

# RECLAIMING THE

# RIGHT OF WAY



A Toolkit for Creating and Implementing **Parklets**

**UCLA** Luskin School of Public Affairs

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# RECLAIMING THE RIGHT-OF-WAY:

## A TOOLKIT FOR CREATING AND IMPLEMENTING PARKLETS

UCLA Complete Streets Initiative  
Luskin School of Public Affairs

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## ABOUT THE COMPLETE STREETS INITIATIVE

The Complete Streets Initiative is a joint effort of the Lewis Center for Regional Policy Studies, the Luskin Center for Innovation, and the Institute of Transportation Studies in the UCLA Luskin School of Public Affairs. The Initiative's mission is to conduct research, educate students, and engage the public on the many critical and often competing roles streets play in creating a more vibrant, productive, and sustainable California.

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

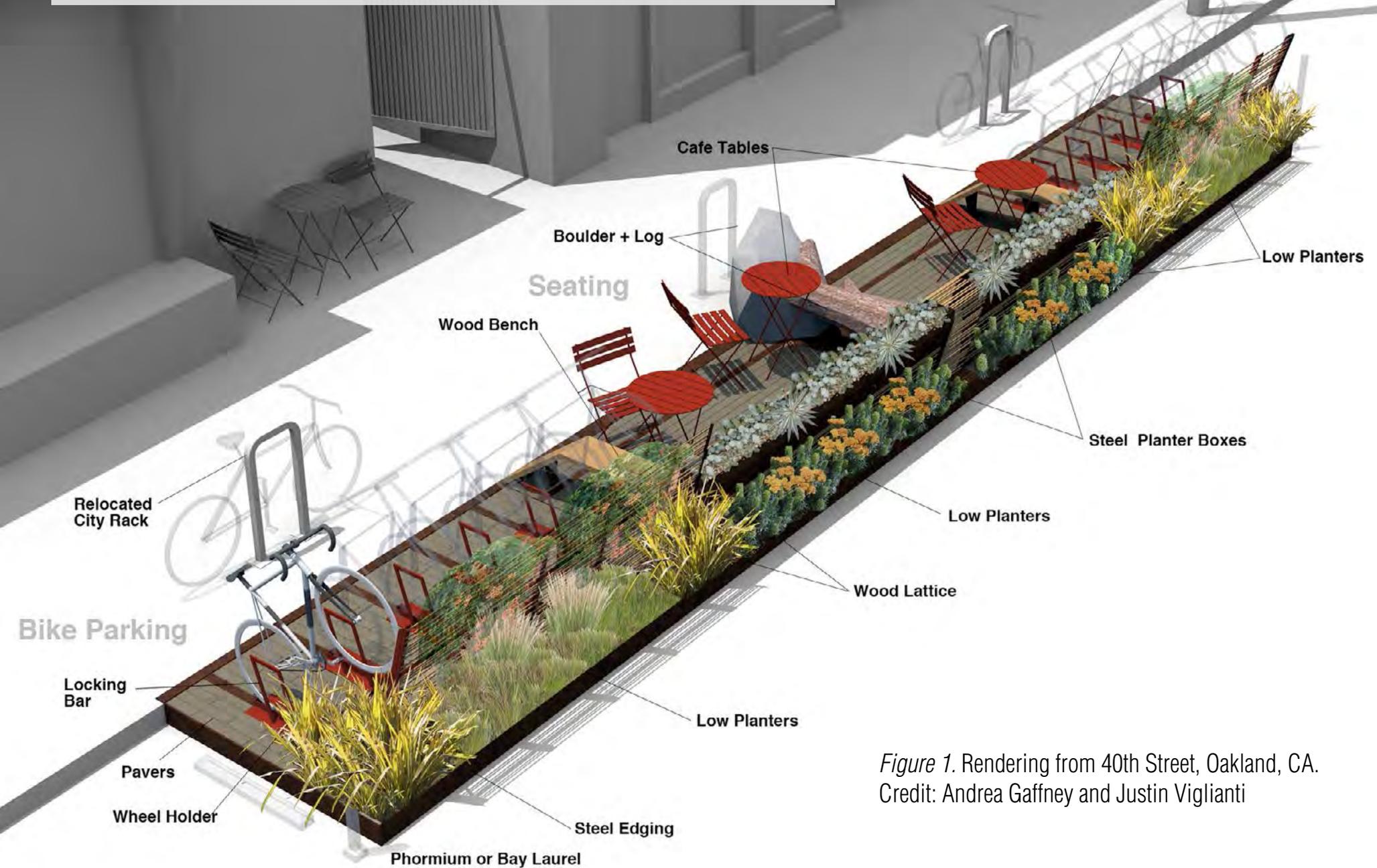


Figure 1. Rendering from 40th Street, Oakland, CA.  
Credit: Andrea Gaffney and Justin Viglianti

### Purpose of this Toolkit

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The purpose of the Parklet Toolkit (toolkit) is to provide city staff and community members with practical guidance to support the development of small-scale parks, called parklets. Parklet programs and projects are spreading quickly across the nation, from San Francisco to New York and other cities profiled in the toolkit. This decision support toolkit is designed specifically to facilitate the development of parklet projects in the city of Los Angeles and encourage a parklet program that creates an institutionalized pathway for their installation. Despite the focus on Los Angeles, the program case studies, project guidelines, and other best practices presented in this toolkit are easily transferable to other communities across the nation.

### Scope

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This toolkit begins with an introduction to parklets, including the definition of parklets and a summary of their use, value, and precedents. Next, Chapter 2 provides context for parklets in Los Angeles. This chapter highlights activities that led to current efforts to re-purpose streets, re-energize public spaces, and insert physical activity opportunities into the urban environment.

Chapter 3 consists of case studies of parklet programs in cities across North America. The case studies are ordered starting with the most advanced program to the most nascent. These case studies represent a snapshot in time, containing information gleaned from interviews with program leaders and a literature review conducted during the spring of 2012. As the parklet movement is rapidly evolving and expanding, the authors of this toolkit acknowledge that the program section contains an incomplete list of parklet programs. The programs included in the toolkit, however, were selected by UCLA researchers to collectively show a range of best practices that could serve as models for Los Angeles and other cities seeking

to begin similar initiatives. The case studies highlight key information about reoccurring themes of program goals, site selection, design development, permitting, maintenance, and lessons learned.

Chapter 4 provides practical advice and supporting details at a micro level to help readers select a project site and then design parklet projects based on the specific context, including surrounding land use, desired project duration, and project function and objectives. Examples of specific projects are included throughout this chapter to illustrate and highlight examples within a parklet typology matrix. This chapter also gives readers decision support tools for designing a project that incorporates considerations of cost, safety and comfort, landscaping and environmental amenities, as well as management and maintenance.

The toolkit concludes with a summary of where parklet programs and projects originated, their current status, and future opportunities. As such, Chapter 5 includes several photo simulations to illustrate the range of potential possibilities for parklets in Los Angeles.



*Figure 2.* Parklet use on Divisadero Street, San Francisco, CA.  
Credit: Jeremy Shaw

### Methodology

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UCLA researchers compiled the information used in the toolkit through a combination of online literature reviews and one-on-one interviews with parklet program and project leaders. Specifically, the program case studies of Chapter 3 involved structured interviews using a standard format of 17 process-oriented questions. These interviews were conducted with the parklet program directors of each of the profiled cities. Interview questions addressed program goals and objectives, program history, organizational process, scope (number of projects and project typology), permitting and maintenance requirements, and funding, as well as program evaluation, impacts, challenges, successes, and lessons learned. The survey instruments can be found in the Appendix.

For Chapter 4, UCLA researchers conducted two types of interviews: 1) with parklet designers; and 2) with business owners or managers who have adopted each of the parklets. The interviewees provided insights into specific elements of parklet projects and answered questions such as:

- What design considerations should I make if I have a site of a certain size?
- What should be taken into account if the parklet is surrounded by particular land uses?
- What factors should I consider when designing parklet seating?

The researchers extracted lessons and practical advice drawing from the interviews with designers, business owners, and city staff. The goal of the toolkit is to provide practical advice and demonstrate the wide range of design options available for parklet installations.

## Parklet Basics

The term “parklet” was first used in San Francisco to represent the conversion of an automobile parking space into a mini-park for passive recreation. This toolkit expands this basic definition to include other spaces formerly occupied by cars as well as spaces that can also facilitate active recreation.

Parklets emerge from the low-cost conversion of small and under utilized residual spaces originally devoted to cars into spaces for the passive or active recreation of people.

Parklets are typically created by building a platform on the pavement to extend the sidewalk space, and retrofitting it with benches, planters, tables and chairs, umbrellas, and bike racks. In the case of active recreation parklets, exercise machines can be bolted to the platform.

Parklets vary based on the following characteristics:

- **Location:** Parklets can occupy former parking spaces, street medians, traffic triangles, re-purposed travel lanes and parking lots or excess asphalt space at angled or irregular intersections.
- **Surrounding land uses:** Commercial or residential,
- **Size:** From a couple of parking of spaces to spaces extending along the length a block, to larger spaces occupying entire parts of a block,
- **Shape:** Linear, square, rectangular, triangular, or irregular,
- **Duration:** From a few hours (e.g. Ciclovias and Sunday Streets), to one day (Park(ing) Day), to part of the year (during spring and summer), to year-around installations,
- **Type of activity:** Passive or active recreation.

This parklet project typology will be further explored in Chapter 4.

## 6 RECLAIMING THE RIGHT OF WAY

In addition to presenting a range of locations and typologies for parklets, this toolkit also introduces the concept of active recreation parklets. Typically, parklets have served passive recreation purposes, such as sitting and enjoying a cup of coffee purchased at a nearby café. But as will be discussed in Chapter 2, in Los Angeles, plans are moving forward for the development of a parklet that will include exercise equipment. This type of parklet would allow pedestrians to actively use the public right-of-way.



*Figure 3. Rendering for Spring Street Parklet, Los Angeles, CA.  
Credit: Berry and Linné*

## Need and Rationale

The Los Angeles park system lags behind other large cities of the West Coast in terms of percentage of space dedicated to parks.<sup>1</sup> The exact amount of accessible open space in Los Angeles varies widely by neighborhood and largely relates to neighborhood economic prosperity.<sup>2</sup> While wealthier and disproportionately non-Hispanic white areas have over 100 acres per 1,000 residents, many low-income neighborhoods in the densely populated areas of Los Angeles have less than one acre of park space per 1,000 residents.<sup>3</sup> These “park-poor” neighborhoods also have limited access to fresh and healthy foods. Not surprisingly, obesity prevalence is higher in these areas; approximately one in three adults in South Los Angeles is obese.<sup>4</sup> These patterns collectively demonstrate the dire need for increased open space for physical activity in inner city Los Angeles neighborhoods.

In comparison, significantly more space in Los Angeles is dedicated to the movement of vehicles (i.e. roadways and the public rights-of-way) than is found in all of the city’s parks.<sup>5</sup> Los Angeles is not alone in this regard. Road space comprises a significant amount of acreage in US cities, and at least since the last century, this space has been the domain of the private automobile. Indeed, US cities

are characterized by wider traffic lanes and more surface parking lots than cities in other countries.

Recently, some US cities have started to rethink the use of street space and convert formerly automobile-occupied spaces into multi-use spaces for pedestrians in the form of parklets. While converting large swaths of land in central and inner city neighborhoods is often unfeasible or very expensive, an advantage of parklets is their low installation and maintenance costs for cities. This is due in part to their relatively small size, less permanent nature, and partnerships with adjacent businesses. A leading organization in the parklet movement, San Francisco Great Streets Project, describes parklets in the following way:

“Parklets are built out of semi-permanent materials and are installed in a way that does not require reconfiguring the roadway or pouring concrete. They are usually hosted or sponsored by a local business or organization that pays to design and build them and agrees to keep them maintained.”<sup>6</sup>

## Parklet Precedents

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Parklets, as defined and explored in this toolkit, are a recent phenomenon in American cities, but one with roots in earlier trends in public space design and urban place making in North America. The conversion of under utilized, residual, or automobile-oriented spaces into places to relax, recreate, or engage in the public life of the city is part of at least three broader trends in reshaping urban public space. The parklet movement is also specifically an offshoot of the successful and nimble parklet program in San Francisco, which has its own roots in a similar program in New York City. A brief overview of the history of the parklet movement is provided below to highlight the context and explain how parklets fit within the North American public space tradition, and how they can provide new opportunities for public spaces in urban environments.

The idea of the “parklet” in its current expression emerged in San Francisco in the form of temporary installations intended to extend the social life and pedestrian space of the sidewalk into parking spaces. Rebar, a San Francisco art and design studio, created the first such parklet in 2005 by converting a single metered

parking space into a temporary (two-hour) public park in downtown San Francisco. This parklet was complete with a lawn, shade tree, and park bench.

This initial action quickly transformed into a global trend and sparked the development of an international Park(ing) Day movement. Every year myriad organizations and individual participants in cities across North America and Europe transform parking spaces into a diverse array of urban parks for a day or less.

The success of Park(ing) Day encouraged Rebar to experiment with more extensive forms of temporary space activation. Eventually the City of San Francisco incorporated parklets (including a Rebar designed parklet kit) as part of its “Pavement to Parks” program. This program seeks to reclaim under utilized street space and convert it into new, quick, and affordable public plazas and parks that can exist for days or years (rather than a day or less). The program started in 2009 with an initial pilot plaza, Castro Commons, created at the triangular intersection of 17th, Market, and Castro streets in San Francisco.



Figure 4. Park(ing) Day, Seattle, WA.  
Credit: Rob Ketcherside

This program was, in turn, inspired by New York City's 2008 "Pavement to Plaza" Program, which transformed excess roadway spaces into public plazas through the simple use of barriers, seating, and surface painting, and "Green Light Manhattan" in 2009, which converted automobile-oriented spaces on Broadway, Times Square, and Herald Square into pedestrian plazas. This "pedestrianization" of Broadway in Times Square involved adding moveable seating and sidewalk paint to create open space in the heart of the city.

While the San Francisco and New York programs signify the genesis of parklets in the US, the rise of parklets is also connected to three broader trends, including:

### Use of Residual Space

There is a long tradition in public space design and implementation to leverage residual spaces into active public spaces or new community park space. These include roadway medians, spaces under bridges, traffic islands, roadway edges, freeway caps, and parking lots. These spaces are often valued for their availability, since their "leftover" status does not require expensive acquisition or intense competition for their use. A recent effort to reclaim residual spaces is seen in the celebrated reuse of the High Line in New York City.

Approaches for the reclamation of residual spaces vary widely, but typically require creative site-specific design solutions and engagement with the local community. Typical solutions tend to be long-term in intent, while the design and scale of the projects are based on considerations unique to the project.

### Tactical Urbanism

There is a growing interest across North America in creating or transforming public space with a quicker, lighter, cheaper ethos. Not only does this use of temporary tactics allow for more affordable public space creation in an era of limited public resources, but it also encourages experimentation, iteration, and adaptation. Many tactical urbanism projects use the notion of "pilot" program or "interim" use to avoid lengthy bureaucratic approval processes, thereby enabling cities or groups to try public space interventions, like parklets, to see what works, and build an evidence-base or supportive constituency for the intervention.

Other terms associated with this trend include D-I-Y (do-it-yourself) urbanism, guerrilla urbanism, or pop-up urbanism. These terms reflect the small-scale, affordable, flexible, and often temporary nature of tactical urbanist

Figure 5. Park(ing) Day Bratislava, Slovakia.  
Credit: Mark Archimera



Figure 6. Castro Commons, San Francisco, CA.  
Credit: Frank Chan, San Francisco Bicycle Coalition





Figure 7. Herald Square, New York City, NY. Credit: Anastasia Loukaitou-Sideris

interventions but also their accessibility and appropriateness for community or advocacy group-led projects. Tactics typical of this approach to public space intervention are usually temporary in intent and design. Examples include “city repair” (community groups reclaiming neighborhood streets as public gathering places with paint, plantings, artwork, or other community-oriented amenities), “pop-up cafés or retail spaces” (short-term commercial uses that create opportunities for small-scale entrepreneurs to experiment), and “mobile playgrounds” (light and easily assembled and disassembled play facilities that can be easily transported to new locations).

Such interventions can range in size. On the larger end of the spectrum was a three-block “Popuphood” launched in Oakland, CA in 2011 that provided six months free rent to six new retail stores in five previously vacant store fronts. Other interventions include “chair-bombing” (filling a public space with chairs to encourage sitting and socializing), “pop-up town halls” (providing temporary spaces for public discussions and forums), and “site pre-vitalization” (enabling temporary uses such as community gardens, temporary markets, and art events on vacant parcels or prior to permanent development).

## Car Free Streets

Parklets also fit well in the trend to transform street space to pedestrian or other non-automobile-centric uses. There is a broad spectrum of public space interventions within this category. These include temporary or permanent street closures and conversion to spaces for walking and cycling, car-free days, and open streets initiatives, where streets are closed to car traffic during specific hours and days (often during weekends) to enable biking and walking. Although car-free spaces tend to be larger scale than parklets, there is a common lineage in the concern for expanding pedestrian space in urban areas.

Car-free streets range from permanent pedestrianization--including Santa Monica’s Third Street Promenade--to temporary closure that enables pedestrian or event use, such as car-free days during CicLAvia in Los Angeles and Sunday Streets in San Francisco, among others. The car-free streets movement also includes new street design approaches that restrict or limit automobile access and increase the use of lane ways or alleys for festivals or more permanent pedestrianization.



*Figure 8.* Painted intersection, Los Angeles, CA.  
Credit: Michelle Selvans



*Figure 9.* Chair "bombing," Brooklyn, NY.  
Credit: Aurash Khawarзад



Figure 10. CicLAvia, Los Angeles, CA.  
Credit: Waltarrrr

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## 2. PARKLETS IN LOS ANGELES



Figure 11. People at Park(ing) Day, Los Angeles, CA.  
Credit: Pacoima Beautiful

## Park(ing) Day LA

Starting in 2007 as part of the larger Park(ing) Day movement described in Chapter 1, Park(ing) Day LA marked the appearance of the first temporary parklets in Los Angeles. Park(ing) Day LA has continued annually ever since 2007. While not the first effort to increase public space in Los Angeles, Park(ing) Day LA “celebrates the momentum of providing additional parks and open space throughout Los Angeles, especially as it relates to smaller, more infill opportunities” by converting metered parking spaces into engaging, public space installations.<sup>7</sup> Installations on Park(ing) Day seek to educate the general public about the problems and opportunities relating to open space availability in the city of Los Angeles.

The following is an example of how and why one organization, Pacoima Beautiful, participates in Park(ing) Day.

Pacoima Beautiful, a member-based environmental health and justice non-profit organization operating in Los Angeles’ Northeast San Fernando Valley, incorporates Park(ing) Day into its Complete Streets initiative. The community of Pacoima contains industrial land uses that contribute to traffic and air pollution impacts for local

residents, who are predominantly lower-income Latinos. Pacoima Beautiful leads campaigns to increase open space and specifically to improve livability along Van Nuys Boulevard, a major traffic artery in the neighborhood.

Pacoima Beautiful’s Park(ing) Day goals include:

- Have a free, fun event in the community.
- Increase awareness about the organization (especially for people who are outside the traditional outreach.)
- Give out information about Pacoima Beautiful campaigns and other public awareness information.
- Promote the idea of increasing the amount of green space and environmental amenities in Pacoima.

Pacoima Beautiful participated in Park(ing) Day in 2010 and 2011, utilizing a parking space in front of the library along Van Nuys Boulevard. The site was chosen because of high foot traffic and because it has a median that shields pedestrians from automobile traffic.

While the first year's installation successfully attracted community members to the site, in the second year, Pacoima Beautiful was able to better meet its goals by designing the installation to look more like a traditional street fair, which are common in Pacoima. Design elements included adding a tent and having more tables and chairs. Organizers found that the tent and signage were important to designate a public space. Also to create a street fair environment and engage people in the space, the organizers expanded their programming in the second year to include sidewalk art projects, a plant raffle, Popsicle give-away, and bicycle safety information. In addition, Pacoima Beautiful realized the benefit of coupling Park(ing) Day with other campaign events, specifically neighborhood clean-up events.

In the fall of 2012, Pacoima Beautiful will open a new pocket park. The Park(ing) Day event will work as a promotional event for that campaign.

Overall, a temporary installation like the one by Pacoima Beautiful costs approximately \$50 to \$300, depending on how many items (such as tents, chairs, and plants) an organization owns prior to the event.



Figure 12. Park(ing) Day, Los Angeles, CA.  
Credit: Pacoima Beautiful

## Streets for People

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The Streets for People pilot initiative resulted in arguably the first large-scale and longer-term parklet in Los Angeles. This parklet, called the Sunset Triangle Plaza, opened in March of 2012. Yet its origins occurred years earlier, when community activists within the group Living Streets LA met to discuss pilot project interventions that would improve streets in Los Angeles. Inspiration came from the conversion of New York City's Times Square into a pedestrian plaza. One of the members of Living Streets LA, Margot Ocañas, moved into a position with the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health's RENEW program (Renewing Environments for Nutrition, Exercise and Wellness). RENEW, which was federally funded for three years (from March 2009 to March 2012), provided financial and technical assistance to cities to increase opportunities for physical activity within the built environment. RENEW program funding was used to officially launch the Streets for People (S4P) project.

During the same time, the Los Angeles Planning Commission, also interested in creating healthier built environments, saw an opportunity to work with the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health through the scope of RENEW and their S4P project. Bill Roschen, President of the Planning Commission, and Margot Ocañas began

looking for opportunities to initiate a project similar to the Times Square pedestrian plaza.

Ultimately, S4P became an initiative of the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health and the Los Angeles Planning Commission, working closely with the city Departments of Transportation, Planning, and Public Works as well as the Office of Council member Eric Garcetti, local businesses, and community-based organizations, including the Silver Lake Improvement Association and the Silver Lake Neighborhood Council. Living Streets LA and its parent organization, Green LA Coalition, have been integral to S4P, providing staffing support and acting as fiscal agents.

The S4P's Sunset Triangle Plaza opened in March 2012, occupying 11,000 square feet of a former traffic triangle and roadway. This parklet moved from idea to installation in less than two years and for a total cost of \$25,000. It is equipped with movable chairs and tables, umbrellas, bike racks, and planters, all sitting on asphalt pavement that has been transformed through the application of bright green paint. The project is a one-year pilot. It will be evaluated in 2013, and either converted to a permanent installation, altered, or removed.

Los Angeles Director of Planning, Michael LoGrande, believes that this pilot project can be an effective way to provide public spaces within neighborhoods:

“I think by moving quickly and showing people we can take chances, we can try things that are pilot programs and not necessarily go through a huge process that people lose interest in because it takes too long to see results. In government, we have to be nimble as ever, and show small successes.”<sup>8</sup>

More details about the design of this project can be found in Chapter 4 of this toolkit.



Figure 13. Sunset Triangle Plaza, Los Angeles, CA.  
Credit: Neal LaMontagne

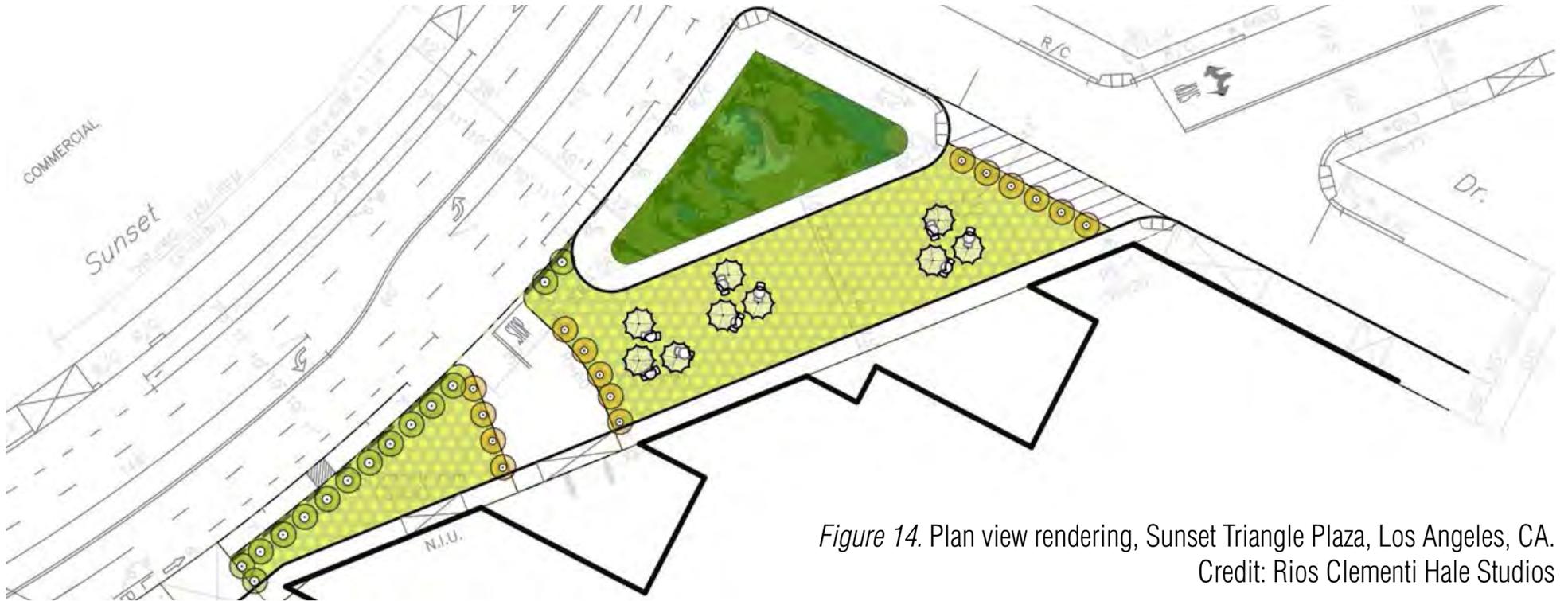


Figure 14. Plan view rendering, Sunset Triangle Plaza, Los Angeles, CA.  
Credit: Rios Clementi Hale Studios

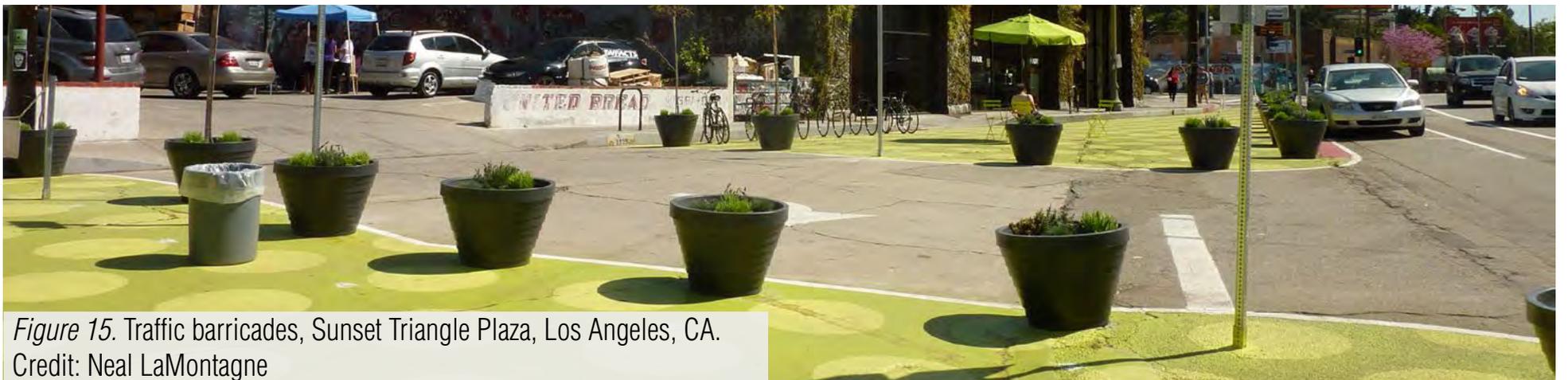


Figure 15. Traffic barricades, Sunset Triangle Plaza, Los Angeles, CA.  
Credit: Neal LaMontagne

## Bike Corrals

Bike corrals are a type of parklet dedicated to bicycle parking.

