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## **Pioneer Park in Mesa, Arizona Named One of 6 Great Places by the American Planning Association (APA)**

*In the program's 12th year, APA Recognizes 13 Great Neighborhoods, Streets and Public Spaces*

**Washington, D.C.**— The [American Planning Association](#) (APA) has named Pioneer Park in Mesa, Arizona, one of 6 Great Public Spaces on APA's annual [Great Places in America](#) list, which starts the countdown to National Community Planning Month in October.

“For Dig studio, the Pioneer Park project was about highlighting and reinvigorating what was special about this amazing public space; not applying something foreign. Even the new amenities are rooted in the existing character of the park and the community that has loved it for generations,” explains Chad Atterbury, Dig Studio Landscape Architect and Project Manager for Pioneer Park.

APA's Great Places in America program recognizes the streets, neighborhoods and public spaces in the United States demonstrating exceptional character, quality and planning—attributes that enrich communities, facilitate economic growth, and inspire others around the country. The Great Neighborhoods, Great Streets and Great Public Spaces of 2019 are places that are unique and exemplary in their success stories of revitalization, cultural identity, and strong community connection.

“The public spaces recognized this year demonstrate the importance of planning in creating welcoming, multi-use spaces for the entire community to enjoy and come together,” said Kurt Christiansen, FAICP, APA president. “Pioneer Park is a national example of how to balance historic character with the evolving desires of the community.”

Pioneer Park, anchoring one end of downtown Mesa, Arizona, had fallen into a period of disuse and decay where illegal activities were pushing out appropriate family-focused park use. Many learned to avoid the park altogether, until long-time residents decided to come together to reignite the history and beauty that had made Pioneer Park a once-beloved community space. Dig Studio was selected by the City of Mesa as the Prime consultant and lead design firm for the \$6 million improvements project to the park. Community engagement was critical in striking a balance between old and new. Through careful planning, the project managed to preserve historic elements like the train engine, monuments of Mesa's founders, the rose garden, and the horseshoe courts, while also enticing visitors with new features. Pioneer Park is now a thriving public space that is home to a surge of new community events, and it stands as a testament to the value of a truly engaged community planning process.

The community will come together to celebrate Pioneer Park's designation as a Great Public Space in America on **October 12, 2019** at **the Mesa Farmers Market and Flea in Pioneer Park**.

In addition to Pioneer Park, APA has also recognized the following Great Public Spaces in 2019:

- Neponset River Greenway – Milton and Boston, Massachusetts
- Mohawk Valley Gateway Overlook – Amsterdam, New York
- Governors Island – New York, New York
- Gathering Place – Tulsa, Oklahoma
- Discovery Green – Houston, Texas

Since launching the Great Places in America program in 2007, APA has recognized 303 neighborhoods, streets and public spaces around the country. Designees are selected annually and represent the gold standard for a true sense of place, cultural and historical interest, community involvement, and a vision for the future.

For the sixth year, members of the public can suggest their favorite public space, neighborhood, or street to earn a "People's Choice" designation. Throughout October, individuals can offer suggestions via APA's social media channels using the hashtag #APAgreatplaces. APA will select five finalists that the public can vote on via APA's website. The "People's Choice" winner will be announced **October 30, 2019**.

For more information about APA's Great Neighborhoods, Great Streets and Great Public Spaces for 2019 and previous years, visit [www.planning.org/greatplaces](http://www.planning.org/greatplaces).

Learn more about APA's National Community Planning Month by visiting [www.planning.org/ncpm](http://www.planning.org/ncpm).

*The American Planning Association is an independent, not-for-profit educational organization that provides vital leadership in creating great communities for all. APA and its professional institute, the American Institute of Certified Planners, are dedicated to advancing the profession of planning – physical, economic and social – to foster quality of life for all residents. The 45,000 members work in concert with community members, civic leaders and business interests to create communities that enrich people's lives. Through its philanthropic work, the APA Foundation helps to reduce economic and social barriers to planning. APA has offices in Washington, D.C., and Chicago. Learn more at [www.planning.org](http://www.planning.org).*

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