

CREATING A SENSE OF PLACE ON THE STREET:
PARKLETS IN SAN FRANCISCO NEIGHBORHOODS

by

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This paper examines the tactical urban design structure of four different parklets on users and non-users in San Francisco neighborhoods. The main objective of this study is to understand the impact and inclusiveness of the parklet on the neighborhood since it was first conceived in 2009 and constructed in 2010, and how users and non-users perceive and experience the public space. San Francisco was the first city to start implementing parklets by reallocating street space for pedestrians. Parklets have become somewhat of a social phenomenon that has captivated the attention of city and urban planners across both the United States and worldwide. The addition of parklets has changed the dynamic of the street by promoting inclusiveness in the community. Although public spaces are meant to provide areas accessible for all people to enjoy, some of these spaces can also be associated with negative impressions and anecdotes. City officials, architects and designers are refining their methods and processes of creating parklets, but more can be done to address what users and non-users encounter: inclusivity and gentrification.

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Introduction to Public Space

Public, as defined by the Oxford English Dictionary, is "open to or shared by all the people of an area or county." Space is "a continuous area or expanse, which is free, available, or unoccupied." These two words together make up public space, which is one of the more significant goals many large metropolitan cities strive to provide and promote a happy, satisfying and fulfilling community experience. Public space offers a haven where people can gather or seek refuge, if only temporarily, from their busy daily rigors. Parks, playgrounds, marketplaces, and plazas are some traditional examples of public spaces. Cities in the United States are advocating for additional public space to encourage a more inclusive, healthy, mentally invigorating and vibrant community.

One of the most important spaces in any city is the street grid—but the movement and storage of private vehicles dominate most streets. The invasion of the automobile in urban areas created congestion and discomfort, inspiring European cities to study how people actually use and interact in public space. Cities such as Amsterdam and Copenhagen, and now many United States cities, are finding solutions to address the increasing quantity of private vehicles to take the streets back for the people.

One lesson learned from these model prototypes is that a town or city cannot be prosperous and stimulating if the focus is primarily on private vehicles. Public spaces must also account for non-driving users such as pedestrians and bicyclists. Cities cannot take public space lightly. There needs to be more effort put into restoring or repurposing land for people to use. Public space has to be strategically located throughout the city to ensure that different neighborhoods and their inhabitants conveniently benefit from the

space. Cities can follow the footsteps of other successful public spaces created by innovative thinkers, planners and designers for everyone to use.

From its origin of the traditional plaza and park, public space is beginning to steer away from conventional concepts and look at non-traditional low-cost and small-scale interventions and policies. An example of this is adding an outdoor living room couch or a swing under a bus stop shelter to add whimsy and fun for people otherwise routinely and mundanely waiting for a bus. Ingenuity and innovation have been the leading drivers on how public space has transformed from what people are accustomed to seeing as a conventional park. For people, changes to public space through urban design and tactical urbanism allow for immediate reclamation, redesign, and reprogramming of such areas for greater public benefit and enjoyment.

Janette Sadik-Khan, the former commissioner of the New York City Department of Transportation, perfectly sums up the importance of streets: "Streets are the social, political and commercial arteries of the city,"¹ Streets tie residents together and play a role in transformative moments in history and life. Sadik-Khan helped transform the past landscape climate of New York City's busy streetscape to create a new repurposed street grid for people and promote better mobility for the city with and without cars.

Every city resident is a pedestrian at some point in the day. A city whose streets invite people to walk, bike, and sit along them also inspires people to innovate, invest, and stay for good. Regardless of where you live or how you get around or how much you may detest a bike lane, bus lane, or plaza, streets matter.²

¹ Janette Sadik-Khan and Seth Solomonow, *Streetfight: Handbook for an Urban Revolution* (New York: Viking Press, 2016), 3.

² Ibid.

With the rise of urban growth, public spaces play a central role in nurturing public life and the well-being of the community. Cities are addressing the importance of what it means to be public space and how finding alternative solutions to improve traditional social and physical landscape can strengthen the social fabric of communities.

Architects, designers, and landscapers are working alongside city planning departments to create, improve and energize public spaces all over the world. San Francisco was the first city to apply tactical urbanism to the street to address the problem of private vehicles overtaking the public street. This new design repurposed prime parking spaces in San Francisco and transformed them to become a safe and comfortable place for people to sit and enjoy being a part of the landscape and cityscape.

What's to the Name—Parklet?

A parklet is a term coined to describe an area that was initially one or two parking spaces, transformed into a small mini-park with green seating and table space for public use.³ Parklets are a space of creativity for the user and the creator of social engagement, cultural expression, and play.

As public spaces, parklets offer an area for people to meet, sit, eat or just spontaneously enjoy being outside. The word parklet comes from the popular Park(ing)

³ "Parklets," Pavement to Parks, accessed February 15, 2017. <http://pavementtoparks.org/parklets/>

Day, created in 2005 by San Francisco's Rebar Art and Design Studio.⁴ The concept, conceived through the idea that most of San Francisco's active downtown areas were dedicated to the storage of private vehicles, made members of the studio wonder why there was a lack of convenient public space for people. Rebar employees converted two-meter parking spaces in downtown San Francisco into a single temporary public park.⁵ This man-made pop-up structure with grass sod, a bench, and a potted tree lasted for two hours—the maximum amount of time allowed by the parking meter. After this successful event, it would become the first of many Park(ing) Day installations. This synthetic park in the street generated critical debate about how public space is created and allocated.

Park(ing) Day is now an annual, worldwide event held the third Friday in September⁶ during which participants reclaim and repurpose metered parking spaces for the public good. Artists, activists, students, or anyone who wants to can design and build a temporary Park(ing) Day space. Many designs call attention to specific issues happening in the community and around the world. Some of the initial installations ranged from experimentation and play to acts of generosity and kindness to political topics addressing problems like clean water and marriage equality to improving the quality of the urban human habitat. In Baltimore, Maryland one group reconstructed a living classroom of an urban wilderness marshland of the Chesapeake Bay to show

⁴ Schneider, Benjamin, "How Park(ing) Day Went Global," last modified September 15, 2017. <https://www.citylab.com/life/2017/09/from-parking-to-parklet/539952/>

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

some of the different organisms affected by global climate change.⁷ With the success of the one-day celebration of Park(ing) Day, a new permanent kind of Park(ing) Day in the street appeared: a parklet.

The first designated permanent parklet, outside of Park(ing) Day, appeared in San Francisco in 2010. A total of five pilot parklets⁸ were created by repurposing two or three parking stalls—completely removing the parking meters, and transforming the space into an extended sidewalk park. San Francisco permanent parklets started to pop-up and today there are over 60 parklets throughout the city and more in the development and planning process. The popularity of parklets has spread beyond San Francisco to Los Angeles, Portland, Miami and many other cities. Parklet sizes and designs vary by location, sidewalk widths, and sun orientation, but the same idea remains—people are taking back space formerly dedicated solely to private vehicles.

