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CITY OF HARTFORD

# TRANSITION REPORTS



LUKE A. BRONIN  
MAYOR

# LETTER FROM THE MAYOR

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Dear Mayor-Elect Arulampalam:

As our city transitions between mayoral administrations, my team and I will continue to do everything we can to support you and your team, and to ensure the smoothest and most successful transition possible. As part of that effort, we've prepared this transition report.

I know that you have been in touch with current department heads, and that you will have the benefit of continuity in a number of critical leadership positions throughout city government. We hope that the briefings contained in this report supplement that collaboration, in addition to the ongoing and important work of your transition team.

This report is meant to give you and your team an overview of key initiatives across a range of critical issue areas, including public safety, economic development, housing, and more. Each report provides a high-level summary of the issue, an overview of particular initiatives with relevant information including funding sources and timelines, and brief recommendations for your consideration.

These reports are not meant to — and no report could — document all of the good work that every department does on a day-to-day basis, or all of the challenges our team confronts. There are many programs and services the City provides that are not included, for the sake of length. Separate from this report, each of our departments has been preparing to provide you and your team with detailed briefings on departmental operations. We are also providing you and your team with in-depth information on the budget and city finances.

It has been an honor to work alongside an outstanding team, and I am deeply grateful for their hard work and commitment to our community. We have gotten a lot done, but there is so much left to do.

It has been the privilege of a lifetime to lead our great city and this great team. Now, that privilege is yours.

Sincerely,



**Luke A. Bronin**  
Mayor



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# FINANCE REPORT



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# FINANCE REPORT

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## BACKGROUND

**LOOKING BACK: HARTFORD'S BUDGET CRISIS:** When the Bronin administration took office, Hartford was facing the greatest fiscal crisis in its history. Prior administrations had made many decisions that worsened the City's financial position, including borrowing heavily, restructuring debt to create short-term savings, relying on one-time revenue sources such as property sales, raising the property tax rate to levels that discouraged growth, and committing to unsustainable long-term liabilities. However, those decisions merely exacerbated the fundamental and persistent structural challenge: Hartford's property tax base was simply too small to sustain the core services required.

Like other Connecticut municipalities, Hartford's only significant source of locally generated revenue is property taxes. Approximately half of Hartford's property is tax exempt, with large concentrations of state-owned property, college and hospital property, and property owned by non-profits and religious institutions. In addition, while densely populated, Hartford is both geographically small and has an intense concentration of poverty. As a result, the City of Hartford must sustain a higher level of core services on a severely limited tax base, with a taxable grand list barely larger than that of small suburbs like Farmington and Glastonbury.

Facing a severe and urgent budget crisis, Mayor Bronin's administration made deep cuts, including eliminating more than 100 positions, or 15% of non-uniformed personnel, and reducing or eliminating a wide range of programs and services. It also began the process of negotiating substantial concessions from collective bargaining units. Following the city's cost reduction measures, Moody's Investors Service noted that, "[t]here is very little room for further cuts, given the reductions in services the city has already made and its fixed costs."

**BUILDING A PATH TO FISCAL STABILITY:** By 2017, the City had begun the process of preparing for a Chapter 9 Bankruptcy filing, believing that the City of Hartford deserved an opportunity to rebuild on a new foundation, rather than rely on temporary measures that would have merely prolonged the crisis.

At the same time, as an alternative to a Chapter 9 filing, Mayor Bronin proposed and [advocated](#) for the creation of a Municipal Accountability Review Board (MARB), authorized to pair financial support for distressed municipalities with stringent oversight and transparency. The State passed bipartisan legislation to create the MARB, and in 2018, the City entered into a contract assistance agreement, under which the State assumed responsibility for the City’s existing general obligation debt.

In addition to financial assistance from the State, the City pursued and reached agreements with its labor unions that provided significant cost savings. In FY2019, the City projected \$10 million in savings from the labor agreements it reached, with similar savings through the life of those contracts.

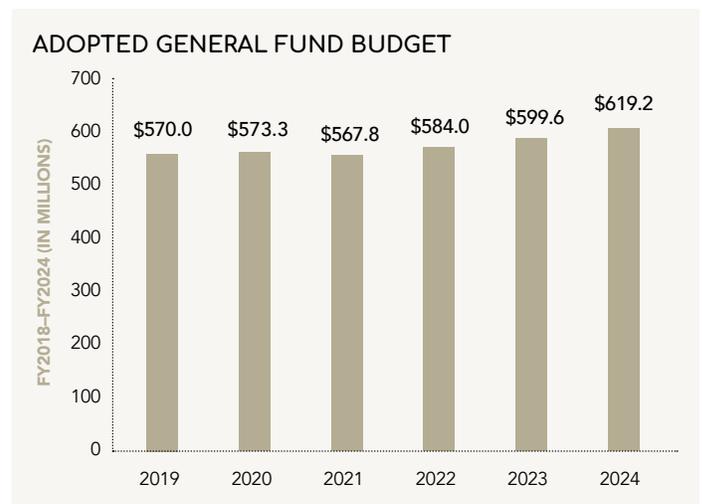
The City also engaged Hartford’s largest companies, obtaining a \$50 million commitment over five years from The Hartford, Aetna (now CVS Health), and Travelers.

Taken together, the deep and difficult cuts, negotiated labor savings, the corporate contributions, and the State contract assistance agreement created a path to longer-term financial stability for the City. The City built a five-year recovery plan that relied on those components, as well as continued budget discipline and aggressive pursuit of grants and philanthropic funding.

**RECENT BUDGETS:** Rigorously adhering to its long-term plan, the Bronin administration’s budgets have been built on several fiscal principals: no new long-term borrowing; no reliance on one-time revenue sources to balance the budget; adopting a pay-as-you-go capital investment program, funding capital investments with general fund appropriations, surplus allocations, and grant funding; fully funding its actuarially determined pension obligations; and protecting education funding, with consistent increases in per-pupil spending due to decreasing enrollment, driven by the Sheff v. O’Neill settlement.

The City has prioritized funding core services, slowly and carefully rebuilding capacity after deep cuts to personnel that harmed services, while avoiding unnecessary spending and prioritizing rigor and discipline. Overall, the City budget has increased at an average rate of 0.2% per year since implementing its financial sustainability plan in FY2018.

Since FY2018, the City of Hartford has generated annual operating surpluses that have been utilized strategically a) to rebuild the city’s unassigned fund balance, which today sits at approximately 6% of the city’s annual budget, b) to fund critical capital investment without new issuance of debt, c) to provide support to the city’s most vulnerable residents, and d) to support economic development that will help to grow the city’s grand list and promote more economically vibrant neighborhoods.



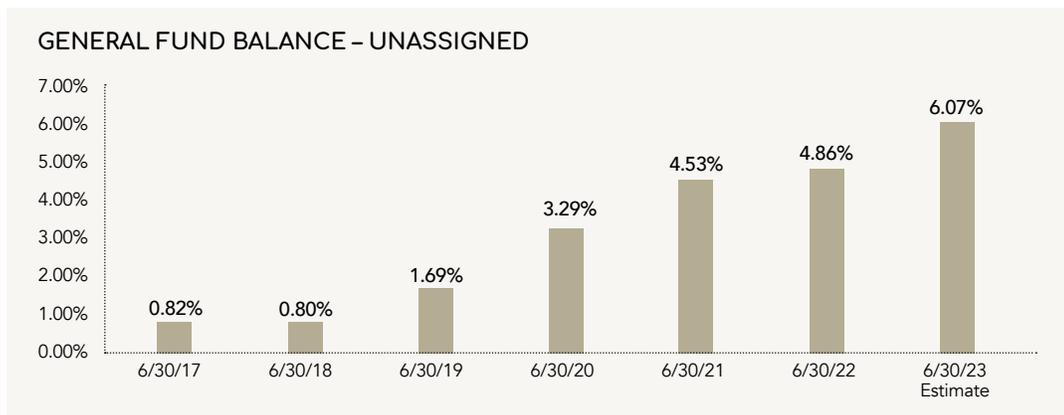
**CURRENT BUDGET:** The City’s FY2024 budget totals \$619.17 million. Revenues are derived primarily from property taxes (49%) and state municipal aid (47%). All other General Fund revenue sources make up just 4% of the total budget. Education comprises the largest portion of the City’s expenditure budget at 46%. The remaining non-education portion of the budget is largely allocated to Payroll and Benefits which make up 70% of non-education expenditures.

Current projections estimate a year-end surplus of \$6.3 million in the General Fund. Revenues are currently projected to be \$8.3 million favorable to budget, with additional favorability likely to be recognized after the January tax billing and related collections. Similarly, potential favorability in other revenue sources are not factored into projections until sufficient trend data is established.

Expenditures are currently projected to exceed budget by about \$2 million, driven largely by overtime costs and legal settlements. However, the projected expenditure overage is expected to diminish over the course of the year as vacancy savings are recognized. As is the case with many revenue sources, potential favorability in other expenditure accounts is typically not reflected in forecasts until sufficient trend data has been established.

In short, the current estimate of a \$6.3 million surplus for FY24 is conservative, allowing the City to continue its established practice of using surplus funds to build up its fund balance and invest in priority capital improvements.

**GROWING FUND BALANCE:** The City’s unassigned fund balance has grown steadily and consistently after dipping below 1% of budgeted expenditures in FY2017, at the height of the fiscal crisis. The City’s unassigned fund balance is currently estimated at just above 6%, or \$36.4 million as of the end of FY2023. In addition, the City has built up reserves for specific purposes, including in the Capital Improvement Projects Reserve, reserve funds set aside to support neighborhood economic development, and a reserve for Vehicles, Equipment and Technology acquisition.



**RATINGS ACTIONS:** As Hartford has continued to maintain fiscal discipline and adhere to its fiscal recovery plan, ratings agencies have consistently upgraded their assessments of the City. Since 2017, Moody’s has upgraded its ratings five times, and Standard & Poor’s upgraded its ratings three times. Both agencies now rate Hartford’s debt as investment grade. In its latest ratings action in August of 2023, Moody’s cited “[t]he city’s improved governance” as a “key driver.”

**MOODY’S RATINGS HISTORY**

Ratings as of 12/17/2017	Rating 4/4/2018	Rating 3/21/2019	Rating 2/25/2020	Rating 8/26/2021	Rating* 8/27/2023
Caa3	B2	B1	Ba3	Ba2	Baa3

**STANDARD & POOR’S RATINGS HISTORY**

Ratings as of 12/17/2017	Rating 4/13/2018	Rating 7/3/2019	Rating* 11/18/2021
CCC	BB	BB+	BBB

\*Debt rated as investment grade.

**PROPERTY TAXES:** By state statute, the City of Hartford is subject to a unique property tax structure, with commercial property taxed at the full statutory assessment ratio of 70% and residential properties assessed currently at 36.75% of value. The residential ratio is calculated annually, using a formula based on the relationship between CPI and the year over year tax levy change. Under the formula, the residential assessment ratio may increase, but may not decrease.

In FY2023, the City reduced its mill rate for the first time in many years, and by the largest amount in more than 30 years, reducing the mill rate by 7.2%, from 74.29 to 68.95. However, the 2021 revaluation, which took effect in FY23, resulted in a shift from commercial property to residential property, as the values of commercial properties declined while residential properties increased. It is likely that the city will continue to see continued pressure on the commercial property market.

**SHIFT TO TIER II MUNICIPALITY UNDER MARB & TERMS OF CONTRACT ASSISTANCE:** In light of the City’s improved fiscal performance and consistent adherence to its long-term fiscal plan, the MARB voted in November of 2023 to recognize that the City had satisfied all conditions of Tier III supervision. While the Connecticut General Statutes do not provide a clear path for a municipality to continue a relationship with the MARB after a municipality satisfies the requirements to end a designation, the Bronin administration made a voluntary request to be redesignated as a Tier II municipality. That request was formally accepted by the Municipal Finance Advisory Commission in December of 2023, and the City of Hartford is now designated as a Tier II municipality under MARB.

As a Tier II municipality, the City will provide monthly financial reports to the MARB and update its five-year financial projections. The MARB will also continue to review and approve certain assumptions in the City budget, including State Aid, the tax collection rate, and the mill rate.

Regardless of the City’s status under MARB, the City is also subject to certain reporting requirements and constraints under the contract assistance agreement, including: (1) annual submittal of three-year financial plans and assumptions for those financial plans; (2) monthly financial reporting and cash flow projection; (3) a requirement to provide additional financial information to the State when requested; and (4) while the assistance is in place, the City faces restrictions on the issuance of new debt.

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# RECOMMENDATIONS

- **MAINTAIN STRINGENT BUDGET CONTROLS:** Hartford's progress towards fiscal stability and strength has been substantial, but it is also fragile. The City still faces long-term challenges, including pension obligations, the inadequacy of the property tax base, and the continuing challenges in the commercial real estate market. The incoming administration should maintain its focus on core services, and must remain disciplined and careful in avoiding new costs.
- **CONTINUE TO AVOID NEW DEBT ISSUANCE:** The City of Hartford has not issued any new long-term debt since 2016, and as noted above, has funded its capital investments with a combination of general fund appropriations, surplus allocations, grants, and philanthropic contributions. To avoid the accumulation of new debt service obligations, the City should continue to refrain from new debt issuance, and where the budget allows, should seek to meet its capital needs through increased annual appropriations from the general fund.
- **PURSUE CREATIVE SOLUTIONS TO THE CHALLENGE OF POST-PANDEMIC COMMERCIAL REAL ESTATE:** Commercial office space is unlikely to return to its pre-pandemic value in the near term. Occupancy rates in the largest markets before the pandemic were at or close to 100%. Now, only one city in the top 10 is above 50%. For a city like Hartford, which was steadily building occupancy before the pandemic, plummeting commercial real estate value represents a significant risk. The City must continue to find ways to activate these spaces in ways that bring energy, activity, and revenue. That includes conversions to residential uses where possible.
- **PREPARE FOR ONGOING TAX APPEAL RESOLUTION:** The years following a revaluation tend to see the most tax appeal activity. Since the 2021 revaluation, there have been 336 appeals. The pace of court action on those appeals has been slower than anticipated. The City should consider preparing for those appeals to be adjudicated in the coming years by setting aside additional revenues to offset the impact of tax appeals in future years.

## RECOMMENDATIONS CONT.

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- **AGGRESSIVELY PURSUE GRAND LIST GROWTH:** In addition to remaining disciplined, the City of Hartford must continue to aggressively pursue the growth of its tax base through economic development. Tax abatements will be necessary to incentivize new economic development, and the city should take a long-term view of the benefits of incentivizing growth. A continued commitment to building residential density in and around the downtown will be particularly important not only as a means of adding new property to the grand list, but also as a way to protect the value of the existing commercial real estate, which will maintain its value far better if the central business district is perceived to be active, vibrant, and growing.



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# PUBLIC SAFETY



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# PUBLIC SAFETY

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## BACKGROUND

Public safety in Hartford is a shared responsibility, with multiple City departments and offices, external partners, and residents themselves involved. Over the last eight years, the City has prioritized core necessities like police staffing levels while making significant new investments and building partnerships that broaden the concept of public safety and emphasize crime prevention.

This transition report documents many of the City's efforts on those core public safety services and new initiatives, with metrics and information, along with details about funding, where applicable. Please note that a separate section of this transition report focuses exclusively on efforts to reduce community gun violence.

## BACKGROUND CONT.

At a high level, while there are many ways to conceptualize what public safety means in a community, one of the most common measures is the amount of Part One crime, which measures the level of violent crime. Part One crimes include rape, robbery, aggravated assault (including gun violence), burglary, larceny, and auto theft. The chart below shows total Part One crimes in Hartford over the last ten years, demonstrating a consistent and significant downward trend since 2015.

### PART ONE CRIME TREND

YEAR	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
<b>PART ONE CRIMES</b>	7099	6585	6751	7049	6740	6364	5916	4635	5214	4438	4476

One important piece of context to note is that the measurement of these crimes recently became more rigorous, when the FBI [switched](#) to a new data collection system called the National Incident-Based Reporting System in 2021. The new system requires a greater degree of specificity and an FBI [analysis](#) found that using the new system resulted in slightly higher levels of reported crimes, due to changes in reporting requirements. Even with that change to a more rigorous reporting requirement, Part One crime in Hartford has been on a consistent downward trend. In 2022, Part One crime was down nearly forty percent compared to 2012. As of the first week of December 2023, Part One crime has continued to decrease, relative to 2022, falling by a further 6.8%, despite an increase in auto theft driven largely by the design flaw in Kia and Hyundai vehicles.

Overall, the consistent year-over-year decreases in Part One crime from 2015 to the present represent a significant improvement in safety, security, and quality of life for Hartford residents.

## CITY INITIATIVES

This report outlines a selection of public safety-related city initiatives and partnerships by categorizing them by department or function.

### POLICE DEPARTMENT

**STAFFING:** The Police Department currently has 375 sworn officers. Despite an unprecedented commitment to recruiting over the past eight years,, the Department has also seen a number of retirements and hiring of officers by other departments, as has been the case in many urban departments around the country. There are currently three members of the Department who are retirement eligible, with 50 becoming eligible for retirement in the next five years.

- **Recent Recruitment Statistics:** Since taking office in 2016, the current administration has prioritized police recruitment and recruiting diverse candidates. Overall, from 2016 through 2023 the City has recruited 258 new police officers in some of the most diverse classes in the city's history. Over the last four years, 49% of new recruits have been Black, Hispanic, or Asian, and 22% have been women. In the four years before the current administration took office, the city recruited less than fifty new officer.
- **Recruitment Strategies:** Over the past two years, the City of Hartford has worked with the Hartford Police Union to implement substantial wage increases to support recruitment and retention. In addition, the Police Department has devoted resources to maintaining a full-time Recruitment Unit with a Lieutenant, a Sergeant, and an officer. The Recruitment Unit is responsible both for proactive community engagement and for supporting applicants through the application process. In 2022, the most recent full year of recruiting, there were 575 total applicants.
  - **2018 Assessment:** In 2018, at the City's request, the Department of Justice conducted an assessment of the Police Department's recruiting strategies. That assessment resulted in a number of recommendations, including establishing stronger communication with applicants and better preparing prospective recruits for written and physical components of the application process, which the Department has since implemented.

- **Resident Hiring:** The Police Department has taken a number of measures to support and encourage the hiring of Hartford residents, including: regularly engaging with community organizations like the Urban League, the Blue Hills Civic Association, the Greater Hartford NAACP, as well as Hartford Public Schools and local churches; holding events aimed at educating residents on how to become eligible to be a police officer; providing coaching for both the written and physical components of the application process, and waiving certain application fees for Hartford residents; and offering Hartford residents more time to achieve performance standards.
- **Funding:** The vast majority of the Police Department's budget comes from the General Fund and goes to staffing of various divisions throughout the department. The largest single division is the patrol division, which accounts for approximately 40% of the Department's funding. A small number of positions, approximately between 10 – 25, are grant-funded every year. The largest source of grant funding is the U.S. Department of Justice's COPS Hiring Program, which is a competitive award that law enforcement agencies, including Hartford, compete for every year.



**ACCREDITATION:** Independent state and federal accreditation bodies certify law enforcement agencies based on their adoption and maintenance of standardized policies and procedures for all departmental activity, from their handling of evidence and their code of ethics to their policies for critical incidents and treatment of suspects. The process of earning accreditation can take years, and it includes multiple stages, including self-assessment, external assessment with on-site evaluation and interviews, and ongoing monitoring.

- **Current POSTC Accreditation:** The Hartford Police Department was accredited by the Connecticut's Police Officer Standards and Training Council (POSTC) in 2022, earning Tier I certification, which is the first of three successive tiers. This was the first time the Department earned any accreditation in its history.
- **CALEA Accreditation:** The Department recently earned national accreditation from the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA), one of two national accreditation organizations recognized by the U.S. Department of Justice. Only a quarter of the police departments in Connecticut have CALEA accreditation, and the assessment is valid for four years. Larger police departments are held to a more rigorous accreditation standard, and Hartford is the only one of Connecticut's five largest cities to have been awarded accreditation.
- **Future Accreditation:** The Department is pursuing Tier II and Tier III accreditation from POSTC in 2024. The 2022 Tier I accreditation lasts for three years, and the Department will have to determine which accreditations to pursue for recertification in the coming years.

**TECHNOLOGY:** Enhancing the use of technology to enhance crime prevention and investigative efforts has been a major policy emphasis over the last eight years, and the Department has built its Capital City Command Center (C4) into the state's most sophisticated municipal law enforcement technology asset. The Department uses the C4 to distribute information in real time to assist in critical incidents, improve case closure rates by substantiating or discovering new investigative findings, to plan and prepare for large events, and more.

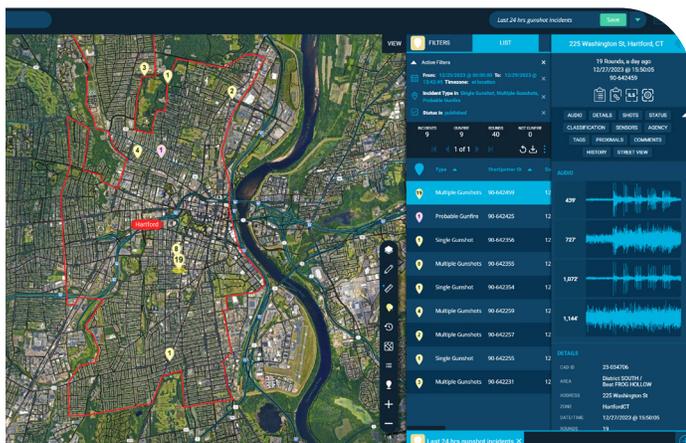
- **Citywide Camera System:** The City has made significant investment in the build-out of a citywide camera network, which now provides some level of coverage in every neighborhood in the city. The camera network is a key component of the City's investment in technology, and has been a critical tool for solving gun violence cases that likely would have remained unsolved previously. A forthcoming analysis from the Police Department studied 419 shootings between 2019 and 2023 and found that when shooting cases have video relevant to the incident, there is a 123% increase in the proportion of cases solved, compared to those cases without video. Recently the Department launched a program that allows residents and business owners to register their own cameras with the police department, speeding up investigations and allowing officers to be more proactive with properties that are a consistent concern.
  - **Funding:** Maintenance for the camera system varies year to year. The budget for 2023 was \$315,000 within the Department of Public Works budget. The Police Department expects that maintenance costs will decline as the City builds out its fiber network. However, it is imperative to continue to invest in regular maintenance, and there continue to be opportunities to close gaps in the citywide camera network coverage.
  - **Staffing:** The C4 is staffed by five detectives and one officer, as well as with five full-time civilian analysts. These positions are supported by the General Fund.



- **Body Cameras:** The Department began rolling out its body-worn camera program in 2019, with a phased deployment throughout the department, including the creation of a use policy. The city initially purchased 325 body-worn cameras and 75 car cameras, and then in 2021 purchased an additional 150 body-worn cameras. The Department now has enough body-worn cameras for all officers to wear them.
  - **Funding:** The initial rollout in 2019 cost \$1.8 million and was purchased with a combination of City funding and state grant funding. The second deployment in 2021 cost \$375,000 and was paid for with City funding. There is minimal maintenance cost associated with the body-worn camera program because the cameras are built for constant use.
- **ShotSpotter Expansion:** Hartford utilizes ShotSpotter technology, which is an acoustic sensor system that detects gunfire and alerts the police to its exact location with high precision. In recent years, Hartford has significantly expanded ShotSpotter coverage throughout the city. ShotSpotter now covers all residential neighborhoods in the city, identifying shots-fired incidents that might previously have gone unreported and allowing the Police Department to respond as quickly as possible to shooting incidents.
  - **Funding:** ShotSpotter is an annual subscription service that costs approximately \$740,000 at its current level of deployment. The City does not own the equipment or perform any maintenance. A small portion of the annual cost for the next two years is covered by the \$2 million Community Based Violence Intervention & Prevention Initiative Grant received by the city in 2022.



