

Cost and planning considerations



Sweeping changes in stormwater regulations - specifically, new requirements for Low Impact Development (LID) - have city and county officials throughout Washington asking themselves the same question: "What is this going to cost us?" Given the budget realities that local governments currently face, this question is both timely and fair. Knowing what to expect in terms of costs will help cities and counties prepare for these changes.

This fact sheet - and other resources - will help answer this and other questions your jurisdiction may have. Note that regulations vary geographically from Western Washington (WWA) and Eastern Washington (EWA) to factor in regional differences.

Western Washington

Q. How much will it cost my jurisdiction to comply with new stormwater/ LID requirements?

Answer. It depends. Costs will vary depending on how big or small a jurisdiction is, whether or not it has already begun the process of integrating LID codes, standards, and plans, as well as many other factors. While costs for initial transition to LID will be higher, cities and counties can expect long-term costs to be lower.

Although no formula currently exists, the following cost considerations should be taken into account. These include:

- **Regulatory transition costs:** the review and update of ordinances and plans, regulations and standards; changes to permitting procedures; tracking and reporting, and staffing for inspection and maintenance

- **Staff training:** staff in various departments will need training to understand the new LID requirements; to review and permit LID project proposals, and; to design, install, and maintain LID facilities

It is worth noting that numerous studies have shown that LID methods can cost less to install, have lower operations and maintenance costs, and provide more cost-effective stormwater management and water-quality services than conventional practices.

Q. What areas of government services will be affected?

Answer. Some departments and programs will be affected more than others. Those that can expect the greatest amount of change include public works and planning/permitting/building. Others that will be impacted to a lesser degree include parks and fire/safety. A quick synopsis of what these departments and programs can expect follows.

Public works departments will need to integrate LID into public works projects and codes addressing stormwater runoff. Staff will need training to inspect LID projects to ensure that they were built as designed and are functioning properly. LID projects will also need to be maintained, both for city/county owned facilities and for facilities maintained by the jurisdiction. Public works staff will likely need training on maintaining LID facilities using new skills and equipment.

Planning/permitting/building will need to integrate LID requirements into development plans, codes, rules, and standards. Site plan review processes will need to be updated to reflect changes. Other codes, rules, and standards that will likely need updating include: zoning and subdivision codes; clearing and grading ordinances; street and parking standards and; stormwater and landscaping standards. Staff will likely need training on LID.

LID should be integrated into existing planning efforts and processes such as the Growth Management Act (GMA) update of comprehensive plans and critical areas ordinances. In many cases, integrating LID into local codes is consistent with actions called for in local salmon recovery plans and watershed plans, resulting in multiple benefits.

Fire and safety officials need to be involved with code and standard updates around street widths, access for emergency response, street layout within subdivisions, and street surfacing materials.

Parks staff will likely need training to assist with inspection and maintenance of vegetated stormwater best management practices (BMPs) like bioretention facilities.

Q. What support will my jurisdiction receive to help with compliance of these new requirements?

Answer. Ecology has developed a comprehensive LID Training Plan that will help jurisdictions get relevant staff trained appropriately. These trainings will address the municipal needs around LID training, from design and engineering to operations and maintenance, land use and stormwater code updates, hydrologic modeling, and others.

Eastern Washington

Question: How will the costs differ for Eastern Washington cities and counties compared to those in Western Washington?

Answer. Costs to local governments in EWA will be significantly lower than in WWA. Only a few jurisdictions will need to modify stormwater codes, and many will rely on the feasibility criteria in the Eastern Washington LID Guidance Manual. This manual, which is expected to be available by fall of 2013, funded by an Ecology grant and is designed to meet the December 2017 permit requirement.

Q: Will Eastern Washington cities and counties need staff training through the Ecology training program?

Answer. Yes, the training program is designed to help prepare and take input from EWA cities, counties and consultants for future LID requirements. Trainings will include developing and sharing information on siting and designing and maintaining LID facilities in local conditions for different areas of EWA.

What resources are available?

Numerous resources exist and others are in development to assist local governments with their transition to adopting the new requirements.

Code Integration

- Integrating LID into Local Codes: A Guidebook for Local Governments. Designed to help local government staff integrate LID requirements into local codes and standards. Available at: www.psp.wa.gov/downloads/LID_Guidebook/20120731_LIDguidebook.pdf
- Model ordinances developed as part of the development of the local codes guidebook. Model ordinances developed for 1) Grading, land clearing and tree cutting; 2) Off-street parking, 3) Planned unit development and 4) Site assessment. Available at: www.psp.wa.gov/LID_GLG.php
- Additional resources are available at the Association of Washington Cities' website: www.awcnet.org

Tools for estimating costs and benefits

- www.werf.org/bmpcost - A spreadsheet-based tool to help users identify and combine capital and ongoing maintenance costs for stormwater BMPs and LID.
- www.udfcd.org/downloads/software/BMP-REALCOST_v1.0.zip - A spreadsheet-based tool that analyzes the life cycle costs of BMPs for planning purposes.
- <http://greenvalues.cnt.org/national/calculator.php> - An online tool to help determine performance, costs and benefits of LID.

