

Designing for the Future

Incorporating SITES into sustainable landscape regulations

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[Cultural Arts Corridor: The Lower Ramble](#) | Photo: City of Fayetteville

In order for landscapes to be effectively used in governance at least two conditions are necessary. First, the services that landscapes provide must be understood and viewed as relevant and, second, there needs to be tools to act. Ecosystem services help with the first condition and SITES with the second.

From “[Landscape Governance: The Prospects for the SITES Rating System](#),” by Frederick Steiner, SITES AP, FASLA, FAAR, RAAR, University of Pennsylvania¹

Land use in the United States is largely regulated at the municipal level, dating back to the Supreme Court approval of comprehensive zoning in the 1920s². Municipalities often face challenges in implementing landscape development regulations; even more so when they seek to integrate sustainable and resilient design strategies into those regulations. Towns and cities searching for a clear, replicable and verifiable approach to sustainable land development are increasingly incorporating [SITES certification into their regulatory toolbox](#).

The Sustainable SITES Initiative is owned and administered by [Green Business Certification Inc. \(GBCI\)](#), the certifying body for the Leadership for Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) rating system, which established the first baseline for green building standards. SITES offers a comprehensive rating system designed to guide, evaluate and certify a project's sustainability in the planning, design, construction and management of landscapes and other outdoor spaces. It complements the LEED rating system, which is also used in many municipal regulatory standards. SITES' nature-based solutions and strategies promote biodiversity, conserve water and other resources, mitigate climate change, improve public health and provide economic benefits in development projects.

To date, SITES has identified

- Fifteen localities incorporating SITES into their local ordinances.
- Twelve additional localities adopting SITES in local or institutional policy and development guidelines.
- Two states that have adopted SITES through legislation or executive action.
- One occurrence of SITES adoption at the federal level.

As municipalities and institutions across the world are increasingly turning their focus to sustainability, resilience and decarbonization strategies, landscapes are a powerful resource to support biodiversity, reduce risk from natural hazards and climate change impacts, reduce urban heat island effects, conserve water and provide access to community spaces that improve human health and well-being.

Local, state and federal government branches are also enacting SITES across their land development projects to pursue these goals. The following snapshots give a brief overview of each category, with details and links to further information in the [appendix](#). The purpose of this resource is to document the progress made and to provide ideas and inspiration for other institutions seeking to reinforce their own sustainability policies.

Do you know of additional local, state or federal regulations incorporating SITES? Are you pursuing this kind of work in your own institution? Let us know by emailing sites@gbc.org.



[Arizona State University Orange Mall Green Infrastructure Project](#) | Photo: Marion Brenner

Snapshot: Local ordinances

The sixteen localities enshrining SITES into law are distributed across the country. Six require SITES in some situations. Four award points for SITES as an option for achieving a specific required score. Three offer development incentives for SITES, and three encourage SITES adoption. The following chart details this in summary.

SITES in Local Ordinances (as of 10/23)		
Required		
Austin	TX	Required for projects over \$2 million
Bryan	TX	Required for planned development district
Dyer	IN	Required design guideline
East Pikeland Township	PA	Required for overlay district
King County	WA	Required for county-owned or -financed projects
Lexington	MA	Required for sites over 1/2 acre
Contributing		
Chicago	IL	Contributes to required development elements
Dallas	TX	Contributes to required development elements
Lexington—Fayette County	KY	Contributes to adaptive reuse requirement
Wilton Manors	FL	Contributes to required development elements
Incentivized		
New Haven	CT	Contributes to larger building size
Pompano Beach	FL	Reduces or increases parking requirements
Will County	IL	Contributes to “bonus dwelling units”
Encouraged		
Broward County	FL	Encouraged in development requirements
Easthampton	MA	Incorporated into smart-growth zoning district
Edina	MN	Encouraged in park master plan

Snapshot: Local or institutional policy

Washington, D.C.; Lakewood, Colorado; Lincolnwood, Illinois; New York City, New York; and the Illinois Metropolitan Mayors Caucus have each embraced SITES in various localities through administrative policies, rather than local legislative action.

