

# WHOSE CITY? A STORY OF NEW HAVEN

In 2019, new market-rate priced housing developments are going up throughout New Haven while residents are struggling with rising rents and housing insecurity. The people of New Haven are told that they are experiencing a “Renaissance,” but so far it has only been a renaissance for a rising “professional class” community, much of which is only now moving into the city. Meanwhile traditional New

**ROOM FOR ALL COALITION**  
**NEW HAVEN LEGAL ASSISTANCE ASSOCIATION**

Haven residents from black and brown working-class communities are being displaced.

This story is not new—it’s part of a long history in our city. Every few decades, New Haven is presented with a shiny new economic development plan full of false promises. But the City administrations that champion those big ideas too often also invite, collaborate with or remain apathetic

to the influence of private interests that disregard the stability of low-income, black and brown communities and rob them of their right to grow and maintain roots in their neighborhoods.

Every step of the way of this process, New Haven has fought back with strength and solidarity against racist, elitist and unjust economic development. Now we are putting up that fight again.

## URBAN RENEWAL DISPLACEMENT

Between 1956 and 1974, one in every five New Haveners are displaced from their home neighborhood or mom-and-pop business by urban renewal planning.

### DEMOLITION BEGINS AT CHURCH STREET SOUTH

Church Street South was quickly identified as a strategic location for Urban Renewal because it lies between Downtown New Haven and the Union Train Station. By 1968, an estimated 2,064 people in 704 households at Church Street South had been displaced by the demolition of their homes.

1954

1956

1960

1974

1982

1996

2002

2015

2018

2018

2019

2019

## 1950s-1960s: URBAN RENEWAL AND THE “MODEL CITY”

The push for better housing conditions in the early 1900s was plagued by bad advice from state and federal leadership, white flight and racist loan practices (i.e. redlining) dating back to the 1930s. By the time it reached New Haven, Urban Renewal

was not about improving poor housing conditions as much as it was about retail, luxury housing and attracting suburbanites back to the city.

City leaders won national praise for their plans to turn New Haven into the

nation’s “Model City” using the federal Urban Renewal program. In reality, the City bulldozed entire neighborhoods and small businesses, failed to replace low-income units and disrupted the lives of thousands of residents.

## 1970s-2000s: NEOLIBERALISM AND THE “INDUSTRIAL INCUBATOR”

From the 1970s-2000s, under Yale’s influence, the City of New Haven prioritized the strategy of luring jobs in the biotech industry. It was virtually a complete failure for the people of New Haven. The City offered public money to Yale for private developments such as

Science Park that never delivered promises of good jobs to City residents who needed them. Instead, they fed the University’s ballooning endowment and further isolated low-income neighborhoods from the city’s core.

As New Haven suffered

from a deep economic crisis, Yale became one of the richest institutions in the world, New Haven’s major employer and a local real-estate giant. Meanwhile, the City refused to put up a fight against Yale’s tax-exempt, non-profit status.

### YALE BUILDS SCIENCE PARK

Promising residents jobs which were never delivered, Yale purchased land for development in the heart of Dixwell and Newhallville. The City turned a blind eye while Yale-affiliated developers used taxpayer money to impose Science Park on black low-income people in order to serve University interests.

### YALE EMPLOYEES GO ON STRIKE

In 1996, labor forces building within the Yale union fought against the university’s effort to subcontract labor outside of the union for work on new property that it had purchased. Thousands of New Haveners stood together and won a contract that forced Yale to retreat on a major chunk of these demands.

## THE TIDE OF RISING RENTS

Between 2002 and 2015, the number of units at more than \$2000 per month increased by 97% while the number of units renting for \$800 or less decreased.

## 2010s: GENTRIFICATION AND NEW HAVEN’S “RENAISSANCE”

Just as in the years of Urban Renewal, the city is once again chasing a stronger tax base at the expense and displacement of New Haven’s working-class, low-income and poor communities. New Haveners are being forced to seek housing outside the city due to rising rents, while market-rate

housing developments are being approved on a weekly basis. We are promised the blossoming of an economic “Renaissance” that will capitalize on strengths such as the train station and our close proximity to Boston and New York.

But this revitalization is not for New Haven’s poor and working class. It is for a community of young professionals who have only begun to move into the city. That’s why New Haven is fighting back to make sure the city’s economic future will include everyone. Join us!

### CHURCH STREET SOUTH DEMOLISHED

Public pressure led the city to build low-income housing at Church Street South in 1968. But less than 50 years later, the building was condemned due to neglect by its property managers. By 2018, 858 bedrooms were destroyed and their former low-income occupants were displaced

### LUXURY DEVELOPMENT AT 201 MUNSON STREET

The luxury development at 201 Munson St. has been announced in the heart of a black working-class neighborhood without neither sufficient time and opportunity for community response or publicized plans for truly affordable units. It is speculated to include plans for a tenant-only pool and tennis court.

### ROOM FOR ALL COALITION

In 2018, a coalition of New Haveners began organizing to fight displacement and unaccountable economic development. Room For All was instrumental in the creation of the City Hall Affordable Housing Commission, and the group continues to demand that City Hall and private developers make efforts to ensure New Haven will be affordable to all.

### YALE ANNOUNCES ST. RAPHAELS’ EXPANSION

Yale University purchased St. Raphael’s Hospital and in 2019 announced an \$838 million neurology center to be built at the site. This makes Chapel St. west of downtown ripe for the displacement of current residents due to rising rents and gentrification without community input.