



## Planning Commission

### Low Impact Development Code Revisions

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#### **Title**

Low Impact Development Code Revisions

#### **Report**

##### **Issue:**

The City's Community Planning & Development and Public Works Departments are revising City development codes and regulations in order to implement more environmentally-sensitive stormwater practices. The Planning Commission will review the proposed code revisions in mid-2015. The Low Impact Development briefing will set the stage for future deliberations.

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##### **Presenter(s):**

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##### **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 long-standing interest and experience with LID techniques. However, unlike past work, Olympia's code and regulations will now be comprehensively evaluated and refined. Washington State Department of Ecology provides a mandatory process for conducting revisions to the codes.

Olympia's Public Works and Community Planning & 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 ad hoc 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 the 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.

The City's Utility Advisory Committee (UAC) worked with City staff over the past few years to evaluate and progressively implement Low Impact Development techniques. Oversight of the LID code revision project will be a key 2015 work effort for the UAC. They will build their knowledge of LID policy and technical considerations, and ultimately recommend a package of code revisions to City Council and the Planning Commission.

The Commission can expect to review UAC recommendations in latter spring or early summer. We plan to complete the work effort including Council-approved code revisions by the end of 2015. More information sharing with the public is anticipated for early spring 2015.

Additional information is provided at the City of Olympia webpage (see hyperlink): [www.olympiawa.gov/LIDcode](http://www.olympiawa.gov/LIDcode) <<http://www.olympiawa.gov/LIDcode>>. Commissioner review of the information is optional.

**Neighborhood/Community Interests (if known):**

The LID code revisions build upon neighborhood development and community interests in environmental protection and sustainable development. We anticipate considerable community interest in the work effort. Public education and involvement will be essential.

**Options:**

None at this time.

**Financial Impact:**

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