



CITY OF FORT BRAGG

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COUNCIL COMMITTEE ITEM SUMMARY REPORT

MEETING DATE: July 26, 2016
TO: Community Development Committee
FROM: Marie Jones
AGENDA ITEM TITLE: Receive Report and Provide Recommendation to Council
Regarding Potentially Allowing the Use of Downtown Parking
Spaces for Parklets

Background

A number of cities have started programs to allow property owners to repurpose public parking spaces, located in front of their parcels, for alternative uses. These “parklets” or “street seats” are then used for outdoor dining, as a small park, for public art or even for various non-profit activities. Cities have taken different approaches to using public parking spaces in the public right of way for non-parking uses. The primary arguments for allowing parklets, include:

1. A parklet provides use of public land for multiple people at the same time, while parking one’s vehicle is arguably an activity that only serves the person who owns the vehicle;
2. A significant portion of all the land in most cities is dedicated to the movement and storage of vehicles (30 to 50 percent in most cities) and much less space is dedicated to pedestrians and parks (2 – 5 percent).
3. San Francisco’s Great Streets Project conducted a study of the first trial parklet (a “micro-park” that occupies one or two public parking spaces) and found that the trial parklet increased pedestrian activity in the study area, as well as the satisfaction of pedestrians in the area and people’s general sense of community character. During the trial period, the study found that weekday evening pedestrian traffic rose 37 percent with the addition of the parklet, and 13 percent overall. The average number of people sitting or standing increased 30 percent, and the average number of the weekday visitors in that particular area almost doubled.
4. Parklets provide an economical solution to the desire for wider sidewalks and provide more public space for the general public to sit and enjoy.
5. Parklets are a form of sidewalk/street furniture, and provide aesthetic elements to the overall streetscape.

Both large and small cities have parklet programs, including these fine cities: New York, San Francisco, Portland, Seattle, Livermore, San Carlos, San Jose, Redwood City, Mountain View, Ukiah and so many more.

Issues for consideration

Potential Impacts

- Will the loss of parking spaces have a significant impact on parking availability? Does Fort Bragg have a parking availability issue that precludes a parklet program? Should the City limit the number of parklets on a trial basis?
- Impacts on drainage, access to utilities. Structures will need to be readily removable for maintenance of pavement, sidewalk, curb, gutter and utilities
- Impacts on drivers. Parklets should be designed for visibility and to minimize driver distraction
- Protection of City property. Parklets should not result in permanent changes to the public right of way.

Permit Considerations

- Which zoning district should be designated for parklets... CBD only, all commercial districts, neighborhoods?
- Should parklet sponsors be allowed to limit access to customers only, or should public use be required?
- What kinds of uses should the City allow— food service, alcohol service, public art, retail sales, public park, community garden, bicycle parking, etc.
- Who can apply for a parklet? Community Benefit Districts (CBDs), ground floor business owners, non-profit and community organizations, fronting property owners and others?
- What should the permit process look like?
 - Encroachment permit with Public Works;
 - Design review – could either not be required, could be completed administratively by the Community Development Director, or by the Planning Commission; and
 - Should the City have design criteria or allow people to be very creative? San Francisco has a very handy and flexible parklet design guideline pamphlet.
- Should permits be transferable?
- Consider permitting as an interruptible privilege, as the City may need to interrupt the operation of a parklet at any time due to conflicts from festivals, parades or marches, repairs to the public right of way, demonstrations or emergencies.
- Design requirements could include: ADA Accessibility, locating the parklet on a street with a posted speed limit of 25 mph or less, requiring soft hit posts and wheel stops, other requirements.
- Location limitations: not allowed over a manhole, public utility valve or other at-grade access point in the street or sidewalk; located in white zones (not blue or green); located at least twenty (20) feet in from a corner, or protected by a bollard, sidewalk bulb-out, or other similar feature, if located at the corner. Other ideas?
- Should the space be leased by the sponsor? At what rate?
 - If the city allows a business to exclude non-customers from the space, should the City charge market rate for that land?

- Should installation of a parklet be “free” for public purposes, such as a truly public park or art installation?

Development & Use Issues

- Generally the parklet applicant/sponsor pays for the entire cost of designing, building, and installing the space platform and parklet buildout.
- Should parklets have signage or sponsor information, if so how big should the sign be?
- Can parklets have utilities such as electricity and/or portable heaters?
- Does the City need parklet maintenance standards?
- Should the City require indoor storage of sidewalk furnishings at night and during inclement the weather?
- Should the City require line of sight from the sponsor building to parklet so that security issues can be addressed?

Interesting reading:

<http://pavementtoparks.org/parklets/>

Images for Parklets



Dining Parklet



Public Parklet on the cheap



A “rain” ready parklet



Exercise parklet



Golf parklet



Garden seating parklet



Art parklets

