General Information

Parklets are public seating platforms that convert curbside parking spaces into vibrant community spaces. They are typically a partnership between the city and local businesses, residents, or neighborhood associations. If the parklet is on a state route, an agreement with MDT may need to be established.

Parklets vary on design but typically incorporate seating and greenery. Some parklets may include bicycle racks. Parklets are a feature to accommodate unmet demand for public spaces while encouraging more people to be outdoors, making a downtown more vibrant and lively.

Parklets may be a platform that is installed in the spring and removed in the fall so that they do not interfere with snowplowing.

While parklets are intended as assets to the community, they have also been proven to increase foot traffic, and in some cases revenue, for adjacent businesses.

Design Recommendations

- Parklets should have vertical elements that make them visible to traffic, such as fencing or bollards.
- Parklets should have some type of buffer or wheel stop at each end.
- Parklets have a desired minimum width of 6 feet (or the width of the parking lane). They usually convert one parallel parking space and 3-4 angled parking spaces, but may vary according to the site, context, and desires.
- The design of a parklet should not inhibit the adequate drainage of stormwater runoff. Small channels between the base and the platform facilitate drainage.
- Parklets should have a flush transition at the sidewalk and curb to permit easy access and to avoid tripping hazards.

Benefits and Considerations

A parklet may be installed and managed by the City or there may be a partnership established with an adjacent business or downtown association to maintain the parklet, keeping it clean, free of trash, and vegetation watered.
More Design Recommendations

- Parklets should not be placed at street corners but are best placed at least one parking space away from the intersection corner. Where installation of a parklet is under consideration for a site near an intersection, volumes of turning traffic, sightlines, visibility, and daylighting should be taken into account.

- Incorporate seating into the parklet. Seating may be integrated into the design itself or made possible with tables and chairs.

- Designs for the sub-structure of a parklet vary and depend on the slope of the street and overall design for the structure. The sub-structure must accommodate the crown of the road and provide a level surface for the parklet. “Bison pedestals” spaced under the surface and of different heights are a common application. Another method is to provide steel sub-structure and angled beams.

- Include an open guardrail to define the space. Railings should be no higher than 3 feet and be capable of withstanding at least 200 feet of horizontal force.

Summary

The design of any individual parklet may vary according to the wishes of the primary partner. Designs may include seating, greenery, bicycle racks or other features, but should always strive to become a focal point for the community and a welcoming public gathering place. Cities may opt to have a standard design template to reduce design and construction costs for applicants.

Information extracted from the NACTO Urban Street Design Guide