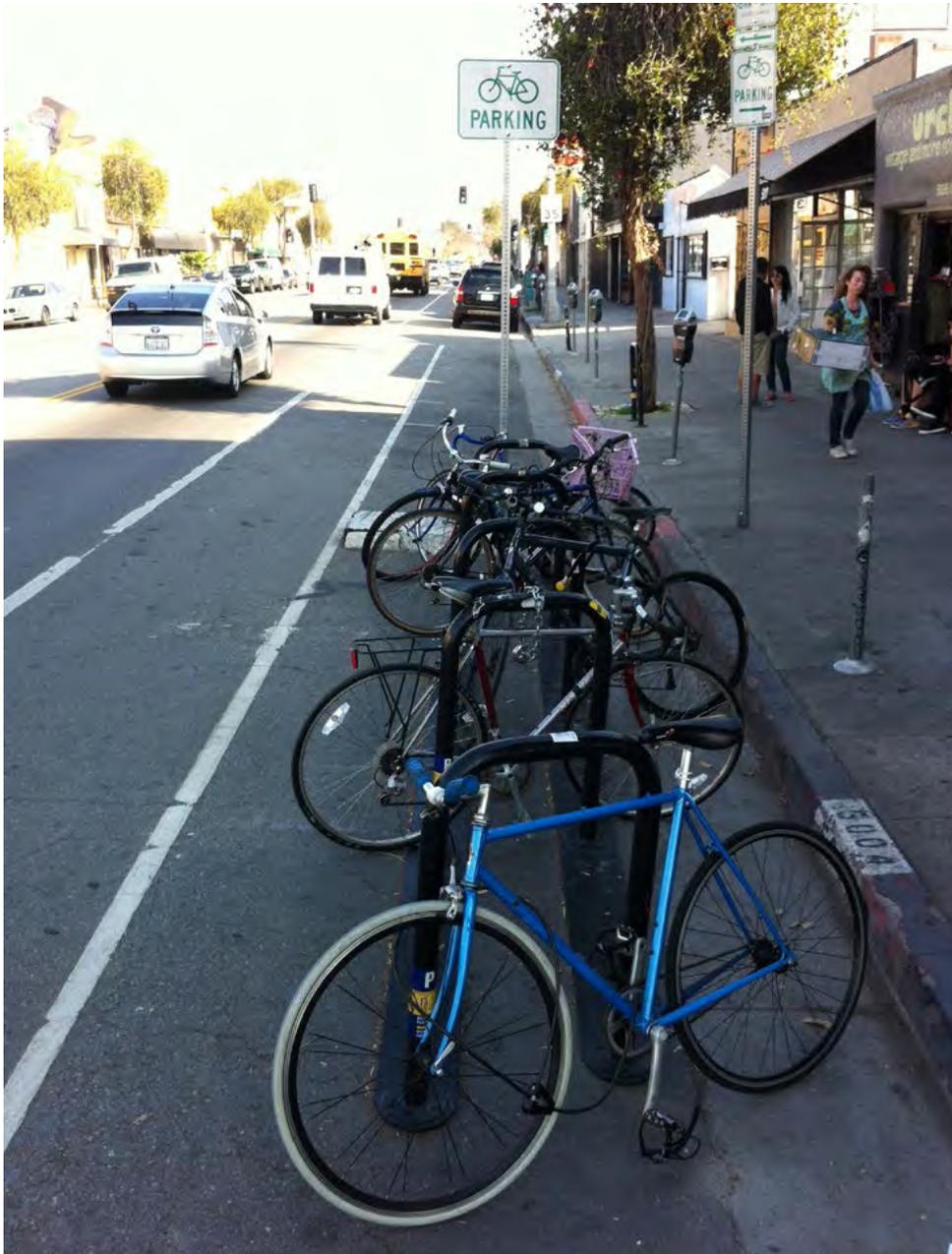
“A corral is an on-street bicycle facility that can accommodate many more bicycles than a typical sidewalk rack...and typically replaces an existing single vehicle parking space with up to eight bicycle racks—enough space to accommodate 16 bicycles. In areas with high cycling demand, corrals use space much more efficiently than a single car parking stall would.”<sup>9</sup>

At the time of this toolkit’s publication, Los Angeles had installed two bike corrals, with plans to install six more. The Los Angeles Department of Transportation (LADOT) installed the first bike corral on York Boulevard and Avenue 50 in the Highland Park neighborhood, and another in the Sunset Triangle Plaza, described in the previous section.

As part of a common theme, the effort to bring bike corrals to Los Angeles is rooted in community activism. Organizations including the Los Angeles County Bicycle Coalition and C.I.C.L.E. (Cyclists Inciting Change Through LIVE Exchange), along with Matt Schodorf (Café de Leche co-owner), Josef Bray-Ali, Joe Linton, and countless other advocates and dedicated citizens, helped make the idea of bike corrals in Los Angeles a reality.<sup>10</sup>

Council member José Huizar, hearing the support for bike corrals successfully voiced by activists using social media in 2009 and 2010, drafted a motion to create a bike corral “Pilot Project” at York Boulevard and Avenue 50. In only 14 days during March of 2010, the initial motion swept through the Los Angeles Transportation Committee and City Council to gain approval for installation.<sup>11</sup> The bike corral at York Boulevard and Avenue 50 opened in February 2011. The bike corral cost approximately \$2,700 and was paid for by the LADOT.

Since then, the LADOT has implemented a Bike Corral Pilot Program. LADOT has issues a promotional document about these bike corrals that explains the process for businesses to apply for and receive corrals. The department also created a maintenance agreement template that applying businesses have to sign.<sup>12</sup> This template, shown in Appendix A, could also be used as the beginning for a city-approved template for future parklet projects. The LADOT Bike Corral Program is currently working with City Council offices and local businesses to identify locations for six more bike corrals.



*Figure 16.* Bike corral, Portland, OR.  
Credit: Chris Brunn

*Figure 17.* Bike corral, Highland Park, CA.  
Credit: LADOT Bikeways

## Fitness Zones



*Figure 18.* Fitness Zone, South Los Angeles, CA.  
Credit: Christine Trang

This toolkit discusses not only parklets as places for passive enjoyment (intended for people to sit, relax and socialize), but also parklets as public spaces for active recreation. A leader in the movement for public spaces for active recreation in the Los Angeles region, the Trust for Public Land began their “Fitness Zones” program in 2005 with funding from the Kaiser Permanente Foundation. These fitness zones are outdoor gyms that contain exercise equipment machines and are located within public parks. The goal of the Fitness Zones program is to:

“Create a fun, accessible, and social environment where people can enjoy getting fit. We know that just getting outdoors makes people healthier and happier. Fitness Zones take that one step further by giving people free access to top-quality exercise equipment suitable for all levels of fitness.”<sup>13</sup>

The process, from planning to installation of a fitness zone, provides lessons relevant to installing parklets in Los Angeles. For each project, the Trust for Public Land works with a community partner to select a park location. Selection is based on local need, demonstrated by limited park space and a sizable local population representing

a variety of park users and potential users. After the park is selected, the Trust for Public Land works closely with the Los Angeles County Recreation and Parks Department to select a particular place within the park. Selection criteria include site visibility and shade. The Trust for Public Land then hires a contractor to install the exercise machines at the selected site, and gifts the machines to the Recreation and Parks Department that is responsible for their maintenance. The Recreation and Parks Department also holds liability insurance for the fitness zones.

Each fitness zone costs approximately \$45,000. Costs include six to eight pieces of exercise equipment, installation, and staff time for permitting and agency coordination. As of June 2012, fitness zones were located in 29 different parks in Los Angeles County. By the end of August 2012, it is expected that 42 LA County parks will contain fitness zones.

Researchers evaluated the fitness zones in 12 parks and found that park use had increased in half of the parks since the installation of a fitness zone.<sup>14</sup> They also found a correlation between the presence of a fitness zone and elevated levels of exercise in a park, not only among users of the fitness zone but also in other parts of the park. Researchers speculate that seeing people on exercise equipment encourages others to be more physically active.



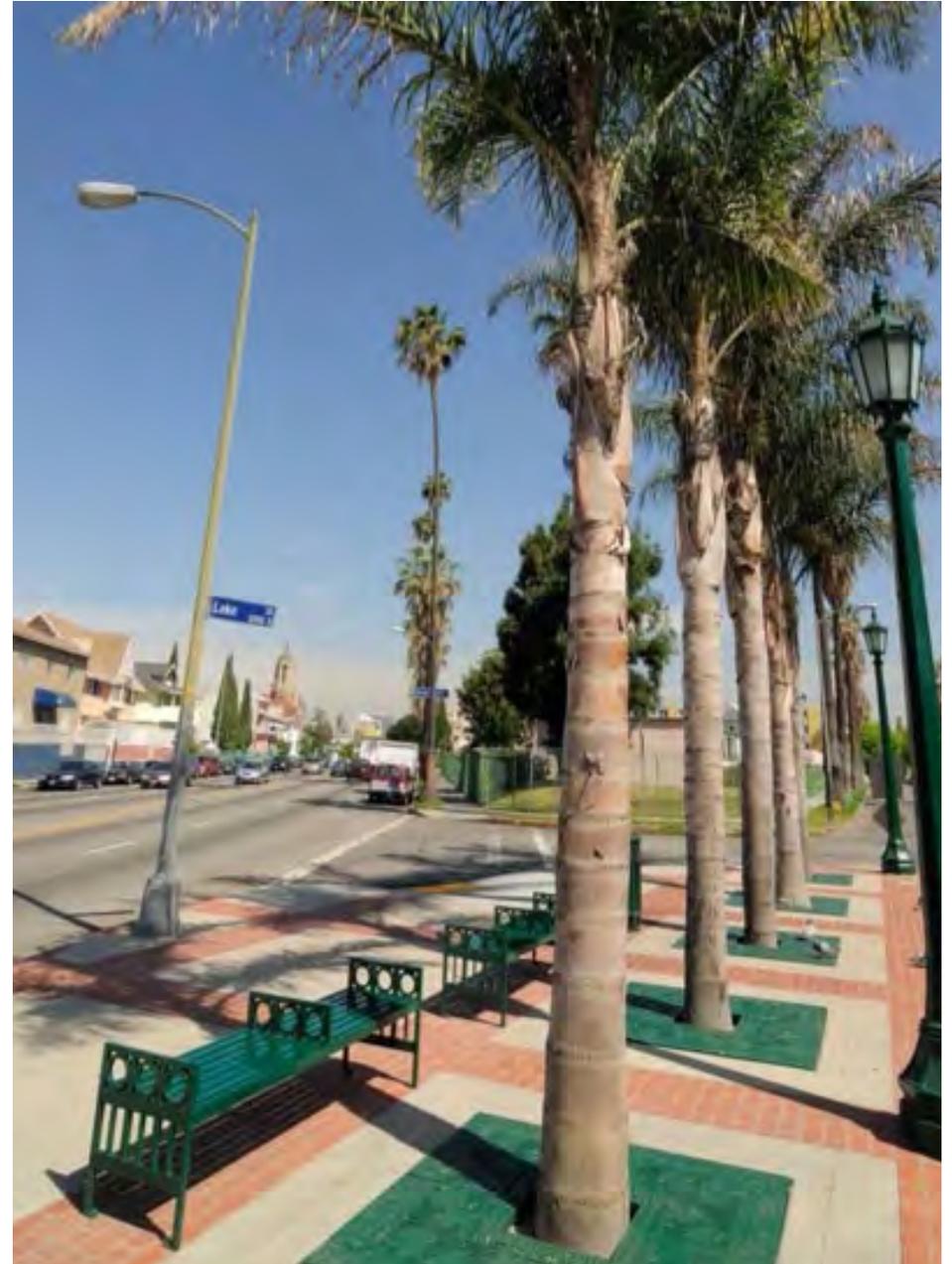
*Figure 19.* Fitness Zone equipment, Los Angeles, CA.  
Credit: Office of Council member José Huizar

## Other Key Precedents

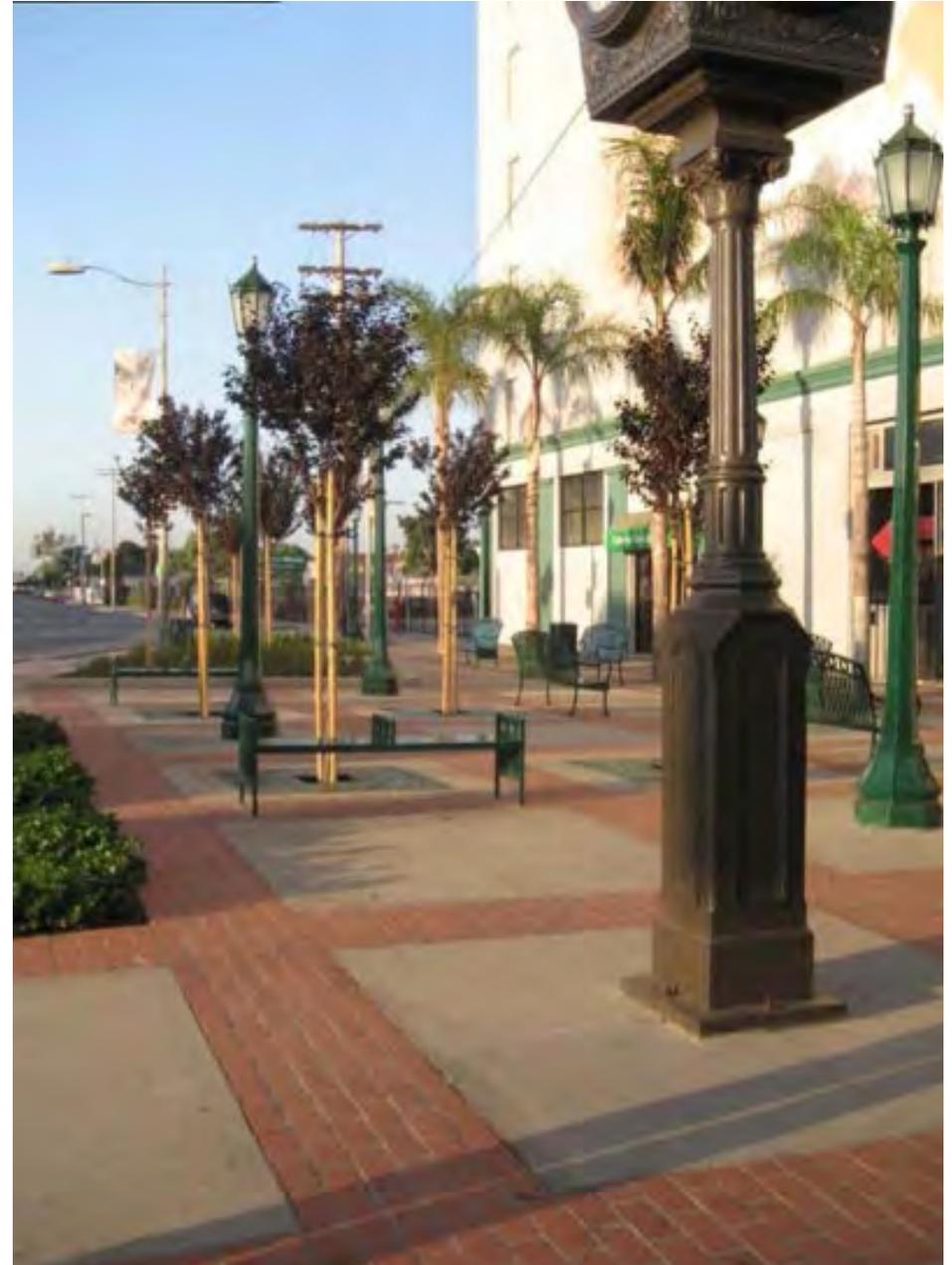
The Los Angeles Neighborhood Initiative (LANI) is a non-profit organization that has initiated a number of streetscape projects. LANI facilitates stakeholder participation and decision-making, and promotes public-private partnerships that result in community improvement projects. Several of LANI's transportation and corridor improvement projects involve converting underutilized roadway space into public space for pedestrians.

For instance, LANI created a public plaza from a street median by closing a small portion of a cut-through street near the intersection of Normandie Avenue and Pico Boulevard (see figures 22 & 23). LANI also added landscaping and benches as part of a beautification project on a street median near the intersection of Hoover Street and Pico Boulevard (see figures 20 & 2). LANI is currently in the permitting phase to expand the plaza at Normandie and Pico, seeking to fill in part of the street and create a larger, contiguous plaza. LANI has several other open space projects in the building, construction, and proposed/planning phases.

LANI projects are designed by a community-driven process in which a Steering Committee meets with architects and gives them feedback through design development. Funding for past projects was awarded through the Los Angeles Metropolitan Transportation Authority's Call for Projects, the Community Redevelopment Agency, and LADOT reprogrammed funds. While similar to parklets, these plazas involve more expensive and permanent changes to the streetscape.<sup>15</sup>



*Figures 20 and 21. Before and after:  
Pico Blvd. and Hoover St., Los Angeles, CA.  
Credit: Los Angeles Neighborhood Initiative*



*Figures 22 and 23.* Before and after:  
Pico Blvd. and Normandie Ave., Los Angeles, CA.  
Credit: Los Angeles Neighborhood Initiative

## Current Efforts and City Support

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In addition to the aforementioned efforts, the Downtown Los Angeles Neighborhood Council (DLANC) formed a Complete Streets Working Group in the summer of 2011 with the objective to explore innovative design ideas for improving streets in Downtown Los Angeles. The group focuses on two initiatives: 1) working with the LADOT Bike Program on designs for bicycle treatments; and 2) installing parklets. The working group identified potential sites along Spring Street for parklet installation and has spoken with business owners at the Historic Downtown Business Improvement District about sponsoring them. They also prepared design concepts for the candidate sites, and collaborated with Los Angeles City Council members and the Department of City Planning to move these projects forward. Additionally, two projects in Council District 14 are moving forward with preliminary designs and are seeking to be among the piloted parklet projects.

As a result of these and other efforts from advocates, Los Angeles City Council members Jan Perry and José Huizar brought a motion to the City Council in September 2011. The motion now instructs the Departments of City Planning, Public Works, and Transportation:

“To assist with the implementation of parklet demonstration projects currently under consideration and to create a citywide parklet pilot program similar to San Francisco’s Pavement to Parks Program.”<sup>16</sup>

With support from the UCLA Luskin School of Public Affairs and a grant to UCLA from The Rosalinde and Arthur Gilbert Foundation, the DLANC is currently moving forward for the development of a parklet on Spring Street that would include exercise equipment. This will be the first active recreation parklet in Los Angeles, allowing pedestrians to actively utilize the public right-of-way. This toolkit is designed to support this effort and others that will follow from it.

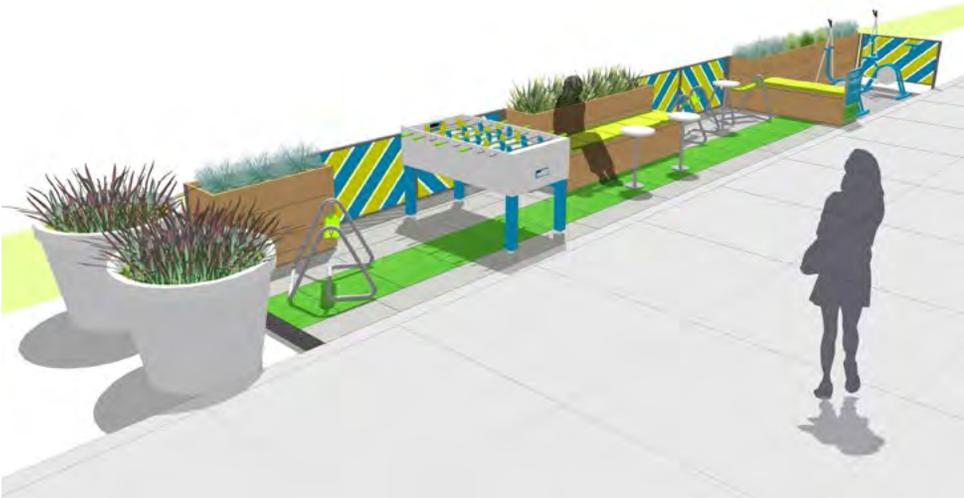


Figure 24. Rendering of Spring Street parklet, Los Angeles, CA.  
Credit: Berry and Linné

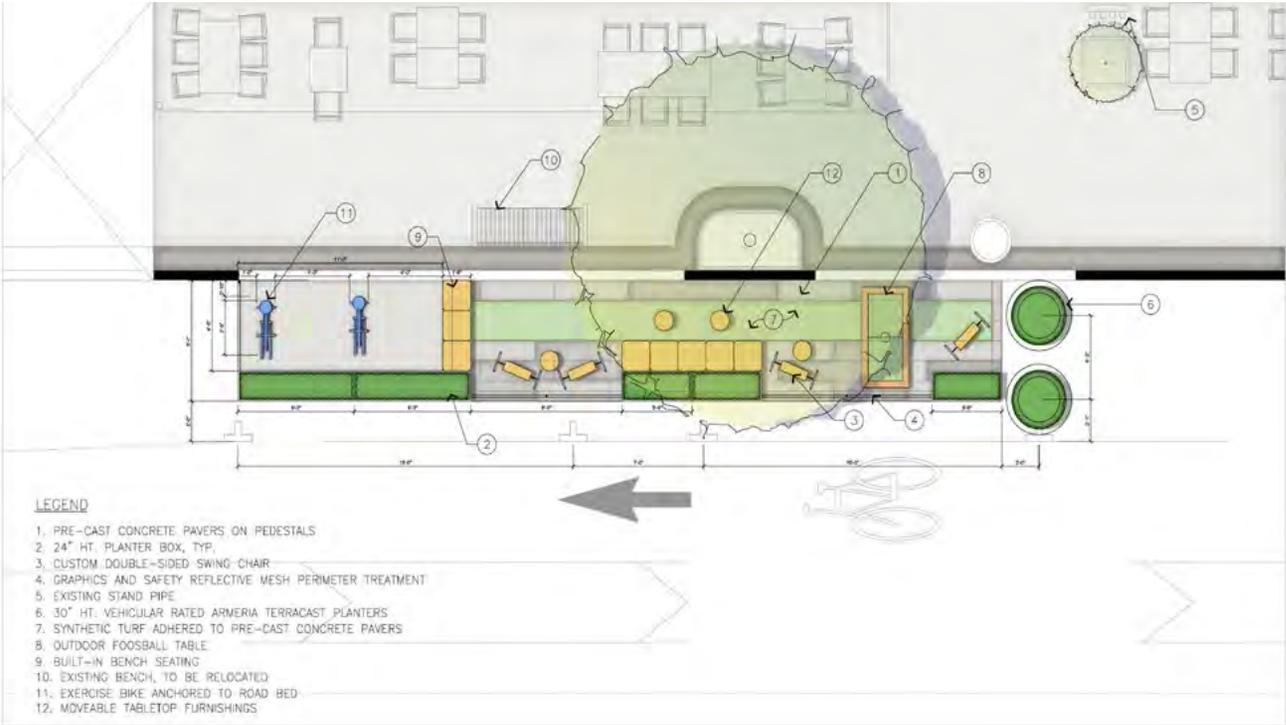


Figure 25. Plan view of Spring Street parklet, Los Angeles, CA.  
Credit: Tony Lopez



*Figure 26.* Rendering of El Serrano parklet, Los Angeles, CA.  
Credit: Kelli Rudnick



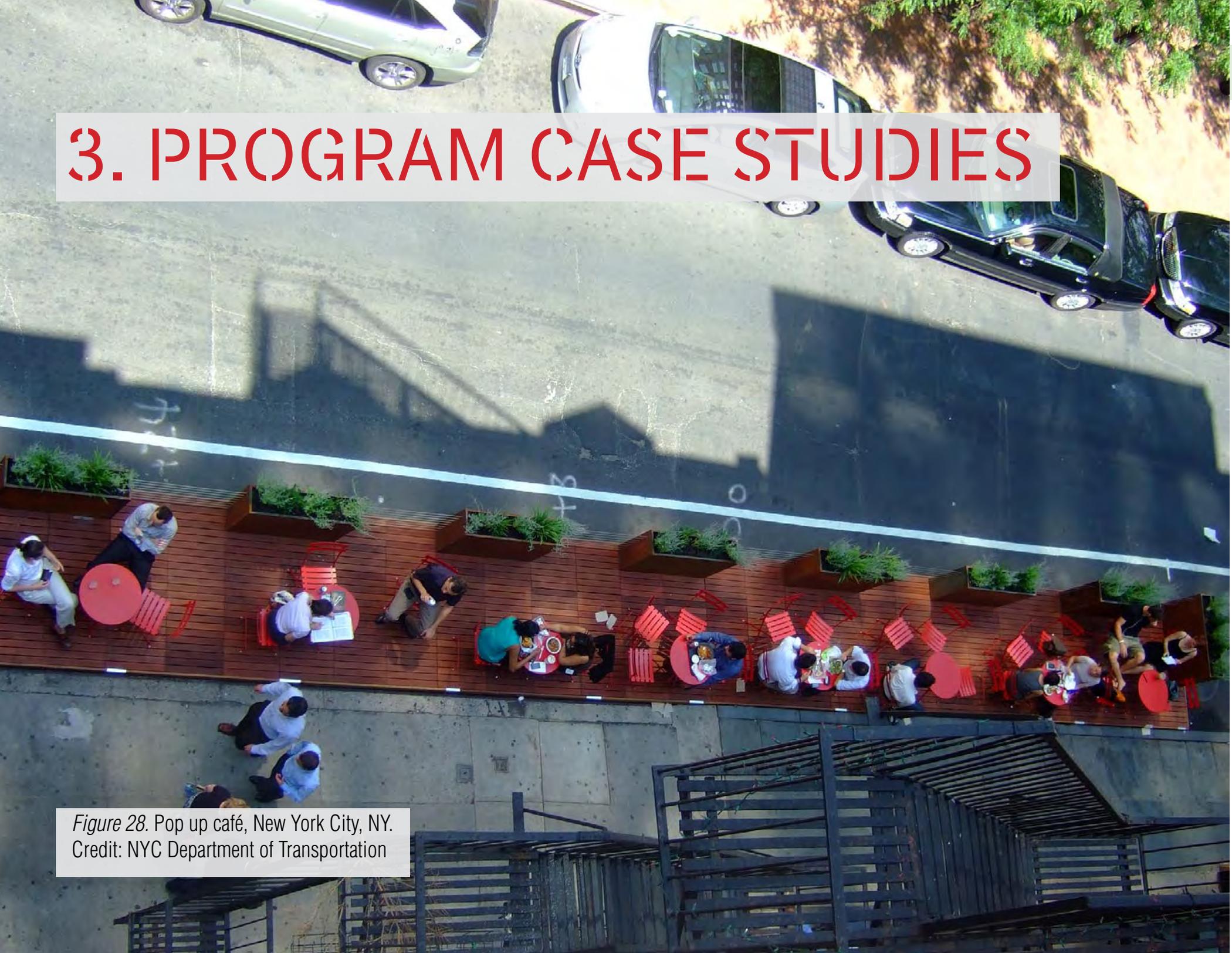
*Figure 27.* Rendering of York Boulevard parklet, Los Angeles, CA.  
Credit: Kelli Rudnick

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# 3. PROGRAM CASE STUDIES

An aerial photograph of a pop-up café set up on a city street. The café is built on a wooden deck that runs along the sidewalk. It features several small, round, red tables and matching red chairs. People are seated at the tables, some eating and some talking. The deck is bordered by a low wall of wooden planters containing green plants. A white line is painted on the asphalt road, separating the café area from the traffic lane. In the background, several cars are parked or driving on the street. The scene is brightly lit, suggesting a sunny day.

*Figure 28. Pop up café, New York City, NY.  
Credit: NYC Department of Transportation*

## Introduction

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The following chapter provides examples of parklet programs in leading cities throughout North America. This chapter does not address every effort in every city. Rather, UCLA researchers selected seven cities because their parklet programs can provide specific lessons for Los Angeles. The following seven municipal parklet programs are discussed in this chapter:

- San Francisco,
- Montréal,
- New York City,
- Vancouver,
- Philadelphia,
- Long Beach,
- Oakland.

Collectively, these program case studies underscore key commonalities as well as the diversity amongst parklet programs in cities throughout North America. These case studies are not meant to be an exhaustive list of all parklets in North America, but rather to highlight some key distinctions between selected cases. The concluding section of this chapter includes a table comparing cities by their number of parklet sites, the city departments involved in their parklet program, their permit requirements and costs, required insurance, and duration of the parklets. Also for comparison purposes, each parklet program case study includes sections on:

1. Origins and goals of the parklet program;
2. Planning process and design development;
3. Implementation and maintenance (including the responsibilities of the applicant/parklet sponsor); and
4. Successes and challenges of each parklet program.

## San Francisco



Figure 29. Castro Commons, San Francisco, CA.  
Credit: Jamison Wieser

### Origins and Goals

San Francisco coined the term parklets and was the first city to introduce parklets (specifically in parking spaces) in the United States. This distinction is due, in part, to a 2008 visit from New York City Transportation Commissioner Janette Sadik-Khan. During her visit, Commissioner Sadik-Khan challenged San Francisco to initiate a program that would create quality public spaces. Responding to the challenge to reclaim public space for people, the City of San Francisco opened its first plaza pilot project on Castro Commons in April 2009 (figure 29).

The San Francisco Planning Department led this initial effort. In order to avoid lengthy permit processing, it defined this project as “removable” in character ensuring an expedited design review process and construction.

Following the Castro Commons parklet, San Francisco established the “Pavement to Parks” program to address the following issue:

“Many of our streets are excessively wide and contain large zones of wasted space, especially at intersections. San Francisco’s new ‘Pavement to Parks’ projects seek to temporarily reclaim these unused swathes and quickly and inexpensively turn them into new public plazas and parks.”<sup>17</sup>

After Castro Commons, the city piloted projects at other locations. The projects resulted in positive community interest and overwhelming demand for more removable public spaces in San Francisco.