- **Drone Program:** In 2021, the Police Department began using drones to enhance their search and monitoring capabilities. The Department uses drones to track dirt bikes and stolen cars, assist with facilitating large crowds, support the deployment of officers in emergency situations, for crime scene documentation, and more. The Department has a policy that governs its use of drones, including prohibitions on using drones as a weapon.
  - **Funding:** The Police Department used approximately \$100,000 in grant funding from the State to procure nine drones and fund related training and licensing through the Federal Aviation Authority. There are minimal maintenance costs.



**INTERNAL AFFAIRS:** The Police Department’s Internal Affairs Division (IAD) investigates citizen complaints reported to the department, conducts internal investigations, supports officer-involved shooting investigations (which are led by the State), and it can also investigate conduct by an officer at the direction of the Chief of Police. The Division is led by a commander, eight investigators, and an administrative assistant. In recent years, the City and the Police Department have placed significant emphasis on increasing the rigor of IAD investigations and ensuring that citizen complaints are taken seriously, a commitment reflected in a **dramatic increase in the percentage of cases sustained** beginning in 2018, compared with prior years.

CITIZEN COMPLAINTS REPORTED TO DEPARTMENT

Year	Cases	Sustained Cases	% Sustained
2014	127	9	7.1%
2015	104	5	4.8%
2016	81	5	6.2%
2017	74	5	6.8%
2018	62	15	24.2%
2019	86	19	22.1%
2020	79	24	32.9%
2021	71	28	39.4%
2022	66	19	28.8%

- **Statistics:** The percentage of citizen complaints sustained by the Internal Affairs Division increased dramatically between 2017 and 2018, and since then has remained above 20%. The Police Department has implemented a number of new processes to ensure complaints are reviewed appropriately and thoroughly.
- **Early Intervention System:** In addition to investigating complaints and conducting investigations, the IAD consistently tracks complaints against officers so that even if complaints aren’t sustained, the Department can take action. If officers receive repeated complaints, they can be assigned to undergo additional training or enhanced supervision to ensure they’re performing their duties appropriately and with integrity.

**CIVILIAN POLICE REVIEW BOARD:** Hartford’s Civilian Police Review Board (CPRB) investigates complaints made by members of the public against Hartford police officers. The body underwent major changes in 2020 with a revised ordinance proposed by Mayor Bronin and supported by the City Council. The most significant changes included: (a) The creation of a new, funded Inspector General position within City government to coordinate the independent investigation of allegations of misconduct, and to provide dedicated staff support to the members of the CPRB; (b) The establishment of a process for concurrent investigations by the Inspector General and the Police Department’s Internal Affairs Division, rather than consecutive investigations; (c) The empowerment of the CPRB to appeal the Police Chief’s decisions to an independent arbitrator; and (d) The authority of the CPRB to initiate an investigation without a specific complaint from a member of the public.

- **Recent Work:** Over the last two years, the body has focused on making sure its investigatory and hearing process is institutionalized, which for many years had been inconsistent. As part of that process, the CPRB has updated its bylaws to be consistent with the revised ordinance, begun deploying a new case management system, and reached an MOU with the Hartford Police Union to participate in interviews of officers conducted by the Police Department’s Internal Affairs division upon request. In practice, there has been little disagreement between the findings recommended by IAD and those reached by the CPRB, and the CPRB has not yet used the arbitration process.
- **Composition:** The CPRB has nine voting members and two alternates. The Mayor appoints eight of the nine members (with Council confirmation), and the ninth is appointed by the Commission on Human Relations. There is also a non-voting member appointed by the Mayor who must be a Hartford resident between 18 – 26. The new ordinance also says the Mayor “shall give substantial weight” to nominees recommended by a majority of Council members or through a community recommendation process.

- **Current Status of the Inspector General:** The current Inspector General is serving on an interim basis. The incoming administration will have to resolve his status or nominate a new Inspector General in accordance with the ordinance, which requires a joint appointment by the Mayor, Chair of the CPRB, and the President of the City Council.
- **Case Load:** Prior to the 2020 reforms, the CPRB suffered from a significant case backlog and by the time the new ordinance took effect in March 2021, the backlog was 170 cases. The entire backlog was cleared by September 2022.



## FIRE DEPARTMENT

**STAFFING:** In the first three years of the Bronin administration, from 2016-2018, the City heavily recruited firefighters due to an impending spike of retirements, hiring 128 firefighters in that short period of time. Since then, it has added new classes on a staggered basis. The current staffing level is 329 sworn personnel, with 24 additional firefighters currently enrolled in the Fire Training Academy.

- **Funding:** The vast majority of funding for firefighters comes from the General Fund. In 2017, The City won an \$11 million SAFER Grant, part of an annual FEMA grant program that helped fund three years of salary for approximately 70 firefighters. The City continues to receive SAFER funding at a lower level.

**FIRE HOUSE RENOVATIONS:** The City has allocated funding for multiple fire house renovations using General Fund and grant dollars. These renovations are meant to repair lighting, improve air quality and ventilation, fix roofs, and improve locker rooms and living spaces, among other changes.

- **Funding:** Multiple firehouses have received significant investments, some across multiple fiscal years, including: Fire Station 11 – \$4.7 million; Fire Station 5 – \$4.5 million; Fire Station 9 – \$4,500,000. Station 11 has been completed. Stations 5 and 9 are currently in the planning phase.

- **Upcoming Renovations:** The renovation for Fire Station 16 is currently in the planning phase and has an estimated budget of \$4.5 million. Planning for the renovation of the Department’s training facility is also underway, but there is no cost estimate yet.

**ACCREDITATION:** In 2020, the Fire Department became one of only 87 out of approximately 26,000 U.S. departments to be both internationally accredited and to hold an ISO Class 1 classification. Similar to the Police Department’s accreditation process, the Fire Department underwent a rigorous internal and external evaluation of its processes and procedures, from training and public education to fire suppression and Hazmat operations.

**INVESTMENT IN FIRE PREVENTION:** In the FY24 budget, the City added four new full-time inspector positions to the Fire Marshal’s office to help increase its capacity to perform inspections. Like other cities with large numbers of buildings, Hartford has not been able to keep pace with the annual property inspections mandated by state statute. The Fire Marshal’s office participates in the city’s new Residential Licensing Program, adding new regularity and consistency to the inspections process.

- **Funding:** The funding for these positions comes from the General Fund.



## EMERGENCY SERVICES & TELECOMMUNICATIONS (ES&T)

**STAFFING:** For years, there has been a nationwide shortage of 911 dispatchers, and as recently as 2020, Hartford’s dispatch team was operating at nearly half capacity. ES&T conducted a comprehensive revamp of its recruitment, training, and retention programs, and as of December 2023, there are zero vacancies. That includes 19 fully-trained dispatchers, eight trainees, five fully trained “Call Takers” (a new position), and 13 dispatchers who are scheduled to begin training in 2024.

- **Compensation:** As part of the recruitment revamp, ES&T significantly increased salaries for both dispatchers and supervisors, raising compensation by approximately 30% and 40% respectively.
- **Training:** ES&T historically trained candidates on an ad-hoc basis in small groups of three or four. In November 2022, ES&T began conducting larger group trainings through a dedicated Training Academy, and built a broader new curriculum. This includes engaging with partner agencies, ride-alongs with public safety responders, and both online and in-person training modules, on top of all mandated certifications.
- **Call Taker Position:** ES&T worked with its union to create a new position aimed at alleviating the workload of the dispatchers. These call takers receive training that allow them to receive and respond to calls for service – with the hope that they will eventually become dispatchers. They must successfully complete State-mandated certification within one year of employment.

### COMPUTER-AIDED DISPATCH (CAD), RECORDS MANAGEMENT SYSTEM (RMS), AND RADIO UPGRADE:

The City’s prior CAD and RMS systems were installed about 40 years ago, and the radio systems used by public safety departments were reaching the end of their life. ES&T, working with the Police and Fire Departments, recently completed the CAD/RMS project, and anticipates the new radio infrastructure will go live in early 2025.. These upgrades put ES&T in line with or beyond the industry standard.

- **Funding:** The CAD/RMS project upgrade cost \$8 million, with \$5 million from the State Office of Policy and Management and \$3 million from the City’s General Fund. The separate radio infrastructure upgrade project costs approximately \$6 million, funded exclusively with City dollars.
- **Text to 911:** Hartford launched its “Text to 911” system in January 2018 and became one of the first municipalities to implement the feature, which is particularly useful in critical situations like home invasions and for individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing.
- **Next Generation 911:** The backbone of the 911 system in Connecticut is maintained by the State government. In 2015, it began upgrading its 911 systems to “Next Generation 911,” which is a more resilient system with expanded capabilities, including the ability to receive texts, photos, and videos from emergency callers. Hartford switched over to the new system in 2017.

## OFFICE OF COMMUNITY SAFETY AND WELLNESS

In recent years, the City has initiated or expanded a number of efforts to promote public safety and wellness that are independent of traditional law enforcement. To help coordinate those initiatives, the Mayor established the Office of Community Safety and Wellness within the office of the Chief Operating Officer. This section provides a non-exhaustive review of the initiatives coordinated and managed by the Office of Community Safety and Wellness.

**HEARTeam:** In 2020, Mayor Bronin and the City Council allocated funding for the creation of a civilian crisis intervention team to respond to 911 calls that may not require a response from law enforcement. In 2022, after an extensive research and community engagement process, the City launched the “HEARTeam,” integrating three service providers into the City’s emergency response system: the Wheeler Clinic for people under 18; the Community Renewal Team (CRT) for adults experiencing distress that is not acute; and the Capitol Region Mental Health Center for adults in severe distress.

- **Results:** Since the program’s launch, CRT has responded to by far the most calls, with 1,401 responses. The monthly response volume has steadily increased over time, with less than forty calls each in April and May 2022 and approximately 180 calls each in July and August 2023. Overall, 82% of calls did not trigger a co-response, meaning CRT did not have to go out with police or another partner. In 46% of calls, the team was able to provide assistance or at least evaluate the client, and approximately 37% of responses were canceled on scene because the response team could not find the client. CRT was able to arrange a referral or other follow up for 37% of encounters.

**1,500+**  
HEARTeam RESPONSES

- **Funding:** The initial allocation was \$5 million in surplus funding from the FY2021 budget, and the program continues to operate with that funding. The program’s operating budget is \$1.6 million per year. In 2023, the city is working to finalize an additional allocation of \$2 million from funding reserved for mental health and wellness initiatives under the American Rescue Plan, to provide funding through at least 2025.

**REENTRY WELCOME CENTER:** The City created its Reentry Welcome Center (RWC) in 2018 and operated it out of City Hall with Community Partners in Action, one of the state’s leading reentry organizations. The goal was to connect returning citizens, particularly those completing sentences, to the services and support they need to build successful lives. Since then, it has worked with more than 1,000 individuals, offering case management and referrals to services that can help with basic needs, employment, education, and more, in partnership with a network of dozens of providers. In 2022, the City announced a major expansion of the RWC, at a larger facility, and with additional funding to expand its services.

**1,000+**  
INDIVIDUALS SERVED  
AT REENTRY CENTER



- **Funding:** The RWC has always been supported by multiple funding streams. Initially in 2018, the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving provided a three-year, \$450,000 grant, with some staffing support funded by the city. It is currently funded by \$900,000 in American Rescue Plan funds, a \$375,000 Department of Justice grant, and ongoing funding from the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving. In 2023, the Mayor proposed and the City Council adopted a resolution allocating [cannabis tax revenue](#) to support the RWC — which will provide ongoing and likely growing revenue. There is currently one dispensary operating in Hartford, and estimated annual tax revenue is \$91,200.

**NEIGHBORHOOD AMBASSADORS PROGRAM:** In 2022, the City launched its Neighborhood Ambassadors program, which aims to give formerly-incarcerated residents part-time employment cleaning and beautifying high-traffic commercial corridors in neighborhoods throughout the city. In the program's first two years, it enrolled 27 Hartford residents. Going forward, the program will expand to 16 total ambassadors, with new responsibilities including traffic island maintenance and snow removal at city owned properties.

- **Results:** Fourteen of the 27 Hartford residents initially completed the program and seven were still enrolled over the summer of 2023, with the remaining six dropping out. Of the 14 participants who completed the program, 13 transitioned to full-time jobs, and one encountered a major health issue.
- **Funding:** The initial program was funded with a combination of American Rescue Plan dollars, CDBG funding, and resources from the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving. To provide a sustainable funding source, the City of Hartford has dedicated its "nip deposit revenue," which it receives from a recently-enacted state surcharge, to the Ambassadors program. The current annual revenue estimate is about \$162,000.

**HOMELESS ENCAMPMENT OUTREACH TEAM:** Like many cities, Hartford has seen an increase in unsheltered residents who take up residence on public or private property. The City convened a working group including the Department of Public Works, the Police Department, the Department of Development Services, and partner agencies including Journey Home, Hands on Hartford, the Wheeler Clinic, and the Greater Hartford Harm Reduction Coalition to develop and implement a protocol to conduct outreach and appropriately clear encampments.

- **Outreach Protocol:** When the 311 system, the City, or one of its partners are made aware of an encampment, one of the partner agencies aims to respond to the identified site within 72 hours and begins working with individuals to connect them to the appropriate services, including shelter placement. The full working group convenes weekly to review the status of referrals it has made and identify locations for proactive outreach.

- **Responding to Encampments:** After initial outreach and referral, the City identifies a date for a clean up of the encampment, and posts a notice 72 hours in advance. During those 72 hours, outreach teams engage or reengage with any individuals remaining at the encampment to offer resources and provide support to them post-clean up. Journey Home is currently exploring an external partnership that could pilot changes to the current protocol.

**SELF-CARE AND WELLNESS INITIATIVE:** In 2023, the City launched a community-wide initiative to increase the community's focus on mental well-being, bringing together national mental health leader Headspace, a local provider in the Copper Beech Institute, and the Greater Hartford Arts Council. The overall goals are to equip more Hartford residents with tools to improve their mental wellbeing, improve awareness of existing resources and identify gaps, provide mental wellness training to City employees, and strengthen their ability to in turn promote mindfulness resources for the residents they serve.

- **Funding:** This is a multi-year, \$900,000 initiative using American Rescue Plan funds.

**UNIVERSAL REPRESENTATION PROGRAM:** In 2021, in partnership with the City Council, the City launched its Universal Representation Program to fund legal assistance for Hartford residents facing immigrant court proceedings, and likely deportation. The program is administered by New Haven Legal Assistance, which had a longstanding practice of representing undocumented residents and experience representing them in immigration proceedings.

- **Funding:** The City has allocated \$95,000 in General Fund dollars for the program annually, and the incoming administration will have to decide its status for FY2025.

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# RECOMMENDATIONS

- **CONTINUE TO PURSUE ADEQUATE POLICE AND FIRE DEPARTMENT STAFFING:** The City has worked aggressively and consistently to recruit police and fire personnel, and has negotiated significant increases in pay for officers and firefighters to assist with both retention and recruitment. However, both departments will continue to face staffing pressures going forward. Like urban police forces across the country, the Police Department continues to face retirements and transfers to departments with less challenging responsibilities, requiring continued focus on recruiting and retention. Stemming attrition will also require continued effort to reduce the number of involuntary call-ins, with some common-sense changes necessitating approval by the Hartford Police Union. The Fire Department's labor contract is expiring next year, and building on the substantial pay increase recently negotiated for junior firefighters, negotiating a responsible, fair contract that retains personnel at all levels of seniority should be a priority.
- **EVALUATE AND GROW THE HEARTTEAM PROGRAM:** The HEARTeam program is funded through next year's FY25 budget cycle, and it has been successful and well-received by city residents. The City will likely be able to draw on anticipated end-of-year surplus dollars to sustain the program beyond that date, but should work to identify a recurring revenue stream, advocate for state funding for civilian crisis response initiatives, or pursue grant funding.
- **SUSTAIN AND EXPAND THE SCOPE OF THE REENTRY WELCOME CENTER:** The RWC has become an important part of the public safety and criminal justice ecosystem in Hartford, and its new location and funding will allow it to serve more returning citizens. Its continued operation and growth is not a given, and the incoming administration should continue to prioritize seeking funding and ensuring that the partnerships that allow it to succeed continue to deepen.
- **MAINTAIN AND EXPAND THE CITYWIDE CAMERA NETWORK:** While the City has made significant investments expanding the citywide camera network, there are still important areas of Hartford that lack adequate coverage, including heavily-trafficked corridors in the South End. The City should pursue funding for camera expansion, which is costly due to the need to purchase cameras and install high-speed fiber, which allows the cameras to plug into the broader system effectively and ensure its resiliency.

## RECOMMENDATIONS CONT.

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- **SEEK FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES TO SUSTAIN COMMUNITY SAFETY AND WELLNESS INITIATIVES:** The network of programs within the Office of Community Safety and Wellness, including the community violence intervention and hospital-based violence intervention programs, the HEARTeam, the Neighborhood Ambassadors program, and others all have varied funding streams and their creation and implementation have been driven by consistent attention and prioritization by the Mayor and his senior leadership. The incoming administration should consider similarly devoting time and resources to each of these programs, as part of its broad public safety agenda.



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# GUN VIOLENCE



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# GUN VIOLENCE

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## BACKGROUND

Like cities across the country, Hartford experienced a sharp increase in shooting incidents, including both homicides and non-fatal shootings, in 2020 and 2021. As of December 28, 2023, the number of shooting victims had declined by approximately 28% compared to the same point in 2022, and by approximately 31% compared to the same point in 2019, prior to the pandemic. Indeed, the number of non-fatal shooting victims at this time in 2023 is lower than any year since at least 2006, and the total number of shooting incidents is the second lowest during that period.

Incidents of fatal gun violence have remained high, with 27 gun violence homicides this year. That number is significantly lower than the number of gun violence homicides in 2022, but remains higher than many prior years, even as the total number of gun violence incidents has decreased significantly. The larger share of gun violence incidents resulting in fatalities appears to be a result of multiple factors, including a) the increasing prevalence of high-capacity magazines and “switches” that convert semi-automatic weapons to fully automatic, increasing lethality, and b) an increasing share of personal, intimate acts of violence at close quarters.

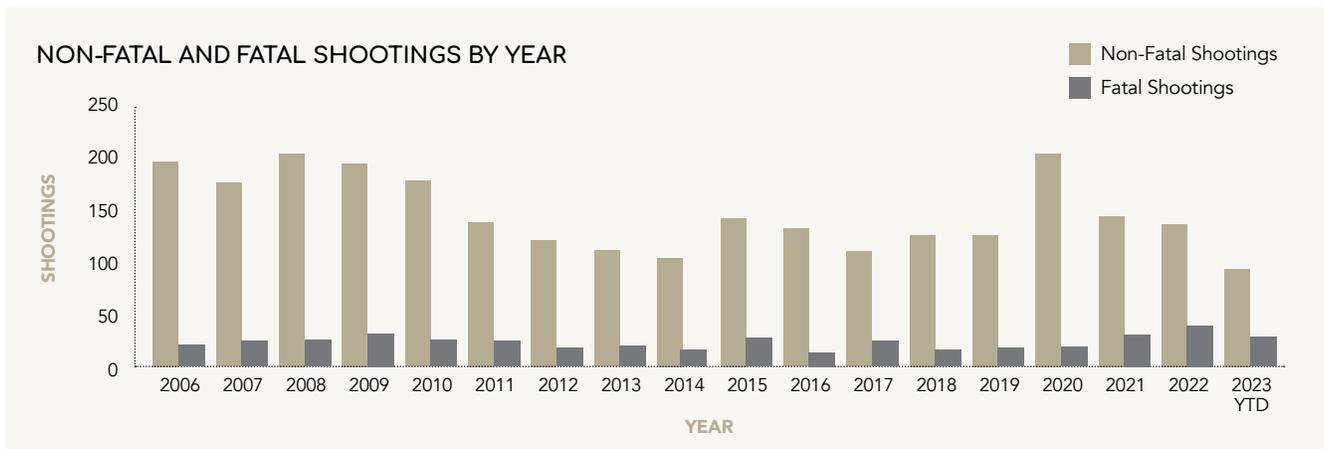
In 2021, the Hartford Police Department commissioned a thorough analysis of homicides and shootings in the city. There were several important findings:

- Gun violence disproportionately affects males between 18-34.
- The most intense concentration of gun violence occurs in four neighborhoods: Northeast, South Green, Upper Albany, and Clay Arsenal.

## BACKGROUND CONT.

- Gun violence in Hartford is heavily driven by drug-related disputes, personal grudges, and momentary disagreements that turn violent thanks to the presence of firearms.
- Between 64-70% of known victims and suspects in shootings were known to the criminal justice system prior to their involvement in these incidents. The average number of prior arrests was 9.6. A significant number of shooting suspects were on pre-trial release, probation, or parole at the time of the most recent shooting.

Both prior to the pandemic-related increase in gun violence and since, the City of Hartford has undertaken a number of initiatives to address gun violence, emphasizing prevention, intervention, community partnerships, and law enforcement, making aggressive use of all available resources. This memo details a number of those initiatives, and outlines both opportunities and challenges the city will face in the years ahead.



## ONGOING INITIATIVES: LAW ENFORCEMENT

No single intervention can eliminate gun violence, but smart law enforcement strategies that seek to deter violent crime and hold perpetrators of crime accountable are an essential part of the solution. The Hartford Police Department continues to implement a number of initiatives that are directly focused on gun violence, in several categories:

### STRENGTHENING INTERNAL & EXTERNAL COORDINATION

#### CREATING A NON-FATAL SHOOTING TASK FORCE:

Research shows that focusing on non-fatal shootings can help reduce overall violence, and in 2021, the Hartford Police Department created a Non-fatal Shooting Response Team (SRT) to bring new resources and an enhanced focus to the problem. The SRT benefited from intensive training, dedicated investigative effort, standardized response protocols, and collaborative peer case review. When a shooting happens, the SRT deploys detectives rapidly to crime scenes and utilizes enhanced investigative training and other assets more often associated with homicide investigations. Since the establishment of the Non-fatal Shooting Response Team, the Department has dramatically increased the clearance rate for non-fatal shootings — doubling the clearance rate from 2020 to 2021 and 2022. Based on that success, in 2022, the U.S. Department of Justice awarded Hartford a \$500,000 grant to continue and expand the SRT's work.

#### ENHANCED SUPPORT FROM STATE AND FEDERAL

**PARTNERS:** The Police Department has added to its investigative capacity by strengthening partnerships and increasing the number of state and federal agents assigned to HPD task forces. That includes eight task force officers from the FBI, two from the DEA, two U.S. Marshals, two members of the Connecticut State Police, and intelligence analysts from the Department of Correction and the Connecticut National Guard. Those additional assets do not include the Greater Hartford Regional Auto Task Force, which includes 12 regional police departments and sometimes pursues cases with a connection to shots-fired incidents or shootings.

