

LOW IMPACT DEVELOPMENT

EXAMPLES of DEVELOPMENT CODE CHANGES

The proposals described below provide further detail about the staff recommended options in Elements #1-#5. Specific code language will not be determined until late in 2015.

Group 1 – Reducing Site Disturbance

Element 1

- Site Assessment: At the Stormwater Assessment design stage, require more detailed information on soil conditions, the condition of understory vegetation, and the extent and severity of invasive species on site. *Current regulations do not require the level of detail needed for 'LID' designs.*
- Grading permits: Unless within 10 feet of an approved building, the City would require grading permits for adding, removing or moving more than 10 cubic yards of material or disturbing more than 7,000 square feet of the soil surface. Current regulations allow up to 50 cubic yards and 20,000 square feet of soil movement without a permit, and exempt grading within 30 feet of structures from separate permit requirements. *This would be a procedural, not substantive, change.*
- Perimeter grading: Limit re-grading within about 100 feet of the perimeter of a development site and within 100 feet of 'no disturbance' areas such as tree preservation tracts or wetland buffers. Limits may be with regard to slope or extent of topographic change. *Current regulations generally impose limits only within 10 feet of such perimeters.*
- Mass-grading: Limit changes in the topography of a site, such as requiring that for 50% of a development site elevation changes not exceed four feet. *Current regulations impose almost no limits on 'mass-grading,' i.e., substantially changing the drainage pattern of a development site.*

Element 2

- Tree Tracts: Redefine tree tracts in subdivisions as 'Soil and Vegetation Protection Areas' (SVPA) to protect soils, understory plants, and trees. *Current regulations require tree tracts, but only protect mature trees over 6 inches in diameter.*
- Multi-family SVPAs: Require that 'Soil and Vegetation Protection Areas' be established in multi-family projects where 'open space' is required, in part to meet tree unit and open space requirements. And exempt these SVPAs from 'minimum development density.' *Current regulations require 'open space,' but only require that a minimum 30 tree units per acre be preserved or planted on site; there are no protections for soils or understory vegetation.*

- Open Space: Wherever open space is required, such as cottage housing, apartment buildings, manufactured home parks, and “villages”, require that a minimum percentage of the open space be a ‘Soil and Vegetation Protection Area.’ *Current regulations allow a broad range of ‘soft surface’ options including yard areas, active recreation, and ornamental or undisturbed native landscaping.*
- Plant Selection: Adopt criteria for plants in ‘Soil and Vegetation Protection Areas,’ including a required percentage of evergreen and deciduous trees, and establish a list of invasive and infrastructure-damaging plants that will not be approved as part of development. *Current regulations only require that plants be ‘appropriate,’ ‘suited,’ etc.*

Group 2 – Minimizing Impervious Area on Site (i.e., outside right-of-way)

Element 3

- Clustered housing: When a substantial portion of a development (90% of site?) permanently conserves native soils, allow alternative building forms, such as taller buildings or multi-family housing in single-family areas. *Current regulations only allow 20% smaller setbacks and lot sizes.*
- Cottage housing: Increase viability of cottage (small single-family) housing options, possibly by providing more individual unit driveway options, and by allowing larger ‘small homes’, e.g., allow up to 1,600 square-foot home (2 story) with 800 square-foot ‘footprint.’ *Current regulations require a shared parking lot and limit homes to 1200 square feet with 800 square-foot footprint.*
- Small setbacks: Refine reduced residential setback option – may become more restrictive (possibly only allowed if with alley access) to ensure adequate side-yard infiltration areas. *Current regulations allow 3-foot sideyards to include pavement and small structures.*

Element 4

- Impervious surfaces: Reduce maximum impervious surface limits in most of the city. In general:
 - In most low-density residential zones (over 70% of the city) impervious surface limits would be reduced to the current ‘building coverage’ limit – about a 10% reduction; this change would generally lead to permeable driveways and other surfaces.
 - In medium-density residential zones and mixed use zones (such as neighborhood commercial, office and medical zones – about 10% of the city) impervious surface limits would be reduced by 5 to 10%, probably resulting in more permeable parking. *Note that a related ‘green roofs’ proposal may provide for ‘bonus’ coverage.*
 - In more intensive development areas, including most commercial and all industrial zones, impervious surface limits would not change. Other LID techniques would be required while retaining the opportunity for intensive development consistent with the City’s Comprehensive Plan.

Element 5

- Parking lots: Reduce width of drive aisles in parking lots, allow more and require a minimum number (10%?) of small spaces in large (100 spaces or more?) parking lots, and require use of permeable pavement for parking area exceeding median (“target”) number of spaces. The required number of employee, customer and freight-delivery spaces are also being re-evaluated, but no major changes are anticipated.

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