

NSW Public Spaces Charter

What is it?

The Charter identifies 10 principles for quality public space, developed through evidence-based research and discussions with a diverse range of public space experts and closely aligned to the United Nations Charter of Public Space.

Why a “Charter”?

A Charter structure emphasises a commitment to a common goal by a group of signatories – in this case achieving high quality public space available for everyone in NSW. The Public Spaces Charter is supported by its growing network of committed signatory organisations – councils, practitioners and policy makers supportive of good quality public space.

Signatories have access to regular Communities of Practice, training opportunities and informal peer to peer learning.

We invite NSW Government agencies, local government, industry and other organisations and groups who plan, design, manage and activate public space across NSW to commit to the Charter and join us in becoming signatories.

What do we mean by public space?

Public spaces are all places publicly owned or of public use, accessible and enjoyable by all free and without a profit motive. They include:

- **Public open spaces:** 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.

In NSW, as in other jurisdictions in Australia and globally, some public places may be privately owned but accessible and used by the public. For example, some green spaces or seating adjoining public squares or footpaths; shopping arcades or car parks.

Every public space is different, how can this Charter apply to all of them?

The Charter's principles are premised on the understanding that there isn't a one-size-fits-all approach to public space. Every public space has its own unique history, heritage, context and is supporting the different needs and uses of a specific community. There are significant and important differences in landscape, climate, amenity, population density and social and cultural demographics across Greater Sydney and regional and rural New South Wales.

All these factors influence where and how people use public space and what the priorities are for their community. There are no set rules as to where and how the Charter applies –it could apply to the management of a national or regional scale parkland, just as it could to the design of a new pocket park. The Practitioner's Guide provides more detail in applying the Charter in practice.

Who is the Charter for?

The Charter and supporting documentation are available to everyone in full on the Placemaking NSW website, and we encourage communities, organisations and individuals to apply the Charter principles and values in their local areas.

The Charter signatory network is open to any business or association with a registered ABN and who operates in NSW.

Public space managers can use the 10 principles as a framework to inform plans of management and the policies and programming that respond to the needs of their users. Strategic and statutory planners can apply the 10 principles as they develop policies and controls, and as a framework for the important review of schemes and proposals.

The Charter is an excellent framework to support design process and delivery of a public space. Designers and developers can draw from the 10 principles in how they plan for and provide quality public spaces within their developments.

Why should my organisation become a signatory to the Charter?

We encourage all NSW Government agencies, local government, industry and other organisations and groups with a role in the planning, development, design, management or activation of public space in NSW to sign up to the Charter.

By becoming a signatory to the Charter, an organisation will be demonstrating a commitment to delivering great public spaces outcomes for everyone.

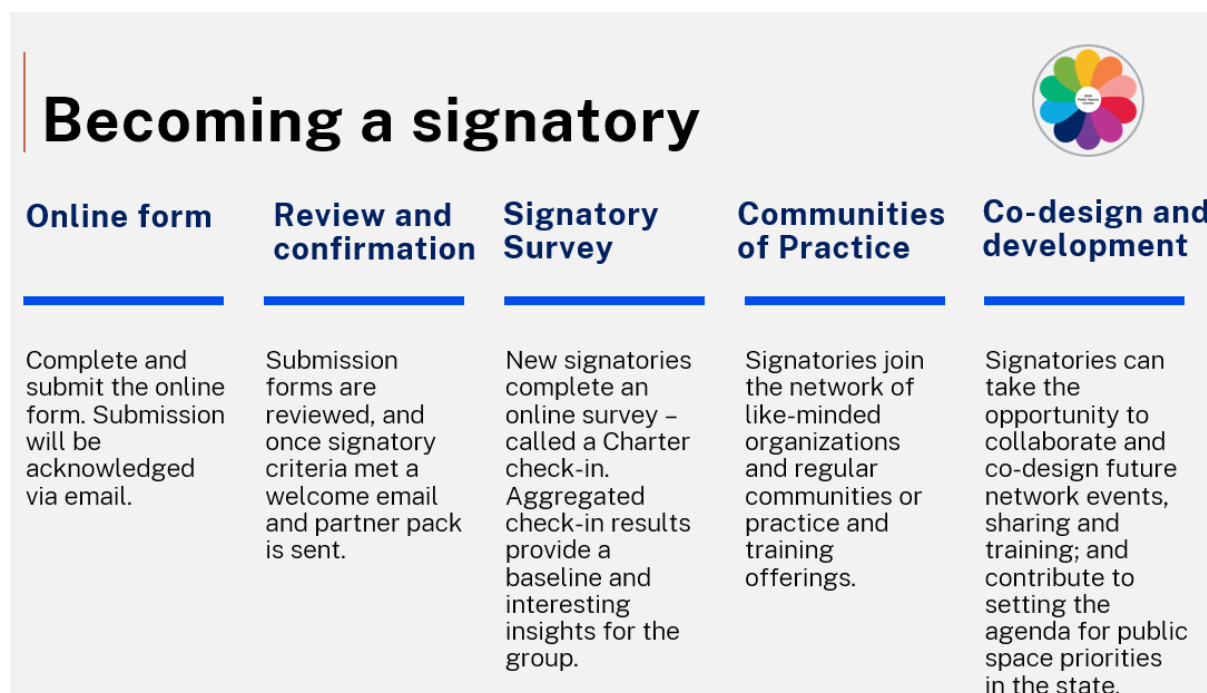
Signatories to the Charter will have access to a Community of Practice and support from the department to apply the Charter, as well as promotional and data-sharing opportunities.