#### CLOSER COORDINATION WITH PROSECUTORS' OFFICES:

On a regular basis, the Police Department meets with federal prosecutors and the Office of the Chief State's Attorney. Relying on intelligence gathered from a variety of investigative units, the group identifies individuals at highest risk for violent offending. They work together to determine potential tactics to prevent violent activity by that small group of actors, including federal case adoption and leveraging resources from probation and/or parole. This close coordination increases the likelihood that high-risk offenders are deterred from violent activity.

**FOCUSING ON FIREARM SEIZURES:** While the Police Department cannot control the flow of guns into the city, it has prioritized seizing illegally possessed guns to get firearms off the streets. As a result of that prioritization, HPD has taken more illegal guns off the street in recent years than ever before. From 2014 through 2020, the Department saw a modest increase in illegal firearms seized each year until 2020, averaging 244 per year, with a high of 272 in 2019. In 2021 and 2022, that figure was 341 and 367 respectively, and as of December 2023, the Department had removed a record 369 illegal firearms from Hartford streets.

RECORD ILLEGAL  
FIREARMS REMOVED → 369  
AS OF DEC. 2023

## LEVERAGING RESEARCH & TECHNOLOGY

**GUN VIOLENCE PROBLEM ANALYSIS:** As referenced earlier, in 2021 the Hartford Police Department engaged an outside expert, Dr. Lisa Barao from Westfield State University, to conduct a thorough examination of the gun violence in Hartford. Working with the Police Department since then, she has produced detailed analyses about the nature of gun violence, the backgrounds of perpetrators and victims, and recommendations for violence reduction based on those observations. The Police Department has the analysis and continues to work with Dr. Barao.

- **Findings:** The analysis examined all homicides and non-fatal shootings from 2018 through 2021 and made a number of findings. The largest categories of non-fatal shootings and homicides were drug-related disputes or personal disputes, collectively making up a majority of homicides and a strong plurality of non-fatal shootings. The vast majority of victims and suspects are males between 18–24, and the vast majority are also known to the criminal justice system.

The analysis also included initial recommendations, many of which the Police Department has pursued, including enhanced focus on very-high-risk people and places, prioritizing enforcement of certain offenses associated with violent crime, strengthening criminal justice partnerships, and leveraging technology, data, and reporting.

**SHOTSPOTTER EXPANSION:** Hartford utilizes ShotSpotter technology, which is an acoustic sensor system that detects gunfire and alerts the police to its exact location with high precision. In recent years, Hartford has significantly expanded ShotSpotter coverage throughout the city. ShotSpotter now covers all residential neighborhoods in the city, identifying shots-fired incidents that may previously have gone unreported and allowing the police department to respond as quickly as possible to shooting incidents.

- **Funding:** ShotSpotter is an annual subscription service that costs approximately \$740,000 at its current level of deployment. The City does not own the equipment or perform any maintenance. A small portion of the annual cost for the next two years is covered by the \$2 million Community Based Violence Intervention & Prevention Initiative Grant received by the city in 2022.

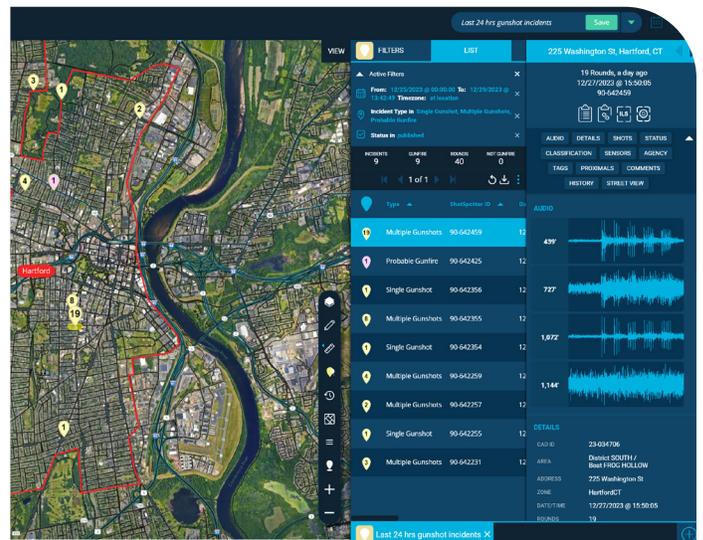
**CITYWIDE CAMERA SYSTEM EXPANSION:** Over the last eight years, the City has expanded its own camera network to cover every neighborhood in the city. The camera network has been a critical tool for solving gun violence cases that likely would have remained unsolved previously. A forthcoming analysis from the Police Department studied 419 shootings between 2019 and 2023 and found that when shooting cases have video relevant to the incident, there is a 123% increase in the proportion of cases solved, compared to those cases without video.



- **Funding:** Maintenance for the camera system varies year to year. The budget for 2023 was \$315,000 within the Department of Public Works budget. The Police Department expects that maintenance costs will decline as the City builds out its fiber network.

### NEW CONNECTIONS WITH PRIVATE CAMERAS:

Modeled after a program in Atlanta, the Hartford Police Department now offers residents and business owners the opportunity to connect their own private cameras to the City system, growing the City's network at little to no cost. In addition the City has distributed 70 free Ring cameras that are connected to the City's network.



## ONGOING INITIATIVES: PREVENTION AND COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

While effective law enforcement is critical to ensuring accountability, increasing deterrence, and removing individuals who consistently commit violent crime from the community, the city's response to gun violence goes far beyond law enforcement. The City has made major investments in prevention and community partnerships to complement the work of law enforcement, as part of a broader violence reduction strategy.

To advance that work, the City created an Office of Community Safety and Wellness under the Chief Operating Officer. That Office is part of the National Offices of Violence Prevention Network, a learning community that enhances the effectiveness of these kinds of government departments across the country.

One focus of the Office of Community Safety and Wellness is Hartford's population of returning citizens, because successful integration into the community is an important part of violence prevention in Hartford. According to the Police Department's analysis, the majority of gun violence victims and suspects were known to the criminal justice system before their involvement in violence.

**REENTRY WELCOME CENTER:** The City created its Reentry Welcome Center (RWC) in 2018 and operated it out of City Hall with Community Partners in Action, one of the state's leading reentry organizations. The goal was to connect returning citizens, particularly those completing sentences, to the services and support they need to build successful lives. Since then, it has worked with 1,000+ individuals and in partnership with a network of dozens of providers, offering case management and referrals to services that can help with basic needs, employment, education, and more. In 2022, the City announced a major expansion of the RWC, at a larger facility, and with additional funding to expand its services.

- **Funding:** The RWC has always been supported by multiple funding streams. Initially in 2018, the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving provided a three-year, \$450,000 grant, with some staffing support funded by the City. It is currently funded by \$900,000 in American Rescue Plan funds, a \$375,000 Department of Justice grant, and ongoing funding from the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving. In 2023, the mayor proposed, and the City Council adopted, a resolution allocating cannabis tax revenue to support the RWC, along with the Neighborhood Ambassadors Program.

**1,000+**  
INDIVIDUALS SERVED BY RWC



Three other initiatives of the Office of Community Safety and Wellness support violence prevention through intervention.

#### **HOSPITAL-BASED VIOLENCE INTERVENTION PROGRAM**

**(HVIP):** In 2022, Hartford launched and funded a comprehensive hospital-based violence intervention program, which aims to engage with survivors of violence right after an incident at the hospital. The City's HVIP is administered by Connecticut Children's Injury Prevention Center, in partnership with Trinity Health of New England and Hartford Hospital, together with local violence interrupters — making Hartford the only city in the state to have three hospitals participating in its HVIP. Collectively, these partners implement a trauma-informed approach to care, identify risk factors, and provide long-term case management for victims of gun violence.

- **Formalized Partnerships:** Grassroots organizations like Hartford Communities That Care (HCTC), Mothers United Against Violence (MUAV), and COMPASS Peacebuilders have long done violence reduction work in Hartford. For the first time through the HVIP, they each have a formal contract and budget of \$110,000 with Connecticut Children's, which administers the program. They're contracted to provide a specific set of wraparound services, with MUAV focused on grief counseling, HCTC focused on supporting adults, and COMPASS focused on supporting young people who are involved in violence.
- **Results:** Over the five-month period between April and August of 2023, the HVIP coordinated care for 116 victims of gun violence across the three hospitals. More than half were connected to services to help them heal from trauma, access basic needs, or other support.
- **Next Steps:** There are several efforts underway to strengthen the HVIP, including enhancing data sharing and adding partners to support young women and victims requiring ongoing wound care, and refining the process of providing immediate support for victims.
- **Funding:** The City has allocated \$2 million in American Rescue Plan funds to run the HVIP in 2022, 2023, and 2024. Sub-awards to grassroots organizations fund staff and provide administrative support. Funding for the hospitals goes towards hiring a full-time HVIP specialist and associated costs.

**RAPID RESPONSE PROTOCOL:** In 2018, Hartford's Chief Operating Officer established a coordinated crisis response plan for victims of gun violence who were under 25 years old. That plan brought together law enforcement, social services, state officials, and the school system, as appropriate, to identify each young person's immediate needs and to try and address systemic challenges that might affect their life going forward. That turned into the City's Rapid Response Protocol, which is led by the Department of Families, Youth, Children, and Recreation's Youth Services Bureau (YSB), with support from the Office of Community Safety and Wellness.

The program came about after repeated instances where one agency or community group would know about a young person in crisis, and at risk of being a victim or perpetrator of violence — but either did not or could not marshal broader resources to intervene.

Since being formalized, the program has responded to 237 incidents of violence involving a young person, and has begun following the 5-5-5 model: meeting the family within 5 hours of the incident bedside at the hospital, offering a home visit within 5 days of first contact, and following up within 5 weeks to ensure outstanding needs are being met. Those needs can include trauma-informed counseling and support, housing assistance, transportation, basic needs, or whatever else a family might need. Recently, these response efforts have been further refined to provide a more individualized response to youth victims of violence and their families, which may mean coordinating services and meeting with families sooner and more frequently than the 5-5-5-model.

- **Funding:** The operation of the Protocol is funded through staff salaries, largely from the General Fund.

## COMMUNITY VIOLENCE INTERVENTION AND PREVENTION INITIATIVE:

In 2022, Hartford successfully applied for \$2 million in funding through the Department of Justice's Community Violence Intervention and Prevention Initiative. Hartford applied for that funding because, while it had built multiple components of a successful community violence intervention (CVI) strategy, its approach could benefit from coordinated expansion and development. The programming funded by this grant is designed to work with repeat, violent offenders who were identified in an external analysis conducted for the Police Department. The City is supplementing the grant with American Rescue Plan dollars, and using this funding in a number of ways:

- To hire two intensive case managers at Community Partners in Action to meet daily with individuals at high risk of being involved in violence, helping them build life plans and meet their goals.
- To work with Capital Community College (CCC) and develop a curriculum that can train Hartford residents who were formerly justice involved to work as credible messengers and serve the role of a peer mentor to individuals at risk of being involved in violence, in partnership with Intensive Case Managers. Currently, eight Hartford residents who were formerly justice involved are participating in a 10-week training program at CCC. They will complete their training in February of 2024 and begin peer mentoring. Two additional 10-week training sessions for new peer mentors will be held later in 2024.

- To engage the Full Citizen's Coalition, a statewide advocacy group that works on behalf of people who are incarcerated and people returning home, which is being subcontracted by CPA to support the credible messengers program.
- To defray the cost of Police Department staffing directly related to violence reduction.
- To similarly defray technology costs directly related to violence reduction, including ShotSpotter, communications platforms, and video technology.

COMPASS Peacebuilders is a key partner in Hartford's CVI ecosystem, and grant funding through the Community Violence Intervention and Prevention Initiative will directly and indirectly support their work. Over the last year, they've enrolled more than 263 Hartford youth in their programming, and conducted 3,049 individual school, court, and home visits.

The City has also consistently provided direct General Fund support for COMPASS, including \$300,000 in FY2023. Their programming is effective, with 62% exhibiting decreased levels of risk, 57% achieving gains towards employment, and 59% making gains toward building positive social relationships.



## ADVOCACY & STATEWIDE REFORM INITIATIVES

Alongside developing and implementing evidence-based violence reduction strategies, the City has advocated for a range of policy changes that can have a material impact on the safety of neighborhoods in Hartford. Recent examples include:

### NEW STATE LEGISLATION ON SERIOUS FIREARM OFFENSE & REPEAT

**OFFENDERS:** The Hartford Police Department’s analysis of gun violence between 2019 and 2021, including 63 gun-related homicides and 398 non-fatal shootings, found that suspects and victims were **highly likely** to have prior arrests. For suspects and victims between eighteen and twenty-four, forty-nine percent had committed at least two or three criminal offenses.

Overall, seventy percent of victims and suspects had prior arrests in Hartford — and the average number of prior arrests was 9.6. In 2022 alone, of the 44 individuals arrested for fatal or non-fatal shootings, 39% were on pre-trial release, 14% were on probation, and 5% were on parole.

In response to this troubling data, Mayor Bronin, the Connecticut Conference of Municipalities, and the Chief State’s Attorney developed a legislative proposal to increase accountability for repeat offenders, supported by a broad coalition of community advocates. That advocacy effort resulted in the most significant, bipartisan gun safety legislation in recent history, enacted by the legislature and Governor Lamont in 2023. The legislation increased accountability and provided prosecutors with additional tools for addressing Repeat Serious Firearm Offenders responsible for violence in the community.

**ADVOCATING TO PROTECT GHOST GUN REGULATIONS:** In 2022, Hartford joined fifteen other cities to file an amicus brief opposing an injunction attempting to prevent the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives from regulating “ghost guns.” The federal court system is still hearing appeals to the ATF’s rule.

INCREASED  
ACCOUNTABILITY  
FOR REPEAT SERIOUS  
FIREARM OFFENDERS



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# RECOMMENDATIONS

Gun violence is the most painful, vexing challenge that Hartford and cities like it face. It is a uniquely American, entrenched problem with many external causes, deeply felt by the most vulnerable members of the community — many of whom are traumatized by cycles of violence.

The incoming administration should continue working on every possible front and pursue a holistic approach to gun violence reduction. Specific priorities include:

- **CONTINUE TO STRENGTHEN IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CVI MODEL:** Hartford has invested significant resources over the last several years into studying the nature of gun violence in Hartford. As the City strengthens its implementation of its CVI model, including the HVIP, it will need the incoming administration's support — in terms of prioritizing gun violence prevention work within government, seeking funding, and keeping local stakeholders engaged.
- **ADVOCATE FOR MORE EFFECTIVE TRAUMA TREATMENT INSIDE DOC FACILITIES AND IN COMMUNITY SETTINGS:** We know that those who are involved in gun violence in our community have often been exposed to violence, and in many cases have been victims of violence. Breaking the cycle of violence requires more effective treatment of trauma, through tools such as Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT). It is vital that we provide more effective treatment to those who are incarcerated and especially to those young people who are becoming involved with the criminal justice system.
- **MAINTAIN TECHNOLOGY INVESTMENTS:** Hartford has invested millions of dollars and enormous time and energy into its anti-crime technology investments. Those investments, including the camera system, ShotSpotter, and other technology, as well as expertise within the Police Department, will require regular maintenance and prioritization.
- **CONTINUE TO ADVOCATE FOR LAWS THAT REDUCE ACCESS TO GUNS:** Hartford has seen a growing number of ghost guns, along with the proliferation of Glock switches and the steady flow of out-of-state guns. Access to illegally possessed firearms continues to be a major factor in the rate of gun violence. The incoming administration should continue Hartford's longtime advocacy against the proliferation of illegal guns.

# HOUSING & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



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# HOUSING & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

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## BACKGROUND

One of the most urgent challenges facing the State of Connecticut and the City of Hartford is the significant need for quality housing opportunities at every level of the income spectrum. The City of Hartford hosts more deed-restricted affordable housing than any municipality in the state, by far, and over the last eight years has significantly improved major affordable housing developments while adding new affordable units, with more in the pipeline.

In addition to maintaining its focus on the improvement and construction of affordable units, the City has worked to expand the supply of market-rate and workforce housing — a priority that will be critical to the city’s recovery in the wake of COVID-19, given the shift to remote work and the opportunity Connecticut as a whole has to attract workers and families.

Hartford’s energy and investments in housing are reflected in its City Plan, which was released in 2020, and the Affordable Housing Plan, released in 2022. The City laid out clear goals in its 2015 Plan: 5,000 new units of housing in and around the Central Business District, including filling vacant lots and converting abandoned buildings to residential use; repairing the housing stock; using the land bank to transform vacant, blighted properties; and increasing homeownership. There are initiatives underway on all of those fronts.

## BACKGROUND CONT.

In addition to initiatives specifically aimed at housing, the City is also pursuing a wide variety of other economic development projects in locations across Hartford, aimed at not only furthering our housing goals, but also creating new spaces for street-level small businesses and growing the City's grand list through economic expansion, with resulting job opportunities for city residents. Many such projects feature mixed-use development, in which retail or commercial space can be found on the ground floor, with residential units on the floors above. These initiatives will be described in more detail further on the following pages.



## CONTINUED INVESTMENT IN AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Given Hartford’s aging housing stock, growing the number of quality affordable units requires rehabilitating or rebuilding existing properties while at the same time building new affordable developments and, where feasible, including new affordable units within larger market rate developments.

**1,389 REHABILITATION OF EXISTING AFFORDABLE HOUSING:** The City has worked to fix up large affordable housing projects such as the Clay Arsenal Renaissance Apartments and Barbour Gardens, which had fallen into shocking disrepair due to the negligence of their out-of-town landlords. Including those projects and others 1,389 affordable units were rehabilitated in Hartford between 2016-2022.

**675 AFFORDABLE UNITS IN THE REHABILITATION PIPELINE:** Over the next three years, there are an additional 675 affordable units slated for rehabilitation — funded by a combination of tax abatements and tax credits. Projects include the Tuscan Homes, the apartments at Bedford Gardens, The Retreat, and the next phase of Clay Arsenal apartments.

### REHABILITATION OF NEIGHBORHOOD AFFORDABLE HOUSING SINCE 2016

Project/Development Name	Project Type	Total Units	Market	Affordable Units	% Affordable	UnitsNeighborhood	AMI Level	Completed
<b>CLAY ARSENAL RENAISSANCE APARTMENTS</b>	Rental	150	0	150	100%	Clay Arsenal	25%-80%	2019
<b>BARBOUR GARDENS</b>	Rental	74	0	74	100%	Northeast	25%-80%	2022
<b>BEDFORD GARDENS</b>	Rental	85	60	25	29%	Clay Arsenal	25%-80%	2022
<b>SIGOURNEY SQUARE</b>	Rental	42	0	42	100%	Asylum Hill	25%-80%	2022
<b>95 VINE</b>	Rental	31	0	31	100%	Upper Albany	25%-80%	2022
<b>CASA VERDE</b>	Rental	39	0	39	100%	South Green	25%-80%	2022
<b>ENFIELD /MAGNOLIA</b>	Rental	20	0	20	100%	Northeast	25%-80%	2022
<b>SIGOURNEY MEWS</b>	Rental/Family	88	0	88	100%	Asylum Hill	25%-80%	2018
<b>BILLINGS FORGE</b>	Rental/Family	112	0	68	100%	Frog Hollow	25%-60%	2019
<b>CHAPELLE GARDENS</b>	Rental/Family	179	0	179	100%	Northeast	25%-80%	2021
<b>M.D. FOX</b>	Rental/Family	90	0	90	100%	South Green	25%-65%	2016
<b>CLEMENS PLACE</b>	Rental/Family	642	0	583	100%	Westend	25%-80%	2016
		<b>1552</b>		<b>1,389</b>	<b>0%</b>			

### REHAB PIPELINE OF AFFORDABLE UNITS/PROJECTS IN THE NEIGHBORHOODS

<b>CLAY ARSENAL RENAISSANCE APARTMENTS OMNI</b>	Rental	150	0	150	100%	Clay Arsenal	25%-80%	2023
<b>MERCY SHELTER HOUSING — PLINY STREET PROJECT</b>	Rental	24	0	24	100%	Northeast	25%-80%	2024
<b>DILLON PLACE APARTMENTS</b>	Rental	65	0	65	100%	Sheldon-Oak	25%-60%	2023 2025
<b>WETHERSFIELD COMMONS — CRT</b>	Rental	12	0	12	100%	Sheldon-Oak	25%-60%	2023
<b>TUSCAN II HOMES</b>	Rental	120	0	120	100%	Northeast	25%-80%	2023
<b>HARTFORD ASSISTED LIVING PARTNERSHIP — CRT (90 RETREAT AVENUE)</b>	Rental	100	0	100	100%	South Green	25%-60%	2024
<b>THE RETREAT</b>	Rental/Elderly	100	0	100	100%	South Green	25%-65%	2023
<b>THE HOLLANDER</b>	Rental	70	14	56	80%	Asylum Hill	25%-80%	2025
<b>SOROMUNDI COMMONS</b>	Rental	48	0	48	100%	Asylum Hill	25%-60%	2025
		<b>689</b>		<b>675</b>	<b>98%</b>			

**818 NEW AFFORDABLE HOUSING UNITS OUTSIDE DOWNTOWN:** The new affordable housing units built over the last eight years include new, ground-up construction at historic housing projects like Westbrook Village and Bowles Park, now known as The Village at Park River and Willow Creek. It also includes important projects the Hub on Park, and New Samaritan senior housing in Parkville. All together, 818 new, affordable units were built or are currently being built in Hartford in Hartford between 2016-2022 outside the downtown area.

- **575 Affordable Units in the Construction Pipeline:** Separately, there are nearly 600 affordable units in the construction pipeline, ranging from larger projects like Fuller Brush to smaller projects like 270 Albany Avenue, and the last phases of the Westbrook Village and Bowles Park projects.



