



## **Communication Package for Business Complaints**

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## **Documentation Procedure For Property Complaints (Businesses):**

- Call the business and ask to make a brief appointment to meet with the store or property manager. Tell them why you are and that you wish to chat briefly about an issue with their property. If they refuse to meet with you, then start with the letter-writing campaign suggested below.
- Bring another NRZ member with you for moral support and to corroborate the conversation.
- Keep the conversation:
  - positive – thank them for investing in the City and neighborhood, congratulate them on any recent successes, acknowledge how long they have been here, etc.
  - brief and to the point – they are busy and have a business to run
  - polite and non-judgmental – you are trying to help them, not get them on the defensive
  - business and not personal – this is solely about making the neighborhood better for all, including them
- Offer suggestions about fixing specific aspects of the situation, not just general complaints. For example: “Your property is messy” vs. “There is a lot of litter on your property, perhaps you need more trash cans, one by the door and one in the parking lot.” Encourage them to be a good neighbor, the strength of our neighborhoods depends on the everyday quality of life for everyone.
- Cite the Municipal Code and summary if needed:
  - You can find both in the PDFs of the City’s Resident Guides here: <http://www.hartford.gov/resident-guides> (note, most codes regarding property maintenance apply to all properties, not just residential)
  - You can find the full Municipal Code here: [https://library.municode.com/ct/hartford/codes/code\\_of\\_ordinances](https://library.municode.com/ct/hartford/codes/code_of_ordinances)
- Make a note of the full name of the person you are speaking with (get a business card if possible).
- If they tell you that you need to speak to someone else, get that person’s full name, title, phone number and email.
- Document your visit (date and time of your visit, issues you observed, who you spoke to, what you discussed, suggestions you made, what they offered to do about it.) Take photos of the litter, weeds, etc. if needed.
- Contact your NRZ representative from the City’s Community Engagement office ([hartford.gov/constituent-services](http://hartford.gov/constituent-services)) to give them a head’s up so that if the property manager contacts them (unlikely) they won’t be caught off guard, and also so that they are aware of the situation.
- Consider enlisting help from the heads of neighboring NRZs, especially if the property in question is on or near the border of their NRZ, or impacts their NRZ in other ways.
- Consider enlisting Hartford NEXT to send supportive letters as well.

### **Send a letter:**

Send a polite follow-up letter briefly reiterating the highlights of your in-person conversation:

- Thank them for investing in the neighborhood
- A summary of the issue
- Cite the municipal code
- Offer suggestions for improvement
- Encourage them to be a good neighbor

A sample letter "sample 1st ltr to Local business or branch.docx" is attached.

Visit the property a week after you mail the first letter and assess if any improvement has been made. Call the store manager and have a polite follow up conversation about the issue. Document your visit, the conversation, and any subsequent visits and communications.

If no improvements are made within two weeks, or if initial improvements are not maintained, send a follow up letter. A sample letter "sample 2nd ltr to Local business or branch.docx" is attached.

If the issue is remedied, send a letter or card thanking them for their attention the matter and for being a good neighbor. Share the improvements and any other positive actions with other members of your NRZ and encourage them to patronize this business and to thank the business when they visit/shop there.

Always invite the property manager/owner or business owner to attend NRZ meetings so that they can be active participants in their neighborhood.

**If this is the local branch of a larger company, and after one month there has been no improvement, it is time to go above the local manager to Corporate:**

- Research the company's CT or US headquarters and find the name of the head of Public Relations or Community Relations. Start with a simple Google search (very often the people who are in charge of PR have their full contact info listed on every press release by that company), and also try LinkedIn and voilanorbert.com.
- Send them a letter (both by US mail and email them a PDF) outlining the attempts you made to remedy the situation with the local manager, listing the issues, personnel you spoke with, and the dates of those conversations. Include copies of the letters you sent at the local level and any photos taken.
- CC the head of the City's Community Engagement Office (currently Janice Castle).
- Follow up with the Corporate contact a week later regarding the situation and how they can assist you in getting the issues addressed. Additional weekly follow up as needed.
- If you continue to get no response, contact Hartford NEXT, the City's Office of Community Services, and Chamber of Commerce regarding designing a more strategic effort, which may include going to both social media and local news media.

**Bad practices:**

- Public shaming via social media or local news media.
- Boycotting the business or encouraging others to do so.
- Any kind of personal attack on the business manager or owner.

*Always take the high road. Your actions will reflect on both your neighborhood and the City as a whole.*

**How to find out who owns a property:**

- You will need the exact address of the property.
- Visit the City Assessor website at <http://assessor1.hartford.gov/default.asp>
- Enter the street name and street number in the appropriate fields.

- Click on the Parcel ID and verify that the photo and description match the property in question.
- Note the property owner's name and mailing address.
- If the property is owned by the City:
  - Contact 311 via their smartphone app (this way you get a complaint number that you can track progress on)
  - Contact your NRZ representative from the City's Community Engagement office ([hartford.gov/constituent-services](http://hartford.gov/constituent-services)) and ask them for assistance in addressing the issue with DPW, Economic Development, etc.
- If the property is owned by an LLC:
  - Search for that LLC's Agent of Record here: <https://www.concord-sots.ct.gov/CONCORD/online?sn=PublicInquiry&eid=9740> (note, you may have to enter the LLC's name a few different ways, with and without the asterisk, to get the correct entity).

**If the issue is a criminal matter (e.g. suspected drug dealing):**

- Contact your NRZ's Community Service Officer for assistance and next steps. He or she may already be aware and may have additional information to aid in the situation, quell neighbors' fears, etc.

