



# Outdoor Dining Citywide Parklet Program Standards

For Food Serving Businesses Located  
in Commercial Districts  
outside of the Pedestrian Mall

**As  
Revised  
July 2023**

# Parklet Program Standards

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## I. Introduction

Outdoor dining adds liveliness to City streets and supports local businesses. To that end, the City has created programs allowing businesses to expand their operations with additional seating in the public right of way, which includes City sidewalks and streets. The City of San Mateo created three distinct programs in order to provide the most flexibility for outdoor dining. All of the programs allow food service businesses the opportunity to expand a portion of their operations outdoors, directly in front of their business:

- A. PEDESTRIAN MALL PARKLET PLATFORM ENCROACHMENT PERMIT– Allows ground-floor food service business **located within the Pedestrian Mall** (*B Street between 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue*) to construct a dining platform in the closed street directly in front of their business.
- B. PARKLET ENCROACHMENT PERMIT– Allows ground-food service businesses **located outside the Pedestrian Mall** (*B Street between 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue*) to construct a dining platform within on-street parking spaces directly in front of their business. Parklets are allowed City-wide in commercial districts (except along El Camino Real, shopping centers, or private parking lots).
- C. SIDEWALK AND PEDESTRIAN MALL FURNISHINGS ENCROACHMENT PERMIT – Allows ground-floor food service businesses to provide outdoor seating and related furniture along the sidewalk in commercial districts and **inside the street within the Pedestrian Mall** (*B Street between 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue*) without building a flat platform. Sidewalk dining is not allowed along El Camino Real. This permit is not required for furnishings provided on parklet platforms or in conjunction with a parklet permit.

*All three programs require an [Encroachment Permit](#) from the City of San Mateo. Encroachment permits are not available to food service businesses located in shopping centers or businesses on El Camino Real, because these locations are not under the City's control. Only food service businesses with brick and mortar storefronts may apply for encroachment permits to serve food or drinks.*

This set of standards applies to only businesses who wish to build a **parklet in a commercial district outside of the Pedestrian Mall** (B Street between 1<sup>st</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue). Due to the unique circumstances of each proposed parklet location, there may be instances where City staff requires additional design elements not covered in these standards. The City of San Mateo will review the application and will approve submittals that meet the requirements set forth by these standards.

Plans must be submitted by the business sponsor and permits must be issued by the City prior to any construction or modification. The Parklet applications will be subject to a one-time permit application review fee, an annual permit fee as defined in the [City Fee Schedule](#), and an inspection fee from San Mateo Consolidated Fire as defined in the [SMCF Fee Schedule](#).

# Parklet Program Standards

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## II. Location and Setback Criteria

Parklets are generally allowed in commercial districts along the curbside on public streets where on-street parking spaces exist. However, parklets are not allowed along El Camino Real because it is a State-controlled roadway and is not under the City's jurisdiction.

Parklets can be considered in commercial districts where there are or would be space(s) for on-street parallel, angled, or perpendicular parking, including spaces with metered or unmetered parking. Parklets are not allowed in ADA/accessible parking spaces or red curb zones. Parklets proposed in loading zones and in 24-minute parking spaces will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

