



THE Sustainable SITES Initiative®

*The University of Texas at El Paso's Campus Transformation Project is the first SITES certified project under v2 of the rating system.
Photo credit: Adam Barbe.*

THE SITES RATING SYSTEM

Population growth and development are causing our communities to use more resources than ever before, which means more waste and a negative impact on the environment. Traditional land development and land use decisions often underestimate or ignore healthy ecosystems. However, by developing land sustainably it is not only cost effective, it is better for the land and fosters resiliency.

The Sustainable SITES Initiative (SITES®) is the first program of its kind to offer a systematic, comprehensive rating system designed to define sustainable land development and management. SITES aligns land development and management with innovative sustainable design—defining what a sustainable site is and, ultimately, elevating the value of landscapes in the built environment.

SITES can be applied to development projects located on sites with or without buildings—ranging from national parks to corporate campuses, from streetscapes to homes. The SITES rating system is currently being used by landscape architects, designers, engineers, architects, developers, policymakers and more.

Land is a crucial component of the built environment and can be planned, designed, developed and maintained to protect and enhance the benefits we derive from healthy functioning landscapes. The four overarching goals of the SITES rating system are to create regenerative systems and foster resiliency; ensure future source supply and mitigate climate change; transform the market through design, development and maintenance practices; and enhance human wellbeing and strengthen the community.

SITES-CERTIFIED PROJECTS

- Benefit the environment, property owners and local and regional communities and economies
- Provide ecosystem services and create ecologically resilient communities that are better able to withstand and recover from floods, droughts, wildfires and other catastrophic events
- Reduce water demand by requiring less maintenance and filtering and reducing stormwater runoff
- Involve no—or limited—pesticide use, reduce energy consumption, help sequester carbon and improve air quality
- Enable wildlife habitat, conserve natural resources and offset development impacts
- Promote human health and wellbeing by connecting people to nature, to their communities and to each other

SITES was developed through a collaborative, interdisciplinary effort of the American Society of Landscape Architects, The Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center at the University of Texas at Austin and the United States Botanic Garden.

In 2015, Green Business Certification Inc. (GBCI®) officially acquired SITES from ASLA and The University of Texas and launched project certification for the second version (v2) of SITES. The SITES v2 Rating System draws on the experience gained from a two-year pilot program involving more than 150 projects. Already, SITES v2 has seen projects registering across the world from New York to Los Angeles, to Vancouver to Hong Kong and much more.

SITES v2 includes 18 prerequisites and 48 credits for measuring site sustainability. To achieve certification, projects can earn a total of up to 200 points at the Certified, Silver, Gold or Platinum levels. The rating system is divided into ten sections, which cover site context, design and construction, operations, maintenance, education and innovation. These strategies cover both pre-design and construction activities and are tied together through an integrative process.

Just as LEED® undeniably transformed the built environment, SITES has the ability to transform land development and use under the administration of GBCI. Interested project teams can visit sustainablesites.org for more information.