The City of San Francisco has information available online about how to create a parklet and the process necessary to get one started. The website, Pavement to Parks, details the policy framework of how applicants and designers can submit their proposals and make their design a reality. It also showcases various parklet projects in detail from pilot programs to ones featured with the most up-to-date bells and whistles. The Pavement to Parks name was rebranded to Groundplay⁹ in March 2017⁹ to heighten awareness of all projects under the common mission to work with "ordinary San

⁷ Mike Chino, "PHOTOS: Amazing Park(ing) Day 2015 parklet pop ups around the world," last modified September 19, 2015, <https://inhabitat.com/photos-the-most-amazing-parking-day-2015-parks-from-around-the-world/>

⁸ "Parklet Projects," Pavement to Parks, accessed April 19, 2017. <http://pavementtoparks.org/parklets/#parklet-projects>

⁹ "News & Releases," GroundplaySF, accessed January 10, 2018. <http://groundplaysf.org/hello-world/>

Franciscans to build temporary installations that turn underused public spaces into joyful community spaces."¹⁰ Groundplay projects can go beyond the curbside and transform a sidewalk, rooftop, parking lot or vacant spaces into vibrant temporary or permanent space. Community partners, funders and various city agencies all work together to bring these projects to fruition.

¹⁰ "About," GroundplaySF, accessed July 12, 2017. <http://groundplaysf.org/about/what/>

About Parklets

Parklets used as a tactical urbanism strategy to create new public spaces have caught the attention of national news outlets such as San Francisco Chronicle and New York Times. One article from San Francisco Chronicle, "How S.F.'s parklet movement has grown across globe" (2015), writes, "The best parklets combine design ambition with a genuine desire to engage the passerby. Others are no more than a glorified sidewalk seating for the businesses that install and maintain them. They are, in short, as varied and problematic as the city they were born in."¹¹ With that statement also comes criticism that these structures take away valuable and scarce parking spaces that they and " beachheads of gentrification."¹²

One study, "Revisiting the San Francisco parklets problematizing publicness, parks, and transferability" highlighted the urban strategy as proposed by the United Nations Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). The study showed that cities are recognizing the need for self-sustaining urbanism to emphasize and acknowledge the importance of nature.¹³ As stated by Rebargroup.org, the design firm that came up with the idea of parklets, "more than 70% of San Francisco's downtown outdoor space is dedicated to the private vehicle, while only a fraction of that space is allocated to the public realm."¹⁴ While looking at the influence of parklets in San Francisco, Littke focused on the question, "What, as a result of the high profile of

¹¹ John King, "How S.F.'s parklet movement has grown across globe," *San Francisco Chronicle*, March 30, 2015.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Hélène Littke. "Revisiting the San Francisco parklets problematizing publicness, parks and transferability," *Urban Forestry & Urban Greening*, no. 15 (2016): 165.

¹⁴ "About Rebar Group," Rebar Group Inc., accessed November 16, 2017. Rebargroup.org

the project, can we learn from existing parklets in San Francisco that is important to the introduction of the concept into other localities?"¹⁵

While Littke focused on how to integrate the parklet into other aspects of a busy city, "Partnering for Parklets" (2014) examined Los Angeles' use of parklets and the goals public space is trying to accomplish. "The goal of installing a parklet is to convert underused street space into a more vibrant, people-oriented place."¹⁶ The study addresses the goals parklets are trying to achieve. The list follows:

1. Emphasizing the street as a place of social interaction and activity
2. Supporting a quality streetscape experience and improved day-to-day life of the road
3. Creating areas for community gatherings, events, and celebrations
4. Increasing safety for pedestrians, cyclists, and transit riders
5. Encouraging increased levels of walking and cycling that support local businesses
6. Catalyzing public and private-sector investment in infrastructure to promote walking and cycling
7. Providing added space for bicycle parking, where sidewalk space is inadequate¹⁷

Unlike the Littke study, this study prioritizes how parklets can partner with the greater Los Angeles community to fulfill the parklets mission. For example, the "Partnering for Parklets" study encourages parklets to challenge the standard sidewalk café seating model and turn a parklet space into an impromptu pedestrian plaza, open to all.

In 2014, five students of the College of Environmental Design at the University of California, Berkeley conducted a four-month-long parklet study on the

¹⁵ Ibid, 166.

¹⁶ Zaki Mustafa et al. "Partnering for Parklets." *Institute of Transportation Engineers*. ITE Journal 84, no. 9 (2014): 38.

¹⁷ Ibid.

effects of socioeconomic status on parklet perception in a wealthy neighborhood and a low-income neighborhood.¹⁸ The students choose to study a cluster of parklets in two San Francisco neighborhoods, Polk Street and Divisadero Street.¹⁹ The research wanted to see if high-income neighborhood parklet users would view parklets as a public space, while lower-income neighborhood parklet users would believe the parklet space was reserved for patrons. Their findings concluded that there was no significant difference in viewpoints between the two neighborhoods.

Other research, not specifically on parklets, focused on what makes an effective public space. William Whyte, an American urbanist, studied how people interacted with spaces in New York City and analyzed the different factors and patterns of how people were sitting, standing, and talking in the space. In one of Whyte's studies, he videotaped and manually recorded how people were sitting on benches in plazas. Whyte's book, *The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces* (1980) examined his findings. He found that to create a successful public space, seating space has to be included for "People tend to sit the most where there are places to sit."²⁰ A well-designed public space is an area that includes all the basics-sitting space, a food vendor, and heavy pedestrian flow to maximize the amount of public use.

Jan Gehl, a Danish architect and urban design consultant, also examined the daily lives of people interacting with public space. In one of his studies, "The Effect of

¹⁸ Allison Ecker & Stella Kim, "Are Parklets Public? Perception of Polk Street Parklets," Research Methods in Environmental Design, 2014. <http://pavementtoparks.org/wp-content/uploads//2015/12/The-Public-Perception-of-San-Francisco-Parklets-Polk-St.pdf>

¹⁹ Vincent Agoe et al, "Divisadero Cluster," CP/LA 241 Research Methods, 2014. <http://pavementtoparks.org/wp-content/uploads//2015/12/The-Public-Perception-Of-San-Francisco-Parklets-Divisadero-St.pdf>

²⁰ William H. Whyte, *The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces* (Washington, D.C.: Conservation Foundation, 1980), 28.

More Seating: When the number of seats is doubled, do more people sit?" (1998) he determined that the doubling the seating in an open area in Oslo, Norway doubled the number of people sitting in the space. Building upon Whyte's conclusion about people feeling more inclined to sit when seating is available made Gehl test Whyte's theory. In the summer of 1998, Gehl installed additional benches in the Aker Brygge quarter at Oslo Harbor. He learned that there was a lack of seating options in the area prior to the installation and once implemented, seating more than doubled for visitors. In a follow-up to his study two years later at the same location, Gehl found that doubling the seating resulted in doubling the number of people seated in the area.²¹

Design planning plays an integral role in creating happy and satisfying public spaces. The National Association of City Transportation Officials Urban Street Design Guide identified wide sidewalks as a key element to successful public design. Wider sidewalks can promote public art, music, and large-scale design features while offering the public more open space options such as parklets.²² The City of San Francisco's Pavement to Park website includes infographics and a manual²³ for how a person can create a parklet in their neighborhood.

²¹ Jan Gehl and Birgitte Svarre, *How to Study Public Life* (Washington, DC: Island Press, 2013), 111.

²² National Association of City Transportation Officials, Author. *Urban Street Design Guide*. (Washington: Island Press, 2013), 41.

