



MEMO

TO: City Council
FROM: Andrea Villalobos, Senior Planner, Planning and Development Services
DATE: April 22, 2020
RE: Temporary Parklet Program

Project Summary

Planning & Development Services has received direction to explore options for a temporary parklet program in downtown San Marcos to allow businesses to temporarily convert on-street parking spaces adjacent to their shop into outdoor seating. The purpose of this program is to provide an aesthetic enhancement to the downtown streetscape and provide businesses with additional visible service area as a means to reactivate downtown following the COVID-19 stay at home orders of 2020.

Current Parklet Ordinance

In 2015, the San Marcos City Council adopted a Sidewalk Cafés, Parklets, and Similar Special Uses of Public Rights-of-Way Ordinance creating a public-partnership for streetscape improvements in the public realm. The program consists of an easy-to-read Streetscape Manual with photos, examples, guidance, and resources; technical information is provided within the associated Ordinance. Information can be found online at: <https://www.sanmarcostx.gov/969/Parklets-Sidewalk-Cafes>. While the city has permitted four sidewalk cafés and other miscellaneous streetscape enhancements through this program, the city has not yet received an application for a parklet. Alternatively, the City has seen participation while hosting the annual “National Park(ing) Day” which allows temporary parklets in the downtown for one day.



September 2019 Park(ing) Day Installation.

From left: Blue Dahlia Bistro, Move SM (in front of Showdown), 218 Studio Co-op

Temporary Parklet Program Recommendations

In order to meet the intent of temporary parklets downtown, staff recommends the following items:

- **Administrative review of parklets.** Currently, a request for a parklet within an on-street public parking space is required to submit a formal application along with supplemental information to the Planning and Development Service Department for interdepartmental review. Following review of the application, staff provides the request to the City Council for final approval. Due to the temporary nature of parklets proposed within the scope of this program, as well as to expedite the approval process, staff recommends that parklet applications be submitted for administrative review only. The ordinance requires that the owners of property or businesses abutting the proposed licensed area must sign off on the parklet. Since the parklets are temporary, this requirement could be waived.
- **Allowances for food service and/or retail service within parklets.** Under the current ordinance, parklets are not to be used for commercial use and shall be open, like a public park. In order to meet the intent of business owners' request for temporary parklets in the downtown area, parklets will serve as extended eating space or retail space, subject to any COVID-19 social distancing requirements. This would allow for restaurant wait staff to provide service in the parklet or allow for a primarily "to go" restaurant, such as a smoothie shop, to have extra tables for customers to sit at outside. Staff recommends that no alcohol and no smoking be allowed in the parklet. Trash and recycling facilities will be required in the parklet.
- **Temporary Parklet Manual.** Staff recommends several modifications to the streetscape manual to allow temporary parklet designs as well as to add standards for any food service such as trash and recycling, locking and storing of chairs, and material of furniture. Please reference the attached "Temporary Parklet Manual" for these recommendations.
- **Time duration / number of parklets.** Due to the high demand in parking spaces in the downtown area, staff recommends that all temporary parklets be removed by August 15, 2020, the move-in date for students. Staff recommends removing the cap on the number of parklets allowed, however, recommends that each block be limited to no more than two parklets. Businesses will most likely request that their parklet be more than one parking space in size, therefore, a cap should be established that limits each parklet to no more than two parking spaces.
- **Insurance / License Agreement.** Staff recommends keeping the requirement for insurance and an administratively approved license agreement, however, Legal should weigh in on this item for the purposes of a temporary parklet.

Future Opportunities

Parklets have not been pursued in San Marcos. Creating a temporary parklet program may allow for re-evaluation of the ordinance as well as spur business owners or community groups to apply for a formal long-term parklet approved by City Council. In addition, to enhance the downtown streetscape, provide businesses with additional visible service area and help revitalize downtown in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, Main Street has applied for a \$10,000 grant from the National Main Street Center. This grant application coordinates with the Temporary Parklet Program developed by Planning & Development Services (pending Council agreement). If awarded, the grant funds will be distributed to businesses who have successfully

applied for and been granted a Temporary Parklet Permit. Funds will be used to help businesses create parklets. These parklets will serve as an incremental approach to reopening and act as a template for successful, safe business practices in the new normal. Grant winners will be announced on May 18. If Main Street does not receive funding, they will continue to provide small business assistance utilizing staff (Main Street and Economic Development) and community partners (Chamber of Commerce, Small Business Development Center, etc.).