

LID Community Workgroup Meeting #7

Notes

Thursday, March 29, 2016 – 10AM-Noon
Thurston Regional Planning Council – 2424 Heritage Ct. SW, Suite A, Olympia, WA
Conference Room A (first floor)

Attending: *Veena Tabbutt -- TRPC; Allison Osterberg – Thurston County. Art Castle, Whitney Holm, Mark Kitabayashi, Tris Carlson, Ben Alexander, Rich Davis, Ron Thomas, Joshua Deal, Holly Gadbow*

Tabbutt began the meeting with a greeting and review of the agenda. She asked members to introduce themselves.

Wrap Up

Osterberg began a wrap up of the project for the stakeholder group. She reminded them of the goals of the project:

- Better understanding of codes and how LID is implemented
- Provide input on design that allow for innovation
- Regulations that are workable/practical
- Regulations that are ecologically protective

She reviewed how their input was incorporated into the draft recommendations that were being reviewed by the planning commission, asking the group to identify anything the project team may have missed, or what else the group would like to see incorporated. The review included:

Parking Standards

- Allow 10% discretion in required number of stalls, rather than exact number

Bulk Standards

- Make standard side setbacks 5 feet – (reducing roof overhang allowance)

Clearing & Grading

- Clear list of regular and maintenance activities that are exempt (i.e., removing invasives)

Landscaping

- Increase pervious pavement incentive threshold to 10%
- Add minimum spacing information for trees and shrubs
- Allow for variations from minimum width of landscape islands (8 ft) if designed appropriately
- Clarify what counts as “existing vegetation”

Native Vegetation Protection:

- Focus on canopy preservation, rather than # of trees
- When replanting is required, also require understory planting

Incentives:

- Look into substantially increasing stormwater fee credit for LID above and beyond requirements
- Design “credits” have been incorporated into impervious surface and landscaping requirements to allow for flexibility
- Better credits for clustered development
- Look into tax incentives for tree preservation

Education Needs

- Educate public/customers about LID requirements, performance, aesthetics
- Information on maintenance needs & costs, support for property owners who own long-term

Workgroup members gave Osterberg their input on how to do outreach to interested parties as the new requirements are rolled out.

Castle mentioned that the County should let people know about Ecology's technical training opportunities, as it will be important for contractors and landscapers to understand how to implement the new LID techniques.

Davis mentioned that the County should consider convening a volunteer group to help rural homebuilders understand their options on siting homes and landscaping.

Castle responded by mentioning the dilemma is that giving advice to people that don't ask for it can be problematic – and that encouraging people to seek guidance, rather than telling them what to do, could be a more effective strategy.

Thomas asked if there was an outreach budget to reach out to organizations. He suggested reaching people through professional organizations such as American Institute of Architects (AIA) or the Olympia Master Builders to reach site contractors – the people with their feet on the ground. However he mentioned that it was hard to reach contractors and landscapers because they often don't go to organizational meetings.

Carlson mentioned that perhaps the Conservation District could serve a role to reach people as they are not regulators.

Castle suspected that most of the homes being built in the rural county were custom homes, so there could also be a need to reach out to the customers. He also explained that the Mason Conservation District was involved in a project to help people install LID features.

Osterberg mentioned that Lacey, Olympia, and Tumwater have stormwater stewards programs, and people will come in and do a plan for you if you need help.

Alexander mentioned that the WSU extension also provides technical assistance. He echoed what Thomas had said about contractors and landscapers being important, but hard to reach.

Kitabayashi mentioned that reaching contractors was key when trying to influence the custom home market, and that consumers also needed to be educated. He mentioned that there was a need to talk about the incentives and benefits of LID up front to put the positive aspects out in front of the consumer – things like saving money, conservation, and why it was good for you.

Davis mentioned that if contractors understand about the ecological/conservation benefits of LID they will work with their customers. Customers are likely to be unfamiliar with all of those aspects and need help understanding.

Gadbaw asked if there was a network of neighborhood associations in the County.

Kitabayashi explained that there were some homeowners' associations, but they were smaller, less likely to be functional and therefore less easy to reach than the larger ones in the cities. He mentioned that realtors will be marketing LID to put a positive spin on it, because they promote the positive aspects of any home they are trying to sell.

Osterberg mentioned that they could provide some education to realtors about why LID is there, and why it's an asset.

Gadbaw mentioned that if the County were able to reach out to homeowner's associations, they would reach existing home owners and be able to encourage fixing existing problems. She pointed out that the new regulations will only help offset stormwater issues from new construction, but won't help address existing issues.

Castle mentioned that the WSU extension reaches out to existing home owners.

Alexander pointed out that there are three main points of contact:

- Real Estate Community
- Permit Center
- Contractors

He mentioned that the permit center would be a good opportunity to provide material on the benefits of LID, and not just the regulations. He used the "Catching Rain" material as an example of material that is ready to go.

Holm mentioned that she's going through a remodel, and a one- to two- page information sheet outlining the pros would have been a great thing to have available – rather than all the negatives that go along with following regulations.

