

BLUE HILLS NRZ HOW WE STARTED



When the opportunity to become recognized as a Neighborhood Revitalization Zone (NRZ) first presented itself, we did not pursue it because we were not quite sure what it meant to our neighborhood. We consider ourselves a stable area with a high percentage of home-ownership and although we are not without problems the Blue Hills Civic Association (BHCA) has played a prominent role in addressing many of our quality of life issues.

After attending a presentation on NRZ legislation and learning more about the specific powers that may be associated with a formal designation, we reconsidered. We also believed that state-sanctioned recognition could help us pursue whatever funds that would be made available. We also thought that an NRZ could provide follow-through on the implementation of many issues and ideas that surface through the BHCA.

And so the first meeting of the Blue Hills NRZ Planning Committee convened. After meeting several times, we assembled a draft plan. In December 1999, we held a public meeting to present our ideas. As the plan evolved it was also presented to the Blue Hills Merchants Association. Ideas raised at those meetings were subsequently incorporated.

In August 2000, the City of Hartford offered funding to us to secure a consultant to finalize the Plan. With this plan now completed we are anxious to begin implementation.

As we envision it, the Blue Hills Civic Association and the Blue Hills NRZ will have common ground. The Civic Association will continue its function as our neighborhood “watch dog”. After all, the Association has done a fantastic job of focusing on our people and specific issues and also garnering institutional support. Our newly-created NRZ will initiate the physical actions that are needed in Blue Hills and when necessary will help secure the necessary powers such as code waivers or receivership to accomplish specific actions. The NRZ will also be the first line of communication with the City when a development is being proposed in our neighborhood.

As the graphic below illustrates, we have a third entity with which we share common ground – the Blue Hills Merchants Association. This group has essentially functioned as the neighborhood’s de facto economic development committee. We have limited areas for new development and so Blue Hills Avenue and the merchants and people occupying the corridor contribute directly to our local economy.