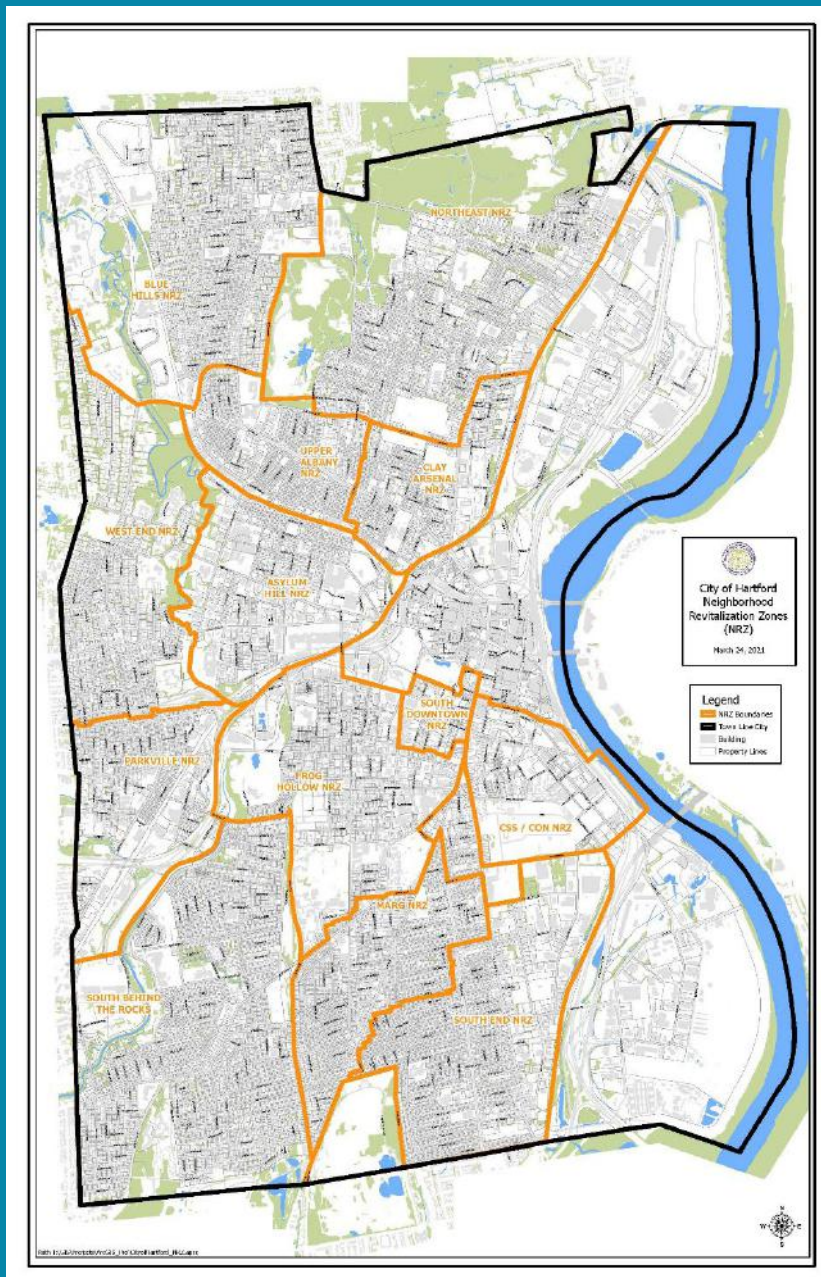


Compliance Best Practices for NRZs

Courtesy of Hartford NEXT, Inc. and the City of Hartford



Blue Hills



Frog Hollow
Neighborhood Revitalization Zone

MARG



Parkville

South End



Southwest/Behind the Rocks



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PURPOSE

The information in this booklet will help Hartford's Neighborhood Revitalization Zones (NRZs) remain in compliance with State of Connecticut General Statutes and Hartford Municipal Codes.

Why is compliance important?

- NRZs not in compliance are not eligible for funding from the City of Hartford
- The components needed for compliance, such as the Strategic Plan, provide direction about the improvements for the neighborhood
- Working together on the steps for compliance is a way of getting agreement from members of the community

The complete text for the statutes and municipal codes governing Neighborhood Revitalization Zones are General Statute § 7-600 to § 7-608 and Hartford Municipal Code Chapter 118 Sec. 28-196.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

NRZ Compliance Requirements	4-5
Bylaws	6-7
Strategic Plan	8
Annual Report	9
Membership Roster	9
Minutes and Notices	10-11
Conducting Meetings	12-15
Annual Calendar of Regular Meetings	16
Annual Meeting	16
Sources	17
Neighborhood Revitalization Zone Strategic Guidelines	18-42
Appendix	43
NRZ Compliance Checklist	44
Membership Roster Template	45-46

NRZ Compliance Requirements

Operational Requirement		Comments
1.	NRZ Bylaws	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain updated bylaws and file a copy with the Town Clerk
2.	Strategic Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Submit a Strategic Plan annually, if it is new or changed from the previous year. Send a copy to the Mayor's Office, Hartford Common Council, the Secretary of the OPM Mayor's Office, Municipal Building, 550 Main St, Hartford CT 06103 Hartford City Council, Municipal Building, 550 Main St, Hartford CT 06103 Secretary, Office of Policy & Management, 450 Capitol Avenue, Hartford, CT 06106
3.	Annual Report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Submit an Annual Report by January 31st of each year about the NRZ's implementation of their Strategic Plan during the past year. <i>If the existing strategic plan is outdated, NRZs must commit to update it within 2-3 years.</i> Submit the Annual Report to the Mayor's office, Hartford Common Council, and the Secretary of OPM (<i>see addresses in 2</i>)
4.	Membership Roster	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NRZs must maintain a list of voting members. Membership shall include tenants, property owners, businesses, and community organizations. A majority of members must reside within the NRZ boundaries.
5.	Minutes and Notices of Meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Must be filed with the Town Clerk quarterly Minutes must be approved by the NRZ before submitting to the Town Clerk <i>Town Clerk, Municipal Building, 550 Main Street #1, Hartford, CT 06103</i>

<p>6.</p>	<p>Annual Calendar of Regular Meetings</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The date, time, and place for meetings must be filed with the Town Clerk by January 31st of each year • Any changes to meeting schedules must be sent to the Town Clerk (<i>See address in 2</i>)
<p>7.</p>	<p>Annual Meeting</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One of the meetings in the calendar year must be an annual meeting to elect members of the NRZ board.

