NEWS

"A great empire, like a great cake, is most easily diminished at the edges."
BENJAMIN FRANKLIN FOUNDING FATHER

City breaks ground on 'affordable' apartment complex in the Hill

BY EVELYN RONAN
CONTRIBUTING REPORTER

City and state officials gathered at a long-vacant Liberty Street brownfield site in the Hill to celebrate the Monday groundbreaking of a new housing development at the abandoned Electrix Illumination Factory.

Within 18 months, the new complex will stand one block from Union Station, offering apartments for working families, officials said. Mayor Justin Elicker praised the development for its environmentally sustainable and transit-oriented design.

"There's a lot of other vacant properties we're looking at. Hopefully, this is the start of a longer journey throughout the city," he said.

The project involves the redevelopment of the brownfield site into 150 "affordable" housing units for families earning between 30 percent and 80 percent of the area's median income, according to Seila Mosquera-Bruno, a Commissioner of the Connecticut Department of Housing. The project will be heated and cooled by geothermal energy, according to Elicker.

The development, led by Cortell Development Group and WBP Development LLC, is being financed through a partnership involving the Connecticut Department of Housing, the Connecticut Housing Finance Authority, the Department of Economic and Community Development's Brownfield Program and Bank of America, which is serving as both the project's equity investor and construction lender.

Last year, the city received a $995,600 Brownfield Grant from the state economic and community development department to fund the demolition and environmental cleanup of dilapidated industrial buildings on the Liberty Street site.

Nandini Natarajan, the CEO of the Connecticut Housing and Finance Authority, described new housing as essential for New Haven's continued development.

"People forget that housing and economic development are very closely linked," Natarajan said. "Providing this kind of housing is pivotal to the growth of our economy and the people who make it thrive."

Matt Pugliese, the deputy commissioner and chief investment officer at the state economic and community development department, said the Brownfield program helps cities reclaim blighted land.

"It's adding to the property value of the neighboring properties by cleaning up this blighted vacant property," Pugliese said. "It's remediating environmental health risks for neighbors in these communities."

Pugliese said that the state's Brownfield program is designed to leverage public funds to attract private investment.

"For every public dollar the state invests, we see almost twenty dollars in private investment for this project," he said, a "multiplier effect" that, in this case, helped unlock tens of millions in financing from private partners like Bank of America.



EVELYN RONAN / CONTRIBUTING REPORTER
Local leaders broke ground on a new 150-unit apartment complex project on Monday.

Bank of America provided $75 million in financing for the Liberty Street project, the officials said.

"Bank of America deserves more recognition for what they're doing here," Jonathan Cortell, the president of Cortell Group, said in acknowledgment of the bank's 15-year partnership with Connecticut's housing agencies.

In a press release, Lenny Speiller, Elicker's spokesperson, framed the project as part of New Haven's broader push to create 10,000 new housing units over the next decade and to foster more walkable, livable and economically vibrant neighborhoods across New Haven.

"We're not just constructing a building, we're laying the foundation for what's possible when an entire community comes together in service of a higher goal: housing for all," Elicker said on Monday.

The Liberty Housing Development is located at 10 Liberty St.

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DATA: City's voter turnout higher than in last municipal election

BY ELIJAH HUREWITZ-RAVITCH, AIDEN ZHOU AND VIA WANG
STAFF REPORTERS AND CONTRIBUTING REPORTER

On Tuesday, 14,895 New Haveners voted in the mayoral election, with 84.3 percent opting to reelect three-term incumbent Democrat Justin Elicker, according to data from the city's Registrar of Voters.

Across the city, total voter turnout rose to 26.1 percent from 24.5 percent in 2023.

Elicker won handily in almost all of the city's wards. His share of the vote was below 75 percent in just three — the Hill's Ward 3, where he won 72.8 percent, the Annex's Ward 17, where he won 64.4 percent, and East Shore's Ward 18, where he won 56.6 percent. Ward 18 saw a higher share of its residents vote for President Donald Trump last fall than any other ward.



LOGAN DINKINS / CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHER
Incumbent Mayor Justin Elicker won 84.3 percent of the vote in New Haven, as turnout rose slightly from 2023.

