



Great Public Spaces

Evaluation Tool for Public Space and Public Life



How to use the Tool

This tool can assist in evaluating what is working well and what could be improved in your public space. The tool draws on research and globally renowned methodologies by [Gehl](#) and [Project for Public Spaces](#) amongst others.

Results from your completed evaluations will add to your evidence base of what is working well and future improvements for the public space. This can be used to help inform place planning, project scoping and briefs, grant applications or document changes in a public space over time as a before and after survey. Note: The evaluation results are for the use of the project team and are not collected by the NSW Government.

Refer to the [Great Public Spaces Guide](#) and the [NSW Public Spaces Charter](#) to further build your understanding of what contributes to great public spaces.

Steps

- 1 Read all pages of the tool to understand the steps. On this page draw a site sketch. On page 2 record the number of people using the space. On page 3 and 4 record your evaluation.
- 2 Familiarise yourself with the site. Observe, move around and experience the environment.
- 3 Take photos of your observations e.g. activities, built and natural features.
- 4 Fill out the tool on multiple occasions e.g. different times of the day and night, week, year and in different weather conditions.
- 5 Complete the evaluation from your personal observations. It is not intended to be used to survey other people.
- 6 Analyse the results of your completed evaluations and summarise into a report. The results can inform interventions to improve the public space quality or assess the success of an intervention.

Public Space

The quality of a public space is just as important as access to public space, as quality makes people feel safe, welcome and included. Quality is not only reflected in a public space's physical form—how it's designed, maintained and integrated with its environment—but also through the activities it supports and the meaning it holds.

Public spaces include:

Open spaces

Both active and passive including parks, gardens, playgrounds, public beaches, riverbanks and waterfronts, outdoor playing fields and courts, and publicly accessible bushland.

Public facilities

Public libraries, museums, galleries, civic/community centres, showgrounds and indoor public sports facilities.

Streets

Streets, avenues, and boulevards, squares and plazas, pavements, passages and lanes, and bicycle paths.

Sketch here

Draw a simple site map of the area being evaluated. Show how people use the public space, where they sit or stand and how they enter and exit. This map can also help define the area for the Snapshot of people on page 2. You can also use this space for extra notes or photos if using digitally.

When using a digital PDF with Adobe Acrobat, use the **Pencil** and **Text** tool from the Comment taskbar.

Example Legend:

- ✕ Gathering point
- △ Person
- Pathway
- Building/structure
- Point of interest
- /// Open area/grass
- ⊗ Tree
- ↑ North

General

Your name

Project name and stage

Council area

Location

Weather

Date

Time

What type of space is this?


Open space

Public facility

Street

Describe the space

Snapshot of people

Tally the number of people  = 5 people

Use this table to count how many people are using the space for five minutes. Record users' approximate age. If you feel comfortable include their gender, alternatively just count all people together under the Everyone column. Count the number of people either moving through the site or staying. You can use the site sketch on page 1 to help define the area you are counting people in, as a smaller zone can be helpful for a busy space. Do not double count people.

Multiply the total amounts by twelve to get an hourly average of users.

Moving

For example a person walking, in a wheelchair, on a bicycle

Age	Men			Women			Everyone		
	Tally	Total	Hourly	Tally	Total	Hourly	Tally	Total	Hourly
0-5									
6-11									
12-17									
18-24									
25-34									
35-44									
45-54									
55-64									
65+									

Staying

For example a person sitting, standing or laying

Age	Men			Women			Everyone		
	Tally	Total	Hourly	Tally	Total	Hourly	Tally	Total	Hourly
0-5									
6-11									
12-17									
18-24									
25-34									
35-44									
45-54									
55-64									
65+									

What are people doing?

Tick

- In a group
- By themselves
- Walking
- Walking a pet
- Riding a bicycle
- On a skateboard/scooter
- Pushing a pram
- Using a mobility aid
- Socialising
- Relaxing/sitting
- On a laptop or phone
- Reading
- Performing/busking
- Exercising/playing
- Other:

What features can you see?

Tick

- Furniture/seating
- Shops/cafe/kiosk
- Market/stall
- Stage/event space
- Community building
- Shade structure
- Playspace
- Sportfield/court
- Toilets/amenities
- Drinking water
- Way-finding signage
- Public or community art
- Educational program/space
- Meeting room/space
- Public transport options
- Welcome desk/information pod
- Heritage elements
- Trees/plants
- Beach/foreshore
- Wetlands/river/water
- Animals/wildlife
- Other:

What can you hear?

Rate if the sound is positive (P) or negative (N) in your experience. N/A if not applicable.

- Birds/wildlife
- Trees/foilage
- People talking/socialising
- Music/creative performance
- Construction
- Traffic
- Industrial noise (fan/pumps)
- Wind
- Other:

Questions & observations

How would you describe the overall quality of this public space?

High Medium Low

What makes this public space special or unique? What does the community value about the space?

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Ideas to improve the place

Short to medium-term & low-cost

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Long-term & permanent

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Who could help deliver these ideas? (businesses/community groups/schools)

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Other observations or ideas, e.g. note any recent improvements

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Please fill out your evaluation below

N/A Can't answer/not applicable **1** Strongly disagree **2** Disagree **3** Neutral **4** Agree **5** Strongly agree

Divide the total score by the number of answered questions in each of the four themes.

The average score for each theme provides an overview of its performance compared to the other themes.

Am I able to get there?	Score	Am I able to stay?	Score	Am I able to connect?	Score
People find it easy and pleasant to get to the public space, through a network of paths, streets, public transport and signage		People can sit in the shade or in the sun		People with a diversity of ages, genders, cultural or ethnic backgrounds are using the public space	
People can easily access the public space through multiple entrances		There are a range of comfortable places to sit, stay or relax and amenities are provided		There is an interesting atmosphere and activities e.g. people watching, arts and cultural activations	
People of all ages and abilities can easily and comfortably move around the space		There are enough trees, grass and plants to make the public space shaded and comfortable		You can meet people and socialise, and it is a positive place	
People walking are protected from all vehicles including cyclists		The public space feels safe during the day		There are shops, cafes, community services or economic activity close by	
People riding bikes are protected from other vehicles		The public space feels safe at night		People are able to connect with each other in both a commercial and non-commercial settings	
Average score Total score ÷ number of answered questions		The public space is lit at night and has clear sight lines and good visibility		There are local stories of significance (First Peoples, historic, cultural) told and celebrated in the public space	
Am I able to play and participate?	Score	The public space is clean and well-maintained		There are public artworks, heritage or monuments that reflect the unique local character	
There are a range of things to do in the public space including exercise, recreation, games, play and/or learning opportunities		The surrounding buildings scale are not too dominating, allowing people to feel comfortable in the public space		There is evidence of volunteerism, community stewardship and/or the space is well-loved and well attended for its function	
The public space encourages positive social interactions or individual experiences e.g. talking, casual or planned		It is well designed, visually attractive with scenic qualities		There are cultural, performance or musical activations	
People of all ages and abilities can use the space and have the facilities they need to stay e.g. end of trip facilities or drinking water		There are features that shelter you from wind, sun, and rain		The public space feels welcoming with a sense of belonging and you feel encouraged to return	
There is a choice of places or features to safely sit, play, thrive and relax		You are protected from noise, dust, unpleasant smells, or pollution in the public space		Average score Total score ÷ number of answered questions	
There are social or cultural activities appropriate to the space e.g. programmed activities or events		Average score Total score ÷ number of answered questions			
Average score Total score ÷ number of answered questions					