



# Great Places in Pennsylvania

## Category Criteria

### Great Public Spaces

**What is a Public Space?** A public space may be a formal or informal gathering space within a neighborhood, downtown, district, waterfront or other area of a community that is within the public realm, promotes social interaction and community engagement, and fosters a sense of community. Public spaces may be indoors or outdoors, man-made or natural, and provide opportunities for passive or active social interactions. Some examples of public spaces include plazas, parks, greenways/trails, public commons, marketplaces, convention centers, monuments, and special areas within public or private buildings.

**Nomination Form:** The nomination form is the means to describe the planning story and characteristics that make your nominated public space worthy of a Great Places designation. Use the following criteria to assist with writing your responses. Where possible, quantify the information provided, such as number of visitors, events, activities, and economic impact.

**Livable Built Environment:** Great Public Spaces are compatible with surrounding land uses, other public spaces, and the community as a whole and are designed to support the quality of life. *Does the public space...*

- utilize design, scale, form, architecture and other features to create a visually interesting experience that is appropriate to the location?
- incorporate landscape and hardscape features that are unique or special to the public space?
- incorporate natural features, topography, and vistas?
- accommodate multiple types of users by its accessibility and for a variety of purposes/activities?
- connect to surrounding uses including residential, commercial, and public uses via sidewalks, pathways, transit, or other means?
- support physical activity and healthy lifestyles?

**Unique Characteristics:** Great Public Spaces have unique qualities that set it apart from other public spaces. *Does the public space...*

- convey a sense of importance or extraordinary characteristics that set it apart from other public spaces in the community?
- promote an atmosphere of discovery, inspiration, contemplation, or spiritual reflection?
- have cultural, economic, historic, or natural importance?

- incorporate environmentally friendly practices, such as green infrastructure, recycling, and water conservation?
- promote or act as an example of infill development?
- conserve or reuse historic resources?

**Social Interaction and Interwoven Equity:** Great Public Spaces are treasured by their entire community and serve a diverse population's need for safe and healthy recreation and social interaction. *How does the public space...*

- utilize activities or events to attract people to the space or engage them?
- encourage users to interact with each other?
- ensure activities, events, etc. are accessible to residents of the community, regardless of age, income, disability, ethnicity, etc.?
- provide a sense of comfort and safety to people using the space? (ie. traffic calming, lighting, police, etc.)
- improve the physical, environmental, and/or economic conditions of the community or neighborhood?

**Resilient Economy:** Great Public Spaces build a community's capacity to react to changes in economic circumstances by providing a hub for community connections and economic activity. *Does the public space....*

- Provide opportunities for economic activity?
- Support physical activity and healthy lifestyles?
- Attract visitors that support the local economy? (# visitors, # events/activities)
- Serve as a local or regional anchor to spur economic activity in the greater community?

**Planning and Authentic Participation:** Great Public Spaces reflect the desires of all segments of the community and are designed through a planning process that involves a broad cross-section of community members in analyzing issues, generating visions, developing plans, and monitoring outcomes. *Does the public space (or do its related planning efforts)...*

- have a plan that has contributed to its development and/or ongoing sustainability?
- demonstrate the importance of planning through a planning process?
- involve planners and/or partnerships?
- engage diverse leadership, participation, and advocacy with the community, including the disadvantaged and underserved?

## Great Neighborhoods

**What is a Neighborhood?** A neighborhood is a district or area within a community that has distinctive or unique characteristics, which define its identity or geographic boundary. Neighborhoods may be downtown, urban, suburban, town, small village, or rural in their scale. A neighborhood's defining characteristics could include its physical features (natural and man-made), social and/or cultural qualities, and day-to-day amenities available within the neighborhood. It may be known by a commonly recognized name.

**Nomination Form:** The nomination form is the means to describe the planning story and characteristics that make your nominated neighborhood worthy of a Great Places designation. Use the following criteria to assist with writing your responses. Where possible, quantify the information provided, such as number of visitors, events, activities, and economic impact.

**Livable Built Environment:** Great Neighborhoods show all elements of the built environment working together to create a sustainable place for living, working, and recreation. *Does the neighborhood...*

- have clearly defined and recognizable boundaries?
- have mixed land use patterns with a range of housing types for all income levels?
- have structures that contribute to a local or national historic district?
- accommodate multiple modes of transportation safely and efficiently, including vehicular movement, bicyclists, pedestrians (walkability), and transit?
- contain or provide ready access or connectivity to facilities and activities that serve residents' daily needs, including residential, commercial, schools, parks, and other public services?
- relate to and enhance the surrounding natural settings and/or environmental features?

**Character & Interwoven Equity:** Great Neighborhoods have a unique character and qualities that set it apart from other neighborhoods and ensure fairness and equity in providing for the needs of its residents. *Does the neighborhood...*

- have design and/or architectural features that are visually interesting and/or create a unique experience?
- illustrate infill development or productive redevelopment of a former brownfield site?
- foster social interaction and promote a sense of community and neighborliness?
- use local history and/or environmental factors to help create a sense of place?
- provide a comfortable quality of life for residents of varying economic, social, and ethnic identities?
- promote security from crime, safety for children, and/or community inclusiveness for individuals of diverse backgrounds?

- Incorporate environmentally friendly practices, such as green infrastructure, recycling, and water conservation?

**Resilient Economy:** Great Neighborhoods are built to weather positive and negative economic circumstances through sustainable development and redevelopment strategies that foster growth and build reliance on local assets. *Does the neighborhood...*

- maintain high degree of stability through periods of economic downturn and/or demographic change?
- have a healthy mix of commercial, residential, and public land uses supported by adequate infrastructure?
- provide room for businesses to grow and thrive?
- utilize redevelopment to adapt to changing conditions or recover from disinvestment?
- respond to environmental challenges, including impacts on air and water quality, stormwater, natural habitat loss, green infrastructure, and management of agricultural land, etc.?
- prepare for, or has it recovered from, the impacts of natural disasters?

**Healthy Community:** Great Neighborhoods recognize and address public health needs by providing for physical activity; access to recreation, health care, and healthy foods; environmental justice; and safety. *Does the neighborhood...*

- provide activities and facilities that support everyday health (ie. accessible parks, outdoor fitness equipment, trails/greenways, bike lanes, open space)?
- Provide residents access to health care facilities and healthy, fresh foods?
- Promote security from crime and is it perceived as a “safe” place for all age groups?

**Planning and Authentic Participation:** Great Neighborhoods are built through planning processes that actively involve all segments of the community in analyzing issues, generating visions, developing plans, and monitoring outcomes. *Did or does the neighborhood...*

- demonstrate the importance of planning?
- have a plan (ex. comprehensive plan, strategic plan, master plan, economic development plan) that has contributed to or sustained its character, or did the neighborhood form organically?
- engage planners and/or partnerships?
- encourage diverse participation and advocacy with residents and community groups, including the disadvantaged and underserved?
- show a history of coordination with the visions and plans for the municipality, region, or county in which located?