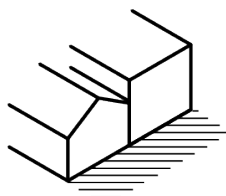




PARKLET GUIDE



BETTER BLOCK



PARKLETS IN RESPONSE TO COVID-19

As businesses begin to reopen in our cities, they're looking for ways to maintain healthy social distancing while providing services for as many customers as possible. Our neighborhoods' landscapes have changed with a reduction in vehicular traffic (and thus a need for parking) as well as people wanting to stay six-feet away.

Over the years, we at the Better Block Foundation have begun to explore the world of digital fabrication. We realized that by working with 3D printers, laser cutters, and CNC (Computer Numerical Control) routers, we could create beautiful, more robust designs than before but still create opportunities for community builds. We launched Wikiblock, which is a library of street furniture designs that anyone anywhere can download for free, use a CNC router to cut out, and build without any glue, screws, or nails. [You can find the designs here.](#)

When Covid-19 hit, we transitioned our CNC router from creating street furniture to cutting out visors for face shields. And as our cities began to transition to reopening, we looked for ways to help local businesses create safe spaces for their customers, and we found the streets. There has always been potential with rethinking the way we use our streets. And now that Covid-19 has changed traffic patterns and created a desire for space, cities are open to bringing some old ideas to life.

One such idea? The parklet.

Over the next few pages, we go into detail about parklets, as well as the city of Dallas' new parklet pilot program. We'll explain what you need to do to acquire a permit as well as give some design ideas. [For more information, go here.](#)

MEET THE BETTER BLOCK FOUNDATION

The Better Block is a 501(c)3 urban design nonprofit that educates, equips, and empowers communities and their leaders to reshape and reactivate built environments to promote the growth of healthy and vibrant neighborhoods. We work to show neighbors that they have the power and resources to affect change in their communities, and we work alongside city staff to identify hurdles and overcome them to bring this change to life. To learn more, visit betterblock.org and follow [@BetterBlock](#) on social media.



WHAT IS A PARKLET?

An extension of a sidewalk; an addition to seating

Parklets are public seating spaces that extend the sidewalk, generally taking the place of a car in a parking spot. A parklet can take many forms, but usually has sturdy walls, greenery, and allows for seating. It is placed in partnership with the business owner, property owner, and city. A parklet needs to be maintained by one of the entities.

You are probably most familiar with the concept of a parklet from the national movement, Park(ing) Day. Park(ing) Day began in 2005 with three friends in San Francisco who placed grass, a bench, and a potted tree in a parking spot. They they went across the street to watch what would happen. Before too long, a guy sat down on

the bench and ate his lunch. Then another joined. That's when the three knew they had created something special.

Over the past 15 years, parklets have gone from items found in people's backyards to intricately designed structures by registered architects.

Along the way, they've become more sanctioned, with cities adopting policies to allow parklets to exist in front of businesses. Some allow alcohol; others are more like parks. Some are considered public spaces; others private. No matter what they look like or what they're in front of, the idea is the same: Create more spaces for people.



WHAT ABOUT THE PARKING?

Parklets generally take a space away from parking

One of the first questions we get when we talk about parklets is: What about the parking? Since a parklet generally takes up the same space as a parking spot, people wonder where they're going to store their vehicles. There are a few ways to address this question.

1. It's Hard to Find Parking in Great Places

One of our mottos at the Better Block Foundation is that it's hard to find parking in great places, meaning that the places we all love to go to were built for us, not our vehicles. They're human-scale, meaning they have pedestrian amenities, such as landscaping and seating. When we start to take those elements away and reallocate them for vehicles, the space is not longer humane.

2. Need for Parking Is Down (As Is Traffic)

Over the past few weeks, people have been staying home more and keeping their cars parked. They've begun exploring their communities by foot or pedal. There is reason to believe this trend will remain.

3. Parklets Will Help Businesses

In Chicago, 80% of businesses that added parklets saw an increase in foot traffic, as well as more spending. Also, a parklet can hold 8-10 people; whereas a parking spot holds an empty car for generally only 1-2 passengers.

4. Dallas' Program Is Temporary

The parklets can be as simple as moving existing tables and chairs, display racks, and safety barriers into the right-of-way.