²³ "Parklet Manual," Pavement to Parks, accessed April 20, 2017.
<http://pavementtoparks.org/parklets/#parklet->

Study of Neighborhood Parklets

The purpose of this study is to investigate how users and non-users interact with the public space of a parklet and its effect on the community and its surroundings. In San Francisco, public space makes up more than 70% of the streetscape.²⁴ Through observation, surveys and interviews, this research seeks to uncover the public's opinion and perception of parklets and whether parklets fosters engaging public spaces that people want to use and whether parklets change the dynamics of neighborhoods where they are located. As cities look to transform public areas to make them livelier and more viable, parklets are one example to understand how reclaiming spaces for people can improve the overall quality of life. Streets are vital to the movement of people-everyone is a pedestrian at some point in their day interacting with public spaces whether or not they realize it.

Before choosing specific parklets for my research, I observed over 20 different parklets throughout San Francisco. Each parklet had different characteristics, some parklets were directly on busy streets in front of food or coffee establishments while other parklets were hidden in residential neighborhoods and less populated streets. Parklet architecture varied by location, seating capacity, and creativity of the design from one parklet table and chair, to a large piece of driftwood, to a more adventurous play structure that closely resembles a children's playground.

After narrowing down my parklet research to four parklets, I chose parklets located in very distinct neighborhoods in San Francisco with intentionally different

²⁴ "About Rebar Group," Rebar Group Inc., accessed November 16, 2017. Rebargroup.org

characteristics to see whether or not user and non-user interaction changed depending on the parklet’s design and whether that was a factor in distinguishing the parklet as a public space. My research and data collection consisted of four methods of investigation: observations, surveys, and interviews with businesses and interviews with city officials. The observation phase of research consisted of going to each parklet and watching how people were interacting with the space and the vendors around them. Surveys were conducted as a Likert Scale with open-ended questions. In-person interviews and conference calls were completed with business owners and workers adjacent to the parklet and senior city officials responsible for the implementation of San Francisco parklets. All four parklets selected for this study were installed at or before 2014 and are some of the oldest parklets established after the pilot programs.

Parklets Chosen	Parklet Seating Characteristics	Food Vendor Available?
24th Street Installed 2010	Foldable tables and chairs that are removed once the sponsor store closes	No, parklet is directly across from a retail store
9th Avenue Installed 2011	Benches and chairs integrated into the design of the parklet	Yes, directly across from Arizmendi Bakery
California Street Installed 2012	A few tables and chairs alongside concrete benches built in the parklet	Yes, directly across from Pizzeria Delfino, and a few shops down from Smitten's Ice Cream
Columbus Avenue Installed 2014	Benches and tables built into the parklet, along with a few stools for countertop seating	Yes, across from artisan coffee shop Réveille Coffee Co.

Table 1: Parklet characteristics of four San Francisco parklets, seating and food vendors vary by location.



Figure 1: People enjoying the 24th Street parklet, which includes a children's play area.

24th Street (2010)

The 24th Street parklet located in the Noe Valley neighborhood is not associated with a food or drink vendor. At this parklet, a person can find an assortment of colorful tables and chairs, a play area for children to move plastic blocks up and down different pillars, and a station to finger paint on an easel. This parklet is located in front of Just For Fun & Scribbledoodles, a retail shop selling art supplies, gifts and stationery. To the left of the parklet is Chase Bank and further down the street is Whole Foods Market. The area above the retail storefront is residential, with apartments overlooking the parklet. Weather on 24th Street is generally warmer and not as cold compared to the parklets situated closer to the Pacific Ocean. Shoppers enjoy this busy and vibrant commercial corridor where strollers and dogs are always welcomed. The parklet has

excellent sun exposure as it is oriented in the ideal east-west direction and situated on the north side of the street to take advantage of the sun's southern path.



Figure 2: The 9th Avenue parklet on a sunny weekend day with customers coming in and out of Arizmendi Bakery.

9th Avenue (2011)

Located in San Francisco's Inner Sunset neighborhood, the 9th Avenue parklet is compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and features benches, open spaces for wheelchairs, and built-in lounge chairs and tables. The integration of the design components into the parklet makes it appear as if it were created out of one slab of wood, and it resembles more of a multi-purpose space of interactive play than just a park bench. Directly built within the parklet is bicycle parking and trash and recycling bins. The shop straight across from the parklet is Arizmendi Bakery, a co-op bakery where customers can take food to go and eat outside at the parklet. Besides Arizmendi Bakery, on the left there is a veterinary office, and to the right there is an acupuncture office, a nail salon, and a Chinese restaurant. The weather around the parklet can be

cold and foggy due to its proximity to Ocean Beach. Its orientation is north-south with good sun exposure only in the morning as buildings block out the sun in the afternoon.



Figure 3: Side angle of the California Street parklet, also known as the Fillmore Stoop.

California Street Fillmore Stoop (2012)

This Lower Pacific Heights neighborhood parklet is located on California Street perpendicular to Fillmore Street—a popular shopping street with different specialty stores ranging from high-end fashion to coffee chains. This section of California Street is quieter with less foot traffic and more vehicle traffic. Directly in front of the parklet is Pizzeria Delfino, to the left is a One Medical Group health clinic, to the right is Smitten's Ice Cream, a popular San Francisco ice cream shop, and just across the street is a Mollie Stone's grocery store. The seating at this parklet is relatively industrial, with solid concrete-like blocks acting as benches in addition to a few tables and chairs. The parklet even has its own name, the Fillmore Stoop, referencing the nearby shopping district. Unlike the 9th Avenue parklet, this public space receives a fair amount of

sunshine throughout the day due to its east-west orientation and southern sun exposure on the entire length of the parklet.



Figure 4: People at the Columbus Avenue parklet on a Friday late afternoon.

Columbus Avenue (2014)

This Columbus Avenue parklet is located at the intersection of the Financial District, Chinatown and North Beach, Little Italy. It offers a beautiful view of the Transamerica Tower, the traffic driving up Washington street, the opportunity to people watch, and close access to freshly brewed artisan coffee and avocado toast from Réveille Coffee Co.—located directly outside the parklet. To the right side of the parklet are office buildings and apartments. This location receives a good amount of sunshine when the sun is out and attracts people during the daytime when the coffee shop is open. Situated on the northeastern part of San Francisco, this parklet is on a hill, designed with a diagonal-like structure of wood, grate-like flooring, and stools which provides room for office workers to gather for impromptu meetings, to eat lunch, or to

rest when they are on a break or enjoying coffee and the city vibe. This parklet is oriented in the north-south direction with sun limited to morning through early afternoon.

Observation

The first part of this study involved observation of the parklet with no interaction with the users or non-users. I wanted to see if parklets foster engaging neighborhood interaction by observing how users function within the space and whether or not users are purchasing items from the sponsor shop or supporting other local businesses. A parklet sponsor can be a business, community resident, nonprofit organization, architect, employee or anyone interested in creating a parklet can apply, present a design, gather funding, receive neighborhood feedback and build the parklet after receiving city approval. Sponsors also assume liability for the parklet and are responsible for its maintenance and repair.

William Whyte, the famed American urbanist, observed the behavior of New Yorkers in Manhattan and wrote and recorded different everyday aspects of life. Whyte examined the effect of various factors such as sitting space, natural elements and availability of food nearby and how that can influence people's use of the public space. Using similar methods to Whyte, I took detailed notes about the people sitting at and around the parklet. I also analyzed the research conducted by Jan Gehl, the Danish architect and urban design consultant, who studied the correlation between public space and public life. Gehl's work focused on a bench on a sidewalk in Norway and how the public used it.

