

LID Community Workgroup Meeting #1

Notes

Thursday, June 25, 2015 – 1-3PM
Thurston Regional Planning Council – 2424 Heritage Ct. SW, Suite A, Olympia, WA
Conference Room A (first floor)

Attending: *Mike Burnham, Veena Tabbutt and Paul Brewster -- TRPC; Pat Allen, Allison Osterberg, – Thurston County. Ron Thomas, Ben Alexander, Alex Smith, Donna Weaver, Angela White, Jeff Pantier, Holly Gadbaw, Steve Swan, Whitney Holm, Tom Holz, Richard Davis,*

Absent: *Art Castle, Mark Kitabayashi, Brian van Camp, Amy Tousley, Ron Deering*

Tabbutt began the meeting with a greeting and review of the meeting agenda. She pointed to informational materials in the project binder given to each workgroup member. She then asked workgroup members to say who they are, what their experience is with LID issues, and the organization they represent.

Osterberg then delivered a 35-minute presentation about the workgroup's role and the broader NPDES municipal stormwater permit – the regulatory driver for Thurston County's LID code review process. TRPC will post the informational handouts and presentation on its project website: www.trpc.org/lid

TRPC and Thurston County project staff then answered workgroup members' general questions about the permit and project. Some workgroup members offered general comments.

Davis asked whether the Ecology Department requires a specific result – specific edits to the Thurston County Code. Osterberg said Ecology does not; rather, the agency requires Thurston County and other permittees to merely review their development codes to consider ways to make LID the “preferred and commonly used approach” to site development, where feasible. It is up to permittees what changes they make to their development codes. That said, Thurston County engineers are involved in a parallel process to update the County's Drainage Design and Erosion Control Manual with technical edits related to LID.

Pantier asked whether this workgroup's focus will be different than the cities' focus. He noted that development practices are very different in urban and rural areas. He is wary that some urban policies will carry over to rural areas. Project staff explained that each jurisdiction has its own code review process. Joint planning agreements dictate how Thurston County should integrate cities' policies into the unincorporated UGAs set to be annexed.

Gadbaw asked whether the workgroup will consider small cities' (e.g., Tenino and Rainier) codes too. The answer is no – the project will consider only unincorporated UGA and rural areas.

Tabbutt then began an exercise with several written questions for workgroup members to consider. They were asked to answer each question on a cue card. After each workgroup member had a chance to answer each question aloud, staff posted the answer on a bulletin board. The questions are as follows:

- **What would you like to get out of this process?**

- **What are your concerns as the County moves forward with this process?**
- **What topics are of interest to you?**

Below are answers workgroup members offered to the questions.

Question 1: What would you like to get out of this process?

The general theme among the responses below is workgroup members' desire for LID codes that are practical (cost-effective, environmentally sound/effective) and possible (understandable, workable with other rules) for the people implementing them (designers, developers, etc.).

- Contribute to effective codes that lead to LID without undue burden on property owners.
- An opportunity to provide input from the perspective of the design community – architecture, urban planning – and development community.
- A better understanding of LID and the impacts these code changes will have on transportation. How will changes in road surfaces and parking lot surfaces and dimensions affect automobile and especially alternative transportation modes? Will street surfaces support transit vehicles? Will narrower road widths apply to existing and potential public transit corridors? Right now there aren't any transit corridors in the rural county, except for along Yelm Highway.
- Regulations that are workable (i.e., no parking stalls that dent doors mandated by code, and no under-sized parking lots)
- Better understanding of the code and why things are the way they are.
- As a final outcome, recommendations for aesthetically pleasing, environmentally sound, and cost-effective methods for implementing LID in rural Thurston County.
- Workable LID requirements.
- Code updates and other policies that maximize low-impact development throughout the county.
- Better understanding of how LID is implemented “on the ground.”
- Better understanding of the voluntary vs. mandatory nature of the requirements that the county will impose.
- Hope to see development regulations that are: predictable/not ambiguous; not cost-prohibitive; appeal to the vast majority of future homeowners.
- Get perspectives from different points of view/knowledge.
- Remove conflicts with current land use codes.
- A wholehearted embracing of LID techniques by the development community.
- Removal of conflicting codes.
- I would like to make sure the code is practical and possible for the people implementing it.
- Better understanding of the key concerns of all the affected stakeholders.
- Potential incentives/tax rate discounts ... A well thought out, people-friendly scenario for encouraging reasonable use and conservation.
- Identifying where other regulations and goals compliment and benefit LID (examples: clustering, landscaping regulations).
- Cities of Tumwater and Lacey have “zero effect” ordinances since 1998. How will these ordinances be used in this process?
- A clearly defined, easily understood process for local folks.
- Regulations for The Evergreen State College that promote continued environmental sensitivity within a suitable zoning scheme.