WHAT ABOUT THE HOMELESS?

And others who may not use the parklet appropriately

While the first question we get is about parking, the second one is, “What about the homeless?” There’s a great deal of fear about how the parklets will be used by people up to no good and the homeless (they’re not always one and the same). Generally speaking, a place that is welcoming to the general public and bustling with activity attracts attention. People up to no good typically don’t care for an abundance of attention. Concerns about the homeless are also unwarranted, as in our experience, parklets do not attract their interest. A few other thoughts:

1. Build for Love, Not for Fear

We often tell people we build for the community that exists, not the worst-case scenarios we come up with in our heads. We

build spaces for everyone to enjoy. So far, this method has worked for us.

2. Eyes on the Street

By creating beautiful pieces that activate spaces, we add more eyes on the street (at safe distances). These eyes create a security system and give neighbors a stake in the game and ensure that the pieces will be watched over.

3. Parklet Maintenance

In order for parklets to be successful, there needs to be an “owner.” Sometimes that owner is an individual; other times it’s a PID or BID; but in many cases, it’s the businesses it’s in front of. These stewards are generally tasked with ensuring the space is clean and properly maintained.

WHAT IS DALLAS' PARKLET PILOT PROGRAM?

In its continued response to the impacts of COVID-19, the City of Dallas has created a temporary parklet program to assist local businesses with their economic recovery.



“We’re thinking it might actually help folks feel more comfortable about getting back out there and spending money again, helping small businesses. It encourages people to get outside...and engage with your neighborhood again in a safe, socially distant kind of way.”

CHAD WEST

DISTRICT 1 COUNCILMEMBER IN AN INTERVIEW WITH THE DALLAS MORNING NEWS

TEMPORARILY TESTING OUT PARKLETS

Recently, Dallas passed an ordinance allowing temporary parklets as part of a pilot program to aid local businesses in the recovery from Covid-19. Unlike permanent parklets, these are meant to be simple in design and easily removed nightly.

If you receive your first permit, it is good for 10 days. Seven/eight days in, the Office of Special Events will review your parklet and give you a revised permit for another 10 days if there have been no issues or violations. You may extend your parklet up to 60 days (with a new permit issued every 10). There will not be an additional permit fee.

Here are the aspects you need to know about Dallas’ parklet pilot program. [You can find these and much more here.](#)

There are six steps to acquiring a permit:

1. Complete Application
2. Submit Site Plan
3. Pay Fees
4. Complete Other Requirements
5. Permit Review Process
6. Receive Your Permit

STEPS TO ACQUIRING A PERMIT

There are a few tools you'll need to transform your street quickly. These are just the basics for your recipe. Use yours and your neighbors' creativity to take your street to the next level.

1. Complete Application

- Find a link to the application here.
- Applications will be reviewed within three days, so your application should be filed at least three days before you'd like to build your parklet.
- Temporary parklet installations must meet the required Ordinance 42A guidelines.
- Do note that there may be other forms required of you, including third party acknowledgement, property owner authorization, meter hooding request form, insurance waiver request, Dallas Fire Rescue Tent and Membrane Plan Review, Dart traffic plan, DART bus stop change notice/sign, notification verification for, floodway permit application and policies, vendor list (markets, events, carnivals), parking, shuttle, shared ride plan form, public information officer log. Find the forms here: <https://www.dallasspecialevents.com/templates/>

2. Submit Site Plan

- The site plan should be a drawing with a legend indicating all elements of the parklet including the parklet perimeter, dimensions, café tables, chairs, benches, bike racks, solar lighting, umbrellas, planters, safety apparatus, signage, hand sanitizer, fire hydrants, fire lanes, and self-contained portable misting system or battery-operated fan.
- Take into consideration the occupancy load. The permit holder is responsible for monitoring this. Seating is required for each visitor. Standing room only is not allowed
- To see more requirements and guidelines on design, go to page 8.

