**Building** **Green** **Cities**

Note: This is a discussion GUIDE. Questions will not be read verbatim and at times may be asked out of order.

**Local Government Interview Discussion Guide**

Note: Timing provided is meant to be a best guess.

## Note to Advisory Committee: The information learned during these local government interviews will be used to inform the final developer interview discussion guide. We are interviewing representatives from 3-5 local governments who work directly with developers and are responsible for overseeing/reviewing permits.

Thank you for agreeing to speak/meet with me. As you know, we are contacting you on behalf of the Washington State Department of Commerce and Puget Sound Regional Council. We will be conducting research with developers regarding their inclusion of Low Impact Development (LID), also known as Green Stormwater Infrastructure (GSI), principles and best management practices (BMPs) in their projects. Before we speak with them, we wanted to talk with you to gather any insights you can share on developers. It’s my understanding that you work closely with developers on LID stormwater practices/regulations. I’d like to learn about your experience working with them.

# Developer’s Current Understanding of LID (5 minutes)

## Questions Goal: Learn from local government permit review staff what their impressions are of the level of knowledge developers have when it comes to LID principles and BMPs. We are aware that the architects and engineers are very knowledgeable in this area. We assumed that developers are not nearly as knowledgeable, but is this really the case? We want to understand what, if any, knowledge gaps the developers have.

* How much do you think developers know about stormwater management, specifically LID principles and BMPs? What makes you say that?
  + What do you think they need to know that they don’t?
    - Do most of them understand the local stormwater code requirements?
    - At what point in the process do you think developers are thinking about LID for stormwater management?
    - At what point in the process are you asking developers about LID for stormwater management?
    - Do they also understand that there are some optional LID BMPs that they can also implement?
    - What percentage of developers in your jurisdiction have chosen to use optional LID BMPs or design principles? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_%

# LID Programs – Current Practices (5 minutes)

## Questions Goal: Learn which optional LID BMPs are typically being installed and which LID options they are shying away from.

* One of the goals of this research with developers is to understand what needs to be done to encourage developers to implement more LID, including both LID design principles and BMPs. Which LID design principles and optional LID BMPs are developers in your jurisdiction installing most often? (IF RESPONDENT SAYS “NONE,” THEN REFRAME TO ASK ABOUT LID IN GENERAL.)

*In their response, we will listen for them to talk about LID principles and BMPs such as:*

Note: Any text in light grey is background information for the moderator and will not be read to or shared with respondents.

***LID Principles:***

* + - * *Optimize development envelope*
      * *Reduce impervious surfaces as part of the road layout design*
      * *Reduce impervious surfaces for buildings by clustering and reducing footprints*
      * *Preserve open space and native vegetation (BMP T5.40)*

***LID BMPs required*** *by Washington State for evaluation include (NOTE: some local governments such as Seattle and King County have stricter requirements):*

* + - * *Amended Soils (BMP T5.13)*
      * *Dispersion (BMP T5.10B, BMP T5.11 BMP T5.12) (Note: Full dispersion (BMP T5.30) is most likely not feasible in the urban and suburban areas that are included in this study)*
      * *Rain Gardens (BMP T5.14A)*
      * *Bioretention (BMP T5.14B, BMP T7.30) (Note:* Planters don’t count towards MR5, but could be used to provide water quality treatment)
      * *Permeable Pavement (BMP T5.15)*
      * *Perforated stub-out connections (BMP T5.10C)*

***Optional LID BMPs:***

* + - * *Trees (retained and newly planted) (BMP T5.16) (Note that Tree protection during construction is covered in the construction volume of the SWMMWW)*
      * *Vegetated/Green Roofs (BMP T5.17) Note: green roofs may not be as effective as other measures in the Puget Sound climate.*
      * *Minimal Excavation Foundations (BMP T5.19) Note: sometimes called “pin” foundations.*
      * *Reverse Slope Sidewalks(BMP T5.18)*
      * *Rainwater Harvesting / Re-use (BMP T5.20) Notes: the Hirst decision may limit harvesting, and double-plumbing for reuse add substantial costs.*
  + What makes those LID design principles and BMPs the most popular?
  + What’s going on that the other options are not being installed?

# Barriers to Using LID (10 minutes)

## Questions Goal: Understand where developers are running into issues and how, if at all, local government staff are pushing back/assisting them.

* I’d like to get an idea of what you are hearing from developers. What do you think are the most common barriers that developers face when it comes using LID to manage stormwater?

We will listen for barriers such as:

* + - * *Confused about local stormwater code requirements*
      * *Insufficient cost data from other projects*
      * *Site constraints (geology, hydrology, existing paving systems)*
      * *Development costs*
      * Current LID incentives don’t help offset the development cost
      * *Lack of access to properly trained staff*
      * *Additional design time/effort*
      * *Increased permit review time/complexity*
      * *Developers don’t have time to obtain the geotechnical information that is required to be obtained in the rainy season*
      * *Inspection takes longer*
      * *Municipal codes require conventional stormwater system as backup anyway*
      * *Municipal inspectors don’t understand LID technologies*
      * *Municipal codes not aligned with LID methods*
      * *Client won’t pay more or don’t want LID*
      * *Client doesn’t want to deal with LID maintenance*
      * *Concerns about private property LID maintenance*
      * *Client doesn’t understand LID*
      * *Lack of familiarity with LID methods/options and which are most effective*
* When developers cite infeasibility criteria or request exemptions, what are the most common reasons they give?
  + Do you think the developers are usually telling you the real reason? If not, what do you think is the real reason?
  + How often do you question with skepticism the infeasibility criteria or reasons they have cited?
  + Do you ever counter their requests with alternative suggestions, offers of incentives, or technical assistance? Tell me more about that. How do developers respond?

