

parklets

tiny parks with big impacts for city streets



SvR Design
Sarah Gould
12/21/12

“Not surprisingly, the close connection between people’s use of city space, the quality of city space and degree of concern for the human dimension is a general pattern that can be shown at all scales. Just as cities can invite city life, there are many examples of how the renovation of a single space or even change in furniture and details can invite people to a totally new pattern of use.”

- Jan Gehl, *Cities for People*

introduction

Parklets are one of the ways citizens are taking back cities from cars and returning them to pedestrians. As miniature, fully-functional parks, they promote street life, encourage face-to-face interaction and engage people with their local community. A parklet is a physical intervention that takes over one to three parking spaces, widening the sidewalk and creating places to sit, talk, play, dance, eat, read, nap, observe or park your bicycle. It provides opportunities to innovate in the form and function of public space and build collaboration between local government, businesses, customers, designers and residents.

How They Began

The first “parklet” was installed in San Francisco in 2005 by the art and design studio Rebar. Titled “PARK(ing),” it consisted of a bit of turf, a potted tree, and a bench that occupied a single metered parking space for two hours. When the experiment proved popular, Rebar went open-source with the idea, writing up a manifesto and a how-to manual so that others besides Rebar can create their own PARK(ing) projects. The urban intervention has since spread to cities around the world with an annual PARK(ing) Day event taking place from Helsinki to Melbourne and everywhere in between. It has resulted in hundreds of temporary parklets - 975 were built in 2011 alone.

How They Caught On

San Francisco took the idea one step further and has been a pioneer in making parklets into permanent part of the cityscape. Like food trucks, permanent parklets are catching on as a way to improve the civic experience with little cost to the city. They have already been built and permanently installed in places like Vancouver, BC and Chicago, IL, and other cities - including Seattle - are considering them.

How They Work

Permanent parklets are proposed to a city by businesses and community organizations who agree to fund and maintain them. For businesses, parklets tend to pay for themselves by attracting customers to local stores and restaurants. But they aren't just for patrons; since parklets are built in the public right of way, they are open to the public no matter who built them.

Parklets have also been an opportunity for design firms and products to gain exposure. Designers might donate their time and expertise to help make a parklet structurally sound and aesthetically pleasing, or a company might donate material or products, and in the process attract attention to their work.



parklets in seattle

There is already interest in bringing parklets to Seattle. Some momentum is behind getting one built on East Pike, and recently the Renegade Planners Collective created a small park at Olive and Denny with their Four Car Park project.

One issue that can arise with the development of parklets is the perception of a loss of dedicated parking spaces for cars. Drivers might take umbrage to losing even one parking space, especially in places where parklets would do well, such as on Capitol Hill.

The city is ready, however: Brian de Place, head of "Right of Way Management" for the Seattle Department of Transportation, wants to bring parklets to Seattle as early as next spring. "We are interested in allowing and permitting these should we find specific communities and business areas want them."



"Increased concern for the human dimension of city planning reflects a distinct and strong demand for better urban quality. There are direct connections between improvements for people in city space and visions for achieving lively, safe, sustainable and healthy cities."

- Jan Gehl, *Cities for People*

construction

San Francisco's Parklet Design Guidelines include the following requirements for the parklet structure:

