



# NEIGHBORHOOD REVITALIZATION ZONE STRATEGIC PLAN PROCESS & GUIDELINES

## **NEIGHBORHOOD REVITALIZATION ZONES GOVERNANCE: CT GENERAL STATUTES [SECTIONS 7-600 TO 608](#).**

*Neighborhoods that contain deteriorated property can take advantage of the State of Connecticut's Neighborhood Revitalization Zone program. This program establishes neighborhood groups that participate in collaborative processes between local, state, and federal programs for neighborhood revitalization activities. While NRZ groups were established and set out to address blight concerns in their neighborhoods, today NRZs across the state range in topical focuses centered around neighborhood improvement.*

*This Process & Guidelines document is a step-by-step guide to the formation process, along with resources on best practices to continue neighborhood revitalization work as an established Neighborhood Revitalization Zone.*

## **RESOLUTION TO ESTABLISH A NEIGHBORHOOD REVITALIZATION ZONE**

The local legislative body must pass an enabling resolution<sup>1</sup> establishing Neighborhood Revitalization Zones in their municipality. The resolution should arrange for the chief executive official to assign municipal staff to assist the designated neighborhoods and establish a process for determining the boundaries of NRZs.

- **Formation:** the municipal resolution establishes NRZs as a recognized group, as well as a process for organizing boundaries for any NRZs
  - This resolution does not activate any NRZ benefits; this is only a first step that sets into motion the creation of a strategic plan, which is the necessary tool to be recognized as a fledged NRZ

<sup>1</sup> **Enabling resolution:** a resolution passed by the municipality that outlines the roles, responsibilities, and expectations of the environment in which people organizing an NRZ can operate within to be compliant

- The map of the NRZ's boundaries and resolution should be sent as a notification to the Undersecretary of Intergovernmental Policy & Planning Division with the Office of Policy & Management (OPM) to allow for the coordination with other NRZs and state agencies that can assist NRZ objectives
- Ongoing: The municipal resolution should designate municipal staff that will assist the neighborhoods by providing information and modifying municipal procedures

#### RELATED TOPICS:

### CITY GOVERNMENT – ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

## ESTABLISHING NRZ BOUNDARIES

Any neighborhood containing deteriorated property<sup>2</sup> that has determined its boundaries by following the process established by the municipal resolution will be considered an NRZ but will not be entitled to benefits until it has developed an approved plan using the steps outlined under "Strategic Plan Development" in this document. OPM should be notified of the establishment of an NRZ.

- The resolution itself may establish the boundaries, but is only *required* to describe the process under which boundaries are defined
  - This could range from the city council actually designating the boundaries of each NRZ, to a process involving the neighborhoods themselves
- You may want to consider using census boundaries, which will assist in the efforts to gather data on the neighborhood. Councils of Governments (COGs) and other regional planning organizations can help in this effort.

## FORMATION OF PLANNING COMMITTEE

The NRZ forms a Planning Committee to develop a strategic plan. Membership of the committee must reflect the neighborhood. The Planning Committee must develop, adopt, and publish bylaws in the newspaper.

<sup>2</sup> **Deteriorated property:** per statute, "property in serious noncompliance with state and local health and safety codes and regulations"

- Membership of the NRZ Planning Committee must reflect the composition of the neighborhood including tenant residents, property owning residents, community organizations, and representatives of businesses located in, or owning property in, the neighborhood. A majority of the members must be residents (either tenants or property owners) of the neighborhood. If the city manager or mayor has appointed someone to the Planning Committee, this person is entitled to be a voting member as representative of the city's role and stake in the process.
  - Having a specified Planning Committee should not stop you from including others in your planning process. In fact, various other residents, businesses, and government or non-profit entities that are not on the Planning Committee should be encouraged to become involved in the planning process.
- Planning Committee bylaws are rules for governing how the group will operate, including a process for making decisions by building consensus. To be a recognized NRZ, you are required by statute to publish notice of adoption of your bylaws, and any amendments, in a local newspaper having general circulation no more than seven days after adoption or amendment. Once the bylaws have been adopted, you should send a copy to OPM.

#### RELATED TOPICS:

IDENTIFYING TEAM PLAYERS

GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE & BYLAWS

## STRATEGIC PLAN DEVELOPMENT

Next, the Planning Committee develops a strategic plan.