**NEW NEIGHBORHOOD AFFORDABLE HOUSING SINCE 2016**

Project/Development Name	Project Type	Total Units	Market	Affordable Units	% Affordable	UnitsNeighborhood	AMI Level	Completed
<b>CLOVER GARDENS</b>	Rental	32	0	32	100%	Asylum Hill	25%-80%	2022
<b>NEW SAMARITAN ELDERLY HOUSING</b>	Rental	22	0	22	100%	Parkville	25%-80%	Underway
<b>HARTFORD HABITAT</b>	H/O	4	0	4	100%	Northeast	80%	2020
<b>HARTFORD HABITAT</b>	H/O	3	0	3	100%	Frog Hollow	80%	2017
<b>HARTFORD HABITAT</b>	H/O	3	0	2	67%	Northeast	80%	2018
<b>HARTFORD HABITAT</b>	H/O	2	0	2	100%	Southend/ Northeast	80%	2017
<b>HARTFORD HABITAT</b>	H/O	6	0	6	100%	Asylum Hill	80%	2020
<b>THE HUB</b>	Rental	45	10	35	78%	Frog Hollow	25%-65%	2022
<b>EDWARDS STREET HOUSING</b>	H/O	3	3	3	100%	Clay Arsenal	80%	2022
<b>WEAVER BUILDING LLC ALBANY &amp; WOODLAND</b>	Rental	18	10	8	44%	Upper Albany	0%-80%	Underway
<b>MAGNOLIA BUILDING LLC 635 ALBANY</b>	Rental	12	4	8	67%	Upper Albany	0%-80%	Underway
<b>ANDALEEB ENTERPRISES LLC ALBANY AND VINE</b>	Rental	8	2	6	75%	Upper Albany	0%-80%	Underway
<b>BRACKET KNOLL</b>	H/O	14	0	14	100%	Northeast	80%	Underway
<b>THE VILLAGE AT PARK RIVER/ WESTBROOK PHASE 1-4</b>	Rental	260	60	200	77%	Blue Hills	25%-65%	2022
<b>WILLOW CREEK/BOWLES PARK PHASE 1-3</b>	Rental	135	11	124	92%	Blue Hills	25%-65%	2022
<b>VARIOUS RESIDENTIAL 1-3 FAMILY PROPERTIES</b>	H/O	147		147	100%	All Neighborhoods	60%-80%	2016-2022
<b>VARIOUS RESIDENTIAL PROPERTIES</b>	OO/Rental	135	31	104	77%	All Neighborhoods	25%-80%	2016-2022
<b>VARIOUS RESIDENTIAL PROPERTIES</b>	OO/Rental	29	16	13	45%	Clay Arsenal Northeast	0%-100%	2020-2022
<b>DAYS INN SHELTER - CRT</b>	Shelter	85	0	85	100%	Meadows	0%-80%	Underway
		<b>963</b>		<b>818</b>				



**132 NEW AFFORDABLE UNITS AS PART OF DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT:**

Working hand in hand with the city, the Capital Region Development Authority (CRDA) has helped spur a large amount of housing development downtown, from the Capewell Lofts to new construction near the baseball stadium. Those developments have included 132 affordable units already built, with another 54 expected over the next year through DONO Phases I and II and the Arrowhead project. Overall, about ten percent of Hartford’s downtown units are categorized as affordable, and that percentage is higher than 136 out of Connecticut’s 169 municipalities.

**SELECT DOWNTOWN HOUSING PROJECTS SINCE 2016**

Project/Development Name	Total Units	Market	Affordable Units	% Affordable Units	Completed/AMI Level	To Be Completed
TEACHERS VILLAGE	60	42	18	30%	25%-100%	2019
CAPEWELL LOFTS	72	72	1	20%	50%-120%	2016
390 CAPITOL AVENUE	112	71	14	20%	50%-120%	2016
DONO PHASE I	270	243	27	10%	30%-120	2022
28 HIGH STREET	28	22	6	20%	50%-120%	2020
PARK AND MAIN	126	101	25	20%	80-120%	2022
525 MAIN STREET	42	36	8	20%	80-120%	2022
55 ELM STREET	164	131	33	20%	80%-120%	2022
	<b>874</b>		<b>132</b>			
<b>DOWNTOWN PROJECT PIPELINE — ANTICIPATED</b>						
DONO PARCEL B (PHASE I)	280	270	10	4%	50%-80%	2024
DONO PARCEL B (PHASE 2)	189	180	9	18%	120%	2024
ARROWHEAD	18	14	4	22%	50%-80%	2024
	<b>487</b>	<b>464</b>	<b>23</b>			

**2,339 TOTAL NEW OR REHABILITATED AFFORDABLE HOUSING:** Taken together, 2,339 units of affordable housing were added or rehabilitated between 2016–2022 in Hartford, excluding affordable units in the pipeline. As a result, even as the City has brought new investment and market rate housing, it has maintained a record proportion of affordable housing: 40%, the highest in the state.

## MARKET RATE DEVELOPMENT

In partnership with the Capital Region Development Authority, Hartford has seen more than 3,300 units developed over the last eleven years, with a current occupancy rate of 95%. Building on that progress, Hartford’s City Plan, adopted in 2020, embraced the goal of building 5,000 new units between 2020 and 2035. CRDA is also helping to advance several of the Plan’s “Ten Transformative Projects,” including the completion of DONO, development at Bushnell South, and the Parkville Arts & Innovation District.



### DOWNTOWN HOUSING PROJECTS SINCE 2016

Project/Development Name	Total Units	Market	Affordable Units	% Affordable Units	Completed/AMI Level	To Be Completed
TEACHERS VILLAGE	60	42	18	30%	25%-100%	2019
CAPEWELL LOFTS	72	72	1	20%	50%-120%	2016
390 CAPITOL AVENUE	112	71	14	20%	50%-120%	2016
DONO PHASE I	270	243	27	10%	30%-120	2022
SPECTRA ON PEARL (101&111)	258	258	0	0	N/A	2020
28 HIGH STREET	28	22	6	20%	50%-120%	2020
81 ARCH STREET	53	53	0	0	N/A	2019
COLT NORTH ARMORY	48	48	0	0	N/A	2019
HARTFORD CARRIAGE HOUSE AT ALLYN	66	66	0	0	N/A	2020
1279-83 MAIN STREET	10	10	0	0	N/A	2022
HARTFORD LOFTS/ 289 ASYLUM STREET	8	8	0	0	N/A	2019
COLT U APARTMENTS	28	28	0	0	N/A	2021
PARK AND MAIN	126	101	25	20%	80-120%	2022
525 MAIN STREET	42	36	8	20%	80-120%	2022
275 PEARL STREET	39	0	0	0	N/A	2022
55 ELM STREET	164	131	33	20%	80%-120%	2022
99 PRATT STREET	97	97	0	0%	N/A	2022
	<b>1481</b>	<b>1286</b>	<b>132</b>			
<b>DOWNTOWN PROJECT PIPELINE — ANTICIPATED</b>						
DONO PARCEL B (PHASE 1)	280	270	10	4%	50%-80%	2023
DONO PARCEL B (PHASE 2)	189	180	9	18%	50%-120%	2024
ARROWHEAD	18	14	4	22%	50%-80%	2023
	<b>543</b>	<b>464</b>	<b>54</b>			

**1,481 TOTAL DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT SPURRED BY CRDA:** CRDA has supported most of the new, market rate housing development downtown. Most of the 1,481 units built between 2016 - 2022 come from larger projects, with one hundred or more units. They are scattered throughout the downtown area.

**KEY OPPORTUNITIES:** There are 1,107 CRDA-supported units that are currently in construction or at closing. There are an additional 1,350 units that are in the underwriting or planning phases. Many of those planned units are in developments that were identified among the city’s “Ten Transformative Projects” highlighted in the Hartford 2035 City Plan.

**CRDA’S ROLE BEYOND DOWNTOWN:** CRDA has also played an active role in development projects beyond downtown, including providing some financing for Parkville Market, the homeownership opportunities at Brackett Knoll, the Bowles Park redevelopment, NINA’s work in Asylum Hill, and more.

- **Bristle & Main (Former Fuller Brush Factory):** In December 2023, the City announced that redevelopment of the old Fuller Brush factory would move forward. The \$36 million project includes funding from CRDA, the State, the City, and private financing secured by Shelbourne, the developer. The mixed-use project will include 155 one- and two-bedroom units. There is a \$27 million second phase of the project that includes commercial and light industrial space that still requires funding.



## HOMEOWNERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

The overwhelming majority of Hartford residents are renters, and one of the goals in the City Plan is to increase homeownership by 50% by encouraging more owner-occupied units, including condo buildings in the neighborhoods. Hartford is pursuing several initiatives to push the city towards that goal.

As part of the Affordable Housing Plan, there are 171 affordable homeownership units planned for the next five years.

### ANTICIPATED NEW AFFORDABLE HOMEOWNERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

Project/Development Name	Project Type	Total Units	Ownership Units	Rental Units*	Neighborhood	Homeowner AMI Level	Form of Assistance	Anticipated Completion Date
<b>HABITAT FOR HUMANITY RESIDENTIAL PROJECTS</b>	H/O	10	9	1	Various	50%-80%	ARPA Funds	2023-2024
<b>SOUTHSIDE INSTITUTIONS NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION (SINA) RESIDENTIAL PROJECTS</b>	H/O	16	8	8	Parkville	25% -80%	ARPA Funds	2023-2024
<b>THE VILLAGE AT PARK RIVER (FORMERLY WESTBROOK) PHASE 5 OR 6</b>	H/O	18	18	0	Blue Hills	80%	DOH, Private Funds	2024
<b>WILLOW CREEK (FORMERLY BOWLES PARK) PHASE 5 OR 6</b>	H/O	29	29	0	Blue Hills	80%	DOH, Private Funds	2024
<b>CITY OF HARTFORD HOUSEHARTFORD DOWNPAYMENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM</b>	H/O	120	75	45	Northeast	50%-80%	HouseHartford Down Payment Assistance Program	2022-2027
<b>HARTFORD LAND BANK</b>	H/O	37	25	12	Various	80%	DOH, Private Funds	2022-2027
<b>CITY OF HARTFORD'S GAP PROGRAM</b>	H/O	13	5	8	Various	80%-120%	Gap Program, Private, CHFA	2022-2024
<b>NEAK CONSTRUCTION, LLC</b>	H/O	16	4	2	Northeast (Enfield Street)	80%	HOME	2024
		<b>247</b>	<b>171</b>	<b>76</b>				

\*Note that in some cases, new affordable homeownership projects will consist of 2-unit residential structures, where one unit will be owner-occupied and the other will be rented. For this reason, there are rental units included in the anticipated 5-year pipeline. Source: City of Hartford Housing Division, August 2022.

**DOWN PAYMENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM:** Owner-occupied housing opportunities strengthen neighborhoods and help attract (or lure back) families who want to live and raise their families in Hartford. But down payments are one of the biggest hurdles prospective homeowners face — particularly for people of color. One analysis found that 80% of “working age minority renters,” have less than \$5,000 in cash. In Hartford’s context, that would be a huge barrier for families that have roots in Hartford but have moved to surrounding towns, or to other parts of the country.

To help make it easier for prospective homeowners, Hartford has long had a down-payment assistance program, which it funds through a U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development annual allocation. The program offers down payment assistance to low and moderate-income households seeking to purchase a 1- to 4-unit home in Hartford. The program can cover up to 20% of the purchase price for down payment, up to a maximum of \$40,000 total. Homeowners that receive assistance must maintain the property as their primary residence. From 2016 to 2022, that program helped 185 homebuyers, and more than ninety percent of successful buyers were households of color, and the City has allocated more than \$5 million through this program.



**CITY EMPLOYEE DOWN PAYMENT ASSISTANCE:** In 2023 the City set aside \$1.25 million, from a combination of American Rescue Plan funds and General Fund dollars, to create a down payment assistance program for City employees. It will offer \$10,000 to each employee who wants to buy a home in Hartford, and the program is now open to applications.

**GAP FINANCING:** This program creates a financial incentive for developers to build 1- and 2-unit owner-occupied homes. The developer can fill the “gap” between what it costs to build a home and the appraised value or sales price of that home, giving a low-income family the opportunity for homeownership. Over the last eight years, the City has spent \$1.7 million supporting 27 projects with 47 total units of housing.

**HOMEOWNERSHIP PARTNERSHIP WITH NEIGHBORHOOD DEVELOPERS:** Hartford allocated \$4.1 million in American Rescue Plan funds to support the work of Habitat for Humanity, NINA, SINA and the Hartford Land Bank. Those organizations are charged with renovating old, blighted buildings or building on vacant lots to create homeownership opportunities. The City has worked with these organizations for many years, and since 2016 they’ve collectively created more than fifty homeownership opportunities (excluding the Land Bank). So far, this funding has allowed the three organizations to create more than 50 homeownership opportunities.

**COMMUNITY INVESTMENT FUND (CIF) APPLICATION:** In 2022, the State launched a five-year, \$875 million grant program aimed at building affordable housing, brownfield remediation, and public facilities. Hartford

submitted an application for \$26.7 million to support a \$39.9 million, five-year effort to build 200 new, owner-occupied homes. The funding would create 48 new homeownership units and 26 rental units in duplexes, as well as pre-development work for two Hartford Housing Authority sites that will enable a minimum of 50 additional homeownership units. The overall project team includes experienced developers including Mutual Housing Association of Greater Hartford, Toraal Development, Sheldon Oak Central, the Hartford Housing Authority, the Hartford Land Bank and LISC. The city has site control on all of the proposed properties.

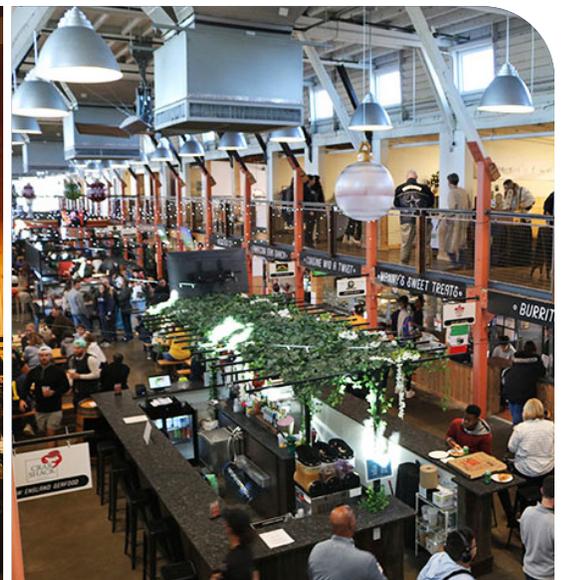
- **Funding for Mary Shepard Home Ownership Opportunities:** In April 2023, the State Bond Commission granted Hartford \$4.57 million to fund one component of its overall plan, the redevelopment of Mary Shepard Place, a 127-unit public housing development owned by the Housing Authority. As part of this redevelopment plan, the aging units will be placed with a mix of homeownership and affordable rental units.

**LAND BANK:** In 2017, Hartford created a land bank and successfully obtained \$5 million in initial capitalization funds. Land banks are non-profit entities that acquire and redevelop (or sell) properties in order to return them to productive use. It took several years for the state to release the funding for the Hartford Land Bank to use, and the City began transferring parcels to the Land Bank in 2021. The first renovation was completed in 2022 on Earle Street. Since then, the city has transferred 23 additional properties to the Land Bank, bringing the total number of Land Bank properties to 30.

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

In addition to the housing initiatives described above, the City is pursuing a wide variety of economic development projects in locations across Hartford aimed at furthering our housing goals, creating new spaces for street-level small businesses, and growing the City's grand list through economic expansion with resulting job opportunities for city residents.

Many such projects feature mixed-use development, where retail or commercial space can be found on the ground floor, with residential units on the floors above. Here is a selection of the largest economic development projects across the city that are underway or in various stages of planning, with a focus on projects with significant commercial components. Some of these projects are at or near construction, while others remain in the earlier stages of planning and development:



**PARKVILLE ARTS & INNOVATION DISTRICT:** This is a major, \$242 million plan to transform Parkville into a statewide destination for arts, culture, cuisine, creative enterprise, and innovation. Realizing the entire vision will require continued coordination and funding from the City, the State through its Innovation Corridor program, CRDA, and private developers. These are the components of the project that are not related to housing:

- Parkville Market Phase II:** The second phase of Parkville Market will include 30,000 square feet of commercial and recreation space. Construction is underway, with anticipated opening of the first floor in the first half of 2024.
- 237 Hamilton St:** Originally a factory, this 112,000 square foot complex will become a mixed-use development including 80,000 square feet for commercial uses. This approximately \$70 million project is financed primarily through private financing, utilizing historic tax credits, and CRDA gap financing. Environmental remediation work is already underway and nearly complete, with the next phase of construction anticipated for the Spring of 2024. This project represents the largest of the current redevelopment projects on the Bartholomew Avenue corridor.



- 17-35 Bartholomew Avenue:** These vacant lots are slated for the first significant ground-up construction in the Parkville neighborhood in many years, with approximately 57 units of residential concealing a structured parking garage that will provide district parking to the Parkville neighborhood. The residential project is anticipated to cost approximately \$17 million, and will utilize a combination of sources, including private financing, Challenge Grant funding, and city funds allocated through the CRDA partnership. Garage financing includes an allocation of city economic development funds allocated through the CRDA partnership. The city is currently working to finalize both the property disposition and a revenue sharing agreement.
- 81 Bartholomew Avenue:** In 2022, the City acquired this 80,000 square foot property from a private owner. The initial plan was to create a co-working space focused on advanced manufacturing and digital technologies, potentially anchored by DISTRICT, the New Haven-based technology park, and the Connecticut Center for Advanced Technology. While the city was unsuccessful in obtaining an Innovation Corridor grant to pursue that initial plan, the Bronin Administration believed that it was critical to control the future disposition of such a large and unique property on Bartholomew Avenue.
- 169 Bartholomew Avenue:** This former Whitney Machine Company building includes 48,000 square feet of space that requires substantial remediation and stabilization. The building is under private ownership, and the owners have been pursuing brownfield grant funds to support remediation. The city has encouraged the owners to partner with larger-scale developers given the size and complexity of this project. If successful, this project would be a very significant addition to the Parkville redevelopment efforts.
- The Biggest Redevelopment Opportunity in Hartford:** In 2021, the City of Hartford acquired, through foreclosure, the 33-acre former scrap metal yard located along Flatbush Avenue and abutting the properties slated for redevelopment on Bartholomew Avenue. This property requires significant environmental remediation, and the city has completed initial environmental assessments. Due to its size, this property represents, over the long-term, the largest single developable parcel in the City of Hartford.

**“NORTH CROSSING”:** Originally known as Downtown North, the mixed-use development project around Dunkin’ Park can now continue, with the City’s litigation with the former developer settled. The total \$250 million project, which is developed by RMS Companies, will create about 1,000 apartments in addition to parking garages and commercial spaces.

- **Parcel C:** The first phase of development, to the South of the stadium, was fully completed in the summer of 2023. There are 270 apartment units, a 250-space parking garage, and 5,500 square feet of commercial space. The housing on Parcel C is almost entirely occupied by tenants. The vast majority of the \$56 million project was privately funded, with \$11,800 from CRDA and about a million in City HOME funding.

**PARCEL B:** This is the next stage of development, on the surface parking lot West of the stadium, which will be broken up into two parts. Phase I is a \$58 million project that includes 227 apartments and a 541-space parking garage, and it is expected to break ground in early 2024. Phase II will include 304 apartments and likely break ground in 2026. Phase I and Phase II together represent a \$120 million development, anticipated to include approximately \$32 million in funding from CRDA.

- **Parcel A:** This is a collection of vacant parcels Northwest of the stadium and it’s connected to the Arrowhead Gateway redevelopment. This parcel could serve a variety of uses, including a potential grocery store.
- **Parcel D:** This is the former Travelers data center, and it requires about \$12 million in environmental remediation before redevelopment can be considered. This City of Hartford is currently pursuing Community Investment Fund resources to support this demolition and remediation.
- **RPI Campus:** The developer of North Crossing purchased the 13-acre former Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute campus. The developer plans to demolish part of the campus to support future mixed-use development, allowing for a substantial addition of residential density that will complement the growth of Downtown North. The development will retain the existing 450-spot parking garage.

**BUSHNELL SOUTH:** The master plan for Bushnell South envisions a new neighborhood at the crossroads of Bushnell Park and the Bushnell Theatre, including new apartment buildings, townhouses, restaurants, and green spaces. The plan includes approximately 1,200 units of housing and 63,000 square feet of retail and commercial space. The total project cost is estimated at \$400 million, and it would require approximately \$100 million in gap financing through CRDA. Main elements of the master plan include:

- **Multi-parcel property around 55 Elm Street:** An affiliate of Spinnaker Real Estate Partners owns five acres of land on and around 55 Elm Street, the site of two old State office buildings, and holds the option to acquire six additional parcels of surface parking totaling another 2.5 acres. The full potential development includes more than 450 units of housing, 75 hotel rooms, and 150,000 square feet of commercial space.
  - **55 Elm Street:** This project is underway and will include 164 apartments and about 15,700 square feet of commercial space. The total project will cost \$68 million, with \$5 million from CRDA. If the project receives historic tax credits and repays CRDA with those credits, CRDA will roll over the funding into other portions of the development.
  - **65 Elm Street & 100 Capitol Avenue:** These properties would become apartment buildings with a combined 85 residential units, at a total project cost of about \$23 million. These parcels would receive CRDA rollover funding, if applicable.
- **Capitol Avenue & Buckingham Street:** This parcel is currently a state-owned surface parking lot down the street from the Bushnell Theatre, and will be the site of a \$72 million project that includes 375 residential units and 28,000 square feet of commercial space. It could also include an outdoor performance venue and green space connecting the housing development to the Bushnell.

**ALBANY AVENUE REVITALIZATION:** The City of Hartford has pursued an aggressive, coordinated economic development plan for Albany Avenue, which includes multiple mixed-use renovation projects and ground-up construction, with the goal of eliminating blight, filling in vacant lots, and creating a more vibrant economic corridor:

- **Expansion of Albany Avenue Library Branch:** The City of Hartford has provided substantial funding, utilizing multiple sources, to allow for the rehabilitation of the Historic Northwest Jones School to serve as an annex to the existing Albany Avenue Library. The City is currently preparing to begin environmental remediation work, after which the project will be transferred to the Hartford Public Library.
- **Albany-Woodland Redevelopment:** This long-vacant lot at the corner of Albany Avenue and Woodland Street is moving toward development. The plan includes the construction of approximately 31,000 square feet of total space, and it will house the City's health department, a bank, a restaurant, and parking behind the building. This is a \$19.5 million development project, led by Grow America and funded by the city, in partnership with CRDA. The city is working to finalize a Development Management Agreement that will allow for construction to begin in early 2024.



- **Development of 614 Albany Avenue (Police Substation Lot):** The site located at 614 Albany Avenue and 88 Magnolia Street has been blighted and underutilized for many years. Redevelopment plans now in progress call for a team of developers in partnership to construct a mixed-used structure consisting of 78 residential units and approximately

12,000 square feet of commercial space with amenities on the ground floor. The total projected cost of the project is approximately \$30.9 million, with financing to include a construction loan, CHFA loan, federal LIHTC equity, State Department of Housing funds, developer equity, and a \$3.5 million City of Hartford grant supported in part by State bonding.



- **Development of 270 Albany Avenue Block:** The property located at 270 & 292 Albany Avenue has been blighted and underutilized for several years. In late 2021, the City issued an RFP seeking to redevelop the property into a mixed-use development with commercial space on the ground floor and residential spaces above. Plans call for rehab of the existing historic structure, already stabilized by the City, into eight residential units and approximately 1,200 square feet of commercial space, while a new four-story building will add 32 additional residential units and 1,800 more square feet of commercial space on the ground level. This \$10.8 million effort will be financed through a construction loan, CHFA loan, historic tax credits, federal LIHTC Equity, and State Department of Housing funds.
- **Arrowhead Redevelopment:** At the corner of Main Street and High Street, the Arrowhead redevelopment project will combine four City-owned parcels with four privately-owned parcels to create a mixed-use development including 43 market rate and affordable apartments and three commercial spaces. This is an \$18 million project with more than half a dozen sources of funding, including \$6.3 million in competitive state Challenge Grant funding and \$4 million through CRDA.

**BARBOUR STREET DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS:** On Barbour Street, the City is leading and/or partnering on the development of multiple parcels. Together with the reconstruction of Wish School and the planned demolition and development of the contaminated Clark School, for which the city is currently seeking CIF funding, these projects will contribute to a significant revitalization and strengthening of the Barbour Street corridor:

- **Barbour Street Library Branch:** This \$17.5 million project will construct a state-of-the-art library branch on the site of the former Snyder's Grocery Store, which sat vacant and blighted for decades. The city has funded this project through a combination of sources, including significant general fund appropriations, an allocation of ARPA funding, contributions from corporate partners, and a \$2 million grant from the Connecticut State Library. The project is expected to break ground in the spring of 2024.
- **Housing Developments at Westland & Barbour:** The City is currently finalizing the sale of the city-owned property at the corner of Westland & Barbour to a development coalition led by Mutual Housing, Inc. Combined with multiple lots controlled by the Citadel of Love Church, the \$26.6 million first phase of this project will construct 21 units of quality affordable housing at 128 Westland Street. Later phases of development at the site will add a further 100 residential and mixed-use units.

