

# Thurston County Stormwater Solutions

## LID Fact Sheet: Landscaping

### **Issue**

Retaining and replacing a development site's trees, shrubs and ground cover helps the soil soak up rainwater and filter pollutants — ultimately reducing polluted runoff into our lakes, streams and Puget Sound. A low-impact development (LID) approach to landscaping does not necessarily result in more vegetation than conventional landscaping requirements; rather, it emphasizes retention of native and drought-tolerant vegetation and soils as a means to manage stormwater effectively during both construction and occupancy.

### **Why are changes needed?**

The Thurston County Code (TCC) includes minimum landscaping requirements and standards to promote safety, provide privacy screening between incompatible land uses, and protect the aesthetic assets of the community. The current standards do not allow for landscaped areas to be large enough or oriented to serve stormwater facilities. The standards also are lacking where landscaping could be used to treat runoff from parking lots and other large impervious surfaces.

### **What changes are proposed to current regulations?**

The recommended Thurston County Code changes focus on ensuring that appropriate and adequate vegetation is planted and maintained within landscaping areas. The draft code includes additional guidance on developing landscaping plans and adds a provision to require 10% internal landscaping in parking areas that are larger than 5,000 square feet.

### **How would the code support the use of native vegetation in landscaping areas?**

A proposed code change would add language to the TCC's "Purpose" section emphasizing the goal of retaining native vegetation and providing stormwater flow control and treatment. The code would also add emphasis on retention of existing vegetation, and specify sources for appropriate plants.

### **When would landscaping plans be required?**

A proposed code change would add more detail on what to include in a landscaping plan, when required. For larger subdivisions (greater than 4 lots), such plans must be prepared by a professional landscape architect, horticulturalist, or other landscape professional. The plan must include detail on the location, size, and species of plant, as well as a description of how the landscaping will be prepared, installed, and maintained to ensure the long-term survival of plants.

### **How would the code ensure landscaping areas are maintained?**

A proposed code change would add provisions for maintenance of landscaped areas, including the requirement for an assurance or bond to be held for one year from planting to ensure planted areas are maintained.

**How would the code ensure there’s enough room in landscaping areas for LID?**

A proposed code change would increase the minimum required landscape buffer around commercial uses from 5 feet to 8 feet to allow sufficient room for use as a stormwater facility.

**How would the code changes support LID within parking lot landscaping?**

A proposed code change would add a new section dealing with landscaping within parking areas. The section would apply to parking lots larger than 5,000 sq. ft. or that add 10 or more spaces to an existing lot. It would require that 10% of the parking area be landscaped and used for stormwater, where feasible. Interior islands used for landscaping must be a minimum of 8 feet in diameter – more if using trees to allow sufficient space for growth. This width requirement could be bypassed if the design allows for sufficient stormwater infiltration.

**When could the amount of required landscaping be reduced?**

The amount of required landscaping may be reduced by 20% if a site design emphasizes retention of native vegetation or continuity between other landscaped or open space areas. The amount could be reduced by 50% if the parking area is surfaced with a minimum 5% pervious surfaces.

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