BYLAWS

According to Connecticut General Statute § 7-600, each neighborhood revitalization zone must develop bylaws through a process designed by City and State authorities. Check your NRZ's Bylaws to make sure they are compliant with the state and municipal regulations below.

Connecticut has some provisions that must be included in the NRZ's bylaws. **The required provisions are bolded.** Your bylaws should include the following items.

- the official name of your NRZ
 - the organization's principal address
 - boundaries of the NRZ
 - the organization's purpose
 - membership requirements (see text below)
 - an outline of the board structure
 - the process of consensus-making decision-making
 - a list of your officers (such as the president, vice president, secretary, and treasurer) and a description of what each will do
 - your procedure for adding and removing board members (including qualifications to serve on the board)
 - any term limits for board members
 - your schedule for regular and annual board meetings (see text below)
 - details about giving notice of board meetings
 - the NRZs rule on quorum requirements
 - a list and description of board committees
 - the date that will be the end of your fiscal year
 - rules for amendments
- **MEMBERS: Membership shall include representation of tenants, property owners, businesses and community organizations. A majority of members must reside within the boundaries of the neighborhood revitalization zone. The Mayor will appoint a representative who shall be a full member of the committee.**
 - **MEETINGS: An annual meeting shall be held to elect the members of the neighborhood revitalization zone committee. The time and place of all regular meetings for a calendar year shall be filed with the City Clerk no later than January 31st of the calendar year and notice shall be published in a newspaper in general circulation as stated in G.S. § 7-600 et eq. The City will pay for reasonable costs of publishing such notice.**

Any committee member, except for the Mayor's representative, who is absent from three (3) regular meetings in one (1) calendar year may be replaced in accordance with committee by-laws.

All meetings shall be held within the boundaries of the neighborhood revitalization zone or in city hall. The City shall provide space in a municipal facility for neighborhood zone meetings if requested by the neighborhood revitalization zone committee.

All neighborhood revitalization zone committee meetings shall be open to the public.

Connecticut requires each NRZ to have a secretary who is responsible for taking and submitting meeting minutes.

- **MINUTES AND NOTICES OF MEETINGS: Each neighborhood revitalization zone committee shall appoint or elect a secretary who shall be responsible for maintaining written records for the neighborhood revitalization zone committee.**

The secretary shall be responsible for keeping minutes of every neighborhood revitalization zone committee meeting and delivering notices for every meeting.

Once approved by the neighborhood revitalization zone committee, minutes must be filed with the Town Clerk quarterly.

The minutes shall include a tabulation of those committee members present as well as those who were absent.

A meeting notice and agenda for each regular meeting shall be delivered or mailed to each committee member at least three (3) business days prior to the meeting.

Notice of a special meeting shall be filed with the City Clerk and delivered to the residence of every committee member at least twenty-four hours prior to the commencement of the special meeting.

BEST PRACTICE

All NRZ board and voting members should have a copy of and understand the bylaws. Non-voting members of the NRZ should know where to find the bylaws if they would like to review them.

Member recruitment is an ongoing process. Establish a membership committee to get to know your neighborhood members and to create ways to recruit new members.

STRATEGIC PLAN

A neighbourhood strategic plan is the lifeblood of the organization. It is a living document that should be reviewed regularly. Committees and subcommittees may be formed to support the goals of the plan.

The Office of Policy and Management wrote a paper titled *Neighborhood Revitalization Zone Strategic Plan Guidelines* to assist NRZs in preparing their Plans.

It's likely your NRZ already has a strategic plan and even though the guidelines are written for an NRZ without one, it is still a valuable resource for updating your strategic plan and educating board members and general members about the process. The most recent copy of the *Neighborhood Revitalization Zone Strategic Plan Guidelines* is included at the end of this document.

There are a number of styles for writing a strategic plan but basic requirements for developing a plan are listed in CT Gen Stat §7-601 (2022).

- **Membership of the Strategic Plan Planning Committee shall reflect the composition of the neighborhood.**
- **Amendments to the strategic plan must be approved by the NRZ planning committee, the Hartford Common Council, and submitted to the Secretary of the Office of Policy and Management.**

NOTE: The NRZ Strategic Plan and the Neighborhood Plan are not the same. The NRZ Strategic Plan is created by each NRZ and should serve as the reference document for the Neighborhood Plan. The Neighborhood Plan is typically created by the City of Hartford.

The steps to create and gain approval for a Strategic Plan are in the *Neighborhood Revitalization Zone Strategic Plan Guidelines*.

BEST PRACTICE

All board members and voting members should have a copy of the -most current Strategic Plan. The general membership and public should know where to find the strategic plan and it should be easily accessible.

ANNUAL REPORT

Each year, NRZs are required to submit an annual report about the progress made on the implementation of their strategic plans. The Annual Report should include the following sections.

- Description of Organization
- Operations
- Highlights of Activities
- Updates especially on Bylaws
- Pictures for any events that took place
- Committees
- Treasury Reporting
- Strategic Plans and Goals
- Board Member Updates

The Annual Report should be submitted to the Mayor's Office, Hartford Common Council, and the Secretary of the Connecticut Office of Policy and Management. *(See addresses on page 4)*

BEST PRACTICE

Create an Annual Report committee to gather materials during the year and to prepare the Report for review and approval by the NRZ board. Set a due date for the Annual Report to be submitted to the NRZ board for review.

MEMBERSHIP ROSTER

The NRZ Membership Roster should have the names and addresses of all board member and indicate their membership as Resident, Community, or Business. The Roster should be kept up-to-date and be readily available.

