



NEIGHBORHOOD REVITALIZATION ZONE ADVISORY BOARD MINUTES OF MEETING

July 18, 2024

The State Neighborhood Revitalization Advisory Board (advisory board) held a remote meeting on Thursday, April 18, 2024, at 9:00 AM. The [agenda](#) and [video](#) are available online.

Board Members or Designees Attending Remotely:

Julie Carmelich, [CT State Historic Preservation Office](#)
Andrew Clark, [CT Institute for Municipal & Regional Policy](#)
Marlon Dubois, [CT Dept. of Transportation](#)
Jennifer Edwards, [CT Social Equity Council](#)
Mike Gilmore, [Waterbury Development Corporation](#)
Marion Griffin, [Hartford NEXT](#)
Martin Heft (Chair), [CT Office of Policy & Management](#)
Sheila Hummel, [CT Dept. of Economic and Community Development](#)
Kaylie Moran, [City of New Haven](#)
Ken Mysogland, [CT Dept. of Children & Families](#)
Matt Pafford, [CT Dept. of Administrative Services](#)
Mark Polzella, [CT Dept. of Labor](#)
Pete Procko, [Greeneville NRZ](#), Norwich
Andy Toledo, [City of Bridgeport](#)

Other Participants Attending Remotely:

Greg Kirschner, [CT Fair Housing Center](#)
Vera Lembrick, [CT Social Equity Council](#)
Bongi Magubane, [West End Civic Assoc.](#) (Hartford)
Debi Martin, [LISC CT](#)
Vincent Mobilio, [City of Bridgeport](#)
Marcus Ordonez, [Hartford Land Bank](#)
Nancy Procko, [Greeneville NRZ](#), Norwich
Carey Shea, [Frog Hollow NRZ](#), Hartford

Staff:

Justine Phillips-Gallucci, [CT Office of Policy & Management](#)
Phil Shattuck, [CT Office of Policy & Management](#)
Bruce Wittchen, [CT Office of Policy & Management](#)

1. Welcome, Introductions, Adoption of Minutes

Martin Heft called the meeting of the [Neighborhood Revitalization Zone](#) (NRZ) Advisory Board to order and everyone introduced themselves. A motion was made and seconded to approve the draft [4/18/2024 Meeting Minutes](#) and the motion was approved unanimously.

2. Presentation from Hartford Land Bank

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/opm/nrz/meetings/2024/nrz_hlb_presentation_2024-07-18.pdf

Phil Shattuck introduced Marcus Ordonez, who provided a presentation on the [Hartford Land Bank](#) (HLB). Marcus explained the problem addressed by the HLB, highlighting the blighted property cycle and how the HLB breaks that cycle by acquiring a property, clearing its title and other impediments, and returning it to beneficial use. He also described the HLB as an organization, its history, and the service it provides, including developer training. Marcus showed before and after photos of several properties the HLB has worked with and invited questions.

Andrew Clark mentioned that he owned the building across the street from one of the buildings Marcus had shown and provided some history highlighting the benefits of the HLB's work and thanking them. He asked if the HLB retains ownership of the underlying land and if Marcus knows of programs that might help others on the block keep up with maintenance.

Marcus said there is not much assistance for property maintenance now, but mentioned the federal [Neighborhood Homes Investment Act](#) which, if passed, can provide funding for renovation. He also pointed out the gap between the value of a rehabilitated property the cost of rehabilitation, noting that lenders will not provide more funding than the property is worth. The HLB can provide a forgivable loan or grant to help fill the gap, but gaps are growing and more programs are needed to support developers and also aging homeowners who need assistance. As for land ownership, Marcus said the HLB has ways to protect the property if a developer defaults and to ensure properties are occupied as intended and not flipped. He also described the HLB's efforts to work with local people while ensuring they have the finances and experience to succeed.

Ken Mysogland asked about the timeframe for developers to obtain gap funding and Marcus highlighted that money can be drawn as work is completed and he described how they work with lenders and other funders. There were no further questions and Martin Heft thanked Marcus for the presentation and for the work the HLB does.

3. In-person Meeting Follow-Up from Greenville NRZ

Bruce Wittchen introduced Pete and Nancy Procko of Norwich's Greenville NRZ and reminded everyone that this advisory board had met in Norwich in April and many members toured the NRZ. This is a good time for an update on the NRZ's activities.

