

# Neighborhood Conservation Program CONCEPT DESIGN REVIEW MEETING NOTES



**PROJECT NAME:** N Highland Street  
**PROJECT #:** Z261  
**DATE:** March 31, 2016

**MEETING GOAL:** Present owners with concept plan in preparation for NC's spring funding round

**TO:** Scott Milam, Block Representative  
 Thora Colot, NCAC Alternate  
 Bess Zelle, NCAC Representative

**FROM:** Michelle Stafford, Neighborhood Conservation Planner

**ATTENDANCE:**

**County Staff:** Tim McIntosh, NC Coordinator  
 Michelle Stafford, NC Planner  
 Matthew Trout, DES Engineering Supervisor  
 Edward Caccavari, DES Engineer  
 Jill Yutan, Landscape Architect

**Attendees:**

	NAME	ADDRESS	PHONE/EMAIL
1	Thora Colot	2505 4 <sup>th</sup> St N	703-528-9953 <a href="mailto:thoracolot@gmail.com">thoracolot@gmail.com</a>
2	Matt Cohen	25 N Highland St	571-212-6190 <a href="mailto:Cohenmatt8@gmail.com">Cohenmatt8@gmail.com</a>
3	Amanda Milam	108 N Highland St	
4	Diane Hauslein	38 N Highland St	703-525-9238 hauslein@
5	Kenneth Moore	16 N Highland St	703-528-1176 <a href="mailto:kennethrmooresr@gmail.com">kennethrmooresr@gmail.com</a>
6	Tom Daly	111 N Highland St	703-527-2386 <a href="mailto:Tom.daly@ofplaw.com">Tom.daly@ofplaw.com</a>
7	Abbie Daly	111 N Highland St	703-527-2386
8	Carlton Nguyen	15 N Highland St	703-522-7151 <a href="mailto:Carlton62n@gmail.com">Carlton62n@gmail.com</a>

9	Mark Montgomery	116 N Highland St	703-850-2649 <a href="mailto:mmontgomery@dewberry.com">mmontgomery@dewberry.com</a>
10	Andy Hershey	115 N Highland St	703-405-9960
11	Jennifer Li	29 N Highland St	703-527-6936 <a href="mailto:jenniferli@gmail.com">jenniferli@gmail.com</a>
12	Virgilio Sanchez	3101 Arlington Blvd	571-233-4908 <a href="mailto:Saulromero73@hotmail.com">Saulromero73@hotmail.com</a>
13	Anish Patel	31 N Highland St	703-955-0690 <a href="mailto:Anish.h.patel@gmail.com">Anish.h.patel@gmail.com</a>
14	Barbara Sandoval	39 N Highland St	
15	Jessica Tanner	102 N Highland St	540-460-0964 <a href="mailto:Jessica.tanner@gmail.com">Jessica.tanner@gmail.com</a>
16	John Fiske	102 N Highland St	703-527-7855 <a href="mailto:Jfiske7@yahoo.com">Jfiske7@yahoo.com</a>
17	John Naughton	35 N Highland St	703-243-7376 <a href="mailto:Naughton.john@gmail.com">Naughton.john@gmail.com</a>
18	Shawn Teter	24 N Highland St	703-558-0160 <a href="mailto:Shawnteter2124@gmail.com">Shawnteter2124@gmail.com</a>
19	Mike Lee	30 N Highland St	703-528-3128 <a href="mailto:colortrace@yahoo.com">colortrace@yahoo.com</a>

**BACKGROUND:**

This project was originally nominated for NC funding by the Lyon Park Civic Association as part of a larger project that included the 7 blocks between Arlington Blvd and Pershing Drive. In the fall 2014, the larger project failed to pass the General Interest Survey (“Clipboard Petition”). LPCA nominated the portion of N Highland St from Arlington Blvd to 1<sup>st</sup> Rd S for NC funding, which in January 2016, passed the Clipboard Petition with 61.5% of properties voting to move forward to design, based on the linear frontage of the voting property owners.

