

BEST PRACTICES



Low Impact Development Code Updates

Taking Place Throughout the Region

When rain falls on undeveloped land, most of the water percolates into the ground to recharge groundwater aquifers or is used up by plants in the area. When rain falls on developed land with hard surfaces such as driveways, parking lots and roofs, much of the water puddles up or runs off to lower points becoming stormwater runoff. Less than 1% of rain that falls on undeveloped land becomes stormwater runoff, but 20-30% of rain that falls on developed land ends up as stormwater runoff.

Stormwater runoff not only causes urban flooding, it is also the largest source of pollution entering Puget Sound. Lacey, Olympia, Tumwater and Thurston County are updating their development codes and stormwater manuals to include mandatory Low Impact Development (LID) approaches for new development. LID allows rain water to infiltrate on the property and prevents stormwater runoff from developing, therefore significantly reducing pollution entering our stormwater system and ultimately, Puget Sound.

Why are we doing the LID code updates?

Washington State Municipal Stormwater Permits, administered by the Department of Ecology, govern how cities and counties manage stormwater runoff. There are three separate permits covering different parts of the state. Lacey, Olympia, Tumwater and Thurston County fall under the Phase II Permit for Western Washington. All Washington cities and counties that have a Municipal Stormwater Permit have a legal obligation to prevent pollution from rainwater that washes over roofs, driveways and developed areas. The Phase II Permit requires cities and counties, including Lacey, Olympia, Tumwater and Thurston County, to enact codes incorporating LID measures by the end of 2016.

LID techniques imitate the natural processes that help rainfall absorb into the ground, instead of running into pipes and large holding ponds that drain to streams and water bodies. LID measures, such as rain gardens, bioretention facilities and permeable pavements, treat and retain stormwater at the source.

How does LID affect new business or new construction in our area? How does LID affect homeowners?

In Lacey, Olympia, Tumwater and Thurston County most new developments that create 2,000 square feet of hard surface area or disturb more than 7,000 square feet of land will have some LID requirements. Projects will have two options for complying with LID requirements: choose from a prioritized list of LID Best Management Practices (BMPs), or meet the "Low Impact Development Performance Standard". Additional standards, such as limits on hard surfaces or landscaping, might apply.



Source: Stream Team News, Fall 2016