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# RECOMMENDATIONS

Hartford is well on its way to meeting its 2035 goal of building 5,000 new units in and around the Central Business District, while continuing to push aggressively on a number of neighborhood economic development projects. The incoming administration should continue to push the envelope by maintaining the City's partnership with CRDA, advocating for bond funding, and continuing to pursue development across the city. Specific recommendations include:

- **BUILD MIXED-INCOME DEVELOPMENTS WHEREVER POSSIBLE:** Research shows that economically diverse neighborhoods produce better outcomes, especially for lower-income residents. Concentrating affordable housing in one neighborhood or one city perpetuates socio-economic segregation, while mixed-income development provides for a healthier, more sustainable form of growth.
- **CONTINUE BUILDING A CRITICAL MASS OF DENSITY DOWNTOWN, INCLUDING PURSUING COMMERCIAL CONVERSIONS WHERE THEY MAKE SENSE:** The City's longtime goal of building back enough density downtown to support retail and an even more vibrant arts and culture scene depends on building more housing, which should include additional conversions of commercial office space, where feasible. Aggressively pursuing the goal of adding 5,000 more units in and around the Central Business District is vital to the city's future economic health and viability in the wake of the shift to remote and hybrid work.
- **CONTINUE FOCUSING ON RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOOD DEVELOPMENT:** There are a number of key residential projects in the pipeline in Parkville, on Albany Avenue, and in the Northeast neighborhood. Those projects are critical to meeting the City's housing needs.
- **PURSUE THE ARROWHEAD GATEWAY PLAN:** Beyond the Arrowhead Cafe redevelopment project, the City has carefully and strategically established site control over multiple parcels near the intersection of Albany Avenue & Main Street. These parcels present the opportunity to pursue the coordinated Arrowhead Gateway redevelopment plan that will build upon the success of the Downtown North development and strengthen the connections between downtown and the North End.

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## RECOMMENDATIONS CONT.

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- **COMPREHENSIVE PLAN FOR THE HOMESTEAD AVENUE CORRIDOR:** The City and State made major improvements on Albany Avenue, and Homestead Avenue has seen a small number of housing redevelopments. This stretch of land is both a key conduit into the city and goes through a residential neighborhood. The City has deliberately and strategically acquired multiple parcels along Homestead Avenue to ensure that the city is well-positioned to lead the redevelopment effort along the corridor and to seize the opportunity that may be created by the redevelopment of the Griffin Line railroad tracks into a multi-model transit path.
- **ADVOCATE FOR THE FULL COMMUNITY INVESTMENT FUND HOMEOWNERSHIP PROJECT:** As the State continues to grant funding through the CIF program, the City should pursue the full breadth of the previously proposed city-wide homeownership promotion project to create hundreds of new homeownership opportunities. The CIF is expected to award up to \$175 million each fiscal year across multiple application periods.

# HOUSING QUALITY & BLIGHT



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# HOUSING QUALITY & BLIGHT

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## BACKGROUND

As a post-industrial city that lost one-third of its population during the latter part of the 20th century, and which has a high percentage of renters and a high percentage of out-of-town landlords, the twin challenges of housing quality and blight continue to be visible and persistent challenges in the city.

In recent years, the City of Hartford has undertaken a number of initiatives to increase accountability for landlords, increase the responsiveness and effectiveness of housing inspections and enforcement, and dedicate new resources to protecting tenants, promoting housing quality, and combating blight. This report provides a high-level overview of the efforts currently underway.

## CODE AND BLIGHT ENFORCEMENT

### HOUSING CODE REVISION AND ESTABLISHMENT OF THE RESIDENTIAL LICENSING PROGRAM (RLP):

In 2019, Hartford overhauled its housing code, after extensive consultation and collaboration with community organizations, tenant advocacy groups, and property owners.

Among other provisions, the new code created a proactive Rental Licensing Program for multifamily properties. The RLP includes mandated inspections and compliance with housing and zoning codes, as well as with the State building and fire safety codes. To prevent lead poisoning, the RLP also requires a lead risk assessment certifying the building is lead safe if occupied or will be occupied by a child six years or younger. The RLP represents a fundamental shift in the method of housing enforcement, supplementing a purely reactive response to housing complaints with a proactive and comprehensive licensing requirement. The new code also mandated greater transparency about ownership, to address the persistent problem of unresponsive out-of-town landlords. The code includes heavy penalties for non-compliance.

- The RLP is being implemented in phases, beginning with buildings with 40 or more units, hotels, rooming houses and group living. However, owners of buildings with multiple Housing Code violations can be ordered to apply in advance of their original date.
- The City is currently implementing the first phase of the RLP. Approximately 87% of buildings with 40 or more units have applied for the Rental Licensing Program. The same rate of hotels in the city have applied. The City has received 411 rental license applications and issued 64 licenses, with inspections ongoing.

**HOUSING CODE ENFORCEMENT:** For years, housing code enforcement in Hartford lacked transparency, organization, and consistent follow up. While still requiring additional process improvement, the City has made significant improvements to the housing code enforcement process, more than doubling the number of inspectors and utilizing new technology to track complaints, increasing the number and speed of inspections and reinspections significantly.

By December 2023, the City had conducted nearly 13,000 housing code inspections and reinspections, roughly triple the number of inspections conducted annually prior to 2022. In addition, the city has become far more aggressive in following through with enforcement actions, assessing more than \$650,000 in fines for non-compliance over the past two years.

- **Referrals for Criminal Prosecution:** In recent years the City has also made more than a dozen referrals to the Office of the State’s Attorney for serious violations of the blight and housing codes. These are cases where the City has issued multiple violations, or violations have been particularly egregious, and property owners have failed to respond to notices of violation.

### ANNUAL HOUSING CODE INSPECTIONS AND REINSPECTIONS

Year	Cases
2016	5,803
2017	4,419
2018	4,444
2019	4,152
2020	3,359
2021	4,539
2022	8,137
2023	12,793



**BLIGHT REMEDIATION:** Over the last eight years, hundreds of blighted properties have been remediated or renovated, using a combination of tools, including a stronger and more consistent enforcement regime. Similar to housing code enforcement, the City has added inspection capacity and dramatically increased the number of inspections over time. To date in 2023, the City has conducted more than 800 blight inspections and reinspections — more than 10 times the number of inspections conducted in 2016 and 2017.

- **Anti-Blight Ordinance:** In 2017, the City enacted a new Anti-Blight ordinance that strengthened its enforcement ability while encouraging property owners “Fix It Up, Pay It Up, or Give It Up,” which is a model of code enforcement successfully used around the country to fight blight.
- **Blight Remediation Team:** Early in the Bronin administration, the City created a dedicated Blight Remediation Team. Today, that team includes an enforcement officer who writes violations of the blight and property maintenance code, a senior project manager, and three inspectors who are cross-trained as blight and building inspectors. This is a distinct team from housing code enforcement, which has significantly expanded in recent years.
- **Other Initiatives:** There are several other blight-related initiatives, including the creation and work for the Hartford Land Bank, and the City’s support for organizations like SINA and NINA, which are discussed in the housing and economic development report.

**ANNUAL BLIGHT INSPECTIONS AND REINSPCTIONS**

Year	Cases
2016	60
2017	67
2018	280
2019	401
2020	261
2021	187
2022	322
2023	863

**PROBLEM PROPERTIES WORKING GROUP:** In 2021, the City began convening a Problem Properties Working Group with representatives from multiple City departments to address recurring health and safety issues at specific properties in Hartford. In response to repeated violations of State or city codes or serious criminal activity, the working group directs a coordinated, multi-department response that leverages all of the City’s inspection and enforcement tools to address systemic issues affecting residents’ health and wellbeing. Depending on the specific issue, the City can require a property owner to pay for police presence, issue code violations, and issue fines and liens when issues aren’t corrected. The end goal is to identify and then use the specific tool(s) that will maximize the likelihood that health and safety issues don’t reoccur and residents have the living experience they deserve.

- **Example:** A single out of state LLC owned a series of residential buildings in the Gillett Street area that were in severe disrepair and frequently the site of criminal activity, including common area drug use. The owner was non-responsive to housing and police officials, and so the City required the owner to pay for a special police detail for two months. When the owner did not pay, the City covered the cost through its emergency repair fund, placed a priority lien for the cost of the police detail and emergency housing code repairs, and then began a lien foreclosure. At that point, the lender involved in financing the properties came forward, and the owner agreed to transfer the deeds to the lender in lieu of the foreclosure process. Since then, the lender has hired new management and is working with the City to repair the buildings and enhance residents’ safety.

**LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY:** In recent years, the City of Hartford has led the advocacy effort to support key changes in state law that strengthen municipalities’ ability to fight blight and improve housing. Some key changes include:

- **Reforming Notice Requirements:** During the most recent state legislative session, the State reformed onerous notice requirements related to housing code violations. Previously, municipalities were required to make a wide range of notifications when issuing housing code violations, and inadequate notice could jeopardize enforcement actions. The change to state law streamlined initial notification requirements, making it easier for cities and towns to hold delinquent and unresponsive property owners accountable.
- **Authorizing Funding for Revolving Loan Fund for Receivership:** The City of Hartford successfully advocated for the reestablishment of a state revolving loan fund to support housing repairs under court-ordered receivership. In 2023, the State authorized \$50 million in bond funding for the loan fund, which has yet to be allocated by the State Bond Commission.



## TENANT PROTECTION

### PARTNERSHIP WITH GREATER HARTFORD LEGAL AID:

- In 2022, Hartford allocated \$750,000 over three years to Greater Hartford Legal Aid (GHLA) to support GHLA's representation of tenants in housing disputes with landlords. While GHLA had previously represented tenants in eviction proceedings, this new partnership allows GHLA to represent residents in cases concerning housing quality. GHLA also uses the funding to engage with community organizations who work with tenants, helping them expand their knowledge of tenants' legal rights and the legal process.
- In 2023, the City of Hartford allocated \$1,000,000 to establish an Emergency Rental Assistance program administered by Greater Hartford Legal Aid (GHLA). Funds may be disbursed to Hartford residents who are facing eviction, homelessness and/or poor housing conditions — and to be used for security deposit, first month's rent, or back rent owed. A tenant may be granted up to \$4,000, with the goal of providing meaningful support to as many residents-in-need as possible.

## REPAIRS FOR HOMEOWNERS & RENTERS

### REVOLVING LOAN FUND FOR EMERGENCY HOUSING

**REPAIRS:** In 2022, Hartford announced a \$1 million revolving loan fund to provide emergency funding for extreme and urgent repairs to residential buildings. When housing conditions endanger children, seniors, or disabled residents, the City can now directly engage and fund contractors to perform critical repairs. The landlord must pay back the cost of the repairs to the City, but the city's initial funding ensures that emergency repairs are expedited for the safety of vulnerable residents.

- **Funding:** The program was funded through a combination of city general fund revenue and American Rescue Plan funding. It currently has a balance of \$817,000.

**SENIOR HOMEOWNER REHABILITATION PROGRAM:** In 2023, Hartford launched a \$1.25 million forgivable loan fund for Hartford seniors who own their homes and want to make exterior repairs, aimed at seniors who make up to 80% of the area median income. The program provided loans of up to \$10,000 each for a range of eligible repairs including improving handicap accessibility, fixing porches and decks, installing railings, fixing driveways, and more.

- **Implementation:** The City received strong interest, with nearly 200 inquiries to Housing Division staff, and anticipates awarding nearly all of the funding allocated soon.

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# RECOMMENDATIONS

- **SUPPORT AND MONITOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RESIDENTIAL LICENSING PROGRAM:** The RLP represents the most significant change in housing enforcement in decades, and is the most proactive and comprehensive licensing and inspection regime in Connecticut. Effective implementation of the RLP requires a substantial commitment of staffing and resources, particularly during initial implementation. It will be important to ensure that the phased implementation of the RLP proceeds on schedule, with careful attention to submission deadlines, notice deadlines, inspection and reinspection timetables, and coordination between the multiple departments and divisions responsible for certifying compliance.
- **CONTINUE TO IMPROVE HOUSING CODE ENFORCEMENT:** The City has made meaningful improvements to the housing code enforcement process, but more remains to be done. The incoming administration should maintain the significant staffing expansion and continue to carefully track and monitor housing complaints, to ensure that reinspections and appropriate enforcement actions are pursued in a timely and consistent manner.
- **MAKE AGGRESSIVE USE OF RECEIVERSHIP:** Receivership can be an important and powerful tool for taking control of properties with the most egregious violations. The City should continue to look for opportunities to utilize receivership, and should advocate for the allocation of the \$50 million receivership revolving loan fund authorized in the 2023 state budget.
- **CONTINUE TO HOLD LANDLORDS ACCOUNTABLE USING THE NEW TOOLS AT HAND:** With more than 75% of housing occupied by renters, the City has a fundamental responsibility to hold landlords accountable for providing safe and healthy dwelling units. The City of Hartford must continue to send a clear and strong message that property owners who do not fulfill their obligations will face real and reliable consequences, including hefty fines and criminal prosecution, where warranted.

# YOUTH & YOUNG ADULTS



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## YOUTH & YOUNG ADULTS

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### BACKGROUND

For decades, many young people in Hartford have grown up facing significant interconnected challenges, including intergenerational poverty, trauma, unstable home lives, and other adverse childhood experiences. In response to both longstanding and newer challenges, Hartford has significantly expanded city programming and services aimed at young people.

It is important to note that children and teens in Hartford receive support and services from many places — families and neighborhoods, Hartford Public Schools, the Hartford Public Library, and faith-based and community-based organizations of all sizes. The City of Hartford has long maintained a robust Early Learning Network, and has worked to maintain and support that network in numerous ways, including most recently through a coordinated campaign to encourage [enrollment in early learning centers](#), which have seen lower enrollment since the pandemic. In addition, the city has expanded its focus on literacy and language development, including through the establishment of the “Hartford Talks” initiative and the Dolly Parton Imagination Library, in partnership with Connecticut Children’s Medical Center.

During the Bronin administration, the City significantly expanded its work with older children, and in particular with disengaged and disconnected young people ages 14-24, and strengthened its partnerships with youth-serving community-based organizations. This report focuses on those more recent city-led initiatives and partnerships, which are mainly housed within one division of the Department of Families, Children, Youth, and Recreation.

## SUPPORTING OPPORTUNITY YOUTH

A recent [report](#) by Dalio Education, one of Connecticut’s leading philanthropies focused on young people, highlighted the fact that in 2022 one in five young people in the state between the ages of fourteen and twenty six were either at risk or disconnected from school and work – and therefore designated as “Opportunity Youth.” That figure was above forty percent in Hartford, exacerbated further by the pandemic. Over the last eight years, the City has deepened its focus on supporting this group of young people:

**HARTFORD YOUTH SERVICE CORPS:** In Mayor Bronin’s first year, he raised philanthropic funding to create the Hartford Youth Service Corps (YSC), a new initiative housed at Our Piece of the Pie. The YSC gives young people ages sixteen to twenty-four, who are disconnected from school or work, the opportunity to earn a paycheck through year-round, part-time work improving their community, while at the same time connecting them to an extensive network of support, coaching and mentoring. The Youth Service Corps is by referral only, and a significant number of YSC members have been justice-involved, DCF-involved, housing insecure, or have faced multiple adverse experiences.

- The program was meant to fill a gap by serving young people who weren’t eligible for other types of programs. And as a paid program, it was conceived as a key stepping stone to full-time work and career development.
- Seven years later, the YSC has enrolled 1,975 young people, and 1,561 of those young people sustained their engagement with the program. Ninety one percent of participants demonstrated positive behavioral change and eighty nine percent completed career competency development training.

- Collectively, YSC members have earned \$6.9 million in wages.
- In terms of educational and career outcomes, 74% of YSC members who had previously dropped out of school re-enrolled in a diploma-granting program. And 71% of out-of-school youth with a diploma or GED secured unsubsidized employment.
- In 2023, YSC was awarded the inaugural Innovative Program Award by the National Youth Employment Coalition.
- **Funding:** The City recently secured \$2.2 million from a group of philanthropies and businesses led by Dalio Philanthropies, which will allow the program to expand and serve 500 young people over the next year. Overall, YSC has received funding from a range of philanthropies and businesses in addition to Dalio Philanthropies, including the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving, The Hartford, Travelers, Aetna, and grant support from the U.S. Department of Justice, U.S. Department of Labor, and the City of Hartford.



**\$10 MILLION FOR OPPORTUNITY YOUTH:** In 2021 the City secured more than \$10 million in philanthropic funding from Dalio Education and the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving to expand support for initiatives serving opportunity youth, including:

- A significant expansion for COMPASS Peacebuilders, a community violence intervention organization, allowing them to hire more violence interrupters.
- A new initiative by ROCA, a national youth-serving organization that brought a program focused on engaging young women and young mothers to Hartford. ROCA specifically works with young women who have a history of trauma, justice-involvement, and exposure to violence. Its work in Hartford involves providing trauma-informed wraparound services, crisis response, parenting education, connection to employment, and assistance navigating services across multiple systems.
- In the first two years of ROCA's engagement in Hartford, it made thousands of attempts to engage the highest-risk young women, and served 100 young women — including 77 mothers — for at least 18 months. None of the women served were (re)incarcerated, despite the fact that 69% of them had prior arrests. Nearly all of them demonstrated improved behavioral health.
- Additional funding for the YSC, allowing it to serve an additional 100 young people.



#### **HARTFORD OPPORTUNITY YOUTH COLLABORATIVE**

**(HOYC):** The HOYC was created a decade ago to bring together City government, the school system, service providers, and philanthropies to build career pipelines and set young people on the path to successful adulthood. In recent years, the HOYC began to focus on the crisis of absenteeism within the Hartford Public Schools, as well as on breaking down barriers to data sharing among youth providers. At the most recent meeting of the HOYC, the group discussed the need to refocus and refine its mission, and to determine whether the group should service as a) merely a forum to share information, best-practices, and trends; b) a coordinating body to ensure that gaps in youth service needs are filled, and to avoid unnecessary duplication; or c) to continue to pursue a more robust role of coordinating services for individual young people who are disengaged and disconnected, on the model of the Coordinated Access Network.

- **Data Sharing:** Data sharing between service providers, state government, and school systems has long been challenging in Hartford and across the country due to well-intentioned privacy laws. That lack of data sharing prevents those stakeholders from working together in a seamless way to identify and support the needs of young people.

## YOUTH SAFETY AND JUSTICE INITIATIVES

Young people who have been involved in the criminal justice system, or who have been victims of violence, need high-touch, specialized support. Only coordinated, compassionate care can prevent them from becoming involved in cycles of violence that have ramifications for their own lives, their families, and the city as a whole.

The prior section covers some of the City's support for organizations like COMPASS and ROCA, which both have a role to play supporting justice-involved young people. There are several other initiatives to be aware of:

**RAPID RESPONSE PROTOCOL:** In 2018, Hartford's Chief Operating Officer began developing a coordinated crisis response plan for victims of gun violence who were under 25 years old. That plan brought together law enforcement, social services, state officials, and the school system, as appropriate, to identify the young person's immediate needs and to try and address systemic challenges that might affect their life going forward. That turned into the City's Rapid Response Protocol, which is led by the Department of Families, Youth, Children, and Recreation's Youth Services Bureau (YSB), with support from the Office of Community Safety and Wellness.

- The program came about after repeated instances where one agency or community group would know about a young person in crisis, and at risk of being a victim or perpetrator of violence — but either did not or could not marshal broader resources to intervene.
- Since being formalized, the program has responded to 237 incidents of violence involving a young person, and has begun following the 5-5-5 model: meeting the family within 5 hours of the incident bedside at the hospital, offering a home visit within 5 days of first contact, and following up within 5 weeks to ensure outstanding needs are being met. Those needs could include trauma-informed counseling and support, housing assistance, transportation, basic needs, or whatever else a family might need. Recently, these response efforts have been further refined to provide a more individualized response to youth victims of violence and their families, which may mean coordinating services and meeting with families sooner and more frequently than the 5-5-5-model.
- **Funding:** The operation of the Protocol is funded through staff salaries, largely through the General Fund.

**OPP'S BEHIND THE WALL NAVIGATOR PROGRAM:** The City uses its General Fund to support Our Piece of the Pie's Behind the Walls Navigator Program, which works with returning citizens between the ages of 18-25 who are nearing their release dates, trying to ensure they receive pre-release services that smooth their transition. The program operates at York, Manson, and Osborn Correctional Institutions and the Hartford Correctional Center. Pre-release services include everything from assistance accessing benefits to intensive supports for mental health and substance abuse.

### CARE COORDINATION FOR JUSTICE-INVOLVED

**YOUTH:** The City formed a partnership with the State of Connecticut's Court Support Services Division (CSSD) to help prevent justice-involved young people from recidivating — and to connect them to services that will help them succeed. This program is specifically focused on justice-involved youth with a history of illegal firearm charges. Through the partnership, CSSD refers specific young people under probation to the City's Department of Families, Children, Youth, and Recreation, which then develops an individualized care coordination plan, working with the school system and community-based organizations like the Center for Children's Advocacy, Our Piece of the Pie, and others. This partnership is the first of its kind in Connecticut. This program is currently underway and outcome data is not yet available.

- **Funding:** The City won a \$1.4 million grant from the U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Juvenile Justice Delinquency Prevention for this initiative, which it paired with \$500,000 in General Funds.

## EXPANDING RECREATIONAL PROGRAMMING

Hartford has worked to expand access to low-and-no cost recreational programming for children throughout the city, both through the Department of Families, Children, Youth, and Recreation, and in partnership with local organizations. Those initiatives include:

**EXPANDING YOUTH SPORTS:** In 2021, the City began partnering with Active City's Hartford Youth Sports Collaborative to fund free, citywide youth sports programs for Hartford children ages 5 to 14. In its first two years, approximately 6,000 children played baseball, basketball, football, soccer, and track and field thanks to a group of youth-serving organizations who came together under the Hartford Youth Sports Collaborative banner. The partnership included activating Hartford Public Schools facilities, in addition to City-run spaces. This free sports programming has continued since then.

- **Funding:** In 2021, Hartford committed \$900,000 to this program using American Rescue Plan funding for a three-year period, through 2024.

### INCREASING HOURS AT CITY RECREATION FACILITIES:

The City of Hartford's FY24 budget funds an expansion of hours at City recreation facilities, allowing for the doubling of general recreation hours at the Parker and Arroyo Recreational Centers, tripling hours at Metzner Recreation Center, and expanded weekend and aquatic

hours at applicable recreational sites as well. This expansion diversifies and builds on sports and recreation programming the City has provided for many years.

- **Funding:** This expansion was funded through the regular budget process, as part of the General Fund allocation to the Department of Families, Children, Youth, and Recreation.

**ASSESSMENT OF RECREATIONAL PROGRAMMING:** In early 2023, the City received an independent assessment of its recreational offerings to identify areas for improvement and to conduct peer benchmarking. The assessment found that Hartford compares favorably in terms of the breadth of services offered compared to larger municipalities in Connecticut and cities across the country. It also identified several areas for improvement, including adding full-time staff to the City's recreation division, expanding utilization of the MyREC scheduling software, and adding specific "pay to participate" programs (given that current programming is free).

