

SITES

SUSTAINABLE SITES INITIATIVE™

The Sustainable Sites Initiative™ (SITES™) is an interdisciplinary partnership led by the American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA), the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center at The University of Texas at Austin, and the United States Botanic Garden to transform land development and management practices through the nation's first voluntary guidelines and rating system for sustainable landscapes, with or without buildings. The guidelines and rating system represent over five years of work by dozens of the country's leading sustainability experts, scientists, and design professionals, and incorporate public input from hundreds of individuals and organizations.

The Importance of Site and Landscape

Existing design and construction rating systems include little recognition of the benefits of sustainable landscape and site design. While carbon-neutral performance remains the holy grail for green buildings, sustainable landscapes move beyond a do-no-harm approach by sequestering carbon, managing stormwater, cleaning the air, increasing energy efficiency, restoring habitats, and ultimately providing significant economic, social, and environmental benefits. The U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC) is a stakeholder in the Initiative; the SITES Rating System builds upon site-related content in the LEED® Green Building Rating System™ and the SITES and LEED systems will continue to inform each other as the two systems evolve.

The SITES Rating System

Modeled after LEED®, the SITES benchmarks and Rating System were published in the *Sustainable Sites Initiative Guidelines and Performance Benchmarks 2009*. Since then, the Rating System has been tested by over 150 pilot projects, which include educational centers, transportation corridors, industrial complexes, parks, recreation centers, and residences. The prerequisites and credits in the 2009 report are currently being updated based on experience gained through the two-year pilot program, and a public comment period which closed November 26, 2012.

As revised, the benchmarks include 18 prerequisites and 49 potential credits. Prerequisites and credits cover areas such as the use of greenfields, brownfields or greyfields; materials; soils and vegetation; and construction and maintenance. When finalized, the 2013 credits will serve as the basis for SITES' move to open enrollment in mid-2013.

The guidelines and performance benchmarks, as well as the rating system, can be used by anyone in the design, construction, and maintenance fields, as well as homeowners, governments, and those who maintain existing green building standards.

Project Certification

As of August 2013, a total of 23 projects have now achieved certification under the 2009 *Guidelines and Performance Benchmarks 2009*, with an additional 60 projects continuing to pursue certification under this rating system. Each of the projects incorporates sustainable features and practices which enabled them to achieve a star rating.

The certified projects are:

- American University School of International Service, Washington, D.C., two stars
- Bat Cave Draw and Visitor's Center, Carlsbad Caverns National Park, N.M., two stars
- Blue Hole Regional Park, Wimberley, Texas, one star
- BWP EcoCampus, Burbank, CA, one star
- Charlotte Brody Discovery Garden at Duke University, Durham, NC, two stars
- Cleveland's Public Garden, Cleveland, OH, three stars
- Cornell University's Mann Library Entrance, Ithaca, NY, one star
- George "Doc" Cavalliere Park, Scottsdale, AZ, three stars
- Grand Valley State University Student Recreation Fields, Allendale, MI, two stars
- The Green at College Park of the University of Texas at Arlington, TX, one star
- Harris County Water Conservation and Improvement District (WCID) 132's Water Conservation and Demonstration Center, Houston, Texas, one star
- Hunts Point Landing, an urban park, Bronx, NY, two stars
- Meadow Lake and the Main Parking Lot at The Morton Arboretum, Lisle, IL, one star
- Mesa Verde Visitor and Research Center, Mesa Verde National Park, CO, two stars
- National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL) Research Support Facility, Golden, CO, three stars
- Novus International Inc., campus, St. Charles, MO, three stars
- Scenic Hudson Long Dock Park, Beacon, N.Y., three stars
- The Stone Brewing World Bistro & Gardens, Escondido, CA, one star
- SWT Design Campus, St. Louis, MO, two stars
- Taylor residence, Kennett Square, PA, three stars
- Theater Commons and Donnelly Gardens, Seattle, WA, one star
- Victoria Garden Mews, Santa Barbara, CA, two stars
- Woodland Discovery Playground at Shelby Farms Park, Memphis, TN, one star.

For information visit www.sustainablesites.org