

Fact Sheet on Alleys

What is the definition of an alley?

The definition of an alley in the code is:

A public or private way at the rear or side of property permanently reserved as a means of vehicular or pedestrian access to a property. Functionally, an alley is the minimum or lowest classification of a street.

What does the current Comprehensive Plan say about alleys?

T 3.22 Alleys should be encouraged in new developments except where the site configuration or features (e.g., wetlands or steep terrain) impede their use, or where the additional impervious surface would cause stormwater problems. Alleys will:

- a. Allow alternate access to lots for service functions;*
- b. Allow more options for locating the garage on a lot; and*
- c. Allow for fewer curb cuts, more continuous sidewalks for pedestrians and more curbside parking along streets.*

Are alleys built in residential and commercial areas?

Yes, the Engineering Design and Development Standards (EDDS) states that alleys can be built in commercial and residential areas:

Alleys may be permitted at the rear of single family residential, multifamily residential, commercial, or industrial property. Dead-end alleys are prohibited. (EDDS 2.040 Requirements B. Streets and Alleys, 11)

What surface are alleys required to be?

Alleys must be paved with asphalt in commercial areas. In residential areas, the requirement is for concrete in the wheel path and grass for the remainder of the alley. (See EDDS sections 4B.160 for Surfacing Requirements, and drawings 4-6A, 4-2J, and 4-4A)

Can alleys be made of pervious materials?

This is not currently addressed in the EDDS. The reason for grass in residential alleys is to reduce impervious surfaces.

Can alleys be used to treat stormwater?

Current stormwater regulations do not permit stormwater management within the right-of-way. In a subdivision, stormwater has to be managed on a separate tract maintained by the home owners' association.

A large portion of downtown is tributary to the LOTT wastewater treatment plant where it receives exceptional water quality treatment. At this time there is no need to detain and treat

stormwater for a majority of the downtown. In addition, infiltration is poor in the downtown so permeable pavements are infeasible.

Are alleys public or private?

Alleys are typically public. Alleys can be private under certain circumstances:

Alleys not required for fire suppression access, solid waste collection, or other public purposes may be privately owned. Unless City Council approves an exemption, private alleys will conform to all improvement standards for public alleys, will be posted, and will meet all other provisions applicable to private streets. (EDDS 2.040 Requirements B. Streets and Alleys, 11)

Briggs Village and Woodbury Crossing are examples of where public alleys have recently been constructed. The Village at Mill Pond is an example of where private alleys are proposed to be constructed to City standards within private tracts. Stormwater management for the alley and adjacent roofs is being provided in infiltration trenches below the alleys. Maintenance of pavement and stormwater facilities in this case is all private.

Who maintains alleys?

The Public Works Department maintains public alleys on an as-requested basis. In the past, a budget for regular alley maintenance was in place, but this was cut out of the operating budget in the late 1990s.

In 2013, 53 requests for alley maintenance were made. Maintenance activities typically include grading, pothole patching, vegetation control for waste collection trucks, and building berms to control stormwater runoff.

What are some examples of alleys in new development?

Woodbury Crossing and Bay Hill are examples of subdivisions that built alleys. Whitmore Glen, Merryman Place and Whisper Ridge are subdivisions that did not build alleys. Briggs Village is an urban village that built alleys.

Along the Urban Corridors of 4th and State Avenues between Plum Street and Turner Street, alleys are generally retained with redevelopment. Examples include the dental office at 4th and Eastside, and the Salvation Army building on 4th and Central.

In the downtown, the new building and parking garage built by the Washington State Employees Credit Union is an example of new development that retained alleys. The planned state office building at 1063 Capitol Way proposes to vacate an existing alley. The Boardwalk Apartments on Capitol Way vacated alleys. The Port of Olympia East Bay Short Plat, which includes the Hands On Childrens' Museum did not build alleys.