#### COMPONENTS:

### 1. What does our neighborhood look like today? (Neighborhood Profile)

- a. Human Resources (residents, landowners, and business owners, etc.)
  - i. Find out their perspectives and what skills they offer
  - ii. Demographic portrait of the neighborhood (household characteristics, etc.)
  - iii. Identification of stakeholder individuals, groups or organizations
    - 1. Examples include recognized community leaders, religious organizations, community development organizations, advocacy

- organizations interested in local issues, and other groups that comprise neighborhood residents
  - 2. If groups have specific locations, include them on the area map
- b. Physical Resources (roads, buildings, sidewalks, other structures, etc.)
  - i. Map of the neighborhood
  - ii. Inventory of property in the neighborhood
    - 1. Details about properties that are foreclosed, abandoned, blighted, substandard, a public health or safety hazard, or out-of-compliance (will fast-track addressing these properties in implementation)
    - 2. Use the “Community Mapping” resource below for more information
- c. Community Resources (economic opportunities, education, public safety, cultural offerings, job training, social services, child care, elderly programs, transportation, recreation, etc.)
  - i. Use the “Identifying Community Resources” resource for more information
- d. Summary of strengths
- e. Significant problems & needs

## **2. What do we want the neighborhood to look like? (Neighborhood Vision)**

- a. This element of the Plan should result in a clear and compelling picture (vision) of the neighborhood’s preferred future. This vision should be realistic and credible since it will serve as the framework for the action plan.
  - i. The NRZ enabling statutes requires that the planning process be done by consensus, so reach a common agreement here
    - 1. Use the “Consensus Building” resource below for more information
  - ii. In accordance with NRZ legislation, identify goals that will:
    - 1. Amplify the neighborhood’s advocacy of its goals, and bring others onto the stakeholder team
    - 2. Increase home ownership
      - a. What will attract people to your neighborhood in the future?
      - b. What is the ideal mix of residential and commercial property?
    - 3. Improve property management
      - a. What will make the physical and natural environment better?
      - b. What kinds of changes need to be made to residential areas?
    - 4. Promote sustainable economic development
      - a. What kind of training/educational facilities do you need in the neighborhood?
    - 5. Enhance effective relations between landlords and tenants
    - 6. Coordinate and expand delivery of services to the neighborhood
      - a. Do you need more/less retail stores, grocery stores, churches, medical facilities, gas stations, day care centers?

### 3. How do we get there? (Action & Implementation Plan)

- i. From legislation: “may also include components for public safety, education, job training, youth, the elderly and the arts and culture”*
- a. Short and long-term objectives
- b. Priority projects targeted in order of completion
- c. Cost of each project and funding sources
  - i. Example of potential funding sources could include local government funds, local community foundation, local banks and philanthropic organizations, state programs from various departments, and others, depending on funding*
  - ii. Use the “Leveraging the Community Reinvestment Act” resource for more information on working with local banks to support local projects*
- d. Timetables for project completion
- e. Proposals for which governmental departments or other organizations ought to coordinate efforts to bring objectives to fruition
- f. Plans to seek waivers of state and local environmental, health and safety codes and regulations identified as barriers to neighborhood development
  - i. In order to take advantage of the waiver process available through the NRZ legislation, you are required to identify the federal, state, and local environmental, health and safety codes and regulations that impede revitalization of the neighborhood, and propose alternative measures*
    - 1. The existing code requirement or regulation*
    - 2. The address of the property for which waiver is sought*
    - 3. The costs of meeting the existing code requirement or regulation*
    - 4. The proposed alternative*
- g. Plans for engaging the State Historic Preservation Office for property consultations – The SHPO offers several expedited reviews of properties, depending on the intended use of the property. SHPO can also help with community education on the benefits of historic preservation and relevant SHPO programs.
  - i. Prior to engaging for property review, the NRZ must provide a listing of designated historic properties within your plan and identify the planned use of such properties*
  - ii. The SHPO online mapping tool [CRIS](#) can help identify eligible properties*
- h. Plans to apply “eminent domain”: as outlined in [the NRZ legislation](#)
  - i. You must provide a listing of such properties within your plan and identify the planned use of the properties*
- i. Plans to apply rent receiverships as outlined in [the NRZ legislation](#)
  - i. For each property, you must identify:*
    - 1. Address of the property*