For recording my parklet observations, I created a standardized form and checklist for different categories and areas of interest. During my two-hour observation period, I examined the parklet in ten-minute segments with a five-minute break in-

between. Alongside recording who, what, where, when, why—location, time, weather condition and how many people were at the parklet, my observations included:

1. Are people engaging in business? Did people at the parklet come together? Did they come alone?
2. Is the parklet ADA accessible?
3. What are people doing at the parklet? (Are they interacting with others, eating, reading, on their phones?)
4. What age are the people at the parklet? (Children, teenager, young adult, adult, elderly?)

Keeping these questions in mind, I also used Gehl's 12 criteria checklist to assess the public space qualities. Gehl's 12 points of criteria are:

1. Protection Against Traffic & Accidents
2. Protection Against Crime & Violence
3. Protection Against Unpleasant Sense-Experiences
4. Possibilities for Walking
5. Possibilities for Standing
6. Possibilities for Sitting
7. Possibilities to See
8. Possibilities for Hearing/Talking
9. Possibility for Play/Unwinding
10. Small Scale Services (Friendly Gestures)
11. Designing for Enjoying Positive Elements
12. Designing For Positive Sense-Experiences²⁵

Using Gehl's criteria as a guideline, I used his standard to observe how people were interacting with and embracing the parklets. Parklets varied with how many people were using the space at one time, in addition to the drastic change in temperature from the morning, midday and evening. Some of the significant observations noted depended on the time of day in comparison with other times when it was less utilized. While doing an 11:00 a.m. observation at the California Street parklet, it was empty for the majority of the two hours with only seven people showing up the entire time. The

²⁵ Ibid, 106.

observations for all four parklets took place at different times of the day ranging from 9:00 a.m. in the morning to midday to after 2:00 p.m. to see the diversity in user engagement at each parklet. At the 9th Avenue parklet starting at 1:00 pm, I recorded 51 people sitting or standing in the parklet space during the two hour period. The attraction to the parklet came from the bakery, which does not have a lot of indoor seating for customers—but the additional space from the parklet makes the outdoor seating area crowded with people eating their baked goods and drinking their coffees. Some notes from that day included, "a family of three and two older people eating food from the bakery at the table section and one woman is playing with her phone on the bench." In another observation at the Columbus Avenue location around 12:30 p.m., people did not approach the parklet or try to sit there due to a woman who appeared to be homeless lying down on one of the benches taking up the whole right section of the parklet with her possessions. People from the coffee shop were carrying plates of pastries and coffee looking for a place to sit but ended up using the coffee shop's outdoor seating directly outside the storefront instead to avoid disturbing her. It was not until 1:00 p.m. that people started sitting at the parklet on the left side away from the homeless woman. The five people at the parklet aside from the homeless woman were making space for others to sit. The majority of parklet visitors on this day were alone and spent time looking at their mobile devices. Some sat on the counter stool eating their food in peace while others were preoccupied reading a book or newspaper.

One observation at the 24th Street location, not directly across or adjacent to any food vendor, people were just sitting enjoying the sun. And while some people had food from vendors down the street, people at this location spent less time on their phones and

more time interacting with their companions or enjoying the nice weather. There were also two businessmen having a meeting at the parklet, with laptops open.

During this observation phase, I noticed many people were attracted to the parklets because of the availability of overflow seating offered for the vendor located right next to it. The convenience of the space also provides people the ability to sit, rest and eat. People were spending time with friends, eating food, catching up on things on their phone, reading the news—all activities that they might not be doing during their regular work schedule. This space optimizes the outdoor enjoyment for someone seeking sunshine and fresh air as compared to eating or having a conversation inside the confines of the office. Parklet users also recognized the parklet as a public area. A large sign is posted at each parklet with the words "Public Parklet" and the subheading "ALL SEATING IS OPEN TO THE PUBLIC." After observing a variety of people using the space from the person drinking coffee purchased at the coffee shop to the homeless man sitting and eating his found Chinese food, the area appeared to be well-used by a broad cross-section of the community.

Parklet	Total Amount of People Observed	General Trends
24th Street	36	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – People on their phones – Kids playing with the built-in toys at the parklet – Family-friendly seating
9th Avenue	73	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Popularity dependent on weather – People attracted to the parklet space for the bakery – Family-friendly seating
California Street	42	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Parklet used as waiting area for the pizzeria – People purchased food from other food vendors – Parklet used as a rest area for ride-share and waiting for people
Columbus Avenue	56	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – People eating food or drinking at the parklet – People purchased food from other food vendors – Lots of people on their phones

Table 2: Observation data gathered at the four parklet locations.



Figure 5: The sign indicating that a parklet is a public space, attached to all parklets in San Francisco.



Figure 6: A sleeping man with his feet up on the chair at the 24th Street parklet on a Friday afternoon.



Figure 7: A woman next to her bike at the built-in bicycle rack at the 9th Avenue parklet on a Sunday morning.



Figure 8: A woman talking on the phone midday Saturday while leaning against the parklet's bicycle rack and holding the leash of her dog.



Figure 9: People at the Columbus Avenue parklet on a Thursday afternoon.



Figure 10: Two women on a late Wednesday afternoon are talking and eating their to go food at the California Street parklet.

Surveys with Users and Non-Users Methods

The second phase of my research came from conducting surveys with users and non-users at the parklets. The goal was to understand the impact parklets had on the people walking in the neighborhood, residents and visitors in the area, and those who were attracted to the space by the food or drink vendor. I conducted surveys using a Likert Scale questionnaire with open-ended questions, where people would circle a number on a scale of 1-6 from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (6) in response to a particular question. Alongside the Likert Scale, I included a few demographic questions as part of the survey to identify who sits at a parklet in terms of their age, ethnicity, and income range. Other non-Likert Scale questions included "did you walk, bike or drive to the parklet?" and "is this your first time at a parklet and do you know what a parklet is?" The Likert Scale was associated with questions, "do you think this space is inclusive?" and "does the parklet attract a wide variety of different people (age, ethnicity, income range)?" The remaining questions not mentioned above were as followed:

1. Why are you using this space? And how often do you come to [insert parklet name] street/avenue?
2. What do you think of having this public space available for people to use?
3. Do you take public transit daily? If not, why?

To neutralize any biases associated with the survey phase of my research, I approached every third person who either walked into the parklet or was walking down the street on the same side or the other side of the parklet to gain both user and non-user perspectives. Responses varied from very in-depth to quick answers for those who were in a hurry and not wanting to take the time. For those who took the time to fill out the

survey, the answers were helpful in gaining insight into how people look at a parklet and their views on engagement, inclusivity and design.

The survey to users and non-users was administered over two weeks with an original goal of surveying at least 50 people at each location (25 users and 25 non-users). However, due to sporadic usage at some of the parklets, the actual number of surveys varied across sites. I visited each parklet during three time periods of the day - morning, midday, and afternoon-to conduct the survey. I had the best response during early and late afternoon when participants completed the survey.