According to GS § 7-600 and Municipal Code Sec. 28-196, membership of committees should reflect the composition of the neighborhood revitalization zone and include tenants, property owners, community organizations, institutions, and businesses. The majority of the members should be residents of the neighborhood.

MEETINGS AND NOTICES

AGENDA

Connecticut General Statutes require NRZs to submit a copy of the meeting agenda with the minutes. The meeting notice and agenda should be sent to board and voting members at least three (3) days prior to the meeting.

Sample Agenda:

NRZ Meeting
Date/Time
Virtual/Zoom Link OR Physical Address

Call to Order/introductions

Approval of Minutes

Treasurer's Report

Public & City Service Reports:

- Police*
- Fire
- Planning & Development
- MDC
- Community Engagement

NRZ Committee Reports

Community Discussion

Old business/new business

Adjourn

*We recommend scheduling the Harford Police Department at the beginning of your agenda so they can return to their patrol duties.

MEETING MINUTES

The primary purpose of meeting minutes is to record the attendance and document the business conducted by the NRZ. Meeting minutes are a legal document and should be accurate. The agenda can be the basis for meeting minutes.

Sample:

Call to Order/introductions

- The meeting was called to order by _____ at 6:00 PM

Present:

Absent:

Reading of Parliamentary Rules or Pledge of Allegiance

Approval of Minutes

- Month of the Minutes to be approved
- ___ moved, seconded by _____
- Results:

Treasurer's Report (if applicable)

Public & City Service Reports

- Police
- Fire
- Planning & Development
- MDC
- Community Engagement

NRZ Committee Reports

Community Discussion

Old business/new business

Adjourn

- Motion to adjourn by _____, seconded by _____
- Meeting adjourned at 7:00 PM

CONDUCTING A MEETING

It's important that meetings are productive, orderly, and democratic. *Robert's Rules of Order-Simplified* is a recognized source for meeting procedures. A copy of the simplified Order should be distributed to all board members.

1. Set the tone for a meeting and make everyone feel welcome. Without community engagement, there is no NRZ. Good meetings are founded on respect for those involved.
 - People who feel ignored or dismissed won't come back to a meeting.
 - Disagreements do not have to be disrespectful shouting matches.
 - Rules for meeting etiquette ensure everyone is aware of expected conduct
 - The Chair/President and board members should learn ways to diffuse potentially disruptive conversations.

It is most important that everyone have the opportunity to speak.

Roberts Rules of Order – Simplified

Guiding Principles:

- Everyone has the right to participate in discussion if they wish, before anyone may speak a second time.
- Everyone has the right to know what is going on at all times. Only urgent matters may interrupt a speaker.
- Only one thing (motion) can be discussed at a time.

A **motion** is the topic under discussion (e.g., "I move that we add a coffee break to this meeting"). After being recognized by the president of the board, any member can introduce a motion when no other motion is on the table. A motion requires a second to be considered. If there is no second, the matter is not considered. Each motion must be disposed of (passed, defeated, tabled, referred to committee, or postponed indefinitely).

How to do things:

You want to bring up a new idea before the group.

After recognition by the president of the board, present your motion. A second is required for the motion to go to the floor for discussion, or consideration.

You want to change some of the wording in a motion under discussion.

After recognition by the president of the board, move to amend by

- adding words,
- striking words or
- striking and inserting words.

You like the idea of a motion being discussed, but you need to reword it beyond simple word changes.

Move to substitute your motion for the original motion. If it is seconded, discussion will continue on both motions and eventually the body will vote on which motion they prefer.

You want more study and/or investigation given to the idea being discussed.

Move to refer to a committee. Try to be specific as to the charge to the committee.

You want more time personally to study the proposal being discussed.

Move to postpone to a definite time or date.

You are tired of the current discussion.

Move to limit debate to a set period of time or to a set number of speakers. Requires a 2/3rds vote.

You have heard enough discussion.

Move to close the debate. Also referred to as calling the question. This cuts off discussion and brings the assembly to a vote on the pending question only. Requires a 2/3rds vote.

You want to postpone a motion until some later time.

Move to table the motion. The motion may be taken from the table after 1 item of business has been conducted. If the motion is not taken from the table by the end of the next meeting, it is dead. To kill a motion at the time it is tabled requires a 2/3rds vote. A majority is required to table a motion without killing it.

You believe the discussion has drifted away from the agenda and want to bring it back.

“Call for orders of the day.”

You want to take a short break.

Move to recess for a set period of time.

You want to end the meeting.

Move to adjourn.

You are unsure the president of the board announced the results of a vote correctly.

Without being recognized, call for a “division of the house.” A roll call vote will then be taken.

You are confused about a procedure being used and want clarification.

Without recognition, call for "Point of Information" or "Point of Parliamentary Inquiry." The president of the board will ask you to state your question and will attempt to clarify the situation.

You have changed your mind about something that was voted on earlier in the meeting for which you were on the winning side.

Move to reconsider. If the majority agrees, the motion comes back on the floor as though the vote had not occurred.

You want to change an action voted on at an earlier meeting.

Move to rescind. If previous written notice is given, a simple majority is required. If no notice is given, a 2/3rds vote is required.

Unanimous Consent:

If a matter is considered relatively minor or opposition is not expected, a call for unanimous consent may be requested. If the request is made by others, the president of the board will repeat the request and then pause for objections. If none are heard, the motion passes.

You may INTERRUPT a speaker for these reasons only:

- to get information about business –point of information to get information about rules– parliamentary inquiry
- if you can't hear, safety reasons, comfort, etc. –question of privilege
- if you see a breach of the rules –point of order
- if you disagree with the president of the board's ruling –appeal
- if you disagree with a call for Unanimous Consent –object

Quick Reference					
	Must Be Seconded	Open for Discussion	Can be Amended	Vote Count Required to Pass	May Be Reconsidered or Rescinded
Main Motion	√	√	√	Majority	√
Amend Motion	√	√		Majority	√
Kill a Motion	√			Majority	√
Limit Debate	√		√	2/3rds	√
Close Discussion	√			2/3rds	√
Recess	√		√	Majority	
Adjourn (End meeting)	√			Majority	
Refer to Committee	√	√	√	Majority	√
Postpone to a later time	√	√	√	Majority	√
Table	√			Majority	
Postpone Indefinitely	√	√	√	Majority	√

ANNUAL CALENDAR OF REGULAR MEETINGS

A calendar of regular meetings must be sent to the Town Clerk's office by January 31st of the calendar year. Any changes to the meeting schedules must be sent to the Town Clerk.