- I would like to make sure the code does not unintentionally squash innovative ideas.
- Education on the mandated changes (understanding what's required).
- Great teaching tools to aid design community in educating our clients (public and private).
- Want this process to result in recommendations that will actually save habitat for aquatic life (rather than just satisfy Ecology outreach requirements).
- Design and development incentives for integration/implementation of LID principles.
- Want this process to have identical recommendations as SSWAB recommendations in 2014 and 2015.
- Native pollination and wildlife corridors integrated into stormwater management and LID.
- The ability to understand the “science” of storm-water management and its impacts on construction of residential & commercial occupancies (e.g. structural, fire suppression systems, etc.).
- Ensure that fire and life safety concerns are considered in the development of low impact development codes and regulations.
- The potential for inclusion of a wild-land urban interface planning element, specifically the *FIREWISE* program (NFPA, USDA-Forest Service).

Question 2: What are your concerns as the County moves forward with this process?

The responses to this question ranged widely. Some workgroup members are concerned this process will result in code changes that are overly burdensome for the development community and property owners (costly, confusing, complicated). Other workgroup members feared the process is a nominal exercise to satisfy the regulatory mandate, and that resultant code changes will be inadequate to protect water quality and habitat, as well as to affect existing development.

- Allow/encourage LID improvements within the public right-of-way.
- My concerns would be that code changes could create additional layers of regulation and cost, creating a barrier to affordable housing.
- I am concerned that most of the damage to streams occurs inside the UGA, and it is unlikely that the cities will adopt a standard to preserve streams.
- Concerns related to new LID regulations include: Not practicable for most development sites or projects; too expensive to implement; do not consider the desires of home or business owners.
- Codes must provide flexibility, emphasize desired outcomes, not prescriptive measures.
- Will the commissioners listen? Will the commissioners develop a regulatory scheme that is costly, complicated and unclear?
- How can we deal with existing, badly designed and maintained “improvements?”
- Want decisions that will promote a sustainable, transit-friendly community; concern that new roadway dimensions will negatively impact public safety.
- That the requirements could have downsides or negative impacts that haven't been thought of yet, or in the narrow context of stormwater.
- Fear of planning overreach: Minimum/maximum stall dimensions should be left to business, not a central planning source. ... Actually, parking in general should be a business decision, not a planning decision. ... Also fears additional costs.

- What about incentives for inadequate past development? Fears not being able to make all of this workgroup's meetings. What about agriculture, forest, and mining items? Are they covered by different regulations?
- I am concerned that this process is to satisfy Ecology outreach requirements rather than achieve an outcome that will preserve habitat.
- I am concerned that LID is way too little and way too late. Goals of the community don't embrace preservation of the natural world.
- Too big of changes making development slow or too difficult for what it's worth.
- Decisions/changes being made on theory and not have modeling to back it up. ... With the changes, the county engineers and planners won't be on the same page, making permitting tough.
- There may be a high level of resistance and misunderstanding if the education component is weak or inadequate.
- It is essential that the code updates address the concerns of the development community, that they buy in.
- Don't get lost in the details at the outset. Keep focus on the "big ideas."
- Identify barriers (don't ignore them) and figure out how to resolve.
- That the requirements will be unworkable or cost-prohibitive to build or maintain. That it will be hard to define "where feasible."
- Implementation of any low impact development rules, regulations or practices that may impact 1) a structures resistance to fire (both externally & internally) and means to suppress that fire, 2) access for fire protection utilities & apparatus and 3) any "trade-offs" that may exist under the building codes for energy/conservation measures that may affect fire safety integrity.
- The impacts of enforcement and managing of the resulting LID features: will they be a burden on the occupant/owner and will it have a fire safety implication (e.g. long grass, flammability of plantings, facility access, etc.)?

