



Utility Advisory Committee

Low Impact Development Code Revisions

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Report

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Staff Contacts:

Eric Christensen, Planning and Engineering Manager, 360.570.3741

Laura Keehan, Senior Planner, 360.753.8321

Andy Haub, Water Resources Director, 360.753.8475

Background and Analysis:

The Washington State Department of Ecology defines low impact development (LID) as a stormwater and land use management strategy that strives to mimic natural hydrologic processes such as infiltration, filtration, and evaporation of precipitation. The strategy emphasizes natural resource conservation, site planning, and small-scale stormwater management practices that are integrated into the project design. Low impact techniques include careful site design and innovative stormwater management approaches such as minimizing impervious pavement surfaces, bioretention, and compost-amended soils.

The City of Olympia is required by the State to evaluate our various codes and regulations in order to "make LID the preferred and commonly used approach to site development." Regardless of the State mandate, Olympia has longstanding interest and experience with LID techniques. However, unlike past work, Olympia's code and regulations will now be comprehensively evaluated and refined. The Washington Department of Ecology provides a basic, mandatory process for conducting the codes revisions.

Olympia's Public Works and Community Planning and Development Departments assembled a LID code revision team in February, 2014. The team meets twice a month. Key tasks that are underway or completed include:

- Identifying specific City code and standards that need to be evaluated for potential revisions.
- Developing a public decision-making process and schedule.
- Drafting 25 issue papers that evaluate the potential use of specific low impact development techniques in Olympia. Work on the issue papers is not complete and will continue over the winter.
- Helping sponsor a local symposium on low impact development with Northwest EcoBuilding Guild. Coordination with the Guild is ongoing.
- Assembling a 16-member technical work group that will review issue papers and draft code revisions.

- The committee is comprised of members of the local development and consulting community.
- Providing information about the project through City's utility bill insert and webpage.
 - Distributing an e-newsletter that provides project updates.
 - Coordinating with the other three local jurisdictions.
 - Briefing and updating the Olympia City Council.
 - Briefing the Olympia Planning Commission (January 5, 2015).

The City's Utility Advisory Committee (UAC) has worked with City staff over the past few years to evaluate and progressively implement low impact development techniques. Staff recommends that LID code revisions be a key 2015 work effort for the UAC. With staff support, the UAC is asked to build their knowledge of LID policy and technical considerations, and ultimately recommend a package of code revisions to City Council and the Planning Commission.

City staff and SCJ Alliance, a local planning and engineering firm, are developing approximately 25 issue papers, each explaining the potential use of a specific LID technique (e.g., permeable pavement, bioretention, narrow streets) in Olympia. The issue papers will provide the background and logic applicable to subsequent staff recommendations. Review of issue papers and associated comments from the LID technical workgroup and others is an important role for the UAC. A list of issue paper topics and preliminary staff recommendations is attached. Ultimately, recommendations will lead to specific code revision language that defines standards for new development.

The draft 2015-2016 UAC work plan is also on the UAC's agenda for January 7. The draft plan includes time for LID discussions in February, March, and May 2015. Staff also requests the UAC meet in early July to formalize recommendations. Typically, the UAC takes July and August off.

In addition to monthly agenda items for the evaluation of LID revisions, the UAC could also consider supplemental processes such as:

- Inviting several Olympia Planning Commission members to participate in UAC discussions.
- Create a LID subcommittee to meet as needed and make recommendations to the larger group.
- Meet jointly with the LID technical workgroup and/or the Planning Commission to discuss final recommendations.
- Share recommendations publicly through the local Northwest EcoBuilding Guild as a follow-up to a previous Guild LID symposium.

We plan to complete the work effort, including Council-approved code revisions, by the end of 2015.

The January 7 agenda item will provide the UAC with necessary background information on the project. The UAC will be asked to develop a basic strategy for developing recommendations.

Additional LID information is provided at the City of Olympia webpage (see hyperlink above). www.olympiawa.gov/LIDcodes UAC review of the information on the webpage is optional.

Financial Impact:

Public Works and the Community Planning and Development Departments are providing the in-house planning and technical resources for the project. Additionally, the Storm and Surface Water Utility is funding outside consultant support.

Attachments:

Low Impact Development Materials