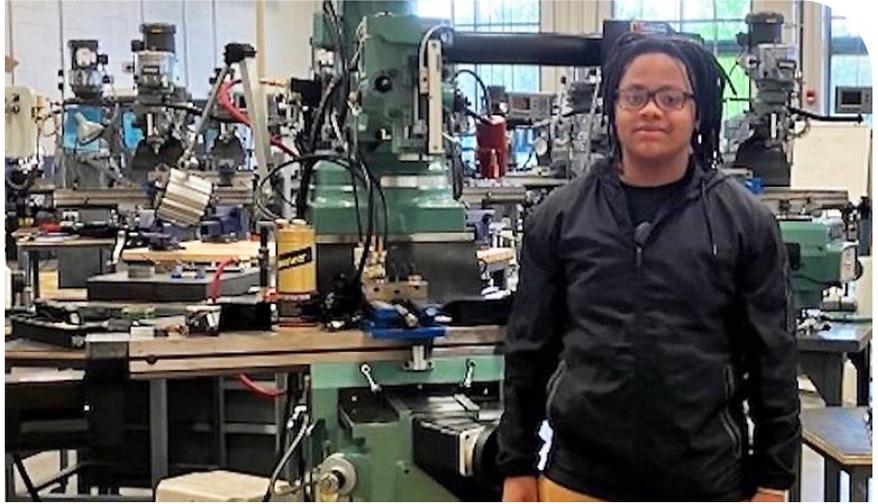
## INVESTING IN COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANIZATIONS

**HARTFORD UNITY GRANTS:** The City of Hartford allocated approximately \$5 million from the American Rescue Plan to launch the Hartford UNITY initiative, aimed at helping heal, recover, and reconnect young people in the wake of the pandemic by expanding youth recreation, employment, enrichment, and other support services. Currently in its third year, the program has mostly provided grants of up to \$50,000 to youth-serving organizations of all sizes to help them expand their services. Nearly 30,000 young people under the age of 25 have benefited.

- **Technical Assistance:** Many youth-serving organizations in Hartford have limited staff, and so as part of the Unity Grants program, the Department of Children, Families,

Youth, Recreation offered these organizations free training on how to run effective programs.

- **Funding:** To date, \$4.9 million has been awarded to dozens of community-based organizations per year, each year. FY24, to allow the Boys & Girls Clubs of Hartford to serve more young people. This funding was intended, in part, to support the reopening of the Northwest Boys and Girls Club, which was built in 1964 as part of the Bowles Park (now Willow Creek) housing development. Nearly a third of Hartford's youth population lives in the neighborhood, and this funding will allow the Club to reopen and serve more than 1,000 young people every year.



**SUPPORTING THE BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS:** The Boys & Girls Clubs of Hartford (BGCH) are one of the largest youth service providers in the City, serving approximately 8,000 young people every year. The City has helped the BGCH expand in Hartford and strengthen their operations in a number of significant ways:

- **New South End Boys & Girls Club:** In 2018, the City began working with the BGCH to identify a site and raise funds for a new facility in the South End – an area of Hartford that they had identified as a priority to serve. The City gifted BGCH 3.3 acres of City-owned land at the site of the old Burr school on Ledyard Street. The City also helped BGCH raise more than \$20 million for the construction of the facility. It now serves more than 1,500 young people.
- **Operational Funding to Enable Reopening of the Northwest Boys & Girls Club:** The City dedicated \$1.5 million in funding over three years, through FY24, to allow the Boys & Girls Clubs of Hartford to serve more young people. This funding was intended, in part, to support the reopening of the Northwest Boys and Girls Club, which was built in 1964 as part of the Bowles Park (now Willow Creek) housing development. Nearly a third of Hartford's youth population lives in the neighborhood, and this funding will allow the Club to reopen and serve more than 1,000 young people every year.

**HARTFORD PROMISE:** In 2015, the Hartford Promise program was established to remove financial barriers to college for Hartford students, and has since helped more than 1,000 Hartford students attend and succeed in college.

While Hartford Promise has been funded almost entirely with philanthropic funds, in 2021, the city committed \$1 million general fund dollars to encourage additional private commitments and promote the financial sustainability of the program.

- **Promise Fellows Program:** Mayor Bronin also created the Hartford Promise Fellows program, which for the last two years has provided paid summer internship opportunities for Promise Scholars in the Mayor's office, working closely with his staff. The goal is to expose young people to their local government and encourage them to pursue careers in public service.

## PROMISE NEIGHBORHOODS GRANT – NORTH

**HARTFORD ASCEND PIPELINE:** In 2021, the City partnered with Connecticut Children’s Medical Center to apply for and win the Department of Education’s Promise Neighborhoods Grant, one of the largest federal grant programs aimed at supporting children. Building on the Promise Zone designation the City earned in 2015, the grant is aimed at implementing strategies that help children progress through every stage of life, from cradle to career — and improve developmental outcomes for children living in distressed communities. Connecticut Children’s led the application process and is now administering the program, which is called the North Hartford Ascend Pipeline.

- **Funding:** \$30 million over five years, with \$34 million in in-kind support from a wide range of community organizations and government agencies. The City’s Department of Families, Children, Youth, and Recreation is providing about \$25 million of that in-kind support with initiatives in several categories, including funding technical assistance from the William Julius Wilson Institute of the Harlem Children’s Zone, advancing the potential rehabilitation of the former Simpson-Waverly School, and more.
- **Current Status:** The Department of Education designated the first 18-24 months for planning, including building trust and advancing community engagement. That work has been ongoing and included standing up a series of working groups for Community and Family Engagement, Data and Evaluation, Family Navigation System Building, and Partner Engagement.
- **Next Steps:** In 2024, the implementation team led by Connecticut Children’s plans to begin building the pipeline that connects families to helpful resources in a coordinated way. That will also involve collecting data to measure the impact of these connections on families and children.



# RECOMMENDATIONS

This report has summarized several new City initiatives in key areas of focus for youth and young adults. The City also has several longtime, successful programs aimed at supporting young children in particular.

As we get further from the pandemic, the need to focus on young people of all ages will not recede. It should continue to be a top City priority. There are a number of specific challenges on the horizon:

- **SUPPORTING MIDDLE SCHOOL-AGED YOUTH:** Over the last two years, the Surgeon General's advisories on youth mental health and on social media have put in stark relief how much support young people — and middle schoolers in particular — need. The City, the school system, and their many partners will have to increase our collective focus on this issue, particularly on vulnerable groups like homeless youth and LGBTQ+ youth.
- **STAFF RECRUITMENT, RETENTION, AND TRAINING:** There are well-recognized staffing shortages in lifeguards and recreation staff in cities across the country. Those shortages exist in Hartford, but there are also shortages in specialized positions that serve justice-involved youth. The City has established a partnership with COMPASS Peacebuilders to mentor Hartford youth who were formerly justice involved. The City will need to work in partnership with COMPASS to address staffing shortages in this critical program.
- **FURTHER STRENGTHEN CITYWIDE RECREATIONAL PROGRAMMING:** The City's partnership with the Hartford Youth Sports Collaborative was a big step forward in expanding access to free recreation for children, and the recent expansion of funding and hours at recreation centers will also make more recreation options available to young people. Those initiatives are part of the Department of Families, Children, Youth, and Recreation's ongoing commitment to expand recreation options. However, there remains a need for continued expansion of options and access, particularly in the arts.

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## RECOMMENDATIONS CONT.

- **CONTINUE EFFORTS TO IMPROVE DATA SHARING:** As referenced earlier, improving data-sharing between youth-serving organizations, whether they're public, private, or non-profit entities, continues to be a barrier to identifying young people in need of additional support. The incoming administration should continue working to make progress on this issue, including by advocating for appropriate changes in state law governing the sharing of student information by school districts.
- **PRIORITIZE THE MOST SUCCESSFUL PROGRAMS AS ARPA FUNDING ENDS:** As ARPA funding comes to an end, the incoming administration will have to grapple with how to fill funding gaps in youth-serving programs. It will not be possible, with existing resources, to sustain all of the interventions and efforts established in recent years, and it will be important to allocate the more limited resources on the basis of demonstrated program effectiveness and urgency of need.
- **REVIEW AND REFINE THE HOYC MISSION AND OPERATING MODEL:** The Hartford Opportunity Youth Collaborative provides an opportunity to coordinate among the many organizations serving disengaged and disconnected young people in Hartford. Following the disruptions of the pandemic, it is important to review and clarify the mission of the HOYC, as outlined in the report above. To the extent that a decision is made to continue to pursue a more robust role of coordinating services for individual young people who are disengaged and disconnected, on the model of the Coordinated Access Network, it will be necessary a) to solve the problem of data sharing and b) to identify additional resources for staff support.

# SMALL BUSINESS SUPPORT



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## SMALL BUSINESS

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### BACKGROUND

Small businesses are critical to the economic health, vitality, and vibrancy of the Hartford community. They employ city residents, they serve neighborhoods, and they're often owned by people who have a deep connection and commitment to the community.

As in every city, Hartford's small businesses were hit hard by the pandemic. The shift to remote work has had a continuing impact on many small businesses — especially those for which office workers were an important part of their customer base. In the wake of the profound disruption caused by the pandemic, the city has utilized philanthropic funds, American Rescue Plan resources, and city resources in unprecedented ways to help Hartford's small businesses recover and to incentivize new small business creation.

## PANDEMIC EMERGENCY RESPONSE INITIATIVES:

At the height of the pandemic, the City created the Hartford Small Business Emergency Grant Program — the first and largest local small business pandemic relief program in Connecticut. Partnering with the Hartford Foundation, Capital for Change, and several technical assistance providers, a total of \$2,894,005 was deployed through 380 grants to small businesses in Hartford, with an average grant of \$7,616. The grants maintained nearly 1,500 jobs by replacing lost revenue and covering the costs of continuing operations. Approximately \$2 million was awarded to low-income businesses and nearly \$1.4 million was awarded to women-owned businesses.

## ONGOING SMALL BUSINESS INCENTIVE PROGRAMS

In addition to the emergency grants awarded during the pandemic, the city utilized multiple funding sources to establish programs that it continues to administer, often in partnership with third parties:

**THE HARTLIFT PROGRAM:** The City of Hartford created the HartLift Partnership to achieve three interlocking goals: to assist property owners hit hard during the pandemic, to help new small businesses start up or expand, and to activate vacant retail spaces both in the downtown and in Hartford’s neighborhoods.

Administered by the Chamber of Commerce on behalf of the City, the HartLift partnership provides grants to assist with the buildout of new businesses in vacant space. In 2023, Hart Lift was recognized as the “Best Use of Federal Economic Development Resources” in the country by the International Economic Development Council.

- **HartLift formula and conditions:** HartLift provides a grant of up to \$50 per square foot, up to a maximum of 3,000 square feet or \$150,000 per recipient. The program requires a 100% match from applicants located downtown, and a 50% match from applicants in neighborhood commercial corridors. The program may also support a small number of high-priority projects which are eligible for a \$100 per square foot allocation, requiring at least a 200% match from the applicants.

- **Outcomes:** To date, 62 businesses across the city have been allocated funding totaling \$6.8 million. The majority of supported businesses were minority or women-owned. The program will ultimately help to activate or reactivate more than 225,000 square feet of ground floor commercial space and support the creation of hundreds of jobs.
- **Funding:** The HartLift Partnership has been allocated more than \$10 million in American Rescue Plan funds dedicated to Economic and Community Development. The allocations have been broken down into several categories, as detailed in the chart below. The majority of these funds have been committed or are intended for use at specific properties, but remain to be expended pending project completion.

HartLift ALLOCATIONS — ESTIMATES AS OF NOVEMBER 2023

Project	Amount Allocated
CITYWIDE VACANT SPACE ACTIVATION	\$4,000,000
DOWNTOWN PROPERTY STABILIZATION	\$3,000,000
RETAIL IN CITY PROJECTS	\$2,000,000
HIGH VACANCY CORRIDORS	\$1,000,000
HIGH PRIORITY PROJECTS	\$2,000,000

**SMALL BUSINESS INVESTMENT FUND:** To support existing businesses in the creation or retention of jobs in the wake of the pandemic, the city created a \$1.5 million grant program. Businesses were eligible for up to \$100,000 with a 50% matching funds requirement. The match can be made with cash or investment accounts, and also by showing evidence of revenue loss during COVID-19 or recent investment in the business.

- **Outcomes:** 45 businesses have been funded, 74% of which have been in neighborhoods outside of downtown, and 80% of which are minority or women-owned.
- **Funding:** This program was funded with American Rescue Plan dollars. The entire \$1.5 million has been committed, and \$1.1 has been disbursed.

**THE MICROENTERPRISE MICROGRANT PROGRAM:**

To support the growth of small entrepreneurial ventures that have the potential to create jobs and successful businesses in the Hartford community, this \$500,000 grant program can provide businesses with five or fewer employees with up to \$2,500 in financial assistance. The City of Hartford has partnered with the Urban League to distribute the funds. To date, there have been 513 applicants, with 327 businesses eligible for funding.

- **Funding:** The program is funded through the American Rescue Plan, and the full balance is available for disbursement.

**SMALL BUSINESS FACADE IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM:**

The facade improvement program is a forgivable loan program for property owners and small business owners to apply for up to \$50,000 for non-structural upgrades to building facades in designated commercial corridors. The program requires a matching private investment of at least 25%. The City has identified eleven buildings throughout the city to date, and is currently working with building owners to disburse the funds.

- **Funding:** This funding comes from the American Rescue Plan, and the city has set aside \$2 million for the program.
- **Ongoing Partnerships and Promotion of Small Business:** In addition to the unprecedented initiatives launched in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the City has funded and supported a number of partnerships to ensure that small businesses in Hartford have access to capital, technical assistance, and other support. In addition, the City has partnered actively with the Chamber of Commerce to promote Hartford small businesses.

**DIRECTOR OF SMALL BUSINESS INITIATIVES AND SUPPORT:**

Early in his administration, Mayor Bronin elevated the position of the Director of Small Business Initiatives and Support within the Development Services Department, reporting to the Department Head. The Small Business Director has been central to developing and administering many of the programs outlined above, and is an important point of contact for small businesses throughout the city.





**PARTNERSHIP WITH THE HARTFORD CHAMBER OF COMMERCE:**

In recent years, the City of Hartford has funded a position within the Hartford Chamber of Commerce to facilitate engagement with small businesses and to serve as a small business “navigator,” intended to provide support to businesses seeking space, introductions to lenders, or assistance engaging with city departments.

**PARTNERSHIPS WITH SMALL BUSINESS TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROVIDERS:**

The City has provided funding and in some cases staff support to assist with the work of vital community partners including the Spanish American Merchants Association (SAMA), HEDCO, ReSET, and more recently, Inner City Capital Connections (ICCC).

The City supports several of these entities with CDBG funding on an annual basis: approximately \$100,000 a year to HEDCO, \$165,000 to SAMA, and \$30,000 to ReSET.

**PROMOTING SMALL BUSINESSES:** In addition to providing funding and facilitating technical assistance, Mayor Bronin has regularly sought to use the platform of his office to promote small businesses. That includes ribbon cuttings, speaking at small business incubator events, and visiting “hack-a-thons” and other events that bring budding entrepreneurs together.

Just in 2023, Mayor Bronin cut the ribbon for 21 new small businesses in town. Most importantly, the Mayor and the administration have played an active and direct role in recruiting small businesses to Hartford.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

The City of Hartford has been a proactive partner to small businesses, launching a range of initiatives to accelerate the recovery and growth of small businesses in Hartford. Going forward, the City should seek ways to sustain and expand these initiatives:

- **SUSTAIN THE HARTLIFT PROGRAM:** Given the HartLift's program success in activating neighborhood corridors and stabilizing businesses across the city, the incoming administration should consider how it could continue the program. While the current allocation of funding has been made available as a result of American Rescue Plan funding, the city should seek other funding sources and should consider utilizing some portion of future surplus dollars, if available, to sustain and expand the HartLift partnership.
- **CONTINUE TO SUPPORT HARTFORD'S STARTUP ECOSYSTEM:** Hartford is fortunate to have innovative entrepreneurs who want to turn their ideas into stable businesses, and City government should continue helping them along that path. ReSET has been an important partner and convener in that effort, and the incoming administration should continue finding ways to help foster a culture of entrepreneurship that creates local jobs.
- **EXAMINE ROLE & RESPONSIBILITIES OF POSITION FUNDED AT THE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE:** The incoming administration should work with the Chamber of Commerce to examine and refine the scope of duties and responsibilities of the position funded by the City, to ensure that the position is utilized to maximum effect to support small businesses.

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# HEALTH



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# HEALTH

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## BACKGROUND

The Health and Human Services Department (HHS) provides a range of services to improve the health and wellbeing of residents, with specific focus on children and mothers, seniors, and vulnerable members of the community. In addition to serving as the primary public health agency, HHS also houses environmental health and licensing, which includes food, body art, mobile vendor, and salon licenses. HHS manages the city's relocation program, shelter system and warming center, and has primary responsibility for the city's response to homelessness.

HHS functions differently than most other City departments, with a majority of the departmental budget coming from grant funding. In the FY24 adopted budget, HHS received \$5.7 million from the General Fund, and approximately \$11 million from state and federal grants. The precise amount and purpose of grant funding fluctuates year to year, in line with emerging local needs and state and federal priorities.

This report provides a high level outline of the Department's operations.

## MATERNAL AND CHILD HEALTH

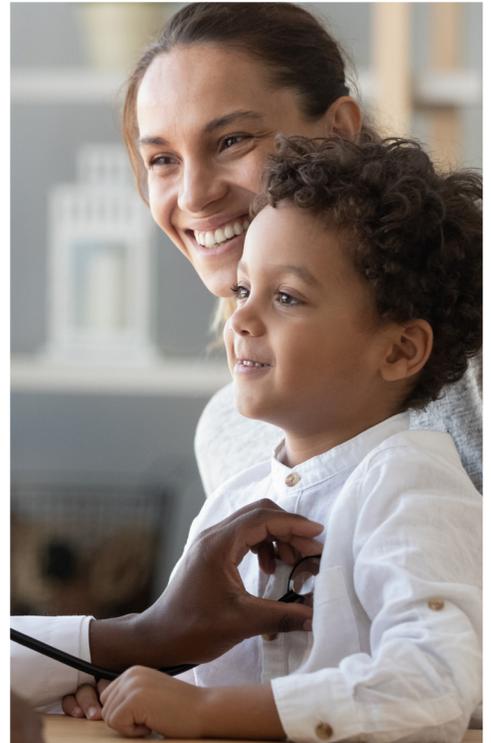
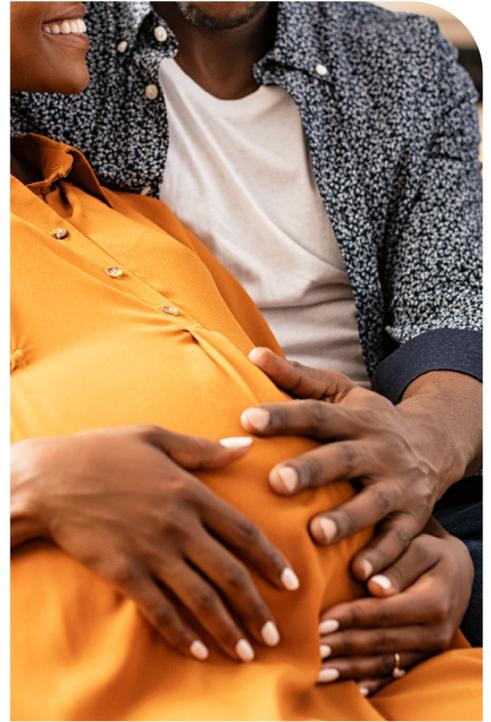
**MATERNAL AND INFANT OUTREACH PROGRAM (MIOP) & FAMILY WELLNESS HEALTHY START PROGRAM (FWHS):** The Department has two programs aimed at providing one-on-one outreach to families during pregnancy and early infancy. Mothers receive pre- and post-natal education, guidance on healthcare for them and their child, one-on-one case management, referrals to services, and more. In recent years, approximately 1,000 participants in Hartford and surrounding towns have received services each year through MIOP and FWHS. Nearly 100% of children whose families receive services are born full-term, and nearly 100% are born over 5 lbs 8 oz, the threshold for low birthweight.

**WOMEN, INFANT, AND CHILDREN (WIC):** WIC provides nutrition assistance to pregnant women, new mothers, and children up to age five. Participants receive food vouchers, education on healthy eating, breastfeeding education, and referrals to social services. Approximately 5,000 participants in Hartford and surrounding towns receive nutrition services through WIC every year.

- **Funding:** The overall Maternal and Child Health Division receives approximately \$430,000 from the General Fund and includes two full-time positions, and the specific programs are federally funded. WIC receives approximately \$1.3 million a year from the federal government.

**RACIAL AND ETHNIC APPROACHES TO COMMUNITY HEALTH (REACH):** REACH is a federally-funded program, administered through the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, that aims to reduce racial and ethnic health disparities among populations with the highest burden of chronic disease. Key recent initiatives that advance the REACH program include Hartford's passage of two local ordinances aimed at curbing tobacco use, the creation of the Bicycle Master Plan in 2019, and partnerships with community-based organizations to increase referrals to healthcare providers.

- **Funding:** Hartford receives approximately \$800,000 from the CDC on an annual basis for REACH.





## SENIOR SERVICES

The Department oversees three programs to promote healthy living and self-sufficiency for Hartford seniors. The City spends about \$2.7 million per year on services for seniors, including five full time staff positions.

**SENIOR CENTERS:** There are four senior centers across the City for residents ages 55 and older. They serve as hubs of social connectedness and activities, nutrition, and access points for information and service referrals. The senior centers receive between 30,000 – 40,000 visits per year, and the City spends approximately \$1.1 million in General Fund dollars to support them, including payroll.

**DIAL-A-RIDE:** The City's dial-a-ride program serves 5,000 thousands of seniors every year, and it has averaged about 300 participants per month — though that number has gone down after the pandemic. The City spends approximately \$530,000 from the General Fund on Dial-A-Ride, and it receives about \$270,000 in grants.

**RENTER'S REBATE:** HHS helps to administer the State's reimbursement program for renters who are age 65 and above, or who are age 50 and above and meet certain requirements. For 2023, a single recipient's total income has to be less than \$40,300 and a couple's income has to be less than \$49,100. HHS facilitates between \$2.5-\$3 million in rental rebate payments per year.



## RELOCATION PROGRAM

HHS administers the City's relocation program, which is required under Connecticut's Uniform Relocation Assistance Act. The City is responsible for providing relocation benefits for those who are displaced, typically as a result of fire or code violations that leave a structure uninhabitable.

- **Funding:** In FY23, the City changed the way it funds relocation, creating a revolving fund, with initial funding of about \$600,000 in City dollars. Where appropriate and possible, the city seeks reimbursements from property owners. So far in FY24, approximately \$514,000 has been spent on relocation. While the annual expenditures vary from year to year, it's not unusual for relocation to cost more than a million dollars per year.