We will listen for responses such as:

* + - * Improving perviousness of the site outside of footprint
      * Redesign assistance by staff or call in a third party
      * Engineering support by staff or call in a third party
      * Technical assistance by staff or call in a third party
      * Use of BMPs on other portions of existing site not being redeveloped
  + When they cite infeasibility criteria or request exemptions, how often does your jurisdiction agree and allow them to move forward with their design?
  + I realize you are not required to track what’s infeasible, only what’s installed. However, do you have a tracking system that records the cited infeasibility criteria or requested exemption? *(look for Yes/No response)*

# LID Programs – Current Incentives/Programs/Funding (10 minutes)

## Questions Goal: Delve into the details surround incentive offered to developers and which developers find most appealing.

* (IF INCENTIVES NOT DISCUSSED/NOT DISCUSSED IN ENOUGH DETAIL IN PREVIOUS SECTION, ASK) What, if any, incentives/programs/funding are you using to help encourage developers to increase use of LID above and beyond code?

*We will listen for factors incentives/programs/funding such as:*

* + - * *Direct financial incentives (reduced fees charged during development, tax credits or rebates, grants or cost-share) NOTE: permit fees are already very low and typically cannot be reduced because they directly pay for permit staff time.*
      * *Reduced fees charged after development (e.g., ongoing annual stormwater fees)*
      * *Expedited permitting/reduced review periods*
      * *Project design changes (zoning variance, ability to build more units, add height)*
      * *Ability to stage in right-of-way*
      * *Ability to cluster development in one area*
      * *Ability to modify parking*
      * *Adjusting street landscaping standards and setbacks*
      * *Ability to pay into fund to install LID off site (e.g., credit trading, fee-in-lieu)*
      * *Technical assistance (e.g., to work through design)*
      * *Incentives from non-government entities (e.g., Salmon Safe, 2030 District)*
      * *Public recognition/awards*
      * *Grants for demonstration projects*
      * *Public-private partnerships (e.g., Seattle Dept of Transportation/Parks) to integrate LID with street improvements or park development*
      * *Training*
      * *Training for financers and insurance companies*
* What’s your impression regarding how well these incentives/programs/funding are working?
  + What percent of the time are they effective?
  + How long have the incentives/programs/funding been available?
  + How are the incentives/programs/funding advertised / promoted?
  + Are the incentives/programs/funding used?
* What feedback have you received from developers regarding the incentives/programs/funding?
  + In your jurisdiction, which incentives/programs/funding do developers find most appealing? What do you think makes those incentives/programs/funding particularly appealing to them?

# Motivators and New Incentives for Using LID (5 minutes)

## Questions Goal: Learn from local government staff what incentives/programs/funding they think might motivate developers.

* What suggestions do you have regarding your jurisdiction’s LID incentives/programs/funding? What makes you say that?
  + What changes would you make if you could to the incentives/programs/funding?
* What other incentives/programs/funding could your jurisdiction offer to encourage developers to use more LID? IF SAYS THEIR JURISDICTION COULDN’T OFFER ANYTHING: Even if you can’t offer it, what do you think would motivate developers?

*We will listen for incentives/programs such as:*

* + - * *Incentives listed above*
      * *Other non-LID incentives*
      * *Through existing or new policies*
      * *Through existing or new programs (what specifically)*
      * *Help with the removal of barriers (what specifically)*
      * *Add incentives (what specifically)*
      * *Star ratings, certifications, recognition*
      * *Dedicated LID construction inspector(s) ( trained in LID);*
      * *A clear and streamlined process for approving LID designs and installations*
      * *Technical assistance (access to permitting for collaborative problem solving early in the process; personalized site assessment with list of options suitable for site conditions)*
      * *Information (database of more general site info [soil permeability, slope, aspect] with list of options suitable for site conditions; database of LID costs, LID inventory, ready-to-use LID designs); project design changes, such as zoning variance, ability to build more units, add height, density bonus)*
      * *Information on LID principles and BMPs*
      * *Provide LID design templates*
      * *Stormwater Credit Trading (be sure that this is defined before asking)*
      * *Provide cost estimates for methods*
      * *Facilitating partnerships with other developers/nonprofits/brokers*
      * *Help create market demand (how many and what type of customers asking for LID?)*
      * *Help change cultural norms among developers*

# What do Local Governments Need? (2 minutes)

* At the end of this research, we will be developing guidance for jurisdictions on effective incentives/programs/funding that can be used to increase the use of LID by developers. What format for that guidance would be most helpful for your jurisdiction?
  + - * *Guidebook / report*
      * *Case studies*

# Suggestions for Talking with Developers (2 minutes)

* Finally, I’d appreciate any suggestions you would have for me as I try to contact and recruit developers to speak with me about LID for stormwater management.
  + What would you suggest I keep in mind?
  + Do you have any suggestions for developers I should reach out to?
  + Do you have any good examples of projects that go above-and-beyond in using LID?