

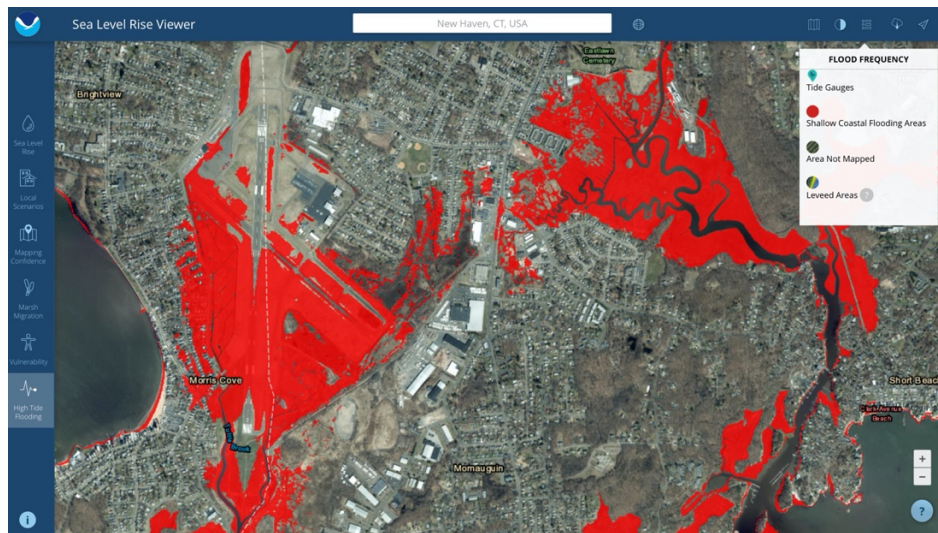
Tweed Airport Expansion Community Concerns August 2021

In May 2021, the City of New Haven and the Tweed New Haven Airport Authority announced a proposed \$70 million airport expansion. The expansion would be privately financed through Avports, a Goldman Sachs subsidiary company. The expansion would be governed by a 43-year lease. Elements of the proposed expansion include: a) a new 74,000 sq. ft. terminal; b) improvements to the existing terminal; and c) lengthening of the runway by around 1000 ft. The proposal must now gain approval from the New Haven Board of Alders, who are asked to not only approve the 43-year lease, but also repeal a city ordinance prohibiting airplanes that weigh more than 160,000 lbs. Possible conveniences from this proposal are greatly outweighed by the **overwhelming health, economic, sustainability, and quality-of-life threats** detailed below. Moreover, the omission of key information from the proposed agreement **leaves decision-makers “flying blind”** with respect to the airport’s true cost to our community. The Board’s Finance Committee will vote on the agreement and potential ordinance repeal this **Monday August 30 at 6PM via [this zoom link](#); [agenda here](#).**

Our community NEEDS YOU TO SPEAK UP and insist that our Alders PROTECT OUR COMMUNITY by VOTING NO on the agreement as currently drafted.

1. **FEMA and NASA project the airport to be underwater by 2050.** The airport sits within a coastal floodplain bowl and the low-lying surrounding neighborhoods face regular and ongoing flooding. Yet the airport has no Coastal Resilience Plan. Climate change will only increase the severity and regularity of storms that cause floods—and further wetlands destruction to enable expansion will exacerbate flooding. There is no data to support the Authority’s assertion that proposed upgrades to the tide gates will be sufficient to prevent massive flooding as storms increase in severity. Even in the very near future, the flooding will cause significant delays and cancellations that make the airport an impractical destination for carriers and travelers.

Current high-tide flooding from NOAA



2. **No Project Labor Agreement.** The Authority asserts that the project will generate 10,000 jobs. But it does not provide an economic model to support this figure. In addition, the agreement does not specify what kinds of jobs will be created, whether jobs will have union protection, how long jobs will be available, and whether New Haven residents will receive priority in hiring. The absence of even the broad outline of a project labor agreement or any other detail to support the hiring commitment raises doubt as to the actual jobs benefit to New Haven residents.
3. **Critical Details on Mitigation Missing.** The agreement outlines contributions of \$1.5 million for traffic calming and \$5 million for “noise mitigation, other mitigation, and community enrichment” while omitting important details on this commitment, e.g. whether it will be applied over 1 year, 5 years, or the life of the 43-year lease, and whether it is to be split between New Haven and East Haven and, if so, how. Without a written mitigation plan developed in light of public health impact studies, moreover, it is impossible to assess whether the mitigation offered is adequate to address the level of need.

4. **No Community Benefits Agreement.** There is broad agreement on the need for a community benefits agreement to compensate the residential neighborhoods affected by the proposed expansion, *separate from specific traffic and noise mitigation efforts*. Any other significant development in the city would require such an agreement be in place before submission to the Board of Alders. Yet there is no such agreement in place, and there has been no effort to establish one. For example, a Special Services District would be an appropriate structure to provide long-term benefits to nearby neighbors for the 43-years of the agreement.
5. **Increased Health Risk to Children with Already-High Incidence of Asthma.** Studies to quantify the environmental, health, and quality-of-life impacts of an expanded airport are incomplete—e.g. the Environmental Impact Assessment—and there are no plans to study other key topics such as anticipated noise and air pollution on the multiple neighborhoods directly impacted by expansion. Yet we don’t need a study to know with certainty that additional flights will pump additional quantities of dangerous particulate pollutants into communities with *already-high asthma rates, presenting increased risk to children*.
6. **Noise Levels will be Dangerous to Human Health.** Decibel levels of 737 airplanes regularly exceed 95 decibels at landing, above the 85 decibel-level considered harmful to human health. The Authority points to improvements made to immediately-adjacent homes in the past to mitigate noise; but without any detail on mitigation plans, we cannot assess whether health impacts will be mitigated.
7. **No Commitment on Traffic.** Mayor Elicker consistently touts that traffic to and from the airport will flow from East Haven. However, no such an agreement has been formalized and, at this point, traffic will continue to flow through residential neighborhoods and on streets ill-equipped to handle an influx of traffic.
8. **Long-Term Risk to the City, while Short-Term Profits Accrue Elsewhere.** Leaders of the Authority, Avports, and Goldman Sachs are *not from New Haven and seek to close a business deal without having to live with its risks and harmful impacts*. The airport is propped up as “too big to fail,” with every dollar that the FAA grants to the Authority for paving, construction, fencing, etc. required to be matched and a commitment to keep the airport open for twenty years. Given the future unknowns and risks of the airport’s long-term viability, we cannot accept privatized profits alongside public risks.
9. **Neighbors May be Forced Out of their Homes by Eminent Domain.** Section 9.2 of the lease agreement includes a dangerous provision opening the door to potential use of eminent domain to claim personal property. Attorney Mike Moscowitz raised this issue in a July community meeting, stating that he feared the airport could use such a clause to avoid offering people fair market value for their property, knowing they can take the property via eminent domain. He says the clause should be deleted; yet the city has yet to formally address these concerns. At the same time, the Authority has demonstrated willingness to take judicial action to overturn local ordinances and state laws. The lease agreement does not bar the Authority from appealing to the courts to appeal City decisions.
10. **Unravels the City’s 2018 Climate and Sustainability Framework and 2019 Resolution on Climate Emergency.** Developing a “green building” on sensitive wetlands to promote fossil fuel transport is “greenwashing” and demonstrates the Authority’s willingness to misrepresent critical issues to the community. Increased fossil fuel transport and pollution, added paving, waiver of the city’s reflective heat standards, and a largely auto-focused transit plan to access the airport *are all at direct odds* with city commitments to take action in the face of our existential climate emergency.