Pete Procko said the city's attitude has changed since the state NRZ Advisory Board met in Norwich. The city realizes that the NRZ is a very good partner and every NRZ meeting since then has included a City Council member. They have offered to help the NRZ with different things and he also mentioned state funding to begin demolition and cleanup at the abandoned Capehart Mill along the river in Greenville.

Pete highlighted that small things are very important in changing perceptions of a neighborhood and described the NRZ's fire hydrant painting contest and a mural showing Norwich and Greenville history. He said city departments have begun asking the NRZ for advice and added that there now is interest in the city's Downtown NRZ, which had been inactive. Hosting the state advisory board meeting opened a lot of people's eyes. The city had considered us to be just one of 80 clubs – they called us a bicycle club – but the city now realizes that the NRZ is more than just another club.

Future meetings should be in Norwich and other communities: we can help each other out.

Pete said his wife is working on another idea and Nancy Procko explained that local students were helping with the NRZ's planter project and had great ideas for improving the neighborhood. She said it is hard to get younger people involved in the community and they have a different perspective. She thought about the possibility of creating a junior council for the NRZ and the kids involved can grow up seeing the importance of community improvements and quality of life. She talked with the city about this yesterday and there is a dialogue going on. Nancy noted the difficulty of getting help with community activities but kids getting involved now might be interested in being part of the NRZ later.

Andrew Clark thanked Peter and Nancy for their efforts and said the idea to involve neighborhood youth is brilliant. He noted the amount of effort required to do things on a volunteer basis and the need for support to help NRZs, especially to start and grow. Pete Procko said the Greeneville NRZ has just started researching this but he has been told to look for sponsorships and agencies that would be interested in developing a program. He will keep people updated.

Debi Martin thanked Marcus for his land bank presentation and said other municipalities are also looking at the land bank model. She thanked Pete and Nancy for their update and said she joined the walking tour following the meeting in Norwich and said there were many aha moments for people on the tour. She looks forward to more in-person meetings. Debi also said she loves Nancy's idea for starting a junior council and mentioned that Hartford NEXT had an Americorps member pulling young people together and they can be the next generation of NRZ leaders.

4. NRZ/Community Group Resources Documents & Next Steps

Justine Phillips-Gallucci provided an update on guidance documents that are being prepared to assist NRZs, their municipalities, and state agencies. The guidance covers a range of issues and will be more clear and easier to reference. She said one of the goals is to make NRZ planning more practical and manageable, noting how long and how old the previous guidance had been. New guidance will be in short documents.

Phil Shattuck showed the current draft and mentioned feedback from NRZs about previous state guidance being long and cumbersome. The current draft has been scaled down from 20+ pages to 7 and, although it has been prepared as a Word document, it will be in an online format with live links to other resources. It will be organized in more of a checklist structure, which he mentioned will guide people in identifying what they want their neighborhood to look like, what they want in the future, and how they get there.

Phil said the document is still evolving and described how sections will link to other things. He pointed out the list of topics at the end, which he said will be a central point for finding guidance on topics various NRZs have tackled in the past. He requested people provide any information they would like to be distributed in this way, even to groups that are not NRZs.

Carey Shea thanked Phil for this work and said her NRZ has struggled to put together a strategic plan. She described the neighborhood planning process underway in Hartford and said it did not produce the results they wanted, even with the help of a consultant.

She said slimming down the guidance is going in the right direction and pointed out that they have productive NRZ meetings, but everyone is a volunteer. Strategic plans have to be right-sized for the organizations and she believes this effort is going in the right direction. Otherwise, we will fail because the process is too daunting and we will be out of compliance. Marion Griffin thanked everyone involved in moving the guidance forward and added that the state could help with this process, saying that consultants who know what they're doing can help NRZ volunteers through the process. The guidance should identify resources that NRZs can use for this.

Phil Shattuck described discussions among state agencies about how to make the NRZ process more manageable, possibly including statutory changes. They are preparing a work plan, a memo, to identify issues that have been identified and goals to work towards, such as making the planning process more manageable. We want to kick off that conversation. Martin thanked everyone for this discussion and there were no further comments.

5. NRZ, Municipal, State Agency, or Other Updates, Comments, or Questions

There were no further updates, comments, or questions.

6. Next Meeting October 17, 2024 (in-person in Bridgeport; details to follow)

7. Adjourn

A motion was made and seconded to adjourn the meeting and the motion passed unanimously, adjourning the meeting at 9:58.