Following the success of these plaza pilots and inspired by PARK(ing) Day, the city innovated a new program to create temporary plazas in parking spaces, which it dubbed “parklets.” After installing the first pilot parklets, the city streamlined permitting for these spaces, including the processing of the applications, selection of sites, and their subsequent installation by private parties such as businesses and residents. As of July 2012, San Francisco has 35 parklet projects installed and 35 more in the pipeline. The Pavement to Parks program is now housed in the City Design Group at the San Francisco Planning Department and is a

collaborative effort between the Planning Department, the Department of Public Works, the Municipal Transportation Agency and the Mayor’s Office.

According to city planner Andres Power, San Francisco’s main objective for parklets is to reprogram automobile parking spaces for alternate uses and reallocate them in strategic ways to provide better public space for pedestrians. The City of San Francisco wants to pursue the parklet projects quickly and cost-effectively and also possibly in a reversible way, in case there are unforeseen challenges. As the city’s recent request for parklet proposals indicates:

“Parklets are intended to provide space for people to sit, relax, and enjoy the city around them, especially where narrow sidewalks would otherwise preclude such activities. They are intended to be seen as pieces of street furniture, providing aesthetic enhancements to the overall streetscape.”<sup>18</sup>

## Planning Process and Design Development

The first pilot plazas in the Pavement to Parks program were permitted as temporary street closures, typically for about a month or two to test out the viability of the spaces. Once the plazas were proven successful, the city legislated the spaces as permanent open space. The first pilot parklets

in parking spaces were permitted under an existing street closure permit. Given the positive feedback on the first pilots, along with community-driven demand for more parklet projects, the City streamlined permitting and initiated an expedited approval process. Since the program's establishment, the city has issued three rounds of Requests for Proposals for parklet projects, and it will issue a fourth round in fall 2012.

The city evaluates the viability of a parklet location on a case-by-case basis, using the following criteria:

- Lack of public space in the surrounding neighborhood,
- Preexisting community support for public space at the location,
- Surrounding uses that can attract people to the space,
- Identified community or business steward,
- Not blocking a fire hydrant or bus stop,
- Generally not located on a corner or on the City's five year paving plan,
- Slope of the street is less than 5% grade.

The city recommends the following general design guidelines:

- Parklet should be easily accessible from the sidewalk,
- Some landscaping is expected,
- Parklet should be visually permeable to enable people to rest and experience the street off the sidewalk,
- Parklet should conform to ADA access guidelines. Parklet must be open to the public and display two standard signs (per city template) stating "public parklet,"
- Should feel public and be devoid of cues (e.g. umbrellas and condiment bottles on tables) that signify that the space's primary function is for commercial activity,
- Seating should be included and any removable furniture must be distinct from those of restaurants.

The Request for Proposals also strongly encourages fixed/permanent furniture—including benches and bike racks to denote that it is a public space—rather than movable tables and chairs. If a business chooses to include

movable tables and chairs, this furniture must be different than the furniture that the business currently uses. The site should ‘read’ overall as a public space, and businesses are not allowed to provide table-side service to the parklet. These tactics all combine to indicate that the parklet is public rather than a private extension of the business.

Other than the above requirements, the guidelines are not very prescriptive. These guidelines will allow parklets to have a unique character and display a sense of belonging to their particular neighborhood, as the city cherishes the



Figure 30. “Parkmobile” Yerba Buena district, San Francisco, CA.  
Credit: Madeline Brozen

diversity of parklet designs. The fourth round of RFP to be released in fall 2012, will have stronger design guidelines and more detailed accessibility guidelines. As a result, parklets in San Francisco have different characteristics and typologies. For instance, the installation on Powell Street is a corridor treatment--sponsored by Audi Motors and designed by Walter Hood--that runs along two blocks and on both sides of the street (figures 33 & 34). The city views this corridor treatment as a hybrid between a parking-space parklet and a pedestrian plaza.

On the other end of the size and duration spectrum, six projects in the Yerba Buena Community Benefit District are “parkmobiles,” small installations consisting primarily of just a bench and a planting that can be moved periodically to different sites in the district (figure 30). Parkmobile parklets are distinct from both the plazas and parking space parklets, as they require a different permit than the now-standard permit used for parklets.

### Implementation and Maintenance

Each applicant—typically a business owner, community benefit district, non-profit or resident—agrees to certain responsibilities. The applicant must be willing to pay for the construction costs of the parklet. The applicant also agrees

to provide day-to-day maintenance of the parklet, including the storage of movable tables and chairs, and the cleaning of trash. The applicant must show the city evidence of at least \$1 million in liability insurance and name the City and County of San Francisco as additionally insured. The city grants successful applicants a revocable lease and issues a temporary occupancy use permit to install a parklet. The following fee structure is imposed for projects designed and constructed by outside parties:<sup>19</sup>

- \$791 base fee for all applications; and
- \$650 for up to two parking meter removals (required only if meters currently exist);
- \$191.50 to pay for site inspection before and after installation; and
- \$285 additional base fee for each parking stall used beyond the first two,
- \$325 additional fee for each additional meter removal beyond the first two (required only if meters currently exist,)
- \$221 for yearly permit renewal.

## Successes and Challenges

The non-profit organization Great Streets SF conducted an evaluation of the Divisadero Street parklet, located in front of Mojo Bicycle Café.<sup>20</sup> Researchers found that the number of pedestrians increased by an average of 13 percent after the installation of the parklet, with the greatest increases on weekday evenings.

According to San Francisco planners, the biggest success of the Pavement to Parks program is helping the public to re-imagine creations in the city's rights-of-way. In the case of parklets, by recasting spaces for cars as spaces for people, local merchants have a new way to interact with the community and attract new customers. San Francisco planning staff also report that many businesses, especially cafés and restaurants, have experienced marked revenue increases since the installation of a nearby parklet, resulting in increased sales tax revenue for the city and in some cases increased jobs, as restaurants hire additional staff to meet increased demand.

However, the goal of these installations is not for increased business revenues, but for a creation of public space and a catalyst for community development. Parklets provide merchants of all varieties another way to engage with their community which is not solely based on a marketplace interaction. For example, after installing a parklet, its steward in the Mission District initiated a local farmers market in the neighborhood, the Mission Community Market. Now, the city and the neighborhood are looking to redesign the street to better facilitate this market. This example demonstrates how parklets in San Francisco are acting as a catalyst for incremental interventions in the public realm.

In terms of challenges, some businesses have not been great stewards of their spaces. There have been a few incidents of businesses turning away members of the public who were not their patrons from using the parklet. The city must enforce and follow up on complaints to prevent the misuse of parklets and has the right to revoke the permit at any time. Yearly permit renewal is thus a useful tool for the City to ensure that parklet stewards adhere to the rules of operation.



*Figure 31. Café Abir, San Francisco, CA.  
Credit: Daveed Kapoor / utopiad.org*



*Figure 32. Devil's Teeth parklet, San Francisco, CA.  
Credit: San Francisco Pavement to Parks*



*Figure 33.* Powell Street Promenade, San Francisco, CA.  
Credit: SFMTA Livable Streets Division



*Figure 34.* Planters, Powell Street Promenade, San Francisco, CA.  
Credit: SFMTA Livable Streets Division

According to city planner Andres Power, parklets have been so popular, (more than 100 applications) that the amount of city resources required to review the proposals and issue the permits is becoming a concern for the city. Regardless, this public-private partnership model that is supported by community-driven demand, strives to bring more public spaces to the city.



*Figure 35. Terrasse, Montréal, Quebec.  
Credit: Neal LaMontagne*

## Montréal

### Origins and Goals

City staff members in Montréal are uncertain as to when parklets first appeared in the city. Montréal has long allowed on-street patio decks, (called terraces in Montréal) as requested by local businesses to increase their outdoor seating without impinging on sidewalk space (figure 36).

A current wave of interest in parklets stems from the Avenue Verte — Mont Royal initiative. This large parklet along Mont-Royal, a major commercial street in Montréal, brings attention to the idea of livable commercial streets, which combine places for people, nature, and vehicles. The Mont-Royal Avenue Street Association supports having terraces while retaining automobile access to the street. While Montréal has not yet institutionalized a robust parklet program, the city did update and standardize its permitting process for parklets (terraces) in 2007. There are now over 90 terraces installed seasonally in Montréal.

### Planning Process and Design Development

Similar to other cities, typical parklet sites in Montréal are on-street parking spaces located adjacent to the applicant business (café, restaurant, or bar). The street space remains public, and the permit only allows for temporary occupation. The presence of on-street terraces must not cause nuisance to pedestrians or danger to residents and users.



*Figure 36.* Terrasse, Montréal, Quebec.  
Credit: Laurence Parent

The process to develop a terrace begins with a business submitting an application to the city. Site criteria used by the city to determine approval include:<sup>21</sup>

- Maintain a minimum continuous linear sidewalk width of 1.8 m (5.9 ft.).
- Maintain a 1 m (3.3 ft.) buffer between the terrace and the travel lane.
- Maintain a 0.5 m (1.65 ft.) buffer between terrace furniture and street furniture (benches, trees, bins, parking meters, etc.). Can request to move some street furniture.
- Must be located directly in front of the establishment it serves and have a maximum width equal to the business frontage. If this width cannot be achieved due to the presence of a bus stop or minimum distance from an intersection, the operator may apply, with agreement from neighboring business, to extend to a width of 30 percent of the neighboring business frontage.
- Not allowed in bus stop areas, in lanes dedicated for buses, or any place deemed unsafe by Public Works.
- Not allowed within 5 m (16.4 ft.) from intersections.

The size of a typical on-street terrace is one parking space, but as noted above, the precise size depends on the business frontage and conformance with the aforementioned site criteria. The number of terraces varies by year, based on applications received, and they are installed during the warmer weather months (April to October), often on popular destination streets. Terraces have become a popular fixture in Montréal with some neighborhoods having several along their commercial streets. These parklets are considered public space.



*Figure 37. Terrasse, Montréal, Quebec.  
Credit: Alain Quevillon*

However, there are certain time restrictions: terraces are only open to the public from 7 am to 11 pm (Sunday through Thursday) and from 7 am to midnight (Friday and Saturday.)

Additionally, the permit guidelines detail the following design requirements:

- Terraces must have a guardrail along the entire perimeter (except 1.8 m. entry).
- Planter boxes must be provided along the two end-sides with a minimum weight of 75 kg. (165 lb.) and a minimum height of 0.5 m. (1.65 ft.). These boxes act as bollards to protect against parking maneuvers. Boxes must be planted with flowering plants (perennials or annuals).
- Hedges (between 1-1.5 m. / 3.3-4.9 ft.) are required along the entire length along the street and parking sides. A list of accepted shrubs to compose the hedge is provided in the guidelines.
- Alternative planting requires a proposal to be submitted to Public Works.
- Floor of the terrace to be at the same level over its entire area, taking into account the crown of the road. Floor should be constructed of wooden slats or plywood with a smooth surface of a natural wood color.
- Railings should be constructed of metal (painted black) or wood.
- Furniture should not be constructed of or contain PVC; it should be sturdy, durable, and designed to be outdoors.
- No sound amplification system is permitted.
- No heating system is permitted.
- No vinyl, canvas, cloth attached to the railings is allowed.
- No advertising on the terrace is allowed.
- Umbrellas must not carry advertising, must not extend past the terrace, must not affect visibility of signage, and must be secured to withstand wind stresses.

## Implementation and Maintenance

The City of Montréal requires a permit for parklet installation. Permits are administered and managed by the Division des études techniques — Direction des travaux publics (Public Works) for the specific arrondissement (district). Applications must come from the owner of the applicant establishment; a joint application from adjacent businesses is also possible. The cost of the permit application is \$600, while the cost of a 6-month permit is \$7,625 for a street with parking meters and \$2,207 for a street without parking meters. Costs are estimates and depend on the precise area taken up by the terrace. The cost for the parklet installation is completely the responsibility of the applicant business.

The business is also responsible for the maintenance of the terrace and the cleanliness of the sidewalk (including a street section triangle 2.5 m x 2.5 m, or 8.2 x 8.2 ft, on each side of the parklet where the city street sweeper cannot clean). Cleaning of the terrace and sidewalk is to be done each evening after the business closes.

The operator must hold liability insurance of \$2 million. The operator is liable for any damages, theft, or loss and is responsible for terrace use. The city is not liable for any injury due to accident or incident within the boundaries of the terrace or caused by it.

## Successes and Challenges

Although on-street terraces are a long-standing practice in Montréal, the driving force for these parklets comes from local businesses rather than through an official city program. Consequently, there has not been a city-sponsored evaluation of the terraces to determine impact, successes, and challenges. Regardless, parklets appear to be a success in Montréal as indicated by their popularity and the city's standardized permitting process for terraces. While the cost undertaken by the business champion is not trivial, our interviews indicated that many business owners see value in parklets.

## New York City



*Figure 38. Pop-Up Café, Fika, New York City, NY.  
Credit: Sam Smith*

### Origins and Goals

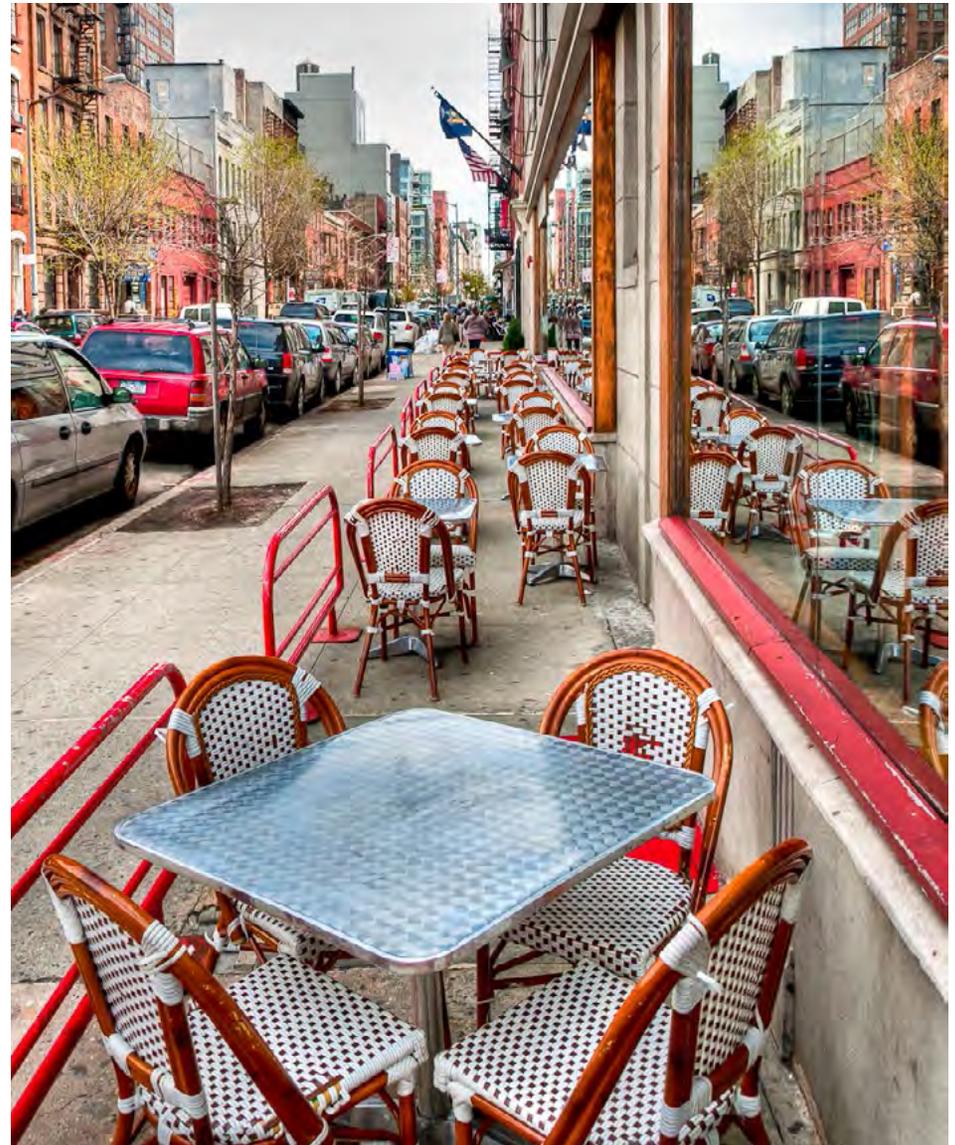
New York City's Department of Transportation (NYC DOT) received a letter in January 2010 from a group of businesses in Lower Manhattan requesting permission to construct additional outdoor seating in the public realm near their establishments. Ineligible for a sidewalk café permit (see figure 39 for traditional sidewalk café) because of the narrow sidewalks in front of their establishments, these businesses requested seating in the parking spaces abutting the sidewalk. The business applicants sought conceptual approval from the local NYC Community Board (similar to neighborhood councils or other citizen elected/appointed groups) as well as advice from San Francisco planners who had already installed parklets in their city.

The timing was right. At the time of the businesses' request, NYC DOT staff members were already aware of similar interventions in San Francisco and had preliminary discussions on the feasibility of transforming parking spaces into mini parks in NYC, a longer-term version of the installations already taking place in NYC on Park(ing) Day. Also as a key precedent, NYC had already successfully converted larger swaths of road space into pedestrian public space, notably through their previously discussed

Pavement to Plazas program and the Green Light for Midtown project, which closed sections of Broadway in Midtown Manhattan for increased pedestrian space, including large pedestrian plazas at Times Square and Herald Square.

Consequently, NYC staff partnered with the applicant businesses in Lower Manhattan to pilot a parklet, referred to in NYC as a “pop-up café.” San Francisco staff connected them with architects and deck contractors who were willing to donate pro bono or at cost services for the pilot parklet. The first pop-up café was installed in New York in the summer of 2010 in front of two restaurants, Bombay’s and FIKA, along Pearl Street in Lower Manhattan.

The city plans to launch an ongoing program to replace the pilot program soon. The goal for this parklet/pop-up café program is “to provide seasonal outdoor public seating in the parking lane of the street as an amenity to pedestrians at places where sidewalk seating is not available, and to build well-designed public open spaces that invite people to stay.”<sup>22</sup> The city also expects pop-up cafés to beautify the street, foster walking and social interaction, contribute positively to street life, and complement other public space initiatives. Its final objective is economic development, with the hope that pop-up cafés increase pedestrian traffic and thus bring more customers to local businesses.



*Figure 39.* Traditional sidewalk café seating, New York City, NY.  
Credit: Ted Jensen

## Planning Process and Design Development

Based on the success of the initial pilot project and following a letter of support from the Community Board, city staff issued a city-wide call for new parklet locations, based on initial and basic development criteria. They received 29 applications, with the city ultimately selecting three sites for installation in 2011 (in addition to the one installed in 2010).

The city cannot estimate how many more pop-up cafés will be installed in 2012 and 2013. There will be a rolling application process with no deadlines. NYC staff will review applications and proposed sites using technical criteria that take into account the physical features of the site and its traffic characteristics. For instance, the city typically allows parklets only at locations with low-speed and low-volume vehicular traffic and on one-way streets. Parklets are currently allowed only in front of commercial/retail establishments (initially only in front of cafés and restaurants), and can only be located in parking spaces along the curb. More detailed technical criteria include:<sup>23</sup>

- The street characteristics must be deemed suitable for parklet installations by DOT. Typically, this means it would be a one-way street that has no more than one lane of moving vehicle traffic. Sites close to intersections or driveways or where turns or lane changes occur could be rejected due to safety concerns.
- The lane along the curb cannot be a moving lane of traffic at any time of day.
- The parking regulations at the curb must be suitable for parklet installation. Examples of unsuitable sites include bus stops, fire zones, authorized vehicle parking, or no stopping zones.
- The site must not have elements obstructing the use of the platform or that require regular access such as fire hydrants, driveways, or newsstands. Certain types of underground utilities may not be suitable locations for curbside seating platforms.

The size of the parklet (how many parking spaces it occupies) is determined by the business frontage. The first pop-up café built in front of two adjacent restaurants occupied five parking spaces. The other three parklets ranged from two to four parking spaces.



*Figure 40.* Pop-up café locations, New York City, NY.  
Credit: NYC Department of Transportation

In terms of other requirements, the city mandates that parklets have plantings, but is flexible in regards to the type of plantings and other design elements. The city also requires signage, to be located at either end of the parklet, stating that it is an open public space. There are restrictions on the

hours for seating, and the adjacent establishment is required to store seating when they close or at the hours stipulated by the Community Board.

The estimated cost for each parklet is about \$20,000, with the costs for design, construction, and maintenance to be covered by the applicant/operator. The city discovered that it is sometimes difficult for businesses to create and pay for the design work. Therefore, NYC DOT asked an architecture intern to develop some schematic designs that future applicants can use. While city staff does not want to develop restrictive standardized designs for all pop-up cafés, the city would like to be able to support future applicants by providing examples of design lessons learned.

### Implementation and Maintenance

Applicants are required to 1) obtain Community Board approval; 2) prepare a design for approval based on the design guidelines; and 3) sign a legal agreement for the maintenance and insurance of the parklet. Insurance should cover liability of \$1 to 3 million (\$1 million for one parklet or \$2 million in the aggregate with an additional \$1 million liability to cover any vehicle damage). The city retains ownership of the land, and there is no lease. The adjacent establishment is not granted any rights to the pop-up café property, but has an obligation for its maintenance.

The Traffic and Planning Division's Public Spaces Unit in the NYC DOT administers the parklet program. Regulation and review take place internally at DOT, and there are no new ordinances issued for the pilot program. After an applicant submits an application, DOT reviews the technical feasibility based on the above stated criteria and, if appropriate, issues a notice of preliminary approval to the applicant. At this point, the applicant prepares professionally certified design plans, which are once again reviewed by the DOT. After DOT approval, the applicant must submit the annual authorization agreement including the maintenance agreement issued by DOT. The maintenance agreement is effectively a permit because it specifically states permission to use the space by the adjacent establishment, and there is no cost for this agreement. Before the site is constructed, DOT installs new signage including any changes in parking regulation, parking stops, and flexible bollards.

Community Board approval is the official public vetting process for these projects. DOT advises and expects the applicants to do outreach in their area prior to requesting the approval of the Community Board. Applications require the signature of the property owner who is also expected to engage other building tenants and neighboring businesses.



*Figure 41.* Flexible bollard and wheel stop, New York City, NY.  
Credit: NYC Department of Transportation

## Successes and Challenges

DOT conducted a simple post-occupancy evaluation of the initial pilot site. A time-lapse video showed that 96 people used the parklet in one day. These included children playing, seniors resting, and other people interacting with neighbors or their dogs. Although the count did not reveal significant increases in pedestrian volumes, Edward Janoff, city planner for the NYC DOT, notes that pop-up cafés utilize parking spaces efficiently and with flexibility.

“The parklets fit very well with a message the city is emphasizing: city streets don’t need to function the same way all the time. Just because the street is designed with concrete and asphalt, it doesn’t need to be used for the same thing. It can be for driving sometimes, and for walking or sitting other times; it can be flexible.”<sup>24</sup>

Yet some minor challenges exist. The parklets have experienced some vandalism, although no other maintenance issues have emerged to date. Thus far, the pop-up cafés have experienced a few challenges from neighborhoods that oppose additional pedestrian traffic. Smoking is prohibited at parklets but ensuring compliance is difficult. The city has also faced a problem with an operator (a restaurant) doing formal table service at the site and had to call and remind the business that the parklet is public.

All in all, there have not been any serious problems, written complaints, or bad press. All four parklets were installed and then easily taken apart during the winter season. According to Mr. Janoff, all operators are glad that they installed and maintained the parklets and would do it again. The city views the parklet program as a success.

## Vancouver



Figure 42. Car free day, Vancouver, BC.  
Credit: Christian Paul

### Origins and Goals

Interest in parklets for Vancouver grew when city staff from the Engineering Department's Street Activities Branch learned about parklets in New York City from NYC Transportation Commissioner Janette Sadik-Khan, who visited Vancouver in 2010. In addition, staff from San Francisco's parklet program met with Vancouver staff at the 2010 Walk21 conference to share knowledge on how to make parklets successful.

Against this backdrop, Vancouver received a "parklet-like" proposal during the 2011 Viva Vancouver call for proposals process. Viva Vancouver is a city initiative to activate streets and public spaces, building from Vancouver's successful Car-Free Day (see figure 42) and a desire to promote alternative uses of streets and roadways. The initiator of

this first proposal envisioned a parklet that would “move” every week from one location to another within the city’s Mount Pleasant neighborhood. After the proposal was short-listed for further consideration by the Viva selection committee, city staff asked the designer if he was willing to have the installation remain in one place for a longer period of time, and he agreed.

Another parklet followed in 2011, and the parklets are now a key part of the Viva Vancouver program. The objectives of this program are to “transform road spaces into people places” and experiment with new ways to increase the flexibility of roadway infrastructure in order to create a more vibrant public realm for pedestrians. The official goals are to:<sup>25</sup>

- Create a variety of public spaces for a mix of engaging activities and sojourning.
- Increase neighborhood livability benefiting residents, businesses, community groups, and visitors.
- Encourage sustainable and active transportation by creating more safe and interesting spaces for walking and cycling.

## Planning Process and Design Development

The City of Vancouver’s Call for Proposals resulted in the first two parklets, both of which are located on city property and maintained by the city rather than being leased to adjacent business owners. These two parklets differ in character and design. Parallel Park is the only curbside parklet and takes up two parking spaces (approximately 500 sq. ft.) on a side street adjacent to a café. Installed in September 2011, the structure is now considered semi-permanent. The other parklet, referred to as Picnurbia, is located on a street temporarily closed to vehicles. Picnurbia was also installed in the summer of 2011, and is approximately three parking spaces in length.

Site selection was an iterative process. For instance, the curb-side café parklet at Parallel Park involved the designer and local business improvement association (BIA) identifying three possible locations. The final location was determined collectively by the designer, city staff, and the BIA. Criteria for site selection included parklet proximity to high pedestrian volumes and retail as well as both sun exposure and shade from trees.



Figure 43. Parallel Park, Vancouver, BC.  
Credit: VIVA Vancouver

Specific design features were not specified by the city; rather, staff reviewed submittals to the Call for Proposals and approved parklet designs. Considered public space, the two parklets featured prominent signage to highlight this fact.

### Implementation and Maintenance

The city hopes to streamline processes and create tools so that the parklet model can live on outside of the experimental platform that Viva provides—likely as a cousin to the city’s existing patio program, which permits tables and chairs on the sidewalk. According to city planner Krisztina Kassay, more parklets are expected to be installed in 2012 as a result of the Call for Proposals. However, the city would like to find sponsors for this “expansion phase.” The city provided construction and installation support as well as financed the liability insurance for the Picnurbia parklet. In addition, city staff time and in-kind services provided by the designer and builder were used for both Picnurbia and the Parallel Park.

The city does not issue permits for parklets, but may do so if the parklet model can successfully expand to more neighborhoods. Staff members anticipate that future permitting will be done through the Engineering

Department’s Street Activities Branch, which is also responsible for issuing permits for the existing patio program.

When the Picnurbia parklet was installed, city solid-waste crew members maintained it by picking up garbage during their routine cleaning. The Parallel Park installation is continuously maintained by staff from the adjacent café. Café staff clean the parklet daily, which includes sweeping the ground and collecting ceramic cups and saucers left behind.

Parklet installation also requires designers to have professional liability insurance. However, thus far the city has covered all insurance costs when the designers did not have the resources for the liability insurance. In the future, the city would like to preclude the need for extra liability insurance by having parklets at street segments, where the city already provides coverage for the street and sidewalks.

### Successes and Challenges

The City of Vancouver evaluated the Parallel Park using a mail-in resident survey, time-lapse photography, and face-to-face meetings with the managers of the two adjacent cafés. The manager and owner of these cafés are very supportive of having a parklet nearby and believe that it

has increased foot traffic to their business; however, this has not been formally tracked. The city had a relatively good response rate (13 percent) to their mail-in resident survey, with many respondents including contact information. Over 60 percent of the survey respondents viewed the structure as a community asset, irrespective of whether or not they had spent time on it. After the parklet's installation, the city also put signage on the structure asking pedestrians to contact the city and give their evaluation. Overall, people enjoy the extra space that the parklets create and some even use them throughout the rainy fall and winter seasons.

The city considers it a success that Parallel Park has not been vandalized. The concerns and fears of nearby residents that the parklet would become a haven for drug dealing and late night drinking have not materialized.

Nevertheless, public engagement could be improved during the planning phase, a challenge given that parklet projects are designed to move quickly from concept to implementation. According to city planner Krisztina Kassay, staff could "certainly do more to keep those who have indicated interest in Viva Vancouver engaged and have them be our champions at-large." The city's community engagement specialists in the Corporate Communications Department are in the process of designing a more robust engagement strategy.

An ongoing challenge has been that, even with a large sign that says "public seating" attached to the structure, many assume that the seating belongs to the adjacent café. An additional challenge relates to resources and funding for parklets as the program expands to more areas in 2012. The city hopes that business will view parklets as a benefit and provide at least some in-kind support.