Notice of the meetings must also be published in a newspaper in general circulation. The city will pay reasonable costs of publishing such notices.

ANNUAL MEETING

One of the scheduled meetings during the calendar year must be an annual meeting for NRZs to elect members of the NRZ board.

SOURCES:

Cornell University. Robert's Rules of Order – Simplified.
https://assembly.cornell.edu/sites/default/files/roberts_rules_simplified.pdf

Edwards, J. (2021). *Annual Reports*. Special Projects Coordinator for Office of Planning and Economic Development. City of Bridgeport Neighborhood Revitalization Zones

Moran, A. (2000). *Neighborhood Revitalization Zones Community organizing handbook: a guide for NRZ member & leaders*. Central Connecticut State University, Center for Social Research.

NEIGHBORHOOD REVITALIZATION ZONE STRATEGIC PLAN GUIDELINES

Prepared by the

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Office of Policy and Management
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Hartford, Connecticut 06134-1441*

860-418-6301

NEIGHBORHOOD REVITALIZATION ZONE
STRATEGIC PLAN GUIDELINES

Table of Contents

Introduction.....page 1

Establishing a Neighborhood Revitalization Zone (NRZ)page 3

Developing a NRZ Strategic Plan.....page 6

Contents of a NRZ Strategic Plan.....page 10

Approval of a NRZ Strategic Plan.....page 18

Implementing a NRZ Strategic Plan..... page 20

Summary..... page 21

NEIGHBORHOOD REVITALIZATION ZONE

STRATEGIC PLAN GUIDELINES

INTRODUCTION

This document is a guideline for communities who are considering establishing Neighborhood Revitalization Zones (NRZs).

Under the Connecticut legislation which established NRZs, the state Office of Policy and Management (OPM) is charged with the responsibility of reviewing NRZ strategic plans and coordinating the NRZ waiver process. To ensure that the plans we receive are comprehensive and consistent with the intent of the legislation, we have designed this document to interpret the law in an easy-to-read manner and to describe the basic components which should be included in the strategic plan.

This document is organized as a series of questions and answers that reflect the kinds of questions that neighborhoods may have about NRZs. We have attempted to anticipate your questions about NRZs and to provide practical and useful answers. If you find that you have additional questions that are not addressed here, please contact us at 860-418-6301.

What are Neighborhood Revitalization Zones or NRZs?

In 1995, An Act Establishing a Neighborhood Revitalization Zone Process (P.A. 95-340) was passed by the Connecticut General Assembly and signed into law by Governor Rowland. This law -- the first of its kind in the nation -- established a collaborative process for communities to work with all levels of government to revitalize neighborhoods which have become substandard, unsafe and blighted.

NRZs represent a new kind of partnership and cooperation between communities and government which shifts the impetus of planning to the local level and provides a mechanism for relief from burdensome state and local regulations.

What are the benefits of becoming an NRZ?

Under the legislation, the strategic plan developed by the NRZ Planning Committee and approved by the municipality is the primary vehicle for

benefits. Through the planning process, the neighborhood works together to determine its priorities and to develop plans of action for revitalization.

The main benefits of this program are related to bringing all stakeholders together to plan a neighborhood that works for all of them, by-passing “red tape” that might impede attempts to revitalize the neighborhood, and establishing a more flexible and creative government response to the needs of communities. It is important to note that the legislation does not provide for any additional money for cities that have NRZs.

The adoption of a strategic plan allows:

- the NRZ to request waiver of state and local environmental, health and safety codes and other regulations that have been identified in the strategic plan as barriers to neighborhood development;
- the NRZ to recommend that the chief executive municipal official (i.e. the mayor or first selectman) enter into tax agreements and allocate municipal funds to achieve the purposes of the plan;
- the NRZ to petition the judicial branch (local superior court) for appointment of a receiver of the rents for any deteriorated property; and
- municipal corporations to be authorized, in accordance with established procedures, to take abandoned or blighted property in an NRZ. (This process is called “eminent domain”.)

ESTABLISHING A NEIGHBORHOOD REVITALIZATION ZONE

What neighborhoods are eligible to become NRZs?

To be eligible to become an NRZ, a neighborhood must have a significant number of deteriorated properties (property in serious noncompliance with state and local health and safety codes and regulations) and property that is substandard, abandoned, blighted, has been foreclosed or poses a hazard to public safety.

Although “a significant number” is not defined in the legislation, it is important that every neighborhood revitalization zone contain one or more buildings that fall into this category.

What does a neighborhood have to do to become a NRZ?

A neighborhood revitalization zone is formed when two steps are completed:

1. a municipal resolution establishes one or more NRZs in your municipality; and
2. the boundaries of your NRZ have been determined according to the process prescribed in the municipal resolution.

In the first step, your municipal legislative body (city or town council, Board of Aldermen or Selectmen, town meeting or representative town meeting) passes a resolution establishing one or more neighborhood revitalization zone(s) in your municipality. The resolution must a) assign municipal staff to assist the neighborhoods by providing information and modifying municipal procedures; and b) establish a process for determining the boundaries of neighborhood revitalization zones.

The legislation requires that a process for determining the boundaries of a neighborhood revitalization zone be established through the municipal resolution. However, the process itself is not prescribed by law and could range from the city council actually designating the boundaries of each NRZ to a process involving the neighborhoods themselves.

The only criteria mandated by the legislation for establishing the boundaries is that every NRZ must contain deteriorated properties. Here are some issues that municipalities may want to consider in determining the process for setting the boundaries:

- What criteria would be useful? (e.g., geographic size, population, low-income population, location of facilities, natural or historical affiliations, boundaries of existing efforts or groups, etc.)
- Who should be involved in the process to determine the boundaries?
- Are there boundaries already established in the city for other purposes? (e.g., community planning efforts, community policing, etc.)
- What are the implications of using boundaries that match those used for other purposes?