NC Staff met with interested neighbors in late January 2016, and invited additional feedback through a “5 Minute Survey” that was distributed in hard copy at the meeting, door-to-door, and via an online survey tool (Survey Monkey). The various points of feedback indicated that the project priorities to consider in the design of the Street Improvement project were: traffic calming, safety, parking retention, and minimum impacts to property frontages. The purpose of this meeting is to present the concept design and answer any questions related to the proposed plan.

**DESCRIPTION OF THE DESIGN:**

The street improvement project on N Highland St between Arlington Blvd and 1<sup>st</sup> Rd N, proposes to construct a 4’ sidewalk, with a utility strip approximately 3’ in width on the west side of the street, and curb and gutter on both sides of this section of N Highland St. The design seeks to avoid relocating the 14 existing utility poles, though it is not certain at the concept design stage if some or all of the poles may need to be moved in association with the project. The design has minimized this likelihood to the extent possible.

## **MEETING MINUTES:**

### **Presentations**

The meeting began with introductions of staff, Scott Milam (Block Representative,) and Thora Colot (NCAC Representative). Michelle Stafford introduced the project background, and provided an update on the design features included in DES Transportation Engineering & Operations (TE&O) program, which will be studied concurrently with the NC project process. Michelle also displayed images of completed NC projects with similar profiles (40' right-of-way, 28' road width, 4' sidewalk with 2.5' utility strip on one side of the street).

Matthew Trout reviewed the existing conditions along the project extent, including areas where water ponds or collects due to the lack of conveyance a proper curb and gutter provides. There is a portion of existing sidewalk on the east side of Highland, located in a permanent easement across 31, 35 and 39 N Highland St, and 3012 1<sup>st</sup> St N. The easement ends abruptly without sidewalk continuity throughout the block. There are also existing sidewalk portions in the County right-of-way on the west side of N Highland St, on an intermittent basis, with no curb and gutter, utility strip, or grade separation. This results in cars parking on the sidewalk. Utility poles are located in the roadway and in the at-grade sidewalk portions.

There is a significant 48" white oak in good condition located in the right-of-way adjacent to 109 N Highland St. Consultation with the County Forester resulted in the determination that this tree should be preserved and any Street Improvement project design should factor in measures to improve its condition.

Staff considered two designs, the first to locate the new sidewalk on the east side of the street, to utilize the existing sidewalk. The resulting project would require acquisition of additional permanent easement, would pose a design challenge that could jeopardize the health of the oak tree, and would require relocation of the utility poles, all significant project risk factors. The second design plans the new sidewalk for the west side of the street, which likely will avoid relocating some or all of the existing utility poles, expands the green area around the base of the oak tree through a small area that "bumps out" into the roadway, and utilizes County right-of-way for the improvements. The design that plans for sidewalk on the west side of the street is the design staff presented.

The proposed design maintains a 28' road width throughout the project area, with the exception of a portion of the area in front of 101 and 109 N Highland St, where the road narrows to 22' to protect the large oak tree. On-street parking will be reduced to the west side only where the road narrows in this section. Twenty-eight feet is the minimum street width required to allow on-street parking on both sides of the street. Analysis of the existing parking available estimates that an additional 6 parking spaces will be created in the street improvement project. There are currently no storm water structures (such as catch basins) on N Highland St between 1<sup>st</sup> Rd N and the asphalt trail along Arlington Blvd. Water conveys, where possible, to the two existing catch basins located on the east and west side of N Highland St, between the asphalt trail and the intersection of Arlington Blvd. This drainage pattern will likely continue, though more efficiently with the addition of proper curb and gutter throughout the project area. Further storm water analysis will ensue if the project passes the final petition stage, prior to the NCAC funding round in June. If additional storm water structures are needed, the project budget will include appropriate funding.

The existing road width of 1<sup>st</sup> St N at N Highland St is approximately 14.5-15.5'. The proposed design for this intersection is to widen 1<sup>st</sup> St N by 6" and utilized a depressed curb and gutter at the northeast corner. This is to allow for turning movements of large vehicles, such as buses and firetrucks. New accessible ramps will be installed on the northwest and southwest corner, with a replacement ramp to be installed on the southeast corner, as the existing ramp does not meet ADA standards.

