



The Sustainable Sites Initiative is an **interdisciplinary effort** by the American Society of Landscape Architects, the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center and the United States Botanic Garden to create **voluntary national guidelines and performance benchmarks** for **sustainable land design, construction and maintenance practices**.

Sustainable Sites Initiative was created to promote sustainable land development and management practices that can apply to sites with and without buildings including, but not limited to the following:

- Open spaces such as local, state and national parks, conservation easements and buffer zones and transportation rights-of-way.
- Sites with buildings including industrial, retail and office parks, military complexes, airports, botanical gardens, streetscapes and plazas, residential and commercial developments and public and private campuses.

The Sustainable Sites Initiative will provide tools for those who influence land development and management practices and can address increasingly urgent global concerns such as climate change, loss of biodiversity, and resource depletion. They can be used by those who design, construct, operate and maintain landscapes, including but not limited to planners, landscape architects, engineers, developers, builders, maintenance crews, horticulturists, governments, land stewards and organizations offering building standards.

This effort began as separate projects of the Sustainable Design and Development Professional Practice Network of the American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA) and the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center. In 2005, the two groups joined forces to hold a Sustainable Sites Summit in Austin, Texas.

In 2006, the United States Botanical Garden (USBG) joined as a major partner in the Initiative. A Steering Committee representing 11 stakeholder groups was selected to guide the Initiative. More than 30 experts are now on Technical Subcommittees developing sustainable benchmarks for soils, hydrology, vegetation, human health and well-being and materials selection. These subcommittees are developing the technical foundation for the Guidelines and Performance Benchmarks. The first interim report - the "Preliminary Report" - was released in November 2007.

The U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC), a stakeholder in the Initiative, anticipates incorporating these guidelines and performance benchmarks into future iterations of the LEED® (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Green Building Rating System™.

Please visit their web site at <http://www.sustainablesites.org/> for more information...and contact RDA Landscape Architects (<http://www.retnauer-design.com>) to learn about our own sustainable and creative design initiatives for local projects.