Note: You may want to consider using census boundaries, which will assist you in your efforts to gather data on the neighborhood. Your regional planning organization can help with this effort.

Once the municipal resolution is passed and the boundaries of your NRZ have been established in accordance with the method prescribed by the city resolution, your neighborhood has officially been established as a Neighborhood Revitalization Zone!

It is important to note that no benefits will be available to your neighborhood simply by being established as an NRZ. In order to receive the advantages of this program -- including waivers, rent receiverships, eminent domain, etc. -- your neighborhood will need to develop a strategic plan and pursue these opportunities. Once you become established as an NRZ, the hard work to revitalize your neighborhood has just begun!

What are the next steps to receiving benefits as a NRZ?

At this point, you should notify the Office of Policy and Management (OPM) that an NRZ has been formed. The purpose of notifying OPM that the NRZ is underway is to promote coordination with other NRZ efforts around the state.

To do this, you can send a copy of the city resolution and a map of your NRZ boundaries to:

*Undersecretary
Intergovernmental Policy Division
Office of Policy and Management
450 Capitol Avenue
P.O. Box 341441
Hartford, CT 06134-1441*

The next step to receiving benefits as an NRZ is to organize a Planning Committee to develop a strategic plan. The process for organizing the committee and developing the plan are outlined in the following section.

DEVELOPING AN NRZ STRATEGIC PLAN

Why should an NRZ develop a strategic plan?

The development of a strategic plan is a necessary step in order to receive any benefits as a Neighborhood Revitalization Zone. The planning process is a way of getting agreement from all participating members of the community regarding where you want to go and how to get there.

What will happen if an NRZ doesn't develop a strategic plan?

Nothing. The neighborhood will not receive any of the benefits available for NRZs. Of course, there is no penalty -- other than a missed opportunity -- for becoming established as an NRZ but failing to go through the strategic planning process.

Who develops the strategic plan?

A broad-based Planning Committee is established specifically for this purpose. A majority of the members must be residents (either tenants or property-owners) in the neighborhood.

What if our neighborhood already has a community development plan?

Many neighborhoods have plans that have been prepared in the past for similar purposes. It is a good idea to use these plans as a starting point -- in fact, it is possible that the NRZ strategic plan could mirror an existing plan. However, it is important that you go through the NRZ organizational steps which guarantee broad community participation and allow the Planning Committee the opportunity to adopt part, all or none of an existing plan. Also, the NRZ Planning Committee should review the plan to ensure that it contains all of the necessary components outlined in the following section.

How does the Planning Committee become organized?

As you begin to put together a Planning Committee, you should identify all the neighborhood stakeholders including residents, associations, local institutions, business owners, and landowners. To generate interest in working together, you will need to build relationships among the various stakeholders and mobilize them to become involved.

There are many creative approaches to informing potential participants about this opportunity -- for example, using flyers, posters, door-to-door visits, announcements in local churches or other organizations, advertisements in the

local newspaper, local access channels or community television. You should think about which approaches will work best in your community.

Clearly, this initial process is time-consuming. However, the time that you invest at this point in this process will pay off later by guaranteeing that you have been as inclusive as possible. The NRZ legislation is based on the belief that neighborhood revitalization strategies will fail if they ignore even a minority of the neighborhood stakeholders -- and that success can only be ensured through incorporating a wide variety of social, economic, and cultural perspectives into your planning effort.

What steps must be taken once the Planning Committee members are identified?

Two steps to establishing a Planning Committee are required by law:

Step 1 -- Convene the broadly representative planning group. 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.

Having a specified Planning Committee should not preclude you from including others in your planning process. Indeed, 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. Although not required by statute, it is recommended that you publish notice of the first meeting of the planning group at City Hall and in conspicuous locations throughout the neighborhood.

Step 2 -- Develop and adopt Planning Committee bylaws. The NRZ Planning Committee bylaws are rules for governing how the group will operate, including a process for making decisions by building consensus. For example, the Planning Committee structure should not permit one person to make unilateral decisions for the group. Rather, the Planning Committee should reach common decisions everyone can agree on. Your bylaws should also identify a method for resolving conflict if you can't reach consensus. 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.

What happens if our NRZ adopted bylaws but did not publish them in the newspaper?

You do not have to publish the actual bylaws -- only a notice that the bylaws have been adopted. If you fail to publish notice of adoption of your bylaws within seven days, the status of your NRZ will not be jeopardized. However, you should make arrangements to publish the notice in your local newspaper as soon as possible since this step must be taken in order to receive any benefits as an NRZ.

What kind of assistance can we get in putting together our NRZ plan?

Putting together a comprehensive and thoughtful neighborhood plan may seem daunting at this point. To help you do this, you should contact the staff person from the municipal government who has been assigned to assist you. This person can be invaluable in helping you find resources and assisting in the planning process.

In addition to your municipal liaison, you may want to contact local groups, including local business associations, church groups, your local chamber of commerce, community colleges, universities, or Community Action Agencies. By building a relationship with local organizations such as resident councils, housing development organizations, community development corporations and others, you may be able to identify staff to assist in the effort. In many neighborhoods around the state, these entities are showing interest in supporting their local NRZ.

What costs are associated with becoming an NRZ and developing a plan?

The costs associated with the NRZ process are minimal and are related to publishing notices in the newspaper and printing and copying your strategic plan.

Once organized, how does the Planning Committee develop a strategic plan?

Keep in mind that there is no one “right” way for a community to develop a strategic plan. Different communities with different resources will plan in different ways -- all with equally successful results. Each community, therefore,

needs to design a planning process that suits its unique needs and abilities. As you develop a process, remember that the clear intent of the legislation is a planning process which is inclusive, participative, and based on consensus-building among all stakeholders.

CONTENTS OF AN NRZ STRATEGIC PLAN

What are the elements of a strategic plan?

Although there is no one right way to develop a strategic plan, there are four basic questions that are answered in every strategic plan:

- I. What does the neighborhood look like today?
- II. What do we want the neighborhood to look like?
- III. How do we get there?
- IV. How can we measure our progress?