The Atlanta Beltline, San Francisco State University, Colby College, University of Illinois Chicago and Arizona State University (ASU) have each incorporated SITES into their development policies. ASU includes SITES in its section discussing a governor’s (former Arizona Gov. Janet Napolitano) executive order mandating LEED.

The Illinois Metropolitan Mayors Caucus 2016 “Green Region Compact,” adopted by 156 communities and four counties, calls for achieving SITES certification in public landscapes and promotes it for use in commercial and institutional landscapes.

Snapshot: State legislation or executive action

Largely due to the efforts of [Rhode Island Green Building Council \(RIGBC\)](#) Chair Ken Filarski, Rhode Island expanded its Green Building Act in 2022 to include a LEED for Neighborhood Development (LEED ND) and SITES requirement for state and municipal projects.

Texas, through executive action by Gov. Greg Abbot in 2018, incorporated SITES into its statewide comprehensive outdoor recreation plan (SCORP). This plan is required every five years for states to access matching federal funds for statewide outdoor recreation planning. The Texas SCORP asserts: “It should be the goal of all public outdoor recreation projects, buildings and sites to strive to follow as many of the LEED and SSI [Sustainable SITES Initiative] concepts as possible, even if the projects are not participating in full and formal certification.”

Snapshot: Federal policy

During the Obama Administration in 2010, the “[Guidance for Federal Agencies on Sustainable Practices for Designed Landscapes](#)” was developed in response to [Executive Order 13514](#), which called for Federal agencies and facilities to improve their sustainability efforts. The United States Botanic Garden was asked to lead the development of the guidance document, while technical assistance was provided by the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center. This was due in part to their participation in releasing the first SITES rating system in 2009, which described best practices and performance goals for the design, construction and maintenance of sustainable landscapes. The Sustainable SITES Initiative is a former partnership of the American Society of Landscape Architects, the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center at the University of Texas at Austin and the U.S. Botanic Garden. Knowledge gained in developing the Sustainable SITES Initiative served as background for many of the recommendations provided in [the ensuing guidance document](#).

In 2015, the [U.S. General Services Administration \(GSA\)](#) began to require the achievement of SITES Silver certification, as a minimum, for projects under GSA’s capital construction program. Largely through the work of the then-GSA national Design Director for Landscape Architect Christian Gabriel, the GSA determined that the incorporation of SITES offers a highly effective and efficient way to compel environmental performance and project efficiencies, including effective cost control, on various capital project types.

“Using SITES gives us project accountability and, frankly, raises the bar on our quality of work,” explained Kevin Hartz, current senior landscape architect for the U.S. General Services Administration (GSA), in [an interview with USGBC+](#). “It makes the difference between talking the talk and walking the walk for our sustainability work.”

Appendix—SITES in U.S. Law and Policy

Local Ordinance

A. Required

- Austin, Texas

Sustainable Landscape Guidance:

The ... policy for new construction for CIP projects includes a NEW requirement for Parks and Recreation Department projects over \$2M to achieve Sustainable SITES certification.

Sustainability does not stop at the front doors. Sustainable landscapes provide numerous benefits for the environment, property owners and communities. Thoughtfully designed landscapes can positively impact building and landscape performance, maintenance and aesthetics as well as promote human and ecological health. The policy outlines landscape and green Infrastructure strategies that should be encouraged and prioritized into all applicable projects.

[Austin Green Building Policy Resolution \(2021\)](#)

[City of Austin Improves Resilience and Community Health Through Landscape Development in Parks and Green Spaces—AustinTexas.gov](#)

[Austin Will Require All Future Parks and Recreation Projects to Achieve SITES Certification—The Architect’s Newspaper](#)