## Philadelphia



Figure 44: Parklet, Philadelphia, PA.  
Credit: Philly Bike Coalition

### Origins and Goals

In 2011, Philadelphia's University City District (UCD) received grant funding to develop innovative place-making programs. This community organization approached the Mayor's Office of Transportation and Utilities at the same time that this office was looking to develop a pedestrian amenities program. With support offered by the William Penn Foundation, UCD was able to build two parklets at a cost of approximately \$10,000 per parklet. The first two sites in the University City District were piloted in 2011.

Philadelphia's goal for its parklet effort is to build pedestrian-friendly spaces for community members to enjoy. Building off the success of the UCD pilot project, Philadelphia is now piloting a citywide program. As such, the city provided \$5,000 grants to five organizations (not including the UCD) in the 2012 pilot



*Figure 45.* Baltimore Avenue, Philadelphia, PA.  
Credit: Philly Bicycle Coalition



*Figure 46.* Wheel stop and flexible bollard, Philadelphia, PA.  
Credit: Philly Bicycle Coalition

phase. These funds are assisting some more pilot projects, but will not be an ongoing feature of the formal program. The city is working to transition its parklet pilot program into a permanent program, which involves formalizing and streamlining the planning, design, and permitting processes so as to encourage future applicants to participate.

### Planning Process and Design Development

As previously discussed, the University City District proposed the first two pilot parklet locations, receiving approval from the Mayor's Office. Both parklets were sited in two former parking spaces. One parklet was located next to a park and the other in front of a cafe. The city's primary criterion in site selection was, and remains, location along streets with a low speed limit. This is based on examples from other cities, indicating that successful parklets are typically located on streets with low speed limits (25 mph or less). The city also prefers to locate parklets along active commercial corridors and high-density residential areas.

The city prefers locations outside of the Central Business District (CBD) to avoid resistance from the CBD business community on reduction of parking space. Most parking locations outside of the CBD have parking meters, but demand for parking is lower there and the amount

of revenue loss due to the conversion of parking spots to parklets is not substantial. Applicants are responsible for seeking approval from a minimum of 51 percent of adjacent property owners at an early stage to avoid conflict and delays. This process is a proven method for gaining community approval, as it is the same process the city follows to designate a city-sponsored car-sharing site.

Parklets in Philadelphia exist from May to October and then are disassembled because of harsh weather during other months of the year. Therefore, the city has pursued a design model that ensures ease of assembly and disassembly. The city also pursues a certain commonality in the design features and materials to achieve cost savings. Parklets need to be ADA accessible and include safety features such as wheel stops and flexible bollards (figure 46). No table service is permitted at the parklets.

### Implementation and Maintenance

The Philadelphia Department of Streets issues a temporary license to applicants. No additional permits are required to establish a parklet. The Streets Department is also required to sign off on the temporary license. A new ordinance may be introduced in the near future, assuming that more parklets are installed. The pilot projects did not

require maintenance agreements, insurance, or liability commitments. A maintenance agreement and proof of liability insurance will be required as the program is formalized and standardized.

Community groups and businesses are in charge of the day-to-day maintenance of parklets. This includes putting away seats at night to discourage vagrancy. Yet the city is willing to be flexible if the residents want nighttime access to the parklet.

### Successes and Challenges

There has been no formal evaluation of the two parklets, but anecdotal evidence suggests that both are well received by community members and have created demand for more parklets in other locations. Parklet users are residents of the neighborhood and customers of the adjacent coffee shop. The parklet adjacent to the Green Line Café has successfully helped to attract new customers, with the café owner estimating that the parklet has increased business revenue by nearly 20 percent.<sup>26</sup> The second parklet has not been as successful, possibly because the site is less visible than the installation near the Green Line Café.

The funding the city provided in the second pilot round is supporting parklet construction in other neighborhoods. There was a great deal of interest expressed once the notice of funding opportunity appeared. This was especially helpful for areas of lower rents where people were less likely to build a parklet, if the financial support was not available. This includes a proposed parklet in front of Logan Library in a predominantly African American neighborhood. According to city staff, some parklet installations are good for place making, while others for commercial vitality. Nevertheless, the best parklets are good for both.

The lack of coordination between businesses, community members, and various departments within the city presents a challenge to implementation. The city, however, expects that formalizing the permitting and installation processes with more clear expectations, design guidelines, and deadlines will help overcome such challenges. The city also prefers that the parklet sponsors allocate more resources for better design options. As the second round of pilot projects is installed, the design options will likely expand.

## Long Beach



*Figure 47. Berlin parklet, Long Beach, CA.  
Credit: Daniel Faessler*

### Origins and Goals

Many retail and restaurant businesses on Fourth Street in Long Beach expressed interest in parklets. Fourth Street is a sort of main street, with a mix of small-scale retail stores-- such as cafés, restaurants, offices, and movie theaters-- on the ground floor and residential units on the upper floors. In the recent past, many of the small businesses on this street struggled to compete with new shopping malls. In response, physical improvements and the renovation of a local theater helped to increase the number of people patronizing restaurants along the corridor. Space-

constrained and unable to accommodate its increased business, Lola's restaurant became interested in creating a parklet to enhance seating capacity.

During the same time, the City of Long Beach was interested in invigorating its main street to prevent any deterioration resulting from the rise in shopping malls. Inspired by the Pavements to Plazas program of San Francisco and the pop-up cafés of New York, city staff anticipated that parklets could support these objectives and have a "street calming" effect. Thus, the city initiated a parklet program in 2010.

Since then, two parklets have been installed in front of two restaurants: Lola's and Berlin. Two more parklets are in the planning and design stage. The first two parklets are located in commercial corridors with substantial pedestrian traffic and are sponsored by the adjacent restaurants. They primarily function as outdoor sidewalk dining spaces for these businesses. Unlike parklets in other cities, in Long Beach the sponsoring business can technically limit use of the parklet to only its customers. While the restaurants do not explicitly object to the public using their parklets, the parklets are predominantly used by restaurant patrons. The land occupied by the parklets is located on the city's right-of-way and is temporarily leased to the private businesses to operate the facility.

### Planning Process and Design Development

A single architect and contractor designed and constructed both parklets. The city does not issue design specifications and does not stipulate design elements for parklets, other than a minimum area of one parking stall, with at least 7 feet parallel and 15 feet perpendicular to the road.<sup>27</sup> Site selection criteria are currently open-ended and site feasibility is determined on a case-by-case basis. First, an interested business owner has to make a proposal. The city

then verifies the site characteristics such as size, location, adjacent property, and street features to assess the viability of the project.

Approval and recommendations are sought from the Department of Water and Power, Department of Traffic, and Fire Department. After these departments grant approval, the City Council grants the final permit. Adjacent property owners are notified and should also approve the conversion of parking spaces to a parklet. Once the approval conditions are met, the city issues an occupancy permit for installation per Municipal code, Section 14.14.



*Figure 48.* Berlin parklet, Long Beach, CA.  
Credit: Daniel Faessler

## Implementation and Maintenance

The business owner or any entity leasing the land for a parklet is responsible for the regular maintenance of the facility. The city requires that the permittee maintains liability insurance for the entire permit period, and the amount can range from \$1 million to \$2 million. The permit is valid for one year and is eligible for renewal, provided there are no changes to the facility. Applicants pay \$819 per year for the processing of the permit.

## Successes and Challenges

The two parklets are achieving the objective of increasing restaurant serving space and stimulating business. Restaurant patrons often gravitate to seating in the parklet rather than the indoor seating area. The parklets' popularity is partly attributable to their location on a busy street with many bus lines and a recently designated bike route. According to Michael Bohn, project designer, the creation of the parklets has contributed to two full-time and four part-time employment positions in the adjacent restaurants.

On the other hand, some have been critical of the Long Beach parklets because of their more private nature compared to the parklets in other cities. While other cities are explicit about the public nature of their parklets,

the public can use the Long Beach parklets only at the discretion of the business operator. As editorialized in the *LA Weekly*:<sup>28</sup>

“How, then, can this truly be a park? The tables obviously are reserved for customers, who on a sunny Tuesday afternoon seemed to be enjoying themselves even without margaritas (an alcohol permit is pending). The short answer is, it’s not a park. In addition to the modified liquor license and additional insurance required for the new space, Lola’s owner, Luis Navarro, paid for the parklet: approximately \$20,000 plus the cost of those chairs and tables. It’s fantastic visibility for his restaurant and a great investment to expand his business, but shouldn’t it be called what it is: a private patio ... in the street?”

## Oakland

*Figure 49.* Rendering of 40th Street, Oakland, CA.  
Credit: Andrea Gaffney and Justin Viglianti



### Origins and Goals

Support for parklets in Oakland has come from many different groups. Many residents and business owners repeatedly met with city officials and council members to push for a parklet program, with Walk Oakland/Bike Oakland, a group active in advocating for pedestrian improvements, mounting a parklet campaign. In addition, the success of parklets in nearby San Francisco along with the popularity of Park(ing) Day in Oakland built momentum for parklets. The City of Oakland became interested in translating the temporary Park(ing) Day event into a longer-term and more permanent program for Oakland.

Oakland initiated a pilot parklet program in the fall of 2011. The main objective for this program is to increase and attract pedestrians and economic activity in commercial areas. The city hopes to create a more pedestrian-friendly environment and provide spaces for people to sit and relax.

According to city planner Blair Miller, formerly with the Oakland Redevelopment Agency,

“Parklets can be an innovative way to improve the pedestrian experience in Oakland. We hope all residents will benefit from the creativity and initiative of private businesses and community groups in the creation of unique, attractive urban spaces.”

### Planning Process and Design Development

Although no parklets currently exist in Oakland at the time of this writing, several parklets will soon be installed. The city released a Notice of Opportunities to encourage applications for parklets throughout the city. The city published a notice for applicants to apply for a parklet; a maximum of eight parklets could have been approved for the pilot program with a goal of one parklet in each of the eight council districts. Applicants had to demonstrate a suitable location, community support, a clear and well thought out design, and evidence that the parklet would be well-maintained. The city primarily considered location of the proposed parklet, the vision of the applicants, and their ability to take it to completion. A \$150 application fee was required to be considered for a parklet.

Seven applications were complete enough to move

forward, just shy of the goal to have one parklet in each of the eight council districts. The seven completed applications came from two cafés, a bakery, a photography shop, a retail shop, a homeowner, and a condominium association.

The city established the following process for parklet implementation:

1. City of Oakland releases Notice of Opportunity.
2. Interested parties respond to the notice with preliminary design sketches, demonstrated community support and evidence of maintenance capability and \$150 application fee.
3. City of Oakland selects sites that can move forward.
4. Design Review Exempt process begins and the city reviews plans checking for basic safety guidelines (see below.)
5. Public notice of future parklet is posted for 17 calendar days.
6. If no concerns are raised during the public notice period, a Noticing Permit is granted.
7. Applicants apply for encroachment permit (with \$1,100 fee) with full construction drawings.
8. Once encroachment permit is granted, applicants can begin construction.

City staff worked with the City Attorney's Office to create the required paperwork for the encroachment permit and the maintenance agreement. The minor encroachment permit carries a processing fee of about \$1,100. The city requires applicants to notify the public of their intent prior to applying for their encroachment permit. Public notice is required at this early stage so that interested parties could voice concerns sooner rather than later, in the hopes that all issues are addressed before finalizing construction drawings and other later steps.

At the time of this writing, only two sites had received approval of their encroachment permits. One of these parklets will be located at Alcatraz Avenue near San Pablo Avenue and is sponsored by Actual Café. The other parklet will be located near the intersection of 40th Street and Webster Street and is sponsored by Subrosa Coffee and Manifesto Bicycles. The other five sites are in earlier stages of development.

The city does not stipulate design guidelines but does have safety guidelines, including curb distances and bollard distance specifications. The City Engineer reviews the designs to ensure that they include features such as 42-inch high railings along the road edge. Parklets must be located at least one parking spot away from a street corner and

cannot be along a street with a speed limit of more than 25 mph. They may be allowed in white (loading zones) and green (ten minute parking) zones if the entity that requested these zones agrees to re-purpose the curb area. Parklets cannot be placed in front of a fire hydrant or in a way that restricts access to any private or public utility. Parklets shall also not be placed in front of or adjacent to a multi-space parking meter kiosk; a minimum clearance of six feet shall be maintained around all kiosks.

### Implementation and Maintenance

The city is considering amending the municipal code to include parklets and allowing a limited number of parklets to be approved twice a year through an application process similar to a request for proposal (RFP). The initial application process for the pilot program was started by the Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA). Upon dissolution of the CRA, parklet permitting moved to the Planning Department, which issues the noticing permit and reviews initial design. The Building Department is then responsible for the final review and plan approval for the encroachment permit.



Figure 50. Parking kiosk, Oakland, CA.  
Credit: Mike Linksvayer

The applicant/parklet sponsor must cover construction, maintenance, and insurance costs. The city subsidizes staff time and some of the application/permitting fees. Each parklet site must be cost-neutral. Therefore, revenue lost from parking meters has to be compensated elsewhere. The city staff must create a new metered space to replace the one lost by the parklet or the applicant must pay the city the lost meter revenue up to \$14,442.44 per space. Six of the proposed parklets are located in free parking spaces, and only one has been proposed in two metered parking spaces. Replacement meters are being installed at another nearby location.

The city requires the following of the parklet's sponsor:<sup>29</sup>

- Provide evidence of at least \$1 million in general liability insurance naming the City of Oakland as additional insured.
- Sign a Maintenance Agreement with the City of Oakland that may require the permit holder to do the following:
  - A. Keep all plants in good health.
  - B. Keep parklet free of debris and grime.
  - C. Adequately maintain the surface.
  - D. Sweep out debris from under the parklet as needed.
  - E. Once a year before the rainy season power wash under the Parklet. Do not allow power wash water to flow into the storm drain. Use appropriate storm drain inlet protection and storm water best management practices. (See Mobile Cleaners guidelines at <http://cleanwaterprogram.org/resources/commercial.html> )

## Successes and Challenges

Given that no parklets have been installed in Oakland as of this writing, it is too early to evaluate successes and challenges of the city's nascent parklet pilot program.

## Policy Recommendations

In order for cities to make the most out of their parklet programs, we present the following list of policy recommendations based on lessons learned from our case studies:

- **Identify residual spaces in priority areas.** Not all sites or all neighborhoods are appropriate for parklets. Parklets work well where there is a certain level of foot traffic, where automobile traffic is low-speed, and where there are surrounding establishments that can provide a level of natural surveillance. Cities can develop an inventory of residual spaces in priority areas with low amounts of open space.
- **Provide urban design guidelines.** As already demonstrated by some cities, design guidelines should not stifle parklet design and experimentation, but must ensure that appropriate safety standards are met.
- **Encourage creative parklet design.** Parklets can be functional and aesthetic assets for cities, especially if they demonstrate unique and innovative architectural and landscape designs. Cities should encourage innovation and experimentation in parklet design. At times, design competitions or charrettes may produce a rich inventory of ideas about parklet design.
- **Encourage community appropriate design.** Depending on the community needs and the character of the surrounding area, parklets should facilitate passive or active recreation, include age-specific activities (i.e. for young children or senior citizens, etc.), and incorporate neighborhood-specific cultural and landscape elements in their design.
- **Streamline permitting process.** Part of the appeal of parklets is that they are relatively easy to plan and install. Cities should ensure that the permitting process is simple, low-cost, and does not deter potential parklet sponsors. At the same time, permits should be renewed annually, giving cities the opportunity to monitor the operation and maintenance of parklets.
- **Designate lead staff person and public agency.** While various public departments have jurisdiction over city streets, it is essential that a particular city agency (and ideally a particular staff person) takes the lead in coordinating the parklet planning and installation process.
- **Streamline maintenance requirements.** Cities should make the expected levels of maintenance very clear to parklet sponsors and keep a watchful eye to guarantee that all maintenance requirements are met. This can be done with an inspection prior to the renewal of permits.

## Conclusion

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The seven city programs included in this chapter represent a range of programs from the most advanced to nascent. The short time frame between them demonstrates how quickly parklet programs have spread across North America. While not every city has conducted an evaluation of its parklet program, the data that does exist, along with anecdotal evidence suggests that both users (residents and customers of local businesses) and sponsors (typically a business or business association) are responding positively to parklets and demanding more of them. All cities discussed in this toolkit plan to expand their parklet program in some way. Additionally, many more cities are planning to begin piloting parklet projects in late 2012 or early 2013. This includes Chicago, IL, Asheville, NC, and Boston, MA, with more cities likely to begin pilots and programs.

Los Angeles and other cities seeking a pathway for more parklets can learn from the history, processes, challenges, and successes of these parklet programs. For comparison purposes, the table below highlights the

cities by their number of parklet sites, the city departments involved in their parklet program, their permit requirements and costs, required insurance, and duration of the parklets. The following chapter provides details at a more micro level to help readers select a project site and design a parklet based on its specific context.

Table 1. Summary and Comparison of Parklet Programs

City	Number of Parklets Installed	Departments Involved	Permit Required and Cost	Insurance/Liability	Duration
San Francisco	35	Lead: Department of City Planning  Coordination: Department of Public Works, Municipal Transportation Agency, and non-profit partner	\$791 base fee  \$191.50 for before and after inspection  \$221 Yearly permit renewal	\$1 million	Year-round; Applicants must renew permits yearly
Montréal	Approximately 90	Department of Public Works	\$600 for application  \$7,625 fee with parking meters  \$2,207 fee without parking meters	\$2 million	April – October
New York City	4	Department of Transportation, Traffic and Planning Division	Cafés must apply but no fee required	\$1 - \$3 million depending on size	April 15 – October 14
Vancouver	2	Engineering Department's Street Activities Branch	No permit required – call for proposals solicited from artists	None – conducted as city project	Summer: (Picnurbia)  Semi-permanent: (Parallel Park)

Table 1. Summary and Comparison of Parklet Programs (Continued)

City	Number of Parklets Installed	Departments Involved	Permit Required and Cost	Insurance/Liability	Duration
Philadelphia	2	Lead: Mayor's Office of Transportation and Utilities  Design Review: Streets Department  Temporary license issued: Department of Licenses and Inspection	No permit required	None required to date – temporary license	April – October 22
Long Beach	2	Lead: Department of Public Works  Approval: Department of Water and Power, Department of Traffic and Fire Department	\$819 with yearly renewal	Between \$1 million to \$2 million liability coverage	Year-round; Applicants must renew permits yearly
Oakland	7 sites in permitting process	Lead: Planning Department  Reviews: Building Department	\$1,100 for a permit	\$1 million in general liability insurance	Year-round; yearly renewal yet to be determined

## Footnotes

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# 4. DESIGN GUIDANCE

## Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to provide practical guidance on selecting a site and designing a parklet. The information provided in this chapter was collected through interviews with parklet designers, business owners, and city staff from cities where parklets have been planned or implemented. The first section provides site criteria about where to build a parklet. Information about how to design a parklet is then provided through a range of parklet examples. A well-designed parklet in an ideal location and with a strong community partner can encourage a vibrant street life and foster future investment in a neighborhood.

## How do I Select a Site?

A number of communities are seeking ways to improve the physical environment by re-purposing road space into parklets. A first step in the parklet development process is to select a site. Site selection should be driven by two main criteria: appropriate physical site characteristics and a responsible site steward/community partner. Both are critical for parklet success. For example, an ideal physical site could exist; however, either through design failure or an irresponsible steward, a site could fall into disrepair and not reach the goal of improving the physical environment. The community partner is typically the adjacent business who applies for the permit, pays for the construction, and maintains the parklet after its installation. Criteria for a physical site and community partner are driven by the following considerations:

### Physical Site Considerations: *Required*

- **Low traffic speeds.** Cities with parklet programs stipulate that parklets should only be installed in streets with low speed limits, typically 25 mph or lower. To minimize air pollution exposure to pedestrians, it is also recommended that parklets are not installed in areas with high traffic volumes.
- **Existing pedestrian activity.** Although parklets have the potential to increase pedestrian activity, there should already be demand for walking in the area.
- **Surrounding land uses that can support pedestrian activity.** These commonly include commercial, high-density residential and mixed-use areas.

### Physical Site Considerations: *Recommended*

- **High visibility from inside adjacent business.** This will provide “eyes on the street” to support safety for parklet users.
- **Adjacent businesses open during normal business hours or longer.** This is particularly important if there are movable tables and chairs in the site that must be taken in and out at night.
- **Existing shade trees.** Most parklets feature landscaping; however, this is typically for greening rather than for providing shade, particularly because of site visibility issues. Therefore, it is recommended to select sites with off-site shade, such as nearby trees.
- **Existing street lights on site.** For safety considerations, the ideal parklet site is well lit at night.

### Community Partner Considerations: *Required*

- **Dedicated partner for site upkeep.** Partners may include: adjacent business owners, business improvement associations/districts, community groups with close ties to a particular area, or resident associations. The ideal group should demonstrate dedication to a specific area rather than a broad focus.
- **Ability to take on \$1 million of insurance.** Most parklet applicants already hold this amount of business insurance.

### Community Partner Considerations: *Recommended*

- **Existing cleaning crew.** A business improvement district (BID) can be an ideal partner as they typically already handle cleaning responsibilities in the area.
- **Previous involvement in sustainability and/or beautification projects.** Parklets programs typically involve a variety of city departments. Therefore, prior experience working with city agencies/departments is helpful.

## How do I Design a Site?

Parklet design can be driven both by physical site characteristics and the desired planned duration for the parklet. There are a variety of different options to be considered. The following table outlines these options and the following section provides more details that are illustrated with specific parklet projects.

*Table 2. Parklet Typologies*

Surrounding Land Use	Parklet Shape	Duration
Residential  Example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>San Francisco's Deeplet</li> </ul>	Parallel Parking Space  Example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Most of the parklets from San Francisco's Pavement to Parks Program</li> </ul>	One Day  Example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Park(ing) Day</li> </ul>
	Diagonal Space  Example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>San Francisco's Devil's Tooth Parklet</li> </ul>	Seasonal  Examples: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>New York City's "Pop-Up Cafés"</li> <li>Philadelphia's University City District</li> </ul>
Commercial  Example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Philadelphia's University City District</li> </ul>	Roadway Travel Lane  Example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Vancouver's Picnurbia</li> </ul>	Year-Round/Semi-Permanent  Example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The parklets in San Francisco</li> </ul>
	Traffic Triangle  Example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Los Angeles' Sunset Triangle</li> </ul>	Permanent  Example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Los Angeles' Byzantine-Latino Quarter Parklet</li> </ul>

## What are Land Use Considerations?

### ...in a commercial area

Most parklets are located in commercial districts. Yet not every part of every commercial district is a good candidate for a parklet. While parklets have the potential to increase the amount of people walking in an area, they should not be the only pedestrian attraction on a street. A commercial area that is already attracting pedestrians is important to ensure parklet use.

A business owner who would like to sponsor a parklet in a commercial area should be mindful that parklets are public spaces (unless otherwise specified, as could be the case in Long Beach, CA). Parklet signage must convey to pedestrians that the space is public rather than an extension of a business. Other design elements can be included to underscore that the space is welcoming to the public. For instance, as shown in figure 52, colorful chairs and tables placed in the parklet can be used to attract attention from passing pedestrians, who can enter the platform from the sidewalk (with railings on the street side as protection from vehicles).

If a parklet is properly located and designed in a commercial district, it can support economic activity by helping to draw people to a commercial street and providing more space for the enjoyment of the area and its businesses. This is true in Philadelphia's University City District, where a seasonal parklet (from spring to mid-autumn) has helped increase revenue by 20 percent for the adjacent café, Green Line. A similar result occurred in New York City, where the owners of Local, a parklet-adjacent business, reported that the installation was "definitely good for business, especially in a way that creates new space for the community."<sup>30</sup> Other parklet-adjacent businesses in NYC—including Ecopolis, Le Pain Quotidien, Bombay, and FIKA—agreed with this assessment. For instance, Bombay's sales increased by 14 percent from the year prior to the parklet's installation, while FIKA's sales increased by 9 to 15 percent. Depending on a parklet's design, construction and implementation, business owners investing in a parklet can expect to recover costs in approximately five years, although some businesses recoup costs at a quicker rate.



*Figure 51.* Parklet, Philadelphia, PA.  
Credit: Dan Reed



*Figure 52.* Colorful chairs at parklet, Philadelphia, PA.  
Credit: Philly Bike Coalition

### ...in a residential area

While most parklets are located in commercial or mixed-use commercial areas, parklets can be successful in residential areas, with sponsorship from one or more residents and support from local neighbors. The “Deeplet” parklet on San Francisco’s Valencia Street is a good example of residential sponsorship and engagement (figures 53-54). During renovation of a house on this street, the project’s architect suggested installing a parklet next to the driveway. The home owners, car-free environmentalists, agreed that constructing a parklet in front of their house offered an opportunity to express their values and contribute to their local community. They recognized that the sidewalks on Valencia Street were not well maintained and installation of a parklet could help to improve the pedestrian experience and encourage walking. Amandeep Jawa and Kimberly Conley, sponsors of the Deeplet parklet, said of their project:<sup>31</sup>

“It is no coincidence that our effort involves reclaiming our private “car-space”--the street space in front of our house...only useful for us to pull a car out of our private driveway--and converting it into a spot many can enjoy by making it into a parklet.”

The site’s designer, Jane Martin, worked with the parklet sponsors and their neighbors to select a parklet design that connected with their love of animals, specifically dinosaurs. The final site design features a succulent sculpture in the shape of a Triceratops, a unique aspect differing from many other parklets that most prominently feature seating.

In most instances, parklets in residential areas should not include movable tables and chairs. Unlike with commercial sponsors who can take such furniture inside their business at the end of the day, a residential sponsor will likely not want this responsibility nor have the space to store furniture at night.

A parklet within a residential area should also be designed to address any concerns about usage. For instance, to address potential issues of noise from people congregating in the site at night, the designer of the Deeplet parklet included slightly downward sloping wooden benches that are comfortable for sitting but inconvenient for sleeping. With the exception of the benches, all other surfaces are made of aluminum to facilitate easy cleaning in the case of graffiti.



*Figure 53.* Sloped seating, Deeplet, San Francisco, CA.  
Credit: Daveed Kapoor / utopia.org



*Figure 54.* Succulent dinosaur, Deeplet, San Francisco, CA.  
Credit: Kimberly Conley

## What are design considerations based on shape and size?

### ...if my site is a parking space

Parking space conversions provide for the most common parklet shape, with two parking spots as the most common size for curbside parklets. For instance, San Francisco's parklet permit design guidelines explain that parklets are generally two parking spots wide, although expansion may be considered. Table 3 provides a summary of design guidelines for curbside parklets as provided by San Francisco and three other cities.

Whether or not a parklet requires a licensed engineer's or architect's stamp is an important distinction in these design guidelines. Cities that do not have this requirement note that it is an expensive and costly barrier for community groups seeking to install parklets. Cities that require such a stamp find it to be helpful for ensuring that safety considerations are met. Regardless of this requirement, businesses designing parklets should seek review from an architect or engineer for safety considerations.

Parklets in curbside parking spaces can be designed in a myriad ways. A few unique curbside design options can be found in the section, "If my parklet will be installed year-round/semi-permanently."

### ...if my site is using diagonal parking stalls

Typical parallel parking spots only allow for a six-foot wide parklet. In contrast, diagonal stalls are deeper, extending 11 feet into the street, which allows for a larger curbside parklet. For example, the Devil's Teeth Bakery in San Francisco decided to transform its three angled parking stalls into a uniquely designed parklet featuring two areas separated by a two-foot wide barrier. These two "zones" allow the parklet to accommodate different user groups at the same time, including dog walkers and bicyclists, people of varying ages, and socializing groups, as well as individuals seeking a quiet place to read. The design of this parklet incorporates both seating and landscaping. Seating is paramount in this parklet, with planted zones along the length of the benches. This design allows landscaping without decreasing seating capacity.

The parklet design was constricted by the acute angles of the space but designer Shane Curnyn was able to successfully convert these challenges into opportunities. One acute angle at the uphill end of the parklet became an opportunity to create a "chaise lounge" condition. This could have been an awkward conjunction, but good

design transformed it “into the best seat in the house.” The other acute angle provided an opportunity for planting. The slope of the street also made it tricky to render the street/ parklet interface cleanly, but this obstacle was overcome by skilled carpentry.

Overall, diagonal parking stalls and other irregularly shaped sites can be a challenge as well as an opportunity for simple but creative design. Shane Curnyn provides the following advice for such sites:

“Keeping the shape of the parklet as simple as possible while providing the most usable space and seating for the occupants is the best way to approach the plan. Save your design energy (and budget) for the many tricky details and threshold conditions invoked by street, curb, materials, city, builder and the client.”

