

## How an Idea Becomes a Neighborhood Conservation Project

At our November 14, 2001 meeting, we had a good discussion on how ideas become Neighborhood Conservation (NC) projects. There are two types of projects that the neighborhood can sponsor: civic association sponsored projects and grass roots projects. An example of a civic association sponsored project is the Zachary Taylor parks improvement project that was recently approved by Neighborhood Conservation Advisory Committee (NCAC). This project has been discussed at most of our meetings over the past eight months and has been directed by our Parks Committee (chaired by Larry Finch). Grass roots projects are those that usually benefit a small portion of the neighborhood and may include improvements such as curbs, gutters, sidewalks and streetlights.

Under NCAC guidelines, neighborhoods can advance only one project per funding round, and there are two funding rounds each year (June and December). It is important, therefore, that there be procedures in place to ensure that potential projects be considered fairly and openly by our community.

The NCAC requires that the neighborhood file a "letter of intent" on its first priority project at the end of March and September respectively. To ensure that our membership has the necessary information to make an informed vote among multiple projects and competing priorities, the following guidelines will be used to advance grass roots projects.

1. The block seeking a project must select a volunteer block captain who should be a DRCA member.
2. The block captain will then contact the Arlington Dept. of Public Works (DPW) concerning their project. The county may require the affected homeowners to sign multiple petitions as evidence of support for a project. The first petition is used to gauge interest in the project by the affected homeowners. It is the responsibility of the block captain to obtain individual homeowner signatures to satisfy the county's petition requirements.
3. Once the first petition has been signed by 60% (county requirement) of the affected homes, a block meeting will be held between county representatives and the homeowners to discuss the project specifics. When the civic association is informed of this block meeting, a member of the DRCA executive committee will be assigned to assist the block captain.
4. The project is refined at the block meeting and a second petition (with project specifics) is then sent out. If the second petition is approved by 60% of the affected homes, then the project is eligible for consideration by DRCA for advancement in the NC funding cycle. NOTE: completion of petitions does NOT automatically advance a project for funding and implementation. County procedures require that a project be specifically identified as "DRCA's number one priority" in order to be implemented under the NC program.
5. After the second petition is approved, the block captain will be required to make a brief presentation about the project to the DRCA Executive Committee. The purpose of this meeting is to ensure that all funding alternatives are considered. At that meeting, the project scope may be modified to increase its likelihood of being approved by the NCAC.
6. After the Executive Committee meeting, the block captain will submit a brief summary article for publication in the DRCA newsletter to enable DRCA members to have complete information about all NC projects prior to voting.
7. At the March or September meeting, the block captain will make a presentation about the project to the general membership and ask for the membership's support.
8. Those dues-paying members of the civic association present at the general membership meeting will then vote on all eligible NC projects and identify a number-one priority project that will be advanced to the NCAC for funding consideration. Please note: DRCA bylaws prohibit the use of voting proxies.

Because each NC project must be approved by the membership before it is advanced for funding, it is vital that the DRCA be involved early in the process and that sufficient notice be given to all the members of the

association, the newsletter article and meeting with the Executive Committee are essential. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions on this process.