



The Town of Leesburg
Department of Planning and Zoning

To: Town Council

From: Susan Berry Hill, Director
Irish Grandfield, Senior Planner
Department of Planning and Zoning

Date: June 10, 2013

Subject: Watershed Committee LID Report- Staff Analysis

BACKGROUND

On May 14, 2013 the Leesburg Watershed Committee presented to Town Council six specific recommendations for implementing Low Impact Development (LID) in Leesburg. In preparation for Town Council consideration at their June 10 work session, staff provides the following analysis as follow-up on the Watershed Committee recommendations.

ANALYSIS

Watershed Committee Recommendation 1: *“Develop guidance to initiate, and when applicable implement, LID site development strategies and practices at the earliest stages of land development planning.”*

Staff Analysis: This suggestion is necessary because effective LID practices work best when incorporated into land development plan concurrently with initial conceptual site design. Implementing this recommendation should largely be limited to administrative process changes for Town land development applications although there might be a need for a few minor changes to the minimum submission requirements for land development applications.

Suggested Action: Direct the Planning Commission to work with the Watershed Committee and Town staff to identify necessary administrative process changes as well as ordinance amendments.

Watershed Committee Recommendation 2: *“Re-evaluate Town’s minimum parking standards and define maximum parking standards.”*

Staff Analysis: Reducing the amount of asphalt parking when offset by an increase in pervious space and stormwater reuse results in less runoff. Additionally, developing fewer parking spaces provides increased opportunities

for allowing the runoff to be retained onsite. The parking standards in the Town of Leesburg Zoning Ordinance were updated several years ago to include shared use/time of day standards the effect of which was to reduce parking areas and impervious surfaces for mixed use projects. Further revisions to the Zoning Ordinance to require parking maximums, as opposed to minimums, may further the objective of reducing impervious area. Staff has compared the Town's parking standards to a few other local jurisdictions and notes that the Town's standards are generally comparable to other jurisdictions but that further changes could be done to address environmental objectives. Establishing maximum parking standards could be an effective tool in reducing stormwater runoff if tied to a performance standard of increasing the pervious area onsite.

Suggested Action: Initiate a Zoning Ordinance Amendment to adjust minimum parking standards and create maximum parking standards to reduce impervious surface on developed sites. An initiation resolution is attached for Council consideration.

Watershed Committee Recommendation 3: *“Provide landscape and open space credits for green roofs.”*

Staff Analysis: The Watershed Committee's recommendation is focused on how the Town can provide incentives for developers to choose LID options such as green roofs. The issue of whether green roofs could be credited toward either open space or landscape requirements is not clear in the Ordinance and has not yet been the subject of a Zoning Administrator interpretation. Staff acknowledges the merit of considering whether open space and landscaping credit could be effective incentives for encouraging green roofs.

Suggested Action: Staff has provided an attached Zoning Ordinance Amendment resolution for consideration by Town Council should they wish to pursue this action.

Watershed Committee Recommendation 4: *“Examine opportunities to encourage structured parking within the Town.”*

Staff Analysis: Subject to properly developed performance standards, structured parking is a tool that can facilitate Low Impact Development. The Watershed Committee suggested that parking structures be allowed by-right as an incentive for developers to build parking in a manner that conserves more land and is mindful of environmental objectives. Several years ago, aisle and parking space standards in the Zoning Ordinance were revised for parking structures in an effort to reduce the minimum requirements. Additionally, the Town adopted the Crescent Design District to allow parking structures by-right solely in the Crescent Design District. However, in other commercial zoning districts, parking

structures are permissible only by obtaining a special exception. Because the Town uses the parking garage special exception process to accomplish multiple objectives some of which are unrelated directly to the environmental objectives (such as site layout and building design), any ordinance revision must be careful to not only encourage structured parking but also to ensure Town Council has a say in the other, non-environmental considerations. Compared to the other recommendations from the Watershed Committee, staff anticipates a zoning ordinance amendment to accomplish this goal would be a more complex task that could consume Town staff resources but ultimately produce limited results for protecting streams. Staff believes this recommendation needs further discussion before Council considers initiation of a Zoning Ordinance amendment.

Suggested Action: Staff recommends Council direct the Planning Commission to work with the Watershed Committee and Town staff to better define the scope of actions needed to address this recommendation and then evaluate whether this item should be a priority considering limited Town resources.

Watershed Committee Recommendation 5: *“Develop innovative parking lot layouts and designs to maximize use of vegetation as part of stormwater management, and/or landscape requirements.”*

Staff Analysis: Interior parking lot islands offer opportunities for LID stormwater infiltration practices. The Town of Leesburg Zoning Ordinance standards should be evaluated to advance the objective of creating interior parking lot islands that are sized appropriately for LID practices.