Castle mentioned that the new rules will be more prescriptive, and will need a higher level of technical understanding.

Kitabayashi mentioned that the initial point of contact is the permit center, and agreed that positive material there is important.

Castle mentioned that new construction should have zero impact if people follow the new rules, so it will be important to address existing issues and work with existing home owners to put in LID features.

Gadbaw mentioned that it would be helpful to provide examples for people.

Alexander mentioned that rural examples are difficult to find, and often inaccessible.

Castle mentioned a website or paper map showing examples would be helpful.

Osterberg mentioned the project website had a map with LID locations throughout the county.

Davis mentioned that LID should add value to homes, and that should be pointed out to consumers.

Kitabayashi pointed out that the value of landscaping and LID varies from person to person, and that the “Build Green” is an example where the investments don’t necessarily add comparable value to a home. People are doing it because they want to, not necessarily for value.

Davis asked that if there are two equivalent properties – one with landscaping and the other without – which would be more desirable?

Kitabayashi replied that it’s not that easy to characterize or generalize what people want. Some people, for example, may not want a home with trees too close. It all depends on what you want as an individual.

Thomas mentioned that the key is education of realtors to convey the positive effects of LID – if they are educated, they can talk about the benefits. It has taken a long time for energy efficiency to become a main stream topic, but now it is.

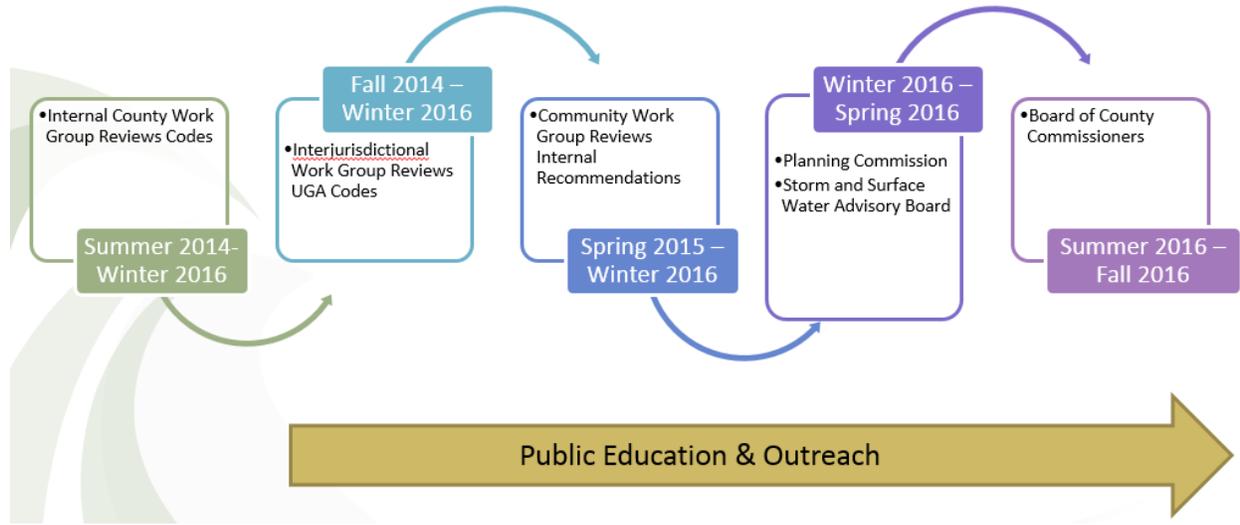
Kitabayashi thought that realtors were generally educated, but the public wasn’t there yet.

Thomas pointed out that most people in Thurston County really care about our community and quality of life, and this is all part of that.

Alexander mentioned that education is never finished – it’s a continuous effort, so it makes it tricky. There needs to be an on-going infrastructure for education.

Kitabayashi mentioned that realtors need continuing education requirements, and he is one of the instructors, and would be happy to create a class on the topic.

Following the discussion, Osterberg continued on with her presentation, showing the group the timeline for the remainder of the project and pointing out areas for public input.



Public comment opportunities:

- Planning Commission Work Sessions: Ongoing
 - April 6
 - April 20
 - May 4
 - May 18
- Planning Commission Public Hearing: June 15 (most likely)
 - Open House prior to hearing
- Second Open House: August
- BoCC Public Hearing: August/September
- Effective Date: **December 2016**

She concluded with asking the group if they had any further ideas on outreach, and mentioned they were thinking of filming a TCTV spot.

Gadbaw mentioned reaching the press, and perhaps the editorial board.

Final comments.

Davis mentioned that he really enjoyed the process and the amount of learning, and that next time he'd be open to having homework assigned, as there was a lot of material to learn.

Thomas also thanked staff for the process and diversity of the group.

Gadbaw commended the county for working with Lacey, Olympia, and Tumwater to implement their zoning codes in the UGA, and was glad to hear the intent of the joint planning agreements were still in effect.

Tabbutt mentioned that Tumwater's code will not be coming to the group.

The meeting concluded with Osterberg and Tabbutt thanking the group for their contribution to the process.

###