Platform

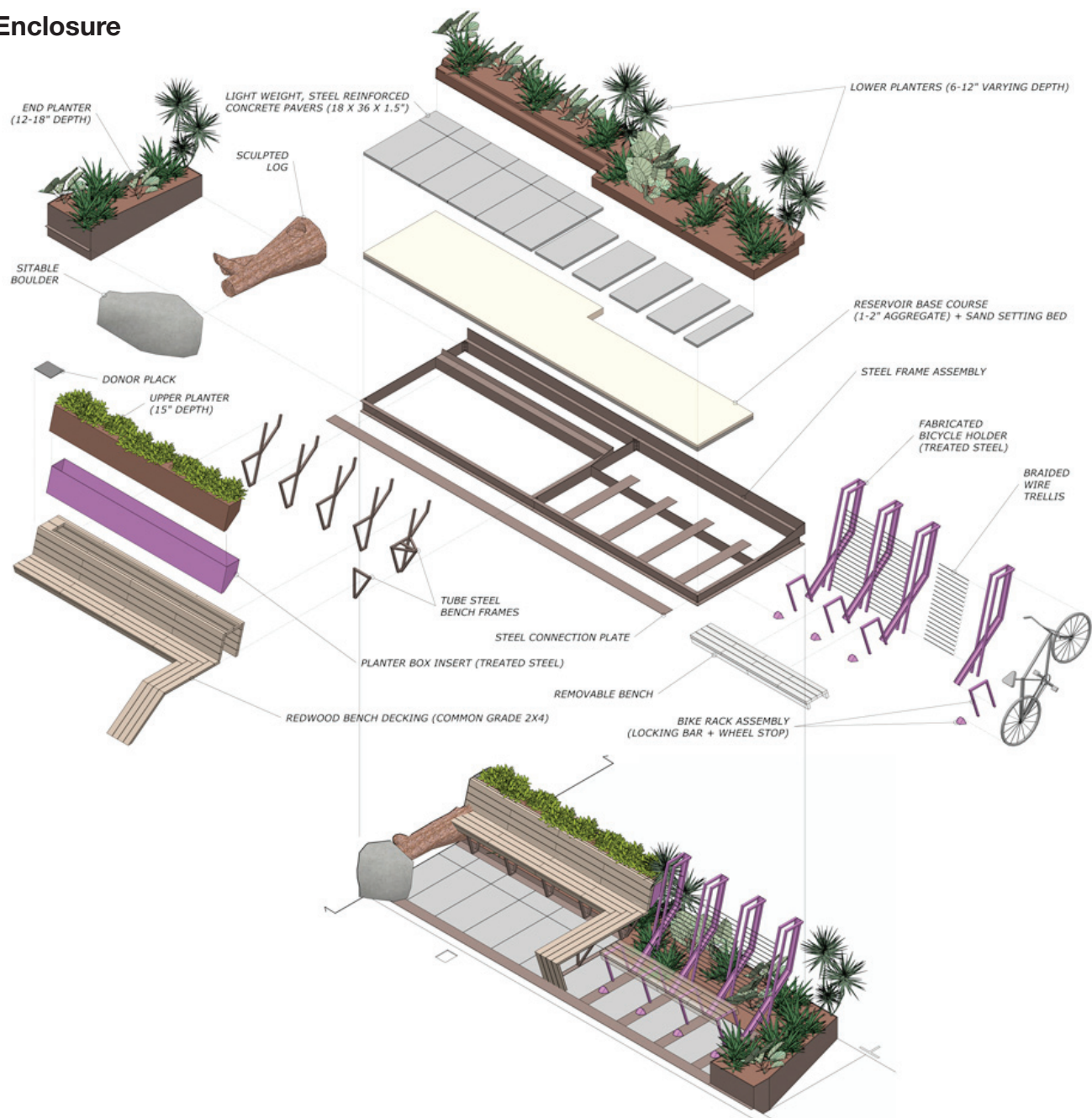
The platform provides the structural base for the parklet. The surface must be flush with the sidewalk with maximum 1/2" gap to comply with ADA. It cannot be bolted into the surface of the road or impede curbside drainage. Cross slopes cannot exceed 2%.

Enclosure

Include multiple points of entry along the curbside edge and buffer the sides with planters, railings, etc. Walls should be no higher than 42" to maintain a visual connection to the street.

Amenities

Integrate permanent seating into the parklet structure and use a variety of forms. Include bicycle parking and greenery.