How do I sign up?

To commit to the Charter by registering as a signatory, each organisation must:

1. Be involved in planning, designing, delivering, managing or activating public space
2. Be a registered with a valid Australian Business Number
3. Demonstrate that you operate in NSW

We encourage sole practitioners working in planning, designing, managing and activating public spaces to sign up for the Charter. Individuals without a registered business are not eligible



Becoming a signatory

Online form	Review and confirmation	Signatory Survey	Communities of Practice	Co-design and development
<p>Complete and submit the online form. Submission will be acknowledged via email.</p>	<p>Submission forms are reviewed, and once signatory criteria met a welcome email and partner pack is sent.</p>	<p>New signatories complete an online survey – called a Charter check-in. Aggregated check-in results provide a baseline and interesting insights for the group.</p>	<p>Signatories join the network of like-minded organizations and regular communities or practice and training offerings.</p>	<p>Signatories can take the opportunity to collaborate and co-design future network events, sharing and training; and contribute to setting the agenda for public space priorities in the state.</p>

Why is the Charter voluntary?

There is no compliance or legislative requirement associated with the Charter. The Charter's principles have been deliberately developed so as not to have any binding policy or resourcing impacts on signatories, while at the same time working within the existing NSW legislative settings. The Charter can be applied flexibility in many contexts and project scales and types and within existing planning frameworks.

How is the success of the Charter be measured?

The Charter program specifically seeks to engage and influence stakeholders responsible for the planning, delivery, management, evaluation and activation of public space. The evaluation program for the Charter is in development and may include the number of signatories, number of strategies that now have public space embedded as a priority, and the positive outcomes signatories have been able to achieve.

Will signatories need to complete any reporting?

Signatories complete an online survey – called a “Charter Check-in” every 12 months. Results are aggregated, analysed and reported back to the network via Communities of Practice. These reports become the foundation of any new developments, or evolution in the program and offering to Signatories.

The information provided in the Charter Check-in will is not shared outside the state government Charter project team unless we receive your organisation’s permission.

Will there be any ongoing forums or events to support organisations?

Yes, this is one of the benefits of becoming a signatory.

We hold regular Community of Practice for the NSW Public Spaces Charter. These will provide an opportunity for knowledge-sharing, discussing case studies, signatories' challenges and opportunities in implementing the Charter, and other capacity-building opportunities.

How was the Charter developed?

The Charter principles were developed through:

- Preliminary research into public space and best practice planning, delivery and management approaches in Australia and internationally.
- Expert interviews with ten Australian and international experts in a range of fields of public space practice and knowledge, including economists, public health researchers, urban geographers, and transport planners.
- Public exhibition and consultation seeking feedback on the draft principles from the community and from NSW Government agencies, councils, and industry about what support they would need to become signatories to the Charter.
- Peer review including detailed feedback on both the Charter and Draft Practitioner’s Guide from over 20 subject matter experts.

How was the community consulted on the Charter?

Between 20 October and 1 December 2020, the draft NSW Public Spaces Charter was placed on public exhibition to get feedback on the principles and how they could be applied.

Over 190 individuals and organisations provided feedback on the draft Charter through seven workshops, an online survey, digital engagement hub and online or email submissions. This included representatives from NSW government agencies, local councils, non-government organisations, community, environmental and recreational groups.

During this time a targeted program of engagement was also undertaken with Aboriginal Knowledge Holders and communities to seek their feedback on the Charter.

How does the Charter align with other key policies and strategies?

Consulting with policy experts and practitioners across the broader NSW Government during the Charter's development we ensured active collaboration and alignment with key Government policy and guidance, including the Government Architect NSW's (GANSW) Better Placed design policy (2017), Open Spaces Strategy (2022) and Connecting with Country framework (2023). The Greater Sydney Parkland's 50-Year Vision for Greater Sydney's Open Space and Parklands (2021) is also a key document the Charter aligns with. The Charter team continue to work to ensure public spaces content continues to evolve and strengthen over time.

The NSW Government acknowledges the goodwill of those participants signing up to the Charter. However, the NSW Government reserves the right to remove or exclude participants from involvement in the Charter at any time, including discontinuing support through providing advice from the NSW Public Spaces Charter project team or providing access to a community of practice. The NSW Government also reserves the right to discontinue any service currently enjoyed by participants.

The NSW Government does not have any responsibility for ensuring that participants uphold the principles and outcomes of the Charter, or the way participants choose to deliver upon these principles and outcomes. To the fullest extent permitted by law, NSW Government disclaims any liability that may arise out of a participant signing or delivering upon the principles and outcomes in it, or in acting on any advice received because of being a participant.