Making Space: An Exploration of Parklets in North America and Vancouver

by
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Abstract

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In the last few decades many municipalities have temporarily closed streets to vehicular traffic to open them to people and foster community. More recently, New York and San Francisco introduced pop-up parks to street rights-of-way, initially as plazas reclaimed from excess road space. On a smaller scale, ‘parklets’ are a response to people’s desires to repurpose parking stalls for community spaces. In June 2013, VIVA Vancouver launched its stand-alone Parklet Pilot Program. The parklet application and design process was examined using an action research case study method for one of the first parklets to be built under the program by PWL Partnership. San Francisco and Vancouver parklets were mapped and compared. Findings reveal that parklets begin as business sponsored projects and over time evolve into community partnerships. Recommendations have been developed for emerging and established programs across North America.
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Chapter 1  Introduction

Streets, parks, squares, and other public gathering places are indicators of collective well-being and possibility. For centuries city streets the world over were structured, both intentionally and organically, to accommodate daily activities of all types. Public and private spaces have long been occupied through sanctioned or unsanctioned interventions with different timescales and sizes (Haydn & Temel, 2006; Lydon & Garcia, 2012). However, both these daily activities and occasional interventions were curtailed in the twentieth century as cities were re-planned for automobile movement and storage, with their public realm functions left to decay (J. Jacobs, 1961; Mumford, 1961; Shoup, 2005).

In the twenty-first century, a resurgence in citizen interest in the public realm has led to new forms of political action and “micro-spatial urban practices that are reshaping urban spaces” (Iveson, 2013, p. 941; J. Jacobs, 2004). Both institutional and informal processes have built on historical knowledge of city functions and participants have allied with the fields of architecture and urban planning to display a kaleidoscope of new city shapes.

Tactical actions, such as guerrilla gardening, pop-up retail, housing cooperatives, play streets, and PARK(ing) Day were some of the first indications of a change in urban mood. Tactical urbanism is a popular term among urban advocates, planners, and policy-makers in the twenty-first century seeking “to place an umbrella over a growing number of short-term, often self-funded efforts that were leading to permanent change” (Lydon & Garcia, 2012, p. v). Deriving from philosopher Michael de Certeau’s appropriation of ‘tactics’ to describe insurgent planning, tactical urbanism is a global movement to transform abandoned or underutilized land into places of vitality.

The first ‘PARK(ing) Day’ intervention was undertaken in 2005 by San Francisco-based Rebar and transformed a parking stall into a temporary public space. Demonstrating how street space was undervalued and ready to be repurposed, they plugged parking meters, set down turf and furniture, and invited the public in. This ignited an annual experiment facilitated by thousands of people to reclaim on-street parking spaces into urban amenities (PARK(ing) Day, 2013; Rebar Group, 2013). Meanwhile, New York City developed the first new pedestrianization model in decades when it began reclaiming street space for public plazas (Gehl & Svarre, 2013).

In 2009, parklets evolved both from these plazas and from an institutionalized version of the PARK(ing)
Day typology under the San Francisco Planning Department's Pavement to Parks program. Parklets extend the sidewalk into the street, creating a platform to enrich city life while investing in public infrastructure. San Francisco planners recognized that streets and public rights-of-way make up twenty-five percent of the city's land area, which is greater than all of the park area combined (SF Public Works, 2010).

The parklet model San Francisco planners developed supports the incremental, citizen-led reclamation of public rights-of-way from automobiles, and focuses on high-impact and low-cost in an era of limited government resources. There are now at least twenty-one cities in North America that have either implemented parklets under a municipal department or are piloting parklets in some form.

This renewed interest from municipalities in facilitating citizen-led public space design through tactical urbanism projects, such as parklets, is awakening the "historic social bonds between individuals" that were once embedded in the social fabric of cities (Haydn & Temel, 2006; Madanipour, 2010). Parklets are a response to people's desires to bring balance to overpaved landscapes for public seating and to encourage community building.

Tactical learning arises from immediate and informal attempts to solve complex urban problems (de Certeau, 1984). Knowledge and learning of community-based urban design can be acquired through first hand cumulative experiences in time, best achieved by becoming a "social actor within the research" (McFarlane, 2011; Swaffield and Deming, 2011, p. 152).

Figure 1 illustrates the overall research plan and the intermediary steps taken, from background and field research on New York and San Francisco's public space programs and projects, to first-hand involvement in parklet projects in Vancouver. The process aims to inform both Vancouver's parklet efforts as well as similar public space initiatives that are emerging across cities in North America.