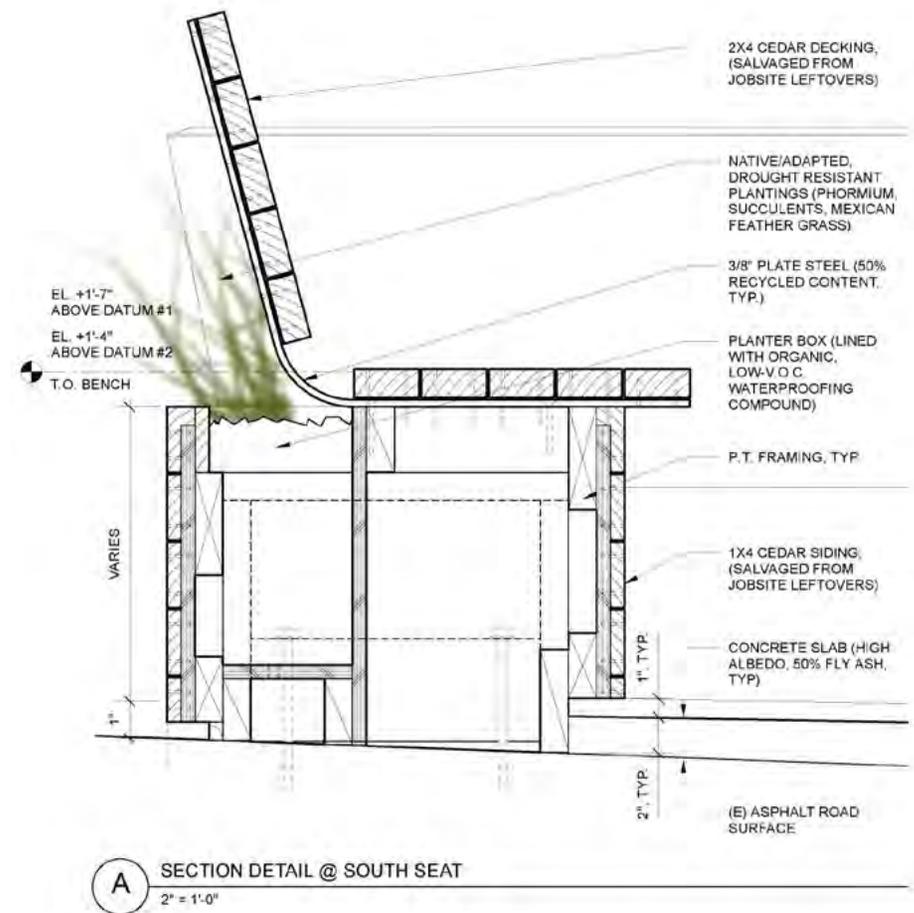


Figure 55. Seating lined with landscaping, San Francisco, CA.  
Credit: Matarozzi Pelsigner Builders

Table 3. Summary of Design Guidelines for Parklets in Different Cities

City	San Francisco	Oakland	New York City	Philadelphia
Size of Parklet	6' width, flush with curb (1/2" gap max)	Same design guidelines as San Francisco	6' width. Should be as flush to the curb as possible—at a minimum 12' must be flush with the sidewalk	6' width
Load	Not specified		Load bearing: 750 lbs/ sq. ft.	Must support 100 lbs/ sq. ft. load
Drainage	Must maintain curb line drainage		Curbside drainage must not be impeded and must allow for easy access to the space underneath	Platform should allow for easy access underneath and curbside drainage may not be impeded
Wind/ Visibility	Visually permeable outside edge; railing may be required		Should have vertical elements so that it is visible from vehicles	Should be stable under wind-loads of 80 mph with open guard rails
Barriers	4' distance from parklet to wheel stop (behind) 3' wheel stop installed 1' from curb (ahead)		DOT assesses site to determine safety improvements: traffic markings, flexible bollards, and wheel stops	Must have reflective soft hit posts and may have wheel stops installed 1 ft. from curb
Licensed Engineer Stamp Required?	No		Yes	Yes

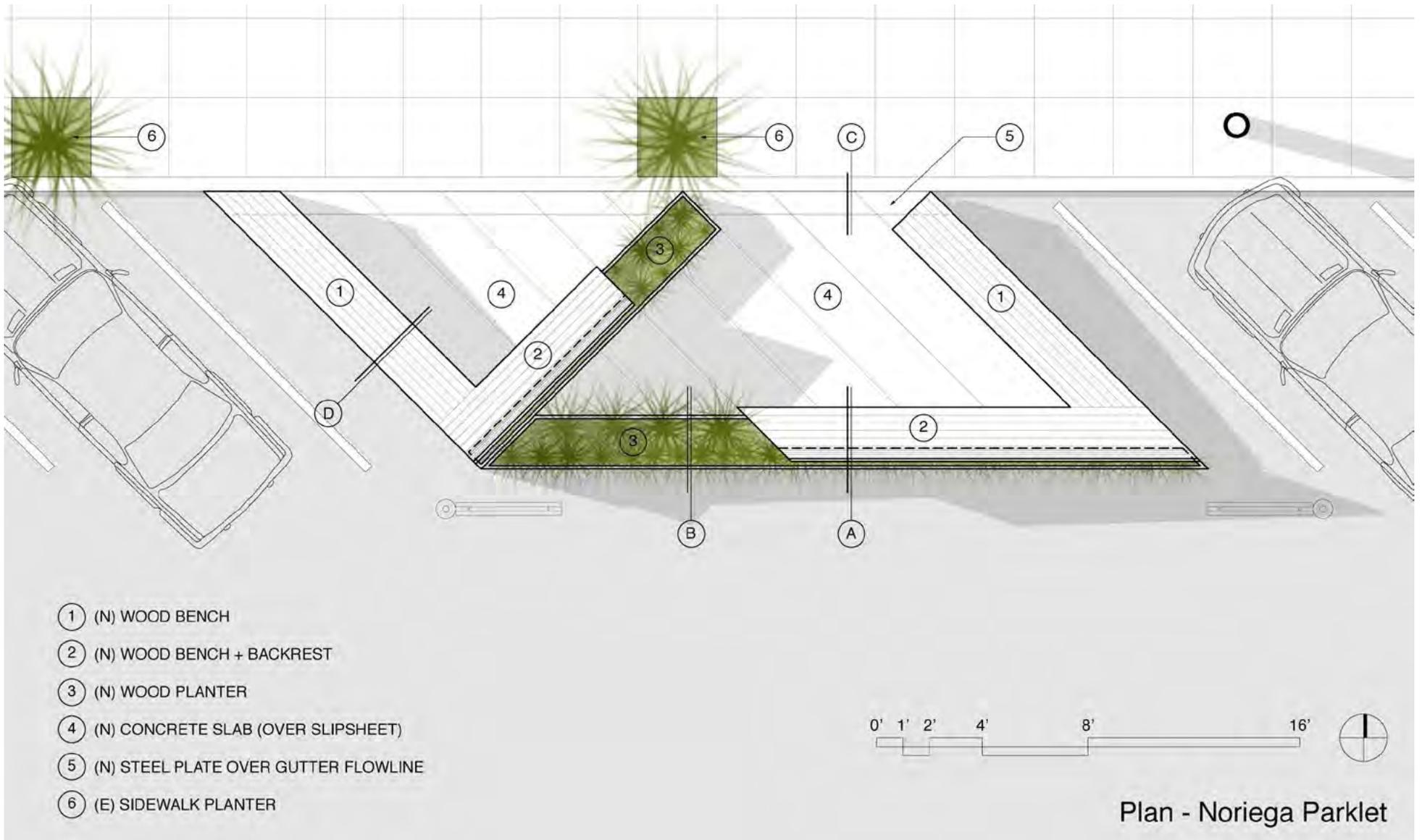


Figure 56. Plan view of Noriega parklet, San Francisco, CA.  
 Credit: Matarozzi Pelsigner Builders

## ...if I want to design within a traffic triangle and/or a travel lane

Compared to the conversion of a parking space, transforming a traffic triangle and/or travel lane into a parklet can be a more significant and longer-term endeavor. The Los Angeles Neighborhood Initiative (LANI) constructed such a parklet, converting both a traffic triangle and a travel lane into a pedestrian plaza within Los Angeles's Byzantine Latino Quarter neighborhood. Prior to construction, the traffic triangle was disconnected from the adjacent sidewalk by a slip turn lane (a lane which allows drivers to turn right without coming to a complete stop). LANI used concrete to fill in the slip turn lane and connect the sidewalk to the traffic triangle, which transformed the dangerous traffic triangle into a welcoming and safe place for pedestrians and transit riders. Traffic patterns were not affected by this change because drivers are still able to turn right, although they must go around the corner rather than in the slip lane.

While LANI sought to create a permanent pedestrian plaza and went through the permitting process to do so, less permanent parklets can also be installed in traffic triangles and/or travel lanes. Designers sometimes have the option to use paint instead of concrete to create their parklet, as was the case at the Sunset Triangle Plaza parklet.

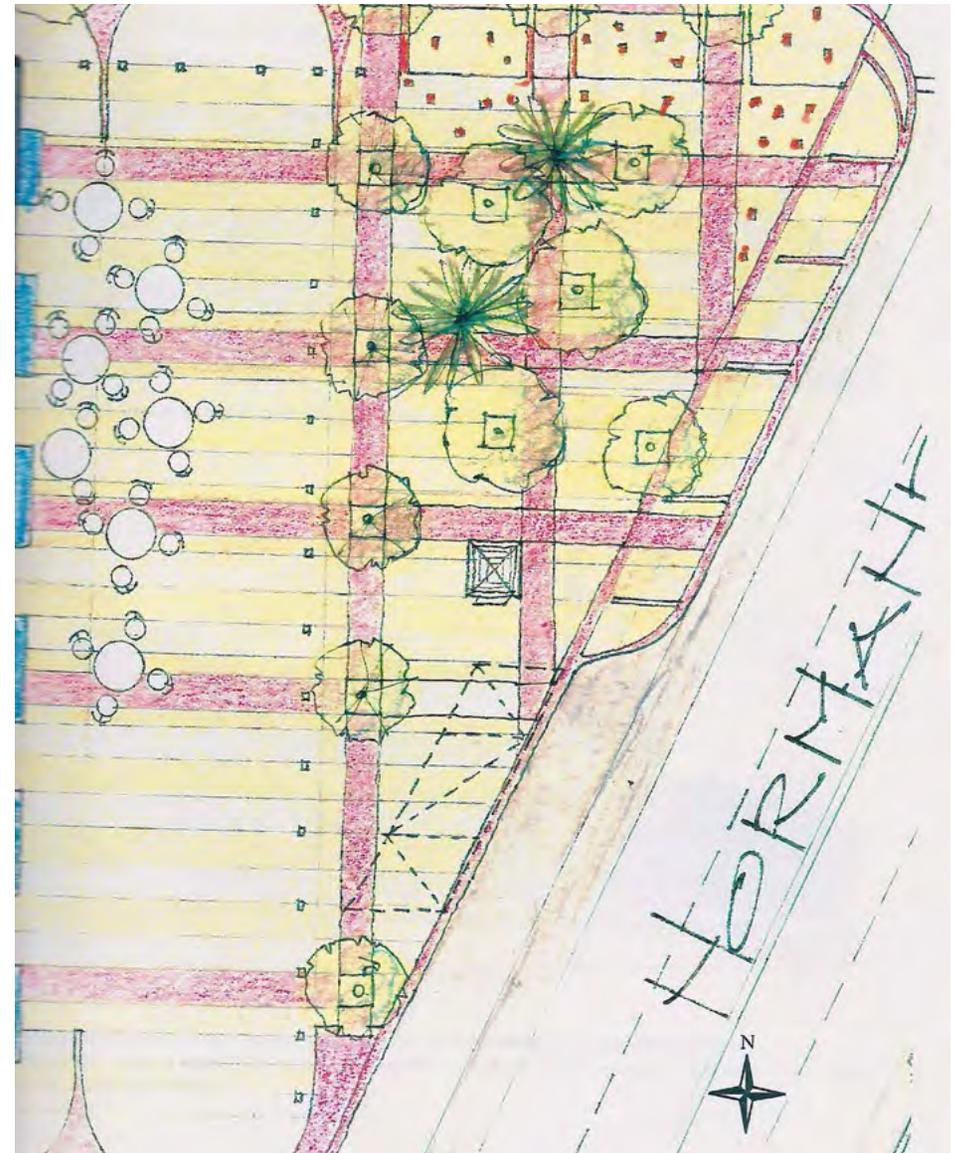


Figure 57. Plan view of traffic triangle conversion, Los Angeles, CA.  
Credit: Anastasia Loukaitou-Sideris



*Figure 58.* Converted traffic triangle, Los Angeles, CA.  
Credit: Los Angeles Neighborhood Initiative

### ...if my site is a street segment

Most parklets involve the conversion of parking spaces, but some larger parklets take up entire sections of a street. Additional space allows for creative designs that can serve multiple users. The following two examples illustrate the flexibility and diversity among this type of large parklet: the Sunset Triangle Pedestrian Plaza in Los Angeles and Picnurbia in Vancouver.

#### *Sunset Triangle*

The Sunset Triangle Pedestrian Plaza in Los Angeles was organized by Streets for People, an initiative of the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health and the City of Los Angeles Planning Commission, as described in Chapter 2 of this toolkit. Opened in March of 2012, the parklet exists on one block of Griffith Park Boulevard in Silver Lake that was closed to automobile traffic between Sunset Boulevard, Maltman Avenue, and Edgecliff Drive.

The adjacent businesses and the Silver Lake Improvement Association formulated the initial plan for the parklet, and the Los Angeles County Public Health Department funded the project before their federal American Recovery & Reinvestment Act grant expired. A quick implementation schedule and the temporary nature



*Figure 59.* "Billboard" with green polka dots, Los Angeles, CA.  
Credit: Ross Reyes

of the pilot project drove design considerations. Parklet design elements had to be "non-committal." This translated into the use of paint instead of jackhammers and removable furniture and planters rather than permanently built pieces.

Transforming the site required using the entire 11,000 square-foot site as a "billboard," with a painted green surface and polka dots. The color green was selected because many other colors were "off limits" as they denote specific purposes in traffic control (i.e., red denotes a no parking zone, and blue is used for handicapped spaces). The color green was selected to highlight the transformation of the site into a public space for people, similar to a traditional public park with green grass. Additionally, large polka dots in a lighter green color were added to the pattern to give dimension and help camouflage dirt and other imperfections on the pavement.

Design elements include chairs, tables, umbrellas, planters, and bike racks. Planters are used to close the street and block off entrance to cars. These bollard planters are filled with sand and soil at their base and with drought tolerant plantings on top. The City of Los Angeles selected the planters and other design elements based on their use in parklets in other cities. After installation, someone also added a basketball hoop, which proved to be one of the most well used elements in the parklet.

The Los Angeles Department of Transportation (DOT) installed the parklet in early 2012. Installation by the DOT allowed the project to move forward without going through a permitting process because many project tasks—such as pavement painting, street closure signage, and bike rack installation—are common functions performed by the DOT installation crews.

Still in its infancy, the parklet is showing early signs of success. Although some customers may have initially struggled to find parking after several parking spaces were removed, more recent anecdotal evidence suggests that business has since picked up after customers learned of the relocated parking spaces. Business may also be benefiting from an increased number of pedestrians visiting the area. For instance, the owner of Morning Nights Café, Julie Choe, noted that revenues at her café have gone up by about 20 percent on weekends since the installation of the parklet.<sup>32</sup>



*Fig. 60.* Planters, Sunset Triangle Plaza, Los Angeles, CA.  
Credit: Alissa Walker



*Figure 61.* LADOT installation crews, Sunset Triangle Plaza, Los Angeles, CA.  
Credit: Margot Ocañas



*Figure 62.* Children at Sunset Triangle Plaza, Los Angeles, CA.  
Credit: Alissa Walker

## Picnurbia

Another example of a parklet that emerged from a street closure is the Picnurbia parklet, which was installed on Robson Street in downtown Vancouver during the summer of 2011. During this time, the city had closed Robson Street to vehicular traffic due to underground construction. The parklet allowed the city to transform a closed street into a playful public space that measured 96 feet in length, 15 feet in width, and 8 feet in height (at its highest point). Located in an area with relatively high foot traffic within a popular commercial district and near a public square, the parklet enhanced the pedestrian experience.

Picnurbia was designed to be a temporary and movable installation, creating a public “living room” where people could spend time, whether with friends, food, or a book. One of the designers, Philipp Dittus, used the following description to explain the character that Picnurbia sought to create:<sup>33</sup>

"It is a place. A wave. A stimulus. An enabler. A park. A piece of furniture. A piece of art. A road block. It is yellow. It is for everybody. IT IS PUBLIC."

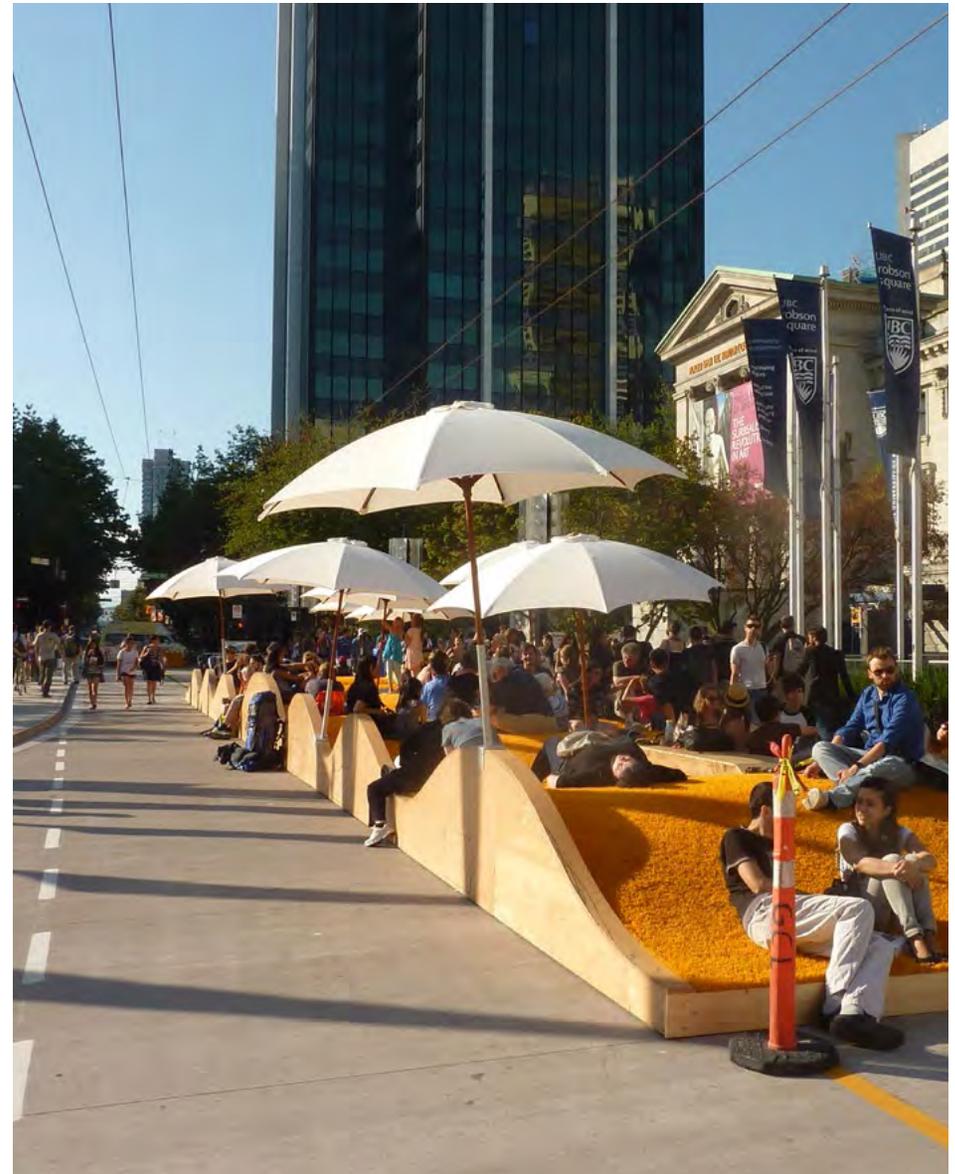


Figure 63. Picnurbia, Vancouver, BC.  
Credit: Neal LaMontagne

The designers of the Picnurbia parklet wanted the installation to be inclusive for many potential users, and to denote public space. Because the parklet was not attached to a commercial operation, it did not require much effort to understand that it was public space. Design elements included seating in the shape of a wave, umbrellas for providing shade, as well as bridges, benches, and tables spanning the length of the wave. Design materials included plywood and construction timber, painted for weather protection and covered by a 1 1/3-inch-thick yellow artificial turf. No design elements were considered more important than others. The designer described the elements in the following way:

“The wooden material which is common and easy to get, gives it the characteristics of furniture. The turf attracted visually with its color, plus it teased people to come closer, touch it, get in on it. The umbrellas offered shadow and made it visible from blocks away; they also created zones on the installation. The bridge/bench/table did the same for exactly the same reasons.”

Safety for parklet users was ensured thanks to Picnurbia’s location on a closed street with no vehicular traffic and because the installation conformed to the city’s

building code. Comfort was provided by the soft-surface turf material, shadow from the umbrellas, and the “ergonomic” form of the wave design. There were no specific design elements intended to protect the parklet from vandalism or crime but the city maintained and cleaned the installation on a regular basis. Because the installation was designed to be movable, the city could decide to bring the parklet to other areas during future summers.



*Figure 64.* Picnurbia, Vancouver, BC.  
Credit: Neal LaMontagne



*Figure 65.* Conceptual design for Picurbia, Vancouver, BC.  
Credit: Loose Affiliates

## What are considerations based on the duration of the installation?



*Figure 66.* Park(ing) Day installation, Downtown Los Angeles, CA.  
Credit: Mike Manal

...if I want to have a parklet installed for one day

Participating in Park(ing) Day, an annual event described previously in this toolkit, is a way for groups and organizations to transform a single metered parking space into a temporary parklet. A Park(ing) Day installation can provide an opportunity to build public awareness of parklets and also increase potential support for more permanent installations. This occurred successfully in Los Angeles and Oakland, as the examples below highlight.

At the Spring Street parklet installation on Park(ing) Day in 2011, the Downtown Los Angeles Neighborhood Council conducted a survey for people stopping by the temporary installation. They asked questions such as:

- How would you like to spend your time while at a parklet?
- How often would you spend time in a parklet?
- What are your priorities for design elements in a parklet?
- Would you kiss your loved one in a parklet?

Responses to these questions helped inform design for a more permanent parklet on the same site. The neighborhood council collected 50 responses to their survey and found the following:

- Seventy percent of respondents would visit a parklet at the site daily or weekly.
- Fifty percent of respondents were most interested in having space to hang out alone or with others and having planting/greenery as design elements in the parklet.
- Eighty-five percent of respondents would kiss their loved ones in a parklet.

Similarly, one currently planned site for a more permanent parklet pilot project in Oakland got its start with a Park(ing) Day installation that included a sidewalk party with a DJ and dancing. The permit applicant, Actual Café, left a parklet guest book for people to register their interest in creating a more permanent installation. These comments were used as evidence of community support in their parklet application. The guest book collected comments such as:<sup>34</sup>

"I am a life-long Oaklander... The parklet changed the whole atmosphere of this block in a way I've never seen in Oakland. It makes the street feel like "ours" in a way it did not before. Just looking at the cozy benches and warm wooden construction gives the eyes a rest from the asphalt and grime that, unfortunately, pervades this area. I hope and believe this parklet will bring long-term neighborhood residents of all ages out onto the street to help renew and refresh this district and highlight our beautiful diversity and peaceful strength."



Figure 67. Whimsical drawing from parklet petition, Oakland, CA.  
Credit: Actual Café

In addition to the guest book pages, Actual Café also collected over 600 signatures for a petition to the City of Oakland for a permanent parklet on the site. The petition stated:

“Make Actual Café’s parklet a permanent fixture of the Golden Gate District! Please grant Actual Café a permit for permanent installation of its parklet in the defunct AC transit bus stop on Alcatraz Avenue. I believe the parklet will enhance the livability of the Golden Gate district.”

The Oakland and Los Angeles Park(ing) Day examples show the power of using Park(ing) Day to garner support for more permanent installations. Both of these sites are in the permit approval process at the time of publication of this toolkit.

Any group can participate in Park(ing) Day, even if a more permanent parklet is not proposed for the site. The following information provides practical advice for a group wanting to stage a Park(ing) Day installation:

- **Bring material for the “floor” of the parklet.** This is commonly a large piece of Astroturf or something which conveys the transformation from a parking space to a temporary park.
- **Pick a location with significant foot traffic.** This will help ensure that the Park(ing) Day installation is well attended. As described in Chapter I of this toolkit, the organization Pacoima Beautiful selected a location in front of a public library.
- **Plan some activities.** Not everyone is familiar with parklets and as such, may not feel comfortable spending leisure time in a parking space. By having activities such as art projects or information tables, people will be more likely to enter the parklet and engage in activities.
- **Bring signage.** This is especially important when people are not familiar with parklets or Park(ing) Day. Signage will help to avoid confusion about the purpose of the installation. The signage does not have to say “parklet,” as this term may not yet be understood in a particular community, but should somehow denote that the space is public.

Overall, participating in Park(ing) Day is a great opportunity for community member engagement and to build public support for parklets.



*Figure 68.* Signage at Pacoima Park(ing) Day, Los Angeles, CA.  
Credit: Pacoima Beautiful

### ...if a parklet is installed seasonally

Parklets in cities with harsh winter months, including New York City and Philadelphia, are designed to be removed in the winter. Design considerations for parklets in these cities are slightly different than for year-round parklet installations, with designers finding solutions to address the issue of seasonal installation. Typically, the design of seasonal parklets is simpler compared to year-round parklet installations.

The Philadelphia solution was to develop a modular system that could fold up flat to fit into a truck and be quickly installed, minimizing labor costs and installation time. The Philadelphia designers also wanted a system that was generic enough in its components to be configured for a variety of designs, differing sizes, and varying curb cuts. Indeed, the final Philadelphia modular system provides great flexibility and can be placed practically anywhere. The modules take less than a day to install and can be easily installed at short notice for other types of public events, such as street fairs, bike events, or marathons.

The modular system consists mainly of three components: a railing, a deck, and a planter box. The railing is made of steel and designed in such a way that it is comfortable to lean on and can handle occasional high



*Figure 69.* Parklet installation, Philadelphia, PA.  
Credit: Philly Bicycle Coalition

capacity. The deck and planters are made of wood. Planters and railing can be combined and configured in a variety of ways to define the boundaries of a parklet. Other components such as benches, tables, high-top tables, and bike racks can be customized to suit the preferred type of use and size of the site. In addition, the designers have devised about six to seven attachment points or connectors that allow for attaching any number of components to the basic module.

New York City's first parklet design employed Riyad Ghannam, a designer who had previously worked on parklet designs in San Francisco. The objective was to create "the nicest space we could make for the least amount of money," said Ghannam.<sup>35</sup> Similar to Philadelphia, the site design is a simple deck ringed by metal planters and cable fencing. The planters are the most costly item of the construction but are important as they have many functions including providing a main structural element, a barrier from vehicles, and support railing/fencing. The decking "does the most for the least," providing the flooring for the parklet in a cost-effective manner. For later iterations of the design, the designer substituted concrete for wood on the decks because concrete is more durable. The cable guardrail and the planters are intended to be as tall as possible within structural and budget constraints.

The New York City designer believes that the plantings are the most important part of parklet design. Mr. Ghannam noted the importance of including as much “green” space elements as possible or else it “just looks like a sidewalk.”<sup>36</sup>

In both Philadelphia and New York City, the seasonal parklets cannot be attached to the street or the sidewalk but rather need to be encompassed on a platform. Neither city has encountered any problems with this system thus far; however, there is a limit on the amount of design elements and amenities that can be placed on a platform.

Responses to interviews in New York City and Philadelphia indicate the ability for parklets to be constructed, removed, and stored by the parklet sponsor/business owner during the winter months. Therefore, location and weather do not seem to affect the ultimate success of parklets.

### ...if my parklet is installed year-round or semi-permanently

Parklets in San Francisco exist year-round, although applicants must submit a \$221 fee for yearly renewal fees. Most parklets have been installed in San Francisco over the last two years with no set expiration date. As such, the overall lifespan and longevity of each parklet site is not yet

clear. The semi-permanence of San Francisco’s parklets and the ever-increasing number of installed sites provide for a diversity of designs. This section highlights three semi-permanent parklet designs in San Francisco, selected by the authors of this toolkit because of their uniqueness and ability to inspire creative designs for other semi-permanent parklets.

### *Peace Keeper Parklet*

The “Peace Keeper” parklet is located in front of a local art gallery in San Francisco. Erik Otto, an artist who had worked with the gallery for many years, designed and built this parklet, which is constructed with recycled materials. The major design elements include a small house and removable beanbags. Neighbors donated the landscaping elements, including most of the succulents and an olive tree. These elements sit on top of a foundation made of a galvanized steel frame with an array of regularly spaced 1/2--inch anchor points for bolting.

The art gallery intended for the parklet platform to house a variety of different parklet elements and to be built, reconfigured, and secured over time. The gallery is currently accepting submissions for the next parklet installation in front of their establishment.