### A. Location Criteria

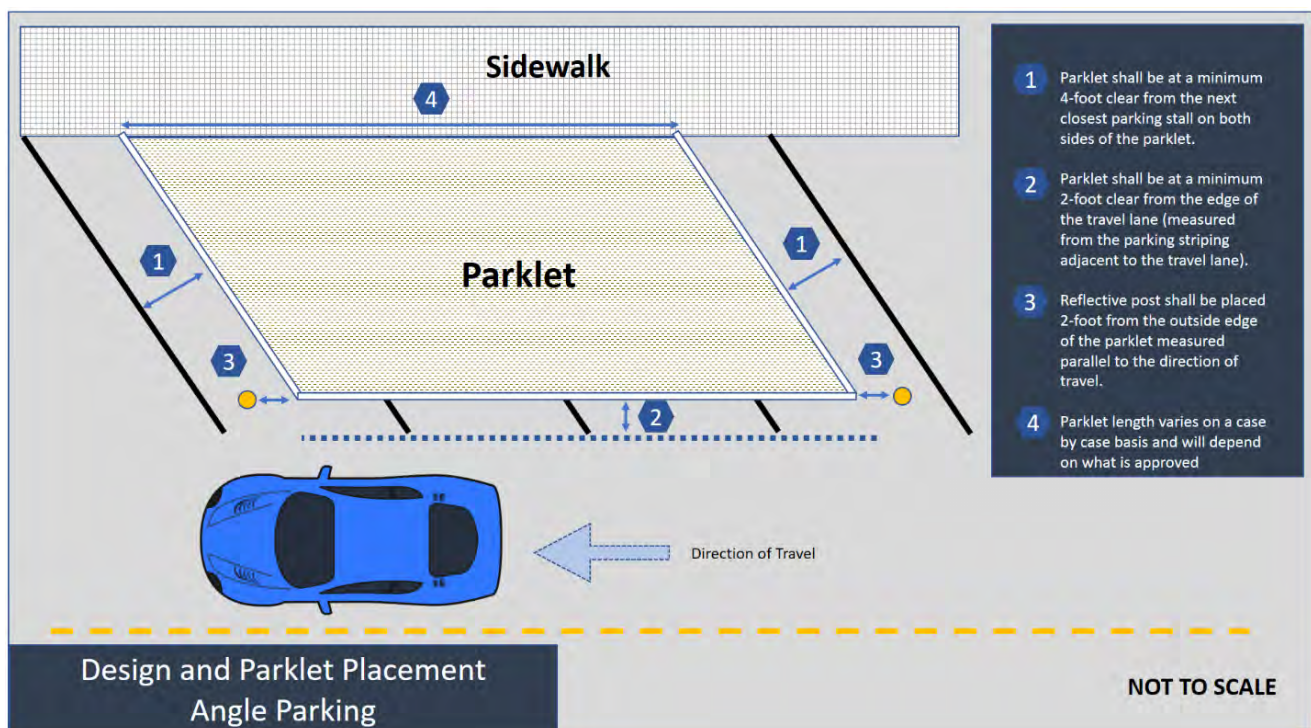
- **Adjacency to Storefront** - Parklets may only be installed along the frontage of the storefront that is applying for the parklet. Parklets are not allowed to use the frontage of adjacent storefronts to expand their territory unless they receive the written consent of the adjacent business. However, minor encroachments on adjacent storefront frontages may be allowed depending on the dimensions of the parking stalls being used for the parklet installation. Parklets shared with adjacent businesses will be considered on a case-by-case basis. The shared parklet area cannot exceed the frontage for the combined businesses.
  - **Consent terms** – Adjacent business must provide consent on an annual basis for the parklet to extend to neighboring frontage.
  - **Change of adjacent business owner** – If the adjacent business ownership change, the consent carries through the existing annual period and the adjacent owner must inform the new owners of the existence of this consent.
  - **Annual written renewal** – adjacent business must affirm the use of their storefront during the annual renewal period for the parklet. If the renewal is not granted, it is the sole responsibility of the parklet owner to make any required adjustments to the parklet dimensions.
- **Maximum Parking Stalls** - A maximum of two parallel parking spaces or four perpendicular or angled parking spaces shall be used for each parklet.
- **Parallel parking spaces** - Parklets located in parallel parking spaces can be the length of one or two parallel parking spaces. A 4-foot inner buffer is required when adjacent to another parallel parking space. A 2-foot buffer is required when adjacent to a driveway, motorcycle parking, or a bicycle corral.
- **Perpendicular and angled parking spaces** - Parklets located in perpendicular or angled parking spaces can utilize a maximum of two to four combined parking spaces. The edge of the parklet must be set back 4 feet from the adjacent parking space on either side.
- **Corner locations** - Parklets located adjacent to intersection crosswalks shall provide 25-foot setbacks from the nearest crosswalk. Parklets that cannot meet these setback requirements may be considered on a case-by-case basis based on whether sight distance and safety can be maintained. In addition, storefronts located at corner locations may only have one parklet.

