



Great Places in Pennsylvania

2021 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, 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 Greenways/Trails

What is a Greenway/Trail? A greenway/trail is a linear parcel of land or right-of-way set aside to preserve/protect open space, scenic landscapes, historical resources, natural resources and plant/animal habitats. It can be found in urban, suburban and rural settings and is frequently created out of a disused railway, canal towpath, utility, or similar corridor. Locations in areas unsuitable for development, such as floodplain areas, stream corridors, and woodlands, are also common. A greenway/trail provides linkages to connect people to parks, schools, downtowns, places of employment, pristine natural areas, and historical structures and features. It can be limited to foot traffic or accommodate multiple users (pedestrians, bicyclists, horseback riders).

Nomination Form: The nomination form is the means to describe the planning story and characteristics that make your nominated greenway/trail is worthy of a Great Places designation. Use the following criteria to assist with writing your responses. Where possible, quantify the information provided.

Livable Built Environment: Great Greenways/Trails provide access to the outdoors, connect people to their communities, preserve open space, scenic landscapes, protect natural resources, and enhance the sense of place that helps define the quality of life. *Does the greenway/trail...*

- Have trail heads for access and parking?
- Incorporate natural features, topography, vistas, and public art?
- Provide connectivity to surrounding uses, such as residential, commercial, and public, as well as transit systems and other trails?

Social Interaction and Interwoven Equity: Great Greenways/Trails accommodate people of all ages and abilities and serve as an informal social network where users can meet and interact. *Does the greenway/trail...*

- Accommodate multiple users?
- Encourage use by a diverse cross-section of the community?
- Provide opportunities for social interaction through events and activities?

Unique Characteristics: Great Greenways/Trails have special characteristics that enhance cultural awareness and community identity. *Does the greenway/trail...*

- Have a sense of importance or extraordinary characteristics that set it apart from other greenways/trails in the community?
- Connect to places of cultural, historic and natural importance?
- Incorporate interpretive signage?
- Provide opportunities for environmental or public health education?
- Reflect local, State, or national history/culture?
- Serve as a site for any special or unique programming or events?

Environmental and Sustainable Practices: Great Greenways/Trails augment environmental stewardship, create value, and generate economic activity. *Does the greenway/trail...*

- Have public/private or multi-municipal investment or commitment for ongoing operations, maintenance, and environmental stewardship?
- Incorporate green infrastructure (i.e. pervious pavement, natural buffers, native plants)?
- Support economic development and ecotourism?
- Promote the safety of users?

Planning and Authentic Participation: Great Greenways/Trails reflect the desires of all segments of the community, are designed through a planning process that involves a broad cross-section of community members, and have a commitment to long-term success. *Did or does the greenway/trail....*

- Demonstrate the importance of planning? Did the greenway/trail evolve through a planning process?
- Involve planners and/or partnerships?
- Engage diverse participation and community involvement, including the disadvantaged and underserved?
- Have a management plan for long-term success?

Great Streets

What is a Street? A street comprises the entire three-dimensional visual corridor, including the public realm and how it relates to adjacent land uses. Street types range from pedestrian-only and local streets to collector and arterial thoroughfares. They may be located in a variety of settings, including an urban center, suburban area, exurban area, small town, village, or rural area.

Nomination Form: The nomination form is the means to describe the planning story and characteristics that make your nominated street worthy of a Great Places designation. Use the following criteria to assist with writing your responses. Where possible, quantify the information provided.

Livable Built Environment: Great Streets balance the competing needs of the street (driving, transit, cycling, walking, parking, drop-offs, etc.), capitalize on natural features, and create an atmosphere through the use of design and architectural features. *How does the street...*

- Accommodate multiple users and activities (i.e. continuous and unobstructed travel lanes, road-sharing measures, traffic calming measures, sidewalks, median strips, bike lanes, etc.)?
- Connect to the broader street network?
- Accommodate or encourage social interaction and pedestrian activity, or serve as a social network?
- Use hardscaping, landscaping, street furniture, or other physical elements (i.e. signage, public art) to create a unique personality and capture a sense of place?
- Capitalize on building design, scale, architecture, and proportionality?
- Provide for parking?

Character & Identity: Great Streets encourage social activity, reflect the local culture or history, employ physical elements to create ambiance and atmosphere, and have a memorable character. *How does the street...*

- Benefit from community involvement and participation (festivals, parades, open-air markets, outdoor performance spaces, etc.)?
- Reflect the area's culture or history? For example, did it play a role in local, State, or national history?
- Showcase interesting visual experiences, vistas, natural features, building design and scale, or other qualities?
- Incorporate artistic expression unique to the community (landscape design, streetscape design, façade program, architecture of buildings, sculptures, murals, etc.)?
- Stand out from other streets? For example, what makes it extraordinary or memorable? What elements, features, and details set the street apart from other streets?

Resilience and Sustainable Practices: Great Streets promote safety of pedestrians and vehicles, are well maintained, and promote sustainability. *How has the street...*

- Been maintained? Is it capable of being maintained without excessive costs?
- Promoted safety of pedestrians, bicyclists, and motor vehicles?

- Promoted use over the 24-hour day?
- To the extent feasible, promoted sustainability through minimizing runoff (stormwater management), protecting groundwater and air quality, reusing water, minimizing heat islands, responding to climatic demands, providing street trees, or implementing other green infrastructure or sustainable strategies?
- Contributed to the local economy?

Planning and Authentic Participation: Great Streets evolved through a planning process that involves a broad cross-section of community members in analyzing issues, generating visions, developing plans, and monitoring outcomes. *Did or does the street....*

- Demonstrate the importance of planning? Did the street evolve through a planning process?
- Involve planners and/or partnerships?
- Engage diverse participation and civic engagement?