



Bill Finch
Mayor, City of Bridgeport
City Hall Annex
999 Broad Street
Bridgeport, Connecticut 06604

Subject: 2009 Black Rock NRZ Six Month Report Date: July 1, 2009

Dear Mayor Finch:

This is the 2009 first report of the Black Rock NRZ, Inc. submitted in accordance with the NRZ Bylaws Section 6.08. (The bylaws require a six and twelve month report for the first year and annual reports thereafter).

The Black Rock NRZ was approved by the City Council in August 2008 and the NRZ became an implementation committee.

Meetings with Bridgeport City Personnel

The following meetings took place with City of Bridgeport personnel:

- ❖ On Monday, March 23, 2009 members of the Economic & Business Development Standing Committee, including the Black Rock Garden Club, met with Charles Carroll, Director of Public Facilities, to discuss plantings on the Median along Fairfield Avenue. This median was being restored after the work done by CL&P to install high voltage transmission lines underground along Fairfield Avenue. Other members of the City Administration attended the meeting including Michael Nidoh, Tom Coble, and Angie Staltaro. It was agreed that plantings recommended by the Garden Club would be used as replacements in spaces needed, and the scheme of planting types would be followed. It was also agreed that metal fences around trees would be removed because the trees had grown too large. The metal fences have been removed and Public Facilities have been working with the NRZ to locate the plantings as specified.



- ❖ On May 27, 2009 members of the Quality of Life Standing Committee met with Charles Carroll, Director of Public Facilities, and Steve Hladun, Parks Department, to discuss NRZ Long Range Strategic Plans for a linear park along the Black Rock Waterfront. The purpose was to acquaint Mr. Carroll and Mr. Hladun with this plan and to discuss some immediate issues; including, maintaining the sand spit at Saint Mary's to ensure the ecosystem wouldn't be impacted, the need to continue the sidewalk along Gilman Street from Saint Mary's to Courtland Avenue for pedestrian safety, and to discuss the Seabright Street Beach. The NRZ members took an Action Item to develop a plan for this Beach.
- ❖ On December 17 a meeting was held with Mayor Finch, Tom Coble and Bill Coleman with respect to the Black Rock Bike Route concept. A subsequent meeting was held with Tom Coble, acting Police Chief Joseph Gaudett and a representative from the City Engineer's office to discuss the route.
- ❖ Several times between On May 1, 2009 and June 1, 2009 members of the NRZ Business and Economic Subcommittee met with a members of OPED and Central Grants to develop an Application for a grant to be awarded by the Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation. The grant was to develop a conceptual design to revitalize the historic Black Rock Bank (once home of the Arts Center) which would be used to support the RFP for the sale of this property. The Grant Application was submitted on June 5, 2009 for \$45,000.

Organization

On October 2, 2008 the Implementation NRZ held an organizational meeting was held with the new Board members and officers were elected.

The following people were elected officers of the Black Rock NRZ:

Black Rock NRZ, Inc.



President: Kristine DeMarco
Vice President: Joe Ianniello
Secretary/Treasurer: John Lee

The following are also members of the Implementation NRZ Board of Directors:

Phil Blagys	Jackie Heneage	Gerry Manning
David Barbour	Scott Hughes	Kathy Van Renesse
Frank Basler	Bishop Kelly	Kraig Steffen
Donna Curran	Laura Hurwitz	Miguel Tomasio
Don Greenberg	Holly Kotos	

The City Ex Officio Members are:

Susan Brannelly	} Ex officio members are specified by the Bylaws to be the City Council members from the 130 th District and one member from the City's NRZ office.
Brian Crowe	
Angie Staltaro	

Operations

The first major meeting of the Black Rock NRZ was to map the implementation strategy, as defined in the Final Report of Zared Associates entitled, "Neighborhood Revitalization Zone Plan" into the six Standing Committees defined in the Bylaws. Essentially the tasks in the summary table on page 33 of the Final Report were assigned to the various Standing Committees. People, both board members and residents of Black Rock, were assigned to each of the Standing Committees.

