

LID Community Workgroup Meeting #4

Notes

Thursday, Oct. 29, 2015 – 10AM-Noon
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; Allison Osterberg – Thurston County. Ron Thomas, Alex Smith, Donna Weaver, Steve Swan, Whitney Holm, Richard Davis, Art Castle, Mark Kitabayashi, Tom Holtz, Holly Gadbaw, Ben Alexander*

Brewster began with a greeting and review of the meeting agenda. He then asked workgroup members to introduce themselves.

Burnham ensured workgroup members had collected handouts for their binders. Among the handouts were: Issue Paper 3: Clearing, Grading & Healthy Soils; Issue Paper 4: Landscaping (and illustration); and Issue Paper 5: Open Space.

Brewster recapped the workgroup's first three meetings and asked for feedback about the site tour.

Kitabayashi said he would like to see maintenance costs – associated with the Deyoe Vista projects – in a few years, whether costs have increased. This is a big issue for homeowners that's worth watching, especially if they must maintain new LID facilities going forward.

Thomas said Deyoe was a great example because it showed the maximum amount of development one could get on a site by working in LID elements. The site felt spacious and included retained vegetation.

Alexander, who installs and maintains LID projects in Portland, pointed out that, in addition to maintenance, there are institutional and organizational challenges associated with LID. However, even if a site is not weed-free, he said, it can still function well in terms of infiltrating stormwater.

Holtz said LID is a far better alternative to conventional stormwater ponds, as maintaining such ponds (e.g., keeping drains free of clogging debris) is often impractical.

Osterberg introduced Issue Paper 3, related to clearing, grading and healthy soils. Conventional clearing and grading makes soils compact and inhibits infiltration. She discussed the Ecology

Toolkit questions, current Thurston County Code requirements and the County LID Workgroup's draft recommendations. She repeated the process for the other two topics on the agenda.

Alexander suggested changing the code's reference to timber "board feet" to area, for consistency's sake. Osterberg explained that the board feet relates to the state's forest practices permit—not the land-disturbing permit recommended by the County workgroup. Such a permit would cover clearing and grading, rather than just clearing (current permit).

Weaver said she is concerned that such a permit would cause "unnecessary complications" for homeowners. It would be "overly intrusive," she contended, if it prohibited rural landowners from removing Scotch Broom or other invasives on their land. She suggested clarifying the proposed permit language to state what activities it would and would not affect. Osterberg noted that the permit would affect new project construction and not maintenance of land when it relates to removing invasives.

Holtz suggested that staff recommend adding language that requires signage denoting areas protected from plant removal, compaction. Alexander countered that the permit should be clarified to state what land can be disturbed (rather than what cannot be disturbed).

Weaver called for more incentives (e.g., faster permit review) to accompany any new permit requirements. Glander and Kitabayashi said a good incentive would be allowing increased density for "doing the right thing."

Holtz questioned the need for such incentives. If the code is going to require more LID, then it needn't be incentivized. After all, it will be required, he said. Osterberg noted that the County could still provide some incentives to help developers meet the Ecology LID standards.

Next, the workgroup discussed Issue Paper 4: Landscaping.

Osterberg gave a brief PowerPoint presentation and referenced the issue paper and an accompanying illustration that showed the current code requirements alongside the proposed recommendations.

Alexander, Thomas and Glander said the 5 percent pervious pavement threshold seems too low.

Glander added that the code should stipulate minimum plant spacing for trees and shrubs in parking landscaping areas.

Weaver said she does not want sites' buffers to impede one's ability to drive between commercial sites.

Alexander said requiring an 8-foot buffer (up from 5 feet) seems too large. One could infiltrate stormwater on a buffer narrower than 8 feet, he contended.

Davis said the requirements need enough flexibility to allow for good landscaping design. Thomas echoed that sentiment, adding that the code should allow selectivity about what trees are saved during construction.

Holm underscored that not every landscaping island could support infiltration. This is largely dependent upon a site's soil and topography. Thus, the code should allow flexibility about the size of parking lot landscape island size and location so as to maximize stormwater infiltration. Design would essentially be driven by a site's ability to infiltrate stormwater.

Alexander suggested strong, clear language that defines what code means by "existing vegetation." This is a topic the workgroup will address at its January meeting.

Osterberg gave a final presentation about the Open Space recommendations and referenced Issue Paper 5.

Glander said he would like the code to have an active recreation requirement for large-lot subdivisions outside of the Grand Mound area. Perhaps the size of the development could trigger the requirement for active recreation.

Kitabayashi agreed with this idea. He's generally wary of decreasing density because it will drive up housing prices.

Thomas supported limiting stormwater facilities to 25 percent of the designated open space areas. The open space requirements provide benefits to housing occupants and other end users rather than to just developers.

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