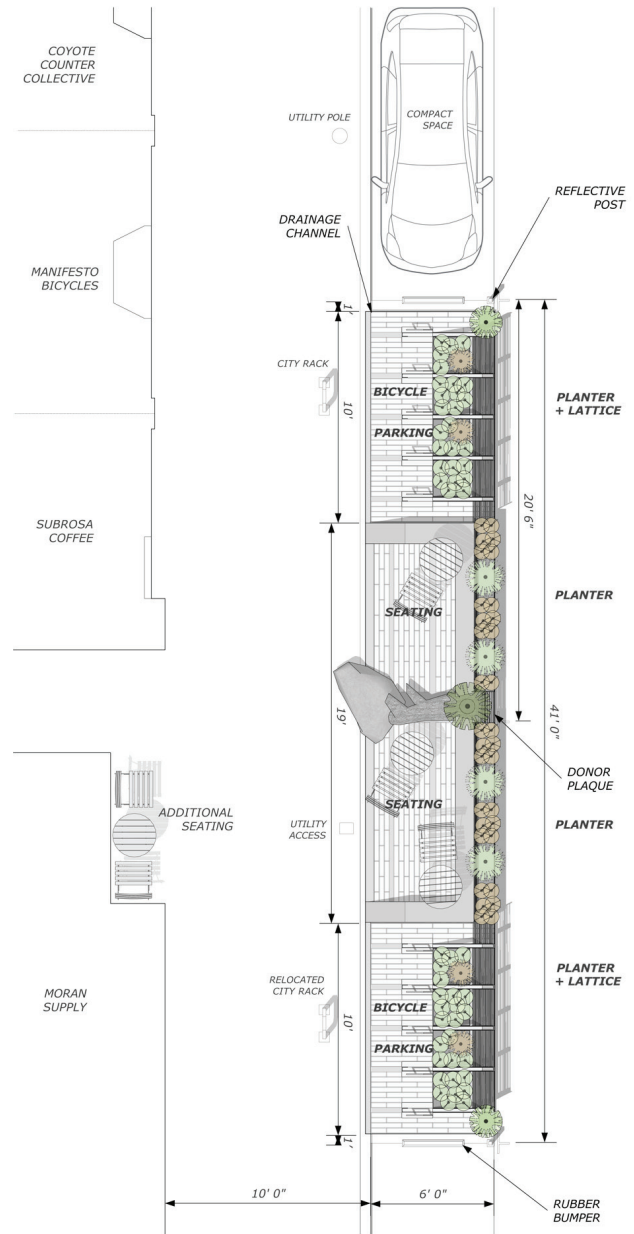
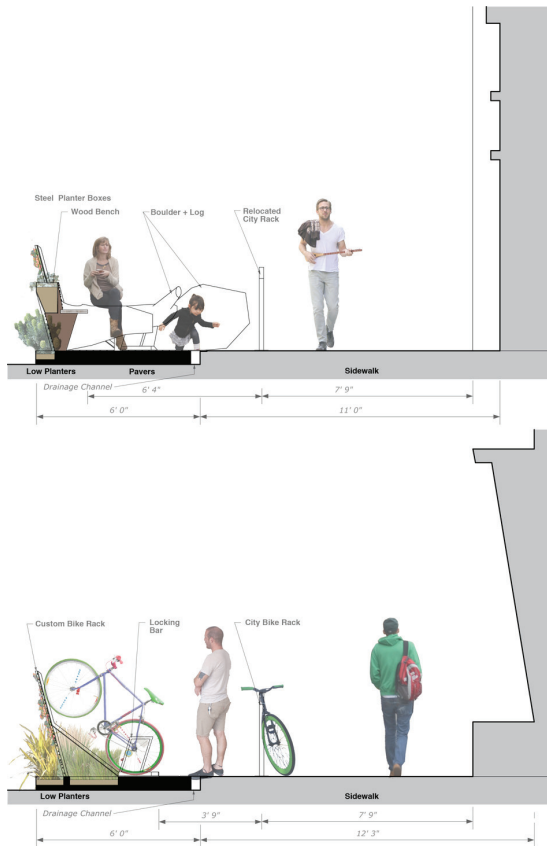
details