Goals and Objectives

The goals of this research is to study the:

• Social and physical characteristics of parklets, including associated design attributes
• Processes for initial application, design, and permitting adopted by North American cities
• Extent of community support to be a successful public space amenity

In carrying out this research, the objectives are to:
• Determine temporal characteristics of parklets and seasonality
• Identify the factors or criteria determining site selection
• Explore the relationship between public space and transportation
• Investigate how the public realm is improved through identified measures of success of pop-up parks
• Investigate maintenance strategies, liability, and risk management of parklet projects
• Synthesize lessons learned to develop recommendations for emerging and existing pilot programs
Figure 1. Research plan (Author, 2014)
Chapter 2  Literature Review

Public squares have been built at the center of communities since ancient Greek and Roman cities. For centuries the world’s major city streets have been structured to accommodate daily activities, especially in urban districts (Lynch, 1981). The term “right-of-way” describes public access to any given place along a street, and, in doing so, helps illustrate how different segments of the population will naturally mix (Whyte, 1988). Throughout history, these places have been inextricably linked to the organic genius and flows of social interaction that drives cultural development of urban communities both large and small.

Just as crucially, the shaping of cities has continually been influenced by the values of each era, just as they were shaped in the pursuit of economic development and surplus (Lynch, 1981). The builders of the modern city, namely government and corporate officials, politicians, engineers, planners, and designers, were “too often” not concerned with the effects of their actions on the urban environment both socially and ecologically and seldom thought of the impacts on human health and quality of life (Spirn, 1984).

The dawn of the automobile age began to divide public ownership of the streets into systemic transportation modes. Noted for significant contributions to urban social planning theory, Lewis Mumford wrote in What is a City (1937) that the city is, above all else, “a theatre of social action.” He persistently argued in his literary works that this urban drama “is bound to have a fatal last act” if dramatic dialogue, offered by intensification of group activities within the city, is lost to accommodate automobile use (Mumford, 1961).

An outspoken critique of contemporary transportation engineering, Jane Jacobs attacked modern city planning in The Life and Death of Great American Cities (1961) Jacobs warned that if city planners continued to address transportation planning as a conflict between pedestrian and vehicular uses, the segregation of the planning and design of public infrastructure would further intensify. Planning cities to accommodate automobiles is a cyclical, erosive process; the more space is subsidized for the automobile, the further distances are to travel; pushing city boundaries outward while increasing dependency on the automobile (J. Jacobs, 1961).

Similarly, Donald Shoup studied the economics of parking policy and documented the effect of mismanagement on cities. Early in the twentieth century, curb parking that previously served those rich enough for the horse and carriage became too scarce for the newly mass-motoring public (Shoup, 2005). In
The High Cost of Free Parking (2005), a compilation of several decades of extensive work, Shoup argued that the policies that enabled a rapid growth of parking were a hidden subsidy and directly impacted the urban form of the city. Rather than use pricing or other policy measures to manage demand for on-street parking, cities began to require "off-street parking in their zoning ordinances to deal with the parking shortage" (Shoup, 2005). Ultimately, cities would require more space for parking than the buildings the parking was to serve; without a method to recoup the costs of providing this parking, subsidized public infrastructure tilted further toward automobile travel, rather than treating walking, cycling, and transit as equal forms of transportation (Shoup, 2005; J. Jacobs, 2004).

As streets and squares were carved up, observers began to note that it was on the sidewalks that activities of meeting, conversing, and people watching would now unfold (Whyte, 1988; Jacobs, 1961). An urbanist and people-watcher, William H. Whyte’s 1980 study of people in New York’s planned and unplanned public spaces started a new school of thought in urban planning and design.

The street in the modern city serves the purpose of carrying vehicles and people to their destination, but there is still a sidewalk ballet that takes place through the interaction of people on the streets (J. Jacobs, 1961; Whyte, 1988). Designing cities with a people-centered focus can support freedom and democratic rights in the city, and begins by observing the interactions between people in the public realm (Gehl, 2010; A. Jacobs, 1985; J. Jacobs, 1961).

Elaborating on Whyte’s use of direct observations, surveys, and behavioral mapping techniques, Jan Gehl studied everyday life in the streets for decades to understand the meaning of human-scale public spaces in cities (Gehl, 2013). Studies by Whyte and Jan Gehl on the form and use of public spaces have informed efforts to revive the social functions of streets in modern cities. There has been an increase in discussions among scholars and professionals regarding urban planning frameworks and an increased recognition for the role and delineation of public and private uses (Haydn & Temel, 2006; Wolfe, 2013). As Madanipour (2010) writes, “public space has been an integral part of cities throughout history, so much so that without it, human settlements would be unimaginable” (p. 2).

Parallel to formal efforts undertaken on behalf of municipalities to repair the public realm, both spontaneous actions and organized movements began to establish temporary to semi-permanent public spaces in response to diminishing public spaces in North America and the rise of the automobile. The roles of strategy and tactics, as forms of resistance rooted in
human behaviour, were extensively explored by Michel de Certeau, a philosopher and historian most influential in conceptualizing these terms as deriving from the practice of everyday learnings acquired by the ordinary individual (de Certeau, 1984). The desire to transform auto-centric cities into walkable communities has spurred a new form of public spaces for the twenty-first century.

