



CITY OF FALLS CHURCH

DATE: July 12, 2014
TO: Streetscape Taskforce
FROM: Paul Stoddard, AICP, Principal Planner, Streetscape Taskforce Liaison
SUBJECT: Decision Making

Introduction

The Streetscape Taskforce is charged with reviewing the City's streetscape guidelines and making a recommendation to Council on updated guidelines. To move forward with a recommendation, the Taskforce should agree on the process for making a recommendation.

During the planning process, the Taskforce will be called upon to make other decisions as well. For example, by charter, the Taskforce is empowered to add to its membership if it feels additional viewpoints are needed.

The Taskforce should discuss various options for making decisions. Below are two options. Once the group has come to a general agreement, I will assume that is the mechanism the group will use going forward for making decision.

Majority Vote

Many advisory boards and commissions operate by majority vote. This can be a good tool when working relationships are already established and voting will not create a sense of winners and losers. To ensure greater levels of agreement, a percentage majority can be required, for example 67 percent instead of 51 percent.

Consensus

In the case of streetscape guidelines, a majority vote may not be appropriate. For successful implementation, many stakeholders have to agree on the right solution, because they will have to put in their own energy and effort to realize the vision. Instead of voting, achieving a consensus may be more appropriate for ensuring that each stakeholder is supportive of the guidelines developed.

Consensus in this case would not mean that the decision of the group reflects each stakeholder's interests perfectly. Rather, it means that each person can live with the decision of the group and can agree to support it moving forward.