- Bryan, Texas

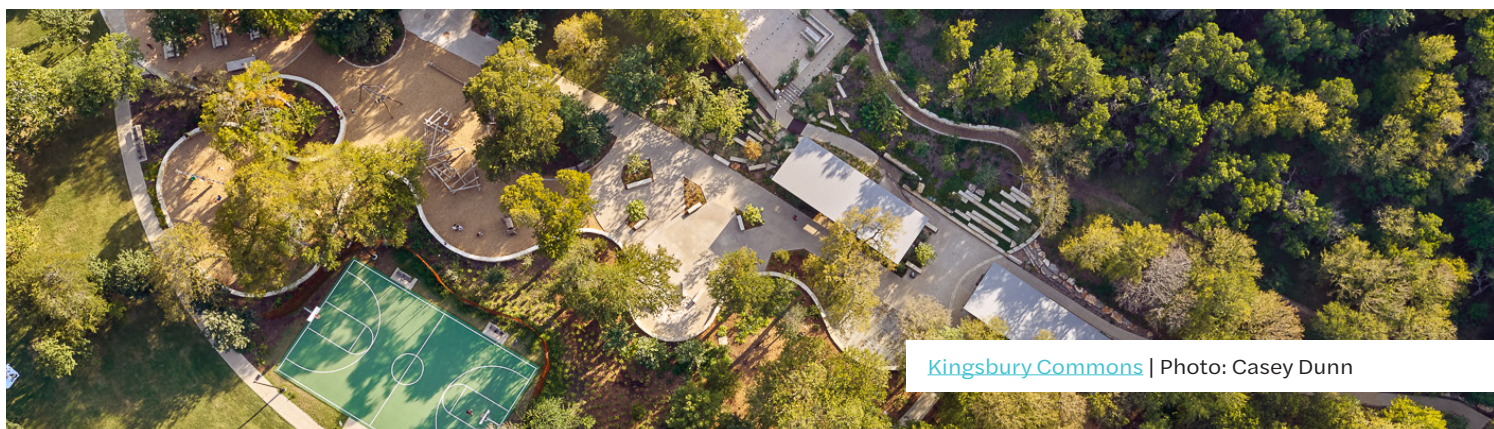
The following general development standards shall apply to all of the BioCorridor Planned Development District except where expressly stated to apply to, or exclude, specific districts.

... The sensitive design and development of this corridor will enable the natural and built systems to work together to meet present needs without jeopardizing the ability of future generations to meet their needs. The standards of this article are intended to use environmental sensitivity standards in order to:

... Foster environmental stewardship through the adherence to the Sustainable Sites Initiative and Guidelines and their Ecosystem Scoreboard.

[Ordinance 2300: Amending a Previously Approved Planned Development \(2018\)](#)

[Ordinance 2336: Amending a Previously Approved Planned Development \(2019\)](#)



- Dyer, Indiana

These minimum landscape standards apply to all public and private Multi-Family Residential, Commercial, Institutional and Industrial developments in the Town ... The Commission must use the following design guidelines to evaluate proposed landscaping plans:

... The best professional practices of the American Society of Landscape Architects and Indiana Nursery [and] Landscape Association are mandatory and incorporated into this ordinance. In addition, guidelines proposed and referenced through the Sustainable Sites Initiative should be utilized.

[Ordinance No. 2021-30: Sec. 10-147.11 Design Guidelines](#)

- East Pikeland Township, Pennsylvania

In addition to all the other design standards in this Ordinance, the below listed standards shall apply specifically within the KLID Overlay District. Low Impact Development residents are united by shared ecological, social, economic, and cultural values. All development under this Article shall attain at least the minimum scores and percentages recited in this Ordinance as to the sustainable land development assessment method SITES v2 Rating System, the dwelling unit energy assessment system RESNET-HERS, and the renewable energy requirements. Development shall incorporate the following standards within its design and function to facilitate social interaction, low-impact site design, energy conservation, and renewable energy.

[KLID Kimberton Low Impact Development Overlay District](#)

- King County, Washington

Green Building Program

The definitions in this section apply throughout this chapter unless the context clearly requires otherwise.

A. “Alternative green building rating system” means a third-party green building certification other than LEED or the King County Sustainable Infrastructure Scorecard. The following are accepted alternative green building rating systems, but the executive may also accept certification through other rating systems as appropriate:

... SITES

... The policy intent of this chapter is to ensure that the planning, design, construction, remodeling, renovation, historic preservation, maintenance, operation and decommissioning of any King County-owned, lease-to-own or financed capital project is consistent with the latest green building and sustainable development practices.