Recent History

Public and private spaces have long been occupied through sanctioned or unsanctioned activities with different timescales and sizes; such actions are capable of improving the urban environment (Haydn & Temel, 2006; Lydon & Garcia, 2012).

Tactical urbanism is a popular term among urban advocates, planners, and policy-makers in the twenty-first century seeking to add vitality to abandoned or underutilized land. The phrase was coined by the principals of The Street Plans Collaborative, Mike Lydon and Anthony Garcia, who were inspired by the pedestrianization of public spaces along Broadway, such as Times Square in 2009 (Lydon & Garcia, 2012). Commonly described as ‘urban interventions,’ these new public spaces are often executed as quick, low cost projects open for anyone to experience. In Lydon and Garcia (2012) tactical urbanism is defined to be:

Of or relating to small-scale actions serving a larger purpose or adroit in planning or manoeuvring to accomplish a purpose... The intent of the publication was to place an umbrella over a growing number of short-term, often self-funded efforts that were leading to permanent change. (cover; p. v)

Figure 2 depicts the intricacies of tactical urbanism in terms of strategic depth and permanence in responding to the vast amounts of vacant or underused spaces in the streets. Unprogrammed voids within the city landscape are gaining value as temporary space that can function effectively through citizen-led interventions (Clark, 2007; Haydn & Temel, 2006). The guerrilla gardening, bike lane, and street art movements are unsanctioned actions of invoking change through expressive means, regardless of legality yet often aspiring to reach a common end goal. Similarly but more formalized, PARK(ing) Day and Build a Better Block are high-profile events celebrating the power of repurposing the road space through the collective work of individuals.

In a semi-formal setting, participatory planning can bring about change by engaging diverse groups and interests to achieve general consensus on a plan and its implementation (University of British Columbia,
Figure 2. Tactical urbanism framework (Reprinted from Lydon & Garcia, 2012)
Embracing the ephemeral urban landscape, participatory planning values trial and error, spontaneity, and principles of placemaking (Wolfe, 2013). Municipal programming such as NYC Plaza Program, SF Pavement to Parks, and VIVA Vancouver are acquiring aspects of participatory planning to the ‘reclaim the streets’ movement. Temporary uses and street reconfigurations are indications of this development to create livable streets through semi-permanent closures to cars and the reclamation of rights-of-way for the pedestrian (Appleyard, 1980).

Tactical urbanism expedites placemaking processes to create public spaces that are responsive to their immediate and surrounding environments.

**On the Origin of PARK(ing) Day**

By the turn of the millennium, increasing global dependence on automobiles and diminishing public spaces prompted an art and design studio group, Rebar, to take direct action through a unique and playful tree, bench, and sod installation in San Francisco on November 16, 2005 (Rebar Group, 2013). Rebar’s rethinking of the use of space in the public realm has since blossomed and been internationally recognized as PARK(ing) Day. This annual global event brings together community members, often artists, designers, and activists, who collectively convert parking spaces into

*Figure 3. Rebar’s first PARK(ing) Day urban intervention (Rebar Group, 2005)*
temporary public parks typically lasting 2-6 hours.

The creators describe this global phenomena as “an annual experiment in reclaiming metered parking spaces” with records showing that 975 parks popped up in 162 cities, 35 countries and 6 continents on September 19, 2011 (PARK(ing) Day, 2013; Rebar Group, 2013). Estimated statistics from the PARK(ing) Day 2013 open-source Google Map suggests more than 1,500 temporary parks were created on September 20, 2013; however, it is difficult to assign a specific number to these informal, spontaneous interventions as some are unrecorded.

**Institutionalizing Pop-up Parks Movement**

Streets, parks, squares, and other public gathering places are symbols of community value, demonstrating the role of cities in encouraging human personal connections (J. Jacobs, 1961; Mumford, 1943). In the twenty-first century, there has been a surge in municipalities temporarily closing streets to vehicular traffic and opening them up to people. The desire to transform auto-centric cities into walkable communities spurred creative placemaking in New York, such as the NYC Plaza Program established in 2008. This inspired the San Francisco Planning Department to launch an initiative in 2009 to similarly reclaim portions of streets and public rights-of-way. Learning from the practices of New York City and San Francisco, Vancouver further developed their own municipal street activities program through pop-up park installations.

