



# **APA -LA Great Places Award**

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The APA LA Chapter Great Places Award will be based on the national APA criteria for Great Places<sup>1</sup> based on criteria for Great Neighborhoods, Great Streets and Great Public Spaces as follows:

*APA's flagship program celebrates places of exemplary character, quality, and planning. Places are selected annually and represent the gold standard in terms of having a true sense of place, cultural and historical interest, community involvement, and a vision for tomorrow.*

*APA Great Places offer better choices for where and how people work and live. They are enjoyable, safe, and desirable. They are places where people want to be — not only to visit, but to live and work every day. America's truly great streets, neighborhoods and public spaces are defined by many criteria, including architectural features, accessibility, functionality, and community involvement.*

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.planning.org/greatplaces>.



## **Great Neighborhoods – Characteristics and Guidelines for Designation**

*A neighborhood can be based on a specific plan or the result of a more organic process. Neighborhoods of different kinds are eligible — downtown, urban, suburban, exurban, town, small village — but should have a definable sense of boundary. Neighborhoods selected for a Great Neighborhood designation must be at least 10 years old.*

### **Description of the Neighborhood**

It is important to identify the geographic, demographic, and social characteristics of the neighborhood. Tell us about its location (i.e. urban, suburban, rural, etc.), density (i.e. dwelling units per acre), or street layout and connectivity; economic, social, and ethnic diversity; and functionality (i.e. residential, commercial, retail, etc.). We also want to know whether a plan or specific planning efforts contributed to or sustained the character of the neighborhood, or if the neighborhood formed more organically and not through a formal planning process.

### **Neighborhood Form and Composition**

#### **How does the neighborhood ...**

- Capitalize on building design, scale, architecture, and proportionality to create interesting visual experiences, vistas, or other qualities?
- Accommodate multiple users and provide access (via walking, bicycling, or public transit) to multiple destinations that serve its residents?
- Foster social interaction and create a sense of community and neighborliness?
- Promote security from crime is made safe for children and other users (i.e. traffic calming, other measures)?
- Use, protect, and enhance the environment and natural features?

### **Neighborhood Character and Personality**

#### **How does the neighborhood ...**

- Reflect the community's local character and set itself apart from other neighborhoods?
- Retain, interpret, and use local history to help create a sense of place?

### **Neighborhood Environment and Sustainable Practices**

#### **How does the neighborhood ...**

- Promote or protect air and water quality, protect groundwater resources, and respond to the growing threat of climate change?
- What forms of "green infrastructure" are used (e.g., local tree cover mitigating heat gain)?
- Utilize measures or practices to protect or enhance local biodiversity or the local environment?



### **Characteristics of a Great Neighborhood include:**

1. Has a variety of functional attributes that contribute to a resident's day-to-day living (i.e. residential, commercial, or mixed-uses).
2. Accommodates multi-modal transportation (i.e. pedestrians, bicyclists, drivers).
3. Has design and architectural features that are visually interesting.
4. Encourages human contact and social activities.
5. Promotes community involvement and maintains a secure environment.
6. Promotes sustainability and responds to climatic demands.
7. Has a memorable character.

### **Description of the Neighborhood**

1. When was the neighborhood first settled?
2. Where is the neighborhood located: in a downtown, urban area, suburb, exurban area (i.e., on the fringes of a metropolitan area), village, or small town? What is the neighborhood's approximate density (e.g., in dwelling units per acre, or other)?
3. What is the neighborhood's location, its physical extent, and layout? What are the boundaries of the neighborhood? Are these boundaries formal, defined by an institution or jurisdiction (i.e., wards or other political boundaries, neighborhood associations, other entities) or is the neighborhood defined informally?
4. How large a geographic area does the neighborhood encompass (number of blocks, acres, or other measurement)?
5. What is the layout (e.g., grid, curvilinear) of the streets? Is there street connectivity; is it easy to get from one place to another by car, foot, or bike within or beyond the neighborhood without going far out of one's way?
6. What is the mix of residential, commercial, retail and other uses?
7. What activities and facilities support everyday life (e.g., housing, schools, stores, parks, green space, businesses, churches, public or private facilities, common streets, transit, etc.)?
8. Is there diversity amongst the residents, including economic, social, ethnic, and demographic? Describe the neighborhood's homogeneity or heterogeneity in those terms.
9. How has a plan or planning contributed to or sustained the character of the neighborhood? Or did the neighborhood form more organically and not through a formal planning process?

