

GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

We all pretty much recognize “gray” infrastructure—as in, interstates, highways, roads, and streets; water and wastewater systems; stoplights and street signs—and why it’s important to our daily lives.

Now it’s time to recognize “green infrastructure”: the planned and managed network of open spaces, natural lands, wildlife habitats, parks, and other assets that enrich the quality of life in our communities.

Learn what it means to implement a green infrastructure plan!



OPEN SPACES

The natural environment provides vistas and open space that can be enjoyed by all.



WATERSHEDS

Maintaining water quality requires protecting rivers, streams, and aquifers from pollution and erosion.



WILDLIFE HABITATS

Wildlife habitat provides animals with the space they need to live and reproduce. Without the right habitat, many species may not be able to survive.



SENSITIVE SHORELINES

Beaches are subject to daily tides and coastal erosion. If too much sand is pulled away from our beaches, flooding and other destruction can occur especially during violent storms.

IMPLEMENTING A GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE PLAN

Green infrastructure planning has become a well-accepted and increasingly adopted best management practice for protecting and promoting the sustainable use of environmental resources; improving economics; reducing construction costs; mitigating environmental hazards; achieving water, air, and biodiversity regulatory compliance; and numerous other benefits related to improving public health.

Green infrastructure planning is a systematic process that seeks to situate land development and land conservation together in a way that leverages natural environmental patterns. In so doing, green infrastructure planning simultaneously promotes both conservation and smart growth.

THE GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE CENTER HAS PIONEERED A SIX-STEP PROCESS FOR IMPLEMENTING A GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE PLAN:

01 SET YOUR GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE GOALS.



All green infrastructure planning efforts must start with the establishment of goals. These goals should articulate what green infrastructure assets your community values the most and what you'd like to achieve with these assets.

02 REVIEW YOUR GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE DATA.



Once you have established your goals, it is time to assemble and review all the existing relevant data for your local area. The data should be directly relatable to achieving your goals in some way, such as by identifying where your assets are located and where they are lacking, and by providing additional context.

03 MAP YOUR GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE ASSETS.



All green infrastructure is location-based within a community. Start by mapping your community's highest-valued natural assets that contribute to a healthy ecology and also support cultural and economic values—based on the goals established in Step 1 and data from Step 2. Creating your assets map identifies where different elements of your green infrastructure infrastructure system are located, allowing local government to monitor, maintain, and enhance those assets.

04 ASSESS YOUR GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE ASSET RISKS.



Once you have created your assets map, it is time to identify any vulnerabilities related to those assets. This involves assessments that identify which green infrastructure assets are most at risk, and what could be lost, if no action is taken.

05 RANK YOUR GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE ASSETS AND DEVELOP OPPORTUNITIES.



Based on the assets and the risks you've identified, you'll next identify which assets could or should be protected, restored, or improved. By identifying which assets contribute the most to your goals and require the most immediate attention, you'll be well positioned to prioritize and initiate relevant planning efforts around these assets.

06 IMPLEMENT YOUR GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE VISION.



Based on how you've ranked your key assets, assessed risks, and planned for opportunities, you may need to implement projects, policies, or changes in local laws, zoning, and comprehensive plans to ensure that your goals are achieved.