

## **East Hartford, CT Public Library Strategic Plan**

**Executive Summary:** This plan aims to tackle youth crime in East Hartford, and youth in general as an underrepresented group in the town outside of school programs and some small community programs already in place. The East Hartford Public Library system is faced with a community problem with no easy or clear solutions, that issue is youth crime. Youth Crime has many underlining issues such as poor youth recreation in East Hartford outside of school, poverty, drugs, adult crimes, and its proximity to the City of Hartford which is notorious for crime. The primary focus within the library mission statement to tackle these issues is to pursue life-long learning showing youth better outlets than crime, and connect with the community this is huge to tackle anything with youth. Showing youth, they have a backing and people in their corner are often enough to make a change. The community for the purpose of this plan is divided into three groups the public adults and parents, youth not involved with crime, and youth involved in crime, this distinction will be explored later in the plan. With the above in mind there are three goals presented in this plan, the first to lower youth crime rates by any amount, second informing youth about dangers of crime with more involved school programming, and third to improve event marketing, social media presence, and outreach. The goals are all set for 3-5 years but hopefully goal 1 and 2 will stay in place and be improved indefinitely.

**East Hartford Public Library Mission Statement:** To provide all the people of East Hartford with opportunities to pursue life-long learning and literacy, to connect with their community, and to share information and ideas freely.

**Library Community Issue Analysis Summary of Youth Crime:** The topic of youth crime has been growing in East Hartford since 2021. The East Hartford Police Chief believes the pandemic to be among one of the causes, but this has been fast growing. Among the many issues youth crime seems to be perceived as the largest problem after a death of a 51-year-old in 2021 caused by teens fleeing a crime scene in a stolen car this comes from an NBC CT news article. This sparked many meetings about youth crime not only in East Hartford but all of Connecticut with talks about youth crime taking place in other towns. While crime has been an issue in Hartford County for a long time there has been an uptick in recent years with crime rates according to neighborhoodscout.com of 32 crimes committed per 1000 residents. This is way above the average for other CT towns with that being 16 per 1000. For reference East Hartford has a population of about 50,000 as of 2020 according to the US census. Most of the crimes are petty crimes as weekly reports from easthartfordct.gov show the majority of crimes are motor vehicle theft and larceny. An article in Sage Journals by Jeff Ferrell describes crimes as these tend to be labeled as crimes of boredom. The main problems in the current community are drugs, poverty/low income, and family issues.

These are also all connected as well, some family issues come from drug use which often can affect low-income homes. Also, with general crime rates being somewhat high in East Hartford not just youth Crime it's just showing youths that crime is okay especially if kids grow up around it, they can see it as being okay if their parents do it. With youth crime trends on the rise in East Hartford, and CT this is an issue worth looking into, and by looking into this issue it can open doors for the issues attached to youth crime such as drugs, poverty/low income, lack of punishments by local officials, and the issue of youth being underserved in the community. The problems of crime will never fully go away but even lowering rates by a small amount is still progress.

**Affected Community:** The community affected in the Town of East Hartford primary, but crime also tends to affect surrounding towns as well. The East Hartford community is very diverse, different ethnicities and varying age ranges, for the purposes of this plan East Hartford will be in three groups, the older public (not youth), youth not active with crime, and youth who actively participate in crime. The older public, adults, and parents of the local youth will be the easiest to reach and get events out too. This plan also addresses youth not involved in crime because there is still a lack of underrepresentation for them, and all youth should have access to any event or program this plan leads too. The topic of youth being underserved in the East Hartford community is just starting to open as of 2023. This opened with talks of a youth sports center where East Hartford town board members had said that youth are underserved. The term social justice was thrown around as well.

<b>SWOT Analysis:</b>	<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Weaknesses</b>
<b>Internal Origin</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The East Hartford Library system consists of the Main Library, and 1 small branch, with one branch being built recently.</li> <li>○ Has a Children’s and Teen Librarian working already.</li> <li>○ The library had working programs with East Hartford School system, fee library cards for kids through high school, and museum passes to local museums in place already.</li> <li>○ Has had a stable budget, at least over the past 5 years.</li> <li>○ New Library branch, more coverage for the town allowing for easier access to community members for programs.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 4 dedicated Librarians for the town, there are more library staff, but they are not trained librarians.</li> <li>○ East Hartford youth are underserved outside of school.</li> <li>○ Poor marketing/advertising for events, over all a town wide problem.</li> <li>○ The library website is a part of the main town website which is a mess to navigate.</li> <li>○ New branch building, large part of library and town project for 2022-2023 budget went to new building facilities.</li> <li>○ Poor Social Media presence for the library, social media is used but not very often.</li> </ul>
	<b>Opportunities</b>	<b>Threats</b>
<b>External Origin</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ New Library branch means more coverage for town, new opportunities, better outreach.</li> <li>○ Overall lack of youth orientated centers outside of school programs.</li> <li>○ East Hartford Library Board was merged into the Commission on Culture and Fine Arts, this brought the library into a larger system with a larger board and a small bump in funding. This previously brought the Museum Pass Program to the library.</li> <li>○ Youth crime is a byproduct of many other problems in the community leaving many avenues open to explore and tackle.</li> <li>○ East Hartford Leadership has gone on record saying youth are underserved, proposed \$10 million sports center.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ East Hartford Library system is small, receives most of the funding through the town.</li> <li>○ Low Staff Numbers.</li> <li>○ Petty crime over all is an issue, adults may not want to get involved to help youth when they themselves do crime.</li> <li>○ Crime in surrounding towns of Hartford City, Manchester, West Hartford are all major problems at East Hartford library that cannot be fixed.</li> <li>○ East Hartford Public does not seem to receive services from the State Library outside of occasional grant awards.</li> <li>○ While new sports center is awesome if approved it’s \$10 million budget could make the town more reluctant on new projects right away.</li> </ul>

**Goals:** The first Goal for the library is to contribute to the lowering of Youth Crime rates in the town of East Hartford by any amount, lowering average crime rates by even a single statistic is progress. This goal is set for 3-5 years but can be a continuing goal for the foreseeable future, something to actively work on every year. Goal two, inform youth about dangers of crime, and other problems before they are out of high school. This goal is set for 3-5 years but can also go on for the foreseeable future. The third goal is, improve event marketing and community outreach overall, not just to youth community members. Getting information to parents will trickle down to kids and teens who to be honest are not looking out for library events in their town. The library seems to be lacking in social media, over 3-5 years this can be improved. These goals are all slated for a 3–5-year time period, all of these goals however are something that can be extended indefinitely, the first goal especially, it is unrealistic to expect crime rates to drop to 0 any time soon or at all, so lowering crime statistics by any amount is a forever term goal, with the hopes that plans are in place 3-5 years from now.

**Supporting Data:** Many crime statistics were mentioned above in the plan but will be summarized and condensed here along with other data. The crime statistics from a couple of different sources primary NeighborhoodScout.com and from crime reports from the Town of East Hartford, and the City of Hartford. The data from these three sources shows the higher than average crime rate per population in East Hartford. On the other side of the sources, these new news articles one from NBC Connecticut and another from the East Hartford Gazette, these articles are from an incident involving the death of a 51-year-old man caused by youths who stole and crashed a car. The final source is a journal article by Jeff Ferrell discussing the topic of boredom in crime. He labels the types of crime, which line up with the most common for youth in East Hartford, as crimes of boredom. The data shows rising trends of youth crime in all of CT and serious talks about the problem only started 2 years ago.

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