2. *description of the condition of the property*
3. *estimated cost to bring the property into compliance with either codes or the requested waivers received for the property*
4. *description of why a receiver should be appointed, how this action will prevent further deterioration of the property, and how it will assure that environmental, health and safety standards are met*

#### **4. How do we measure our progress? (Performance Measures & Monitoring)**

- a. *How you will measure whether your plan has met its goals*
  - i. *The system of monitoring and managing implementation of the plan*
  - ii. *This should identify the methods and measurements used for the specific points in the Neighborhood Vision*
  - iii. *Identify who is responsible for implementing each aspect of the plan*
- b. *A process for modifying the plan and further planning activities*
  - i. *Since NRZs will not be eligible for waivers, eminent domain opportunities or rent receiverships that are not specifically identified in the plan, the planning process should be considered ongoing as the plan may need to be revised from time to time. The revisions/implementation plans must be approved by the “ongoing” committee, submitted to OPM for review and comment, and approved by the legislative body of the municipality.*

#### **5. Appendix**

- a. *Copy of the municipal resolution establishing the NRZ*
- b. *Description of the composition of the Planning Committee*
- c. *Copy of Planning Committee bylaws*
- d. *description of stakeholder participation in the planning process*
- e. *description of the public hearing*

#### RELATED TOPICS:

COMMUNITY MAPPING

IDENTIFYING COMMUNITY RESOURCES

CONSENSUS BUILDING

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS & RESOURCES

### **PUBLIC HEARING & DRAFT SUBMISSION**

The Planning Committee must hold a public hearing on the draft strategic plan. Public notice of the hearing must be given, and the draft plan must be submitted to OPM for review.

## CITY APPROVAL

The plan, as modified following the public hearing, must be approved by city ordinance. The ordinance should create an ongoing NRZ committee with responsibility for continuing the work of the Planning Committee.

- The adoption of a strategic plan allows:
  - The city to receive a waiver from the State of CT from state and local environmental, health and safety codes and other regulations that have been identified in the strategic plan as barriers to neighborhood development for properties located in the neighborhood
    - WHY? This is a cumbersome and expensive process for individual property owners to embark on with the state
  - The NRZ to lobby the chief executive municipal official to allocate municipal funds to achieve the purposes of the plan
  - The municipality to petition the judicial branch (local superior court) for appointment of a receiver of rents for any deteriorated property
  - Municipal corporations to be authorized, in accordance with established procedures, to take abandoned or blighted property in an NRZ (through “eminent domain”)
- Approval by the city is required after a public hearing is held on the proposed strategic plan
  - Two sets of public notice are required before the public hearing: 10-15 days prior to the public hearing, and 2 days prior to the public hearing
- The draft strategic plan should be submitted to OPM for review, and they will facilitate comments from other state agencies that could aid in implementation. These comments could include specific contacts at agencies, guidance on applying for technical assistance or funding programs, advice on plan improvement, and identification of opportunities that work with other state agencies.

### RELATED TOPICS:

BENEFITS OF AN NRZ

HOW TO NAVIGATE STATE GOVERNMENT (& ADVISORY BOARD)

HOW TO NAVIGATE CITY GOVERNMENT

## REPORTING & CONTINUITY

The continuing NRZ committee must submit a report six months after the city approves the plan and annually thereafter, which monitors the progress of implementation and updates the strategic plan. The reports should be sent to the city's chief executive and legislative body, and OPM.

#### RELATED TOPICS:

RUNNING A MEETING

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & MAINTAINING MOMENTUM (PROMOTION)

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

FUNDING SOURCES

MEASURING SUCCESS

FORMING A 501C3

#### GUIDANCE FOR SPECIFIC TOPICS:

##### HOUSING & NEIGHBORHOOD

HOUSING DEVELOPMENT

OUTDOOR ENVIRONMENT

EMINENT DOMAIN

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

RECEIVER OF RENTS

##### BLIGHT & ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS

BLIGHT

HEALTH

HUMAN SERVICES

CHILDREN & FAMILIES

INDOOR ENVIRONMENT

WAIVER OF CODES AND REGULATIONS

##### SAFETY



PUBLIC SAFETY

DISASTER PREPAREDNESS & RECOVERY