## HOMELESSNESS

After a decade of progress in reducing chronic homelessness through the Coordinated Action Network, homelessness in Connecticut rose after the COVID-19 pandemic. Hartford, like Connecticut's other cities, hosts a disproportionately large share of services and supports that homeless individuals use. The City has worked closely with Journey Home and the Coordinated Access Network to improve service delivery, coordinate service delivery between organizations working on interconnected issues like addiction and mental health, expand capacity for service providers, and advocate for a broader approach to ending homelessness.

**SHELTER BEDS:** Hartford is home to 342 of Central Connecticut's 393 year-round shelter beds. In the winter, Hartford hosts 96 seasonal shelter beds. In recent years,

approximately 40% of those seeking shelter in Hartford's warming center have had a last known address outside the city of Hartford.

## FUNDING FOR HOMELESSNESS SERVICE PROVIDERS

**ANNUAL FEDERAL GRANTS:** The City provides significant funding for homelessness service providers like Mercy Housing and Shelter, CRT, South Park Inn, and several others, largely through annual federal grants like the Department of Housing and Urban Development's Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG), Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), and Housing Opportunities for Persons With AIDS Grants (HOPWA). On an annual basis, this funding is approximately \$1.5 million, though it can vary.

### AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN HOME (ARPA-HOME)

**FUNDING:** The City received \$5.2 million as part of the American Rescue Plan's allocation targeted at providing

housing, shelter, and services to vulnerable populations. The City is using \$2.2 million over three years to enhance prevention, diversion, and rapid rehousing support with a priority on working with families with minor children. Journey Home is administering the funding to a variety of service providers.

**ELDERLY HOMELESSNESS OUTREACH GRANT:** In 2022, the City received a \$100,000 grant from the North Central Area Agency on Aging to support Hands on Hartford's outreach to unhoused elderly individuals — a population that was identified as in particular need of additional support.

## FUNDING SHELTERS

**MCKINNEY SHELTER:** The City funds the McKinney Shelter operated by the Community Renewal Team with about \$340,000 in General Fund dollars and about \$500,000 passed through from the State Department of Housing. That funding may increase going forward as the State amends its funding formulas.

**WINTER WARMING CENTER:** The City also operates a warming center on Washington Street seven nights a week during the winter, contracting with South Park Inn for

about \$230,000 per year, funded through the City's General Fund. It is the region's largest winter warming center, with 45 beds, and routinely hosts individuals from across Central Connecticut.

**MARSHALL HOUSE:** The City also allocates \$100,000 from the General Fund to the shelter for families and women run by the Salvation Army. The facility is currently undergoing renovation, which the City is also supporting.



## HOMELESSNESS INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS

**MARSHALL HOUSE:** The City allocated \$1 million in ARPA-HOME funding to support the Salvation Army's renovation of the Marshall House Emergency Shelter for families.

**MCKINNEY SHELTER:** During the COVID-19 pandemic, the McKinney Shelter relocated to hotel space in order to minimize the risk of transmission in a congregate setting. After the pandemic, the City partnered with CRT to obtain \$3.4 million in state funding to purchase and renovate an empty hotel as the new, permanent location with more than 100 beds. The City is supplementing that with \$375,000 from the FY2023 surplus. The new location on Brainard Street will provide private and semi-private rooms and have enough space to arrange behavioral healthcare and other services that individuals need. It is expected to open in the first quarter of 2024.

**SOUTH PARK INN:** The City has reserved \$2 million in ARPA-HOME funding to support the South Park Inn's (SPI) relocation process. SPI's current shelter space is inadequate, and SPI has been seeking a new location for years. This funding will support site acquisition and construction of a new, more modern shelter space, possibly facilitating a shift toward more independent or semi-independent living arrangements. To date, SPI has not identified suitable space. However, the city has begun to examine the possibility of utilizing 110 Washington Street, the former adult education building and the site of the current winter warming center, as a new location for SPI as well as for a broader homelessness service center.

### OPIOID SETTLEMENT FUNDING FOR REENTRY-FOCUSED HOMELESSNESS

**SUPPORT:** Like many Connecticut communities, the City of Hartford has received funds through the national Opioid Settlement. The City dedicated \$400,000 from the first tranche of opioid settlement dollars to provide transitional housing to men who are or have been justice-involved, with a history of addiction. The program is administered by Community Partners in Action, which works with residents to develop housing plans to aid their transition to independent living.

## DISEASE PREVENTION AND HEALTH PROMOTION

**HIV CARE PREVENTION – RYAN WHITE:** The Ryan White Grant is part of the largest federal program aimed at bridging gaps in care for people living with HIV and AIDS. The City receives money from the State and federal government every year — totaling about \$3.2 million in FY24, though funding has steadily gone down as Connecticut’s infection rate has gone down. Funding goes towards staff salaries and subcontracted grants aimed at establishing a continuum of care, enhancing sexual health clinic infrastructure and core medical services. Allocations are decided by a Planning Council appointed by the Mayor.

**STI CONTROL:** The City provides screenings for a variety of STIs, as well as vaccinations and tuberculosis testing, with a small staff of clinicians. The Health Departments screens anywhere from 200 to 400 residents per year. As

part of this work, the City recently successfully applied for a five year, \$500,000 grant from the Centers for Disease Control to foster community engagement and build strategic partnerships to expand sexual health services.

**FEDERAL OPIOID GRANT:** In 2023, Hartford was one of 40 local health departments offered federal grant funding as part of the Centers for Disease Control’s Overdose Data to Action (OD2A) program. The City will receive \$1.1 million per year for five years, which will fund the creation of a data tracking system that will work across multiple municipalities, a lab testing component that will test opioids and identify emerging trends, and enhanced harm reduction work through the Connecticut Harm Reduction Alliance.

## ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH AND LICENSING

The largest division in the Health Department in terms of employee count, the Environmental Health division is responsible for several types of inspections that directly affect the health and wellbeing of Hartford residents. The overall budget is about \$1.1 million with 17 General Fund positions, and the division generates approximately \$300,000 in revenue from fees annually.

**FOOD SAFETY:** The Department conducts more than 1,000 inspections of food establishments throughout the city every year. It also generally investigates between 15 – 30 foodborne illness complaints per year.

**OTHER INSPECTIONS:** The Department also conducts about 500 other inspections, ranging from farmer’s markets and regulated barbershops to tattoo parlors and temporary food service establishments.

## LEAD PREVENTION

Over the last 20 years, the City of Hartford has undertaken a substantial lead remediation effort, utilizing grants from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to remediate approximately 1,500 homes. In 2022, the City received a new, \$4 million grant over four years to provide direct lead remediation and other hazard remediation to an additional 165 low-income homes. The remediation program is implemented in partnership with many community organizations, including the Hispanic Health Council, the Maple Avenue Revitalization Group, and others. Between 2016 and 2020, the City’s lead prevention efforts helped reduce the number of Hartford children reported to have elevated lead levels by 58%, from 170 to 71.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

- **CONTINUE PURSUING GRANT FUNDING TO RESPOND TO EMERGING NEEDS:** As noted at the top of this report, the Health Department can apply for a wide array of State and federal grants every year. Maintaining a strong pipeline of applications will allow the Department to be both nimble and have the capacity to respond appropriately to emerging needs.
- **SUPPORT SOUTH PARK INN IN THEIR RELOCATION EFFORTS:** The City has already allocated funding to support South Park Inn's relocation, but any successful relocation of a shelter will require the support of City government and the Mayor's office specifically. The site at 110 Washington Street is the most appropriate location identified to date, and the new administration should strongly consider supporting a relocation to that site.
- **CONTINUE ADVOCATING FOR REGIONAL PROVISION OF HOMELESSNESS SERVICES AND PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICES:** As the Capital City, Hartford will always serve as the region's center of homelessness and public health-related services. But there continues to be an imbalance, and there is a significant need for services in communities throughout the region.
- **CONTINUE TO MONITOR THE SPREAD OF TUBERCULOSIS AND OTHER COMMUNICABLE DISEASES:** National data shows that tuberculosis cases increased in 2022, and Hartford saw a noticeable spike in 2022 and 2023. The City is equipped to help treat cases of tuberculosis, but if this trend continues, it may need to pursue a broader approach. The City should also monitor STI cases, which are rising around the country.
- **ADVOCATE FOR GREATER STATE SUPPORT FOR THE COORDINATED ACCESS NETWORK:** Before the pandemic, Central Connecticut had made strides reducing homelessness. The Coordinated Access Network (CAN) is an effective model for that work, and the City should continue advocating for greater funding and region-wide support to ensure that the CAN is able to effectively meet the increasing levels of need.
- **ENHANCE PUBLIC COMMUNICATION EFFORTS:** Part of the Department's mission is to educate the public, but it does not have any central, dedicated communications resources.

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# ARTS & CULTURE



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## ARTS & CULTURE

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### BACKGROUND

When it comes to arts and culture, Hartford punches above its weight. Hartford is fortunate to have large and longstanding cultural institutions, such as the Wadsworth Atheneum, the Artists Collective, and the Bushnell Theater; innovative and intimate performing stages, such as the Hartford Stage, TheaterWorks, and Heartbeat Ensemble; a rich tradition of cultural events and festivals, from the nation's largest free festival of jazz to the West Indian and Puerto Rican parades and celebrations; and a community full of artists, musicians, and creators of all kinds.

Over the last decade, arts and cultural institutions experienced a decline in philanthropic funding, as the priorities of longtime funders changed — and the pandemic exacerbated that decline in many ways.

Today, many of our cultural institutions continue to face challenges from those changes and pandemic-related changes in habits, like fewer people going to theaters. It is important that the city continue to play a role both as a direct supporter of the arts and as a convener, fundraiser, and facilitator to ensure that art stays at the center of Hartford life.

## PARTNERSHIP WITH THE GREATER HARTFORD ARTS COUNCIL

Over the last eight years, the City of Hartford has worked to support and grow the artistic community in partnership with a range of organizations, including the Greater Hartford Arts Council. This partnership has focused primarily on maintaining and expanding the city’s calendar of cultural festivals, and more recently launching a broader effort to support artists throughout the Hartford community.

**LAUNCHING SUMMER IN THE CITY:** One of Mayor Bronin’s first priorities upon taking office was to put all of the city’s summer events under one banner, and finding philanthropic support to fund government services related to those events. The result was “Summer in the City,” a campaign to preserve and promote annual events including the Puerto Rican Day Parade, the Greater Hartford Festival of Jazz, the Black-Eyed and Blues Festival, the Taste of Caribbean Jerk Festival, the West Indian Independence Celebration, and the Riverfront Asian Festival. The city raised substantial funding, primarily from Raytheon Technologies, to support this initiative, including funding related government services like police, fire, and public works. More recently, Summer in the City has become a part of the broader Hartford Creates partnership.

**HARTFORD CREATES:** In 2022, the City and the Greater Hartford Arts Council launched Hartford Creates as the home for events that were under the “Summer in the City” banner — as well as a significant number of new public art projects, neighborhood arts activation, and all-season events.

- **Attendance & Support for Local Artists:** In its first year, more than 280,000 people came to arts and culture events under the Hartford Creates banner, including the traditional, large summer festivals and the new slate of smaller events held throughout the year. More than 1,300 local artists were funded for their participation in the full range of events.
- **Additional Programming:** The funding for all-season programming went to events of every size across the city, and through every medium of arts and culture, from picnics and symphonies to dance and puppet shows. Longstanding events like Paul Brown Monday Night Jazz received funding, but so did new events like a series of five street stages that brought more than fifty bands, dance troupes, and visual artists to downtown between May and September 2023. The Arts Council is also planning to host and promote “themed” weeks going forward to highlight different types of art.
- **Funding:** The City is funding Hartford Creates through an approximately \$4 million commitment from American Rescue Plan funding. Next year’s programming is funded, but future years are not.



## NEW CULTURAL EVENTS

Building on Hartford's existing cultural events, the city of Hartford took the lead in establishing two additions to the Hartford cultural calendar in order to create new opportunities for Hartford residents to gather and offer new attractions for visitors, as well.

**HARTFORD LIVE:** To help bring more vibrancy and activity to downtown in the wake of the pandemic, the city entered into a multi-year partnership with GoodWorks Entertainment, the company that owns and operates Hartford's Infinity Hall, to launch a free, new summer concert series. In 2022 and 2023, the Hartford Live series hosted performances by national and regional acts, including Guster and The Wailers, on Thursday evenings in August and September. In the 2023 season, the performances drew approximately 25,000 attendees across all of its shows.

- **Funding:** The City has set aside \$1.5 million in American Rescue Plan funding to support HartfordLIVE. There is about \$400,000 allocated for 2024 and \$200,000 allocated for 2025. The intention is for the Hartford LIVE concert series to become self-sustaining through a combination of sponsorship and ticket sales, and it is anticipated that the concerts will charge a modest admission fee in the years ahead.

**DOMINGO HARTFORD:** In 2022, Hartford launched DominGO, a new open-streets initiative to promote community wellness and connect neighbors with each other by bringing together local artists and entrepreneurs for street fairs. In 2023, DominGO ran once a month in June, September, and October, with one event in the Northeast neighborhood, another in Frog Hollow and a third in Parkville. Each event brought together food, music, and other programming from the local neighborhood — from cricket and drum band demonstrations to arts and crafts and Peruvian, El Salvadoran, and West Indian traditional dancing.

- **Attendance:** In its first year, more than 20,000 people attended the event series.
- **Funding:** The largest funders have been the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving and Hartford HealthCare, with significant in-kind support from the Police Department and the Department of Public Works. In future years, the City's vision is for DominGO to be integrated into the Love Hartford initiative and consist of smaller, block-party type events.



## LOVE HARTFORD

In addition to supporting and coordinating large events and an expanded partnership with the Greater Hartford Arts Council, the City has created opportunities for residents to engage in neighborhood beautification activities. It began in 2018 with a smaller initiative called Love Your Block. The primary funder of Love Hartford today is the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving, and in 2023, they announced a three-year, \$300,000 commitment to the initiative. Components of Love Hartford now include:

**LOVE YOUR BLOCK:** The Love Your Block initiative provides micro-grants of up to \$2,500 for individual residents and up to \$25,000 to community organizations for projects aimed at beautifying or cleaning up specific neighborhoods in Hartford. Now in its fifth year, it has funded community clean-ups, garden bed installations, playscape beautification, chair and bench installation, mural creation, and other resident-led projects that improve the quality of life throughout the city.

As the program has matured, it has granted larger projects. This year, it funded a \$25,000 urban greenspace project at the Harriet Beecher Stowe House and a \$23,000 project at Heaven Skatepark to add ramps, repair cracks, and install permanent murals. Love Your Block in Hartford began with funding from Cities of Service, which supports similar programs around the country. After a successful first year in 2018, Hartford spun it out into the broader Love Hartford initiative.

**LOVE HARTFORD WEEK:** In 2021, Hartford launched “Love Hartford Week,” an annual campaign to strengthen civic pride through volunteerism and community beautification projects across the city. Throughout the week, the City organizes projects in every neighborhood in the city and matches projects with volunteers from community organizations and local companies.

**HARTFORD LOVE:** Launched in 2022, the hARTford Love initiative asked artists from Upper Albany and Clay Arsenal to come together and make their neighborhoods more beautiful. The project, funded through the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving, has supported nine bus shelter art projects and 21 utility box art projects.





## CREATING A PUERTO RICAN CULTURAL CENTER

The City purchased the former Sacred Heart Church building, which is of historical significance to Hartford's Puerto Rican community, from the Archdiocese of Hartford in 2022, as part of the Archdiocese' consolidation plan. Mayor Bronin then created a task force composed of leaders of Hartford's Puerto Rican community to develop recommendations for the creation of a Puerto Rican Cultural Center. That task force recently issued a series of recommendations for the adaptive reuse of the church, and in November 2023, the City released an RFP to select a project planner for the first phase of the project. The City is also receiving technical assistance from Bloomberg Associates, the philanthropic consulting arm of Bloomberg Philanthropies. Bloomberg Associates has laid out a series of next steps over the next six months.

- **Funding:** The City Council approved \$500,000 from the FY2023 surplus for this project. Of that total, \$100,000 has been earmarked for operations and maintenance of the property at 24 Ely Street over a two-year period.

Another \$100,000 has been reserved for potential emergency repairs to the building. That leaves \$300,000 currently available to support the redevelopment planning process and future development phases.

## SUPPORTING THE ARTISTS COLLECTIVE

The Artists Collective has long been one of Hartford's most important cultural institutions. Over the past decade, however, it has run into a range of financial and management challenges. In 2021, Mayor Bronin convened a meeting with the Artists Collective, and they collectively decided that the Artists Collective needed to develop a recovery plan. Since then, the City has allocated approximately \$300,000 in American Rescue Plan funding to help the organization find and hire a permanent executive director and hire an accountant. The City has been in regular communication with the Artists Collective about the steps they need to take to rebuild.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

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Continuing to promote arts and culture is critical to Hartford's economic future and overall vitality as Connecticut's capital. The incoming administration should seek to support and invest in the events and partnerships that Hartford residents and visitors have come to love and expect, and it should consider the following as well.

- **PROTECT AND PROMOTE PERFORMANCE VENUES AND THEATERS:** Theaters and performing venues — large and small — are vulnerable and shutting down across the country. In October of 2023, Mayor Bronin convened a meeting with Hartford-based arts institutions to discuss ongoing challenges. One important role for the city may be to assist with the promotion and marketing of specific Hartford venues — and Hartford as a destination for arts, more generally. The city may also need to play a role in assisting arts institutions in advocating for financial support both from private philanthropic sources and from the State of Connecticut. Mayor Bronin has earmarked \$300,000 from the economic and community development reserve funds to support a marketing campaign that would launch in 2024, marketing the city as a whole, but with specific emphasis on Hartford's arts and entertainment venues.
- **CONTINUE FACILITATING THE CREATION OF THE PUERTO RICAN CULTURAL CENTER:** There is funding available for the next phase of developing a Puerto Rican Cultural Center, and the incoming administration should try to ensure that the City administration continues to play an active role in the process. Bloomberg Associates has written a memo that outlines initial next steps, which the incoming administration should review.
- **CONTINUE TO WORK WITH THE ARTISTS COLLECTIVE IN DEVELOPING A SOUND PLAN FOR SUSTAINABILITY:** Revitalizing the Artists Collective would significantly expand arts opportunities for young people in Hartford, and the organization would benefit from continued engagement and support from the incoming administration. It is important, however, that the Artists Collective develop a sound strategic plan and address the governance and management issues that led it into financial difficulty. The City should continue to work together with the Hartford Foundation to encourage and incentivize this necessary work.

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## RECOMMENDATIONS CONT.

- **FIND NEW WAYS TO SUPPORT LOCAL ARTISTS AND HIGHLIGHT HARTFORD'S DIVERSE CULTURES YEAR-ROUND:** As noted above, the Hartford Creates Program has helped to fund and support local artists. However, more can and should be done to give local artists the opportunity to display, perform, and share their work with the broader Hartford community. In addition, more can and should be done to ensure that celebrations of Hartford's diverse and rich culture are not limited to large festivals, but include recurring events such as the successful Salsa on Pratt.
- **ACTIVATE SPACES WITH ART:** While Hartford Creates works to activate spaces through new initiatives like the Street Stage initiative, more can and should be done to activate spaces (public spaces, vacant storefronts, vacant commercial buildings) with art and performances. This need not require large amounts of funding, but will require new partnerships and significant coordination.
- **EXPAND HARTFORD'S CALENDAR OF FESTIVALS:** In addition to the existing summer festivals, the City of Hartford and the Arts Council have set a goal of building two new large-scale festivals:
- A Gospel Festival, leveraging Hartford's deep and rich Gospel tradition, but also showcasing national talent; and
  - Restoring Hartford's historic "Fiddle Fest" with a new festival of bluegrass music.

In addition, GoodWorks Entertainment and the Hartford Athletic are both working on initiatives to bring large ticketed music festivals to Bushnell Park and to Dillon Stadium, respectively. Finally, the Mark Twain House has begun, with the city's encouragement, to consider ways that it might raise the profile of the Mark Twain House through a Hartford literary festival, built around the existing Mark Twain American Voice in Literature Awards.

The city will have opportunities to encourage, support, and facilitate each of these initiatives in the years ahead.

# SUSTAINABILITY



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# SUSTAINABILITY

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## BACKGROUND

The City created the Office of Sustainability in 2017 after raising \$350,000 in grant funding from the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving, Partners for Places, and UConn's Connecticut Institute for Climate Resilience and Adaptation.

During its first year, the Office created a comprehensive [Climate Action Plan](#) in partnership with the City's Climate Stewardship Council, the Planning & Zoning Commission, and more than 200 stakeholders. The Plan identifies six action areas: energy, food, landscape, transportation, waste, and water.

Since then, the Office and its three staff members (with two current vacancies) have worked to advance a range of environmental stewardship initiatives that also support economic growth, improve public health, and promote social equity, working with dozens of state and local partners.

## HIGHLIGHTED INITIATIVES & ACCOMPLISHMENTS

**URBAN FORESTRY GRANT:** The City recently received a \$6 million grant from the USDA Forest Service's Urban and Community Forestry Grant program to help implement the city's [Tree Canopy Action Plan](#), which was developed in 2020 to guide the City's efforts to grow Hartford's tree canopy from 25% to 35% over the next 50 years. The grant submission envisioned a broad approach to growing the tree canopy, including planting new trees, improving the health of mature trees, and prioritizing neighborhoods with the least canopy coverage, like Clay Arsenal and Parkville.

**PARKVILLE MICROGRID:** In 2017, the City worked with energy suppliers Bloom Energy and Constellation to install and launch one of Connecticut's first fully operational microgrids. The 800-kilowatt microgrid system powers Parkville School, the Dwight Branch Library, the Parkville Senior Center and Charter Oak Health Center, and is designed to also power the CTown and gas station in Parkville if there's a grid outage. The City has a 15-year power purchase agreement with Bloom Energy.

**RESIDENTIAL ENERGY EFFICIENCY PROGRAM:** The City works with Energize CT to help residents achieve energy savings in their homes through its Community Partnership Initiative. The program is targeted at renters in single family homes or multifamily buildings, and the sustainability office has helped engage more than 1,500 residents to increase awareness of energy efficiency solutions.

**SOLAR FOR ALL CAMPAIGN:** Over the last six years, the Sustainability Office has worked with the Connecticut Green Bank and solar energy provider PosiGen to run two campaigns to make solar energy more accessible to Hartford homeowners. Overall, the program has helped connect more than 500 homeowners to affordable solar energy, with no upfront costs and without traditional barriers to entry like credit checks. Enrolled residents save an average of \$1,701 a year.

**POWERING THE CITY OF HARTFORD WITH SOLAR:** Utilizing the State's Virtual Net Metering Program, the City has partnered to support large-scale solar installations that benefit Hartford at locations across Connecticut. The electricity generated is then credited against the City's bills and meters in Hartford. To date, two such solar projects are producing enough solar power to offset 7.2% of all the electricity consumed by City facilities, saving taxpayers approximately \$100,000 per year. Under the State's new NRES program, the City has recently been awarded 13 additional solar projects, to be built at no upfront cost to the City. By the Spring of 2025, these new projects will increase the amount of solar the City generates to offset 69% of total electricity consumption, increasing budgetary savings and dramatically reducing the City's carbon footprint.



