

YALE LOOMS LARGE

Its tax-exempt footprint has led to tensions with New Haven

By Natasha Sokoloff and Victoria Stavish  
STAFF WRITERS

Throughout downtown New Haven, there are signs of Yale University everywhere. College students regularly lined up outside one of the famous Wooster Street apizza joints, the Gothic-style Harkness Tower tower looming over High Street, lavish university buildings along the tree-lined streets are all ubiquitous indicators of Yale's presence in the city.

Yale continues on A4

From forest to city blocks, Yale owns 0.4% of Connecticut

By Victoria Stavish  
STAFF WRITER

Yale University is one of the largest landowners in the state of Connecticut, claiming more than 10,500 of the state's just 3 million acres, or a little less than 0.4% of the state, between its academic, commercial and forested properties. Much of what Yale owns is forested land. More than 7,500 acres in the northeast corner of the state known as the Yale-Myers Forest is used for a mix of scientific research and teaching. Another 1,600 acres of forest land in the southeast corner near State continues on A4



Hearst Connecticut Media file photo  
**A brush fire on Lamentation Mountain on the Berlin-Meriden line last year burned about 100 acres. A Wethersfield firefighter died while battling the blaze when his UTV rolled over. CONN-OSHA cited the department for safety violations.**

‘Didn’t want to fight’

As fire departments shed volunteers or close, Conn. looks at recruitment, safety

By Mary Ellen Godin  
STAFF WRITER

MERIDEN — The South Meriden Volunteer Fire Department, also known as Engine Co. 6, would have needed a Herculean effort to survive, city officials said. The 117-year-old department had 40 active volunteers about 30 years ago in its heyday, but the numbers have continued to dwindle. When a former fire chief told the department a year ago it was disbanding Dec. 31, 2024, the department lost another six volunteers. This spring, the city eliminated funding for the department from its budget, but Mayor Kevin Scarpato, who advocated to give the department a chance, threatened a veto.

To remain viable, the five remaining active volunteers and their chief would have to train with the city's career department, and bolster their recruit numbers in each budget cycle. After spending the summer months discussing ways to meet the criteria, the volunteers and their chief agreed to disband at the end.

“They didn’t want to fight with the unknown,” Scarpato said.

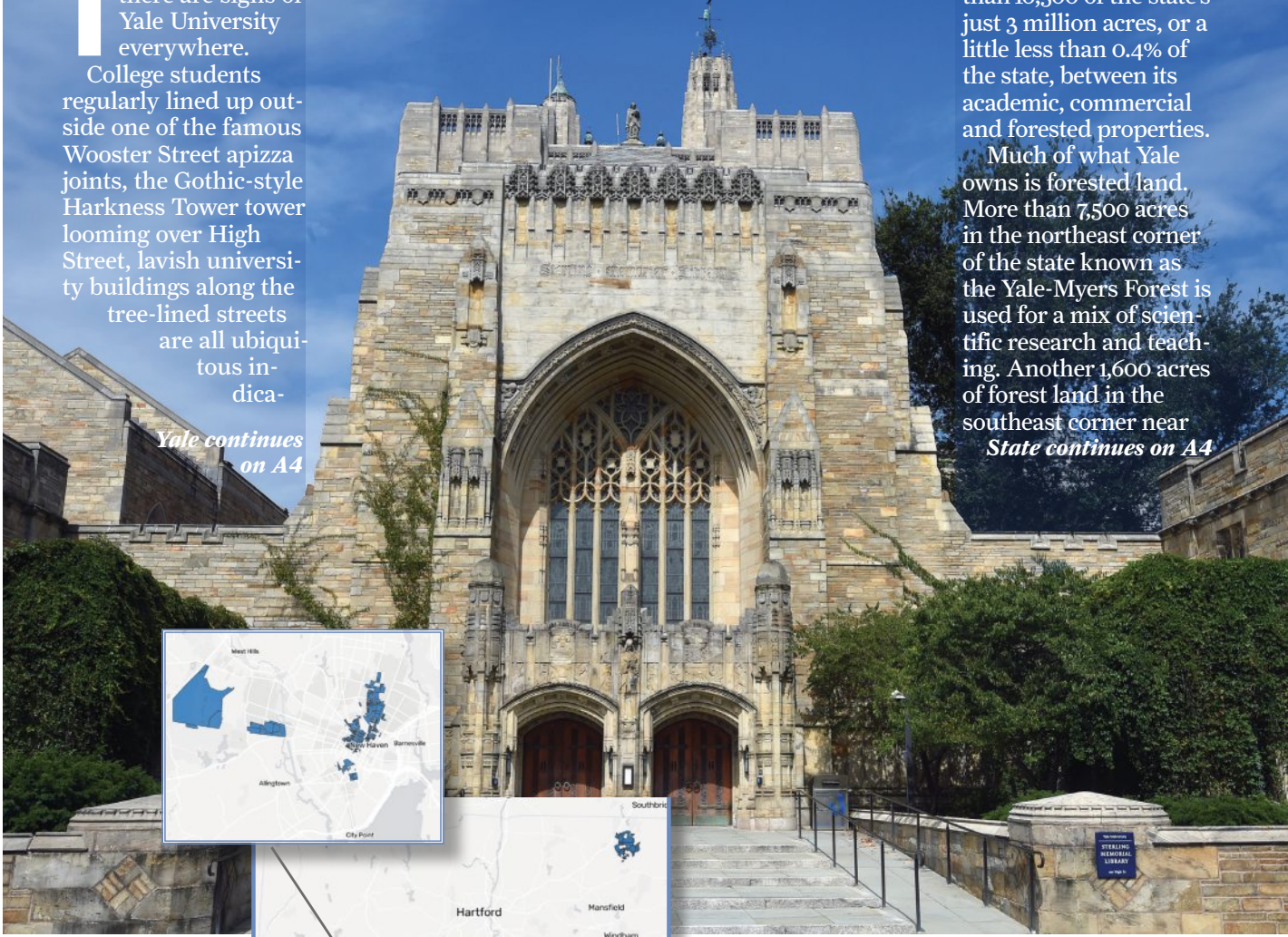
The end of Meriden's volunteer fire department adds to the numbers of dwindling volunteer departments in the state and new ways of looking at fire protection.

