group's final meeting last week, finishing a proposal to alter the state property tax system.

The Connecticut Citizens' Assembly on Property Taxes is made up of 100 randomly selected residents who are representative of key demographic criteria: party affiliation, gender, status as a homeowner or renter, age and race. The initiative's leaders — who bill the assembly as a jury for public policy — hope to engage those who would otherwise not be involved in policy-making. Several of the group's eight meetings, which began this summer, took place at Yale.

"My hope is, even if the politicians do nothing with their work, that over time, it drives change," Joseph DeLong, the executive director of the Connecticut Conference of Municipalities and a co-organizer of the assembly, said in a video interview. "Now we have 100 citizens from all demographics, all across the state, who have given up their summer to do this, who feel passionate about it, who understand it better than the average citizen does."

The citizens' assembly primarily focused on property taxes — an issue that has long defined Connecticut politics.

DeLong said organizers chose to center the group's work around property taxes because "the exercise is more valuable if they do something that has confounded elected policymakers for decades."

The citizens' assembly opted to require a two-thirds majority for passing resolutions and accepting a final proposal. Given such a high bar, DeLong said, he was surprised that the assembly was able to agree on anything.

"There's no way you're gonna get this diverse group of people to vote two-thirds on enough things to go into a report," DeLong said he recalled thinking. But, he said, "they did."

Hélène Landemore, a political science professor who helped facilitate a citizens' assembly in France in 2022 and whose research focuses on citizen governance — in which ordinary people direct public policy — also helped formulate this summer's assembly.

"I wanted to be involved to try something new," Landemore said in a phone interview, "because in fact, citizens' assemblies have been run all over the world, so we know they work."

Landemore added that the initiative could help stem political polarization.

"It's really also about trusting your neighbor — trusting your Republican neighbor when you're a Democrat, trusting your Democratic neighbor when you're a Republican," she said.

Shao Lee GRD '30, who works under Landemore, has been involved in surveying citizens who participated in the assembly.

Observing the group's deliberation, Lee said, he was struck by an emerging sense of civic comity.

"People start to realize, 'We are all in this together, we are the citizens,'" Lee said. "They wanted to come with their own unique solutions."

Landemore declined to discuss the results of the assembly, though she said participants did come to consensus on "a number of issues" and that the proposal created by the assembly will be released in the coming weeks.

Reflecting on the assembly, DeLong said he was impressed with participants' investment in the deliberative process.

He said he hoped participating citizens would go home with greater appreciation for the work of governing.

"I hope that it also helps citizens gain a higher level of respect for their elected leaders, and the challenges of which they go through and they do every day," he said. "One thing that they learned in this process is, this stuff isn't easy."

The first modern citizens' assembly took place in 2004 in British Columbia.

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MARTÍN PERALTA / HEAD PHOTOGRAPHY EDITOR

The group of 100 randomly selected state residents met eight times to create and pass a proposal to reform Connecticut property taxes. A Yale political science professor helped organize the gatherings, some of which took place on Yale's campus.