



PARKLETS

Streets can provide ample opportunity to turn underutilized spaces in urban areas into attractive amenities for public interaction, art, dining, or other activated uses. Parklets are temporary or seasonal mini plazas located in the parking lane. Often the product of a partnership between the city and local businesses, residents, or neighborhood associations, these amenities have a distinctive design and accommodate unmet demand for public space, particularly on thriving neighborhood retail streets or commercial areas.

USE

- Parklets convert curbside parking spaces into a public seating platforms, with plantings, landscaping, and/or bicycle racks.
- Parklets are typically applied where narrow or congested sidewalks prevent the installation of traditional sidewalk cafés or where local property owners or residents see a need to expand their outdoor dining seating capacity and public space on a given street.
- While parklets are foremost intended as assets for the community, their presence has also been shown to increase revenues for adjacent businesses.
- Parklets generally entail the conversion of one or more parallel parking spaces, but may vary according to the site, context, and desired character of the installation. Where a parklet stretches the length of an entire curb, accessibility, turning radii, and sightlines must be taken into account.

DESIGN

- To ensure increased protection from moving traffic and parking cars, parklets must be buffered using a reflectorized wheel stop at a desired distance of three to four feet from the parklet and include vertical elements that make them visible to traffic, such as reflective flexible posts or bollards.

- Parklets have a desired maximum width of six feet (or one foot less than the width of the parking lane).
- Parklets should have a flush transition at the sidewalk and curb to permit easy access and avoid tripping hazards.
- Parklets should avoid corners and are best placed at least one parking space away from the intersection corner. Where installation of a parklet is under consideration for a site near an intersection, volumes of turning traffic, sightlines, visibility, and daylighting should be taken into account.
- Site selection should consider the level of utilization and nearby pedestrian volumes both during the day and at night.
- Incorporate seating into the parklet. Seating may be integrated into the design itself or made possible with moveable tables and chairs. If seating is built in, at least one space needs to be open for accessible seating for a person with a wheelchair/scooter.
- Designs for the substructure of a parklet vary and depend on the slope of the street and overall design for the structure. The substructure must accommodate the crown of the road and provide a level surface for the parklet.
- Parklets should use a slip-resistant surface to minimize hazards and should be accessible to wheelchair users.
- Parklet floor load-bearing weight standards vary. At a minimum, design for 100 pounds per square foot.
- Parklets must not block or impede drainage or stormwater inlets. Small channels between the base and the platform can be used to facilitate drainage along the curb and gutter.
- Parklet siting shall avoid obstructing underground utility access and electrical transformer vaults.
- All parklets shall comply with the Building Code if constructed on a platform.
- Parklets should not use any flammable materials or be constructed in a manner which would violate the Finish Materials chapter of the City's Building Code.
- Bicycle parking may be incorporated into or adjacent to the parklet.

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS

- Parklet locations should consider the speed of adjacent traffic, the presence of nearby bicycle facilities, bus stop locations, and parking demand and turnover.

OPERATIONS AND MAINTENANCE

- Parklets are typically administered through partnerships with adjacent businesses and/or surrounding residents. Design and installation costs are typically borne by nearby residents or businesses and these partners maintain and program the parklet, keeping it free of trash and debris. Where no local partners are present, a parklet may be installed and managed by the city as a traditional park or public space.
- Parklets should be removed during the winter to prevent conflicts with plows and street cleaning vehicles.

REFERENCES

- AASHTO: Guide for the Planning, Design, and Operation of Pedestrian Facilities, 2004
 - Section 3.2.13: Ambience, Shade, and Other Sidewalk Enhancements