The Standing Committees drive the Implementation process. Tasks are sometimes moved between committees and membership sometimes changes. The standing committees and their tasks are listed below.



Standing Committee (See Bylaws Article VII Section 2)	Projects/Tasks	Time Frame (years)
1. Business & Economic Development	✓ Establish Black Rock Village District and guidelines	1-5
	✓ Create incentives for sustainable development <i>[Also an issue for Design Review & Development Standards]</i>	1-5
	✓ Develop plan for streetscape improvements	1-5
	✓ Create commercial rehabilitation and façade improvement programs	1-5
	✓ Identify, encourage and support high-priority development opportunities	1-5
	✓ Establish a liaison within the City for business and neighborhood development.	1-5
	✓ Develop parking garage behind Black Rock Arts Center	1-5
	✓ Recruit appropriate businesses for important neighborhood locations	1-5
	✓ Create database of developable properties, approach owners, and encourage development	1-5



Standing Committee (See Bylaws Article VII Section 2)	Projects/Tasks	Time Frame (years)
2. Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> √ Improve infrastructure at Black Rock & Longfellow √ Increase children’s access to education, including transportation to neighborhood events √ Emphasize Black Rock educational partnerships √ Identify additional funding for education √ Increase community support by recruiting volunteers √ Keep Black Rock School a neighborhood school 	<p>1-5</p> <p>1-5</p> <p>1</p> <p>1-5</p> <p>1</p> <p>1</p>
3. Arts, Entertainment & Culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> √ Promote arts & cultural activities √ Develop marketing plan for Arts industry in Black Rock √ Identify developer/funding and site for artist loft development √ Identify funding to create/support an Arts Center 	<p>1</p> <p>1-5</p> <p>1-5</p> <p>6-10</p>
4. Land Use, Development, & Historic Preservation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> √ Influence Ordinance re-draft to include denial of zone changes in historic districts √ Eliminate inappropriate commercial uses 	<p>1-5</p> <p>1-5</p>
5. Outreach and Communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> √ Develop & implement strategies to involve more community members on NZ task forces, especially people living East of Ellsworth Street & North of Fairfield Avenue √ Communicate task force/NRZ priorities (as they emerge) to the Black Rock Community and other Bridgeport stakeholders 	<p>N/A</p> <p>N/A</p>



Standing Committee (See Bylaws Article VII Section 2)	Projects/Tasks	Time Frame (years)
6. Quality of Life, Environmental, & Public Safety	√ Develop Brewster Street Gateway and other neighborhood gateways	1
	√ Investigate potential for neighborhood trolley route	1-5
	√ Plan for the further development of Brewster St.	6-10
	√ Improve existing municipal parking lots	1
	√ Develop parking plan for Black Rock Library	1-5
	√ Explore expansion of municipal parking on available sites	1-5
	√ Provide traffic lights or other traffic-calming devices at trouble spots	1-5
	√ Implement on-street parking regulations	1
	√ Participate in redesign of Ellsworth Park	2008
	√ Identify property owners/developers for potential waterfront access at Burr Creek	1-5
	√ Participate in re-design of PT Barnum Park	1-5
	√ Identify funding for Black Rock Linear Park	6-10
√ Develop guidelines and ratify Conservation Overlay Zone	1-5	

The 2009 year-to-date activities of each of the Standing Committees are summarized in the following paragraphs.



Standing Committee 1: Business and Economic Development

This Standing Committee is concentrating on the development of the Fairfield Avenue corridor. It has started the process of defining this corridor as the Black Rock Village District.

Representatives of the Black Rock Business Association are participating in the work of this committee. They have defined a business plan that targets using the gateways to Black Rock to attract people to patronize the Fairfield Avenue venues.