... The procurement services section of the department of executive services shall, where possible and appropriate, include green building requirements in capital design and construction contracts, bid documents and technical specifications. The project manager responsible for the capital project shall collaborate with procurement services section staff to determine where green building requirements are possible and appropriate. As applicable, requests for proposals and qualifications should include a list or description of green building rating system certification experience. Procurement documents that relate to construction or capital projects shall cite this chapter.

[Title 18 Environmental Sustainability Program: King County, Washington](#)

- Lexington, Massachusetts

Projects that involve disturbance of more than 1/2 acre of land shall demonstrate certifiability at the [G]old level under SITES v2, as amended.

[Site Plan Review and Special Permit Design Regulations 12.6.1](#)

B. Contributing

- Chicago, Illinois

Chicago Sustainable Development Policy Handbook

... There are two compliance paths available to meet the requirements of the Chicago Sustainable Development Policy. The first pathway involves earning the required number of points without achieving any of the listed building certifications. The required number of points must be achieved from the Menu of Sustainable Strategies explained below.

The second pathway is for projects to achieve one of the listed building certifications. Projects obtaining one of the certifications will start with a certain number of points depending on the type of certification and in certain cases the level of certification. The remaining number of required points will need to be reached through the strategies listed in the menu. Certain strategies are not applicable (NA) because they will have been met by obtaining the certification.

The updated policy framework and requirements apply to all Redevelopment Agreements, Planned Development Agreements, Site Plan Approvals, projects required to comply with the Chicago Air Quality Ordinance (17-9-0117-G) and Planned Development Amendments reviewed by the Department of Planning and Development's Design Review Committee after Jan. 9, 2017.

The strategies in the menu have been categorized as follows: Health, Energy, Stormwater, Landscapes, Green Roofs, Water, Transportation, Solid Waste, Work Force and Wildlife.

... Landscapes

4.4 Achieve Sustainable SITES Certification

SITES is the culmination of years of research and development by leading professionals in the fields of soil, water, vegetation, materials and human health. By providing performance measures rather than prescribing practices, SITES supports the unique conditions of each site, encouraging project teams to be flexible and creative as they develop beautiful, functional and regenerative landscapes. SITES-certified landscapes help reduce water demand, filter and reduce stormwater runoff, provide wildlife habitat, reduce energy consumption, improve air quality, improve human health and increase outdoor recreation opportunities.

Compliance Documentation: A sealed letter from the landscape architect of record stating they will achieve certification and a scorecard detailing the credits that will be pursued.

[Chicago Sustainable Development Policy Handbook](#)

[Chicago Zoning Ordinance and Land Use Ordinance: 17-8-0900 Standards and Guidelines](#)

[Chicago Zoning Ordinance and Land Use Ordinance: 17-9-0100 Use Standards](#)

- Dallas, Texas

LANDSCAPE DESIGN OPTIONS.

Points required for a building site. Points are obtained by meeting design option requirements in order to achieve the total number of points required for the property.

11. The applicant may provide documentation and demonstrate ability to achieve certain conditions.

Option 1. Provide Sustainable SITES Initiative documentation and demonstrate ability to attain SITES [C]ertified level or greater. 10 points.

Option 2. Provide and implement a landscape maintenance plan for a minimum three year period. Three points. (Ord. Nos. 19455; 20496; 22053; 30929)

[City of Dallas, Texas, Code of Ordinances: Sec. 51A-10.126—Landscape Design Options](#)

- Lexington—Fayette County, Kentucky

Adaptive Reuse Projects may be permitted by the Planning Commission upon the approval of a final development plan, subject to the following requirements

... The applicant shall include at least one element from the following categories and must reach total score of 10 points:

... Green Rated Site Design (Sustainable Sites Initiative or similar standard) (3 points) - Incorporating whole of project area.

[Zoning Ordinance Article 8—Schedule of Zones: Sec. 8-21. Wholesale and Warehouse Business \(B-4\) Zone](#)

- Wilton Manors, Florida

SITES certification will provide 2 points towards a required 10–16 points, depending on building type, for most new and substantial redevelopment projects.