**FABRIC8 x ERIK OTTO**

*Proposed drawing of parklet design. Includes bird sanctuary, planter boxes, and 4 bean bag chairs. Structure and surface will be constructed of recycled materials. Select areas will be painted using bright colors while others will remain as wood.*

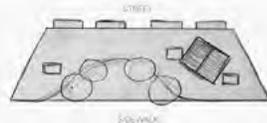
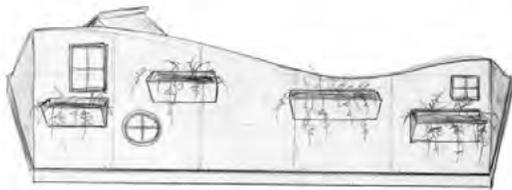


Figure 70. Conceptual drawing of the "Peace Keeper" parklet, San Francisco, CA.  
Credit: Erik Otto

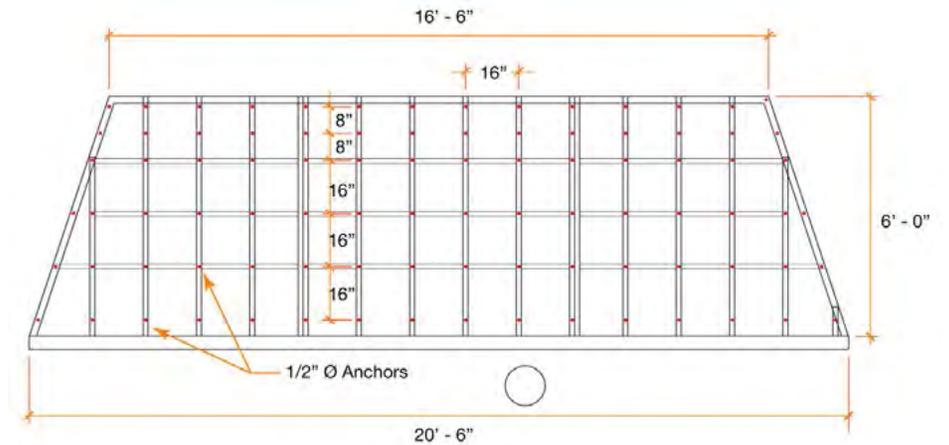


Figure 71. Steel substructure diagram, San Francisco, CA.  
Credit: fabric8



Figure 72. Installed steel sub-structure, "Peace Keeper" parklet, San Francisco, CA.  
Credit: Martha Traer



*Figure 73.* "Peace Keeper" parklet, San Francisco, CA.  
Credit: fabric8



Figure 74. "Walklet," San Francisco, CA.  
Credit: Jeremy Shaw

### Valencia Street Parklet

The Rebar group, the art group that first initiated Park(ing) Day, designed a parklet that is situated in three parking spaces along Valencia Street in San Francisco. Rebar envisioned the installation as a "walklet," a modular sidewalk extension system.

Although a unique parklet, Rebar designed this parklet with modular system pieces that could be used at other parklets. All pieces are manufactured in-house by Rebar for anyone to purchase. The pieces can be combined in any number of ways as part of a mix-and-match system, as seen in figure 76.



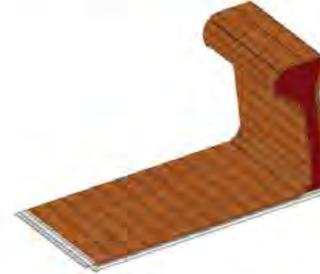
Figure 75. Plan view for "Walklet" options, San Francisco, CA.  
Credit: Rebar

## A MIX-AND-MATCH, MODULAR SYSTEM. CREATE YOUR OWN PROGRAM:



### **SIMPLE SEAT**

Find space to walk, a spot to sit, and room to breathe in a crowded urban space. Our simple bench does it all.



### **HIGH TABLE**

Pause for a coffee, a slice, or a chat at our tall table. This perch also provides a nice visual barrier between sidewalk and street.



### **DEEP SEAT**

Relax and put your feet up, lounge in the sun, or spread out an entire picnic on our most accommodating urban surface.



### **SIMPLE PLANTER**

Provide seating and green space in one fell swoop. Plant vertical species like bamboo for shade and a friendly visual barrier.



### **SIMPLE EXTENSION**

The ultimate space-maker, our sturdy filler platform will expand your sidewalk horizons. Also available with a bike rack attachment.



### **DEEP PLANTER**

Natural shade is easy with our deep planter box, which can easily accommodate a large box tree plus ground cover.



### **END RETURN**

Provide a stylish entry into your new public space with our angled cap piece.

*Figure 76.* Options for "Walklet" pieces.  
Credit: Rebar

These modular pieces interlock with each other and can be bolted to the sidewalk, if desired. However, bolting into the sidewalk or roadbed is not required because of the sufficient weight of the pieces. The decking system is created by using renewable bamboo and is pre-finished on all faces. Also, if desired, a railing system can be added. The installed site on Valencia Street does not use a railing system.

### *Trouble Café Parklet*

Another unique parklet is located in front of Trouble Café, in San Francisco's Outer Sunset neighborhood. The parklet is constructed entirely of found wood. The parklet sponsors and owners of Trouble Café, Giulietta Maria Carrelli and Ajax Oakford, wanted to combine the look of both "land and sea, like a shipwreck that brings people together."<sup>36</sup>



*Figure 77. Trouble Café parklet, San Francisco, CA.  
Credit: San Francisco Planning Department*

John King, urban design critic for the *San Francisco Chronicle*, described the Trouble Cafe parklet in the following way:

“If parklets were nothing more than sidewalk extensions above asphalt, the novelty would wear off. This and a handful of others show what makes the potential so exciting. They embody aspects of neighborhood life, letting outsiders experience strains of local culture. At best, they’re a physical manifestation of today’s San Francisco - and perhaps a hint of tomorrow’s city as well.”<sup>37</sup>



Figure 78. Trouble Café parklet, San Francisco, CA.  
Credit: SF Bicycle Coalition / sfbike.org

### ...if a parklet is permanent

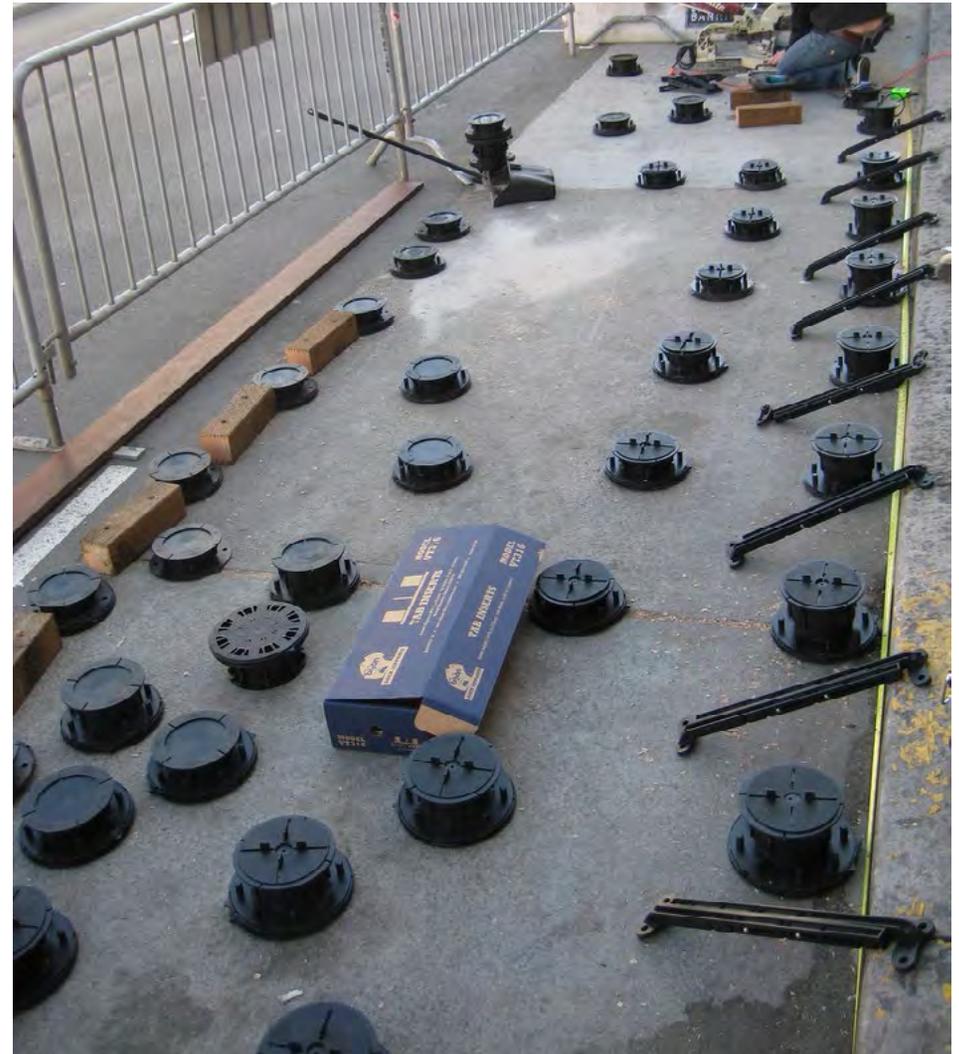
The previously described parklet in Los Angeles’ Byzantine Latino Quarter that provided an example of transforming a traffic triangle and driving lane, is also a good example of a permanent parklet. Permanent installations require different materials and a different permit compared to non-permanent parklets. For instance, rather than using paint as in the Sunset Triangle Plaza parklet, the Byzantine Latino Quarter installation involved filling in a travel lane with concrete and permanently re-routing turning traffic around the corner of the site. Removing concrete can be labor and cost intensive; therefore, it should only be used if a project is not planned for removal. Due to its permanent nature, the project required a lengthy permitting process, a B-permit in Los Angeles. This is not a revocable permit, as is typical with parklet installations. The B-permit must be approved by a number of different city departments, and the approval process can take a year or more. In contrast, the revocable R-permit takes approximately six weeks for processing.

This parklet project dramatically and permanently transformed the area by creating a pedestrian plaza that included landscaping, irrigation, street furniture, tree wells, and an improved bus shelter.

## How do I construct the parklet base?

Parklets have a base or platform to create a flush and safe extension of the sidewalk into the street right-of-way. This is commonly constructed through a sub-structure with a platform constructed on top, leveling the street section to the sidewalk. Streets are commonly slightly crowned for drainage with the middle of the street slightly higher than the edges; therefore, the sub-structure must account for this curvature in the street in order to create a level platform. Engineering options for leveling the platform include the use of pedestals with differing heights, or steel or wood sub-structures with angled beams. With all sub-structures, it is important to maintain curbside drainage by not placing any sub-structure directly next to the curb.

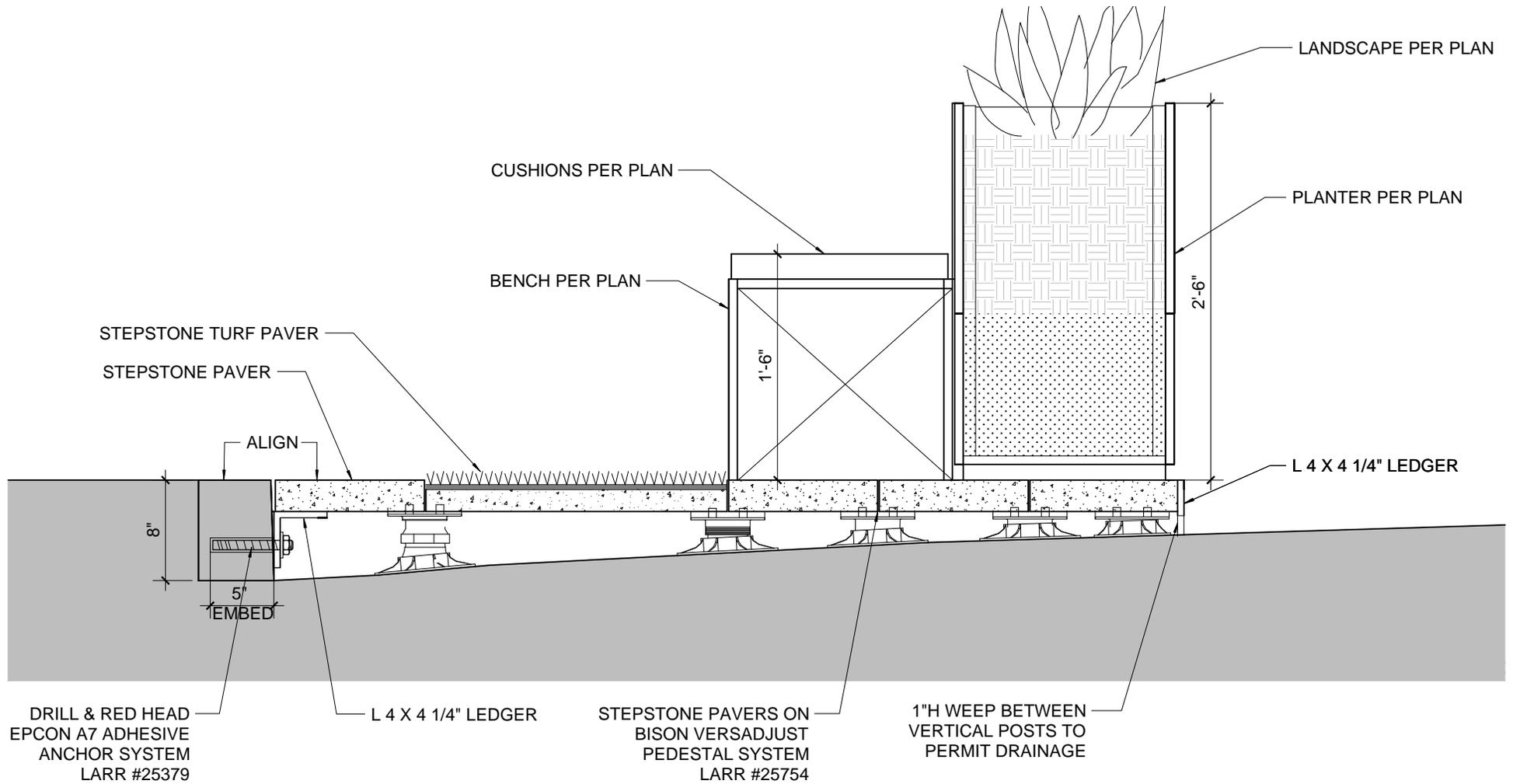
The company, Bison, manufactures the pedestal system most commonly used in parklet sub-structures. However, the Fabric8 installation employs a steel structure with angled crossbars to create a platform as seen previously in figures 71 & 72. Figure 80 shows a pedestal cross section with spacing between the pedestals and the curb for drainage purposes. The Rebar-designed parklet modules feature individual steel



*Figure 79. Bison pedestal system during installation, San Francisco, CA.*

Credit: SF Bicycle Coalition / [sfbike.org](http://sfbike.org)

Figure 80. Cross-section of Bison pedestals of differing heights.  
 Credit: Daveed Kapoor / utopia.org



sub-structures rather than one continuous platform. Wood can also be used to construct the sub-structure as was used in front of Mama's Art Café in San Francisco.

A platform must be constructed on top of the sub-structure. This is typically made of either permeable pre-cast concrete pavers or pre-treated wood.

The aforementioned Devil's Teeth parklet in San Francisco utilizes a new approach for building the sub-structure in a diagonal parking space. This solution involved a simple, concrete topping slab poured over a slip-sheet (to prevent bonding to the street), which has turned out to be a very cost-effective and durable ground surface and a natural extension of the sidewalk. Concrete also eliminates the need for cleaning underneath, and easily mitigates the sloping crown of the road. While this concrete solution seemingly negates the removable nature of parklets, in fact the slip sheet allows the concrete to be removed quickly; a few hits with a chipper will crack it into easily removable pieces.

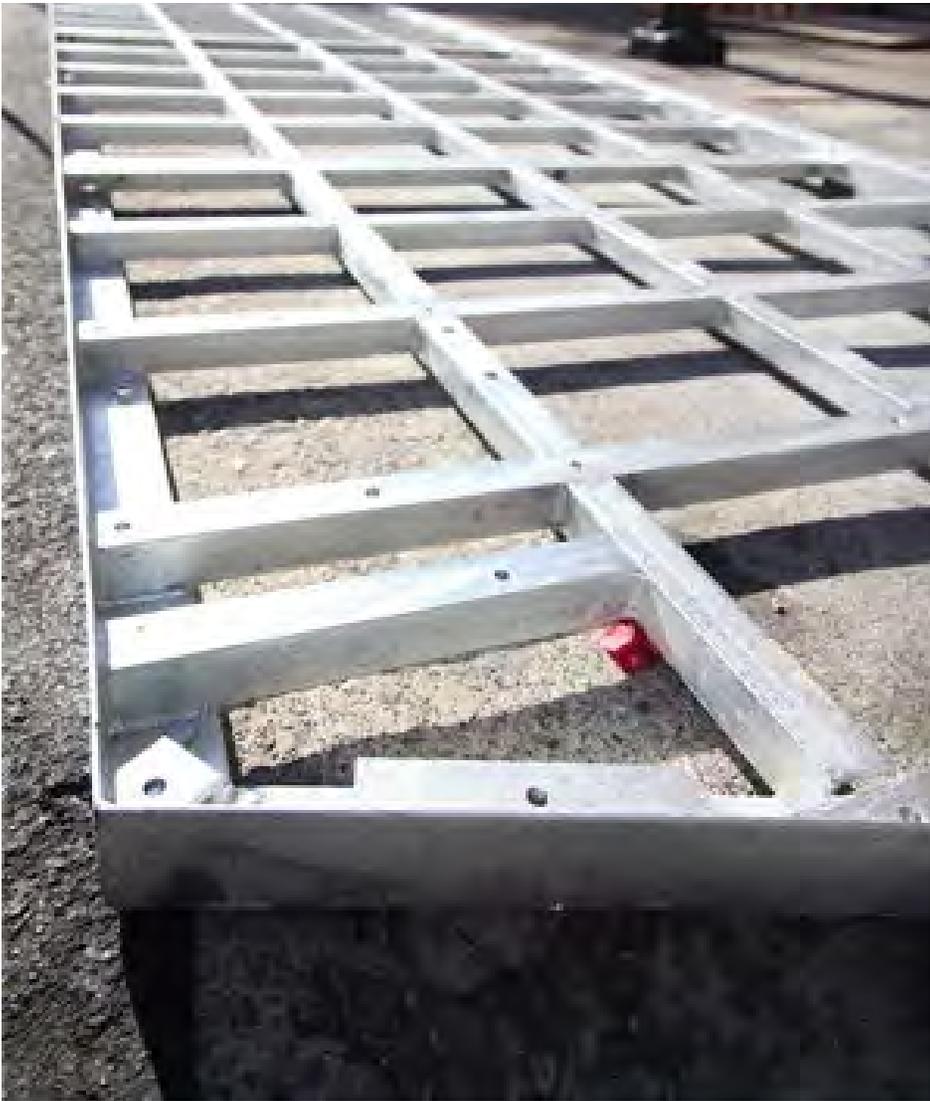
The installation uses a few wedge anchors to secure pressure-treated base plates to the road, providing a solid base for parklet framing. Wedge anchors are only 1/2" in diameter and penetrate only about 2" into the street. These anchors can be cut easily in the event of parklet removal. The platform on top uses unfinished cedar or redwood as these

woods weather well and do not require maintenance or refinishing. Additionally, graffiti can be sanded off the platform.

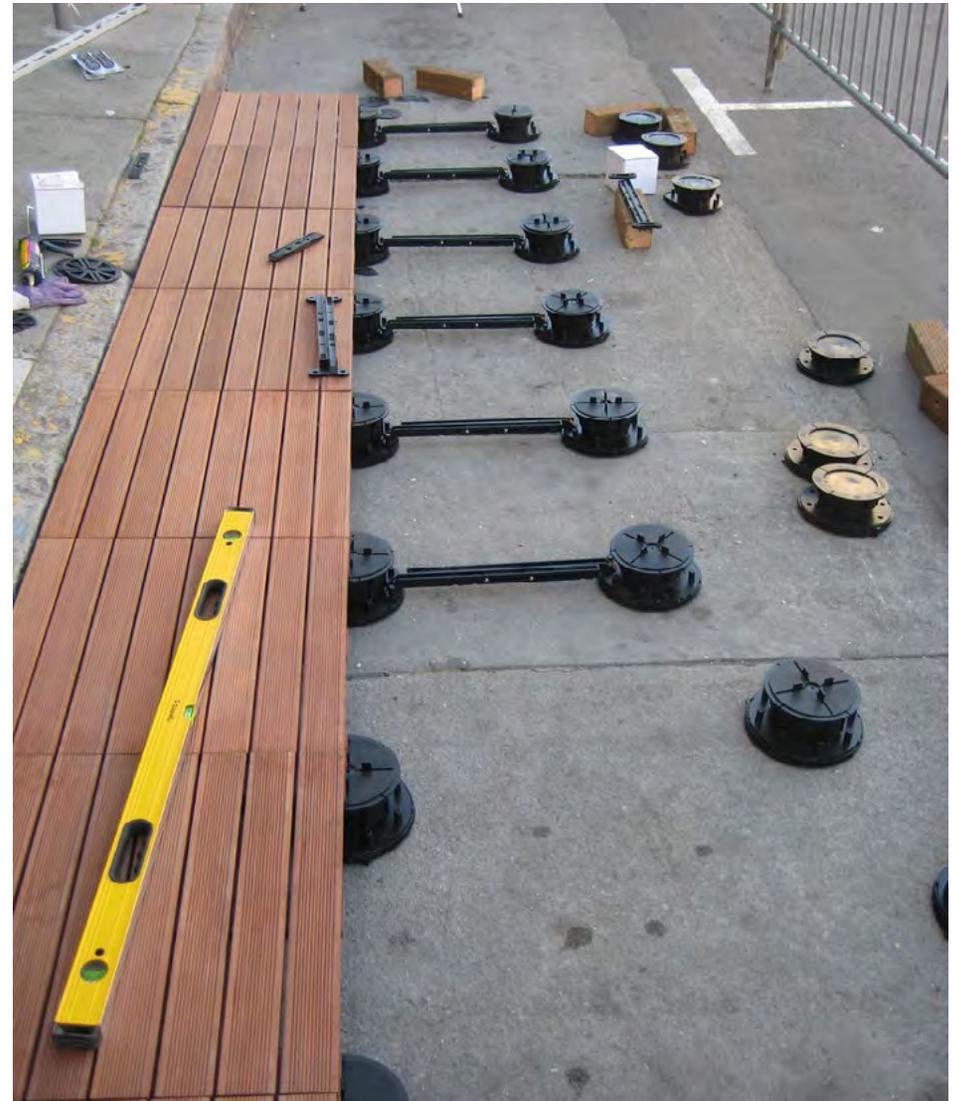
Adjustable pedestals and pre-cast concrete pavers are the most common combination for creating the parklet platform. However, there is a range of options that can be employed. Anyone wanting to design a parklet should work with a licensed architect or engineer to select the most appropriate, safe and cost-effective materials for constructing the parklet platform.



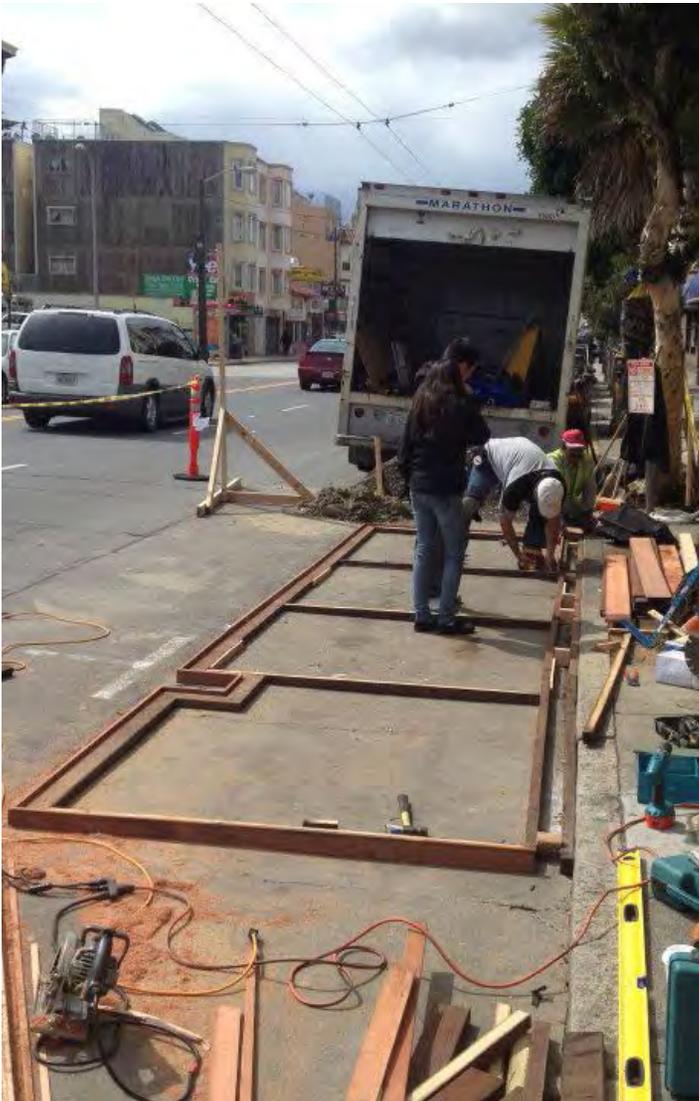
*Figure 81.* Pre-cast concrete pavers during installation, San Francisco, CA.  
Credit: Streetsblog SF



*Figure 82.* Steel sub-structure, San Francisco, CA.  
Credit: Martha Traer



*Figure 83.* Divisadero parklet platform, San Francisco, CA.  
Credit: SF Bicycle Coalition / [sfbike.org](http://sfbike.org)



*Figure 84.* Wooden sub-structure, San Francisco, CA.  
Credit: Excelsior Action Group / [www.eagsf.org](http://www.eagsf.org)



*Figure 85.* Prefabricated modules, San Francisco, CA.  
Credit: Kate McCarthy

## How do I design my site for safety?

For health and safety reasons, consideration should be made to locate parklets on low-speed streets in relatively low-traffic areas. This can help minimize user exposure to particulates and other air pollutants.

In addition, city departments of transportation should install safety features that separate parklet users from traffic while allowing for visibility and thus protection from crime. These features could include parking/wheel stops, flexible bollards, and traffic markings such as striping the outline parking lane or painting the adjacent curb space. Parklets also typically have a railing edge to protect users from traffic. These railings should be visible to motorists. Railings that allow the parklet to be observed from both sides of the street can help to ensure user safety from crime.

Moreover, parklet designers should consider safety considerations when selecting a site, paying particular attention to the hours and type of operation of surrounding businesses. Open-front establishments allow natural surveillance of the parklet by the patrons and owners of surrounding businesses. For nighttime use and to instill a feeling of safety, a selection of parklet sites near street lighting or other sources of lighting is advisable. Lastly, cameras and closed-circuit television systems can be employed for security purposes, but may be costly and not necessarily warranted.

*Table 4. Parklet Traffic Safety Guidelines in Different Cities*

City	Guideline
San Francisco	Generally, the parklet must be located away from a corner and along a street with a speed limit of 25mph or less. The parklet must not extend beyond six feet from the curb line in places where there is parallel parking.
New York City	Curbside seating platforms are not appropriate for every street. Typically they are only permitted on one-way streets with a single moving lane of traffic and low vehicle speeds.
Philadelphia	Parklets should be located on streets with posted maximum speed limits of 35 mph. Approval of any location must be given by the traffic engineers of the Streets Department.
Oakland	Proposed location should have a posted speed limit of 25mph or less. The proposed street should have parking lanes and only minimal slope.



*Figure 86.* Four Barrel parklet, San Francisco, CA.  
Credit: Bruce Damonte Photography



*Figure 87.* Bombay / FIKA edge,  
New York City, NY.  
Credit: NYC Department of Transportation



*Figure 88.* Haight Street parklet,  
San Francisco, CA.  
Credit: SF Bicycle Coalition / [sfbike.org](http://sfbike.org)

## How do I design my site for comfort?

Seating is one of the most important design elements for the parklet to function as a public space. Good seating makes the site attractive to people passing by and provides a reason to linger. According to San Francisco's guidelines, parklets must have benches in order to designate them as public spaces. The city has no design restrictions for seating, and encourages unique parklets that reflect the character of the community. As a result, San Francisco parklets feature a wide variety of seating styles, from functional to artistic.

