

FROM THE FRONT

“The stars don't look bigger, but they do look brighter.”

SALLY RIDE AMERICAN ASTRONAUT

Incumbent mayor wins fourth term

ELICKER FROM PAGE 1

of his win to his administration's focus on crime, affordable housing and the climate crisis, but added that “it is also because when Donald Trump attacks our community, we fight back.”

He mentioned all four of the lawsuits New Haven has joined against the Trump administration since the president's January inauguration. Just last Thursday, the city joined a national lawsuit over anticipated cuts to Supplementary Nutrition Assistance Program, or SNAP. After a federal judge filed a temporary restraining order against the White House, it announced it would send partial payments this month.

And Elicker said in an interview that the antagonistic posture he has taken toward Trump may have helped cement his win.

“At a poll, I said to one woman, ‘Thanks for coming and voting,’ and she said, ‘Thanks for fighting Trump?’” he said. “And that kind of message I heard from many voters across the city that feel deeply concerned about what's going on in our nation.”

Elicker added that he saw much of the president in his challenger.

“Technically, Orosco was my opponent, and Orosco was somewhat Trumpish in his campaign, that wasn't always accurate, was unbelievably negative, didn't really have anything positive to say, any real solutions,” he said.

Orosco, for his part, said that he was counting on support from Trump voters that never materialized.

“If Trump got 7,000 votes in New Haven,” he said, “and I only had 2,000, that number doesn't add up to me, because those 7,000 people should definitely be motivated to vote again this year.”

But entrenched one-party rule has drained energy from the city's democratic life and kept voter turnout low, per several political observers.

Elicker himself acknowledged that “in New Haven, it's hard for a Republican to win.”

Referring to Orosco, he added that “I appreciate him throwing his hat in the ring. I think that it's not easy to run a campaign.”

Democrats sweep alder races

Down the ballot, in six of the seven contested alder races, the Democratic candidates won handily.

In Wooster Square's Ward 8, Democrat Amanda Martinelli, who was endorsed by outgoing alder Ellen Cupo, beat Republican Andrea Zola by around 74 points.

Martinelli said she felt “good” in an interview at Elicker's victory party.

“I really worked hard to get out and meet as many neighbors as I possibly could” — and that, Martinelli said, is why she won.

In Quinipiac Meadows' Ward 12, one-term incumbent Theresa Morant beat Robert Vitello, who ran on the Independent and Republican lines, by around 50 points.

Meanwhile, in Fair Haven Heights' Ward 13, Democrat Mildred Melendez won 417 votes to Green candidate Paul Garlinghouse's 71 and Independent Luis Jimenez's 32.

At Elicker's party, Melendez said she felt “fantastic, fabulous, super excited. Paul Garlinghouse was a perfect opponent. He was kind. He's smart. I truly respect him. He ran a great race. It was a good day together — great example of democracy.”

In Fair Haven's Ward 16, Democrat Magda Natal trumped Independent Rafael Fuentes by around 63 points.

Natal said that she “expected” to win.

