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SFPUC, San Francisco Unified School District Celebrate Opening of First Stormwater Schoolyard Project

Installation at Robert Louis Stevenson Elementary School in the Sunset District will provide educational opportunities about sustainability, water resilience and conservation

San Francisco, CA—The [San Francisco Public Utilities Commission](#) (SFPUC), the [San Francisco Unified School District](#) (SFUSD), Supervisor Katy Tang, educators and students today celebrated the official opening of the City's first jointly funded "Stormwater Schoolyard" at Robert Louis Stevenson Elementary School in the Sunset District.

The "Stormwater Schoolyard" is a pilot project with the aim of facilitating increased stormwater management and schoolyard greening initiatives to SFUSD schools. An example of green infrastructure, the installation at the elementary school includes permeable pavement, dry creek beds, plants and foliage. The project increases stormwater performance, provides opportunities for integrated outdoor learning and adventure play, and acts as a model for other local schools.

"With this project, we are improving drainage systems at schools, but most importantly, we are instilling a sense of sustainable environmental values for the next generation of San Franciscans," said SFPUC General Manager Harlan L. Kelly, Jr. "These students will soon be the leaders of our City and the Stormwater Schoolyard can be their introduction to a lifetime of environmental stewardship."

The green infrastructure at Robert Louis Stevenson Elementary manages stormwater runoff from approximately one acre of impervious surface by diverting it to a series of dry creek beds and a sunken amphitheater with a surface of permeable pavers. The installation is designed to be transparent, allowing students to "follow the stormwater" as



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it travels through the campus, all while providing a stimulating outdoor space for learning and playing.

“We are grateful for the generosity of the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission for their support in promoting sustainability practices for our students,” SFUSD Superintendent Dr. Vincent Matthews said. “The Stormwater Schoolyard is a great way to further instill a culture of environmental stewardship in our students and make the most of our water supply.”

“As a graduate of our public school system, I am happy to see that the students of RLS will have this opportunity to take their learning outside of the classroom,” said Supervisor Katy Tang. “This pilot program is not only great for making the school more environmentally sustainable, but also for getting students to start thinking about career choices within this field at an early age.”

The Stormwater Schoolyard Project is the first time that the SFPUC has worked with SFUSD on a large-scale, performance-based green infrastructure retrofit. The successful installation of the green infrastructure can be a model for other similar projects at local schools. The SFPUC is currently developing a large-scale green infrastructure grant program to support future stormwater schoolyards and other green infrastructure projects on public and private properties across San Francisco.

“The students, families and staff of Robert Louis Stevenson Elementary School are thrilled with the new Stormwater Schoolyard on our campus,” said RL Stevenson Elementary Principal Diane Lau-Yee said. “Not only will this infrastructure help to remove stormwater from our yard, it will teach students about the importance of sustainability and other outdoor learning opportunities.”

The green infrastructure installed includes 5,000 square feet of dry creek beds and 1,100 square feet of permeable pavers, which will remove more than 475,000 gallons of stormwater from the sewer system each year. Green infrastructure projects are a crucial element of the SFPUC’s [Sewer System Improvement Program](#), a 20-year citywide investment to upgrade the City’s aging sewer infrastructure that will increase reliability and sustainability services for residents and businesses. Additionally, projects like these are an important component of the SFPUC’s long-term sustainability goal of capturing 1 billion gallons of stormwater with green infrastructure by 2050.

Continuing to install green infrastructure at local schools will help students learn about the hydrologic cycle, stormwater management and drought tolerant plants.



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“As a graduate of SFUSD schools, I know firsthand how important outdoor education is for our students,” said SFUSD Board of Education President Stevon Cook. “While we live in a dense urban city, accessing nature and learning about the environment is essential to students’ wellbeing, academic achievement, and understanding of the world that surrounds them. This infrastructure is a wonderful addition to the sustainable practices we promote among our students.”

About the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission

The San Francisco Public Utilities Commission (SFPUC) is a department of the City and County of San Francisco. It delivers drinking water to 2.7 million people in the San Francisco Bay Area, collects and treats wastewater for the City and County of San Francisco, and generates clean power for municipal buildings, residents, and businesses. The SFPUC’s mission is to provide customers with high quality, efficient and reliable water, power, and sewer services in a manner that values environmental and community interests and sustains the resources entrusted to our care. Learn more at www.sfwater.org.

About SFUSD Sustainability Efforts

SFUSD has a robust sustainability program that promotes student ecoliteracy while reducing the District’s environmental footprint. San Francisco voters have allocated over \$17 million to fund green schoolyards, including outdoor classrooms for standards-based teaching as well as green schoolyard spaces that support interaction with the natural environment, water resilience, urban agriculture, and hands-on, nature-based learning and play. This year, SFUSD completed work on its first rainwater harvesting system to flush toilets in the new admin building at Starr King Elementary School.

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