ASLA
AMERICAN SOCIETY
OF LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS
WASHINGTON CHAPTER

UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON
BOTANIC GARDENS
Plants for Life

Followup to May 18, 2011 workshop: **The Science, Services and Performance of Sustainable Sites**
Center for Urban Horticulture, Seattle, Washington

Summary Notes from SITES Breakout Group Discussion: CHALLENGES, SOLUTIONS & NEXT STEPS

Four focal groups explored the challenges and opportunities of SITES within an area of common interest: Maintenance Practices, Plants, Water and Long-term Ecosystem Services. By identifying current challenges and opportunities in practice and in the SITES requirements, we hope to transform future practices and help ensure SITES can meet its intended goal.

Group 1: "Maintenance Marmots" *(Maintenance Practices)*

Challenges:

- People have expectations of landscapes. Sustainable practices and reducing maintenance inputs require adjustment of people's expectations of landscapes, which requires education
- Creating natural landscapes with regenerative components

Solutions:

- **Provide credit for education/interpretation of sustainable maintenance practices**
  Use interpretive signage to explain maintenance regime.
  Provide Operations and Maintenance innovation credits for education and interpretation.
- **Provide life-cycle cost comparison data on sustainable practice vs. legacy mow/blow/go.**
  Up front cost vs. long term maintenance information would be valuable as requirements to get innovation credits.
- **Require Best Management Practice checklist within interpretive plan to assure design intent and best use of resources for long and short-term planning**
  Site purpose and longer term intent and plan would be valuable to everyone.

Word brainstorm: frequency, intensity, threshold, costs/payback, research, expected outcome, education, fantasy/reality/maturing vs. short term, BMPs, thinning, client, turf justification/maintenance, soil site prep, land use modification, outreach, interpretation, collaboration process.

Group 2: "The Conscientious Gardeners" *(Plants)*

Challenges and concerns:

- Who is the client? What is the use?
- Cost of plantings vs. lawn (lawn is cheaper to install, may cost more over time for maintenance)
- Are natives appropriate for all sites? Mass plantings of horticultural natives near natural areas may be harmful.
- Is a 250 mile local standard working? Do we have suppliers that close? How will suppliers be documented?
- Quality of production systems and finished system
- Evaluation of all phases of process

Solutions:

- Provide incentives for smaller plants. People want big, now; smaller can save costs, transportation, water for establishment.
- Education throughout the system
- Specification reviews / nursery certification standards
- Cradle to Cradle custody documentation – information tracking of seed source to planting

Group 3: Dura-Sites *(Long-term Ecosystem Services)*

Challenge: Certification process. Monitoring and stewardship need to continue well beyond 5 years.
How long is appropriate for monitoring? 20-25? (increasing value measured over time)

Solutions:

- Re-certification. Certification should require long-term monitoring to ensure the value is sustained and increases.
- Create a form for feedback loops – evolving best practices (e.g. watering methods)
- Involve management
- Accommodate changing user groups

Challenge: How can the metric incorporate marketing strategies and the quantification of long-term ecosystem performance?

Solutions:

- SITES should use the results and issues encountered in pilot project to inform both the metrics and marketing efforts to educate about the larger mission.
- Provide education so that consumers will value the ecosystem and become better stewards over time.
- Real estate values should reflect perceived value and tie to current performance.

Group 4: The Water Hawks *(Water)*

Challenge: National variation in stormwater codes
Solution: Education. Provide incentives to go beyond code. Look to other jurisdictions.

Challenge: Site limitations
Solution: Think about site and the "native site"

Challenge: Definitions can be unclear
Solution: Creative interpretation of credits prior to design

Challenge: Technology/method – Should sites less able to meet minimum prerequisites have other options to meet the intent and become certified – or should the thresholds be strict in order to incite innovation and challenge groups to meet the standards?
Solution: Provide incentives.
(Should we be forcing projects to figure out how to match the set threshold or should SITES be more flexible?)

Challenge: Making people care
Solution: Show success through proof of doing it. Connect health to sustainable sites, federal regulations.
(How do you define an amenity?)

Thank you for your participation in this workshop.
Please watch the Center for Urban Horticulture and WASLA calendars, as we plan future **Science and Practice of Sustainable Sites** courses.