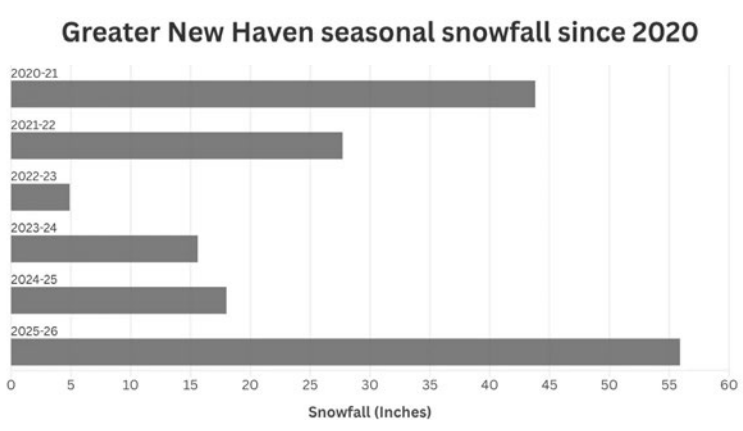
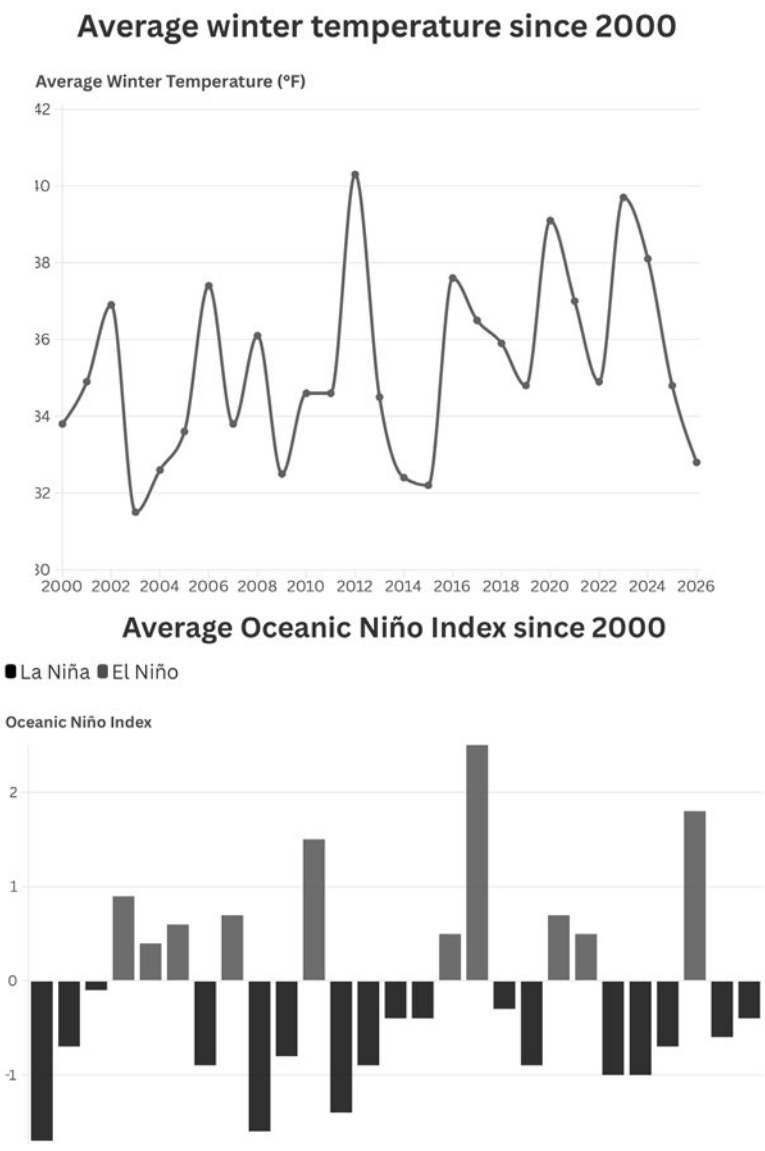
# NEWS

*"For, d'ye see, rainbows do not visit the clear air; they only irradiate vapor. And so, through all the thick mists of the dim doubts in my mind, divine intuitions now and then shoot, enkindling my fog with a heavenly ray."*
**MOBY-DICK** HERMAN MELVILLE

## New Haven had a very snowy winter. Can climate patterns explain it?




BY TYLER MATUKONIS
STAFF REPORTER

Before the sun came out, New Haven weathered two back-to-back snowstorms this winter — after nearly a decade without a blizzard.

