

Arlington's Neighborhood Conservation Program

Neighborhood Conservation (NC) is the most popular and unique citizen-driven program in Arlington County. NC is a 38-year old program that allows residents to spend back a portion of the taxes that they pay to Arlington County in their own neighborhoods as they see fit, within County guidelines. NC projects can run the gamut from park improvements, to sidewalk/curb/gutter construction, to street lighting, to tree planting, to traffic calming, to any project that helps to build a sense of neighborhood. These projects get people out of their dwelling units and walking and talking to one another, enjoying living in Arlington.

The Neighborhood Conservation Advisory Committee (NCAC) is composed of grassroots activists from participating civic associations. The NCAC meets monthly to guide the NC program, share ideas, and have a dialogue among the participating Arlington County neighborhoods.

Arlington-East Falls Church's NC Representative is Liz McGonigle, 703-237-4790 / altobell@aol.com.

INCENTIVES

There are four incentives for a neighborhood to participate in the NC Program.

1. **Access.** The NCAC advises the Arlington County Board on matters related to neighborhoods and thereby provides neighborhoods with special access to the Board. Specific functions of the NACA are to:
 - ? Encourage neighborhoods to join the Neighborhood Conservation Program.
 - ? Review all new and amended or updated Neighborhood Conservation plans and present recommendations to the Planning Commission and County Board.
 - ? Develop recommendations for improving the approach and process by which Arlington works to conserve and enhance neighborhoods.
 - ? Maintain liaison between the County Board, neighborhoods, Planning Commission, and other related committees and commissions.
 - ? Recommend projects to the County Board for funding through the Neighborhood Conservation Bond.
2. **Planning.** Neighborhood Conservation Plans, initiated and prepared by neighborhood residents, are used to:
 - ? Build a neighborhood vision and consensus on issues affecting the neighborhood.
 - ? Establish eligibility for Neighborhood Conservation funding.
 - ? Provide guidance to the County Board, commissions, departments, and staff concerning issues in the neighborhoods.
3. **Funding.** Voter-approved Bond funding is reserved for Neighborhood Conservation areas for projects involving curb/gutter/sidewalk, park improvements, traffic management, street lights, and beautification/
4. **Assistance.** Staff support is provided to the Neighborhood Conservation Advisory Committee by the Office of Neighborhood Services of the County's Department of Community Planning, Housing, and Development.

PROCESS

The Neighborhood Conservation process consists of four elements.

1. **Letter of Commitment.** The 1964 County Board resolution states that any neighborhood of at least 25 acres becomes eligible for the program by "demonstrating its wish to engage in a program of self-improvement." A neighborhood's "letter of commitment" enables voting membership on the NCAC.
2. **Plan Preparation.** Neighborhood organizations, typically civic associations, are responsible for preparing Neighborhood Conservation Plans. Neighborhoods survey their residents and develop plans, which are submitted to County staff for comment. Technical, clerical, and design assistance is available for plan preparation.
3. **Plan Acceptance.** Neighborhoods submit their plans to the NCAC and Planning Commission, which review them and make recommendations to the County Board, which then considers acceptance of NC plans.
4. **Plan Implementation.** An accepted NC plan qualifies a neighborhood to seek NC funds for specific projects. Certain projects must also be supported by petitions. Every six months, the NCAC recommends civic-association approved and prioritized projects for funding to the County Board.