



Parklet FAQs

Background and General Information

What is a parklet?

A parklet is a small public sidewalk extension, usually extending two parking space lengths, that uses non-permanent materials (e.g., it is not concrete). It combines elements such as seating, trees, flowers, shrubs, umbrellas, bike parking or lighting that reflect the unique character and needs of the location.

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 a piece of street furniture, providing aesthetic enhancement to the overall streetscape. By not requiring a permanent concrete base, parklets are a much faster and less expensive way for the City to bring sidewalk improvements to a neighborhood.

Unlike traditional sidewalk widening, which is designed, programmed and paid for by the City, parklets are designed, paid for and maintained by a non-City entity. Often a retail business owner or adjacent property owner hosts and sponsors the parklet. However, parklets are public space and are publicly accessible.

Who can use a parklet?

A parklet is a *public space* that can be used by everyone: neighbors, residents of San Francisco and tourists. It is not private property, and it is not limited to customers of the surrounding businesses or permit holders.

Each parklet has a sign on it clearly indicating that it is a public space.

What are the benefits of a parklet?

A parklet adds much-needed green open space to our dense city. Anyone can sit down to eat or read, watch people, pull over from crowded sidewalks long enough to take a look around and notice new stores and places to explore. The nonprofit Great Streets Project found that the parklet on Divisadero Street near Hayes increased people's sense of neighborhood character from 80% to 90%.

Parklets are also good for surrounding businesses as they attract people to the location and give them a place to linger. The SF Great Streets Project's study of the initial parklet on Divisadero at Grove Street found that it increased foot traffic, particularly during week days, and encouraged people to linger longer (and all without increasing anti-social behavior). The full study results are available at sfgreatstreets.org/parklets.

Often parklets have trees and shrubs, which help to beautify an area and act as a buffer between the street and the sidewalk.

What behavior is not allowed in the parklet?

You cannot smoke, consume alcoholic beverages or participate in other illegal activities, just like a sidewalk. The permit holder is responsible for regulating behavior in the space.

Who cleans up or takes care of the parklet?

The permit holder maintains the parklet. This includes watering any landscaping, spraying under the parklet once a week, and rodent abatement if necessary.

How many parklets are there?

Currently there are five parklets in San Francisco – although that number is going to rise significantly in the coming months. There has been huge demand for parklets around the city, and applications to the City for permits have reflected the hunger for more public space. Check out our ever-evolving map at sfgreatstreets.org/parklets to see the locations of current and future parklets all over the city.

Application and Permitting Process

How does the application and permitting process work?

Currently, the City is accepting applications only after a Request for Proposals (RFP) for Parklets is issued. The next RFP is expected in early Spring 2011. The RFP and submission deadline will be posted online at sfpavementtoparks.sfplanning.org/. Email sfpavementtoparks@sfgov.org if you want to be notified when the next RFP is announced.

Applications submitted by the designated deadline will be reviewed and evaluated for suitability of the location, evidence of community support and how clear and well thought-out the design is. The Department of Public Works will notify applicants whether or not their initial application is approved.

After the initial application is approved, the applicant must post a public notice for ten calendar days. If there are no objections from the public, the applicant will submit detailed design drawings to the parklet program manager for review and approval. Upon approval of the detailed plans, the Department of Public Works will issue the

parklet permit and the permit holder can install the parklet. All remaining fees will be collected at the time the permit is issued.

Depending on the type of programming, the parklet host may need to obtain other permits – e.g. for entertainment, loudspeakers, alcohol.

What is the public notice process?

The public notice requirement for parklet permits is comparable to that for cafe tables and chairs and sidewalk display permits and is similar to the process for applications for color curb zones.

If the initial parklet application is approved, the City will issue a public notice informing the public that a permit is being considered to allow the installation of a parklet at the proposed location. The applicant must post a standard size copy of the public notice in an easily visible place in front of the business for ten calendar days. If there are objections from the public, a public hearing is scheduled to determine approval or denial of the application. In the event of a denial, the applicant may appeal to the Board of Permit Appeals within 15 calendar days of the decision.

What must be included in the initial application?