A Jan. 25 winter storm blanketed the streets of New Haven with more than a foot of snow. On Feb. 22, another storm coated the city with an additional 15 inches. Forecasters initially underestimated the intensity of both storms and increased their predictions in the days leading up to them.

Forecasters generate snowfall predictions from data collected by radar, satellite imagery and computer models. The data often includes temperature, atmospheric pressure, humidity and other rapidly changing factors that influence weather, making snowfall predictions prone to inaccuracies.

Although short-term forecasting of weather tends to be more accurate, it also helps to look at long-term patterns.

When considered from year to year, the average temperature of New Haven during the winter seems volatile and erratic. However, the El Niño-Southern Oscillation, or ENSO, which shifts between the phases of El Niño and La Niña, drives climate variability across North America, including in New Haven.

During the El Niño phase, warm waters in the Pacific Ocean lead to warm and dry conditions in the northern parts of the United States. Conversely, during La Niña, cold water causes the same region to become colder and wetter — conditions that are more favorable to snow formation.

The Oceanic Niño Index measures the extent of each phase, with positive values indicating El Niño conditions and negative values indicating La Niña.

The News plotted New Haven's winter season snowfall totals against each year's average Oceanic Niño Index value to understand the relationship between widespread climatic patterns and local precipitation.

Many of the peaks in total winter snowfall occurred during years where the city experienced La Niña conditions, including 2001, 2018 and 2021. That aligns with the tendency for La Niña conditions to promote snowfall.

However, a year like 2003, when significant snowfall occurred alongside moderate El Niño conditions, demonstrates that El Niño and La Niña alone do not capture the factors that influence snowfall.

A weak La Niña lingered throughout the early months of 2026, bringing approximately 27.4 total inches of snowfall, an increase from previous years.

According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the tropical Pacific is now in a neutral state with a "Super El Niño" on the way.

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## Tweed-New Haven Airport nears runway expansion as concerns persist

BY MICHELLE SO
STAFF REPORTER

A long-standing plan to build a new 84,000-square-foot terminal and expand the runway at Tweed-New Haven Airport appears to be one step closer to implementation.

This month, the Tweed-New Haven Airport Authority published a memorandum of understanding about its runway expansion project, representing a non-binding agreement among New Haven, East Haven, the airport authority and Avports, an airport operator.

"While there are many additional steps moving forward, the MOU provides a framework to address traffic, parking and environmental concerns and the provision of information, ongoing discussions, technical review, and coordination among the Parties," a statement from the four parties read.

While the document formalizes the plan, Lorena Venegas, a lifelong East Haven resident, has long been skeptical of the airport's plans and has actively been fighting the runway's development.

In 2019, Venegas learned about the airport's plans for its biggest expansion yet. Without formal political experience, she began attending town meetings, interested in the environmental and public health problems in her backyard.

In 2021, Tweed laid out plans to expand its runway by 1,035 feet to accommodate larger airline jets, a move that could impact nearby wetlands and local residents. Financing the project, jumping environmental regulation hurdles and facing the public have all posed challenges to the airport.




**Zoe Berg**
An agreement among New Haven, East Haven, the airport authority and the airport operator confirmed the parties' move forward with the Tweed expansion plan.

"I started realizing people didn't know what was happening, and that the more questions that I asked, there were no answers," Venegas said in an interview. "And at the same time, I know that East Haven is very vulnerable."

Venegas, who runs a Facebook page dedicated to anti-Tweed activism, told the News that the new memorandum of understanding about Tweed has been "full of misspellings and misinformation."

"That MOU as it is, it says that we have implemented noise monitors. We haven't. It says we've implemented air pollution monitors, and we haven't," Venegas said.

Tom Cavaliere, a Tweed spokesperson, told the News that the airport has committed to two programs: the Residential Sound Insulation program and the Residential Indoor Air Program.

The sound program has distributed nearly $12 million in federal funding to soundproof more than 180 homes since 2014, according to Cavaliere. The airport identified eligible properties through noise studies, with a new study planned after the completion of Tweed's proposed runway extension. The air program, funded by Avports, provides medical-grade HEPA air purifiers to eligible households in New Haven and East Haven.

"HVN is also the only U.S. airport to offer free air purifiers in response to community concerns around odor," Cavaliere wrote to the News.