[Wilton Manors, Florida, Code of Ordinances: Article 170—Wilton Manors Green Building Program](#)



C. Incentivized

- New Haven, Connecticut

Article V, Section 43 Section 43. - Bulk, yard and density regulations for business and industrial districts.

“Public Plaza that meets SITES certification or equivalent can qualify for additional FAR points at .5 of the points assigned to the equivalent LEED certification rating set forth in subsections 1a–1d above.”

[New Haven, Connecticut—Zoning: Section 43. Bulk, Yard and Density Regulations for Business and Industrial Districts](#)

- Pompano Beach, Florida

New development in the Multiple-Family (RM-), Business (B-), Industrial (I-1, I-IX, OIP, M-2), and Transit Oriented (TO) districts that provide sustainable features [... including s]ite and landscaping design that attains a minimum Sustainable Sites certification of Two Stars [can earn bonus of m]odification in the minimum or maximum number of off-street parking spaces by up to 5 percent.

[City of Pompano Beach Zoning Code: 155.5803. Bonuses for Sustainable Development Features](#)

- Will County, Illinois

A conservation design subdivision designed in accordance with this section ... is a by-right permitted use.... Other development options include a conventional residential subdivision or a planned unit development residential subdivision. When this option is utilized, the regulations of this section are intended to encourage subdivision designs that are more efficient and provide more open space and greater natural resource protection than conventional subdivision designs. One goal of conservation design subdivisions is to allow more compact and less costly networks of streets and utilities. They may also help preserve aquifer recharge, reduce stormwater runoff, reduce non-point source pollutant loading rates and preserve an area’s semi-rural character. Conservation design subdivisions are intended to encourage the provision of open space and recreational amenities for residents and preserve natural, environmentally sensitive and other resources.

[Bonus dwelling units beyond the maximum allowed may be earned by developments providing] design excellence and quality in building style and material. This may include, but not be limited to, compact clustering of home sites with the efficient and appropriate layout of roads and utilities and energy conserving landscaping. This should include the utilization of native plant species and the preservation of natural resources. The aforementioned design should reflect nationally recognized standards, such as the Sustainable Sites Initiative, LEED or National Association of Homebuilders Green Building Standards or as described in the Developer’s Handbook. (not to exceed a[n] 8% bonus)]

[Will County, Illinois, Code of Ordinances: § 154.268 Density Bonuses; Calculations](#)



[Bartholdi Park at U.S. Botanic Garden](#) | Photo: U.S. Botanic Garden

D. Encouraged

- Broward County, Florida

Sec. 39-75. - Purpose and intent.

The general purposes of this article are as follows:

(a) To establish minimum standards for the development, redevelopment, installation, and maintenance of Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ areas in the unincorporated area of Broward County, without inhibiting creative landscape design, construction, and management, and to protect and enhance the aesthetic character of Broward County;

... (e) To promote the use of Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) and The Sustainable Sites Initiative (SITES®) in the landscape environment;

Definition: Sustainable Sites; Green Infrastructure: Sites that have received certification from either the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) or The Sustainable Sites Initiative (SITES®).

... LEED and Sustainable Sites concepts are encouraged in order to increase Green Infrastructure for sites being developed and to make them more environmentally conducive.

[Broward County, Florida, Code of Ordinances: Chapter 39, Article VIII—Landscaping for Protection of Water Quality and Quantity](#)

- Easthampton, Massachusetts

The City of Easthampton Design Standards Smart Growth Zoning District:

The special zoning district, permitted by Massachusetts General Law Chapter 40R, is designed to encourage the development of and access to deed restricted affordable housing. Working essentially as an incentive program, 40R allows a developer to create more housing than zoning would normally permit provided at least 20 percent of the units are affordable.

... As stated in the 2008 Master Plan, the residents of Easthampton would like to see any new development be designed in a way that respects the community character and cultural, natural, and historical features evident throughout the community. We encourage applicants to consider the following design principals when proposing a new Chapter 40R development into the city.