**NAME OR LOGO of NRZ**  
ADDRESS  
HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT \_\_\_\_\_

DATE

Name  
Title  
Property/business  
Street  
City ST zip

Template: First  
letter to local  
business or  
branch

RE: Property at 123 Main Street, Hartford CT, Store #\_\_\_\_

Dear Name:

I am following up on our conversation on \_\_\_\_\_ regarding the litter and weeds surrounding your store. Thank you again for your time that day. As we discussed, the condition of your property is not only harmful to our neighborhood and the environment but reflects badly on your business and is against Hartford's Municipal Code § \_\_\_\_\_. We came to you in person first in lieu of making a report to the City's 311 system, which could result in potential fines for your property. We want you to succeed and prosper and continue to contribute to the fabric of our neighborhood. But we also ask that you be a good neighbor and maintain your property in accordance with the City's Doorknob to Curb #CleanHartford initiative.

Our Capital City already faces so many issues and misconceptions regarding quality of life, crime, cleanliness, and the perception that the community doesn't care. We are proud to live and work here, and truly want to see our neighbors do well. The current condition of your property only contributes to the myths that Hartford is dirty and unsafe. Please help us improve our neighborhood by addressing this important issue.

Thank you for your attention. We await your prompt reply.

Your neighbor,

YOUR NAME  
President  
\_\_\_\_\_ NRZ  
South Downtown NRZ

cc: Janice Castle, Director of Community Engagement, City of Hartford  
Julio Concepcion, Executive Director, Hartford Chamber of Commerce

NAME OR LOGO of NRZ  
ADDRESS  
HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT \_\_\_\_\_

DATE

Name  
Title  
Property/business  
Street  
City ST zip

Template- Second  
letter to local  
business or  
branch

RE: Property at 123 Main Street, Hartford CT, Store #\_\_\_\_  
Hartford 311 Case # \_\_\_\_\_

Dear Name:

I am following up on our conversation on \_\_\_\_\_ and my letter of \_\_\_\_\_ regarding the litter and weeds surrounding your store. As was previously noted, the condition of your property is harmful to our neighborhood and the environment, reflects poorly on your business, and is against the City's Doorknob to Curb #CleanHartford initiative. In the \_\_\_\_ weeks since our conversation on \_\_\_\_\_, there have been no changes to the appearance of your property. We have submitted a ticket to Hartford's 311 system alerting them to your non-compliance with Hartford's Municipal Code § \_\_\_\_\_.

As previously stated, we do want you to succeed and prosper and continue to contribute to the fabric of our neighborhood. But we also ask that you be a good neighbor and maintain your property.

Thank you for your attention to this important neighborhood issue.

Your neighbor,

YOUR NAME  
President  
\_\_\_\_\_ NRZ

cc: Janice Castle, Director of Community Engagement, City of Hartford  
Julio Concepcion, Executive Director, Hartford Chamber of Commerce

**NAME OR LOGO of NRZ**  
ADDRESS  
HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT \_\_\_\_\_

DATE

Name  
Title  
Property/business  
Street  
City ST zip

**Template –  
Letter to  
Corporate  
Headquarters**

RE: Property at 123 Main Street, Hartford CT, Store # \_\_\_\_  
Hartford 311 Case # \_\_\_\_\_

Dear Name:

I write to you in my capacity as \_\_\_\_\_ of the \_\_\_\_\_ Neighborhood Revitalization Zone (NRZ) in Hartford, Connecticut. We are one of fourteen city coalitions of property owners, residential tenants, business owners, and social service organizations. NRZs were created by the Connecticut Legislature in 1995 (Public Act 95-340) to revitalize neighborhoods through the collaborative involvement of residents, businesses, non-profits, and government to determine the vision and priorities of the individual neighborhoods.

We are concerned about your property at (address), which is within/adjacent to the geographic boundaries of our NRZ. This is a busy store at a busy intersection, and is passed by thousands of pedestrians, drivers, and transit users daily. The amount of litter and weeds is an eyesore and is not only a detriment to our neighborhood and the environment but reflects badly on this particular store and the \_\_\_\_ brand, and violates Hartford's Municipal Code § \_\_\_\_\_. While there is a trash can at the entrance to your property, it seems to be constantly overflowing, and as such is impossible to use, thus adding to the litter. We have been to other \_\_\_\_ stores in the suburban towns surrounding Hartford and have noticed that those properties are much neater and cleaner, with well-maintained and landscaped areas. It is not too much to ask that your stores in the Capital City are maintained with the same level of attention as those in the wealthier suburbs.

I have communicated with the local store manager, \_\_\_\_\_, about this specific issue both in person and in writing (see attached letters and documentation) to no avail. To date, our efforts have been ignored, and so we turn to you for assistance with this important matter.

Thank you for your attention. We await your prompt reply.

Your neighbor,

YOUR NAME  
President  
\_\_\_\_\_ NRZ

cc: Janice Castle, Director of Community Engagement, City of Hartford  
Julio Concepcion, Executive Director, Hartford Chamber of Commerce

## Quality of Life Property Compliance Checklist

**Property Owner** \_\_\_\_\_

**Property Address** \_\_\_\_\_

X	Neighborhood Standard	Comment
	Loud Noise	
	Illegally Parked Cars	
	Junk/Derelict Cars	
	Loitering	
	Littering	
	Home Auto Repair Shop	
Yard/lot Maintenance		
	Pooling/Stagnant Water	
	Fences	
	Weeds	
	Driveways	
	Litter, Trash, Dumping	
	Sidewalks clear of Snow & Ice	
Building Maintenance		
	Wood/Painted Surfaces	
	Graffiti	
	Walls/Foundation	
	Roofs	
	Chimneys	
	Gutters	
	Porches & Decks	
	Windows & Screens	
	Rodents	



