

THE EMERGENCE OF THE SITES RATING SYSTEM FOR ENHANCING PUBLIC PLACES

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1 ABSTRACT

This paper addresses the results of the Sustainable SITES Initiative, which created the SITES rating system and its emergence as a tool for landscape governance. The method used is reflective analysis from two individuals intimately involved in the design of a distinctive rating system specifically geared toward landscapes and other outdoor spaces. The purpose is to create more understanding of the process of developing the SITES system to demonstrate its interdisciplinary nature and extensive research. A key finding is that the SITES rating system is proving valuable for landscape governance. SITES' contribution to landscape governance is important because it empowers landscape and site design in the development decision-making process, ensuring that essential ecosystem services are protected and restored in our communities. This paper first reviews the history of the design of the SITES rating system. Several examples of how it is being used by federal, state, and local agencies and entities follow, including the U.S General Services Administration, Arizona State University, and the Atlanta BeltLine in Georgia. The paper concludes with prospects about the future applications of SITES in ensuring development projects strive to protect and restore ecosystem services, foster resilience and improve the overall quality of life. SITES elevates the value of sustainable landscapes in development projects (with or without buildings) and in concert, also highlights the importance of landscape architecture in such work.

1.1 Keywords:

Sustainable sites, ecosystem services, site design, landscape governance, resilience