**Green Connections: PROJECT OVERVIEW & CONTEXT**

**What is the project?**
Green Connections will result in a Citywide network of green streets that can be built over time, improving pedestrian and bicycle access to parks, open space and the waterfront.

At the end of the project, two products will be developed. These products will be helpful when seeking future funding opportunities.

- A Citywide map of Green Connections
- Conceptual designs in six neighborhoods

**Who is involved?**
Green Connections is a collaborative effort of the San Francisco Planning Department, San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency, San Francisco Department of Public Health and the Mayor’s Office of Housing.

The City Agencies have partnered with three community based organizations: San Francisco Parks Alliance, Walk San Francisco and Nature in the City.

**What is the time frame?**
The project is funded by a Sustainable Communities Planning Grant from the State of California Strategic Growth Council. The project will run for two years.

- Year 1 (Winter 2011 – Fall 2012)
  - Define and develop a Citywide Network of Green Connections.
  - Year 2 (Winter 2012 – Fall 2013)
  - Design Green Connections for specific neighborhoods, including Bayview-Hunters Point, Chrissy Field, Potrero Hill, Tenderloin, Visitacion Valley, and Western Addition.

**How can I get involved?**
The project team will host many public events to engage communities in developing Green Connections.

- Visit the project website: [greenconnections.sfplanning.org](http://greenconnections.sfplanning.org)
- Participate in upcoming walks and events
- Join the project mailing list by sending an email to: [greenconnections@sfgov.org](mailto:greenconnections@sfgov.org)

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**Related City Documents & Policies**

Green Connections builds on several City efforts related to street design, open space and sustainability. Distinct policies and plans include:

- The San Francisco Better Streets Plan
- The San Francisco Bicycle Plan
- Stormwater Design Guidelines
- The update of the Recreation and Open Space Element of the General Plan
- The Map of Key Walking Streets developed through the WalkFirst project, as well as area plans of the San Francisco General Plan.

These plans collectively describe a set of strategies for how to improve our City streets for walking and bicycling, improve access to the City’s parks and open spaces, and improve the ecological function of our streets.

These documents provide a strong foundation and starting point for the Green Connections project.
Green Connections will increase access to parks and open space by removing barriers and enhancing the experience of walking and biking to parks.

The first year of the project includes a citywide effort to define and develop a citywide network of green connections.

During the second year, the green connections project will generate conceptual designs for specific streets or paths in six neighborhoods that are underserved by existing open space and would benefit from improved access to the City’s existing and planned open space network.

The focus neighborhoods include Bayview–Hunter’s Point, Chinatown, Potrero Hill, Tenderloin, Visitation Valley, and Western Addition. These neighborhoods have generally high population densities, particularly of seniors and children, lower median incomes, and in some cases lower vehicle ownership rates than the city as a whole.

Green Connections will identify opportunities to connect these underserved neighborhoods to existing parks and open spaces. The project will enhance existing streets and paths by making them better for walking and biking, thus encouraging and supporting the community’s connection to open space.
Green Connections: HOW DO YOU ENVISION A GREEN CONNECTION?

Tell us how you envision a green connection . . .
Green Connections: QUALITIES OF GREEN CONNECTIONS

Habitat or ecological function

- Planted Median, Moraga Avenue
- Sidewalk Landscaping, Shrader Street
- Sidewalk Landscaping, Shotwell Street
- Permeable Paving and Sidewalk Landscaping on Leland Avenue

Manage stormwater on-site

- Storm water retained on-site, Mint Plaza
- Permeable Sidewalk, 22nd Street

Calm automobile traffic

- Slow local access lane, Octavia Boulevard
- Stormwater & Traffic Calming, Broadway Green Grid, Seattle
- Corner bulb-out and center median, Broadway
- Enhanced Bike Lane, Fell Street

Prioritize pedestrians or bicycles

- Stairway, Moraga Street
- Sunday Streets, Valencia Street
Green Connections: WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE PARK TO WALK OR BIKE TO?

Place a green dot next to a park you like to visit and draw your route.

Tell us what you like about your route.
Green Connections: WHAT PARK WOULD YOU LIKE TO WALK OR BIKE TO MORE?

Place a red dot next to a park you would like to visit more and draw your route.