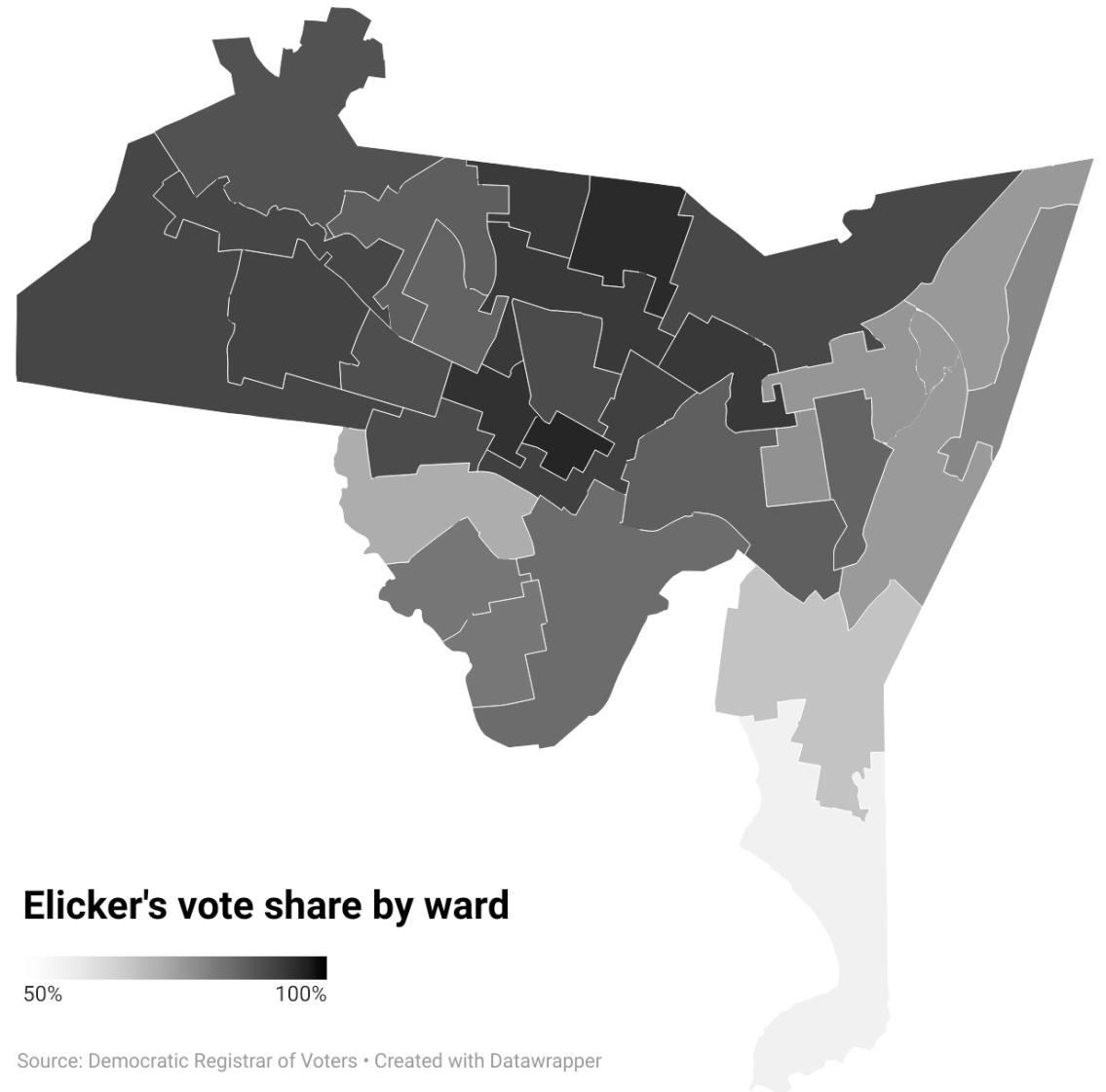
“There was no doubt,” the alder-elect said. “I was hoping to see higher numbers, just because I've been out for so many months.” Natal had won 154 votes as of Tuesday evening. She added that she felt “overwhelmed” thinking about the work that lies ahead.

Over in East Shore's Ward 18, Democrat Leland Moore received 692 votes, while Anthony Acri, who is running on the Republican and Independent lines, won 395 and petitioning candidate Zelema Harris 37.

“It feels good,” Moore said in an interview inside the ward's polling place. “I'll take a little break tomorrow and once sworn in, we'll get to work.”

Acri lamented the challenge of running as a Republican or Independent candidate.

“We're fighting against the Democratic machine in this city — but we did pretty well and



Elicker's vote share by ward

50% 100%

Source: Democratic Registrar of Voters · Created with Datawrapper

Mayor Justin Elicker won a fourth term Tuesday as Democrats triumphed in every city race. / Via Wang

maybe some people will listen.” He added that he will “still be involved in the community — politics, I don't know.”

In West Rock's Ward 30, three-term incumbent Honda Smith crushed Republican challenger Perry Flowers by 86 points.

New Haven's only competitive race took place in the Hill's Ward 3. In that contest — marred by allegations of misconduct at its eleventh hour — half-term incumbent Angel Hubbard, a Democrat, emerged victorious over challenger Miguel Pittman, winning 347 votes to his

303. Pittman, who ran on the Independent and Republican lines, also lost to Hubbard in this year's Democratic primary and in a 2024 special election.

For Elicker, it's straight back to work Wednesday morning.

“I could pull out my schedule, but it's jam packed with meetings,” he said.

Orosco, meanwhile, is not sure what lies ahead.

He lost one race for alder and two for state senator in previous years; last month, he speculated he might one day run for governor. And he has not ruled out running

for mayor again in 2027.

“You know what it is?” Orosco said. “I love to fight. I just do. I can't help myself.”

This was New Haven's first municipal general election with early voting, and as of Tuesday night, before all ballots had been counted, turnout was up from 2023 by more than 1,100 votes.

Eric Song, Chantal Eulenstein and Nellie Kenney contributed reporting.

Contact

ELIJAH HUREWITZ-RAVITCH at elijah.hurewitz-ravitch@yale.edu.

Board of Alders to remain all Democrats

INDEPENDENTS FROM PAGE 1

Most successful was businessman Miguel Pittman, who challenged half-term incumbent Angel Hubbard, a Democrat, for the Hill's Ward 3 alder seat. He previously lost to Hubbard in a tight 2024 special election and in this year's Democratic primary. This cycle, running on the Independent and Republican lines in a race marred by allegations of misconduct, he won 303 votes to Hubbard's 347, according to data from New Haven's Registrar of Voters.

Pittman led by a wide margin in early voting, however. Bartlett speculated that once it became clear Ward 3's race would be the most competitive, “the machine — I mean the Democratic Party, the alders, New Haven Rising and UNITE HERE” put its resources behind Hubbard.

Acri, who has previously run as a Republican twice for city clerk and twice for state representative, also nabbed a significant share of the vote in the Ward 18 race, winning 37 percent.

