

KEY IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY: Changing Municipal Code/Policy

With 21 different municipalities within San Mateo County using this design guidebook as a reference document, it would be difficult to account for all of the code conflicts that could arise in implementing green street and parking lot projects. However, some relevant policy and code information from some of the 21 different municipalities is presented in Appendix D of this document.

There are three major ways to help encourage code changes that support the use of green streets and parking lots: 1) build demonstration projects; 2) provide the opportunity for open communication and collaboration between municipal staff to discuss issues; and 3) provide flexibility in green street and parking lot design standards.

Changing Code with Demonstration Projects

One of the best methods to help municipalities change their development codes to favor green street and parking lot projects is to build demonstration projects. By labeling a project as a “demonstration” or “pilot” project, it often allows city staff to relax their standards and allow the use of alternative methods without the burden of implementing widespread change. Demonstration projects allow city staff to evaluate the particular code on the site level rather than a city-wide scale. This can provide a much clearer perspective of what issues are truly in conflict. Most importantly, when city staff experience first-hand that the particular code conflict is not as critical in light of the other benefits provided by the demonstration project, they tend to standardize the approach for widespread application.

Changing Code with Staff Collaboration

Another other major tool for helping change existing municipal codes is to provide an avenue for inter-city and inter-county collaboration of ideas and concerns. The ideal condition would be for all municipalities within the County to

adopt a uniform and consistent set of codes and policies that support the needs of green street and parking lot projects. This would undoubtedly take a great deal of time, effort and political will to accomplish, but this effort would provide the most comprehensive approach to dealing with potential code conflicts. More realistically, resolution of code and policy conflicts that arise during implementation of green street and parking lot projects will occur through discussion and negotiation among municipal staff. Staff will need to consider multiple perspectives to arrive at a reasonable compromise that serves the greatest good.

Providing Flexibility in Green Street and Parking Lot Design Standards

It is important to note that it is possible for municipalities to rush to provide inflexible green street and parking lot design standards prior to developing a comprehensive array of design solutions for a wide variety of conditions. As a result, developers and municipalities could be limited to only one or two design solutions that are not well suited to the varying street and parking lot conditions in San Mateo County. It is best to provide flexible design guidelines that can be easily updated as green street solutions are refined and properly tested in demonstration projects.

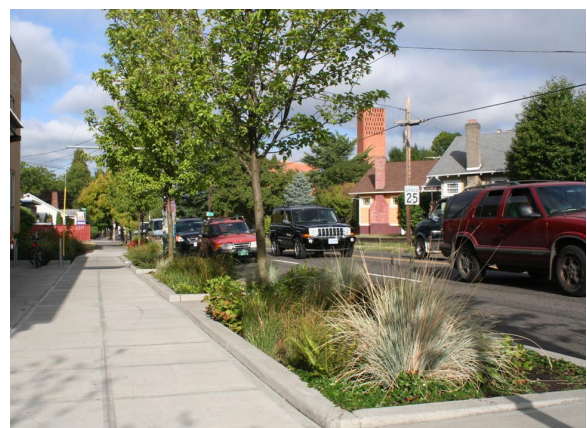


Figure 6-12: This green street project built in 2004 in Portland, Oregon was a first-of-its-kind on a commercial street. Demonstration projects like this one have helped spur other green street projects, as well as provided the impetus for changing municipal design standards and codes.

SOURCE: NEVUE NGAN ASSOCIATES