

# Help Us Build a “Field of Dreams” for Visitacion Valley Elementary School

## A Living Green Schoolyard That Inspires Learning, Play, and Belonging

Imagine a schoolyard so **engaging and welcoming** that children **can’t wait** to go to school each morning—**eager to arrive early just to play on the playground.**

At Visitacion Valley Elementary School (VVES, also known as Little Vis)—a Title I school in one of San Francisco’s most underserved and environmentally burdened neighborhoods—this dream is within reach. But **we need your help** to make it a reality **this summer.**

Currently, the children at Visitacion Valley Elementary play on a **barren, cracked, and windswept schoolyard** with no greenery, shade, or **engaging recreational spaces** to support their **growth, play, and well-being.** A **hazardous, uneven playing surface** makes active play even more difficult. With **few opportunities for structured and creative play, more altercations occur on the playground than in any other area of the school**—a clear sign of the **urgent need** for a **safe, engaging, and inclusive environment** where children can experience **joy, learning, and friendship.**

**Chronic absenteeism impacts 37% of students,** many of whom face **intergenerational poverty, trauma, and environmental challenges.** At VVES, **these challenges run deep—84% of students come from low-income households, and on average, one child in every classroom is experiencing homelessness.**

According to **SFUSD School Culture/Climate surveys, VVES students report feeling significantly less safe at school** compared to their peers across the city. For these children, school isn’t just a place to learn—it must be a **refuge, a place where they can feel safe, supported, and free to play.**

**Reversing absenteeism through every possible intervention is essential** to ensuring that children can **grow, thrive, and develop a strong sense of belonging in their school community**—laying the foundation for a **brighter future.** Without access to **consistent learning and support,** many will **struggle to build the fundamental skills they need to succeed in school and beyond.**

VVES is also one of the most diverse school communities in San Francisco, with students from a **wide range of cultural and linguistic backgrounds.** By creating a **vibrant, recreational, and educational environment** surrounded by **beneficial plantings and habitat-rich landscapes,** we will provide a **shared space where children and their families can connect, play, and build friendships across racial, cultural, and socioeconomic differences**—fostering a **stronger, more inclusive, and richly diverse community.**

To support **equitable opportunities** and student success in Visitacion Valley, we are building Little Vis' "Field of Dreams"—a high-quality, enriched schoolyard and multi-use **playing field** that will **inspire, heal, and uplift** over 320 children and their families while addressing **environmental inequities** in the neighborhood.

With your support, **we are working to create a state-of-the-art, stormwater-treating multi-use playing field as the heart of this living green schoolyard**—giving children a **safe, inspiring space** for sports, team-building, recreation, and both **organized and free-form play**. Providing opportunities for **structured activities** as well as **open-ended, creative play** is a **proven intervention** that fosters **social-emotional learning, reduces conflicts, and enhances overall well-being**—all while advancing **critical environmental and social justice goals**.

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## A Project Rooted in Environmental and Social Justice

This project directly aligns with the **San Francisco Planning Department's Environmental Justice focus areas** and the **SFPUC's Green Infrastructure (GI) co-benefits**, including:

- ✓ **Clean and healthy environments**
- ✓ **Empowered neighborhoods**
- ✓ **Equitable and green jobs**
- ✓ **Climate resilience and justice**

Visitacion Valley is designated as a **Top 30% Environmental Justice Impact Zone** due to **legacy soil and airborne pollutants** from the former **Schlage Lock brownfield site and landfill**, compounded by **intergenerational poverty and systemic social challenges**.

The community faces **high rates of violence, social isolation, and limited access to recreation and economic opportunity**, yet remains **deeply resilient and committed to positive change**.

Years of **City and community-driven participatory design work** have made it clear: Residents need **safe, high-quality green space, nature-based infrastructure, and recreational opportunities** to support children's well-being and **restore environmental balance** to their neighborhood.

The **VVES "Field of Dreams" project** is a **direct response to this need**—integrating **stormwater management, ecological restoration, and active play areas** into a **nature-based, cost-effective, and systemic solution** that benefits **students, the community, and the environment**.

Numerous studies confirm the **transformational power of green infrastructure and well-designed urban landscapes in underserved communities**. Proven benefits include:

- ✓ Lower rates of violence and crime
- ✓ Reduced cortisol levels and stress
- ✓ Improved academic performance and test scores
- ✓ Increased psychological safety, hope, and social cohesion

For a deeper understanding of the science behind these benefits, we encourage exploring **Green Cities: Good Health** by the University of Washington (<https://depts.washington.edu/hhwb/>).

By integrating **nature-based solutions for stormwater management** with **safe, green recreational spaces**, this project will create a **healthier environment where children can grow, play, and learn**, restoring **abundant life and laughter** to the land of VVES' "Living Schoolyard."

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## How You Can Help – Urgent Funding Need

We must **raise \$45,000 in the next two weeks** to keep this project on track. A **hoped-for source of community funding recently fell through**, leaving a critical gap.

Through this process, the **children of VVES have learned the power of their voices**—they have **voted, written letters, and advocated** for the **schoolyard they dream of**. Their overwhelming choice? **A safe, multi-use playing field where they can run, play, and be part of a team**.

Without these funds, we will have to **change our plans and replace the soccer field with a third rain garden** to fulfill the **SFPUC's stormwater treatment requirements**—eliminating the **only dedicated recreational field** in the design.

While additional plantings provide **environmental benefits**, they **cannot replace the active play opportunities** that a **multi-use recreational field provides**. To **keep the project moving forward toward bidding and installation this summer**, we **must** adjust the plan if this funding is not secured.

**We do not want to disappoint the children who have worked so hard to make their voices heard.**

This project is more than a schoolyard—it's a **lesson in democracy, advocacy, and believing in the power of change**.

This funding is the **final piece of the puzzle** to ensure the children at VVES get the **safe, engaging play space they need and deserve**.


We are **so close** to making this dream a reality, but **we need your help right now**. Every dollar brings us **one step closer** to ensuring that this **Field of Dreams** becomes a **place where children can run, play, and thrive for generations to come**.

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### Join Us—Make a Difference Today

Please **donate today** and help build the **“Field of Dreams”** at **Visitacion Valley Elementary School**.

Together, we can **create a lasting legacy**—a place where children **grow, learn, and thrive** for generations to come.

 **Share this campaign** with friends, family, and colleagues who believe in the power of **community-driven change**.