

# Proposed Policy and Procedure for the Review of Zoning Variance Applications and Land Use Issues by the Black Rock NRZ

## Purpose

The Black Rock Neighborhood Revitalization Zone Committee (NRZ) may independently review requests for zoning changes or variances for both residential and commercial properties within the boundaries established in the City of Bridgeport Code of Ordinances set forth in Section 8.96.050.

## Policy

When called upon, the NRZ will provide a statement reflecting the Board's opinion on whether the application would have a negative or positive impact on Black Rock residents near the applicant as well as the community in general based on the following:

1. Will the design be in keeping with the character of the neighborhood and in compliance with the Commercial Village Overlay District as defined in Article 9 of the City of Bridgeport Zoning & Subdivision Regulations, where applicable?
2. Does the variance request conform to other variance requests granted in the neighborhood?
3. Will the granting of this variance alter the essential character of Black Rock, be injurious to the use of the adjacent property, or negatively impact the quality of life of nearby residents and established businesses?
4. What impact will this variance have on the historical character of the neighborhood?

The Black Rock NRZ recognizes that variances and variance requests should not be the norm and should occur only in instance of undue burden which must be proven to result in unnecessary hardship.

There are three general means for variance concerns to be brought to the Black Rock NRZ:

- The NRZ routinely monitors zoning and land use issues that arise in Black Rock and surrounding areas and initiates a review based on the possible implications of the variance and the significant impact it could have on our community.
- Residents and community members bring forward concerns regarding zoning variance applications to the Black Rock NRZ for review and opinion.
- Zoning variance applicants request assistance from the NRZ to facilitate communication between the applicant and residents prior to the formal Zoning Board of Appeals meeting to consider the application.

## Procedure

### Committee-Level Review

Upon becoming aware of a zoning variance application and potential concern, the NRZ (Land Use Chair, NRZ President or Designee) shall request the applicant property owner or developer (or designee to include or not be limited to legal counsel, architect) make a presentation on the variance at an upcoming Land Use Committee meeting.

The following documents/supporting materials shall be provided in electronic format to committee members prior to the meeting and paper copies available at the meeting:

- Architectural plans, site plan, material samples and any other visual aids that illustrate the proposed project's architectural design and construction including building substrates and materials. Photographs of the site and adjacent buildings are to be included in the presentation.
- Relevant city zoning regulations to which the variance is being sought, to include commercial village overlay district requirements if applicable
- Correspondence received in support of, or in opposition to the variance request

Based on the type of variance, the location in question, and other pertinent factors, relevant city departments shall be contacted and strongly encouraged to attend to discuss the variance with the Committee. This list may include but not be limited to:

- Zoning
- Planning & Economic Development
- Environmental Health
- Health & Social Services

If the application is time-sensitive and the Land Use Committee is unable to meet in a timely manner, the NRZ President shall call a Special Meeting of the Executive Committee of the Board of Directors to hear the initial zoning variance presentations and concerns.

Residents and neighbors must have due notice so that they may attend and offer comment on whether they support or oppose the variance application. Thus, the meeting will be publicly posted on the Black Rock NRZ website and community members encouraged to attend and provide input during public comment.

The Committee reviewing the variance application will debate and vote to recommend the following options to the NRZ Board of Directors:

- Support – reflects a consensus, though not necessarily unanimity, among the reviewing committee members in favor of the application.
- Non-Opposition – reflects a generally favorable disposition toward the application among the reviewing committee members but recognizes significant opposition by some neighbors and/or other interested parties.
- Deferral – reflects division among the reviewing committee members to the degree that the committee cannot assume either a favorable or unfavorable position, and therefore recommends no opinion and deferral to the ZBA.
- Opposition – reflects a consensus, though not necessarily unanimity, among the reviewing committee members against the application.

#### Board of Directors Review

The NRZ President will add the item to the next meeting of the Board of Directors where the applicable committee designee will present its recommendation. If the application is time-sensitive, the NRZ President shall call a Special Meeting of the Board of Directors for the sole purpose of hearing the

recommendation of the committee and moving action on whether to uphold the recommendation of the Committee.

The President of the NRZ will write a letter to the Bridgeport Zoning Board of Appeals providing the specifics of the NRZ position on the application, the date and results of the vote, any necessary explanation, and conditions or stipulations requests, as applicable.

The NRZ reserves the right to designate a member of the Board or a member of the Land Use Committee to represent the NRZ at City Board hearings on the application to state the NRZ's position and reasoning for the support for, or request for denial of, any application.

Respectfully Submitted for Review,

Joe Larcheveque

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