Question 3: What topics are of interest to you?

(With this question, workgroup members walked around the room and placed a green dot next to a specific topic, which was accompanied by a list of anticipated discussion items). Below is a table with the topics and the number of dots placed.

Buildings

Goal is to encourage building LID practices, where appropriate.

Anticipated discussion items

1. What incentives should the County provide (if any) to encourage LID building techniques such as vegetative roofs, minimal excavation foundations, and rainwater collections systems?
2. What sort of outreach materials would be helpful? Any initial ideas?

6 DOTS

Parking

Goal is to reduce impervious surfaces associated with parking.

Anticipated discussion items

1. Review proposed minimum and maximum parking requirements
2. Review updated parking dimensions
3. Review parking landscaping requirements

3 DOTS

Open Space, Landscaping, Clearing

Goal is to increase vegetative cover and reduce clearing / vegetation disturbance.

Anticipated discussion items:

1. Review proposed landscaping and open space changes
2. Should the County encourage / require residential cluster developments?
3. How should LID be integrated with landscaping requirements (in parking lots, for screening, and street frontages)?
4. Discussion of methods of reducing clearing and disturbance
5. To what extent can/should other required amenities, such as recreational open space, be located within stormwater facilities

8 DOTS

Native Vegetation

Goal is to retain native vegetation.

Anticipated discussion items:

1. Possible changes to forest harvest regulations for lands converted out of forest practices
2. Review proposed native vegetation definitions and requirements in code

4 DOTS

Street Standards

Goal is to minimize impervious and allow for LID techniques in rights-of-way.

Anticipated discussion items:

1. Discussion of updated street cross sections
2. Discussion of landscape area in right-of-way

7 DOTS

Impervious Surfaces

Goal is to minimize impervious surfaces.

Anticipated discussion items:

1. Discussion of updates to impervious surface limits by zoning district and/or basin
2. Discussion of when/where pervious pavement, porous concrete, or pavers may be allowed and/or encouraged.

5 DOTS

Maintenance

Goal is to ensure new LID facilities are maintained so they function as designed.

Anticipated discussion items:

1. Discussion about challenges, solutions, and costs for long-term maintenance of dispersed stormwater facilities
2. Ideas to inform homeowners and homeowner associations about maintenance of LID facilities.

2 DOTS

Incentives

Goal is to provide incentives (such as credit in stormwater manual) to encourage LID practices where appropriate.

Anticipated discussion items:

1. Discussion of the effectiveness of different potential incentives (stormwater fee credit, expedited permitting, flexible designs)
2. Help the County develop a list of LID practices to incentivize.

9 DOTS

Site Review

Goal is to ensure site is planned in a way that soils with good infiltration potential are used for stormwater management.

Anticipated discussion items:

1. Review modifications to code to encourage LID to be integrated into the site plan.
2. Discussion of best practices for incorporating LID into initial planning

2 DOTS

Other

Other issues you'd like to see discussed at stakeholder meetings.

1 DOT:

- Street standards: will they allow for large fire apparatus & EMS vehicles?
- Open space, landscape, clearing: fire potential during and after disturbance, will changes be consistent with natural and wild-land fire protection principles?
- Enforcement: How, who, cost, training, etc.

The dot exercise will help project staff prioritize which topics this workgroup will focus on in upcoming meetings. In some cases, topics may be combined (e.g., the issues of incentives and maintenance apply to several other topics).

Project staff will schedule the workgroup's next meeting in August. Workgroup members generally agreed that meeting the last week of the month during the daytime is preferable. Burnham agreed to send out a Doodle poll and schedule the meeting. Tentative agenda topics ready for the workgroup's consideration are Buildings and Parking, as these are topics that the County LID Workgroup has already discussed at length.

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