I. WHAT DOES OUR NEIGHBORHOOD LOOK LIKE TODAY? - (NEIGHBORHOOD PROFILE)

This part of the planning process involves quite a bit of information gathering. One way to get information about your neighborhood is to use local libraries and town halls to find out what information is available on your neighborhood.

Another way to collect valuable data is to survey your neighborhood about their views of the greatest problems and greatest strengths of the neighborhood. You may want to ask Planning Committee members to bring the survey door-to-door to ensure that you collect ideas from all of the neighborhood. As in other planning phases, you can get assistance in gathering data from your municipal liaison or other organizations.

Your profile of the neighborhood should include the following categories which are further described below:

- A. **Human Resources** (residents, landowners, and business owners, etc.)
- B. **Physical Resources** (roads, buildings, sidewalks, other structures, etc.)
- C. **Community Resources** (economic opportunities, education, public safety, cultural offerings, job training, social services, child care, elderly programs, transportation, and recreation, etc.)
- D. **Summary of Strengths** and
- E. **Greatest Problems/Needs.**

- A. Human Resources. The people in your neighborhood -- including residents, landowners, and business owners -- can often be one of your greatest assets. It will be helpful to survey residents, landowners, and businesses in your neighborhood to find out their **perspectives** and what **skills** they can offer.

A **demographic portrait** of the neighborhood will also help you identify the composition of the neighborhood to ensure that you have formed a truly representative Planning Committee. Your profile should include a description of the people in the neighborhood including: number of residents, ages, household types (e.g., single parent families), race and ethnicity (e.g., black, white, Asian, Hispanic), number of renters, number of owners, and any other relevant information about the people who make up your neighborhood. Demographic data is usually available by census tract at libraries, city planning departments, or regional planning organizations.

- B. Physical Resources. You should begin this step by preparing a **map** of the neighborhood which identifies the physical boundaries, streets, and other important landmarks of the neighborhood. You should describe the physical size of the neighborhood and any other relevant geographical or environmental characteristics. It would also be helpful to prepare an **inventory** of the property in the neighborhood.

For property that is deteriorated, you should provide an analysis including the address of the property and whether it is: foreclosed, abandoned, blighted, substandard, a public safety hazard (describe how), out of compliance with state health or safety code or regulations (cite which ones), or out of compliance with local health or safety code or regulations (cite which ones).

It is also important to identify the condition of the physical infrastructure, including roads, buildings, and sidewalks. One of the benefits of preparing a thorough inventory is that it will help you identify potential stakeholders. You may have difficulty implementing your plan if the owners of the property are not included in your strategic planning process.

- C. Community Resources. You should examine the existing status of community resources (including economic opportunities, education, public safety, cultural resources, job training, health and human services, child care, transportation, and recreation) in your neighborhood. Some things to think about are:

- What is the current unemployment rate? Are there adequate job training programs that place residents in jobs?

- What are the safety issues?
- What are the barriers to sustaining businesses in the neighborhood?

D. Summary of Strengths. Describe the most positive aspects of your neighborhood. What are the reasons people move to or visit your neighborhood? You may already have a sense of the neighborhood's greatest strengths, but you can also collect and prioritize much of this information using your survey of the neighborhood.

E. Greatest Problems/Needs. Another step to understanding your neighborhood today is to prepare a prioritized list of needs. Using the information from your neighborhood profile (in A, B, and C above), what needs do the neighborhood residents have that are currently not addressed? What are the biggest problems in the neighborhood?

If your Planning Committee is thorough in preparing this first step, it will help you identify what you want to accomplish in the neighborhood through the NRZ process. You are now ready to develop a vision and goals for your neighborhood.

II. WHAT DO WE WANT THE NEIGHBORHOOD TO LOOK LIKE? - (NEIGHBORHOOD VISION)

In this step, the Planning Committee will develop a vision for the neighborhood. In other words, you will work toward agreement on what you all want to see changed in the future. Don't forget -- the NRZ legislation requires that the planning process be done by consensus which means that you must reach a common agreement on a vision and goals that reflects the concerns of everyone in the neighborhood. In fact, the consensus building process will inspire the group toward a vision and goals that will become the framework for neighborhood improvements for decades to come.

In formulating your vision and goals, it will be helpful to remember that plans should be designed, in accordance with NRZ legislation, to improve your neighborhood by:

- A. Increasing self-reliance;
- B. Increasing home ownership;
- C. Improving property management;

- D. Promoting sustainable economic development;
- E. Enhancing effective relations between landlords and tenants;
- F. Coordinating and expanding the delivery of services to the neighborhood;
and
- G. Improving the neighborhood capacity for self-empowerment.

Here are some questions that can help you formulate your vision and goals:

- What will attract people to your neighborhood in the future?
- What kinds of businesses or jobs would you like to bring to the neighborhood?
- What is the ideal mix of residential and commercial property?
- Do you need more/fewer retail stores, grocery stores, churches, medical facilities, gas stations, day care centers, etc.?
- What kind of training/educational facilities do you need in the neighborhood?
- What kind of changes need to be made to the residential areas?
- Do you want to increase owner-occupied buildings?
- What will make your physical and natural environment better?

This process should result in a clear and compelling picture of the neighborhood's preferred future. At the same time, the vision should be realistic and credible. The vision serves as the framework for the action plan in the next section. Once you reach a consensus on a vision for the neighborhood, it is time to develop a strategy to work toward your vision and achieve your goals.

III. HOW DO WE GET THERE? - (ACTION AND IMPLEMENTATION PLAN)

This step in the planning process is ongoing in nature. We understand that it will not be possible to identify in your first plan the ultimate use for all properties in the neighborhood and solutions to meet all of the needs you have identified. But, keep in mind that your ultimate goal -- over time and in stages -- will be to develop a comprehensive plan for the entire neighborhood. You will find it easier to identify financing sources -- both public and private -- when there is a neighborhood-wide plan to invest in. Knowing what will happen to the property next door or down-the-street will help spur investment.

