

## Community LID Workgroup Issue Paper #2

**Topic:** Parking

**Discussion Item:** Minimum and maximum parking requirements and stall dimensions

**Background/Problem:** In most communities, surface parking is second only to streets in the total amount of impervious area they create. Low-impact development parking strategies include adjusting minimum/maximum parking ratios, using pervious pavements, supporting shared parking facilities, decreasing parking stall and aisle dimensions, and increasing parking lot landscaping requirements.

Chapter 20.44 of the Thurston County Code (TCC) focuses expressly on parking and loading provisions for unincorporated parts of the county; similar provisions for the urban growth areas of Lacey, Tumwater and Olympia are within Titles 21, 22 and 23, respectively. In general, the TCC encourages an excess of parking, and standard parking stall sizes are larger than necessary. Reducing these requirements would minimize new impervious surfaces, as would creating incentives for alternative parking arrangements (shared parking, above or underground structures). Additional landscaping requirements would help treat stormwater runoff from parking areas.

**Analysis:** The County LID Workgroup reviewed several documents — including Thurston County’s 2011 LID Barriers Analysis, the Puget Sound Partnership’s LID Guidebook for Local Governments, and the Department of Ecology’s LID Code Update and Integration Toolkit — and considered the following changes to the Thurston County Code:

- Specify maximum parking requirements in addition to minimum requirements.
- Allow credit for on-street parking and shared parking
- Reduce standard stall dimensions
- Encourage angle parking, which takes less room for the same number of parking spaces
- Encourage use of pervious surfaces for overflow parking
- Add bicycle, alternative commute provisions

### *Minimum/Maximum Parking Requirements*

The amount of parking area around a development is generally tied to its use. For example, under Thurston County’s code, a new single-family home is required to have two parking spaces; a new elementary school is required to have one space for every classroom and office; a new retail store is required to provide one space for every 200 square feet of floor area. For rural areas of the county, there are no maximum parking requirements – only minimums. A simple change would make the minimum requirements equal to the maximum requirements, similar to current codes for Tumwater and Olympia. Lacey specifies different minimum and maximum parking requirements, and recently made its minimum requirements optional so that the minimum standards serve only as guidance. We also

compared our minimum/maximum parking requirements to a national standard, and found that for some categories, we required more parking than recommended.

In the current code, there are few opportunities to reduce parking below the minimum. TCC 20.44 does allow a reduction for joint parking facilities, when operating hours of two uses do not conflict. Tumwater’s new parking code allows a 10% modification (increase or decrease) in requirements automatically. Parking can be decreased 20-40% if the applicant shows that the site is within a quarter-mile walk to transit service (verified by Intercity Transit). Pierce County’s code includes provisions that allow the approval authority to approve less than the minimum parking under certain conditions.

The County LID Workgroup considered adding a similar provision to the TCC for the following situations:

- The applicant is able to demonstrate that fewer spaces are needed based on a parking demand study prepared by the applicant or consultant; or
- When on-street parking is available and approved; or
- For multi-family housing, public and semipublic facilities (including schools and hospitals), offices, retail, or commercial uses where alternative transportation options such as transit are located within a quarter-mile walk to the development, or will be within 6 months; or
- For joint facilities when operating hours do overlap, up to 50% reduction (an expansion of the current joint parking provision).

The County LID Workgroup also considered allowing requests to increase parking above the minimum if:

- Parking is contained in an aboveground or underground structure, and does not increase total impervious surfaces on the lot; or
- The applicant is able to demonstrate that more spaces are needed based on a parking demand study prepared by the applicant or consultant; and
- Parking spaces above the minimum are constructed of pervious materials, in accordance with the Drainage Manual.