# Parklet Program Standards

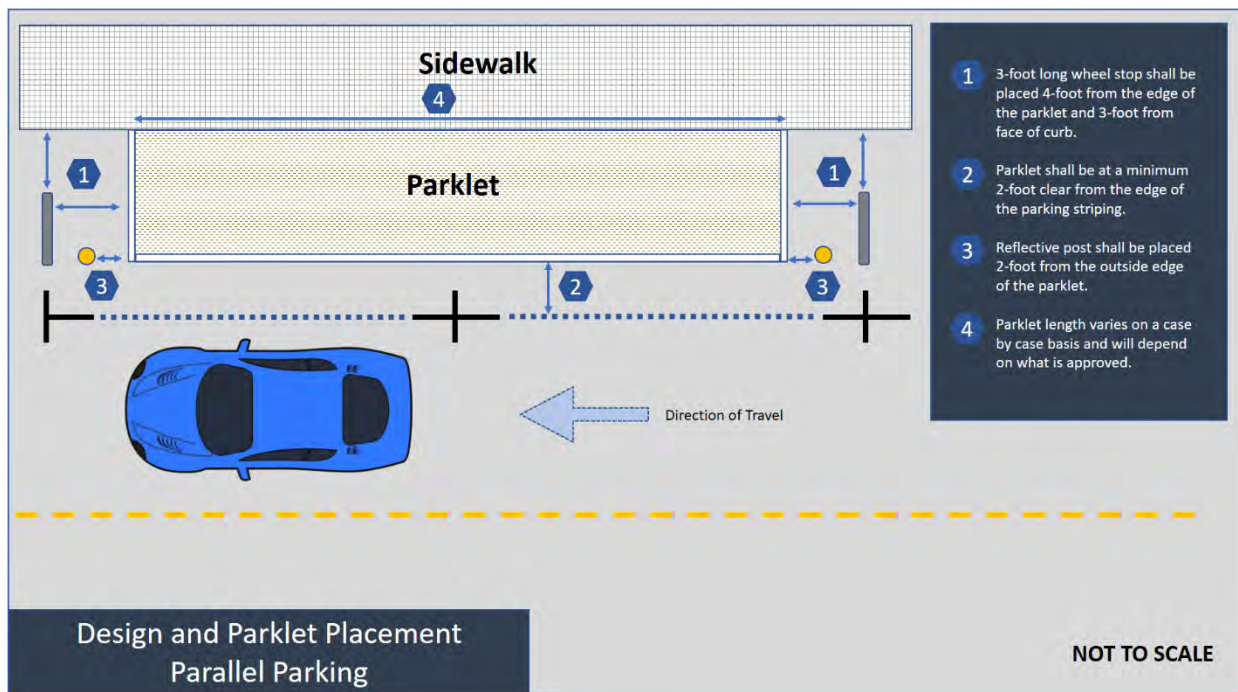
- **Fronting driveways** - Parklets may be installed in front of a driveway if the driveway has been abandoned or no longer provides access to off-street parking. The driveway may be leveled as part of the conditions for the parklet project. Parklets may not obstruct driveways or entrances to City-owned parking facilities.

## B. Parklet Setbacks

- **Travel Lane Setback** – Parklets shall have a 2-foot minimum setback from the travel lane measured from the parking striping adjacent to the travel lane (see Design and Parklet Placement diagrams below for more information).
- **Side Setback** – Parklets shall have a 4-foot minimum side setback to the nearest parking space (see Design and Parklet Placement diagrams below for more information).



