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Sustainable Sites Initiative Selects 175 Pilot Projects

05/27/2010 by asladirt



The Sustainable Sites Initiative™ (SITES™) has selected 175 pilot projects to test a national rating system for sustainable landscape design, construction and maintenance.

The Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History & Culture, New Orleans' Lower Ninth Ward Sustainable Infrastructure Project and the Indianapolis Super Bowl Village join others that include educational centers, transportation corridors, industrial complexes and private residences in employing cutting-edge guidelines and performance benchmarks outlined in the SITES Rating System.

Launched in 2005, SITES represents a partnership of 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 fill a critical gap in green design, construction and maintenance by creating voluntary guidelines and performance benchmarks for sustainable landscapes of all kinds, with or without buildings. The pilot program marks the next phase of SITES –

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putting to the test a rating system created by dozens of the country's leading sustainability experts, scientists and design professionals, with public input from hundreds of individuals and dozens of organizations.

"We received hundreds of applications from an impressive array of federal agencies, international companies, major universities and non-profit organizations among many others to participate in the pilot program," said ASLA Executive Vice President and CEO Nancy Somerville, Hon. ASLA. "The selected projects represent an elite group covering a diverse range of size, project type and geographic location."

Located in 34 states along with Canada, Iceland and Spain, the pilot projects include corporate headquarters, botanic gardens, streetscapes, federal buildings and public parks that vary in scope from several thousand dollar budgets on less than one acre to multimillion dollar efforts affecting hundreds of acres. These projects will restore habitats, rehabilitate landfills, clean and store stormwater, lower the urban heat island effect, create outdoor educational opportunities at schools and reconnect neighborhoods to parks and public transportation.

"It's exciting that many of these pilot projects – eight in every ten – will revitalize previously built landscapes," said Susan Rieff, executive director of the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center. "We can address the serious environmental challenges the world faces in its existing communities by consciously redeveloping these spaces for ecological health as well as beauty."

"Testing the rating system is critical to ensuring the validity and breadth of these guidelines and performance benchmarks, which have undergone four years of rigorous development," said Holly H. Shimizu, executive director of the United States Botanic Garden. "The true value of this endeavor is that it offers improved landscape development practices so that we can maximize the essential benefits supplied by the natural world."

The SITES Rating System includes 15 prerequisites and 51 different credits covering areas such as the initial site selection, water, soil, vegetation, materials, human health and well-being, construction and maintenance – adding up to a 250 point scale. The rating system recognizes levels of achievement by obtaining 40, 50, 60 or 80 percent of available points with one through four stars, respectively.

SITES will receive feedback from the pilot projects until June 2012 and revise the final rating system and reference guide for release in 2013.

[Read descriptions of all 175 pilot projects listed by location.](#)

Image credit: Super Bowl Village – Georgia Street Improvements. Indianapolis, Indiana. RATIO Architects, Crawford, Murphy & Tilly Inc., IEI – Infrastructure Engineering Inc., Heapy Engineering.

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