40th Street Parklet

Designed by O Z I I O

August 2012

Oakland, CA



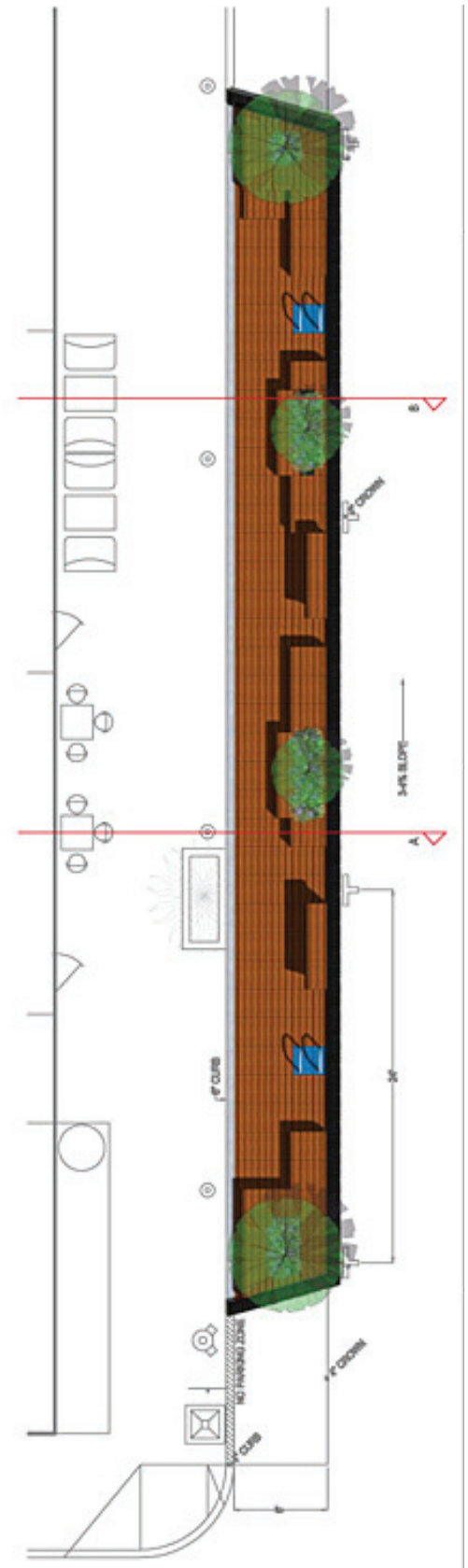
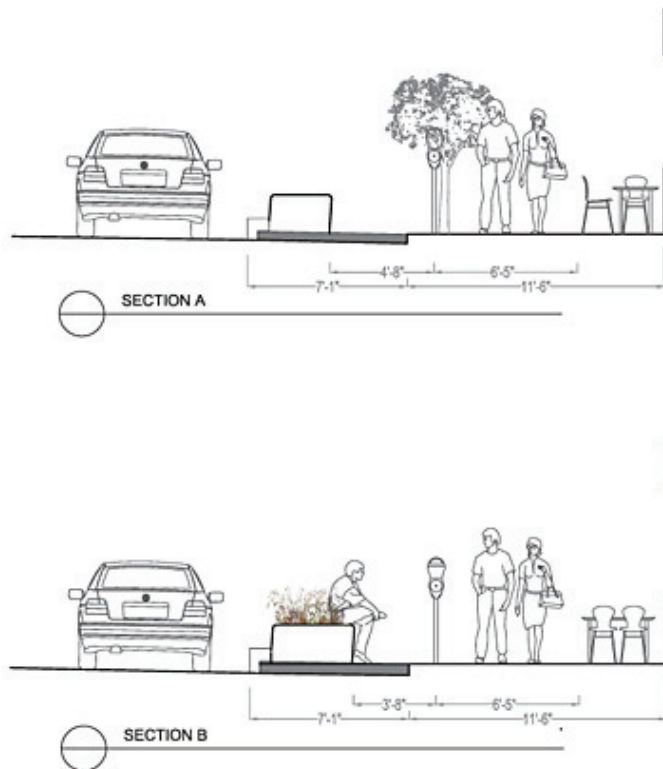
details

22nd Street Parklet

Designed by Rebar

April 2010

San Francisco, CA



permanent parklets



Blue Fig Parklet

San Francisco, CA

August 2012



Four Barrel Coffee Parklet

San Francisco, CA

July 2011



Devil's Teeth Baking Company Parklet

San Francisco, CA

2012

temporary parklets

"PARK(ing) Day is a annual open-source global event where citizens, artists and activists collaborate to temporarily transform metered parking spaces into 'PARK(ing)' spaces: temporary public places... The mission of PARK(ing) Day is to call attention to the need for more urban open space, to generate critical debate around how public space is created and allocated, and to improve the quality of urban human habitat... at least until the meter runs out!"

- PARK(ing) Day



Hourglass: Systems Blown

Portland, OR

PARK(ing) Day 2012



Nacht & Lewis

Sacramento, CA

PARK(ing) Day 2012

temporary parklets



Corgan

Dallas, TX
PARK(ing) Day 2011



Nano Park

Dallas, TX
PARK(ing) Day 2011



Circus Mojo

Cincinnati, OH
PARK(ing) Day 2012

Sources

Special thanks to Paul Chasan from the San Francisco Planning Department for assisting in this research.

Quotations

Jan Gehl. *Cities for People*. Island Press, 2010.

Pavement to Parks

<http://sfpavementtoparks.sfplanning.org/parklets.html>

Brian de Place

<http://capitolhillseattle.com/2012/10/11/trading-parking-for-public-space-parklets-coming-to-capitol-hill-if-you-want-them>

PARK(ing) Day

<http://parkingday.org/about-parking-day/>

Image Credits

40th Street Parklet

<http://www.ozio.com/?p=403>

22nd Street Parklet

http://sfpavementtoparks.sfplanning.org/22nd_street_parklet.html

Blue Fig Parklet

<http://www.downing-co.com/2012/08/01/new-parklet-at-blue-fig-and-afterlife/>

Four Barrel Coffee Parklet

<http://www.downing-co.com/2011/07/27/coffee-and-bikes-new-parklet-at-four-barrel/>

Devil's Teeth Baking Company Parklet

<http://www.adelaidecitycouncil.com/services/permits-licenses/activating-adelaide-splash-adelaide/parklet-program/parklet-gallery/>

Hourglass: Systems Blown

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/87491638@N03/8025655780>

Nacht & Lewis

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/velobry/8010280197>

Corgan

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/dfwcre8tive/6154773344>

Nano Park

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/dfwcre8tive/6154228305>

Circus Mojo

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/taestell/8013453343>