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MAKING PLACES *August 2005*

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The World's Best Public Spaces

Ten lively locations--from a dazzling museum in St. Louis to an exciting plaza in Brazil--are now being inducted to PPS's authoritative [Great Public Spaces](#) website.

In our travels throughout the world, PPS staff and supporters are always on the lookout for wonderful spots that deserve recognition as [Great Public Spaces](#). This is our online collection of the world's best parks, markets, streets, buildings, and districts, which honors over 300 places large and small in more than 30 states and 45 countries. It includes world-famous landmarks like Notre Dame Cathedral and New Orleans' French Quarter along with a modest but wonderful park in Kenosha, Wisconsin, and a well-designed shopping street in Taichung County, Taiwan (see the [full list](#) below).

PPS staff and visitors to our website are constantly adding new places, using the criteria for [what makes a place great](#) that PPS has developed from our 30 years of experience. Intuition also plays a big role: Many times you simply know a great place when you see one--it's where everyone wants to be. The same holds true for PPS's [Hall of Shame](#), our continually expanding roster of the most disappointing public spaces--the places where few people stay any longer than they must.



Largo Glênio Peres in Porto Alegre, Brazil is one of ten farflung new additions to Great Public Spaces.

This year's inductees to Great Public Spaces include a street market in a

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Ten lively locations--from a dazzling museum in St. Louis to an exciting plaza in Brazil--are now being inducted to PPS's authoritative Great Public Spaces website.

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The answer is surprisingly simple.

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Superstar architecture makes a big bang, but forgets that public places are for people.

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Even the best public spaces require constant vigilance. If not, they may lose the qualities that made them great in the first place.

Tell me more about PPS's Great Public Spaces website

[Great Public Spaces](#) is PPS's continually expanding roster of the very finest places around the world. Think of it as sort of a Hall of Fame--a source of ideas for places you'll want to visit and inspiration for improvements you can make in your own community.

Great Public Spaces showcases the world's best parks, markets, streets, buildings, and districts, including more than 300 places in 30 states and 45 countries. You'll find wonders of the world like the [Eiffel Tower](#), [Grand Central Terminal](#) and the [Theatro Municipal](#) Opera House in Rio de Janeiro. But you'll also discover humble but

working class neighborhood of Amsterdam, an immigrant shopping street in Chicago and public squares in provincial cities of Brazil and Mexico, as well as the highly expensive and much hyped renovation to New York's Museum of Modern Art--proving once again that the best public places come in all shapes, sizes, and styles.

Cataloguing the world's very greatest public spaces is an enormous and daunting undertaking, so we count on your help. A number of these new entries were nominated by users of the Great Public Places website. We hope this list inspires you to **[nominate your own favorites](#)** (it's easy to do--see the adjacent sidebar for more about how you can nominate a place). And we hope even more that learning about fascinating places around the world will encourage you to create or improve public spaces in your own community.

[Stanley Park](#), Vancouver, BC



Stanley Park is a great lesson in public space real estate: Its best assets are location, location, location. Within walking distance from downtown in a high-rise residential neighborhood with a population density similar to Manhattan, the park is easily accessible by foot, bike and car. Once there, you can take in some of the most spectacular natural

settings of any public park in North America. Not only is Stanley Park famed for its magnificent trees--including giant fir and cedar, which are unusual for an urban park--it is also known for the variety of activities to take part in. From summer events like Theatre Under the Stars and the annual Chihuahua Walkathon, to a popular public beach with amenities like food kiosks, playgrounds, and an outdoor swimming pool, there's so much to do it's easy to see why Stanley Park is called "Vancouver's playground."

Submitted by: Andrea Winkler. Originally from the Canadian West Coast, Andrea is currently finishing her master's in Environmental Studies at York University in Toronto, Canada. She has recently formed a cultural planning group based in Toronto.

[The City Museum](#), St. Louis, MO



The City Museum is like an amusement park in the middle of downtown St. Louis. It occupies an old shoe factory--a Depression-era relic that sculptor Bob Cassilly and his partners have brought back to life with a fantastically imaginative collection of play spaces, exhibits, and sculptures. Many attractions, like the multi-story slides (which visitors use as downward escalators), awe-inspiring underground cave system, and the interactive sculpture called

MonstroCity (above), take advantage of the building's unique spaces and industrial character. The museum invites its visitors to create and interact

delightful spots like downtown [Lake Street](#) in suburban Oak Park, Illinois, and the [Mbare Market](#) in Harare, Zimbabwe, where you can find anything from vegetables to plumbing fixtures.

PPS also singles out some of the world's most disappointing, overrated or just plain inhospitable places in our [Hall of Shame](#).

We invite everyone to submit their own ideas of favorite (or awful) spaces for our website. Take a look at the information on [what makes a place great](#) that PPS has devised from 30 years of exploring and evaluating public spaces. And then complete our easy-to-use [online nomination form](#). Your submission will appear as a nominee on the website, then PPS staff will review the nomination and decide whether to add as an official Great Public Space.

with exhibits. A tavern on the first floor called the Cabin Inn occupies a transplanted 19th century log cabin and is a popular venue for local musicians.