Depending on the time, the parklets were buzzing with activity or empty for the entire observation period. Depending on the time of day, the parklets were buzzing with activity or had little to no activity during my observation period. The lack of users impeded my data collection, and in hindsight I should have visited each parklet at peak times in order to gather the most survey responses, instead of also trying to gather responses for infrequent parklet users as I had done in the observation phase.

In total, I visited each site five times for one hour during the survey period, once during the morning, twice during the early afternoon and twice during the late afternoon. And although I conducted surveys at all the locations during the 20-hour survey period, a total of 55 people (30 users, and 25 non-users) responded. Most non-users surveyed were in a rush and didn't want to take the time to answer the open-ended questions but did use the Likert Scale to respond. Also, some of the people I asked to fill out my quick survey didn't want to do it since it would take away from spending time with their family members.

Survey User and Non-User Findings

Parklet	User Surveyed	Non-User Surveyed	Average Age of Respondents	Average Income	General Trends
24th Street	15	5	30-49, 50-64	\$30,000-\$50,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - People wrote that they come to the parklet with their family members - 62% surveyed were 30-49 years old - 27% identified their ethnicity as other
9th Avenue	17	8	18-29, 30-49	\$10,000-\$20,000, \$50,000 or more	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - People found the atmosphere inviting with how many people from the bakery sit there - 64% surveyed identified as White
California Street	10	5	18-29	Less than \$10,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - People at this parklet were waiting for friends, or waiting for a table at Pizzeria Delfino - 55% surveyed identified as White, 44% as Asian/Pacific Islander, Black or African American
Columbus Avenue	13	7	18-29, 30-49	Less than \$10,000, \$40,000-\$50,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Majority of people at the parklet came from work and identified the space as a nice place to relax - 53% surveyed work downtown - 35% of parklet users wrote that they came to the parklet for the coffee shop

Table 3: Breakdown of users and non-users surveyed at all four locations.

After conducting the survey portion of my research, the responses provided insight and understanding between the relationship of parklets and the affect of parklets on both users and non-users. One 50-64 year-old user at the 9th Avenue parklet wrote, "I'd like fewer parklets and cell phones" in response to thoughts about having the space available. This same person also wrote in reply to the question of inclusivity, "Not really—everyone in SF is hiding behind their cellphones. Not interacting." Another user of the 9th Avenue parklet, a 30-49 year-old person who comes to the area about six times per week noted, "It's great!" and how they believe the public space is inclusive, "It says so on a sign, I believe." An 18-29 year-old non-user wrote that they come to the street for the co-op bakery, "I buy pizza to eat at Arizmendi's 4 or 5 times a week" and how [the parklet] "it is great, everything is random" with regard to having this public space available for people to use. This non-user also stated that they think it's an inclusive space, "It's for anyone to sit down, stand up, converse, be quiet, [or] ask for information."

Most surveys of user and non-user indicated positive feedback on how a parklet is a space for interaction and integration into the community. A 30-49 year-old user at the Columbus Avenue location wrote they visit the parklet 1-2 times a week to eat lunch and how the parklet is excellent, [There is] "need for public bench seating in the city." This person was also the only one to write yes and no with concern to the inclusivity. "My first experience with a parklet, I thought it was exclusive seating for adjacent businesses. Now I know better. This space is more inclusive than others." Another survey, 18-29 year-old user from the Columbus Avenue location noted in response to inclusivity, "Yes [it is], a homeless guy is sitting next to me ☺."

One survey from an 18-29 year-old non-user at the 24th Street location wrote, "More public space is good obviously, but let's be wary of gentrification" [and how a parklet] "tends to be put in places with lots of rich white people and dogs." Even with such comments regarding these perceived adverse side effects of parklets, this only demonstrates the strong opinions San Franciscans have about space. The majority of the respondents echoed positive affirmation about the parklet. Survey users reiterated similar points that the parklet is a free, clean and welcoming community space, which is easily accessible and a place of refuge for themselves, their families and their pets.

Parklet	Average Likert Scale Answer to, "Does the parklet attract a wide variety of different people (age, ethnicity, income range)? 1 Strongly Disagree - 6 Strongly Agree	Percentage of people who circled 6 (strongly agree) that a parklet space is inclusive	Percentage of people first time at a parklet	Percentage of transit users	Majority of parklet users who either walk, bike or drive to the parklet
24th Street	5.85	80%	15%	20%	Walk, Drive
9th Avenue	5.54	60%	20%	24%	Bike, Walk, Drive
California Street	5.6	53%	13%	33%	Drive
Columbus Street	5.9	90%	5%	40%	Walk, Drive

Table 4: Analysis of data results from users and non-users surveyed at the four locations.

From this table, most users and non-users responded positively to parklets as public space for people. The average Likert Scale answer was above a 5 (Agree) to the questions, "do you think this space is inclusive" and "does this parklet attract a wide variety of different people (age, ethnicity, income range)"? Columbus Avenue and 24th

Street respondents were overwhelmingly in agreement with 90% and 80% of users recognizing the inclusivity of parklets in the North Beach/Financial District area and the busy commercial 24th Street corridor. Transit users equated for less than half of the people at the parklet, although in the free response question with regard to whether people drive, bike or walk, walking as a form of transportation showed up often in three of the four parklet locations. Only biking appeared in the 9th Avenue location as a transportation method people use to get to the parklet. Users and non-users alike enjoy the parklet for similar reasons.

Interviews with Businesses

In addition to surveys of users and non-users, I also reached out to the business owners and managers directly adjacent to and in front of the parklet to ask about their views and opinions. I was able to conduct an in-person interview with the manager at Pizzeria Delfino, a barista from Réveille Coffee Co. and one of the co-owners of Just for Fun & Scribbledoodles. Compared to the survey questions asked of users and non-users, I focused the questions for businesses around what business was like before and after the installation of the parklet, and whether they have noticed any change to the foot traffic on the street and their business as a result of the parklet.

Questions asked (if applicable) included:

1. Before there was a parklet, how was business at your shop [insert shop name]?
2. What was the liveliness of the street like before there was a parklet?
3. How long have you owned [insert shop name]?
4. Now with the addition of the parklet, do you see your business improving? Do you also see more foot traffic on the sidewalk outside of your store?
5. Why was there a parklet created across from your shop?
6. What kind of effect has the parklet created for your shop?
7. Were you supportive or opposed to the idea of a parklet initially? If so, why? And what do you think of it now?
8. Roughly, how many people do you think use the parklet outside of your shop daily?

At Pizzeria Delfino, manager Jenna has worked there for two and a half years, and as the manager for the past six months. She was not an employee at the restaurant when the parklet was installed in 2012, but she explained how Pizzeria Delfino has to maintain and upkeep the space. "...It [has] been here at least three years. This is ours. This is our tables; this is our chairs, we keep up the appearance of it. I don't think it's much of a selling point for us since we don't service these tables. People [from Pizzeria Delfino] can't sit here [to get serviced], and we take care of them. We let people know

that they can order to go and sit out there but we don't actively do anything with the parklet." Although Jenna says that the parklet isn't a selling point, she quickly added that the parklet is filled with pizzeria customers or people buying food from Mollie Stone's Market to eat lunch at the tables during the day. "I think it creates some positive because when we are full, we let guests know that they can order to go and sit out here. So we are still getting business, but we are not catering to them [regarding] table service." On a normal day, the parklet rotates between 15-20 people at a time waiting to be seated indoors at the pizzeria, but on a cold day, Jenna notices that more people choose to walk around or huddle under the pizzeria's interior heat lamps to keep warm. The convenience of the parklet helps Pizzeria Delfino mitigate the long lines and lack of seating during the peak hours of business. It also helps promote the restaurant's image of popularity, "6:30 p.m. to 9 p.m. and we do a crazy amount of business so anytime we are open it's a peak time, and it's noon right now, and we have a waitlist going."