3. Pay Fees

- The application fee must be paid before your application will be reviewed. Fees are as follows:
 - The Application fee is \$50.
 - The Alcohol Sales Fee is \$150.
 - The Alcohol Provided Fee is \$50.
 - The renewal fee will be waived.
- You will receive an invoice via email from the Office of Special Events.
- Per the city, "Please note that other City department permit fees may apply related to parking meter hooding, fire prevention permits, temporary food permits and/or Sustainable Development and Construction Department permits. TABC permit fees may apply."

5. Complete Other Requirements

- Including any additional permits, property authorizations, provide notification, and submit certificate of insurance.

5. Permit Review

- Multiple departments will review and determine the status of your application within 3 days.

6. Receive Your Permit!

- If you have any restrictions, this will be notated on your permit.

FIND OUT ALL THE REQUIREMENTS

For information regarding the following required elements and guidelines of Dallas' Parklet Pilot Program, [go here](#).

- Operation of a Parklet
- Insurance
- Public Safety
- DFR-EMS Services
- DFR-Fire Prevention
- Alcohol
- Parklet Parking Impact
- Property Authorization
- Temporary Signage
- Notification Requirements
- Onsite Contact
- Outdoor Amplified Sound
- Vendor Requirements
- Sanitation
- Permits and Licenses
- Enforcement



PARKLET GUIDELINES

The ins and outs of creating a parklet in Dallas

Over the next few pages, we outline some of the design guidelines and requirements for a parklet as part of the city of Dallas' program.

There are levels at which you can create a parklet in

Dallas, mainly temporary (through the newly launched program) and permanent, which is a different permitting process. The following design guidelines are for the temporary program.

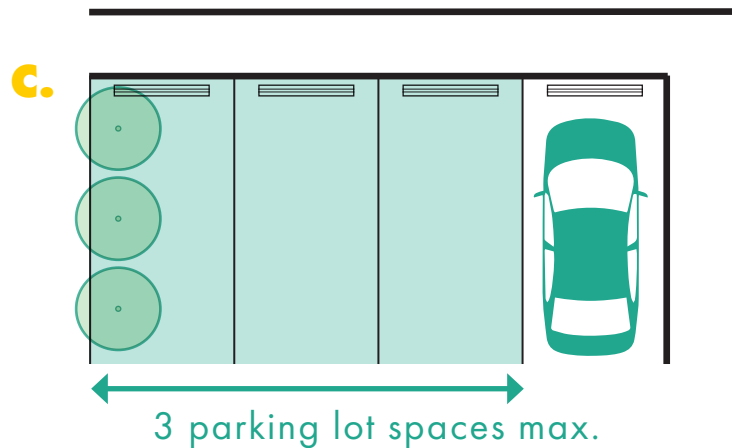
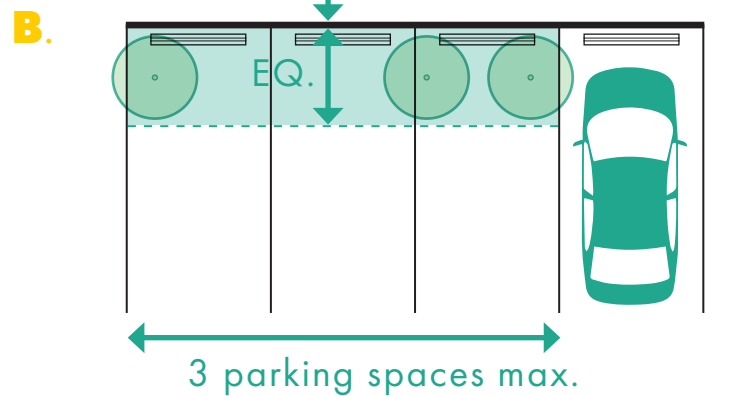
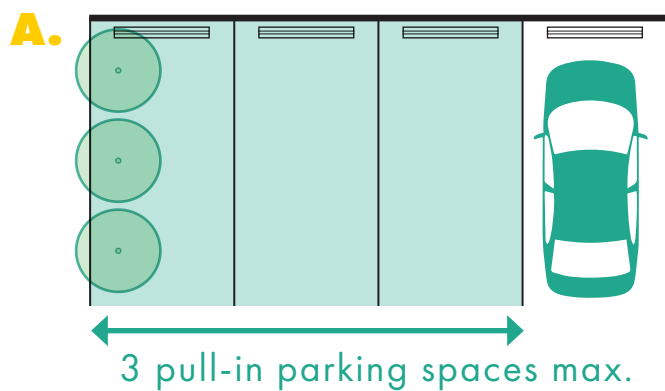
GO HERE