*Parking Stall Dimensions*

Thurston County’s standard parking stall size is larger than most other jurisdictions, although its “compact” size is smaller:

**Current Parking Stall sizes (for 90° space)**

	<b>Stall</b>	<b>Aisle Width</b>	<b>Notes</b>
<b>TC Standard</b>	9 x 20 ft	22 ft	
<b>TC “Compact”</b>	7.5 x 15 ft	22 ft	Up to 25%
<b>TC Parallel</b>	8 x 20 ft		

	<b>Stall</b>	<b>Aisle Width</b>	<b>Notes</b>
<b>Olympia UGA</b>	9 x 17.5 ft	21 ft	
<b>Olympia UGA "Compact"</b>	8 x 15ft	21 ft	<b>Up to 30%</b>
<b>Lacey UGA Standard</b>	9 x 19 ft	26 ft	
<b>Lacey UGA "Compact"</b>	8.25 x 16.5 ft	26 ft	
<b>Tumwater UGA</b>	9 x 17ft 11in	22ft 6in	
<b>Tumwater (new)</b>	9 x 18ft	22ft 6in	
<b>Other Jurisdictions</b>			
<b>Portland</b>	8.5 x 16 ft	20 ft	
<b>Pierce County Standard</b>	9 x 18 ft	24 ft	
<b>Kitsap County Standard</b>	9 x 20 ft	none	

The County LID Workgroup considered whether to change the standard size to match Olympia and Tumwater’s standard, and instead of “compact,” allow for a certain percentage of spaces to be “oversized” for use by vans and trucks. The aisle widths listed in TC 20.44 are generally a foot or so larger than requirements for Olympia and Tumwater.

*Pervious Materials for Parking*

Currently, TCC 20.44 allows parking areas to be surfaced with lattice block pavement, asphalt concrete, or Portland concrete, or gravel (outside of UGAs only). Parking areas that see light use can be on grass, with approval. Thus, the County LID Workgroup considered whether there are additional pervious materials referenced in the Drainage Manual that should be allowed, and under what conditions they could be used. For example, Tumwater includes a provision that parking used less than 15 days annually may use gravel, or other prepared surface. Olympia and Tumwater allow turfblock as an acceptable hard surface and include provisions that a portion (up to 50%) of interior landscaping requirements may be met by using Grasscrete, turfblock or other approved pervious surface, if proven to be maintained.

**Recommendations:**

- Establish maximum parking ratios.
  - *(Currently there are only minimum ratios for rural parts of the county.)*
- Reduce standard parking stall size to 9x18 feet from 9x20 feet.
  - *(This would change stall the dimension -- currently the largest in the county – to be more commensurate with stall dimensions in Olympia, Lacey and Tumwater.)*
- Keep compact stall size at 7.5x15 feet; give developers the option to have 35% compact stalls.
  - *(Currently, up to 25% of stalls may be compact in county lots and 30% in Olympia lots.)*
- Allow the potential to designate 10% of stalls as “oversize” at 9x20 feet.
  - *(This provides parking for vans and trucks.)*
- Change aisle width to 20 feet from 22 feet.
  - *(Currently, the county’s aisle widths are a foot or so larger than requirements for Olympia and Tumwater.)*
- Allow parking spaces that are used infrequently to be constructed of pervious surfacing unless site and soil conditions make pervious surfacing infeasible.
- Require that all commercial, industrial, institutional, and recreational uses that require 25 or more parking spaces provide a minimum of five bicycle parking spaces.

**Community LID Workgroup Discussion:** Key questions for the Community LID Workgroup:

- What do you think of the recommended stall dimensions and maximum parking standards?
- What incentives could the County offer, if any, to encourage use of pervious parking surfaces?

**Feedback from Thurston County Fire Chiefs**

On Oct. 28, 2015, project staff presented the draft parking recommendations to the Thurston County Fire Chiefs Association.

Fire chiefs noted that there are generally bigger vehicles in rural parts of the County. Thus, project staff might want to consider recommending larger stalls and aisles in such areas compared with UGAs and close-in areas. Setting the stall length at 20 feet might be too short, some chiefs contended.

Fire chiefs were supportive of the recommendation to not reduce the current stall width. There was concern, however, about the proposed reduction of the aisle width between stalls.

Chief Brooks said trucks longer than 20 feet would presumably jut out into the aisle. This could inhibit aisle access for emergency vehicles if there several large trucks parked in a lot.