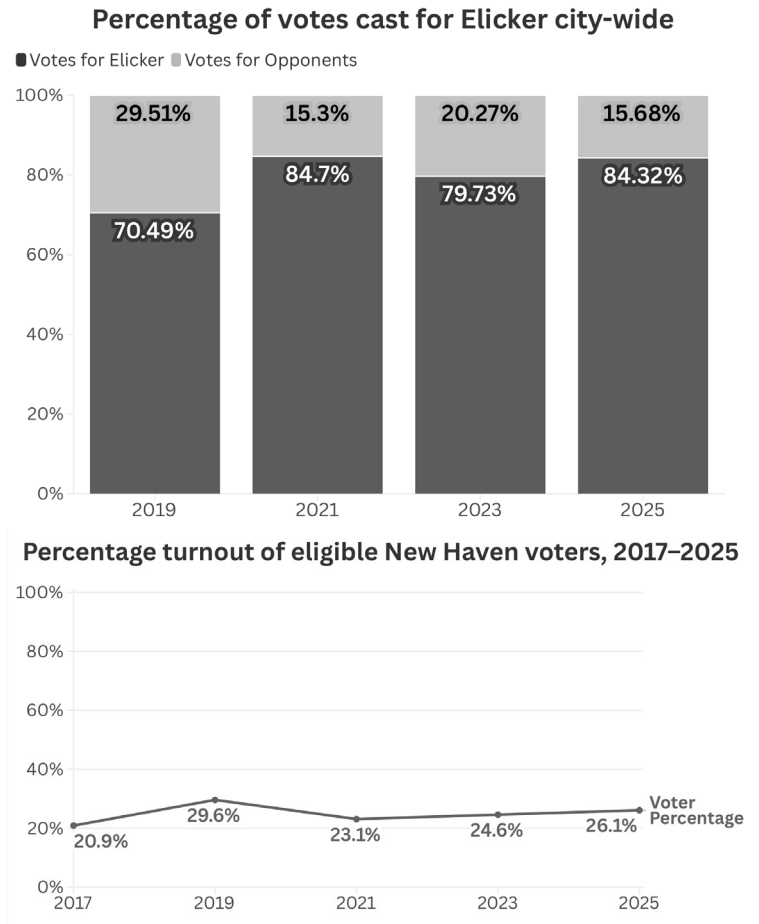
In a Tuesday night victory speech at Da Legna at Nolo, Elicker attributed the margin of his victory to his administration's focus on crime, affordable housing, climate change and his commitment to "fighting back to ensure that we embrace our values and push back on a Trump administration that is attacking the very core of what we stand for."

Elicker increased his vote share everywhere in New Haven except the Hill's Ward 3 — which was home to a competitive alder race this cycle marred by allegations of misconduct — and Fair Haven's Ward 15.

Vincent Mauro Jr., who chairs the city's Democratic Town Committee, said in an interview the night of the election that the mayor's win was "a testament to people feeling like, okay, we're still pushing in the right direction. Is everything perfect? No, absolutely not. But we keep trying."

Overall, Elicker's vote share was up slightly from 2023, when he faced Republican and Independent challenger Tom Goldenberg. Since he beat then-three-term incumbent Toni Harp in 2019, Elicker has won with comfortable margins.

Voter turnout — generally low in New Haven — surpassed 30 percent in six of the city's 30 wards. It was highest in West River's Ward 23, which is represented on the Board of Alders by the body's president.