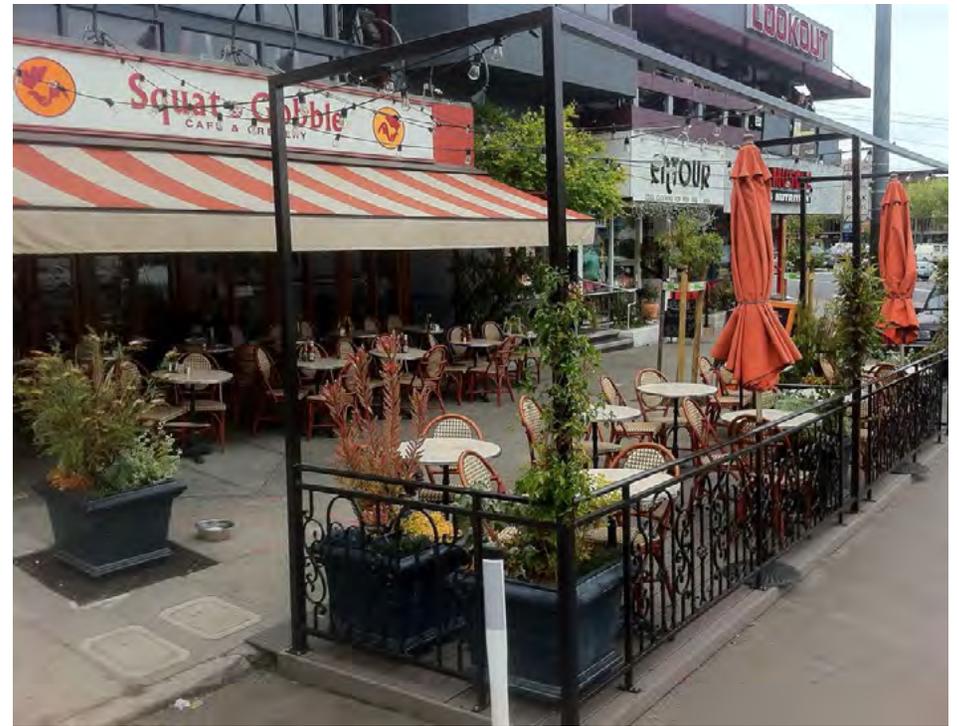
If a design employs removable furniture, it should be durable, light, and easy to remove. However, it is advised to include some built-in seating or other amenities. When parklets are designed with no built-in seating, the parklet looks very bare when seating is stored inside the adjacent business (see figure 89).



*Figure 89.* Café Seventy8, San Francisco, CA.  
Credit: San Francisco MTA Livable Streets

Additionally, if a parklet is located adjacent to a café or restaurant, the tables and chairs should not be the same style as the ones inside the business. This differentiation visually designates the parklet as a separate entity from a private business, and people will not confuse the parklet with café seating. Figure 90 shows a San Francisco parklet which is commonly criticized for creating an ambiguous delineation between the private and public space.

There is an almost endless variety of creative ways to provide seating with either built-in or movable furniture. Movable furniture pieces are commonly used in parklets across the country. Their portability makes it easy for partnering businesses to carry them in every night, and they are optimal for parklets with temporary permits because they can be easily removed. Cities have incorporated everything from cheap folding lawn chairs to beanbags as seating. However, possibly the most common types of furniture are metallic, European café-style tables and chairs from the company Fermob, which are light, durable, and simple to clean.



*Figure 90.* Squat and Gobble parklet, San Francisco, CA.  
Credit: Brian Kusler



Figure 91. Plastic lawn chairs, Times Square, New York City, NY.  
Credit: Jennifer Wu

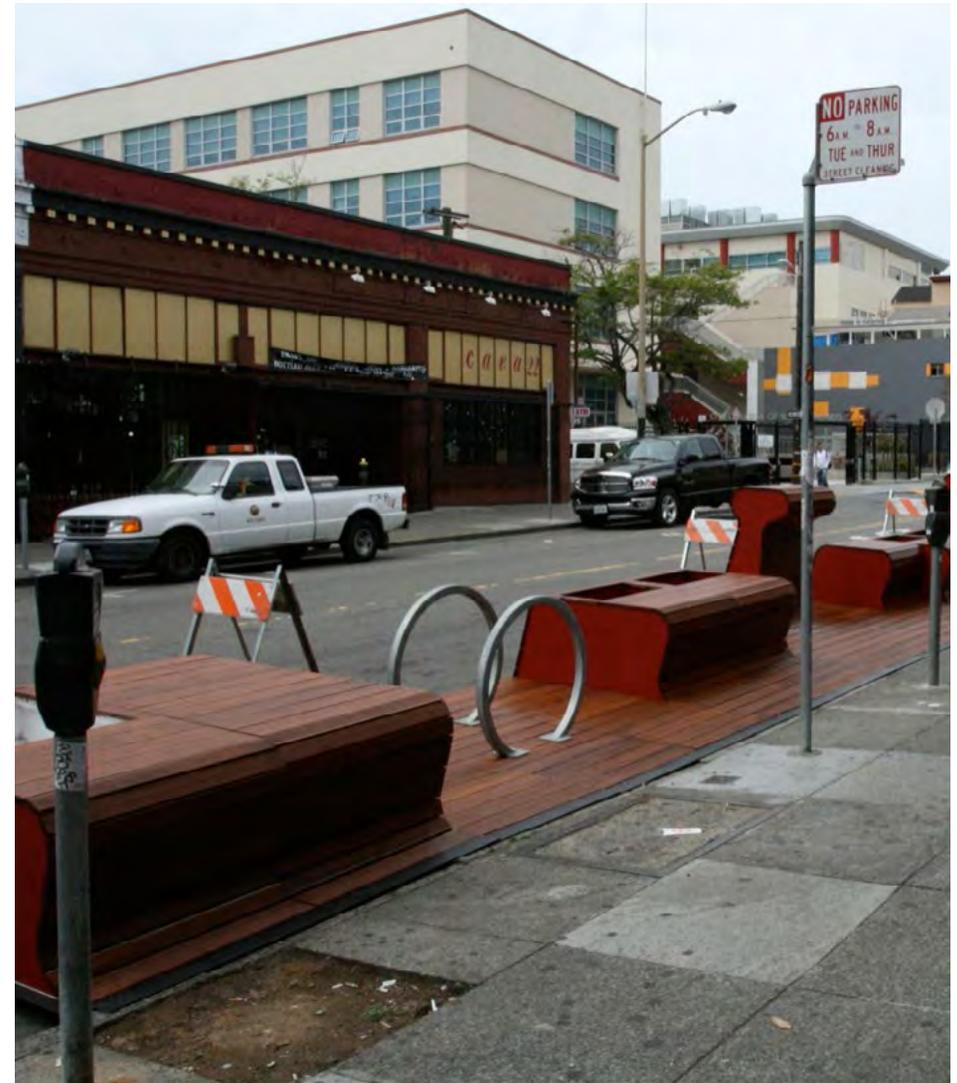


Figure 92. "Walklet," Mission District, San Francisco, CA.  
Credit: Rebar

## How can I landscape my site?

Landscaping in parklets ranges from minimal decking to extensive, garden-like environments. There is a variety of ways to incorporate plants into the design, most commonly with movable planters and boxes. In order to maximize space, landscaping elements often serve dual purposes. One of the most common ways is to have planters double as bollards, in order to delineate the space and protect the site from vehicles. Resilient, drought-tolerant plants are recommended because water can weigh down the decking. Plants that grow vertically instead of laterally are also advisable because they can provide shade and take up less space.

Landscaping can also be the focus of the parklet. Examples of this include the previously mentioned Deeplet parklet in San Francisco. An other example of a vegetation-focused parklet is in San Francisco's Tenderloin neighborhood, installed in front of Farm:Table cafe (see figure 97). The parklet is an extension of their rooftop garden. Ogrzyziak/Prillinger Architects describes the Farm:Table parklet design in the following way:

"A lot of parklets are about café seating – this is a landscape. Each clearing is an isolated pocket with an immersive experience."<sup>38</sup>



Figure 93. Dinosaur landscaping at Deeplet parklet, San Francisco, CA.  
Credit: Kimberly Conley



*Figure 94.* Landscaping with a roll of Astroturf, San Francisco, CA.  
Credit: Daveed Kapoor / utopia.org



*Figure 95.* Drought-resistant plants, Freewheel Bike Shop, San Francisco, CA.  
Credit: Daveed Kapoor / utopia.org



*Figure 96.* Planters doubling as bollards, Just for Fun parklet, San Francisco, CA.  
Credit: Trees on San Pedro Street Project



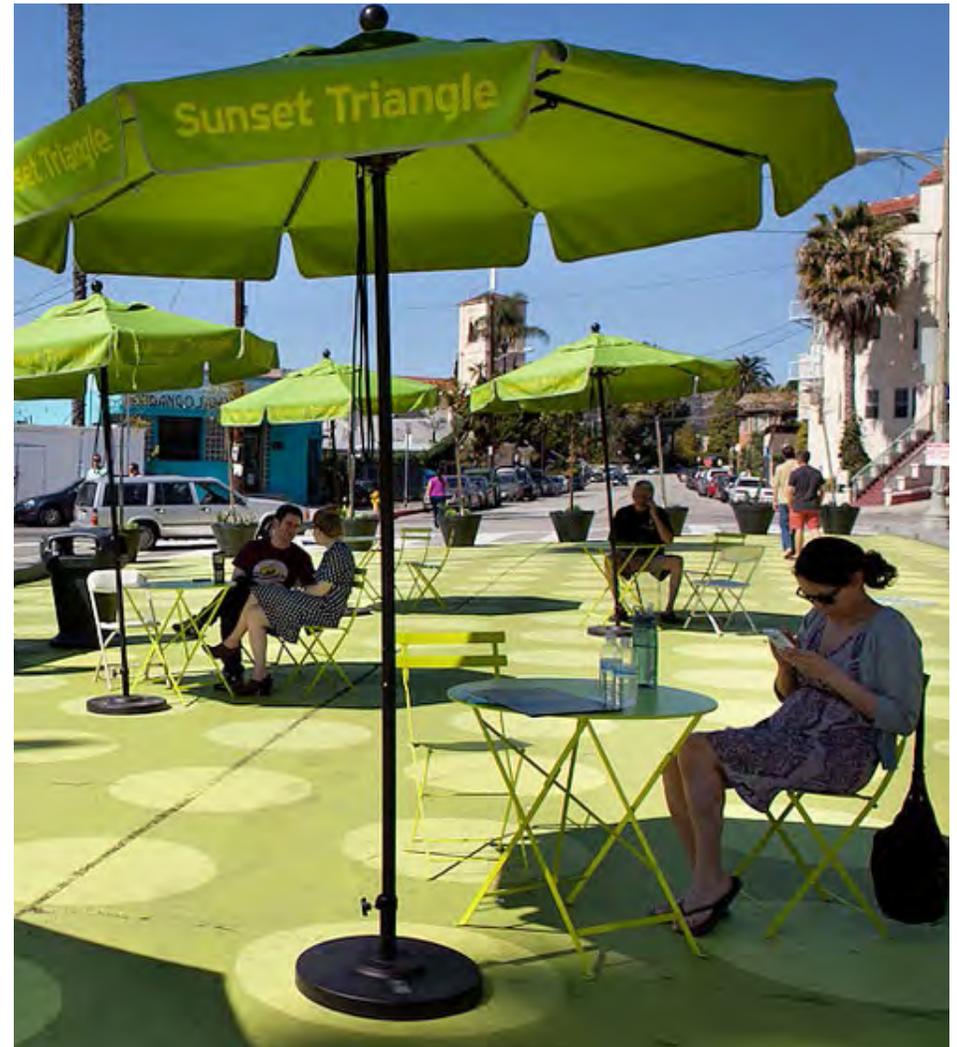
*Figure 97.* Landscaped focused parklet, San Francisco, CA.  
Credit: Ogrydziak Prillinger Architects

## What amenities can I include in my site?

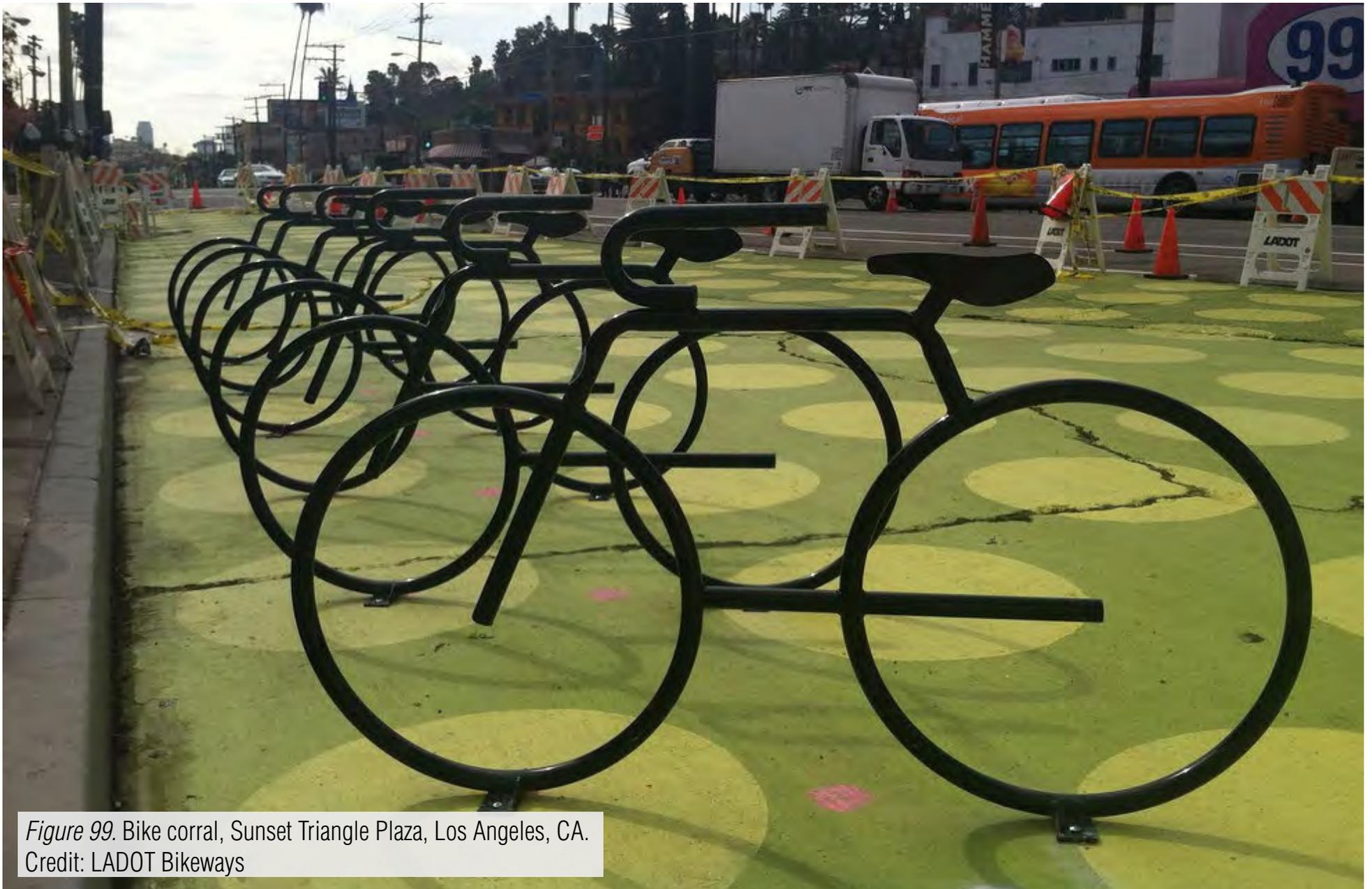
In addition to seating and landscaping features, amenities such as tables and bicycle parking are commonly found in parklet sites. Bicycle parking elements are most commonly mounted to the top of the parklet platform. However, this is not recommended when using pre-cast concrete pavers because drilling into the paver degrades its strength.

A bicycle corral can be installed in a parklet site when there is ample space to do so. This maximizes the amount of bicycle parking.

Additionally, parklets should feature shade during the daytime and lighting at night. Locating a parklet near street trees and street lamps can fulfill this need. Shade can also be provided with umbrellas, and lighting can be incorporated in a number of creative and environmentally sensitive ways such as LED or solar. “There are many possible improvements such as solar-powered lighting available,” according to Riyadh Ghannam, designer of parklets in New York City and San Francisco. Umbrellas can be provided in parklet sites to provide shade. However, because they can be heavy to take in and out, they are not commonly found in parklet sites.



*Figure 98.* Umbrellas, Sunset Triangle Plaza, Los Angeles, CA.  
Credit: Elizabeth Daniels Photography



*Figure 99.* Bike corral, Sunset Triangle Plaza, Los Angeles, CA.  
Credit: LADOT Bikeways



*Figure 100.* Bicycle parking mounting to parklet platform, Mojo Café, San Francisco, CA.  
Credit: Thomas Rogers



*Figure 101.* Vertical bicycle racks, Four Barrel Café, San Francisco, CA.  
Credit: Bruce Damonte Photography

## How do I design an active recreation parklet?

Parklets are commonly places of passive activity. However, as small parks, they also provide a unique and thus far unexplored opportunity to create spaces for physical exercise. Given the cost of creating large-scale parks in urban environments, as well as the public and private costs associated with overweight and obesity, active recreation parklets could provide a solution to help address these challenges.

The proposed parklet on Spring Street in Los Angeles will likely be the first active recreation parklet in the nation. The parklet is designed using the same outdoor fitness equipment found in Los Angeles' fitness zones (see description in Chapter 1). Various types of outdoor fitness equipment are available and can be installed at the parklet. Equipment used in a parklet should be relatively compact and intuitive for people to operate. An observed study of users of fitness zones in Los Angeles found that the least utilized equipment were the horizontal bars and leg press.<sup>39</sup>

The installation of fitness equipment in parklets affects the type of material that can be used for the parklet platform as well as the minimum equipment clearances.

The proposed Spring Street parklet uses stationary bicycles. According to the design plans, the platform will be constructed of pre-cast concrete pavers; thus, the exercise machines will be bolted into the roadbed rather than on top of the platform. The landscaping will extend from the seating area into the exercise area in order to link these two areas together. The bench in the middle will be situated slightly away from the machine to allow for proper clearances. Designers should check with equipment companies to select the type of fitness machines and incorporate the appropriate clearances into the site design.



*Figure 102.* Active recreation parklet rendering,  
Downtown Los Angeles, CA.  
Credit: Berry and Linné

## How are parklets marked as public space?

Parklets in San Francisco, Vancouver and New York City feature explicit signage denoting their public nature.

In addition to signage, parklet design should denote the parklet's public nature. This includes designing an open edge from the sidewalk into the parklet and using distinctly different seating from those of the adjacent businesses.



*Figure 103.* Required signage, San Francisco, CA.  
Credit: Noah Christman, SPUR



*Figure 104.* Pop-up café sign, New York City, NY.  
Credit: Sam Smith



Figure 105. Personalized signage, Deeplet, San Francisco, CA.  
Credit: Madeline Brozen

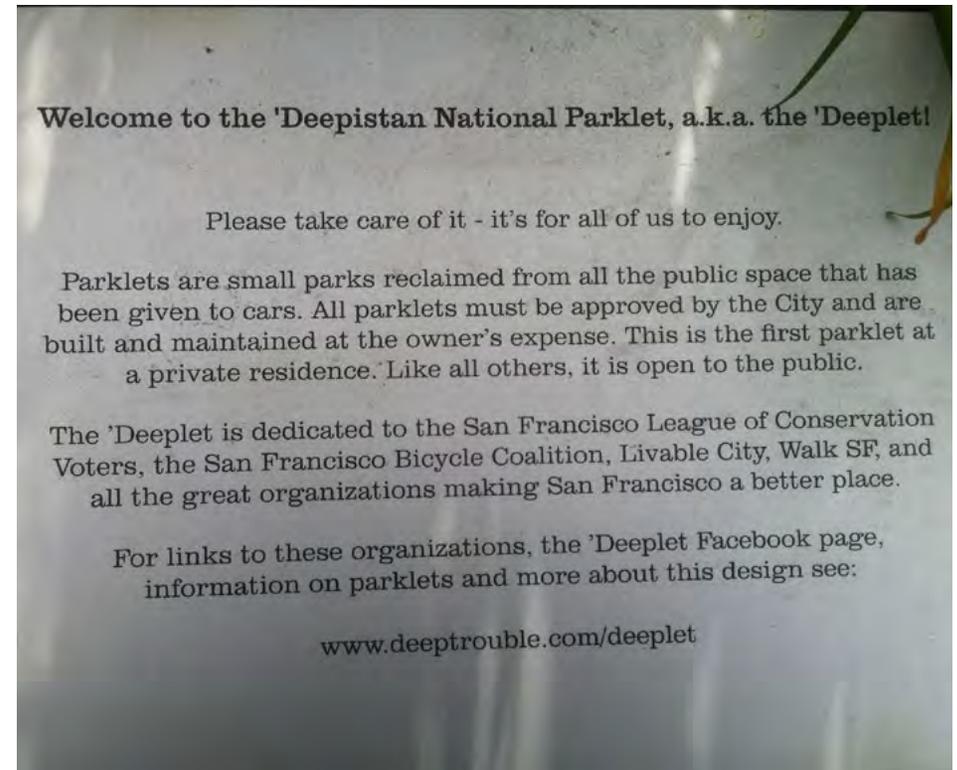
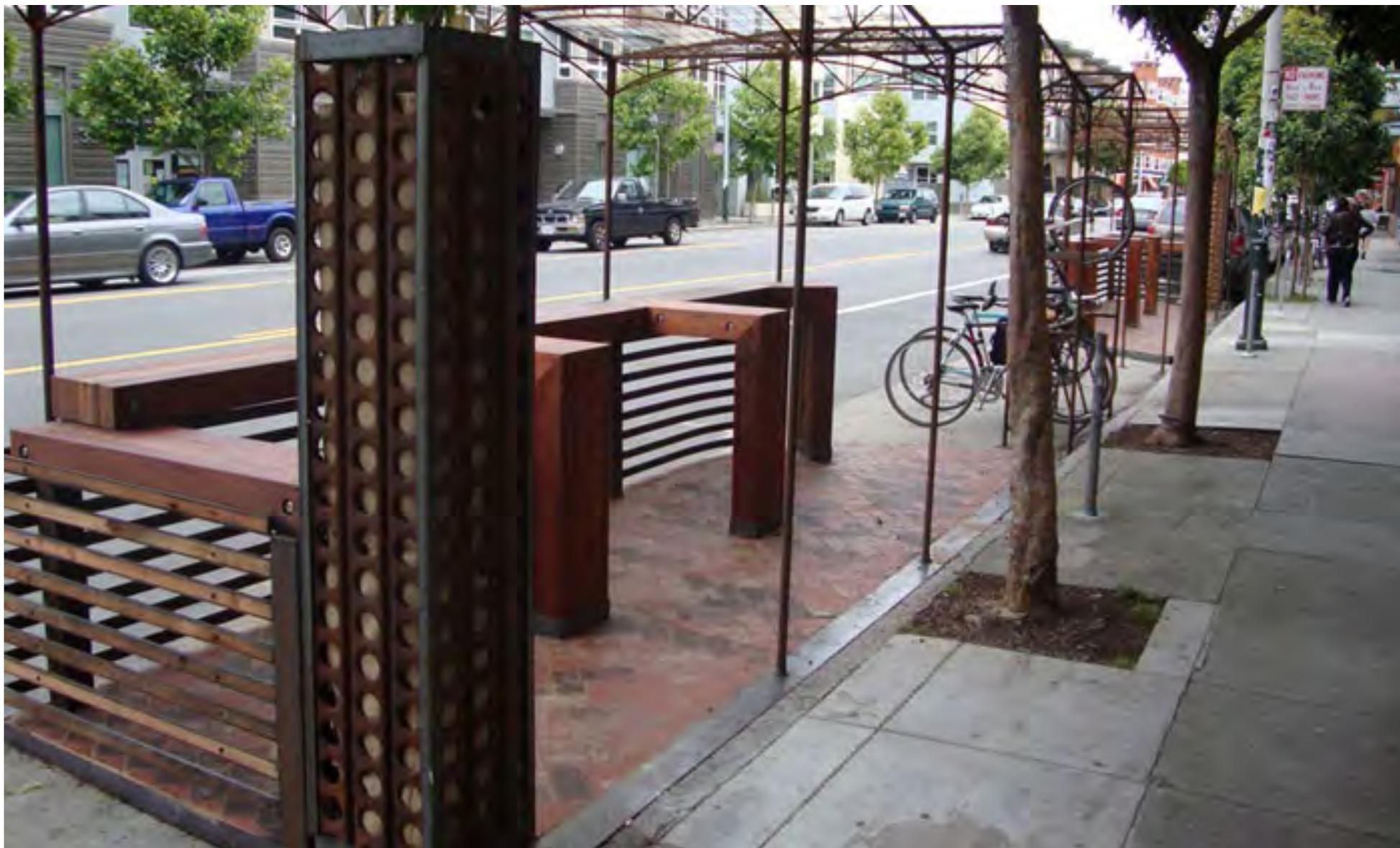


Figure 106. Personalized signage, Deeplet, San Francisco, CA.  
Credit: Madeline Brozen



Figure 107. Parklet, Long Beach, CA.  
Credit: Studio 111



*Figure 108.* Four Barrel Café parklet, San Francisco, CA.  
Credit: SF Bicycle Coalition / [sfbike.org](http://sfbike.org)



Figure 109. Public signage, Parallel Park, Vancouver, BC.  
Credit: Phil Kehres



Figure 110. Parallel Park, Vancouver, BC.  
Credit: Phil Kehres

## How much does it cost and where can I find support?

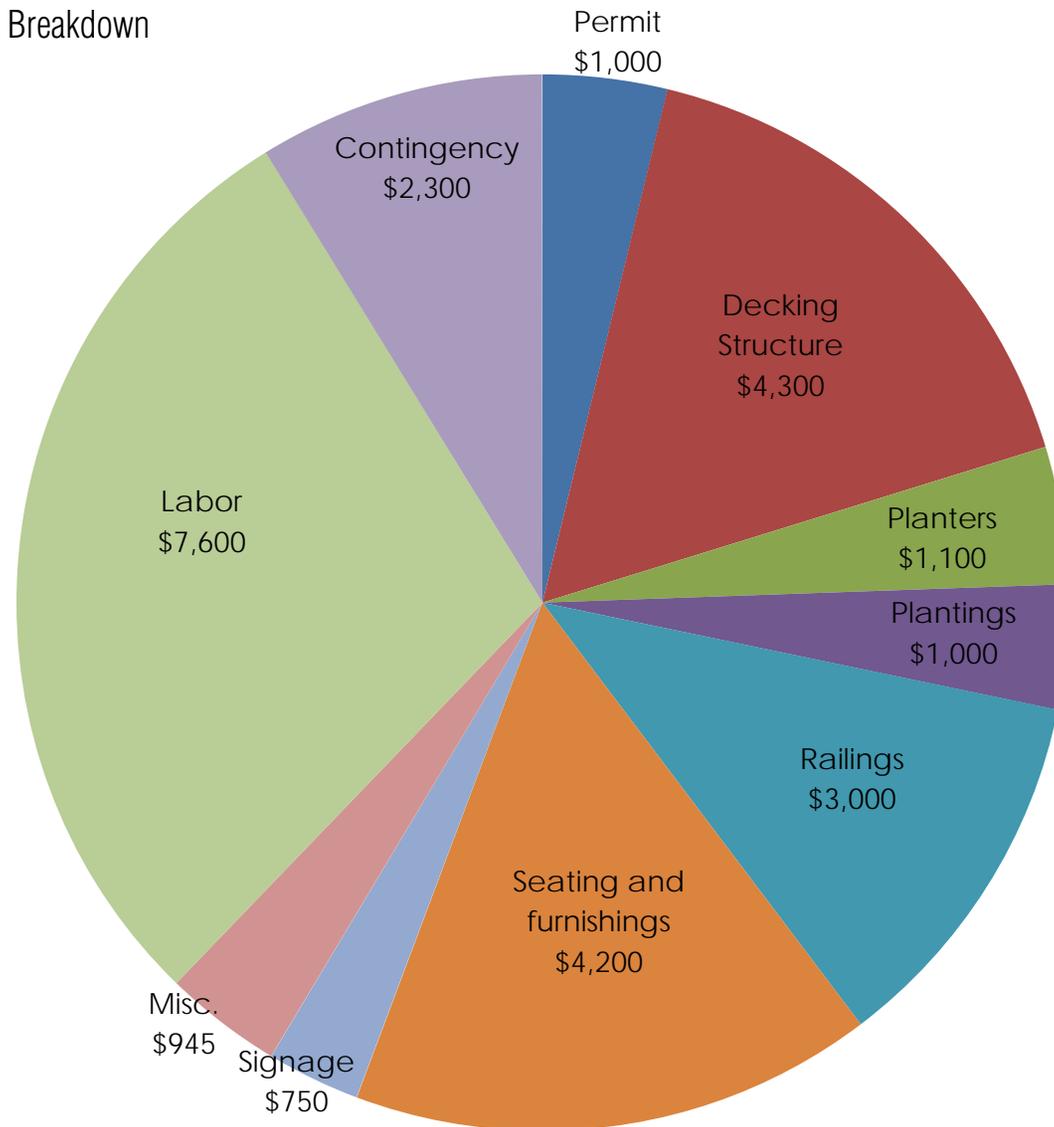
Businesses seeking to install a parklet can expect to spend approximately \$25,000 on a rectangular parklet occupying two parking spaces. A cost estimate for the planned Spring Street parklet in Los Angeles with the total budget of \$26,100 is provided in the table below. This is a proposed project; therefore the amounts shown are estimates.