Suggested Action: Staff has provided an attached Zoning Ordinance Amendment resolution for consideration by Town Council should they wish to pursue this action.

Watershed Committee Recommendation 6: *“Define minimum parking requirements for alternative transportation (e.g. bicycles) and electric vehicles.”*

Staff Analysis: Staff is not able to determine the demand for additional electric car parking and bicycling facilities at this time. Simply requiring a minimum number of parking spots for electric cars (or charging stations) may not have the desired impact if a demand for such services is lacking.

Suggested Action: Staff recommends Council direct the Planning Commission to work with the Watershed Committee and Town staff to evaluate whether this item should be a priority considering limited Town resources and to better define the scope of any action.

SUMMARY STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Direct the Planning Commission to work with the Watershed Committee and Town staff on the following:
 - a. Identifying necessary administrative process changes as well as possible ordinance amendments to implement LID site development strategies and practices at the earliest stages of land development planning.
 - b. Evaluate whether completing a Zoning Ordinance Amendment to allow structured parking by-right merits prioritization considering the level of effort compared to the likely results of such an amendment, and the role of the special exception process in achieving other Town objectives.
 - c. Evaluate whether electric car parking and enhanced bicycle facility efforts should be pursued now considering limited Town resources and other priorities.

2. Initiate Zoning Ordinance Amendments to accomplish the following:
 - a. Revise parking standards considering parking maximums as well as minimums in light of Low Impact Development objectives.
 - b. Consider what incentives can be added to the Zoning Ordinance such as providing open space or landscape credits to facilitate use of green roofs.
 - c. Provide alternative parking lot landscaping standards to maximize use of vegetated areas for stormwater management.

PRESENTED: June 11, 2013

RESOLUTION NO. _____

ADOPTED: _____

A RESOLUTION: ACCEPTING THE LOW IMPACT DEVELOPMENT (LID) RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE LEESBURG WATERSHED COMMITTEE AND ADOPTING A STRATEGY FOR PROMOTING LID IN LEESBURG.

WHEREAS, Town Council established the Leesburg Watershed Committee to coordinate efforts for protecting Town streams; and

WHEREAS, the Town Council adopted the recommendations of the Leesburg Watershed Committee in December of 2007 to address watershed improvement recommendations contained within the report entitled “Summary of Findings from Tuscarora Creek Field Work and Baseline Assessments.”; and

WHEREAS, watershed planning can help implement the natural resources policies of the Town Plan, the Urban Forestry Management Plan, the Parks and Recreation Plan, the Town’s Virginia Discharge Elimination System permit for stormwater, and state and federal stormwater management requirements; and

WHEREAS, Low Impact Development can help the Town achieve natural resource and stormwater management objectives and regulations, and further work is needed to restore degraded stream conditions;

WHEREAS, Town Council Resolution 2011-147 directed the Leesburg Watershed Committee to work with Town staff and interested stakeholders to compile recommendations to update Town regulations to promote use of LID to the maximum extent practicable; and

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WHEREAS, The Watershed Committee has completed its analysis and made recommendations to Council on May 14, 2013; and

WHEREAS, The Watershed Committee was established as an ad-hoc Committee of the Environmental Advisory Commission in 2006 to report to Town Council initially on the Tuscarora Creek study and then subsequently to help implement those recommendations including planting streamside buffers and developing LID recommendations to reduce runoff that erodes Town streams; and

THEREFORE RESOLVED by the Council of the Town of Leesburg in Virginia as follows:

SECTION I. The Town Council hereby acknowledges the Low Impact Development recommendations from the Leesburg Watershed Committee and expresses its appreciation to the Committee for its voluntary service over the past several years.

SECTION II. Amendments to applicable sections within Articles 11 and 12 of the Zoning Ordinance are hereby initiated to address the Watershed Committee recommendations 2, 3, and 5, as noted in the memos from staff dated June 10, 2013 and the Watershed Committee dated the May 14, 2013, pertaining to maximum parking requirements and landscaping requirements and credits for surface and structured parking facilities.

SECTION III. The Planning Commission shall hold a public hearing to consider these amendments and report its recommendation to the Town Council pursuant to Chapter 22, Title 15.2-2204 of the 1950 Code of Virginia, as amended.

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SECTION IV. The Planning Commission, Watershed Committee and staff shall further discuss the Watershed Committee's recommendations 1,4, and 6 as noted in the May 14, 2013 memo from the Watershed Committee and make recommendations on whether they should be implemented and if so, how. Such recommendations shall be made to the Town Council by June 10, 2014.

PASSED this 11th day of June, 2013.

Kristen C. Umstattd, Mayor
Town of Leesburg

ATTEST:

Clerk of Council