



Land Use & Environment Committee

Low Impact Development Code Amendments

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Title

Low Impact Development Code Amendments

Recommended Action

Committee Recommendation:

Review and forward the Planning Commission recommendation to approve the Low Impact Development (LID) Code Amendments to the City Council for consideration.

City Manager Recommendation:

Review and forward the Planning Commission recommendation to approve the LID Code Amendments to the City Council for consideration.

Report

Issue:

Whether to recommend approval of the proposed minor amendments to the Olympia Municipal Code (OMC) and forward to the full Council for consideration. All amendments proposed intend to clarify or adjust language adopted in 2016 related to making Low Impact Development the common and preferred approach.

Staff Contact / Presenter:

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Background and Analysis:

The original LID code revision project began in February of 2014 as a State mandate and was completed in December of 2016 as a community supported effort to change the paradigm of development and stormwater management towards a more environmentally sensitive approach.

The update included revisions to numerous City codes, standards, and manuals in order to make LID the preferred and commonly used approach to site development. The strategy emphasizes careful site planning and small-scale stormwater management practices that integrate into project designs.

Several years after the LID update, staff have now identified a few areas in need of modification to better achieve the intent of the 2016 update. These proposed amendments are based on daily practical application and intend to refine and clarify specific sections that have been challenging to implement. Proposed modifications are not substantive, rather they refine the code language to

better achieve the principles of LID. The full set of proposed amendments are shown in Attachment 1.

Of the amendments proposed, those relating to hard surface limits have been of particular interest to the Planning Commission and community. Hard surfaces (pervious pavement etc.) are a preferred alternative to standard pavement and as such, the amendments in 2016 intended to incentivize their use. Unfortunately, the 2016 adopted code language was far more restrictive than intended and has resulted in unforeseen impacts on residents intending to install new decks, patios, and pathways as well as on non-residential uses within the residential zones. Amendments proposed to address these issues include:

Relax Hard Surface Limits: Hard surface limits were created through the 2016 LID update to help incentivize and regulate the use new technologies such as porous concrete, pervious pavement etc. While establishing limits was appropriate, the limits established were not evenly applied across the City. Hard surfaces are a preferred approach because they allow water to penetrate through the surface, rather than causing runoff as traditional impervious pavements do. The Residential Low Intensity (RLI) zone has been impacted the most by the hard surface limits created in 2016 because they are identical to the impervious surface limits which in effect prohibits the more environmentally sensitive technology that was intended to be incentivized. The proposed revision would set hard surface limits at approximately 20% higher than impervious surface limits in most zones, that will better help incentivize their use and better implement the intent of the 2016 LID Update.

Schools, Parks, and Places of Worship: Impervious and hard surface limits have been challenging for schools, churches, and parks within the residential zones because these uses often include larger buildings and higher parking demands than standard housing. These non-residential uses are often able to use other methods to meet LID stormwater requirements because of the larger site area and through engineered solutions. Amendments would allow for a 10% increase in impervious surface and 20% increase in hard surface limits for larger non-residential uses on large lots similar to limits in non-residential zones. The proposed criteria ensure the increase is the minimum necessary and that the project adequately addresses stormwater requirements found in other sections of the City's regulations.

The proposed revisions intend to provide better incentives to using pervious materials while maintaining the fundamental purpose of the Low Impact Development codes. The amendments were unanimously recommended by the Planning Commission.

Neighborhood/Community Interests (if known):

Surface coverage limits are of interest to all residential property owners. Neighborhoods within the RLI Zoning District have been most impacted by current limits and have shown interest in these amendments.

Options:

1. Accept the Planning Commission recommendation to approve the LID Code Amendments and forward to the City Council for consideration.
2. Accept the Planning Commission recommendation to approve the LID Code Amendments and forward to the City Council for consideration, along with any additional comments and recommendations.
3. Recommend denial of the draft amendments and return to the Planning Commission with direction for further review.

4. Recommend denial of proposed amendments to the City Council.

Financial Impact:

None.

Attachments:

Draft Ordinance