



City of Tacoma  
Planning and Development Services

Agenda Item  
D-2

**To:** Planning Commission  
**From:** Stephen Atkinson, Planning Services Division  
**Subject:** **Sustainability Code Amendment  
(Annual Amendment Application #2014-09)**

**Meeting Date:** November 20, 2013

**Memo Date:** November 14, 2013

At the next meeting on November 20, 2013, the Planning Commission will discuss the proposed topics to be evaluated as part of the 2014 Annual Amendment Application #2014-09 Sustainability Code Amendments. The purpose of the meeting will be to introduce the scope of work for the sustainability code amendments and to provide an overview of the City's goals and policies that support sustainable urban development. The presentation is informational and staff is not requesting a recommendation at this time.

The amendments are intended to further advance the City's goals for sustainable development, public health and active living by addressing issues identified in recent sustainability code audits, including a low impact development gap and barrier analysis performed by AHBL and a code review conducted as part of the STAR Community Rating assessment by the City's Office of Environment and Sustainability.

In addition, staff has participated in an ad hoc regional code coordinating committee (RCC) to jointly review new sustainability standards found in the International Green Construction Code and to adapt these to regional and local context. The issues identified by the RCC generally overlap with issues identified by the STAR Community Rating assessment.

The proposed amendment is the first of multiple phases. Proposed phase one topics include the following:

- Electric vehicle charging stations
- Shower and changing facilities
- Short and long term parking
- Setback dimension exception for exterior insulation
- Sideyard setback exception for rain barrels, cisterns and other rainwater catchment systems
- Light trespass
- Low impact development gaps and barriers audit

Future topics will be identified and evaluated in association with the City's compliance with Department of Ecology's Phase 1 Municipal Stormwater Permit as well as the ongoing affordable housing amendments and the 2015 Comprehensive Plan update. Attachment A provides additional information about this project.

If you have any questions, please contact Stephen Atkinson at 591-5531 or [satkinson@cityoftacoma.org](mailto:satkinson@cityoftacoma.org).

Attachment

c: Peter Huffman, Interim Director

# Sustainability Code Amendments

## Project Overview – Annual Amendment #2014-9

November 20, 2013

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### **SUMMARY:**

As part of the 2014 Annual Amendments, the Planning Commission will consider proposed amendments to the Land Use Regulatory Code to remove barriers to sustainable practices, address code gaps, and to encourage and incent sustainable development practices.

### **Background**

There is a growing recognition that Tacoma’s Comprehensive Plan is a sustainability strategy which promotes low impact development, public health, active living and adaptation to climate change, among other objectives including affordable housing and economic development. The City’s Land Use Regulatory Code implements sustainability approaches to land use through reduced parking strategies, critical areas regulations, small lot development standards, dense mixed-use transit oriented zoning, maximum setbacks, as well as incentives (height bonus) and design (Complete Streets).

In developing the scope of work, City staff is considering the analysis and recommendations associated with the following:

### **Sustainability Tools for Assessing and Rating Communities (STAR)**

The STAR Community Rating System (STAR) is a voluntary framework for evaluating, quantifying, and improving the livability and sustainability of U.S. communities.

The STAR Community Rating System combines:

- A framework for sustainability encompassing the social, economic and environmental dimensions of community;

- A rating system that drives continuous improvement and fosters competition; and

- An online system that gathers, organizes, analyzes, and presents information required to meet sustainability goals.

The City of Tacoma Office of Environmental Policy and Sustainability conducted a STAR rating evaluation for the City of Tacoma in 2013. The findings of the rating are being reviewed for potential policy and code implications.

### **LEED Neighborhood Development**

In 2012 the City of Tacoma was selected by Smart Growth America (SGA) from a national pool of applicants to receive a free smart growth technical assistance workshop titled “Using LEED-DN to Accelerate the Development of Sustainable Communities.” The program is sponsored by SGA, in partnership with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s Building Blocks for Sustainable

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Communities program and is intended to promote the implementation of smart growth principles at the local level.

The LEED-ND rating system is a set of measures for judging and certifying the sustainability of a neighborhood, similar to LEED certification of a green building, but at the neighborhood scale. The City held a workshop in April 2012 on incorporating LEED-ND into the City's ongoing South Downtown and Martin Luther King Jr. Subarea Plans. LEED-ND standards are also incorporated into the STAR Community Rating system.

### Climate Change and Tacoma's Climate Action Plan

In early 2007, the Tacoma City Council and then Mayor Bill Baarsma commissioned the Green Ribbon Task Force on Climate Change to make recommendations to the City Council, defining strategies that the community could take to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. The intention was to implement steps to ensure the City could align itself with the reduction goals stated in the Kyoto Protocol.

Tacoma's Climate Action Plan establishes carbon reduction goals for the City and community and offers more than 40 strategies to achieve those goals.

### Low Impact Development Standards Gaps and Barriers Audit

AHBL reviewed portions of Tacoma's Municipal Code, the Public Works Design Standards, and the Stormwater Management Manual to better understand the challenges to applying Low Impact Development techniques within the City of Tacoma. This review also highlighted areas where LID would be particularly appropriate or where there was existing support for LID approaches and techniques.

The LID analysis of the Tacoma Municipal Code identified a list of gaps in the municipal code as a starting point to identify and remove existing regulatory barriers to low impact development practices in stormwater management and land development.

### International Green Construction Code

In 2012 the International Code Council (ICC) released the International Green Construction Code (IgCC). The IgCC is the first model code to include sustainability measures for the entire construction project and its site — from design through construction, certificate of occupancy and beyond. The new code is expected to make buildings more efficient, reduce waste, and have a positive impact on health, safety and community welfare.

In response, local and regional jurisdictions, including Tacoma, created an ad hoc committee (RCC) to review and adapt new sustainability standards from the IgCC to our regional context. The RCC identified and drafted recommendations for integration into land use as well as other municipal codes.

# Sustainability Code Amendments

## Project Overview – Annual Amendment #2014-9

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### **Topics for Consideration**

The following topics are not inclusive of all the recommendations made by the aforementioned analyses. Staff anticipates the amendments proceeding through multiple phases. The first phase is proposed to address the following:

- Electric vehicle charging stations
- Shower and changing facilities
- Short and long term parking
- Setback dimension exception for exterior insulation
- Sideyard setback exception for rain barrels, cisterns and other rainwater catchment systems
- Light trespass
- Low impact development gaps and barriers

The second phase is expected to track along with the 2015 Comprehensive Plan update and the City's process to comply with Ecology's Phase 1 Municipal Stormwater Permit.

### **Outreach and Collaboration**

In addition to public outreach associated with the annual amendment to the Comprehensive Plan, staff will be highly engaged with other City Departments to draft, review and recommend code amendments, including Environmental Services, Public Works, the Office of Environmental Policy and Sustainability as well as other Divisions of Planning and Development Services.