For a complete outline of all the requirements

PARKLET LOCATION

A temporary parklet may activate in any of the following spaces:

- a. Up to three adjoining pull-in parking spaces
- b. The sidewalk equivalent of up to 3 parking spaces
- c. The parking lot equivalent of up to 3 parking spaces
- d. Up to three adjoining parallel parking spaces
- e. A combination of the above

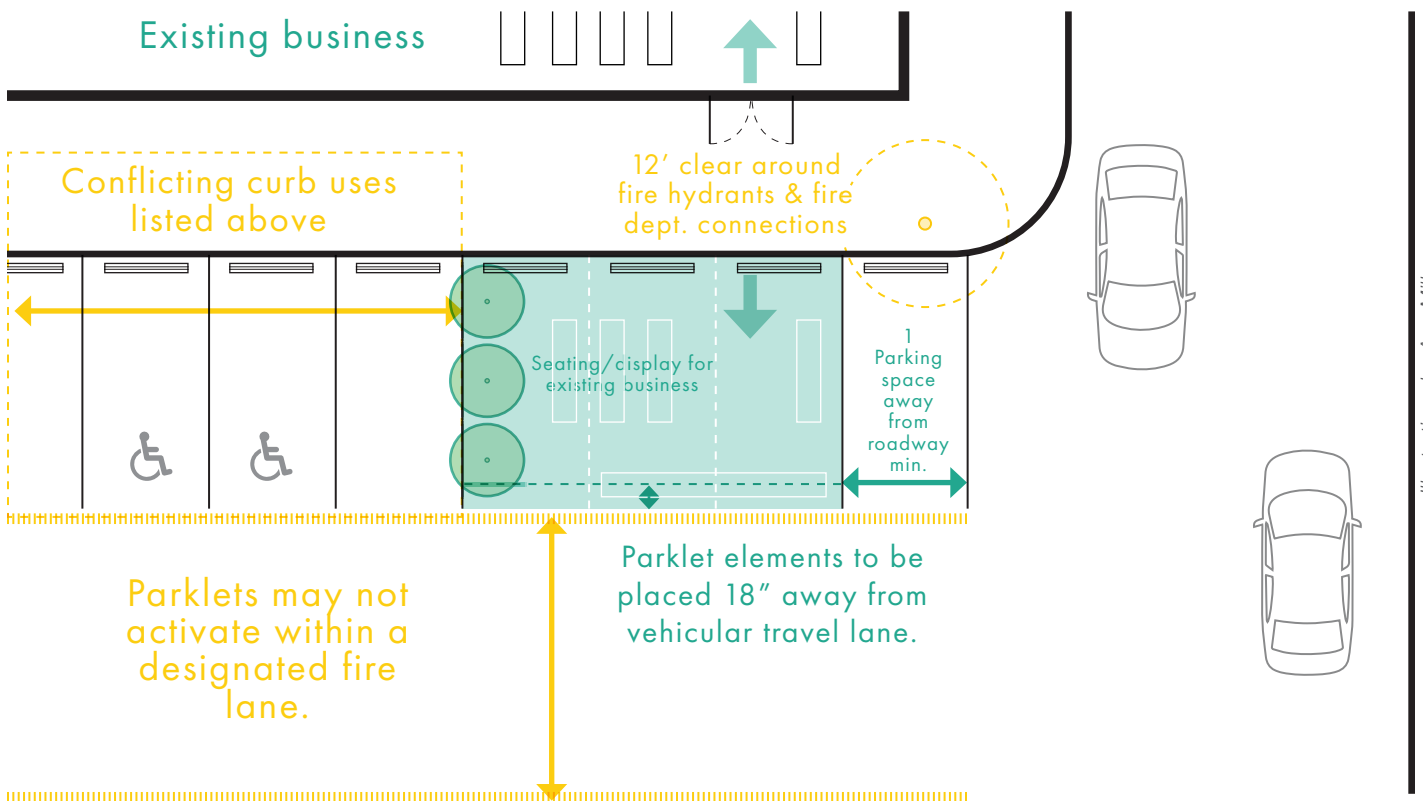


Illustrations by Ana Millan

PARKLET LOCATION, CONT.

