



# Great Public Spaces Guide

## Ideas and opportunities



Public spaces are our open spaces, public facilities and streets. They are publicly owned or of public use, accessible and enjoyable by all for free. Public spaces are the heart of our communities. This guide outlines an approach to place and seeks to help communities, industry, councils and state government take action in creating great public spaces.

### Place

Places are spaces that people have made meaningful. A place is more than its geographic location. It is a unique combination of physical form, the activities that occur there and the sense of place attachment; that is, how people feel about the place. Great places provide diverse opportunities for social interactions, have a strong character, and are welcoming, inclusive and beautiful.

### Aboriginal culture and place

All public space in NSW is on Country, which is at the core of many Aboriginal peoples' identities and sense of belonging. Acknowledging and valuing Aboriginal cultural knowledge in how public space is planned, managed and delivered can strengthen the connection to culture, identity and create healing.

### Creating a sense of place

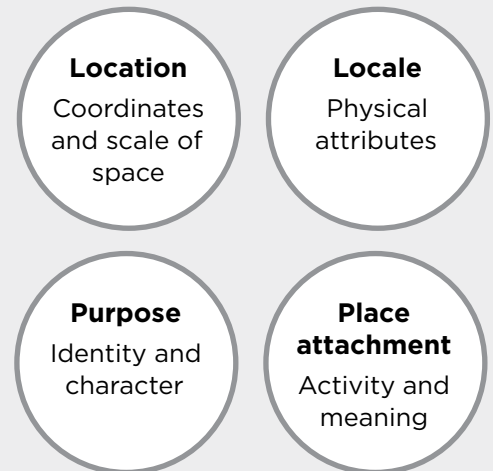
Urban environments require thoughtful planning, design and management to ensure places have character and communities at their heart. Well-planned and well-designed buildings, infrastructure and public spaces play an important role in positively influencing local identity and provide a stage for our public lives. Place management and programming, art and cultural activities, live music and performances are also key to activating public spaces and need to be considered early in design.

### Public life

Public life is the social activity that occurs in public space – the connections between neighbours, family, friends and the broader community that create delight and make life more meaningful. It is in our public spaces that we can connect 365 days a year. Public spaces support our happiness, health and well-being, environmental resilience, and prosperous local economies.

### What creates a great public space?

Great public spaces have a unique combination of the following elements:



### Evaluating the quality of public space

The four questions that follow can help us evaluate the quality of public space and public life. They can also help identify whether a place is doing well and areas for improvement.





## Great Public Facilities

*Public facilities include public libraries, museums, galleries, civic and community centres, showgrounds and indoor public sports facilities. As social infrastructure, these public spaces contribute to community identity, inclusion and cohesion. Access to high-quality and free services has a direct impact on the social and economic wellbeing of citizens.*

**Ideas and opportunities to help create great public facilities include:**

### Am I able to get there?

- People of all abilities have access to facilities
- Connected and accessible by walking, cycling and public transport
- Clear signage and centrally located wayfinding
- Located in the heart of neighbourhoods
- Extended opening hours

### Am I able to play and participate?

- Magnets for information and ideas exchange
- Vibrant artistic and cultural activities
- Facilities for diverse education programs
- Opportunities for events, exhibitions and sporting activities
- Open, playful, creative or peaceful spaces

### Am I able to stay?

- Welcoming, inclusive, safe, like community 'living rooms'
- Wi-fi and computer access
- Equitable access to educational services and materials
- A place to gather and interact or for individual pursuits
- Collaborate, work or study
- Access to community spaces

### Am I able to connect?

- Community participation online and in-person
- A positive and joyful environment
- Discover local, historic and contemporary cultural stories
- Participate in activities and networks
- Share knowledge and skills



Illustration by Gregory Baldwin. Images courtesy of Destination NSW



# Great Open Spaces

Quality open spaces make for liveable, sustainable and healthy neighbourhoods. Public open spaces include parks, gardens, play spaces, public beaches, riverbanks, waterfronts, publicly accessible bushland and outdoor playing fields and courts. They provide us with places to exercise, play, rest, participate in social activities, and contribute to healthy, happy and resilient communities.

## Ideas and opportunities to help create great open spaces include:

| Am I able to get there?  | Am I able to play and participate?  | Am I able to stay?   | Am I able to connect?   |
|--|---|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- People can easily access and move through the place</li> <li>- A short walk from homes and places of work</li> <li>- Multiple entry points</li> <li>- Near public transport</li> <li>- People can access it by walking or riding a bike</li> <li>- Equitable and accessible footpath network</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Diversity of affordable activities</li> <li>- Inclusive play spaces for all ages, abilities and backgrounds</li> <li>- Spaces for respite or relaxation</li> <li>- Event spaces and facilities</li> <li>- Places for community groups and clubs</li> <li>- Sport and recreational facilities for health and wellbeing</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Enjoyable places to sit in the sun or shade</li> <li>- Trees and plants for shade and comfort</li> <li>- Feels safe day and night</li> <li>- Sustainably maintained, clean and healthy environments</li> <li>- Places protected from the weather</li> <li>- Public and accessibility toilets and changing facilities</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Promotes positive social interactions</li> <li>- Inspires community stewardship and connection to Country</li> <li>- Places for social gathering, with opportunities for fun and celebrating</li> <li>- Vibrant and welcoming</li> <li>- Public art, heritage and local character</li> </ul> |



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# Great Streets

*Great streets, avenues, boulevards, squares and plazas, pavements, passages, lanes and bicycle paths are our towns' and cities' connectors. In our urban areas, they provide places where people can walk, ride a bike, socialise and add vitality to neighbourhoods, creating better places to live. Vibrant streets generate positive social, economic, cultural, and environmental outcomes.*

**Ideas and opportunities to help create great streets include:**

## Am I able to get there?

- Appropriate traffic levels and speeds
- Transport options
- Wide footpaths and equitable access
- Safe crossing points with tactile indicators
- Reduced obstructions and clutter
- Clear wayfinding and signage
- People are protected from vehicles

## Am I able to play and participate?

- Diverse public spaces along the street
- Play streets and shared zones
- Interactive activities and place infrastructure
- Places to relax and rest
- Regular programming, events and things to do
- Contribute to the night-time economy

## Am I able to stay?

- Space for business customers to wait or dine outdoors
- Trees and plants for shade
- Safe, clean and well-lit
- Wide footpaths for local street character
- Quality materials
- Variety of businesses and services nearby

## Am I able to connect?

- Vibrant public art, music and performance
- Colourful flowers and plants
- Loveable and authentic local character
- Places of meaning and diverse public life
- 10+ things to see, do and connect with
- Evidence of community volunteerism



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