... Adherence to the Resilient MA Action Team Climate Resilience Design Standards and Guidelines including risk rating, design standards, guidelines, and best practices. Encourage designs focused on promoting native vegetation and wildlife support, such as:

- Pursuit of SITES Certification for sustainable landscapes, as guided by the SITES v2 Scorecard Summary

[The City of Easthampton Design Standards: Smart Growth Zoning District](#)

Also found on the [Planning Board web page](#) (under “Forms & Document: Rules & Regulations”).

- Edina, Minnesota

Park, Recreation and Trails Strategic Plan, Appendix A Implementation Framework:

Develop more sustainable parks and trails infrastructure that are resilient to impacts of climate change

Tactic: Use the Sustainable Sites Initiative (SITES®) as a guide for new park development and retrofits, and to create a green operations plan. SITES® is the landscape and site equivalent to LEED and is the most comprehensive guide and objective sustainability rating system for the landscape

Performance Measure: Utilize SSI checklist for all new and major renovation projects.

[Park, Recreation and Trails Strategic Plan Appendices, Strategy 2.2](#)

Local or Institutional Policy

- Atlanta Beltline

The Atlanta BeltLine Sustainability Guidelines require compliance with portions of LEED™-NC and Sustainable Sites Initiative (SSI) green landscape guidelines to ensure that the BeltLine corridor will be built with green materials, using best practices available in green construction.

[Sustainability 040711—Atlanta BeltLine](#)

[Atlanta BeltLine Requires SITES Certification for Future Parks—retrofit](#)

[The Atlanta BeltLine Will Require SITES Certification for Future Parks](#)

- Arizona State University

The State of Arizona Governor's Executive Order 2005-05 mandates that all new state facilities achieve LEED Silver certification. LEED Silver is the minimum standard for ASU new construction and major renovation projects with Platinum certification as the goal. ASU has pre-determined LEED credits it usually obtains to assist in building design efficiency, as outlined in Section 3: 01 81 13. Compliance with certain LEED credits and sustainability specifications is required for all projects regardless of whether the project is required to achieve LEED Silver certification. All landscape projects are to pursue qualification for Sustainable Sites certification and seek certification when OUA determines it to be appropriate. All parking garages are to pursue qualification for ParkSmart certification and seek certification when OUA and Parking and Transit Services determine it to be appropriate.

[ASU Sustainable Design Guidelines](#)

- Colby College

Colby is committed to planting only native or naturalized species on campus to cultivate a healthy and natural ecosystem, which minimizes maintenance and resource use. Colby has made a commitment to implement the SITES rating system in new landscape designs wherever possible. In 2018, the Colby College Athletic Fields became the first project in New England to achieve SITES certification.

[Colby College Green Development Plan: Landscape](#)

- Fayetteville, Arkansas

Does not appear to have adopted SITES into regulation but has a page dedicated to SITES to share information on its certified project.

[SITES Certification: City of Fayetteville, Arkansas—Official Website](#)

- Illinois Metropolitan Mayors Caucus

The Greenest Region Compact 2 presents consensus goals for environmental sustainability to be addressed by local municipalities, yet will have coordinated, positive impacts on a much larger scale. [This calls for municipalities to:]

“Promote Sustainable SITES Certification for commercial and institutional landscapes” and for municipalities to “Lead by demonstrating sustainable values and practices” by achieving “Sustainable Sites certification for public landscapes.”

[GRC2: The Framework](#)

[Participating Communities and Councils of Governments](#)

[Sample endorsing resolution](#)

Adopted by 156 communities, four counties, and all Chicago-region Council of Governments: [Greenest Region Compact—Mayors Caucus](#)

[Full list of communities](#) as of July 2023

- Lakewood, Colorado, Sustainability Plan

Encourage development in Lakewood that values the natural environment and supports public health and community cohesion.

Implementation strategies: Sustainable Site Planning and Development: Key elements of the Sustainable Sites Initiative (SSI) to integrate into the City’s site planning standards. Specifically:

- Conduct a comprehensive assessment of the Sustainable Sites Initiative to identify key concepts and requirements applicable to Lakewood; and
- Incorporate sustainable site planning requirements and guidelines into the City’s Zoning Ordinance with consideration of the benefits and costs.

