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

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Council area

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Location

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Weather

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Date

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Time

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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			OR	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			OR	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/foliage

.... 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
People find it easy and pleasant to get to the public space, through a network of paths, streets, public transport and signage	
People can easily access the public space through multiple entrances	
People of all ages and abilities can easily and comfortably move around the space	
People walking are protected from all vehicles including cyclists	
People riding bikes are protected from other vehicles	
Average score Total score ÷ number of answered questions	

Am I able to play and participate?	Score
There are a range of things to do in the public space including exercise, recreation, games, play and/or learning opportunities	
The public space encourages positive social interactions or individual experiences e.g. talking, casual or planned	
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 is a choice of places or features to safely sit, play, thrive and relax	
There are social or cultural activities appropriate to the space e.g. programmed activities or events	
Average score Total score ÷ number of answered questions	

Am I able to stay?	Score
People can sit in the shade or in the sun	
There are a range of comfortable places to sit, stay or relax and amenities are provided	
There are enough trees, grass and plants to make the public space shaded and comfortable	
The public space feels safe during the day	
The public space feels safe at night	
The public space is lit at night and has clear sight lines and good visibility	
The public space is clean and well-maintained	
The surrounding buildings scale are not too dominating, allowing people to feel comfortable in the public space	
It is well designed, visually attractive with scenic qualities	
There are features that shelter you from wind, sun, and rain	
You are protected from noise, dust, unpleasant smells, or pollution in the public space	
Average score Total score ÷ number of answered questions	

Am I able to connect?	Score
People with a diversity of ages, genders, cultural or ethnic backgrounds are using the public space	
There is an interesting atmosphere and activities e.g. people watching, arts and cultural activations	
You can meet people and socialise, and it is a positive place	
There are shops, cafes, community services or economic activity close by	
People are able to connect with each other in both a commercial and non-commercial settings	
There are local stories of significance (First Peoples, historic, cultural) told and celebrated in the public space	
There are public artworks, heritage or monuments that reflect the unique local character	
There is evidence of volunteerism, community stewardship and/or the space is well-loved and well attended for its function	
There are cultural, performance or musical activations	
The public space feels welcoming with a sense of belonging and you feel encouraged to return	
Average score Total score ÷ number of answered questions	