# Parklet Program Standards



## C. Other Location Criteria

- **Utilities** – If a parklet is constructed over utility assets, such as but not limited to valves, access panels, or manholes, it should be noted on the plans and a hatch opening needs to be created for access. Parklets proposed under overhead utility lines will be required to meet the minimum distance requirements as established by the CPUC. Parklet sponsors must provide access to any City or public utility company that may have underground conduits beneath the constructed parklet. If there is a maintenance need or an emergency, any parklet covering utilities will be required to be removed and restored at the owner's expense.
- **Storm Drains** – A minimum clearance of 4 feet from each side of the storm inlets/catch basins will be required to allow for maintenance access.
- **Sidewalk Underdrains** – Parklets that block the outlet of a sidewalk underdrain will be required to ensure the outlet is functional and flowing. Be sure to take a thorough inventory of utility access covers in your proposed parklet area by checking under parked cars.
- **Bike Lanes** – Parklets cannot obstruct a bicycle lane or path.
- **Parklet Width** – Parklets must stay within the designated parking stall area.
- **Fire Hydrants** – Parklet platforms cannot be built in front of Fire Hydrants. A 15-foot clearance from the hydrant (7.5-foot each side) along the curb shall be maintained. A 3-foot buffer around the hydrant on all sides should also be maintained.
- **Fire Department Connections (FDCs)** – To maintain access to FDCs, 5-foot wide openings should be provided between every 2 adjacent parklets (and no more than 75 feet apart).



# Parklet Program Standards

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## III. Parklet Design Elements

Parklets generally consist of the following key elements:

- A) A **Platform** that allows the parklet to serve as an extension of the sidewalks.
- B) **Railings or enclosures** that demarcate the exterior of the parklet from the street and surrounding parking spaces.
- C) **Traffic safety protections** to reduce the potential for auto-related damage.
- D) **Furnishings and fixtures** that are property of the businesses used in day-to-day operations such as, but not limited to, tables, chairs, umbrellas, and heaters.

