

Neighborhood Conservation

Village View Article December 2009 By Eric Hougen

Did you know that Arlington County has funded close to a million dollars in infrastructure improvements within the Glencarlyn neighborhood since 2001? Four separate blocks have completed upgrades under the County's Neighborhood Conservation Program. If you are interested in learning about how to improve neighborhood streets, please join us at the Dec. 7 meeting of the Glencarlyn Citizens' Association for a presentation on Neighborhood Conservation Program. The meeting begins at 7:30 p.m. at Carlin Hall (5711 4th St. S.).

With the project on the 5600 block of 3rd Street South nearly completed, Glencarlyn has no projects in the construction queue. The GCA is using the December meeting to raise awareness in the community to find residents interested in getting a project started. It's relatively easy to get a project underway. All it takes is a general idea of what improvements will be requested, and a petition signed by at least 60 percent of the residents on the affected blocks. Based on the experience of residents that have already participated in the process, it is recommended that the residents of the block meet early and continuously throughout the process to ensure that the desires of residents are well communicated to county designers. Design can be particularly complicated in older neighborhoods like ours. Glencarlyn has many old trees and relatively narrow rights of way. It can be very challenging to meet modern code requirements for street width and sidewalks in a neighborhood that was built long before the Americans with Disabilities Act and large fire trucks.

Neighborhood Conservation projects can include one or all of the following aspects: improved street lighting, sidewalks, traffic calming, curb and gutter with street reconstruction to resolve drainage issues, parks projects, and neighborhood signs. Given the poor condition of our neighborhood's streets, many residents are attracted to the street improvement program. Under current county policy, only streets with curb and gutter on both sides of the entire block are eligible for street rebuilding. If your block is currently in poor condition, and lacks curb and gutter, the only known way for that to change is to participate in this program. The current County Board requires that all Neighborhood Construction projects include sidewalks on at least one side. When Glencarlyn residents were surveyed a few years ago, there was roughly a 50/50 split between those supporting and those against installing sidewalks throughout the neighborhood. There is a sidewalk waiver process, but the requirements for approval appear to be out of reach for most blocks in Glencarlyn, with the possible exception of dead-end streets. Blocks wishing to participate in the program should plan on including a sidewalk in their requested design for best results.

The county will survey the current conditions of the street and complete a preliminary "concept design". Multiple revisions may be required before the residents of the block arrive at an acceptable design. To become fully "qualified", 60 percent of the residents of the block must sign a formal petition approving the project and the GCA must identify the project as its first priority project to enter the funding round. Funding rounds occur twice a year, and Glencarlyn projects will compete against projects offered by the other 50 Arlington neighborhoods. Projects are ranked according to a scoring system designed by the Neighborhood Conservation Advisory Committee, which is a citizen led effort. At the most recent funding round, about 10

projects were approved for funding, ranging in cost from \$12,000 to \$630,000. The scoring system heavily favors projects from neighborhoods with an updated neighborhood plan.

Glencarlyn's plan dates to 1978 and a revision of our neighborhood's plan is underway. If you are interested in getting a project started, please attend the Dec. 7 GCA meeting or call Eric Hougen, GCA's representative on the Neighborhood Conservations Advisory Committee, at 703-867-2933 or ehougen@gmail.com. More information about the program can also be found at the county's Neighborhood Conservation website:
<http://www.arlingtonva.us/DEPARTMENTS/CPHD/ons/CPHDOnsConservation.aspx>.