“We did not get the Republicans to turn out as I had hoped that they would,” Acri said. “I did not get the number of Independent votes that I expected either.” Ward 18 saw a higher share of its residents vote for President Donald Trump last fall than any other ward.

Still, Acri fared better than some of his fellow Independents.

In Quinipiac Meadows' Ward 12, Robert Vitello, who also ran on the Republican line, won just over 25 percent of the vote.

In Fair Haven's Ward 16, Rafael Fuentes won 16.7 percent of the vote. And in Fair Haven Heights' Ward 13, Luis Jimenez won 6.3 percent.

“Quite frankly,” Bartlett said, some of the candidates “didn't put in a hundred percent.”

Indeed, Vitello said that he only decided to run for alder because he had heard, mistakenly, that one-term incumbent Teresa Morant was not seeking reelection.



The city's Independent Party failed to win a single seat this election. / Logan Dinkins, Contributing Photographer

“I would have never went against her,” he said, adding that they became friends while standing outside of the ward's polling location Tuesday.

Fuentes, meanwhile, said that he only ran to unseat 10-term incumbent Jose Crespo. But when Crespo dropped out of the Democratic primary in August, Fuentes' name was already on the ballot. He ended up squaring off against teacher Madga Natal, whom he referred to as “a good woman.”

“I didn't do all that crazy legwork,” Fuentes said, adding that he did not particularly want to win. “I didn't go knocking door to door. I didn't call people at their house.”

He said that immediately after the results of his race were called, he congratulated Natal and then drove in his RV from the polls to Maryland to participate in the Haltech World Cup Finals, a drag racing competition.

Many of the Independent candidates who ran this cycle have colorful histories.

Acri was sentenced in 2016 to five years in prison for conspiracy to commit wire fraud, while Vitello was once a mob enforcer, he told the News, and was arrested in 2000 for kidnapping. Fuentes has been accused of organizing drag races by

Crespo, the incumbent alder, allegations he denies.

In Bartlett's eyes, the only way for the Independent Party to gain a foothold on the Board of Alders is to run a larger slate of competitive candidates, which would prevent the Democratic party from concentrating its resources on a single race.

“We understand what it's going to take,” Bartlett said. “Now that I have a party, I can start recruiting today, tomorrow, and we can build, and we can fundraise and actually have the financial capacity and the infrastructure to actually help people across the finish line.”

Bartlett is now focused on finding “more Miguels — more candidates that truly want to win and serve and make a difference in the community,” he said, referring to Pittman.

Ultimately, Bartlett places some of the blame for his candidates' losses on factors far beyond New Haven.

Voters, he said, “weren't thinking local issues. They were like, ‘Okay, we got to go in there and show that we're not for Trump. We're for the Democrats.’ And they just voted straight Democrat.”

Bartlett said that local races in Connecticut became part of “a

national referendum” on the Trump administration.

Indeed, Democrats flipped open seats and ousted Republican incumbents in cities and towns across the state, with Sen. Chris Murphy calling the shift “seismic” and “possibly unprecedented” in a Tuesday night X post.

Anti-Trump sentiment made it “a lot tougher than it should have been” for non-Democrats to win in New Haven, Bartlett said.

He added that the apparent unpopularity of Steve Orosco — who ran against incumbent Mayor Justin Elicker on the Republican and Independent lines and won a smaller vote share than Elicker's 2023 challenger, Tom Goldenberg, did — might have also discouraged New Haveners from voting for Independents down the ballot.

“Politics in New Haven have gotten too comfortable,” Jimenez said. “I think that people might be scared of change.”

Elicker won reelection by around 69 points.

Contact

ELIJAH HUREWITZ-RAVITCH at elijah.hurewitz-ravitch@yale.edu.

McInnis talks art history

MCINNIS FROM PAGE 1

passion amidst chaos” for the class of 2025's baccalaureate and, at this year's opening assembly, compared the “inherent ambiguity” of Winslow Homer's “Old Mill” to the uncertainty the class of 2029 may feel.

In an interview with The Post and Courier, a Charleston newspaper, published Oct. 27, McInnis further detailed her connection to the South, specifically South Carolina — adding that she lived in Charleston for three years while writing a dissertation on its architectural history.

“And as a Southerner whose grandfather was himself a South Carolinian, I can hardly resist an opportunity to enjoy some Lowcountry cooking,” McInnis told The Post and Courier.

According to University spokesperson Karen Peart, McInnis was in Charleston mainly for the event and will return to New Haven on Thursday.

“She was invited by Gibbes in June 2024 to participate in its Distinguished Lecture Series, and she plans to discuss the unique skills and perspectives that her background as an art historian brings to her leadership,” Karen Peart, a university spokesperson, wrote in an email to the News on Wednesday afternoon before the event.

Charleston Music Hall and the Gibbes Museum of Art did not immediately respond to the News' emailed requests for comment.

In 2023, Sarah Lewis GRD '15, a former art critic at Yale School of Art, was the first art historian to speak at the annual lecture series.

Contact JERRY GAO at jerry.gao.jg2988@yale.edu and HENRY LIU at henry.liu.hal52@yale.edu.