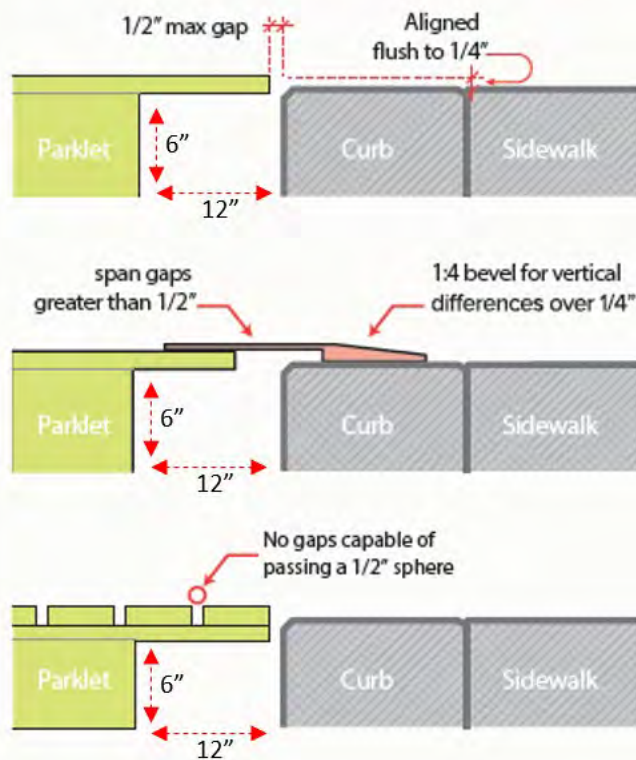
### A. Platform Design Criteria

- **Materials** - Platforms must be constructed from durable materials that can withstand wear and tear of elements. Pouring concrete for parklet platforms is not allowed. You may use concrete pavers on a platform structure instead. Surface materials must be textured or treated with a non-skid coating to ensure a safe walking surface. Loose particles, such as sand or loose stone, are not permitted.
- **Maintenance access** - Parklets must be designed to provide access under the platform to allow for maintenance (i.e. repairs or clearing debris). If the platform base is not a solid mass, access can be provided through access panels, removable pavers, or other means.
- **Platform Threshold** - The platform threshold must be flush and even with sidewalk and must not leave a gap greater than 1/2 inch, nor a vertical separation greater than 1/4 inch.
- **Drainage** - Platforms should allow for curbside drainage flow. A 6-inch height by 12-inch width minimum clear gutter space must be provided along the entire length of the proposed platform. Openings at either end of the parklet may be covered with screens to prevent debris buildup beneath the platform and in the gutter. It is the responsibility of the parklet permittee to clean the cover or screen to prevent any backup of stormwater. All parklets must provide access through the parklet platform or threshold to the gutter adjacent to the curb.
- **Bolting Not Allowed** - At no time may structures be bolted or affixed in any way to the roadway or any structure (including but not limited to buildings, fire hydrants, street trees, streetlights, parking meters, or traffic poles, etc.). An exception to this is that wheel stops for traffic protection must be bolted to the roadway as described in the Traffic Protection section of these Standards.

## Parklet Program Standards

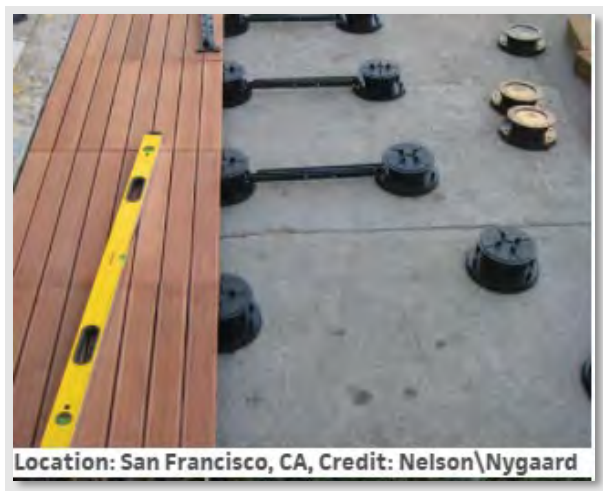
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### PLATFORM THRESHOLD



Source: San Francisco Parklet Manual

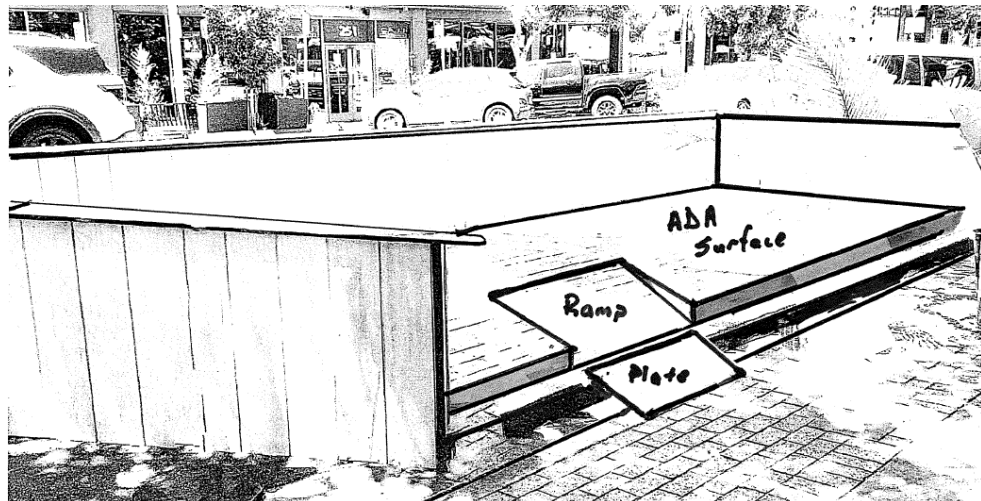
- **Sub-structure** - Designs for the sub-structure of a parklet platform vary and depend on the slope of the street and overall design for the structure. The sub-structure must accommodate the crown of the road and provide a level surface for the parklet. "Bison pedestals" (pictured below) spaced under the surface and of different heights are a common application. Another method is to provide steel sub-structure and angled beams.