### **Guidelines for Great Neighborhoods**

#### **1.0 Neighborhood Form and Composition**

1. Does the neighborhood have an easily discernable locale? What are its borders?
2. How is the neighborhood fitted to its natural setting and the surrounding environs?
3. What is the proximity between different places in the neighborhood? Are these places within walking or biking distances? Does walking or bicycling within the neighborhood serve multiple purposes? Describe (access to transit, parks, public spaces, shopping, schools, etc.). How are pedestrians and bicyclists accommodated (sidewalks, paths or trails, designated bike lanes, share-the-road signage, etc.).
4. How does the neighborhood foster social interaction and promote human contact? How is a sense of community and neighborliness created?
5. Does the neighborhood promote security from crime, and is it perceived as safe? How are streets made safe for children and other users (e.g., traffic calming, other measures)?
6. Is there consistency of scale between buildings (i.e., are buildings proportional to one another)?



## **2.0 Neighborhood Character and Personality**

1. What makes the neighborhood stand out? What makes it extraordinary or memorable? What elements, features, and details reflect the community's local character and set the neighborhood apart from other neighborhoods?
2. Does the neighborhood provide interesting visual experiences, vistas, natural features, or other qualities?
3. How does the architecture of houses and other buildings create visual interest? Are the houses and buildings designed and scaled for pedestrians?
4. How is local history retained, interpreted, and used to help create a sense of place?
5. How has the neighborhood adapted to change? Include specific examples.

## **3.0 Neighborhood Environment and Sustainable Practices**

1. How does the neighborhood respond to the growing threat of climate change? (e.g., local tree cover mitigating heat gain)?
2. How does the neighborhood promote or protect air and water quality, protect groundwater resources if present, and minimize or manage stormwater runoff? Is there any form of "green infrastructure"?
3. What measures or practices exist to protect or enhance local biodiversity or the local environment?

## Great Streets – Characteristics and Guidelines for Designation

*A street comprises the entire three-dimensional visual corridor, including the public realm and how it relates to the adjacent land uses. Submissions should document the street's character across this realm.*

*Streets of different types are eligible, ranging from pedestrian realms through arterial roadways, but each should have a definable beginning and end. Special emphasis is placed on streets that are complete, that is, streets that service and take into account all users – not just motor vehicles.*

### Description of Street

It is important to identify the start and end points of the street and describe the setting in which it is located, whether it's in a downtown, suburban, or exurban area, small village, or small town.

### Street Form and Composition

#### How does the street ...

- Accommodate multiple users and connect to the broader street network?
- Accommodate social interaction, encourage pedestrian activity, or serve as a social network?
- Use hardscaping, landscaping, street furniture, or other physical elements to create a unique personality and capture a sense of public space?
- Capitalize on building design, scale, architecture, and proportionality?

### Street Character and Personality

#### How does the street ...

- Benefit from community involvement and participation (festivals, parades, open-air markets, etc.)?
- Reflect the local culture or history?
- Provide interesting visual experiences, vistas, natural features, or other qualities?

### Street Environment and Sustainable Practices

#### How does the street ...

- Utilize green infrastructure or other sustainable strategies

### Characteristics of a Great Street include:

1. Provides orientation to its users, and connects well to the larger pattern of ways.
2. Balances the competing needs of the street — driving, transit, walking, cycling, servicing, parking, drop-offs, etc.
3. Fits the topography and capitalizes on natural features.
4. Is lined with a variety of interesting activities and uses that create a varied streetscape.
5. Has urban design or architectural features that are exemplary in design.
6. Relates well to its bordering uses — allows for continuous activity, doesn't displace pedestrians to provide access to bordering uses.
7. Encourages human contact and social activities.
8. Employs hardscape and/or landscape to great effect.
9. Promotes safety of pedestrians and vehicles and promotes use over the 24-hour day.
10. Promotes sustainability through minimizing runoff, reusing water, ensuring groundwater quality, minimizing heat islands, and responding to climatic demands.
11. Is well maintained, and capable of being maintained without excessive costs.
12. Has a memorable character.