NC Street Improvement projects are built at no expense to private property owners, through funding from the Neighborhood Conservation bond. In the course of constructing projects, NC provides new driveway aprons, grades to match existing surfaces and materials, including where there are impacts to lead walks. Additionally, if construction crews either need to temporarily remove, or do damage to existing fences, they will repair or replace with like materials to be located on private property. NC projects are constructed in the County owned right-of-way (with exceptions in the case of permanent easements), not on private property.

Jill Yutan spoke about the inability to include any new tree plantings in the utility strip where the strip is narrower than 4' wide, though there may be opportunity to plant in the widened strip in the sidewalk easement area on the east side of the street. Construction of the project could result in 4 to 8 tree removals, though the large significant oak tree would be preserved. Jill will work with homeowners in the event that shrubs or trees are damaged, removed, or need to be relocated.

### **Summary of Issues Arising from the Meeting**

*Traffic Calming* – Several people asked questions about traffic calming and if there are any other options available from the County to achieve traffic calming improvements, including stop signs, speed humps, nubs, raised cross walks, and traffic control measures such as stop signs and restricted turning movements. At this time there is not a traffic calming program, though the Neighborhood Complete Streets program may be an option in the future. The NCS program was approved with a 4-year moratorium on vertical traffic calming measures such as speed humps and raised cross walks. NC staff have initiated the traffic studies necessary for TE&O to consider the merits of the other changes listed. Consideration of these design elements may proceed concurrently with the process that will incorporate sidewalk, curb & gutter through the NC project. Equipment for this purpose should be installed on a temporary basis the week of April 4<sup>th</sup>.

*Safety* – One participant asked if any studies have been performed to prove the proposed design increases safety. It is the professional opinion of planning and engineering staff that pedestrian safety is increased by providing safe, grade-separated sidewalks to walk on, particularly for people with disabilities, the elderly and children. Most of the street will be narrowed to 28' from a variable width as wide as 33'. The area around the large oak tree will see a reduction in width to 22'. Along with high demand for on-street parking, permitted on both sides of the street (except near the tree), automobile travel speeds may be reduced, though no studies have been performed to support this hypothesis.

*Concerns about Concept Design Completeness* – A question arose about the Concept Design (15% design plan) and the unknown variables that may arise going forward. The NC process provides a general concept design to affected property owners for consideration and voting purposes. This is to prevent spending larger sums on a more detailed design, only to have the

design fail in the final petition. NCAC and NC staff take measures to spend the NC bond money responsibly. Unfortunately that means that staff aren't able to report at this stage on many of the intricate design details that will follow if the project is approved by affected property owners, and funded by NCAC and the Arlington County Board. All NC projects include a Final Design Meeting to present the final design, which doesn't include any significant changes to the road geometry. For example, a design with a 28' road width with on-street parking on both sides cannot change to a narrower design with parking eliminated on one side. Though there may be a need to make minor revisions to the geometry once engineering staff begin a vertical design, the major elements of the design presented shouldn't change.

*Are there Risks to Delaying the Final Petition?* – If the neighborhood chooses to delay the final petition process, staff will oblige. The risks would include: availability of bond money approved through ballot, the project schedule, delaying Lyon Park's next priority project, and the possibility that a delay results in no additions or alterations to the proposed plan.

*Water Meters, Driveway Aprons & Restoration* – NC will ensure that meters will be relocated as needed to facilitate the implementation of the proposed design. Driveway aprons will be replaced, and grading and landscaping restored in the construction process.

*Utility Undergrounding* – Undergrounding of utilities is prohibitively expensive. As a result of the cost, NC projects do not fund the undergrounding of utilities.

*Street Lights* – Is it possible to include Carlyle street lights in the project? Although NC does fund Streetlight and Street Improvement projects that install street lights, this design does not include Carlyle street lights. There are 14 utility poles in the two block project area, which would result in a crowding in the utility strip if Carlyle lights are added. The existing cobras will remain in place, and provide adequate lighting. Additionally, DES is engaged in a Streetlight Master Plan process that may change the standards for County lighting. Given this unknown, along with the numerous utility poles, staff opted to not include additional lighting on this particular project.