Tell us how your route could be improved.
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Tell us how your route could be improved.
The goal of Green Connections is to increase San Franciscans’ access to parks and open space. Green Connections will identify a network of walking and biking routes that connect people to parks and open space. The analysis will begin by looking at the City’s existing and planned walking and biking streets.

The map to the left shows the City’s planned pedestrian and cycling systems: bike routes, key walking streets, trails and pedestrian staircases, as well as streets identified in the San Francisco Better Streets Plan as having characteristics related to access to green space: park-edge streets, greenways and alleys.

The map to the left considers the connection between walking and biking routes and the open space system.

Discussion

Which walking and biking streets best access parks and open space?

Where are additional connections needed to improve access to parks?
The goal of Green Connections is to increase San Franciscans’ access to parks and open space. Identifying popular destinations and activity generators will inform decisions about routing Green Connections throughout the city’s diverse neighborhoods. The map to the left shows places and destinations where people congregate to work, shop, learn and play.

Understanding the key places where people gather will inform Green Connections throughout the city. For example, the northeastern neighborhoods focused around downtown have a dense mix of uses and a high concentration of civic institutions like museums and signature open spaces like the Embarcadero waterfront. One potential strategy for the Northeastern neighborhoods would be to choose routes that link these cultural uses and open spaces together.

The City’s residential neighborhoods to the south and west feature community-serving civic institutions such as schools, libraries and community centers, often built around a neighborhood shopping district, as well as some significant regional parks such as Golden Gate Park or McLaren Park. One potential strategy in these areas would be to facilitate safe routes to schools and/or strengthening ties between homes, neighborhood businesses, and open spaces.

**Discussion**

What places are most important to connect to parks (e.g. schools, homes, neighborhood commercial areas, major transit stops)?

How can the City strengthen the experience of moving between parks, schools and shopping districts?
San Francisco’s famous hills mark neighborhood boundaries and orient people within the city. They also define watersheds, micro-climates, and habitats. Understanding the city’s topography and water systems will help determine which streets are best suited to become Green Connections.

**Stormwater**

Paved surfaces such as buildings, streets, and parking lots cover most of the City. Asphalt and concrete streets cover approximately 25% of the city’s surface. Instead of slowly filtering into soils, stormwater runoff quickly flows over these paved areas, picking up pollutants like oil, bacteria, and debris before it flows to the city’s sewer systems. During major storms, the sewer system may get overwhelmed, diverting partially treated runoff into the Bay or Ocean instead of the treatment plant.

To better manage stormwater runoff, the City uses Low Impact Design (LID) strategies for streets and sidewalks. LID mimics the natural hydrologic processes of the landscape by slowing the movement of stormwater. Design approaches feature small decentralized stormwater treatment facilities such as rain gardens, bioswales, and permeable paving materials to slow and treat runoff before it reaches the sewer pipes.

In addition to sustainably managing stormwater, LID can provide other benefits, including greening and landscaping, beautifying the public realm, providing traffic calming, and providing habitat for birds and insects.

**Slope**

San Francisco’s hills present opportunities and constraints in designing a network of Green Connections. Many of the city’s largest parks like Twin Peaks and Bernal Heights sit at the top of hills. Hills also offer views of the city and regional landscape. In some of the city’s steepest areas, public staircases provide key access points to important open spaces.

Steep hills can be challenging for pedestrians and cyclists to navigate. Steep streets also pose challenges when integrating stormwater LID features.

**Discussion**

- How can stormwater management approaches be used to meet other neighborhood objectives such as traffic calming or street greening?
- What is the role of steep streets in developing a network of Green Connections to hilltop parks and open spaces?
While the San Francisco peninsula has changed dramatically over the past 200 years, the City still maintains a strong relationship with the regional landscape. Many streets offer panoramic views to water and green spaces. The City’s diverse open space system provides habitat for native plants and wildlife.

Green Connections will integrate the importance of green space as habitat for plants and animals. Potential strategies for improving habitat in the City might include: establishing citywide “habitat corridors” targeting key species, creating a network of habitat “patches,” and selecting plant species appropriate to the landscape and climate for street-scape plantings.

**Discussion**

How can new street designs improve habitat for wildlife?

Where should habitat corridors connect to?