Soraya, a new barista at Réveille Coffee Co., spoke with me since I was unable to connect with the manager and owners. Although she has worked for the company for less than a year, she had valuable input on the space. "Overall, I think it's a nice option for customers, and I like to use it too on my breaks." Soraya also commented on the inclusiveness of the space, "I think it's pretty mixed, I see a lot of customers out there, but I also see people just stopping by...I don't think people assume that it's a private space, I think it's pretty clear that it's a public space and it doesn't seem like it's exclusive or strictly for customers sitting there."

David Eiland, the co-owner of the 30-year-old local gifts, art supplies, greeting cards and custom stationery store Just for Fun & Scribbledoodles, explained how this

street is not as lively as it once was, not because of the parklet but there are not as many window shoppers or storefronts as before. "Before the parklet, nothing's really changed. I think just as the years go by we lose more foot traffic. I don't think that has anything to do with parklets. We don't have as many foot shoppers as we used to. The demographics of the neighborhood have changed." Installed in December 2010 during the recent recession, the parklet's location was a result of a community survey to merchants, which put his shop's front door space as the preferred location.

The Noe Valley Association—the 24th Street community benefits district selected the parklet's location based on a set of criteria rather than a specific street address. "And there were some guidelines it had to be on this side of the street, sun and with sidewalks... The survey did not list any particular address or business, so when I voted, this is not where I voted for," says Eiland. I also asked him about the parklet's impact on improving foot traffic, and he responded with a 'probably yes.' "I think people enjoy sitting out there and I think it helps keep people coming into the store as well as in front of the store. So I think that's an improvement on the business side. Overall the parklet has created overwhelming positive and very few negatives. It gives them a place to wait while their partners or friends shop at the store. There's a coffee shop; there are areas just a kind of a cool hangout, especially there is this one woman who brings her kids, [and] all the nannies get together with their kids and play." The support of the parklet from community members makes this location a popular destination for residents and those passing alike.

Interviews with City Officials

The fourth phase of my research included interviews with city officials from various departments of San Francisco's city government. Through my internship with The Honorable Mayor of San Francisco Edwin Lee (summer 2017), I was able to get access to different heads of departments during my time in the Office of Neighborhood Services, including members of Groundplay, a multi-agency effort led by the San Francisco Planning Department, which oversees parklets.

Groundplay employs an interdisciplinary group of landscape architects, policy and research strategists, project managers, designers, and engineers, to collaborate with community organizations and individuals on citywide projects. This includes San Francisco Planning (manages planning and permits for the parklet in the public space), San Francisco Public Works (ensuring the parklet is safe and satisfies all technical requirements) and San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency or SFMTA (reviews parklet proposals to ensure there are no traffic, transit, bike and pedestrian issues). From the Pavement to Parks website, listed are the program goals:

- Reimagine the potential of city streets
- Encourage non-motorized transportation
- Enhance pedestrian safety and activities
- Foster neighborhood interaction
- Support local businesses

These five objectives are vital to the successful creation and execution of parklets. By regularly emailing different staff members associated with parklets, and with help from my supervisor at the Office of Neighborhood Services, I was able to get

an in-person interview with Maria De Alva, a veteran project manager for parklets with SF Planning. During my hour-plus meeting with De Alva, she provided valuable insight into the role of project sponsors, those responsible for the outreach, design, funding, and construction of parklets as well as assuming liability for the parklet and its daily maintenance. She explained that while the information on the creation of a parklet is comprehensive, the practicality of the guides are oversimplified, and people may encounter bureaucratic and government obstacles as well as funding challenges which can significantly delay planning and construction before the installation is completed. De Alva has seen groups be unable to finish their parklet due to overlooking some of the more tedious steps.

The first step in proposing a parklet is filling out and submitting the application form and attaching a set of concept drawings showing what the parklet will look like, a short project narrative outlining the need and use, and documents of neighborhood support. The design development stage will take several iterations back and forth with city staff and various stakeholders before the parklet can be approved since it has to meet the strict San Francisco Public Works requirements in addition to ADA, which is one of the primary drivers to make the design equally accessible to the disabled. During the parklet design approval process by SF Planning, SF Public Works and SFMTA, the parklet sponsors can continue to raise funds in parallel to finance the project. De Alva told me that a group has been raising money for almost three years and they are 70% there to reaching their goal to fully funding the parklet. The permit for the parklet costs about \$1,200. A “very accessible” fee says De Alva given that this covers the parking meter for a year, which is a discount compared to what the parking meter would collect

for private vehicles. The construction cost of the parklet can vary in range from \$30,000 to upwards of \$70,000 depending on the complexity of the design of the materials being proposed. "Solar panels and lights, things that add to the cost of the materials. Some people had even used existing fallen tree limbs as seating to form the parklet especially in the old days when everything was a little more organic, and the permits were less rigid," said De Alva.

When the parklet application process first started in 2009, the planning department would have open call periods where people could submit applications specifically where they would like to see a parklet placed and through that process, the planning department would create prototypes and pilot programs to evaluate how users interacted with the space. By 2018, over 60 parklets have been created, and there are important differences regarding the more recent versions compared to older ones. De Alva noted that the first parklets were "easier because there are no set rules" and "a little bit less formal," whereas the newer parklets are a lot more formalized due to stricter adherence to ADA. The changes are in the structural design. The Pavement to Parks manual illustrates the amenities a parklet should have from movable elements of tables and chairs—different from the furniture of the sponsor business, to diversity of form, including traditional tabletop seating with single-seat benches, to designing for handicap accessibility. Some of the guidelines include wheelchair turning space, the ability for a wheelchair to make a 360-degree turn, wheelchair resting space, wheelchair user compatibility to accommodate both disabled and non-disabled visitors for similar facilities, so the tables and drink rails are at an appropriate height for wheelchair users.

With an interagency team reviewing design drawings and selections after a public notice period or public hearing to receive community input, the sponsor of the parklet must provide a letter of consent from the property owners from whom they lease their space or whose property fronts the parklet. Additional letters of community support highlighting the benefits of the parklet should also be submitted for review. The sponsor is usually the shop or store directly in front of the parklet, and the sponsor that holds the permit signs the agreement that they are the ones in charge of the maintenance and stewardship to keep the space clear and free of graffiti and trash. The majority of parklets in San Francisco are attached to a food or drink vendor, but De Alva is pushing towards moving away from the regular coffee shop model.

We are trying to figure out how to best strategize now that the parklet is a strong program, how we can use it to meet those kinds of neighborhoods that have not necessarily been served by this and to kind of shift the model into something that actually can help...not the coffee shop model, but the schools, the organizations, arts and everything else. Our goal as a department and an interagency team is to move the conversation further into effecting social change and making an actual difference.