The Bank on the corner of Fairfield Avenue and Brewster Street has been targeted for revitalization. The City in partnership with the NRZ developed a concept and is applying for a grant through the CT Trust Historic Preservation Association to plan the revitalization of this building. It is hoped that the work being done by the NRZ will enhance the City's prospect of selling this property to a developer that will develop the property to meet the desires of the neighborhood and meet the goals of the NRZ strategic plan. The timing of the Grant, if awarded, will support the RFP generation and support the selected developer in the conceptual phase of defining uses for the property.

Standing Committee 2: Education

The major activities of this committee have been to bring Black Rock and Longfellow parent/school associations together and to keep the Black Rock School open. They also worked with the Black Rock school administration on a number of issues. In February they applied for a grant to build a playground, but unfortunately it was not awarded to Black Rock. Some of their accomplishments and other activities included:

- ❖ Black Rock Pilates has offered an after-school yoga/dance fusion program for a reasonable cost at the Pilates studio. They are also doing a spring yoga program at Ellsworth Park for kindergarteners pro bono.
- ❖ Pursuing partnership with Ash Creek Conservation Society for age-appropriate program.
- ❖ Discussing a boating program with John Gibson.



Standing Committee 3: Arts, Entertainment, and Culture

The role of this committee is to facilitate art performance, education, and exhibition by identifying, cataloging, and connecting local artists and usable spaces. One such space is soon to open and the committee is also looking for community support. The newly renovated Black Rock Library may be an ideal locus for the arts committee.

Standing Committee 4: Land Use, Development, & Historic Preservation

This committee and the Black Rock Historic Preservation Association have focused on the activity at the historic house at 340 to 344 Brewster Street. They have evaluated Applications of Appropriateness from a developer to the Historic District Commission to develop/restore the property. They presented their evaluation to the Historic District Commission meeting during several hearings on the Appropriateness of proposed development approaches.

Standing Committee 5: Outreach and Communications

The function of this committee is to find people to serve on the other committees and do a special outreach to people in the area that was added to the traditional Black Rock area during the NRZ process.

Several meetings were held with the residents of Black Rock who reside in the area of the Longfellow School district. There were two major issues discussed at these meetings:

- ❖ The condition of parks and recreational areas is discussed under Standing Committee 6.
- ❖ The second issue was rodents and bugs that were infiltrating apartments possibly caused by construction in the area. Meetings have occurred with BHA officials to address these problems.

Standing Committee 6: Quality of Life, Environmental, & Public Safety

This Standing Committee was divided into two subcommittees – one on Circulation, Access, Parking, and Public Safety and one on Quality of Life and the Environment.



The subcommittee on Circulation, Access, Parking, and Public Safety is reviewing parking – both municipal and on street parking – and traffic circulation issues caused by the problem of narrow streets.

The second subcommittee is beginning to develop the plan for a linear park. This effort is scheduled to be a six to ten year effort. Members of the subcommittee met with the Director of Public Facilities and the head of the Parks Department to inform them of the goals of the NRZ and ask for suggestions on how to proceed. They also discussed some immediate problems with the environment associated with the planting of grass on the sand spit at Saint Mary's and the curve on Gilman Street that is dangerous for pedestrians walking to Saint Mary's. Finally, they discussed plans for improvements to Ellsworth Field and the West Side 2 Park (sometimes referred to as PT Barnum Park). Also, the other parks and recreation facilities in the Longfellow School section of Black Rock have been reviewed to determine if improvements are necessary. Generally, these areas are in good condition.

In June, as a result of a meeting organized by the Outreach Committee with residents of the Longfellow School area of Black Rock, an NRZ Board member and a resident of the area reviewed the condition of the recreational facilities. They looked at safety, utility and upkeep. In general, they found the condition of the area's recreational facilities good and one area – called the PT Barnum Water Park – was in exceptional condition. The NRZ will follow through to meet with the appropriate people to discuss correcting the issues identified in the report.

A Black Rock bike path route is being planned with the City administration and the Police Department.

Communications

The Black Rock NRZ is in the process of establishing a Web site for communications.

Respectfully submitted;

Dr. Kristine DeMarco ← Original Signed by
President, Black Rock NRZ