[City of Lakewood Sustainability Plan 2015 \(Page 49\)](#)

- Lincolnwood, Illinois

Encourage strategic development that upholds sustainability principles

- Promote Sustainable Sites Certification for commercial and institutional landscape

[Draft Sustainability Plan, July 2023](#)



[Colby College Harold Alfond Athletics and Recreation Center](#) | Photo: Colby College

- New York City, New York

As the SITES developers were in the pilot project stage, the New York City Department of Parks & Recreation adapted the system for its new landscape guidelines (Design Trust for Public Space and the City of New York 2010). Under the leadership of Mayor Michael Bloomberg and Parks Commissioner Adrian Benepe, the city and the Design Trust for Public Space assembled municipal staff, park advocates, and designers to create a blueprint for designing, building, and maintaining the city's 29,000 acres (11,736 hectares) of parks and open space. It was one measure to help implement the city's 2007 plan, *PlaNYC*, and part of the [mayor's strategy](#) to significantly expand parks and open space throughout the city. The resulting [High-Performance Landscape Guidelines: 21st Century Parks for NYC](#) (Design Trust for Public Space and City of New York 2010; See also Carlisle and Pevzner 2012) was closely aligned with SITES as it existed then.

[Landscape Governance: The Prospects for the SITES Rating System, by Frederick Steiner](#)

- San Francisco State University Sustainable Development Framework

Many of the performance requirements herein are based on third-party rating systems and other resources; the specific applicable criteria are referenced in the relevant sections of this Framework. These rating criteria are utilized as the foundation for this Framework because they represent the building industry's best thinking and expertise as to what are truly the best practices in a given area or discipline, as well as how to implement those practices and how they can be credibly verified.

SITES credits are included as options for demonstrating performance in the following areas:

- Community Engagement
- Long Asset Life
- Landscape
- Transportation
- Construction Waste & Pollution Prevention

[San Francisco State University Sustainable Development Framework](#)

- University of Illinois Chicago

All new construction and major renovation projects on campus, regardless of their size or budget, must complete the CAIP checklist for UIC projects, using the LEED® or SITES™ template. Building projects must achieve Gold level or higher and landscape projects must achieve Silver or higher. If the building project costs more than \$5 million, the project must be registered with GBCI and obtain LEED Gold level certification. If the landscape project costs more than \$2.5 million, the project must be registered with GBCI and obtain SITES Silver level certification.

[Climate Action Implementation Plan](#)

- Washington, D.C.

Maintenance Standards: Create official maintenance standards based on industry best practices, such as Sustainable SITES Initiative (SITES) or an equivalent system, to improve the effectiveness of current maintenance and service levels for recreational buildings, facilities, and landscaping. Both maintenance contractors and the District should adhere to these standards.

[The Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital District, Chapter 8: Parks, Recreation and Open Space Element—810.17](#)

State Legislation or Executive Action

- Rhode Island

37-24-4. Green building standards.

(a) All public major facility projects of the state, public agencies, municipalities and political subdivisions shall be designed and constructed to at least the LEED, LEED for Neighborhood Development, and SITES, as provided herein, certified or an equivalent high-performance green building standard. This provision applies to public major facility projects or other public improvements of any kind to any public facility that have not entered the design phase prior to July 1, 2023, for LEED, LEED for Neighborhood Development and for SITES.

(b) All public major facility projects of a public school facility, where the project receives any funding from the state, shall be designed and constructed to at least the LEED, LEED for Neighborhood Development, and SITES, as provided herein, certified standard, or the Northeast Collaborative for High-Performance Schools Protocol, Version 1.1 or above. This provision applies to public major facility projects or other public improvements by the state or a public school district to any public school facility that have not entered the design phase prior to July 1, 2023, for LEED, LEED for Neighborhood Development, and for SITES.