GRAPHS AND MAPS BY VIA WANG

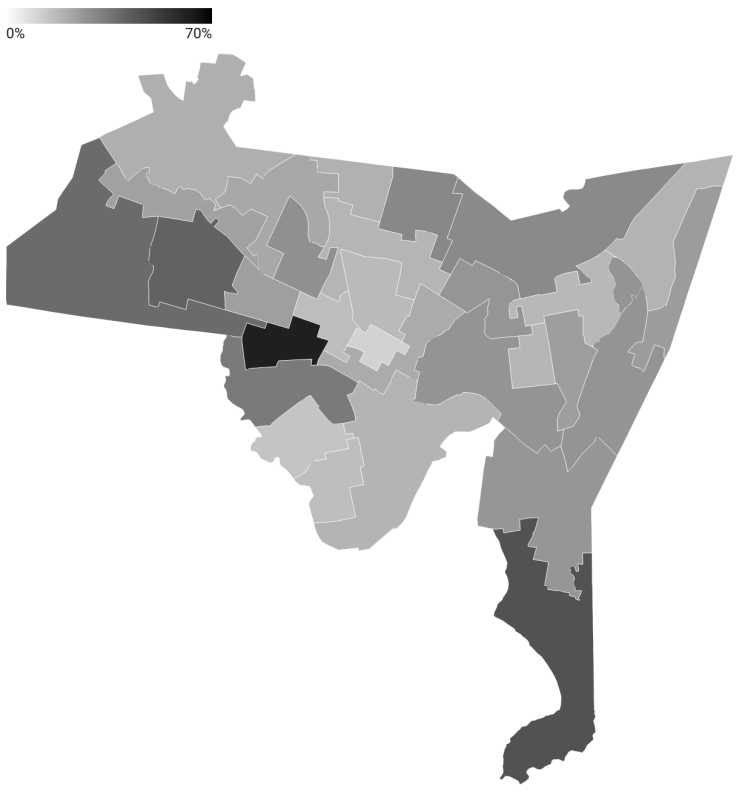
Turnout has risen slowly since 2021. This cycle, it was still down from 2019, when Elicker challenged Harp.

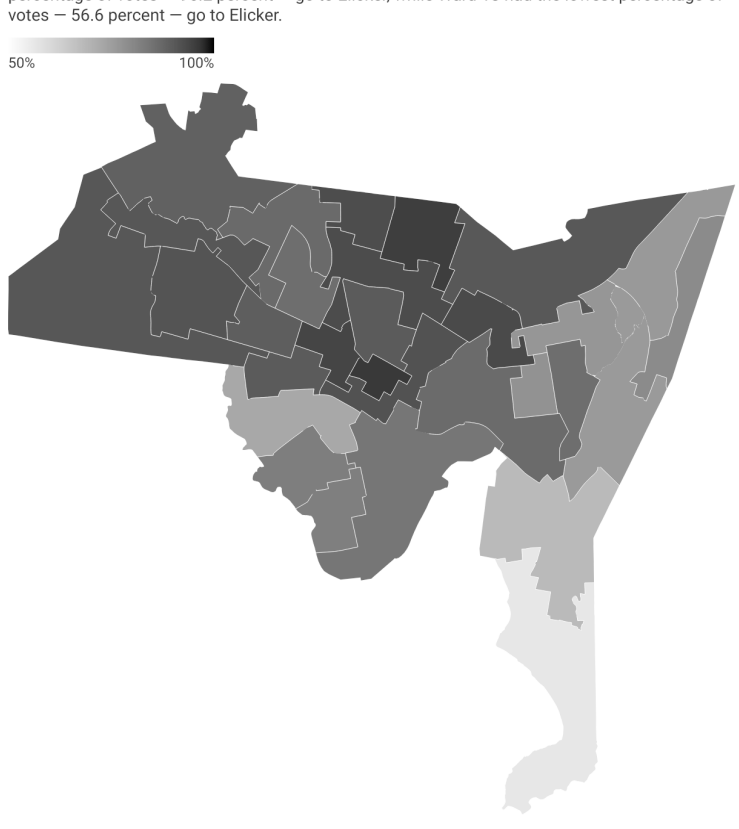
Turnout in Ward 1 — which includes eight of Yale's 14 residential colleges, Old Campus and many University buildings and is sometimes dubbed the "Yale Ward" — dropped steeply from the Democratic primary in September. In that tumultuous and uniquely competitive race, 36.2 percent of eligible voters cast their ballot. In the general election, that figure plummeted to 10.9 percent. Elias Theodore '27, who won the primary, was running unopposed. But he aimed to channel the excitement he generated in the primary towards getting Yalies engaged in the mayoral contest.

"If you're living in a city," Theodore said in an interview the night of Elicker's win, "you should know who the mayor is and what they stand for."

New Haven saw little shift in partisan affiliation from the 2024 presidential election. Wards 3, 18, 22 and 30 moved towards the right; all others moved slightly to the left.

Elicker's Republican challenger Steve Orosco won 15.6 percent of the vote.





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