## **Guidelines for Great Streets**

### **1.0 Street Form and Composition**

1. Describe its accessibility and connection to the broader street network?
2. To what extent is the street well maintained? How is safety addressed? Is there a big disparity (i.e. activities, usage, etc.) between night and day?
3. How does it accommodate multiple users and activities (i.e. continuous and unobstructed travel lanes, road-sharing measures, traffic calming measures, wide sidewalks, median strips, bike lanes, etc.)?
4. How is parking handled?
5. Describe how the hardscape or landscape, street furniture, or other physical elements (i.e. signage, public art) create a unique personality?
6. How do the physical features create or capture a sense of public space?
7. How does the street accommodate or encourage social interaction, or serve as a social network? Is there regular pedestrian activity?

### **2.0 Street Character and Personality**

1. What makes the street stand out? What makes it extraordinary or memorable? What elements, features, and details set the street apart from other streets?
2. How is the community involved in adding vitality to the street (festivals, parades, open-air markets, etc.)?
3. How does the street reflect the local culture or history?
4. Does the street provide interesting visual experiences, vistas, natural features, or other qualities? How does the architecture of the buildings add to the street's visual experience and public realm?
5. Is there consistency of scale between buildings (i.e. are buildings proportional to one another), and are the buildings designed and scaled for pedestrians?

### **3.0 Street Environment and Sustainable Practices**

1. How does the street promote or protect air and water quality and minimize or manage stormwater runoff? For example, how much tree cover is provided? Are there other forms of "green infrastructure"?

## **Great Public Spaces- Characteristics and Guidelines for Designation**

*A public space may be a gathering spot or part of a neighborhood, downtown, special district, waterfront or other area within the public realm that helps promote social interaction and a sense of community. Possible examples may include such spaces as plazas, town squares, parks, marketplaces, public commons and malls, public greens, piers, special areas within convention centers or grounds, sites within public buildings, lobbies, concourses, or public spaces within private buildings.*

*As with all categories of Great Places, it is important to identify what sets a space apart from others spaces so as to qualify it for a Great Spaces designation. Public Spaces must be at least 10 years old.*

### **Description of the Public Space**

It is important to identify the geographic, demographic, and social characteristics of the public space. Tell us about its location (i.e. urban, suburban, rural, etc.), layout and connectivity; economic, social, and ethnic diversity; and functionality. We also want to know whether a plan or specific planning efforts contributed to or sustained the character of the public space, or if the space formed more organically and not through a formal planning process.

### **Public Space Features and Elements**

#### **How does the public space ...**

- Capitalize on building design, scale, architecture, and proportionality to create interesting visual experiences, vistas, or other qualities?
- Accommodate multiple uses?
- Accommodate multiple users? It is accessible via walking, biking, or public transit?
- Use, protect, and enhance the environment and natural features?

### **Public Space Activities and Sociability**

#### **How does the public space...**

- Reflect the community's local character and personality?
- Foster social interaction and create a sense of community and neighborliness?
- Provide a sense of comfort or safety to people gathering and using the space?
- Encourage use and interaction among a diverse cross section of the public?

### **Characteristics of a Great Public Space include:**

1. Promotes human contact and social activities.
2. Is safe, welcoming, and accommodating for all users.
3. Has design and architectural features that are visually interesting.
4. Promotes community involvement.
5. Reflects the local culture or history.
6. Relates well to bordering uses.
7. Is well maintained.
8. Has a unique or special character.



### **Physical Description of the Public Space**

1. Where is the space located, and what is its setting? (Downtown, neighborhood, waterfront, city center, business or entertainment districts, historic area, parks, etc.)
2. What role, if any, did plans and planning contribute to the creation of the space? Is there special zoning or ordinances that allowed for the creation of the space?
3. How large is the area?
4. When was the space created?