Perhaps the best way to begin this part of the planning process is to divide your goals into short-term and long-term goals. If you prioritize your list of needs and problem properties, you can begin to tackle them individually. It is important to be realistic at this stage of the planning process. Your long-term goals can be addressed with more specifics in subsequent submittals.

This part of the plan should be the most detailed and you should think about the following items:

- A. What are your short-term and long-term **objectives** and the specific projects that will be undertaken to accomplish these objectives? You should think about the design of your neighborhood, the desired use of property, and how property should be managed.
- B. What are your **priority projects**, targeted in order of completion?
- C. What is the **projected cost** for accomplishing each project? You should describe how each project will be financed, including:
 - Provisions for identifying and obtaining funds from both public and private sources. (You should research and investigate numerous funding sources, since your plan must include funding sources beyond government funds.)
 - How the plan will leverage investments. Include creative leveraging of financial resources and traditional and nontraditional financing of development. How will marketing and outreach be accomplished?
 - Recommendations to the chief executive official to enter into tax agreements and/or to allocate municipal funds.
- D. What is your **timetable** for completing the projects?
- E. What are the state and local environmental, health and safety codes and regulations that have been identified as barriers to neighborhood development?
 - In order to take advantage of the **waiver process** available through the NRZ legislation, you are required to identify in your plan the federal, state and local environmental, health and safety codes and regulations that impede revitalization of the neighborhood. Because the requested waiver must not create a substantial threat to the environment, public

health, safety or welfare of the neighborhood, you must propose alternate measures. For each waiver identified, you should specify:

- The existing code requirement or regulation;
- The address of the property for which waiver is sought;
- The costs of meeting the existing code requirement or regulation; and
- The proposed alternative.

- F. If you want to take advantage of an expedited Connecticut Historical Commission review of properties designated as having historical significance within your NRZ, you must provide a listing of such properties within your plan and identify the planned use of those properties. A complete listing of such properties can be obtained through the municipal liaison on your Planning Committee.
- G. If you want to take advantage of the NRZ legislation to allow your municipality to acquire property in the neighborhood through established procedures for “**eminent domain**,” you must identify your plans to do so as a part of your strategic plan. Describe any plans to authorize municipal corporations to take property and the procedure you intend to use to accomplish this.
- H. If you want to use the NRZ opportunity to enter into **rent receiverships**, you must also make this part of your strategic plan. Describe any plans you have for petitioning the judicial branch for appointment of a receiver of the rents for any deteriorated property located within the NRZ. Include for each property:
- The address of the property;
 - A description of the condition of the property;
 - An estimate of the cost to bring the properties into compliance with state and local codes and regulation or into compliance with any waivers requested in the above section; and
 - A 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.

IV. HOW DO WE MEASURE OUR PROGRESS? - (PERFORMANCE MEASURES AND MONITORING SYSTEM)

This phase of the planning process should result in the development of a system to monitor and manage implementation of the plan. You should:

- A. Describe how the strategic plan will be implemented. Who will be responsible each aspect of implementation?
- B. Describe further planning activities. If your plan has not identified the objectives for all properties in the neighborhood, you must make plans to modify/expand your plan in the future.
 - What is the process to modify and update the plan as needed?
 - How will ongoing review of the strategic plan be accomplished?

Based on what you learned through the Planning Committee, provide a recommendation for the organization of an ongoing NRZ committee (e.g., how should the committee be organized, describe any necessary subcommittees, etc.) Identify an ongoing contact person(s).

- C. Include any recommendations for the establishment by the municipality of multi-agency collaborative delivery teams.
- D. Describe how you will measure whether your plan has:
 - Increased self-reliance;
 - Increased home ownership;
 - Improved property management;
 - Promoted sustainable economic development;
 - Enhanced effective relations between landlords and tenants;
 - Coordinated and expanded the delivery of services to the neighborhood; and
 - Improved the neighborhood capacity for self-empowerment.

Is there anything else that should be included with the strategic plan?

OPM recommends that all plans include a section on the strategic planning process which describes the following:

- A. Establishment of the Neighborhood Revitalization Zone. Provide a copy of the municipal resolution which established the NRZ and identify the municipal staff assigned to work on the NRZ. How were the boundaries of the neighborhood established?
- B. Composition of the Planning Committee. List the members of the Planning Committee. Include names, addresses, and whether the members are tenant residents, property-owning residents, community organizations, municipal officials or representatives of business located in (or owning property in) the neighborhood. Provide enough information to demonstrate that the composition of the committee mirrors the composition of the community, including ethnicity, etc. Please note the responsibilities and nature of the involvement of Planning Committee members.
- C. Structure of the Planning Committee. Include a copy of the Planning Committee bylaws and a copy of the published notice of adoption of your bylaws from the newspaper -- identifying the newspaper and the dates the bylaw adoption notice ran.
- D. Participation of other individuals and organizations that were involved in the strategic planning process. Describe the level of involvement for other residents, businesses, and government/non-profits that were not on the Planning Committee.
- E. Describe the Public Hearing. Include copy of the published notice of time and place of the public hearing including identifying the newspaper(s) and dates it was published. List of attendees, comments they made, and your responses to them.

APPROVAL OF AN NRZ STRATEGIC PLAN

What do we do once we have a draft plan prepared?

Two steps are required by legislation:

1. Hold a public hearing. The time and place of the public hearing must be published twice in a local newspaper with general circulation -- the first notice must be 10-15 days prior to the hearing and the second must be not less than 2 days prior to the hearing.

The draft plan should be available for review prior to the public hearing. It is recommended that you work with your liaison at city hall and have copies available there for the public. You may also want to make a copy available at local gathering places or at a library.

In addition to publishing the notice in the newspaper, you may want to think of other ways to publicize the existence of the draft plan that will encourage participation. You should encourage broad attendance at the hearing and be responsive to comments made by people who attend or submit written comments on the draft plan.

2. Submit the draft plan to OPM for review. OPM will act as a central depository for this review and will distribute the draft plan to appropriate state agencies for their analysis. This review and comment will help your neighborhood by:
 - providing objective feedback on how your plan meets the statutory requirements;
 - providing suggestions for improving your plan; and
 - providing an opportunity to explore how the state can work with your neighborhood in its efforts to revitalize.