Comptroller Sean Scanlon, the grandson of a decorated firefighter and keeper of the pensions, undertook a study reflecting the current state of volunteer departments in the state and where it can go from here.

Scanlon's study concluded the state lost 64% of its volunteer force from 2017 to 2025 leading to discussions and the formulation of a plan for statewide fire safety at a time when firefighters are battling some of its deadliest fires, floods and rescues.

Colchester Fire Chief Steve Hoffman, who works with the state's many rural departments, was surprised Meriden still had a volunteer department given its size and budget.

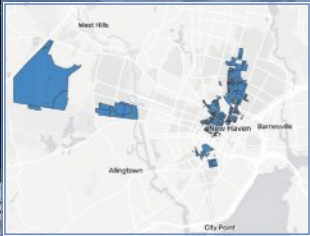
“A lot of these smaller towns in Recruit continues on A8



Yale-owned land in New Haven (left)

Connecticut properties owned by Yale University

Yale University owns nearly one in four properties in New Haven and is one of the largest landowners in Connecticut overall, with a total of more than 10,500 acres statewide.



Map: Victoria Stavish • Source: ReGrid property data

MADISON

‘Just blown away’: Excitement builds for debut of new school

By Susan Braden  
STAFF WRITER

MADISON — Teachers were so excited to get into the new \$66.9 million Neck River Elementary School one day in early August they filled the parking lot.

“Aug. 11 was like a party here,” said Neck River Principal Becky

Frost. “The parking lot was full. Everybody wanted to come and start setting their rooms up.”

The first day of school is Sept. 2 for students.

Excitement was so high in the spring among school staff, it was up “a thousand percent,” Frost said.

When the teachers toured the Neck River Elementary in the

spring right before school ended, “Many of the teachers left that tour saying, ‘I just want summer to go quickly.’ Like, what teacher wishes summer away?” she added with a laugh.

Parents and students were bowled over too on a recent walk-through of the building, Frost said.

Neck River continues on A8



Courtesy Madison Public Schools

The new \$66.9 million Neck River Elementary School opens for students Tuesday, the first day of school.

Green Party mayoral candidate in Hamden calls for town manager and foundation fixes

By Austin Mirmina  
STAFF WRITER

HAMDEN — In 2021, Patricia C. Vener-Saavedra, then a member of the town's Charter Revision Commission, called for a change to the town's government structure that some saw as sorely needed.

Vener-Saavedra and other members felt Hamden could benefit from a town manager who could help execute the mayor's vision and take over the day-to-day duties that can quickly fill up a schedule. The role ultimately wasn't adopted out of fear that it would be too jarring to Hamdenites and weaken the mayor's authority.

Now, as a Green Party candidate for mayor, Vener-Saavedra will get another chance to re-imagine Hamden's leadership configuration – a change that she says is crucial to achieving her long list of priorities, some of which are unconventional.

Although she was a late entrant, Vener-Saavedra Green continues on A8



Courtesy of Patricia C. Vener-Saavedra

Patricia C. Vener-Saavedra