[Rhode Island: The Green Buildings Act](#)

[The Green Buildings Act and Green Buildings Advisory Committee \(GBAC\)—State of Rhode Island Building Code Commission](#)

[Rhode Island Amends Its Green Buildings Act—USGBC](#)

- 2018 Texas Outdoor Recreation Plan

The [Federal] LWCF Act of 1965 authorized the distribution of matching grants to states and local governments for statewide outdoor recreation planning, and to leverage public and private investment in public outdoor recreation through the acquisition and development of outdoor recreation areas and facilities. The 2018 Texas Outdoor Recreation Plan (TORP) fulfills an eligibility requirement allowing Texas to continue receiving its allotted appropriation through the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) program. Each state is required to produce a statewide comprehensive outdoor recreation plan (SCORP) at least once every five years. The Texas Parks & Wildlife Department (TPWD) is the state agency that holds the authority to represent and act for the state of Texas regarding the LWCF stateside assistance program.

... A move from solely recreation-based parks to sustainable parks not only improves the quality of the natural environment, but also adds to the visitor experience in the park and the community in general. Many of the initiatives defined within this chapter are outlined in the Sustainable Sites Initiative (SSI) which was developed by a partnership between the American Society of Landscape Architects, the Ladybird Johnson Wildflower Center at the University of Texas in Austin, and the U.S. Botanical Garden.

The SSI offers a set of “voluntary national guidelines and performance benchmarks for sustainable land design, construction, and maintenance practices” (American Society of Landscape Architects, Ladybird Johnson Wildflower Center, U.S. Botanic Garden, 2009). The SSI is modeled after the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED®) Green Building Rating System™ and is a 250 point rating system based on 15 prerequisites and 51 credits. The U.S. Green Building Council anticipates incorporating the SSI rating system into future versions of the LEED Green Building Design Rating System. In an attempt to increase the validity of TPWD’s Sustainable Park Design initiative, many of the key elements outlined are further supported by the prerequisites and credits listed under the SSI SITES rating system. Land practices are defined as sustainable if they enable natural and built systems to

work together to “meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (American Society of Landscape Architects, Ladybird Johnson Wildflower Center, U.S. Botanical Garden, 2009).

It should be the goal of all public outdoor recreation projects, buildings, and sites to strive to follow as many of the LEED and SSI concepts as possible, even if the projects are not participating in full and formal certification.

[2018 Texas Outdoor Recreation Plan](#)

[Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plans \(SCORPs\)—American Trails](#)

[How States Plan and Select Projects—Land and Water Conservation Fund \(U.S. National Park Service\)](#)

Federal Policy

- General Services Administration (GSA)

In 2015 U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) reached a decision to adopt the Sustainable Sites Initiative (SITES) certification program, with a minimum silver rating, for GSA’s capital construction program. The GSA determined that the incorporation of SITES, which provides a focus on ecological services and economic and environmental sustainability beyond a building’s envelope, and also possesses the ability to be applied independently or coupled with LEED certification, offers a highly effective and efficient way to compel environmental performance and project efficiencies, including effective cost control, on various capital project types.

This decision was originally memorialized in the 2016 version of [GSA’s Facilities Standards for the Public Buildings Service \(P-100\)](#) document, and has been renewed again in subsequent editions. The P-100 establishes design standards and criteria for new buildings, site improvements, infrastructural projects, major and minor alterations, and work in historic structures for the Public Buildings Service (PBS) of the General Services Administration. This document contains both policy and technical criteria used in the programming, design, and documentation of GSA buildings and facilities.

[SITES Certification—U.S. General Services Administration](#)

[General Services Administration Has Adopted SITES—USGBC+](#)

[Interview with Christian Gabriel, ASLA—American Society of Landscape Architects](#)

Endnotes

- 1 Steiner, Frederick. “Landscape Governance: The Prospects for the SITES Rating System.” *Socio-Ecological Practice Research* 2 (2020): 301–10. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s42532-020-00068-x>.
- 2 American Bar Association. *Municipal Power to Regulation Land Use*. [https://www.law.cornell.edu/wex/village_of_euclid_v_ambler_realty_\(1926\)](https://www.law.cornell.edu/wex/village_of_euclid_v_ambler_realty_(1926))