When designing your parklet/site plan, look to:

- Space adjacent to existing businesses to supplement their existing primary use;
- Location is at least one parking space away from a roadway intersection unless buffered by a curb bulb-out.
- No interference with existing utility access and maintenance (i.e., manholes, storm and wastewater, electrical, telecom, etc.)
- Parklets may not activate within a designated fire lane. Please identify the fire lane on your site plan.
- Provide a 12-foot clearance around fire hydrants and fire department connections (FDC). Fire hydrants must be identified on the site plan.
- Parklet may not occupy a designated ADA accessible parking space.
- Ensure no public/private parking access is blocked without providing adequate alternate parking.
- Parklet elements are placed with a minimum 18" buffer to the adjacent vehicular travel lane.
- A Temporary Parklet cannot interfere with other curb uses. Conflicts with existing curb uses that will result in denial of the permit application includes:
 - a. fire hydrant
 - b. valet operation
 - c. bus stop or transit station
 - d. loading zone
 - e. taxi zones
 - f. handicap-access parking spaces
 - g. other specially designated zones



PUBLIC SAFETY & PARKLET PERIMETER

When designing your parklet/site plan, look to:

- Ensure parklet patrons and guests are safely buffered from traffic.
- Provide a physical barrier alongside the travel lane and adjacent to active parking spaces. Safety apparatus may include Jersey barricades, Planters, Type III lighted barricades, Wheel blocker, etc.
- A semi-permanent platform erected into the parking lane to align the grade of the sidewalk and parking area may be permitted.
- Install regulatory proper traffic control devices with reflectors on each end of the temporary parklet zone that abuts traffic lanes or active parking spaces to separate parklet patrons and guests from vehicular traffic.
- Ingress and egress must be allowed to all businesses and residents. Ensure no resident or employee is denied access or egress from his home or place of business.
- Ensure all electrical cords, cables, hoses, etc. used during setup and tear down are covered by cable protectors. These items will not be permitted when the parklet is open for business.
- Provide a minimum of one ADA accessible seating area.
- Ensure no resident or employee is denied access or egress from their home or place of business.
- Sidewalk activation shall allow for general pedestrian traffic. No pedestrian pathways may be completely blocked.
- Provide a minimum of one hand sanitizer stand readily accessible to parklet patrons and guests.

Ingress and egress must be allowed to all while maintaining a clear path of access to and from existing businesses/residences

If activating sidewalk, allow continuous clear path for pedestrian traffic

Provide a min. of one hand sanitizer stand

Provide a min. of one ADA accessible seating area

Physical barrier required along travel lane and adjacent parking spaces

Illustrations by Ana Millan



METRICS

Gather the data to measure your impact

Once you've gone through the permitting process and implemented your parklet, congratulations! Remember to always encourage safe social distancing by placing tables and chairs six feet away and providing sanitation stations.

But you have a little more work to do. If the parklet is something you'd like to see become permanent, you'll need to measure (and prove) its impact.

Did customers like it?

Did your sales go up?

What complaints did you receive?

This is your time to measure, document, and share. Work with volunteers to gather data. There are a few ways you can go about this.

One of our favorite resources is [Gehlpeople.com/tools](https://www.gehlpeople.com/tools). Here you can find tools for age and gender tally, people moving count, participant survey, stationary activity mapping, 12-quality criteria, and a public life data protocol.

Not all these tools make sense for a parklet during COVID-19 measurements, so you can pick and choose what means the most to you, your neighbors, and your elected officials.

Another interesting element to measure is the speed (or change in speed). It's best to gather some of the measurements before implementation, but no worries if you weren't able to.

There are a couple ways you can measure traffic speeds. One is to borrow a traffic gun (or buy one). Or, more simply, you can download a speed gun app on your phone and measure from afar.

Put together an excel sheet and measure several times a day consistently throughout the duration of your project. Do the same after you've taken the project down.

Lastly, be sure to share your findings with us and your elected officials.