



Utility Advisory Committee

Low Impact Development Update

Agenda Date: 5/7/2015
Agenda Item Number:
File Number: 15-0448

Type: information **Version:** 1 **Status:** Filed

Title

Low Impact Development Update

Recommended Action

UAC Deliverable:

Update only

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Previous UAC Consideration: January, 2015

Background and Analysis:

As discussed with the UAC during the January 2015 meeting, 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 permeable pavement surfaces, bioretention, and compost-amended soils.

The City of Olympia is in the process of comprehensively evaluating development codes and standards in order to "make LID the preferred and commonly used approach to site development" as mandated by the State. Low impact work is a major UAC work effort. Staff anticipates providing the UAC with a complete analysis of staff recommendations in September.

In the interim, progress is continuing. Olympia's Public Works and Community Planning and Development Departments, in concert with SCJ Alliance, a local planning and engineering firm, have completed drafts of 23 issue papers. Each issue paper addresses a specific low impact development technique such as reducing parking, use of permeable pavement, and minimizing site disturbance. The issue papers compare traditional development techniques with the low impact technique, evaluate options, and propose a staff recommendation. The draft issue papers continue to be refined as summary documents are also prepared. Ultimately, recommendations will lead to specific revisions of code language that define standards for new development.

During the May UAC meeting, staff will discuss some draft findings:

- Olympia may be ahead of the game with respect to implementing low impact development techniques. Our streets are narrow, parking is modest, permeable pavement is allowed and encouraged in appropriate settings, and so forth.
- Improvements can be achieved through the upfront site evaluation and engineering of projects. More emphasis on retaining and planting native vegetation, LID site feasibility assessments, stormwater use of landscaping, and minimizing site disturbance can be accomplished within our already relatively dense land use practices.
- Private and public maintenance of low impact-related vegetation associated with landscaping and street-side bioretention will be challenging. We need to understand long-term maintenance expectations and costs.
- Costs of development and City construction oversight will likely increase with low impact development.
- In general, low impact development techniques may bring subtle changes to our developments.

Case study comparisons of specific developments in Olympia using traditional and low impact techniques are being developed to help portray the differences between projects designed according to current development code regulations versus potential LID code revisions.

This summer the technical workgroup will take a look at some of the issue papers and case studies and provide feedback to UAC and staff on the technical aspects and implications of staff recommendations. The issue papers, development case studies and technical workgroup feedback will be ready for UAC review at your September meeting.

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

Financial Impact:

None at this time.