However, some residents say the program has its shortcomings. Katherine Bennett and her husband are both retired teachers who live in East Haven. Bennett has felt that the policy left some residents like herself out of the mix.

"People always line up on the street because there's not enough parking and stuff, and waiting for people to come in on planes. You know, they're idling, but I can smell it," Bennett said in an interview.

Despite only living a half mile from the perimeter, Bennett said she does not qualify for the air purifiers.

Bennett says she is disappointed by the pollution caused by the airport and, in regards to the expansion project, hopes Connecticut's Department of Energy and Environmental Protection "shuts it down."

The department — which independently enforces Connecticut's stricter state laws protecting wetlands, water quality, wildlife and flood control — is conducting a technical environmental review of Tweed's runway expansion and terminal construction projects.

Last month, Tweed postponed its monthly community meeting, originally scheduled for March 25, in order to complete answering questions for its environmental review process. Residents were given little notice ahead of the cancellation, according to Venegas.

Regarding the delayed information session, Cavaliere wrote: "HVN has committed to holding public informational sessions at key milestones — including the virtual session already held and a future session at a later stage in the process. We expect that session will take place no earlier than May and will announce the date as the process advances."

The extra time is needed for Tweed's team to "turn its full attention to responding to DEEP comments and advancing the application," according to Cavaliere.

The airport now called Tweed opened in 1931.

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## Judge orders eviction of The Place 2 Be from New Haven location

BY NICOLAS CIMINELLO
STAFF REPORTER

The Place 2 Be's embattled restaurant owner received a court-ordered eviction notice on Friday due to frequent failures to pay rent on time.

Gina Luari, who founded the self-described "millennial brunch" chain, has faced two previous eviction notices for the restaurant's New Haven location since March of last year. In both eviction cases, Luari came to an agreement with her landlord.

Luari has faced other legal issues in recent months. Connecticut's Department of Revenue Services revoked The Place 2 Be's sales and tax use permits in late March, shuttering all three restaurant locations across the state.

Tiffany Thiele, the director of communications for the Connecticut Department of Revenue Services, wrote in an email to the News that the restaurant's permit had not been restored.

Luari attended an eviction hearing on April 7 about her alleged nonpayment of rent in February.

After the hearing, Judge Alayna Stone '04 ruled in favor of Luari because her landlord, Michael Schaffer '72, had continued to accept her late rent payments. Stone wrote that Schaffer could either receive late payments or ask for a court-ordered eviction, but not both.

However, Stone also acknowledged that Schaffer was "understandably frustrated and simply wants possession" of the building, given Luari's complicated history as a tenant.

On Thursday, Schaffer's attorney Phillip Pires filed another affidavit of noncompliance over Luari's alleged nonpayment of rent in April. Pires alleged that Luari owed Schaffer $11,954.50.

The following day, Stone ordered an eviction because Luari had previously agreed in August that any more missed rent payments would waive her right to appeal an eviction notice.

In the past year, Luari has faced other legal issues, including multiple eviction proceedings for other restaurant locations.

New Haven police arrested Luari last September for writing a bad check for $10,000, though she told NBC Connecticut in November that it had been an honest mistake.

"We had a lot of events that happened to us within the last year and a half. We had two floods, we had a fire, we had embezzlement," she said at the time. "We were trying to navigate them the best we could."

Two of Luari's other restaurants have been recently evicted. The Hartford seafood bar RAW* was evicted in October 2025, and court paperwork indicated that Luari owed the landlord over $18,000. The Bakery by TP2B, a breakfast restaurant affiliated with The Place 2 Be chain, was evicted in September 2025.

The Place 2 Be opened its fifth location in New Haven in December 2022, branding itself as a "millennial food concept" with the mantra "Go Bottomless." Founded in 2015, the restaurant quickly gained a large following on multiple social media platforms, with 12,000 followers on Facebook.

As of March, only three locations remained: New Haven, Hartford and West Hartford. Each was shut down by the Connecticut Department of Revenue Services that month.




**Alex Hong / Staff Photographer**
Last month, The Place 2 Be was shuttered after losing its sales and tax use permits. On Friday, a judge ordered the restaurant's eviction after its owner allegedly failed to pay rent on multiple occasions.

Luari, her attorney Brian Steele and Schaffer did not respond to the News' emailed requests for comment.

The Place 2 Be was located at 338 Elm St.

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