### **Guidelines for Great Public Spaces**

#### **1.0 Features and Elements (not all may apply)**

1. What landscape and hardscape features are present? How do they contribute to the unique or special nature of the space?
2. How does the space accommodate pedestrians or others whose access to the space is by transit, bicycles, or other means? Is the space welcoming to those with physical disabilities or others with special needs?
3. Does the space accommodate multiple activities?
4. What purpose does it serve for the surrounding community?
5. How does the space utilize existing topography, vistas, or geography? Does it provide interesting visual experiences, vistas, or other qualities?
6. How are murals or other public art incorporated into the space?

#### **2.0 Activities and Sociability**

1. What activities make the space attractive to people and
2. Does the space provide a sense of comfort and safety to people gathering and using the space? Does the space provide a friendly and welcoming atmosphere?
3. How do people interact with one another? Does the space encourage communication or interaction between strangers?
4. How does this place encourage use by a diverse cross section of the public?

#### **3.0 Unique Qualities, Traits, and Characteristics**

1. What encourages social interaction or makes this public space stand out (commerce, entertainment or performance spaces, recreation or sports, cultural, markets, etc.)? What makes it extraordinary or memorable?
2. Is there variety, a sense of whimsy, or an atmosphere of discovery or pleasant surprise?
3. Is there commitment to maintain the space and to keep it a usable space over time? Does the public have a sense of ownership about the space? How has it changed over time?
4. Is there a sense of importance about the space? What characteristics or qualities contribute to this?
5. What is the history of the space, and how is it remembered or passed on from one generation to the next?
6. Does the space serve as a place of inspiration or contemplation, or is it considered sacred?
7. What is it about the space that contributes to a sense of community?
8. What makes this space special and worthy of designation as a Great Space?



**Summary Characteristic Checklist**

From APA’s Great Places in America, the following table lists below can be used as a guide when discussing potential great places in your Section. These lists are not comprehensive; they are designed to help you think about Great Places suggestions similar to the way the *APA Great Places in America Candidates Committee* approaches them.

Neighborhood	Street	Public Space
Can be based on a specific plan or the result of a more organic process; must be at least 10 years old; neighborhoods of all kinds eligible— downtown, urban, suburban, exurban, town, small village	Comprises entire 3-D visual corridor, from pedestrian realms to arterial roadways with a definable beginning and end; consider adjacent land uses	Gathering spot or part of a neighborhood, downtown, waterfront, special district, etc.; helps promote social interaction; qualities make space standout
<input type="checkbox"/> Affordable Housing	<input type="checkbox"/> Affordable Housing	<input type="checkbox"/> Receive everyday use
<input type="checkbox"/> Infill	<input type="checkbox"/> Infill	<input type="checkbox"/> Encourages social interaction
<input type="checkbox"/> Redevelopment	<input type="checkbox"/> Redevelopment	<input type="checkbox"/> Provide a sense of comfort and safety
<input type="checkbox"/> Transit Oriented Development	<input type="checkbox"/> Public Transportation route/stop	<input type="checkbox"/> Reflect community’s local character
<input type="checkbox"/> Mixed housing stock	<input type="checkbox"/> % of Locally-owned businesses	<input type="checkbox"/> Create a sense of community
<input type="checkbox"/> Brownfield vs Greenfield	<input type="checkbox"/> Hardscaping/Landscaping	<input type="checkbox"/> Adjacent to monumental buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> Public School(s) located within	<input type="checkbox"/> Traffic Calming/Wide Sidewalks	<input type="checkbox"/> Community Involvement
<input type="checkbox"/> Public Park(s) located within	<input type="checkbox"/> On-street parking	<input type="checkbox"/> Multigenerational
<input type="checkbox"/> College/Public Institutions within	<input type="checkbox"/> Bicycle Lanes and Racks	<input type="checkbox"/> Convenient Location
<input type="checkbox"/> Neighborhood Association	<input type="checkbox"/> Community Involvement	<input type="checkbox"/> No Admission Charge
<input type="checkbox"/> Community Involvement	<input type="checkbox"/> Interesting Visual Experiences	<input type="checkbox"/> Hours of Operation
<input type="checkbox"/> Retail Located within/nearby	<input type="checkbox"/> Utilize sustainable infrastructure	<input type="checkbox"/> New/Innovative Public Features
<input type="checkbox"/> Public Transit runs through or nearby	<input type="checkbox"/> Commercial and Residential	<input type="checkbox"/> Local and City Involvement