## Parklet Program Standards

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- **ADA Accessibility** - All accessibility elements of the proposed platform shall be designed, constructed and/or conform to the applicable provisions, rules, regulations and standards of the California Building Code and Americans with Disabilities Act.
  - Accessible Platform Surface — The portion of the parklet platform connected by the accessible path of travel to the wheelchair turning space and wheelchair resting space must be level. The accessible platform surface maximum cross slope (perpendicular to the sidewalk or curb) and running slope (parallel to the curb) cannot exceed a ¼ inch rise per foot in any direction.
  - Street Crown — Note that given the crown of the street in many locations, in order to achieve an ADA compliant platform surface, the parklet platform may need to be higher than the adjacent sidewalk (as opposed to being flush with the sidewalk) and will require a ramp for access. (See the picture below for an example of how this can be achieved.)
  - Accessible entry — Shall be a minimum of 48 inches wide.
  - Accessible path of travel— The accessible path of travel must connect the sidewalk to the accessible entry, platform surface, wheelchair turning space, and wheelchair resting space.
  - Wheelchair turning space — Shall be 60 inches in diameter and located entirely within the platform; a 12-inch maximum overlap on the curb and sidewalk is acceptable.
  - Wheelchair landing — A 30-inch by 48-inch clear floor area. It's permitted to overlap with the wheelchair turning space by 24 inches maximum in any orientation.





# Parklet Program Standards

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## B. Parklet Railings/Enclosures

The parklet railing/enclosure marks the boundary between the parklet and the street or sidewalk. It should serve as a safe edge while also being visually appealing, permeable, and inviting. The following standards and guidelines should inform your design.

- Stable and sturdy enough not to fall over or be pushed over (must withstand 250-lbs of force).
- The parklet should have an edge as a buffer from the street. This can take the form of planters, railing, cabling, or some other appropriate enclosure.
- Openings in rails must prevent passage of 4-inch sphere.
- The height should not exceed 36 inches from the parklet platform floor to the top of the railing.
  - If you wish to install wind barriers taller than 36 inches, the use of transparent materials like acrylic, plexiglass, plastic films, etc. is required. Glass, tempered glass, and frosted materials or similar materials are prohibited as wind barriers. Posts to secure the transparent wind barrier is allowed around the material (both horizontally and vertically) but shall not exceed 2.5 inches in diameter.
  - If transparent wind barrier materials are used, the height of the railing, including the transparent materials and any top rail, should not extend more than 6 feet from the floor platform.
  - Any vertical posts securing the transparent wind barriers should have a minimum spacing of 6 feet apart on the center to allow for adequate sight distance.
- The enclosure should not block the view of conflicting movements of traffic, including pedestrian traffic, nor block the view of traffic control devices such as traffic signs, traffic signals, and other traffic warning devices.
- All railings/enclosures must have retro-reflective reflectors or retro-reflective tape on the corners of the parklet facing the travel lane such that they are visible to vehicle traffic at night.
- Roofs, trellises, and tent shade structures are not allowed. The use of sail-style shades and retractable canopies may be considered but will require additional fortifications for support which will require additional staff review. Engineering calculations may be required as supporting documentation.

## C. Traffic Protections

Parklets are required to provide the traffic protections outlined in this section of the standards.

