

ABSTRACT

The authors are conducting case study research to identify the factors that lead to the adoption of sustainable design practices in the planning and design of the public realm, resulting in the creation of High Performance Public Spaces (HPPSs). A HPPS is being defined as any publicly accessible outdoor and/or indoor space that generates economic, environmental, and social sustainability benefits for its community. The research is based on the Diffusion of Innovation Theory (DIT), which states that the diffusion and adoption of innovation is “a kind of universal process of social change” (Rogers, 2003, p.xvi). In order to select cases for research, the authors first needed to develop criteria to identify HPPSs. While sustainability indicator programs such as Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design (LEED) and Sustainable Sites Initiative (SITES) provided criteria for some dimensions of HPPSs, such as healthy ecosystems, the authors sought to develop criteria for a public space that generates the full array of economic, environmental, and social sustainability benefits. An initial set of 41 HPPS criteria was developed from a review of literature regarding great public spaces and sustainability indicators. The authors then employed a two-round Delphi method to review, refine, and develop 25 performance criteria for a HPPS. The resulting criteria were used to solicit, rank, and select three cases of HPPSs for further study into the factors that influence the adoption of sustainable design innovations in the planning and design of public spaces.