Jardin Juarez and Market Hall, Juchitan, Mexico



This traditional square (or *zócalo*) and adjacent market hall--which houses local government offices on the second floor above market space on the ground floor--together form the social anchor for the whole city of Juchitan in southern Mexico. The market attracts thousands of people every day for a multitude of overlapping purposes, spilling out

onto surrounding streets and the adjacent *zócalo*, which is also the main staging area for weekly dances and all civic events. People usually come to the market with several members of their family and stop frequently to have conversations with people they know. The market employs and incubates hundreds of small businesses and provides more choices and more quality than almost any comparable retail area in the U.S.

Museum of Modern Art Interior and Sculpture Garden, New York, NY



MoMA's 2004 re-design by Japanese architect Yoshio Taniguchi nearly doubled the gallery space showcasing the museum's exceptional collection. It also introduced elements that heighten visitors' awareness of fellow museum-goers as they move between galleries. The effect is that going to MoMA feels much more like a shared experience than it did before the re-design. The Abby Aldrich

Rockefeller Sculpture Garden remains the social heart of the museum, full of people discussing what they've seen, enjoying something to eat from one of the museum's two cafés, and sitting in moveable chairs among works by Rodin, Picasso, Calder, and other modern masters. The exterior of the museum, however, still leaves a lot to be desired, presenting oppressive blank walls to pedestrians on 53rd and 54th Streets.

Kungsporsavenyn, Göteborg, Sweden



Kungsporsavenyn is a grand boulevard that changes character about every few blocks, with each transition serving a different purpose. It begins at the top of a hill surrounded by civic buildings and arts institutions. Descending the hill, it becomes a boulevard with a bicycle greenway in the center median,

surrounded by neighborhood-scale shops. About two blocks later it welcomes trams and the surrounding architecture takes on a majestic scale again. At the foot of the hill, it expands into a tree-and-flower lined boulevard, leading to the entrance of a public garden on one side of the street, and opening out to Göteborg's riverfront on the other.

Devon Street, Chicago, IL



The street corners of this commercial street on the far north side of Chicago resemble South Asia as folks from the neighborhood gather there every evening to socialize. They'll be joined by people of every ethnic background from across the city who come for the legendary restaurants. But the street has managed to retain its identity and strong social fabric rather than giving way to the pressures of

gentrification.

Largo Glênio Peres, Porto Alegre, Brazil



This plaza (or *largo*) was completed in the 1920's and has been a sought-after space for cultural and political events ever since. Situated in the heart of Porto Alegre's downtown, the *largo* is surrounded by noteworthy historical buildings like the City Hall (*Prefeitura Municipal*) and the Public Market (*Mercado Público*), as well as multiple transportation terminals. In

addition to being highly pedestrian-friendly, it is accessible by bus, tram, and bicycle. The City of Porto Alegre manages the *largo* and uses it as a venue for street fairs and markets of all kinds throughout the year: fish and farmers markets, book shows, arts and crafts fairs, festivals, and cultural performances. The *largo* also plays a key role in the civic life of Porto Alegre as a frequent venue for political speeches and demonstrations.

Wisconsin State Capitol, Madison, WI



Situated in the heart of downtown Madison, this beautiful building is actually a major streetcorner—the place where the pedestrian extensions of major streets meet indoors. It truly represents the ideal of a town square that America's founding leaders imagined as the crux of democracy. Sitting on a hill, the building itself is a bit removed from the street, but the pathways up

to the capitol provide congenial spaces for people to sit and talk. Besides being the home of the Wisconsin state legislature and state Supreme Court,

it also functions like the best streetcorners anywhere--as a place for people to bump into one another and stop for a chat. Perhaps no other spot in the world offers better opportunities for everyday citizens to rub shoulder with their elected officials. On Saturdays its grounds welcome the **Dane County Farmers Market**, already listed in Great Public Spaces.

Dapper Market, Amsterdam, The Netherlands



This street market, consisting of more than 250 stalls, has been going for more than 100 years in the working-class Oost-Watergraafsmeer district of Amsterdam. The prominent Dutch newspaper Het Parool recently declared it "Amsterdam's true people's market," and it is also commonly referred to as the "World Market," because of the incredible

diversity of its merchants and products.

Submitted by: Peter Groenendaal. Peter is a native of Amsterdam who lived and worked in Ontario for over 20 years before returning to the Netherlands in the late 1990s. He now manages the Dapper Market in his capacity as Coordinator of Ambulatory Commerce for Oost-Watergraafsmeer.

Trg Bana Jelacica, Zagreb, Croatia



Trg Bana Jelacica is the outdoor living room of Zagreb. It functions both as a destination--with a number of places all its own--and as a multi-faceted connector. Several of Zagreb's tram lines go along the edge of the square, providing easy transit access and adding to the hustle and bustle of the place. It is also a major link between the medieval town (Gradec) and the 19th Century Donji

Grad, as well as a central hub connecting numerous pedestrian retail streets and squares (where outdoor cafés are in abundance).

The square features a number of focal points. The Medusevac fountain and the monument of Josip Jelacic, a Croatian hero and viceroy who defeated the Hungarians in an uprising in 1848, are popular meeting spots. Zagreb's Market Hall often spills its seasonal wares into the square's main space. The buildings that frame the square house several cafés with outdoor terraces lined with marble seatwalls for non-customers. The best thing about these seating areas is that despite their close proximity to the trams, the only thing one can hear when sitting there is other people talking.