De Alva also voiced her opinions on parklets being an inclusive space, touching on the point that there might be the perception of the need to purchase something before sitting at a parklet and how parklets might be “one of the tools of gentrification” but to her, parklets are far from that. “It may be a symptom, but it’s definitely not the driver.”

The Pavement to Parks team receives the most applications from food and beverage businesses since, “It’s profitable, it’s easier; it helps business. They usually have funds, but we are open to all kinds of businesses that have the means.”

Following De Alva's interview, I spoke with John Dennis, a ten-year landscape architect with San Francisco Public Works and another member of the Groundplay

team. Dennis oversees the design and construction of public realm projects throughout the city. As someone who would always choose an outdoor parklet, weather permitting, over sitting indoors in a café or restaurant, Dennis finds value in a well-designed parklet that encourages comfort and safety next to moving traffic.

Parklets, according to Dennis, are a space of inclusion but maybe not everyone understands that they are. "So included in any parklet permit is the understanding, buy-in from the steward who is frequently adjacent to the business that this is a public space, open to anyone, no requirement for any financial transaction for them to purchase any food or coffee from the adjacent business...usually those rules are posted at the parklet." When I asked about signage designating the space as a public parklet, he replied, "But do people read the small print? I don't know." He also noted that people's habits around driving are changing, and how other cities are following the success of the parklet system.

"Also in this city and in probably others around the nation and the world, people are tending to change their habits from driving everywhere and expecting to park everywhere to walking, public transit, [and] bicycles." As to what the future of parklets will be in the next 10 to 15 years, John believes the city's parklet program will grow, and while parklets are intended to be temporary, "sometimes they are such a success that they are rebuilt as permanent elements of a sidewalk extension." Parklets are integrating spaces for people, taking away parking spots where cars once were and are changing the landscape of the neighborhoods.

After finishing my research, three key findings appeared:

1. Parklets are generally misunderstood by the general public and are not perceived to be public spaces.
2. Some users and non-users see parklets as an act of gentrification, not inclusive and accessible to all.
3. Parklets foster community interaction among people of different ages, ethnicities, and incomes.

How to Recognize a Parklet as a Public Space

One of the key findings from my research is that while frequent parklet users see the benefits of parklets, not everyone sees these new street spaces as public space even though each parklet is clearly marked with placards stating so. In interviews, the people who knew what a parklet was were frequent visitors to the space and were aware that it was a general area after noticing that anyone could be sitting there and understood the signage "Public Parklet." Those unaware of the public space had the impression that they needed to purchase something to sit there.

One survey at the 9th Avenue parklet, a 30-49 year-old wrote, "I think of having this space used for places for people to sit without people and engage with each other. It also helps the restaurant or bakery." The non-user also wrote that they didn't think the area was free seating for everyone because during that time the parklet was filled with people eating different pastries and flatbreads from the bakery. One response from a 50-64 year-old non-user at the Columbus Street parklet made note of accessibility, "the opening from the sidewalk to seating is clear [and] unblocked." The stigma and perception that a purchase from surrounding food and drink vendors is needed to sit at

this outdoor parklet is still a barrier. And even though some people walking in the neighborhood might figure out that it is a public spot, judging by the design some people still question the public-ness of the parklet. The design, as at the California Street Fillmore Stoop, is sometimes so integrated into the restaurant seating it can act as a further barrier.

The misconception and confusion that users of parklets face when they believe they must make a purchase before sitting at a parklet is an indicator that what may be considered public to some is not public for all. A parklet is meant to be space for all people for public benefit, but there needs to be an educational campaign to publicize that parklets are for everyone to use. An outreach campaign can happen during both the pre-construction and post-construction phase. Also, a citywide celebration of parklets can be planned to raise awareness of parklets as public space. In my interview with De Alva, she spoke about moving away from the coffee shop model to help battle and change the assumption that people have to purchase to sit there, and perhaps considering building parklets near schools, nonprofits, and arts organizations.

Parklets Role in Gentrification

The presence of parklets in lower-income neighborhoods is seen as a form of gentrification renewal. Although that was not the intended purpose for the implementation of a parklet, some users and non-users do not believe that a parklet is accessible for all to use. In the interview phase of the study with both random users and non-users at the parklet, most of the comments were positive with people wanting to see

more of them throughout the city, though there were also comments of concern. Some of these visitors were concerned about the overall renovation of having parklets appear on streets that were once run-down and undesirable to visit, which have now gained popularity and interest among users and non-users, changing the area's character from what it once was.

In one survey, the user wrote that they liked parklets, but were not a fan of how parklets are placed in areas where "rich white people live." And as I discussed with De Alva during our meeting, local San Francisco residents are the ones that choose the parklet location. The city may have some influence as to where it is located based on what code and zoning are allowed and not allowed from the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency (the agency that governs alternative street uses), but, for the most part the people leading the proposed parklet construction determine the location. As De Alva said, "The parklet has been accused of being one of the tools of gentrification which you know it's obviously not. It may be a symptom, but it's definitely not the driver." Parklets have only been around for the past ten years, and even with that experience, the City of San Francisco is trying to educate people on parklets to improve public space. De Alva added, "Even though you can say San Francisco is saturated by now [with parklets], still there are so many other places where this concept is completely new to city agencies." The goals of the parklet project included transforming the street as a place for social interaction, increasing safety for pedestrians and cyclists, and encouraging support of local businesses. None of these goals had gentrification in mind, but with demographic and economic changes in the city landscape over the last 20 years, the installation of parklets may lead some to

believe this innovation is one of the causes of gentrification. Parklets are meant to put life back on the street and not be a source of conflict.

Fostering Neighborhood Interaction

There is a sense of community among those that regularly use a parklet. From the observations, surveys, and interviews I conducted with all the different personalities of parklet users and non-users, there is some level of comfort and perceived safety created within a parklet space. One of the open-ended questions in the survey was, "What do you think of having this public space available for people to use?" Some answers from participants included:

"I love it! [It] feels more [like] an attachment to [the] community and others while using." (Non-user at Columbus Avenue parklet)

"I love it! Gets people outside and interacting." (User at California Street parklet)

"I think it works well and I wish there were more spaces like it. It prioritizes people over cars." (Non-user at Columbus Avenue parklet)

"I think it's a great idea! Everyone needs Vitamin D! :)" (Non-user at California Street parklet)

"I think it's great and encourages people to sit outside. Also [it] promotes socialization with other people." (Non-user at California Street parklet)

"It's awesome! Everyone sits here. Adults/children/dogs all languages!" (User at 24th Street parklet)

These are just a few of the positive comments I received from participants.

Given the receptiveness of many parklets users who responded to my survey questions, I would say their positive response indicates a strong level of community engagement and involvement with parklets. Many comments touched upon the friendliness, comfort and accessibility when both user and non-users visit a parklet. The community identifies

parklets as a majority positive, but with some negatives. This interest in the parklet space opens up a conversation on what the parklet can look like, and how it can be improved for the future to make it accessible to all. The community and support that is collected at a parklet influence the people around the area to have happy thoughts of the space and to get people to engage with one another. The parklet space can attract a variety of different people. A parklet provides many things aside from a space to sit and relax; the public space also fosters comfort and community in the neighborhood. When people notice others sitting in an open space, it creates a sense of familiarity as well as a safe feeling knowing that others are sitting in the parklet. Parklets help promote community involvement and create a space for play, relaxation, and socialization.