According to our interviewees, businesses tend to recoup their investment in a parklet in approximately five years. While the \$25,000 price tag may be intimidating for a small business, previous examples show that costs can be lowered through a variety of design decisions and in-kind donations. Indeed, many parklets receive a variety of donations that lower the costs for their sponsors. These may include a designer providing pro-bono hours or using volunteers to help during the installation phase. Some businesses have utilized an online fundraising site that allows the public to support creative projects, like parklets. For instance, the Farm:Table Kickstarter campaign for a parklet in San Francisco raised \$15,000. Prospective parklets in Chicago and Oakland have raised \$5,600 and \$10,000 respectively. Government support is also important. An

economic development and public realm improvement grant from the Mayor's Office of Economic and Workforce Development funded two parklets in the Noe Valley neighborhood of San Francisco. Private foundations such as the Wells Fargo Foundation in San Francisco, William Penn Foundation in Philadelphia, and The Rosalinde and Arthur Gilbert Foundation in Los Angeles have also contributed critical resources in support of parklets.

*Table 5. Costs for Various Parklets*

Site	Cost	In Kind Donations
New York City – Bombay Café and FIKA	\$24,000 total	Design provided pro bono
Lola's Long Beach	\$25,000	None, all costs (including designer fees) paid for by Lola's
Philadelphia	\$11,000 (\$10,000 materials + 10% design fee)	All costs paid for by William Penn Foundation
San Francisco "Deeplet"	\$20,000	None

*Table 6. Parklet Cost Breakdown*

## How do I maintain my site?

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Maintenance is extremely important for ensuring the longevity and user-friendly nature of parklets. A parklet can only be well used if it is well maintained. Every city requires that a maintenance agreement is in place before issuing a parklet permit.

According to the San Francisco parklet request for proposals:

“If your project is selected, you will be required to provide daily maintenance of the Parklet. This maintenance includes watering any landscaping, hosing down the surface, and removing any graffiti. You will also be required to hose down the area underneath the Parklet at least once a week. The Department of Public Health may require pest abatement.”

Some parklets are maintained by the business owner, while some employ support from the local business improvement district. Employing business improvement district staff can be advantageous as they are typically responsible for cleaning in the area. In some places, such as the Sunset Triangle Plaza in Los Angeles, both local

businesses and business improvement districts undertake parklet maintenance. In Philadelphia, the University City District shares maintenance responsibilities with the owner of an adjacent café. The café is in charge of arranging furniture every morning and taking it out by the end of business hours, and is also responsible for cleaning chairs and tables. The University City District is responsible for parklet installation and dismantling during the appropriate seasons of the year.

In all maintenance agreements, the responsible party or parties and their assigned tasks should be clearly delineated. The maintenance agreement for the Sunset Triangle Plaza outlines the following four categories for maintenance services:<sup>40</sup>

- **Site cleaning:** A minimum of twice monthly cleanings and on an 'as needed' basis, removal of dirt, litter, obstructions, trash to maintain the site in a clean, neat, and good condition.
- **Landscaping and planter maintenance:** Watering, weeding, trimming, and re-planting in the event that a planter is damaged or destroyed.
- **Tables, chairs, umbrellas and trash cans:** Daily cleaning of debris, installing and removing chairs, emptying trash receptacle, and contacting appropriate parties if any amenities must be replaced or repaired.
- **Graffiti:** Notifying the council district if graffiti occurs and must be removed.

## Conclusion

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Parklets symbolize the desire to create a more communal, enjoyable, healthy, and vibrant public realm. Transforming excess street space into a cost-effective, small park can have a big impact. As John King, urban design critic of the *San Francisco Chronicle* said:

“Some are more welcoming than others. Some already show their age. The best strive to create destinations, not just seating. It's a design experiment being conducted before our eyes, and it's not going away.”<sup>41</sup>

Designing a successful parklet requires a variety of considerations. The site must first be selected by identifying the ideal location and community partner. After site selection, conceptual designs should consider the surrounding land uses, size and shape of the site, and desired duration of the installation.

The parklet base, including sub-structure and platform, should be selected based on cost, aesthetic appearance, and durability considerations. From the platform up, the rest of the parklet is designed for safety, comfort, and to provide an enjoyable public space to socialize, rest, or exercise.

There are a range of design options available for all of these categories. A parklet sponsor should plan to spend approximately \$25,000 on a parklet site occupying two parallel parking spaces. These funds can be raised using a variety of donations, grants, and in-kind materials.

As more parklets are proposed and permitted, the designs are becoming more creative and distinctive. Designers must understand a variety of considerations when working with the community partner to create a welcoming, well-used, and unique private space in the right-of-way. Overall, these installations are re-imagining small portions of the urban landscape from ordinary car-storage spaces into beautiful public space assets for all to enjoy.

## Footnotes

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# 5. VISIONS FOR FUTURE PARKLETS



## Introduction

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As already discussed, parklets can take advantage of underutilized and residual road space and convert it into a meaningful open space for recreation and physical activity. Most US cities, and certainly Los Angeles, have an abundance of such spaces that can be easily converted into parklets. As such, this chapter shows a selected set of sites around Los Angeles that have the potential for dramatic change through low cost transformations. The sites were selected to demonstrate a variety of forms and potential uses. The computer simulations that follow illustrate the application of principles and concepts described throughout this toolkit.

## Site 1: Olympic Boulevard and Schumacher Drive “Residential Parklet”

### *Existing Conditions:*

- Intersection of commercial boulevard and residential neighborhood,
- Overly wide intersection,
- Residual space at the center of the intersection.

### *Potential Improvements:*

- Connecting residual space at the center of intersection to adjacent sidewalk,
- Traffic calming,
- Provide space for active recreation in residential area.



*Figure 111.* Concept for “residential parklet,” Los Angeles, CA.  
Credit: India Brookover/ Google Maps

## Site 2: Alvarado Boulevard and 6th Street “Street Vending Parklet”

### *Existing Conditions*

- Extremely narrow sidewalk,
- High pedestrian volumes,
- Only street vending district in Los Angeles,
- Area with high transit ridership.

### *Potential Improvements:*

- Street vending oriented parklet allowing more space for pedestrians on sidewalk,
- Can be combined with bus stop to provide more comfortable space for waiting transit passengers.



Figure 112. Concept for “street vending parklet,” Los Angeles, CA.  
Credit: Madeline Brozen/Google Maps

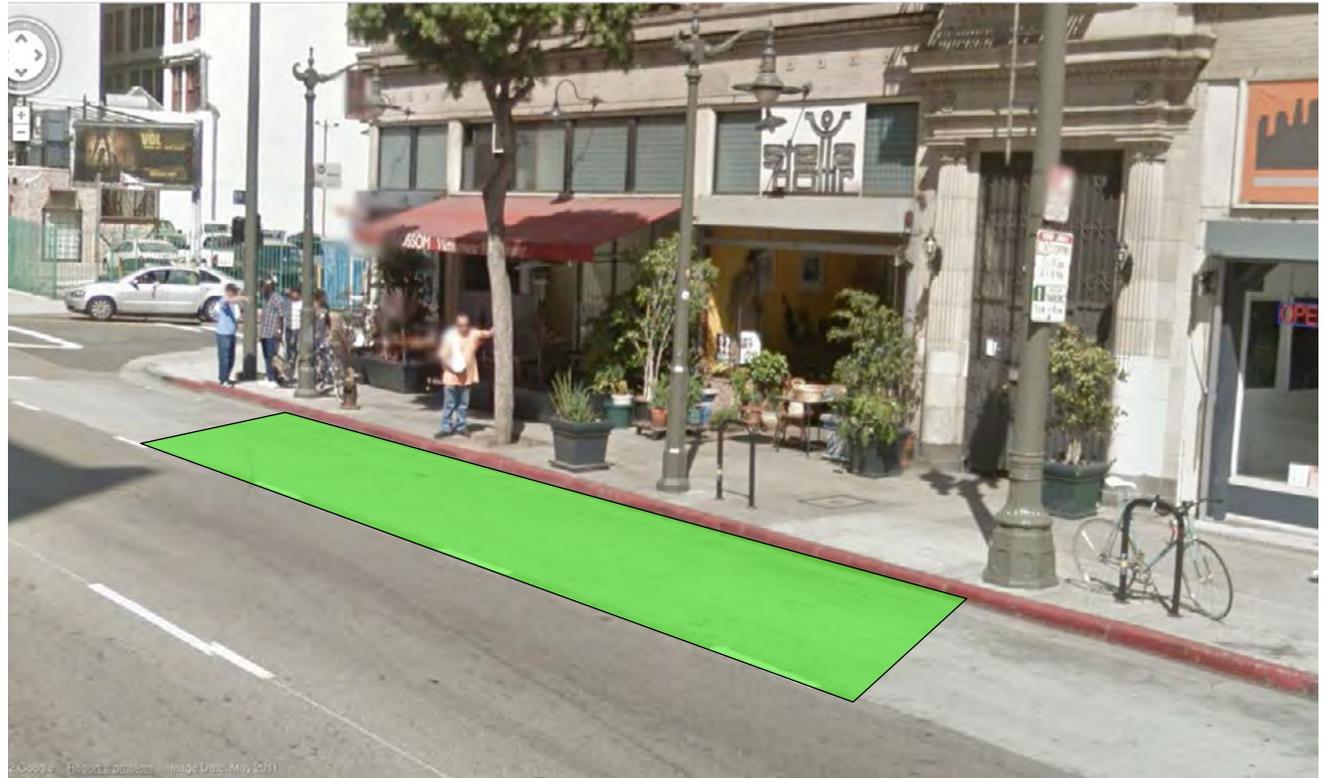
## Site 3: Main Street between 4th and 5th Streets, Downtown Los Angeles “Skid Row Revitalization Parklet”

### *Existing Conditions:*

- Transitional area between revitalized Spring Street and Skid Row,
- Newly installed bike lane, providing buffer between pedestrians and moving vehicles.

### *Potential Improvements:*

- Continue streetscape upgrading and revitalization towards Skid Row,
- Connect with other grass-roots efforts like urban gardening in the area,
- Install active recreation parklet to provide more opportunities for Skid Row residents.



*Figure 113.* Concept for “Skid Row revitalization parklet,” Los Angeles, CA.  
Credit: India Brookover/Google Maps

## Site 4: Hoover Street and Myra Avenue “School Proximate Parklet”

### *Existing Conditions:*

- Large but underutilized pedestrian landing,
- Five schools within a one mile radius,
- Common pedestrian route between transit stops and Silver Lake and Echo Park neighborhoods,
- Skewed intersection that is hazardous to pedestrians.

### *Potential Improvements:*

- Active recreation parklet geared toward neighborhood children,
- Possible expansion into nearby surface parking lot,
- Possible site for public art installation,
- Redesign and possible narrowing of intersection road space.

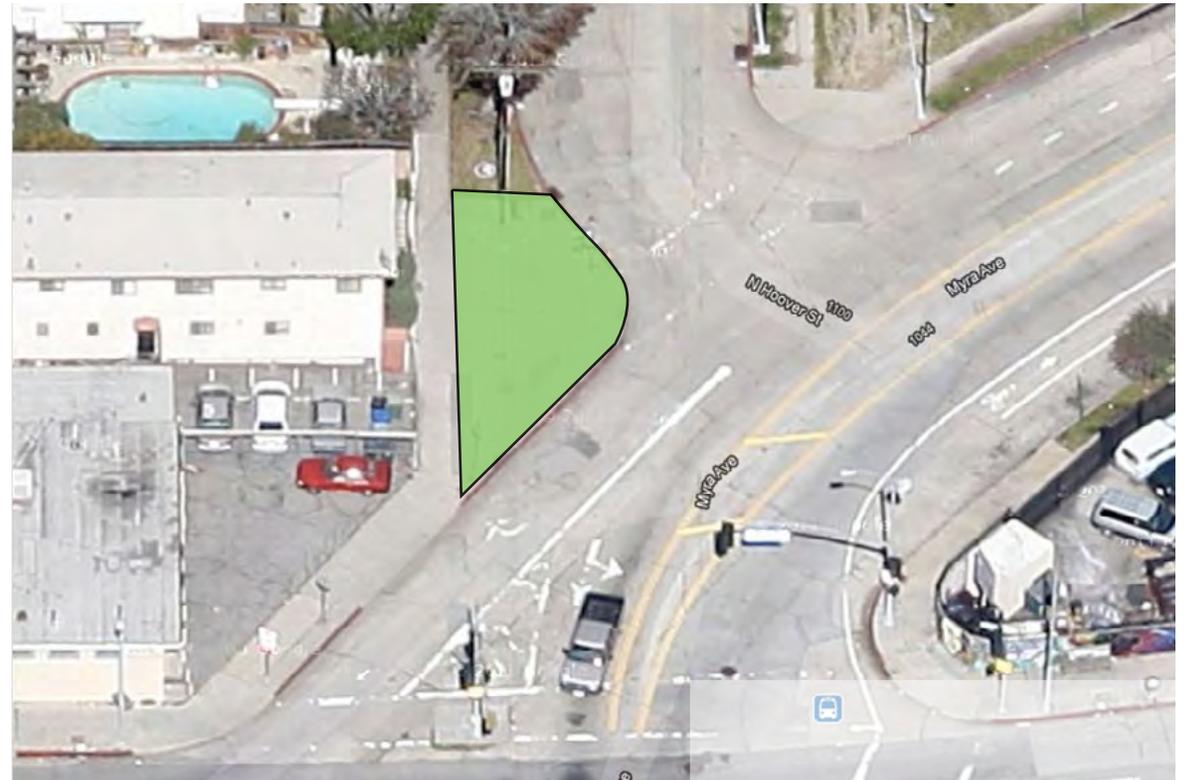


Figure 114. Concept for “school proximate parklet,” Los Angeles, CA.  
Credit: India Brookover/Google Maps

## Site 5: 2nd Street and Alameda Avenue “Culturally Significant Parklet”

### *Existing Conditions:*

- Located between downtown Los Angeles’ Arts District and Little Tokyo,
- Traffic triangle/pedestrian refuge,
- Cars make right turns without stopping, posing a danger to pedestrians.

### *Potential Improvements:*

- Connect traffic triangle to adjacent sidewalk for pedestrian safety,
- Culturally brand the area and create a sense of place with design inspired by neighborhood history,
- Involve active neighborhood organization, Little Tokyo Service Center.



Figure 115. Concept for “culturally significant parklet,” Los Angeles, CA.  
Credit: India Brookover/Google Maps

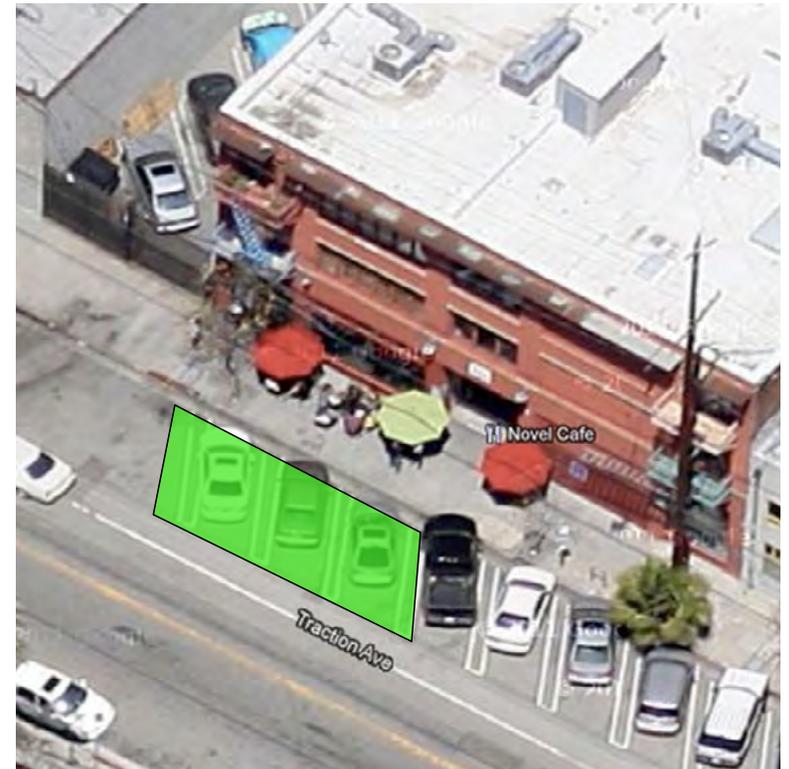
## Site 6: Traction Avenue, south of 3rd Street “LA’s Diagonal Parklet”

### *Existing Conditions:*

- Diagonal parking spaces,
- Commercial corridor with mixed-use housing, including artists’ lofts,
- Recent increase in residents,<sup>42</sup>
- Proximity to Southern California Institute of Architecture (SCI-ARC),
- Limited amount of open space in neighborhood.

### *Potential Opportunity:*

- Deep parklet, utilizing space created from underutilized diagonal parking spaces,
- Design competition for SCI-ARC students,
- Increase open space in community,
- Potential active recreation parklet for SCI-ARC students, faculty, and residents,
- Economic development potential by creating space for people to linger and enjoy the neighborhood.



*Figure 116. Concept for “LA’s diagonal parklet.”*  
Credit: India Brookover/Google Maps



*Figure 117.* Rendering of “LA’s diagonal parklet.”  
Credit: India Brookover

## Site 7: Cesar Chavez Avenue and Grand Avenue “Garden Space Parklet” and/or “Active Recreation Parklet”

### *Existing Conditions:*

- Traffic triangle,
- Redundant travel lane,
- Lack of open space and fresh food in adjacent area,
- High School for the Performing Arts is located across the street,
- High percentage of elderly residents in the neighborhood<sup>43</sup>,
- Highly traveled pedestrian intersection.

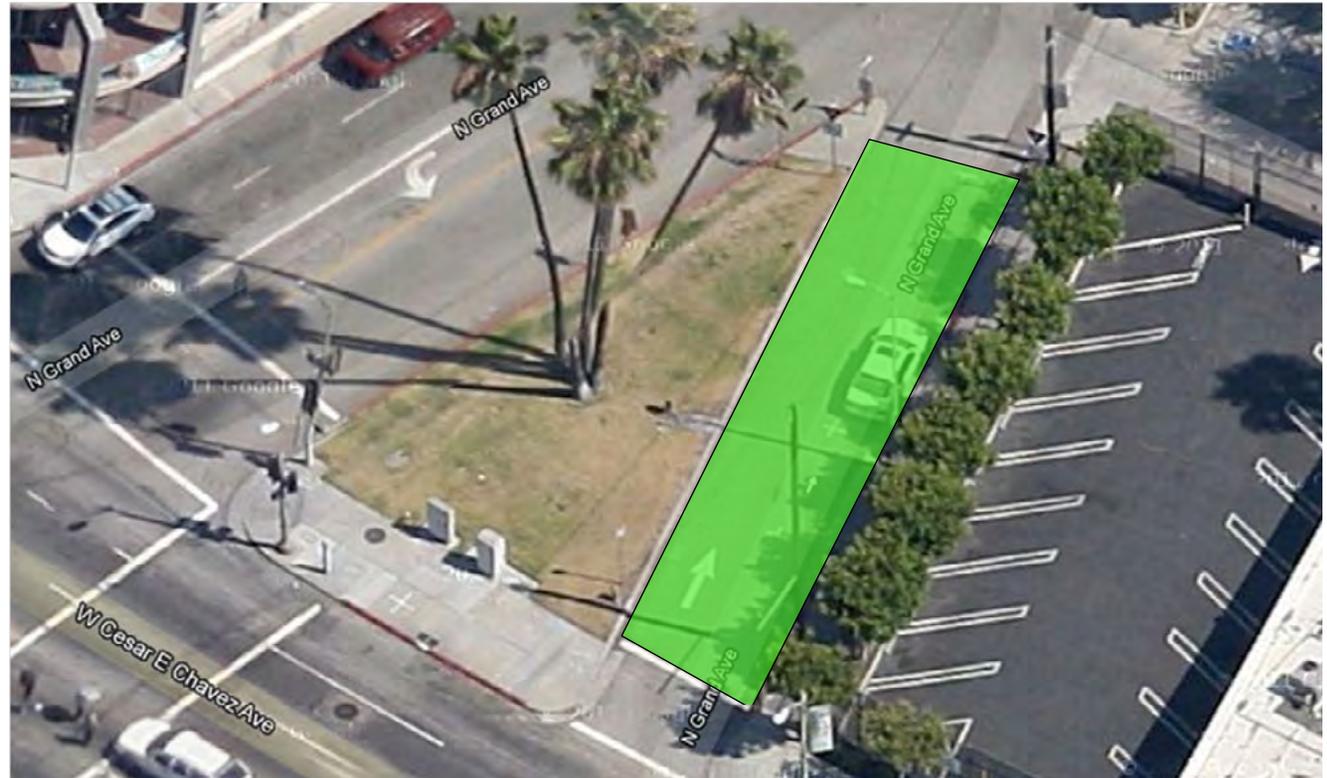


Figure 118. Concept for parklets at Cesar Chavez Ave. and Grand Ave., Los Angeles, CA.  
Credit: India Brookover/Google Maps

*Potential Opportunity for  
“Active Recreation Parklet”*

- Convert redundant travel lane, closing street with planters, as used at the Sunset Triangle Plaza,
- Allow pedestrians and cyclists to safely travel through area without automobile traffic,
- Install outdoor exercise equipment to facilitate physical activity for high school students and seniors,
- Install tables for social interaction.

Figure 119. Rendering of “active recreation parklet,” Los Angeles, CA.  
Credit: Veena Samartha



*Potential Opportunity for  
“Garden Space Parklet”*

- Convert redundant travel lane, closing street with planters, as used at the Sunset Triangle Plaza,
- Install raised beds for community gardening,
- Involve students from high school as “garden stewards” to learn about urban agriculture,
- Create a safe pedestrian area, creating an opportunity for moderate physical activity for seniors.

Figure 120. Rendering of “garden space parklet” Los Angeles, CA.  
Credit: India Brookover



## Footnotes

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42. Downtown population increased from 35,884 people in 2000 to 51,329 people in 2010 (U.S census).

43. Twenty-seven percent of residents in census tract are over 65 years of age compared to 10 percent in the City of Los Angeles (2010 Census).

# Appendix A: Los Angeles Bike Corral Maintenance Agreement

**Maintenance Agreement**

On-Street Bicycle Parking Facility  
Bicycle Corral

**Name and Location**

The City of Los Angeles will install an on-street bicycle parking facility (Bicycle Corral) at *name and location*. The bicycle corral will be located in the parking stall at *name and location*.

The business owner at *name and location* the owner(s) at said property enter into an agreement with the City to maintain the Bicycle Corral and any associated maintenance in adjacent parking spaces required due to the installation of the Bicycle Corral to City standards.

To facilitate the installation of the Bicycle Corral, it is agreed that:

1. The Bicycle Corral and adjacent impacted parking spaces will be swept and otherwise cleared of all debris at least once per week by *Business Owner, Name and Location*. All trash will be removed from the facility and disposed of in a proper manner.
2. The Bicycle Corral and associated equipment will be kept free of graffiti and stickers by *Business Owner, Name and Location*.
3. *Business Owner, Name and Location* Matt, will regularly maintain any landscaping or plantings added to the facility design.
4. The Bicycle Corral will be visually inspected by *Business Owner, Business Name and Location* at least once a week for trash, graffiti, proper maintenance of the bicycle parking equipment, landscaping and overall appearance of the facility. The City will regularly inspect the site to determine that *Business Owner, owner of Business Name* is properly maintaining the site.
5. Should errant motorists, vandalism, or neglect damage the site the City can choose to replace the equipment or remove the Bicycle Corral in its entirety. If funding is not available to replace the equipment or if it is determined the location is underutilized for the purpose of parking bicycles the City reserves the right to remove the Bicycle Corral.
6. Should citizen complaints be received by the City regarding the Bicycle Corral, the following steps will be taken to resolve concerns by the public:
  - a. The City will complete a field inspection of the site and a report will be filed that reviews the condition of the Bicycle Corral to address the concerns of citizen(s).
  - b. If the level of maintenance of the Bicycle Corral is deemed unacceptable by the inspector of the site, *Business Owner, Name and Location* the will be notified in writing of actions needed to be taken to bring the maintenance of the site to the standard required by the City.

- c. Response to the complaint may result in the following action(s) by the City:
  - i. No action;
  - ii. A warning; or
  - iii. Revocation of this permit and removal of the Bicycle Corral by the City.

7. Any changes upgrades or enhancements proposed by *Business Owner, owner of Business Name*, must be approved, in writing, by the City prior to any change in the design, appearance or equipment. Failure to obtain the City's permission in writing for any changes, upgrades or enhancements could result in revocation of this permit and removal of the Bicycle Corral by the City.
8. Should the business or property owner change hands or be transferred, the City will retain the right to remove the Bicycle Corral unless the new business or property owner enters into a new agreement with the City.
9. The City reserves the right to remove the Bicycle Corral at any time and to revoke this agreement.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the parties have executed this agreement by the authorized representatives as of the dates indicated below:

*BUSINESS NAME:*

By: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
*Business Owner, Owner, Business Name*

City of Los Angeles:

CITY OF LOS ANGELES DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION:

By: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Amir Sedadi, General Manager

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

By: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Deputy, City Attorney

## Appendix B.: Interview Questions for City Staff

### Design/Development:

- Describe the history of the program. Where did the initial idea come from and how it came to be as it is today?
- Please describe your program goals. Do you have any written documentation on these goals?
- What are typical sites that you are using for parklets? How do you select sites for parklets? Are there established selection criteria? What are the common surrounding land uses? Who owns the land, or is it leased temporarily?
- Have parklets been installed? If yes, how many and what is their typical size? Does the city plan to allow more parklets to be installed?
- Are there landscaping/design features common to all the parklets? If yes, of what kind? Also, if yes, are these features required?
- Overall, what are the functions of the parklets? Who are the primary users?
- Do you consider parklets as public spaces? If so, how do you denote this to the public? Are there restrictions to their access and use?

### Implementation/Maintenance

- How is design and construction of the parklets funded?
- Which departments are involved in parklet regulation and development and what are their roles? Has the city issued new ordinances or policies for the development and regulation of the parklets or are you using existing ones?
- Is a permit required? If so, who is eligible to apply for a permit and how much does it cost?
- Is the public involved in the parklet development process?
- How are the parklets maintained? Who is in charge of their maintenance? Is there an agreement about their maintenance which you can share?
- How does the city handle liability concerns about the parklets? Who must hold the insurance and how much? Have you had any liability issues to date?

## Evaluation

- Do you have a process for evaluating the parklets post-installation? If so, what are you evaluating? Do you collect data both before and after installation?
- What have been the impacts of the parklet program? [i.e. increased revenue at nearby businesses, etc.]
- After installation, have you seen any relationship between pedestrian traffic volumes in the area and parklet usage?
- What have been the challenges associated with this program?
- What have been notable successes and failures?
- What are the lessons learned?

## Follow-up

- Do you have any other additional insights or recommendations for further information?
- Do you have high resolution photos highlighting the parklet projects?
- If we want to seek more details at a project site level, which projects do you recommend we use as case studies and whom should we speak with for information about parklet design, landscaping, and other project-level details?
- Are you aware of other similar programs in other cities across the nation or the world?

## Appendix C: Interview Questions for Businesses

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1. Why did your business support a parklet?
2. Did the project face any obstacles from your municipality/city?
3. Did you cover the insurance for the parklet project?
4. Challenges and successes about few different elements of the parklet.
5. Please share any lessons learned regarding the following:
  - A. Location and size
  - B. Design elements such as lighting, seating, signage etc
  - C. Signage
6. What was your process for maintenance? Who conducted the maintenance and who often? Who paid for it?
7. Did the parklet help attract new customers? Did you find the parklet profitable/worth it?
8. Do you have any other thoughts that could help other businesses in other cities interested in having a parklet next to their establishment?
9. Please describe any lessons learned regarding the design and location of the parklet.

## Appendix D: Interview Questions for Parklet Designers

1. Please describe the following site characteristics of the parklet:
  - A. Function (active recreation, quiet relaxation, sidewalk dining, etc.)
  - B. Primary users
  - C. Surrounding land uses
  - D. Prior use of space (parking space, median, traffic triangle, etc.)
  - E. Size
  - F. Duration of installation
2. Explain the design and its conception. In what way did the site influence the design? What element have you used to designate and differentiate the parklet from the surrounding area?
3. What design elements were important to include and why?
4. Describe the following landscaping and storm water management elements:
  - A. Trees, planters and other landscaping
  - B. Types of ground cover
  - C. Integration of best management practices for managing water sustainability
  - D. Shade
5. Explain how you designed the project to maximize safety and comfort for users? This includes safety from crime, safety from traffic, buffer from air pollution and safety with equipment and other on-site amenities)
6. How does the project convey that the parklet is open to the public?
7. How much did the project cost and what were the funding sources?
8. How well is the site being used? Do you know of any post-installation evaluation efforts? If yes, what are the findings?
9. If you were to design the parklet again, what would you do differently?
10. Do you have any other recommendations and lessons learned regarding planning, financing, design, or other items that you care to share with other designers?

## Appendix E: Interview References

---

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(M. Brozen, Interviewer)

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Ocanas, M. (2012, April 15). Policy Analyst, LA County Department of Public Health.  
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