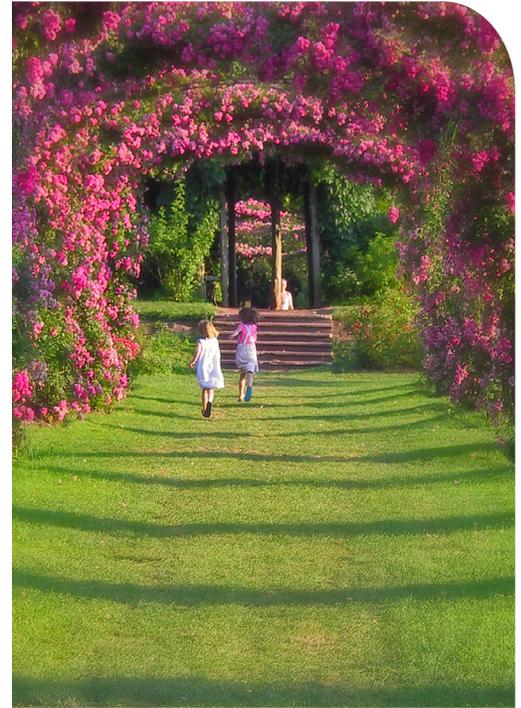
**EXPANDING SOLAR ON CITY OWNED PROPERTY:** In 2015, the landfill located in Hartford's North Meadows was permanently closed, having collected trash from across Central Connecticut for over 75 years. While the riverfront site of the landfill has been spoiled for any future residential or commercial purpose, the City has found a new and environmentally friendly use for the site: placing solar panels on top of the landfill. The current 1 megawatt (MW) solar array saves the city \$205,000 TK in electricity expenses every year, while further lowering our carbon footprint. The City is currently working with a solar developer, who has received an NRES award that will support an additional 4MW array, and the City is working with the developer and with DEEP to finalize the contract, with a goal of installing the panels in early 2025. In addition, the City has received an NRES award to support the installation of solar on the roof of Weaver High School, and is pursuing similar projects at multiple school locations.

**FUEL CELL POWER & SAVINGS:** The Sustainability Office has helped to achieve additional energy savings for the City through the installation of a fuel cell at the Public Safety Complex. This clean power source generates approximately \$100,000 of budgetary savings for the City each year.

**CLOSING THE MIRA TRASH TO ENERGY PLANT:** The City advocated for many years to close the failing trash-to-energy incineration plant in Hartford's South Meadows, which finally shut its doors in July of 2022. The closed plant sits on approximately 80 acres of riverfront land, which requires extensive environmental remediation in order to support any future use. The City successfully advocated for passage of legislation in 2023 that will preserve MIRA reserves for the eventual cleanup of this site, and which established a new board with strong Hartford representation to oversee cleanup and engage the public in the redevelopment process.

**STREET LIGHT REPLACEMENT:** In 2017, the City received a \$5 million grant to convert its existing light fixtures to LED lamps. The City used that funding to upgrade lighting in parks and on City-owned buildings, including parking lots and schools, replacing more than 2,500 lights. At the same time, Eversource has been replacing the lamps they own – which are the majority in Hartford – at their own expense.

**INDEPENDENT ASSESSMENTS:** The Sustainability Office regularly pursues independent assessments of its work. In 2023, Sustainable CT, Connecticut's premier environmental organization focused on galvanizing local climate action, [recognized](#) Hartford as one of only two cities earning its top "Climate Leader" designation. The designation is based on the totality of Hartford's work on sustainability, from converting street lights and improving energy efficiency to implementing a complete streets policy. In 2019, Hartford was also recognized as one of the top 25 cities in the country as part of the American Council for an Energy Efficient Economy's clean energy scorecard Hartford [currently ranks](#) eighteenth in those rankings.



The Office of Sustainability participates in and supports a wide range of projects not listed above: initiatives within City government, like complete streets implementation to make our streets more pedestrian and bike friendly, as well as external initiatives run by partner organizations, from tree plantings to food distributions to public education on a range of environmental and related issues. The Office is currently supported by \$229,000 in personnel funding from the Office of the Chief Operating Officer, and its ongoing initiatives are supported by \$7.3 million in grants from State, Federal and other sources.

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# RECOMMENDATIONS

Tackling the many challenges posed to Hartford by climate change will be no easy task in the years ahead. The Office of Sustainability can continue to lead this important work for the City by directly implementing or advocating for policies that will make a meaningful difference for our environment. Priorities include:

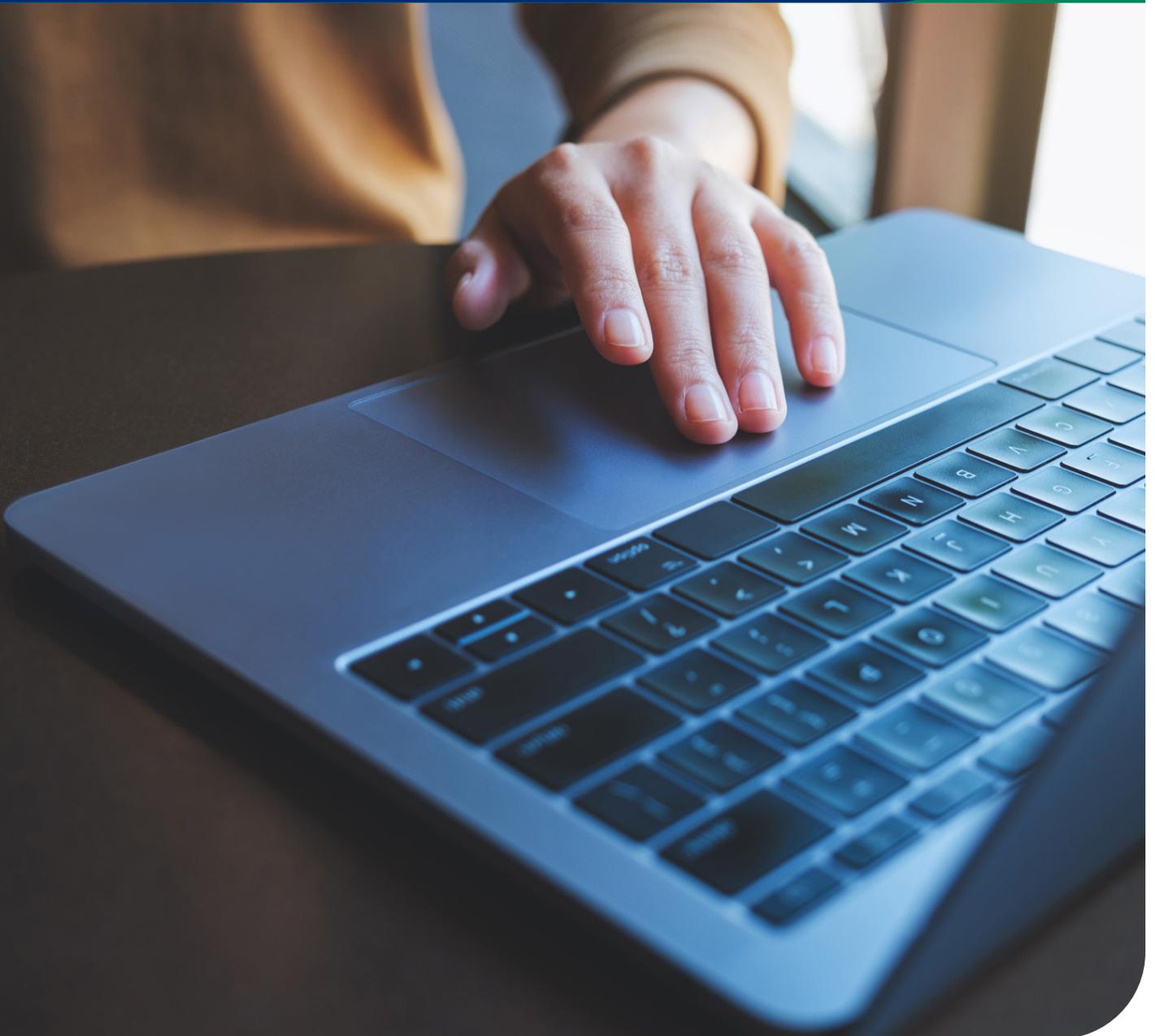
- **STORMWATER MANAGEMENT:** Identifying opportunities to address Hartford's growing issues with stormwater, including through continued pursuit of a green infrastructure test installation to improve stormwater drainage on Granby Street, in partnership with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the State Department of Energy & Environmental Protection (DEEP) and the Metropolitan District Commission (which owns and operates Hartford's storm sewers).
- **SOLAR INSTALLATION:** Continuing to pursue solar installation projects at the Hartford Landfill and Weaver High School, as outlined above, and pursue new opportunities at other city-owned properties, including additional schools.
- **PROGRESS ON CLIMATE ACTION PLAN:** Preserving the City's ongoing commitment to the goals laid out in the City's Climate Action Plan, so Hartford can continue doing its part to address climate change.
- **SUSTAINABLE WASTE DISPOSAL:** Supporting and incentivizing the diversion of organic waste from the waste stream and partnering with regional partners and with the State to support the development of an environmentally sound, fiscally sustainable approach to solid waste disposal.
- **CONTINUE TO STRENGTHEN THE SUSTAINABILITY OFFICE:** Cultivating symbiotic relationships between the Office of Sustainability with and other City departments, key stakeholders, community-based organizations, Hartford residents, and with other municipalities to increase the effectiveness and visibility of all of the Sustainability Office's initiatives.

# PROCESS IMPROVEMENT



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# PROCESS IMPROVEMENT

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## BACKGROUND

On a day-to-day basis, City government delivers a broad range of services to Hartford residents and businesses through each of its operating departments, using multiple technology platforms and software. Keeping those pieces of software, hardware, and processes up to date requires constant monitoring, prioritization, and investment.

In recent years, the City has made substantial investments to upgrade both public-facing and internal digital infrastructure, and this report highlights some of the most significant initiatives pursued in recent years to improve the efficiency and quality of City services, including initiatives currently underway.

## MODERNIZING CITY OPERATIONS

### INTERNAL PLATFORM MIGRATIONS AND IMPROVEMENTS:

The City and HPS use dozens of software platforms to support service delivery, organization, and collaboration — everything from mobile apps that help the City collect information on blighted properties in the field to the Police Department's internal scheduling software. MHIS services all of those platforms, and over the last eight years it has upgraded many of them, including: migrating time clock management software to a new platform; offering a new payment method to city vendors; implementing two-factor authentication to secure user accounts for employees and the City's financial management systems; migrating case management software for the Civilian Police Review Board's Inspector General; launching Hartford 311's public interface; developing GIS websites for the planning division; developing a mobile app for Health Department inspections; integrating the Police Department's body camera system into the City's network; and more.

**ACCELA PLATFORM IMPLEMENTATION:** In late 2023, the City completed the rollout of a major new software platform for multiple City departments, shifting a number of key City internal- and external-facing services to the Accela platform.

This new software will improve the online customer experience for Hartford residents looking to obtain a wide variety of City permits and licenses, as well as for those reporting a pothole to Hartford 311 or filing a complaint about a housing code violation. On the back end of the software, the Accela platform makes it much easier for multiple City staff across different departments to share information and collaborate to quickly address resident needs. The platform upgrade will benefit many City departments, including: Health & Human Services, the Development Services (including Building Code and Licenses & Inspections), Public Works and Hartford 311.

- **Funding:** The Accela upgrade cost \$1.2 million for both software and implementation and it was funded in FY20 and FY21 with General Fund dollars.

### COMPUTER-AIDED DISPATCH (CAD), RECORDS MANAGEMENT SYSTEM (RMS), AND RADIO UPGRADE:

The City's prior CAD and RMS systems were installed about 40 years ago, and the radio systems used by public safety departments were reaching the end of their life. ES&T, working with the Police and Fire Departments, recently completed the CAD/RMS project, and anticipates the new radio infrastructure will go live in early 2025.

- **Funding:** The CAD/RMS project upgrade cost \$8 million, with \$5 million from the State Office of Policy and Management and \$3 million from the City's General Fund. The separate radio infrastructure upgrade project costs approximately \$6 million, funded exclusively with City dollars.

**UPGRADED CYBERSECURITY SYSTEMS:** In 2020, the City experienced a significant cyber attack. Before the attack, MHIS had made cyber-security-related investments that allowed most of the data lost to be recovered. Since then, the City has continued to strengthen its cyber defenses, including by getting external assessments of its cybersecurity. Specifically, MHIS has rolled out multi-factor authentication for all employees, servers have received additional fortifications, and threat intelligence monitoring and endpoint protection has been strengthened.

- **Funding:** The City has spent approximately \$1.4 million since 2019 to further increase cybersecurity defenses.

**STREAMLINING REAL ESTATE TRANSACTIONS:** In October 2023, the City began using Just Appraised, a machine learning application that simplifies the real estate transaction process by scanning deeds and other relevant paperwork, extracting the relevant title information, and then inserting that information directly into the assessor's office software. That allows the assessors to accurately process real estate transactions significantly faster — because they don't have to spend the same amount of time combing through deeds.

- **Funding:** The Just Appraised software is a subscription service that costs about \$20,000 per year.

**CAR TAX ENFORCEMENT:** Between 2019 and 2022, the City contracted with Municipal Tax Services (MTS) to improve compliance with car tax collection. MTS has worked with a number of municipalities in Connecticut, including Stamford. MTS uses an automated license plate recognition system to determine if there are unregistered or improperly registered cars within a municipality, allowing municipalities to assess the appropriate taxes. Their analysis identified approximately \$4.9 million in unassessed car taxes owed by Hartford residents, and the City has collected about \$2.6 million of that outstanding revenue.

- **Funding:** MTS was funded by a \$50 fee per transaction, and also collected 50% of the overdue tax revenue the City received. Even with that split, the City had collected millions in taxes owed that would otherwise have gone uncollected. The City is no longer using MTS.

**CITY COUNCIL iCOMPASS TRANSITION:** The City Council began moving its public-facing meeting interface to a new platform called iCompass in 2022, which was designed for local government. This platform makes it easier for residents to access City Council and Committee meeting agendas, to access the minutes of meetings and see a convenient calendar of all upcoming civic events. The transition process to this new system is ongoing, with the Planning & Zoning Commission soon to adopt the new platform.

- **Funding:** The recurring \$25,000 yearly cost for this software is funded by the Clerk's Office.

**\$4.9M**  
IDENTIFIED IN  
UNASSESSED CAR  
TAXES OWED



## IMPROVING THE CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

**ONLINE PERSONAL PROPERTY DECLARATION:** In 2023, the City began allowing commercial taxpayers to file their personal property declarations online. Previously, personal property declarations had to be mailed in or physically dropped off at City Hall. The upgraded system allows taxpayers to register and create an account on the declaration platform, which is available through the City website, using a unique code that is mailed to them, and then enter their information into the system directly. The system is voluntary, and taxpayers who want to file using the hard copy method can still do so. As of December 2023, 615 taxpayers had used the new system, ranging from small mom and pop businesses to large financial institutions.

- **Funding:** There was no additional cost to set up this system. It is an extension of the City's existing tax software.

**BIRTH CERTIFICATES & VITAL RECORDS:** As part of the City's effort to offer additional online services in the wake of COVID-19, the City now offers online ordering of birth certificates and other vital records, like marriage licenses, with the assistance of new IQS software. This software also facilitates the indexing of land records by the Town Clerk's office.

- **Funding:** Processing fees for the system cost approximately \$80,000 per year.

**UPGRADING ONLINE PROPERTY TAX PAYMENT:** In 2020, the City upgraded its online property tax payment system using a new platform called InvoiceCloud, which accepted a much wider range of payment options. From 2020 to 2021, online tax collection increased by about 60%, and revenue from online tax collection has more than doubled since adoption of the system.

- **Funding:** The platform is almost entirely supported by user fees that taxpayers pay when they complete transactions. The City pays a \$45 monthly subscription fee.

**CITY WEBSITE UPGRADES:** In 2019 and 2020, the City went through a redesign process for the overall City website, [www.hartfordct.gov](http://www.hartfordct.gov), to provide a more modern and intuitive design for visitors. The design focuses on making content easy to find and engaging residents as much as possible, while also being accessible for more users. The entire site can be translated with only two clicks into any of one hundred languages.

- **Funding:** This site redesign was supported with an \$81,000 General Fund expenditure.

**NEW FOI MANAGEMENT SYSTEM:** The City upgraded to new Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) management software called GovQA that tracks information requests in real time and directs them to appropriate City personnel to enhance compliance. The software is widely used by local and state governments around the country.

- **Funding:** This software costs the city \$36,000 per year.

**ENHANCING MYREC SOFTWARE:** The City's Recreation Division uses MyRec, a web-based platform, to schedule all of its programming and allow residents and organizations to reserve recreational facilities. The Division is in the process of introducing a scanner system that will work in conjunction with MyRec to help gather data on usage and attendance.

The scanner system will also help during emergencies because it will provide data on who's at any given facility at any given time. The system will primarily be used at the Arroyo Recreation Center and the Parker Community Center, and implementation is planned for early 2024.

## CLOSING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE

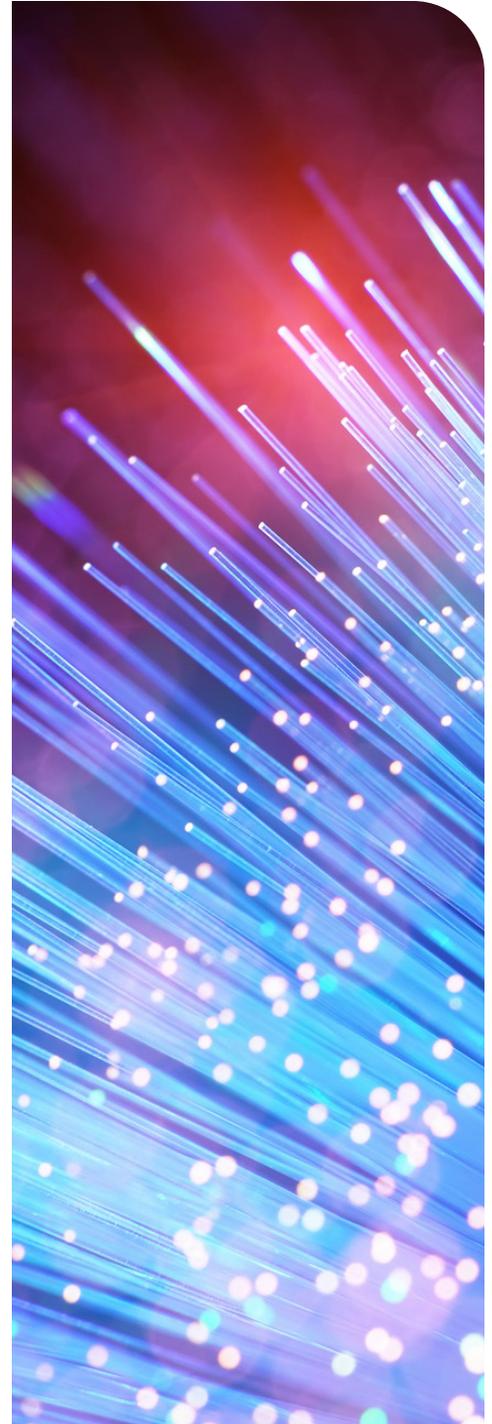
**CITYWIDE FREE WI-FI PROGRAM:** In 2020, the City began building a free, citywide Wi-Fi network available to all residents, using funding from Dalio Education and the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving. Unlike many free public Wi-Fi networks, which aim only to provide internet access in public spaces, Hartford's network seeks to provide free internet services in residential neighborhoods and commercial areas, informed by a 2017 city-wide survey conducted by the Hartford Public Library, which found that 42% of Hartford's population did not have home internet service.

With the emergence of COVID-19 and the resulting necessity of at-home work and schooling, the City's Wi-Fi initiative took on an added urgency and importance. As of September 2023, Hartford's free Wi-Fi network is online and available in six neighborhoods: the Northeast Neighborhood, Frog Hollow, Clay Arsenal, Asylum Hill, Blue Hills and in Bushnell Park. On an average day, 12,907 unique clients utilize the network, drawing down an average of 1.79 gigabytes of data. The City aims to continue expanding this free Wi-Fi network as additional funds become available, including by pursuing grants through the ARPA CPF Program and IIJA BEAD Program, two federal initiatives administered by the State of Connecticut.

- **Funding:** Initial phases of the project were supported by \$1.5 million grants each from Dalio Education and the Hartford Foundation. The City planned to fund the balance of the project and recurring annual costs of approximately \$100,000. State and federal grants are being pursued to finish buildout of the network in all Hartford neighborhoods, which will cost an estimated \$30.1 million.

**FIBER INSTALLATION ON NORTH MAIN:** For many years, businesses located along North Main Street and Windsor Street in Hartford's North End faced high barriers to obtaining affordable broadband internet connections. To bring high-speed fiber internet lines to these businesses in the Northeast neighborhood, the City issued an RFP and ultimately partnered with Comcast, splitting the \$1.5 million project cost 50/50 to bring broadband service to this essential business corridor. Work was completed in late 2023, and the installed fiber will permanently support the future growth and competitiveness of businesses in the Northeast neighborhood.

- **Funding:** This project was funded with approximately \$750,000 from the City's Capital Improvement Plan in FY 22.



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# RECOMMENDATIONS

- **PROPERTY TAX PAYMENT KIOSKS:** The City has had an online tax payment portal for several years, but it is currently exploring setting up tax payment kiosks that could accept any type of payment (cash, card, or check) and reduce the burden of tax compliance. The City has two proposals it is currently reviewing. Kiosks can cost about \$30,000 each. The new administration should strongly consider moving forward with this project, as it will create a more convenient and accessible tax payment option for Hartford residents.
- **EXPAND CITY-OWNED FIBER INFRASTRUCTURE:** By continuing to build out fiber infrastructure that the City owns across Hartford, additional programs and priorities including Hartford's free public Wi-Fi project and the Hartford Police Department's C4 camera system can also be supported.
- **MAINTAIN AND STRENGTHEN CYBERSECURITY AWARENESS AND TRAINING:** While the City was able to recover from the severe cyber attack it suffered in 2020, it will be critical to continue implementing best practices when it comes to cybersecurity. That includes continuing to invest in systems-level software, training and awareness, and user-level tools like multi-factor authentication, which the City has already installed.
- **ASSESS HOW AI CAN IMPROVE CITY SERVICES:** As the City continues its digital transformation, AI presents an opportunity to streamline workstreams and potentially improve customer service. Like every other sector and organization, the City should assess how AI can support City services.
- **CONTINUE TO MIGRATE SOFTWARE PLATFORMS TO CLOUD-BASED SERVICES:** The City has made a great deal of progress modernizing its IT infrastructure, but there are still legacy systems used in many City departments. The incoming administration should continue to assess the costs and benefits of software migration.

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## RECOMMENDATIONS CONT.

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- **ACQUIRE IMPROVED PROCUREMENT SOFTWARE:** The city currently conducts electronic bidding through Planet Bids. Acquiring software with additional features, such as adding other Procurement Office functions like contract compliance and contract management, could improve efficiency and reduce processing time for new procurements of all kinds.
- **COMPLETE THE ROLLOUT OF SAMARA SOFTWARE FOR CITY VEHICLES:** The Department of Public Works has conducted a trial run of software called Samara, which can monitor the operation of City vehicles to detect any violation of driving laws, track when City equipment is and is not active, and much more. The software holds significant potential to improve efficiency of City operations. The trial conducted to date was funded from the contingency account. A full rollout of the software across all City vehicles would cost \$300,000.