

NEW HAVEN CITY PLAN COMMISSION ADVISORY REPORT

RE: [ORDER OF THE BOARD OF ALDERS](#) designating the northeast corner of Redfield Street and Columbus Avenue as “Jerry J. Bell corner” in perpetuity, for his love, commitment, great contributions and service to people in the Hill neighborhood.

Submitted by: Alder Evelyn Rodriguez, Ward 4

REPORT: 1672-07

ADVICE: Approve

BACKGROUND

Jerry Jay Bell, fondly known as “Mr. Bell,” was born on February 20, 1929, in New Bern, North Carolina, and later made New Haven his home in 1956. Mr. Bell dedicated his life to building stronger communities by becoming a homeowner in the Hill Neighborhood, working with numerous organizations including the Housing Authority, Veterans Hospital, Jewish Home for the Aged, and Staff Builders; and through his tireless volunteerism through New Haven Urban Recourses Initiative, New Haven Land Trust, Democratic Town Committee, beautification of city parks, establishing neighbor vegetable gardens, building block groups to improve community safety, extended to teaching art to children, playing drums, assisting community dance groups, promoting civic engagement through voter registration, and leading initiatives that uplifted and empowered his neighbors. For over 30 years, Mr. Bell served as the Garden Coordinator of Redfield Street, transforming a former dumping site into a thriving community garden, and for many years, provided fresh produce and guidance to the Ageless Mature Adults group, inspiring healthier eating and community bonds. In 2023, Mr. Bell was honored as Senior Volunteer of the Year, a testament to his lifetime of selfless service and dedication.

According to Section 18-2(a)(3) of Title III, Chapter 18, Article I of the City’s Code requires, “Each submission shall contain:

- (i) Plan of the site of the proposed location indicating all structures and street features as well as the proposed signage drawn to scale for review by the city.
- (ii) Proposed wording of the signage.
- (iii) A petition of at least two hundred fifty (250) city resident signatures in favor of the proposed naming, of which at least two-thirds (2/3 (one hundred sixty-six ((166))) shall be residents of the neighborhood of the proposed sign location.”

PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

This proposal in accordance with Title I, Article XIII, Section 2(A) of the New Haven Code of Ordinances states, "Every Ordinance or Resolution of the Board of Alders relating to the location and use of any street, bridge, boulevard, esplanade, square, park, playground, playfield, aviation field, parking space, public building, the facilities or terminals of any public utility, or the establishment or change in the boundaries of or regulations concerning zoning, shall be at once referred to the City Planning Commission and final action shall not be taken on any such Ordinance or Resolution until the commission shall have reported thereon, provided that the Board of Alders may establish by ordinance a period of not less than sixty (60) Days within which the commission shall file its report with the City Clerk and if no report is filed within such period the approval of the commission shall be presumed." Accordingly, the Board of Alders seeks guidance regarding the proposed amendment.

The Board of Alder seeks guidance as to:

- Whether the proposal is aligned with the City's Comprehensive Plan.
- Whether the proposal is "complete" and meets the criteria set forth in Section 18-2(a)(3) of Title III, Chapter 18, Article I of the City Code.

ADVICE

The Commission notes that this petition does not appear to meet all the requirements of Section 18-2(a)(3). A Google earth screenshot showing the corner where the sign will be placed has been included in the petition material, as well as the wording for the sign which would read "Jerry J. Bell Corner." However, the petition signature list appears to be missing key information needed to verify residency. Staff confirm at least 245 signatures have all the necessary information but have not verified whether 2/3 of the signatures are from residents living in the Hill Neighborhood. The commission otherwise recommends approval of the corner renaming, should these ordinance requirements be met.

ADOPTED: October 15, 2025
Ernest Pagan
Chair

ATTEST: _____
Laura E Brown
Executive Director, City Plan Department