#### **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:**

- The County will match materials to restore lead walk steps that need to be replaced during construction to achieve proper grading between the street and private property. Driveway aprons will be replaced within the limits of construction – on the north side of the street.
- NC projects are funded by proceeds from a dedicated general obligation bond, approved by the Arlington County voters in County elections held every other year. Proceeds from this bond must be used for Neighborhood Conservation projects (e.g. street improvement projects, neighborhood street lights, park improvement projects, neighborhood beautification) and cannot be used for any other types of County programs or projects.
- If the project is funded and proceeds to construction, temporary easements will be requested of property owners. Temporary easements allow the County contractor's staff to access private yards to perform construction-related work including the relocation of fences, replacement of disturbed sod, matching-up of grade through cut and fill for the adjacent work within the public Right-of-Way. For example, when a concrete driveway apron is poured within the public Right-of-Way, a Temporary Construction Agreement allows construction staff to match the new apron with the existing driveway in a resident's yard. If it is a concrete driveway, it is typical to saw cut the existing driveway at the closest expansion joint to the property line and replace that portion with new concrete in the yard to match the driveway with

the new apron. Temporary Construction Agreements become null and void upon completion of construction.

#### **UPDATE:**

County staff have been informed that on April 3<sup>rd</sup>, following the March 31 meeting, neighborhood residents participated in an additional, informal meeting at the home of Scott Milam. Staff received an email on April 7<sup>th</sup> that requested staff move ahead with the Final Petition process, with the noted requests that The County consider the follow additional elements:

1. Crosswalks (preferably raised) at the intersections of 1st Street North and N. Highland Street AND at 1st Road North and N. Highland St.;
2. Stop signs at the intersections of 1st Street North and N. Highland St, and 1st Road N. and N. Highland street;
3. Adding a "nub" at the southwest corner of Highland street and 1st Road North (this could address a potential speed issue, and potentially save a significant tree);
4. Add "NO LEFT TURN" sign at the intersection of N. Highland Street and Route 50;
5. Consider reducing the speed limit from 25 to 15 or 20 miles per hour; and
6. Consider adding a transitional entry to Highland street at the intersection of N. Highland and Route 50 (similar to the intersection of N. Highland and Lee Highway).

Staff have noted the requested additions, and will proceed forward with the design that was presented at this meeting. The additional elements will be considered following the traffic study that is currently underway for this project. At this time, we cannot guarantee that any of the six requested features/changes will be possible, and we ask that the petition be considered "as-is" with the understanding that the requested changes/additions will be incorporated, if possible.

#### **NEXT STEPS:**

The Final Petitions will be delivered to property owners that are within the limits of the project no later than April 11th. The petition must be signed by the property owners in order to proceed with funding for the project. Please vote "yes" or "no" to the project and return the petition to Michelle Stafford (self-addressed postage paid envelope is included for returns) by **April 22, 2016**. Properties that do not vote by April 22<sup>nd</sup> will be sent a reminder notice via USPS Certified Mail with return receipt notice. If 60% of the linear footage on the street agrees to the project, the project will become eligible for the Neighborhood Conservation Advisory Committee to recommend the project for funding by the County Board in the spring 2016 funding round. **Petitions that are not returned are counted as "yes" votes.**

If the project becomes qualified and is funded, a final design meeting will be held for property owners when the design is 90% complete. Meeting invitations will be sent out to notify property owners at that time.

Any questions or additional information regarding this project or process can be directed to Michelle Stafford, Neighborhood Conservation Planner at 571-305-0125 or mstafford@arlingtonva.us.

Your input and vote is greatly appreciated.

Cc: All owners of property within property limits  
Edward Caccavari, DES Engineering Staff  
Matthew Trout, DES Design Team Supervisor  
Jill Yutan, NC Landscape Architect  
Tim McIntosh, NC Coordinator

Encl: 2