What is urban greening?

Urban greening refers to the incorporation of vegetation and natural elements into the built environment.

When integrated into stormwater systems, urban greening is also referred to as green stormwater infrastructure (GSI) or urban green infrastructure.

Examples of green infrastructure include rain gardens, bioswales, green roofs, and planter boxes.

Why is green infrastructure important?

Over the past few years, Bay Area residents have felt the impacts of our rapidly warming climate: smoky skies, poor air quality, and intense heat. Soon, increased flooding from storms and sea level rise will become the norm. Urban greening has a number of benefits, including building resilience to many of these climate hazards. Replacing impermeable pavement and concrete with trees, planter boxes, and other nature-based elements can mitigate flooding by allowing stormwater to absorb and filter through the soil. Green infrastructure can also reduce urban heat, improve air quality, support mental health, and reduce pollution runoff into the Bay.

These climate impacts disproportionately affect low-income communities and communities of color, who are the least financially resourced to deal with them. Green infrastructure needs to be implemented equitably, with a focus on these communities. Urban greening efforts must be community-led to ensure they do not lead to gentrification and displacement.

While green spaces have a number of benefits on their own, integrating them into the surrounding stormwater system helps keep the Bay clean. The plants and soil in green stormwater infrastructure act as natural filters, trapping as much as 90% of certain toxins and trash before stormwater drains into our waterways and the Bay.

- Learn more about urban greening at https://savesfbay.org/urban-green-infrastructure/
- Find sample policy solutions at https://resilienceplaybook.org/harnessing-the-power-of-nature/