- **Wheel Stops** – To help protect against moving traffic and parking cars, parklets in parallel parking spaces must be buffered using a wheel stop at a distance of 4-foot from the parklet and 3-foot from the face of curb (see Design and Parklet Placement diagrams on Page 4 and 5 for additional detail). This buffer may also serve as a space for adjacent property owners to accommodate curbside trash collection. Parklets located in angled and perpendicular parking spaces do not require a wheel stop unless otherwise specified during the application review

# Parklet Program Standards

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process. Applicants are required to repair any damages to the roadway caused by the installation of the parklet or wheel stops if later removed. Any repairs shall be performed under a separate encroachment permit and in accordance with applicable City standards for roadway construction.

Wheel stops may be purchased from any vendor but must meet these specifications:

- 3 feet long
  - Black rubber with yellow stripes
  - Mounted with bolts
  - Installed 4 feet from outside ends of Parklet which occupies parallel parking spaces
  - Installed 3 feet from the curb
- **Posts or Bollards** – Parklets shall have vertical elements that make them visible to traffic, such as flexible posts or bollards both with retroreflective tape. One possible measure is safe hits posts (as shown in the picture below). These vertical elements shall be placed 2 feet from the edge of the parklet on both sides of the parklet not adjacent to the travel lane. Structural bollards may be required if deemed necessary by the City.
- **Travel Lane Clearance** – Parklets shall provide a minimum 2-foot clearance from the edge of the travel lane (measured from the parking striping adjacent to the travel lane) to ensure safe separation from traffic.



## D. Furnishings and Fixtures

All furnishings and fixtures must be designed to be weighted down for wind protection. Items may need to be stored inside the business during periods of high winds. Please ensure that the weights used do not create tripping hazards for pedestrians.

- **Portable Heaters** –Space heaters are permitted if they are an outdoor approved type, are located in accordance with the manufacturer's recommendations, and are located at least 2 feet from the edge of any umbrella canvas, any foliage, or any other flammable object or material. Heaters are not allowed under umbrellas but can be placed near them if clearances are maintained.

## Parklet Program Standards

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- **Umbrellas** – Umbrellas shall be fire-retardant or manufactured of fire-resistant material. No portion of an umbrella shall be less than eighty (80) inches above the parklet platform.
- **Electrical connections** – All wiring and electrical cords must be exterior rated, GFCI protected, and UL listed. Cords must not create tripping hazards on the sidewalk. If the cords cross above the sidewalk, they must provide a minimum clearance of 10 feet above the sidewalk and the platform of the parklet. The use of adapters is prohibited. Businesses are not allowed to tap into existing City electrical connections such as twinkle light outlets or streetlight poles. Generators are not allowed in association with parklets.
- **Lighting** – Lighting is encouraged and may be provided through electrical connections to the building. Solar-powered lighting is strongly encouraged. Lighting shall not be directed towards the roadway to unintentionally cause glare for vehicles. Light strings must be hung to allow for a minimum clearance of 80” as measured from the parklet platform. Lighting cannot be attached or wrapped around city trees, light posts, sign poles, or other City assets.
- **Signage** – Signs are allowed provided the sign area does not exceed 6 square feet (24 inches by 36 inches). Illuminated signage is not allowed. Sign copy is limited to business identification, except that if the parklet is meant to serve the general public, signage should reflect such. If the parklet is meant to serve as restaurant seating, signage should correlate in design with the signage on the primary building.

## IV. Operational Standards

- **Private Control** – Parklets will be considered private space under the control of the permit holder. The permit holder is responsible for securing the parklet and any fixtures and furnishings contained within it during hours when the associated business is not in operation.
- **No Outdoor Food Preparation** – Outdoor food preparation is not permitted. No heating, cooking, or open flames are permitted in a parklet. Hotpots, barbecues, or other heating of food in the public right of way is not allowed.
- **No Open Flames** – Candles and open flames are not allowed on the parklets.
- **Alcohol Service** – Restaurants and food establishments licensed by the State of California Alcoholic Beverage Control (ABC) will be permitted to sell and allow on-premise consumption of alcoholic beverages. Alcohol service is only allowed under full-service conditions and alcoholic beverages consumed in parklets are not allowed to be provided in to-go containers. Establishments that serve alcoholic beverages in the parklet area shall be required to meet all requirements of ABC and any other federal, state, or local laws and regulations governing the sale and consumption of alcoholic beverages.
- **Site Maintenance** – Parklets shall be maintained free of litter, refuse, and debris. The area shall be scrubbed and mopped to remove any food or drink stains on a daily basis by the permittee. Such cleaning shall be in accordance with the City’s [Storm Water Management and Discharge Control Program](#), which prohibits any discharge other than rainwater into the stormwater drainage system.