The RFP describes the materials that must be submitted in the initial application. These include 1) an initial site plan, 2) a description of the type of elements on the parklet – e.g. café tables and chairs, benches, landscaping, bike parking, etc, 3) the anticipated construction schedule should a permit be awarded and 4) letters of support from immediate neighbors and any relevant neighborhood or merchant groups.

The initial site plan should show the footprint of the proposed parklet, parklet length and width, existing parking stalls, sidewalk width, property lines and all surface obstructions (trees, meters, lights, hydrants) within 15 feet of the proposed site. The initial site plan does not need to be professionally developed, but should clearly provide enough information to illustrate the context of the proposed parklet. Although the design of the parklet does not need to be fully developed, the more detailed provided in the proposed concept the better.

How are applications reviewed?

A staff committee from the Department of Public Works, the Municipal Transportation Agency, and the Planning Department will assess the applications based on the following objectives:

1. The preliminary design is thoughtful and demonstrates that the parklet will enhance the aesthetic quality of the streetscape.
2. The location is appropriate and the parklet is likely to be well used and active.
3. There is strong community support for the parklet.
4. The parklet is likely to be well-maintained.

Who can apply to host a parklet?

Eligible applicants include Community Benefit Districts, storefront business owners, nonprofit institutions and community organizations. Others may be considered on a case-by-case basis. Contact sfpavementtoparks@sfgov.org before submitting an application.

Where can parklets be located?

The parklet site must be at least one parking spot away from a corner, on a street with a speed limit of 25 mph or less and on a street with a minimal slope. Additionally, the street must have parking lanes. Parklets are not permitted in red zones, but they may replace yellow or blue zones or motorcycle parking if the applicant is willing to pay additional fees and there is an appropriate adjacent location for the zone to be relocated. They may be allowed in white and green zones if the entity that originally requested the zone agrees. Finally, parklets are not permitted in front of fire hydrants or over manholes or utility valves.

In addition, the parklet itself must conform to the following guidelines:

- Maximum 6' width into the parking lane
- Maintain curblin drainage
- Decking flush with the curb, with a maximum ½" gap
- 4' distance from parklet to wheel stop
- 3' wheel stop installed 1' from curb
- Reflective soft hit posts
- Visually permeable edge

How much does a parklet cost?

Once a permit is approved and ready to be issued, the following fees apply: \$791 base fee for all applications, and \$650 for up to two meter removals (required only if meters currently exist). If the parklet includes three parking stalls or more an additional \$285 base fee per additional parking stall and \$325 fee per additional meter removal (required if meters currently exist) is required. These fees include fees paid to the Department of Public Works and the Municipal Transportation Agency.

After the first year, yearly permit renewals be charged \$245.52.

The parklet host is additionally responsible for design and construction of the parklet. These costs are not included in the permitting fees and can range from around \$5,000-\$15,000 depending on design and materials.

What are the responsibilities of the permit holder?

Parklets are intended to be aesthetic improvements to the streetscape and the permit holder is expected to maintain a safe and attractive space. The permit holder will sign a

maintenance agreement to keep all plants in good health, clean the surface of the parklet daily, and rinse beneath the parklet at least once a week. If necessary, the Department of Public Health may require pest abatement for the area beneath the parklet platform. Any movable items such as tables and chairs must be locked down or taken inside after business hours.

The permit holder is also required to provide evidence of liability insurance for a minimum coverage of \$1,000,000, naming the City and County of San Francisco as additional insured, valid for the duration of the permit. This is the same insurance requirement as for sidewalk café tables and chairs and most businesses already carry this kind of insurance.

Who designs the parklets?

Photographs, design details, and name of the designers of the first five parklets are available on the Pavement to Parks website sfpavementtoparks.sfplanning.org on the built projects pages.

Additionally, many local landscape architecture and design firms have expressed interest in designing these creative new public spaces. A list of these firms, firm profiles and contact information are available at sfgreatstreets.org/parklets/designers.

Who can I contact for more information?

For general questions, e-mail Jessica Arnett at Jessica@sfgreatstreets.org.

For questions specific to a given parklet, contact the permit holder.

To report problems or non-compliance with parklet guidelines, contact DPW, Bureau of Street Use and Mapping at (415) 554-5810 or parklets@sfdpw.org.