To enhance the value of this review, please make every effort to be comprehensive and specific and to identify individual projects with as many details as possible. If there are questions on the plan, we may hold a meeting with representatives of your NRZ to discuss the plan, suggestions for improving the viability of the plan and next steps.

When should we send our plans to OPM for review?

The proposed plan should be submitted to OPM for review at the time notice of the public hearing is published in the newspaper. If changes are made to the draft plan as a result of your public hearings, please send the changes and the minutes of the public hearing to OPM.

Where should we send the plan?

Two copies of the plan should be sent to:

*Undersecretary
Intergovernmental Policy Division
Office of Policy and Management
450 Capitol Avenue
P.O. Box 341441
Hartford, CT 06134-1441*

What do we do after we have completed the hearings and finalized the plan?

Once your plan is finalized, you must submit the plan to the legislative body of your municipality for approval by ordinance.

What happens if the city does not approve the plan?

According to law, the strategic plan cannot be implemented unless approved by the city. To ensure that your plan is approved by the city, you will want to work closely with your city liaison and other officials throughout the planning process to be sure they are aware of your plans and are supportive of your goals and objectives.

IMPLEMENTING AN NRZ STRATEGIC PLAN

How do we ensure the plan will be implemented?

The NRZ statute requires that the city ordinance that approves the plan also creates an “ongoing” neighborhood revitalization zone committee and establishes the powers and membership of the committee. The “ongoing” NRZ committee may be different from the Planning Committee, but the categories of membership must be consistent with the categories of membership of the Planning Committee. The purpose of this “ongoing” NRZ committee is to oversee implementation of the plan.

Please keep in mind that the ongoing NRZ committee is not expected to accomplish the work on each project alone. In order to be effective, your group will need to work with appropriate local organizations on your priority projects.

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.

The continuing NRZ committee is required to submit reports on implementation of the strategic plan twice in the first year after adoption and once annually thereafter to:

- the Chief Executive Official of the City;
- the legislative body of the city; and
- the Office of Policy and Management.

SUMMARY OF THE NRZ PLANNING PROCESS

The local legislative body must pass a resolution establishing Neighborhood Revitalization Zones in their municipality. The resolution should assign municipal staff to assist the designated neighborhoods and establish a process for determining the boundaries of NRZs.



Any neighborhood having a significant amount of deteriorated property 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 following steps. OPM should be notified of the establishment of an NRZ.



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 local newspaper.



The Planning Committee develops a strategic plan.



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.



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 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.

SUMMARY OF STRATEGIC PLAN COMPONENTS

Although there is no one right way to develop an NRZ Strategic Plan, there are four basic questions that should be answered. These are:

I. WHAT DOES OUR NEIGHBORHOOD LOOK LIKE TODAY? (NEIGHBORHOOD PROFILE)

Your profile of the neighborhood should include the following categories:

- A. Human Resources (residents, landowners, and business owners, etc.);
- B. Physical Resources (roads, buildings, sidewalks, other structures, etc.);
- C. Community Resources (economic opportunities, education, public safety, cultural offerings job training, social services, child care, elderly programs transportation, recreation, etc.);
- D. Summary of Strengths; and
- E. Significant Problems/Needs.

II. WHAT DO WE WANT THE NEIGHBORHOOD TO LOOK LIKE? (NEIGHBORHOOD VISION)

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.

III. HOW DO WE GET THERE? (ACTION AND IMPLEMENTATION PLAN)

This part of the plan should be the most detailed and should include the following components:

- A. Short and long-term objectives;
- B. Priority projects targeted in order of completion;
- C. Cost of each project and financing mechanisms;
- D. Timetables for project completion;
- E. Plans to seek waivers of state and local environmental, health and safety codes and regulations identified as barriers to neighborhood development;
- F. Plans to use an expedited Historical Commission review of properties;

- G. Plans to apply “eminent domain” as outlined in the NRZ legislation; and
- H. Plans to apply rent receiverships as outlined in the NRZ legislation.

IV. HOW DO WE MEASURE OUR PROGRESS? (PERFORMANCE MEASURES AND MONITORING)

This element should describe a system to monitor and manage implementation of the plan, including:

- A. How the strategic plan will be implemented;
- B. A process for modifying the plan and further planning activities;
- C. Recommendations for establishing of multi-agency collaborative delivery teams; and
- D. How you will measure whether your plan has met its goals.

It is recommended that NRZ Strategic Plans also include:

- a copy of the municipal resolution establishing the NRZ,
- a description of the composition of the Planning Committee,
- a copy of the Planning Committee by-laws,
- a description of stakeholder participation in the planning process, and
- a description of the public hearing.

APPENDIX

This Appendix contains optional blank forms to use with the Compliance booklet. It is recommended that the original page remain in the booklet and a photocopy be used as a working document.

Compliance Checklist

The Compliance Checklist gives the user a quick status of the NRZ's compliance.

Membership Roster Template

The Membership Roster Template includes columns to indicate the status of NRZ members: resident, community organization, business, or other. This template provides a quick overview of the membership to ensure the NRZ is representative of the neighborhood.

NRZ Compliance Requirements Checklist

Operational Requirement		Compliant Y/N		Comments
1.	NRZ Bylaws			
2.	Strategic Plan			
3.	Annual Report			
4.	Membership Roster			
5.	Minutes and Notices of Meetings			
6.	Annual Calendar of Regular Meetings			
7.	Annual Meeting			

NRZ Membership Roster

NRZ _____

Year _____

Membership Roster: NRZs must maintain a list of voting members.

- *Membership shall include representation of tenants, property owners, businesses and community organizations.*
- *A majority of members must reside within the boundaries of the NRZ.*
- *The Mayor will appoint a representative who shall be a full member of the committee.*

Fill in first and last name, address, and member category: resident (R), community organization (C), business (B), or other (O).

Name	Address/Email	Phone	R	C	B	O

Name	Address/Email	Phone	R	C	B	O