# Parklet Program Standards

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- **ADA Compliance** – Parklet seating areas must comply with all requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and provide sufficient clearance and walkway space to allow safe access and egress.
- **Hours of Operation** – The parklet shall adhere to the same approved hours of operation as the associated business.
- **Safety Inspections** – The City will be making periodic safety inspections and reserves the right to require adjustments or removal of any elements if deemed unsafe.

## V. Permit Requirements

### A. Permit Submittal Requirements

A Parklet Encroachment Permit is required for all parklet installations. Permit applications must be submitted prior to the construction of any new parklet.

The following submittals are required:

- Plan sets are required. Plans shall be drawn to scale and the minimum page size for submittals are 11 x 17 ledger paper. It is recommended that plans are prepared by a design professional, such as an architect or engineer. The submitted plans should show the proposed layout of the parklet including:
  - The parklet location (business frontage, site address, parking space number, etc.)
  - Dimensions of parking stalls, parklet structure including platform, railings, stormwater access, and traffic travel lanes in the immediate area and in the proposed parklet.
  - Traffic protection measures and dimensions of the setbacks from adjacent parking spaces and adjacent traffic lanes.
  - Location of any adjacent public utilities in the street including curb drains, manhole covers, water shut-off valves, sidewalk utility boxes, streetlight poles, parking meters, gutter drains, fire hydrants, parking meters, etc.
  - Plans must demonstrate ADA accessibility and show dimensions of required clearances
- Materials palette – Use color photo samples to demonstrate:
  - Materials and plants to be used on the platform
  - Railing materials
  - Platform materials
  - Proposed sail shades or retractable canopies
- A valid City of San Mateo Business Tax Certificate, sometimes referred to as a business license.
- Evidence of current insurance coverage including a Certificate of Liability Insurance and Endorsements

# Parklet Program Standards

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Prior to submitting a parklet application and paying the fee for the permit review, businesses should first schedule a pre-submittal meeting with the City to go over their proposed submittal to ensure that their application is complete and is consistent with these standards.

## B. Failure to Maintain

Parklet sponsors who fail to properly and sufficiently maintain the cleanliness, safety, and accessibility of their parklet may be subject to violations and fines. If maintenance issues are not resolved, the City may revoke the encroachment permit and parklet sponsors may be required by the City to remove the parklet at their own expense.

## C. Street Repaving & Utility Maintenance and Public Safety Emergencies

The City needs to repave the street every few years and because parklets may sit atop buried utilities, there may be instances where your parklet will need to be removed to maintain the street or access the utility beneath it. In the event of necessary street infrastructure or utility maintenance or the unlikely event of a utility failure such as a gas leak or water main break that threatens public safety, the City or utility owner may remove parklets with little or no notice. Parklet sponsors are responsible for the cost of re-installing and restoring any damage to the parklet.

## D. Parklet Removal

If for some reason the parklet sponsor no longer wants to maintain a parklet, the parklet sponsor is responsible for notifying the City and removing it at the parklet sponsors' own expense. Immediately upon removal the parklet area shall be cleaned and restored to its previous condition to the satisfaction of the City.

## E. Parklets are Nontransferable

If a business changes ownership and the new business wants to continue with the permit, the new business must submit a new application, pay fees, and provide insurance to the City within 30 days of the ownership change.

## For More Information:

For questions or additional information regarding these Parklet Program Standards or the Parklet Encroachment Permit application, please contact:

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