Policy Recommendations

For cities in the future looking to integrate parklets into their streetscape, I would recommend cities to identify and articulate why they want to install a parklet. Parklets help to reallocate spaces previously dedicated to cars for people to use. Adding a parklet on a certain street has to have a function and reason how the community will benefit. After doing my research, I noticed past case studies about the development of parklets did not gather input from streetgoers. The perspective of those who would actually use the parklet was missing. More community involvement during the planning stage of a parklet can be useful in identifying if that specific community or neighborhood needs to encourage a great sense of community. The introduction of a public awareness campaign even before the construction begins can greatly reduce any questions regarding the parklet space. Educating people whether having presentations at schools, public town hall events, or farmer's markets can increase public awareness of the parklet structure being built. And once the parklet is built, by encouraging interaction with the community like hosting a parklet open house to get people to enjoy the new outdoor, free public space. Raising more awareness of the parklet space can also increase the diversity of people sitting there.

In my research findings, some people knew outright that a parklet was a public space—frequent visitors of the space, those who engage with the food or drink vendor or those who noticed the signage labeling it as a public space. Compared to some people who were at first hesitant to sit in the space, some users soon realized that there is a mixture of different types of people who can sit in the area.

Each parklet has a clear sign indicating that the space is a public area, though the sign is sometimes not placed at the center of the parklet, making it less easy to see and read. Sometimes the sign is placed along the edge so it does not conflict with the parklet design aesthetics. Parklet signs should be placed in an optimal spot for all to see, and for cities that are beginning their parklet program or for future parklet construction; the placement of the sign should be in the center of the parklet and be a mandatory rule. The change in the placement of the sign, although minor, can increase user usage without any confusion as to whether or not the space is public.

Another recommendation when thinking about a parklet installation is where the parklet is located. A lot of people in San Francisco were attracted to the parklet because of the food and drink vendor in front of it. Other people during my study also showed concern for how the parklet is connected to, or directly across from a shop, creating an impression that a person needs to purchase something in order to sit in the public space.

The indirect association the parklet has with a food or drink vendor can greatly influence how a person perceives the space. The issue identified by De Alva is that food and drink vendors usually have the means and ways to install a parklet compared to other organizations such as schools and non-profits. The city of San Francisco is open to all types of businesses who want to create a parklet, but sometimes these businesses and organizations do not have the money to create this public space. To dispel the myth that parklet users must purchase food or drink from a vendor in order to sit at a parklet, cities should steer away from the traditional coffee shop model where parklets are located outside these vendors. Instead, cities should implement new parklet locations near schools, non-profits, workplaces and arts organizations. In order to accomplish this

task for organizations and businesses that do not have the funds, cities should create a grant specifically dedicated to parklets not built outside food or drink vendors. The cost of a parklet can range from \$30,000 to an upwards of \$70,000 and for a public school looking to have a parklet installed, that's a hefty fee. The money that would go into installing a parklet could instead be used for funding new classroom materials and supplies. The trade-off that a school faces installing a parklet, makes it difficult to put in a proposal to the city to build one although the benefit would affect everyone. Most parklets in San Francisco are funded through fundraising and donors. New cities implementing parklets should encourage donors to fund projects near schools, arts and non-profits—for the creation of parklets away from the traditional coffee shop model will shift the paradigm about how the public perceives parklets. By doing so, this will educate communities to know that parklets are a public space for everyone to enjoy and increase overall parklet user experience.

Conclusion

The three main findings of my study indicated that 1) parklets are parklets are generally misunderstood by the general public and are not perceived to be public spaces, 2) some users and non-users see parklets as an act of gentrification and 3) parklets can foster community interaction among people of different ages, ethnicities, and incomes.

Parklets are a space for people to gather and engage in social activities, or find a place of respite to watch the world or immerse themselves in a book or their social network through their phones. There is growing interest amongst city planners and elected officials in public spaces and parklets as prime social gathering areas in the community. Parklets can create spaces for imagination, play, and enjoyment. The designs of parklets will evolve as users become more actively involved in its layout, which will only make parklets more user friendly to everyone. These ideas are brought to life by everyday citizens, inspired to create social change with support from interagency city government departments who help manage the process alongside the sponsoring interest. The process of creating a parklet is a team effort—communities partner with local businesses and civic groups to accomplish these goals. Creating a public space for everyone is difficult, but with what San Francisco has started, beginning with Park(ing) Day, the scope of parklets is growing, and people are seeing the qualitative and quantitative differences a parklet makes in the neighborhood and streets. A person may not know that a parklet is a public space for all, but over time, people will notice the range and diversity of the people who use the parklet. Some people may think that parklets are an instrument of gentrification, but parklets are

designed with people in mind to be accessible to all. Parklets are the new and improved public parks and plazas in an otherwise over-built cityscape, integrating people's ideas and views into the space. The additions of parklets throughout a city make life more enjoyable and add to the quality of life. Anyone can think of an idea of a parklet—a person doesn't need to be involved in a city government or be a professional, anyone can come up with an idea and work with others to make the community a better place. The urban sphere is rapidly evolving to accommodate the needs of people first. Like Lyft and Uber promote ride sharing, parklets promote public space sharing. The future of parklets is certain. It is a tactical urbanism structure to stay.

Additional Study

My study was limited to having to perform the research in San Francisco over a span of two months after I received approval from the Institutional Review Board. I believe a more in-depth study should be conducted over a course of a year to better understand the trends of parklets, including factors such as seasons (fall, winter, spring, summer). Some follow-up questions to my study could include:

1. What are the economic externalities to installing a parklet?
2. What environmental implications do parklets have?
3. What is a successfully designed parklet? One that includes seating built into the parklet or temporary seating?

I believe further research can build upon my work to delve deeper into the tactical urbanism of parklets and how it affects specific groups. It would be interesting to look at the effects as to what some people, users and non-users, think drives gentrification and social change in the community. My study is a snapshot of parklets and how users and non-users interact with the space. I investigated parklets from a primarily quantitative, compared to qualitative way. A more profound investigation looking at the economic externalities of a parklet with regards to the businesses that are directly associated with the parklet, to the neighborhood dynamic could create a better picture as to other reasons why parklets are built. Another follow-up study should focus on the environmental implications that are associated with parklets. Pavement to Parks parklet manual asks for architects and designers to design with sustainability in mind, choosing resources that are easy to maintain, low-emission, locally sourced, recycled and reclaimed. With these guidelines, an investigation into eco-friendly practices could affect the community and businesses to heighten awareness of their carbon footprint.

Another study should be conducted on the overall design. In my research, I focused more on the user and non-user interaction with the parklet, noting the differences between parklet locations with regard to seating layout. I looked at design to describe the different seating arrangements at the four parklets, but I did not focus entirely on the design and architecture of a parklet. The parklets examined for this study all had different seating arrangements occupied throughout the day. Follow-up research on the design and layout of parklets could see whether or not the seating, temporary (foldable tables and chairs) compared to built-in the parklet, makes a difference to the street dynamic when the sponsor shops are not open.

My study is only one of many that can be done on the subject of parklets. Parklets are integrated into different aspects of a person's everyday life and public space. To see these studies take place would help bridge the gap and understand more in-depth the externalities created, environmental implications of a parklet as a sustainable space and what design and layout features make people want to sit at a parklet during all hours of the day.

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