Figures 4 and 5 illustrate where parklets are sprouting throughout North America. Represented in larger circles in Figure 5, New York, San Francisco, and Vancouver are the cities among the twenty-one identified in the map which this research investigates in greater depth. More than seventy percent of municipalities adopting parklets are nearby peer cities to New York and San Francisco. For instance, San Francisco has inspired Oakland, Los Angeles, San Diego, and Long Beach; and New York has had a similar impact on Boston, Philadelphia, and Richmond. Cities that have explicitly referenced San Francisco as a model for their program are Seattle, Berkeley, and Grand Rapids; whereas Portland, Chicago, Miami, and Calgary cite New York. In Spring 2014, Los Angeles transitioned from piloting parklet projects to an official People Street Program, inviting community members to apply for a parklet.

Represented in red on the map, Berkeley, Tucson, Grand Rapids, Boulder, Houston, and Richmond (Virginia) are cities transitioning toward implementing pilot parklet projects or a pilot program.
Figure 4. Parklet programming timeline in North America (Author, 2013)
Case Study
VIVA Vancouver
Parklet Pilot Program

Featured Parklet
Urban Pasture
Designer: FSOARK
Sponsor: Café Crêpe

Pavement to Parks Program
San Francisco Planning
Department institutionalizes the ‘parklet’ typology that evolved from PARK(ing) Day

NYC Plaza Program
City effort to provide a public space accessible to all residents within a 10 minute walk

Figure 5. Parklet programming progress in North America (Author, 2014)
Chapter 3  Methods

Action research was employed to frame the non-linear subjective “why” and “how” parklets came to be. Problem-solving through direct application to a real-life setting was the primary motive for embarking on this form of research, in which procedures and conditions are in favour of responsiveness (Isaac & Michael, 1990). In this strategy, I was actively engaged in research to gain a fuller understanding of the phenomena of interest, specifically the program implementation and process of designing, building, and installing parklets under municipal parameters. Leading municipalities of pop-up park programming, namely New York, San Francisco, and Vancouver, were researched in the field through direct observation; interaction with public space advocates and designers also took place in Vancouver. The latter led to the organization of two Vancouver PARK(ing) Day installations and the pursuit of a parklet project as a case study under the VIVA Vancouver parklet pilot program.

Results were synthesized through a comparative analysis of parklet programming in North America and the development of recommendations for cities transitioning toward established programs.

Foundation to Overall Research

The study began with an overview of historical influences on the pop-up parks movement in North America. The emergence of pop-up park projects in the twenty-first century became the central focus of the literature review. The scope of investigation was narrowed further to place emphasis on parklets in relation to the discovery of:

1. The adoption and institutionalization of tactical urbanism strategies in the form of pop-up park projects in New York and San Francisco;

2. The genealogy of parklet programs influenced by the San Francisco model;

3. The adoption of a newly launched parklet pilot program in Vancouver and its tactical precedents.

4. The implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of parklet projects.

A wide range of publications were reviewed including municipal documents, strategic reports, news media articles, academic publications, research papers, and journal articles. As tactical urbanism is often a form of direct action with informal approaches undertaken by diverse groups of people, publications were critically assessed and those that were not peer reviewed were
The overarching goal of this field research was to study pop-up parks and parklets in their urban contexts, in order to gain information beyond the theoretical on the subject by interacting with its physical characteristics (McFarlane, 2011).

**New York**

Best practices for creating urban spaces through active transportation and community-based street policies in New York were reviewed. Accounts of tactical urbanism were explored through case study examples of Pearl Street Triangle Plaza, Times Square, and Herald Square. Direct observations took place on April 13 and April 14, 2013, including photography of design elements and user behaviours, and mapping in 15-minute intervals to describe the location and type of activities in relation to space. These plazas were predominately selected based on their relevance to the development of the pop-up park typology.

**Vancouver**

Spending summers in Vancouver and witnessing the VIVA Vancouver program develop, I produced a series of short films and commissions documenting unfolding projects, including Vancouver’s first parklets and an annual Robson Square design competition. In June through August 2012, and subsequent summer months of 2013, I documented VIVA pop-up and parklet projects.

*Figure 6. Parklet program documents. Left: San Francisco Parklet Manual (reprinted from SF Planning, 2013); Right: Vancouver Parklet Pilot Program Guide (reprinted from VIVA, 2013).*

Field Research

Institutionalized pop-up parks in North America, as a new strategy to bring streets to life for the twenty-first century, began in New York on a city-wide scale; and soon after was adopted by San Francisco and Vancouver. Field research involved a range of direct observations acquired in these three cities and participation in tactical urbanism placemaking in Vancouver. The evaluated on the merits of source and authorship being reputable in the field of study.
under the Summer Streets program through the combined use of time-lapse and real-time videography. The products were two short videos: Pop-Ups and Pop Rocks released as a Spacing Vancouver production and a timelapse of Corduroy Road commissioned by VIVA. These documentations were separate to the thesis research processes, yet enhanced my awareness of the behavioural nature of these projects.


My eight month internship at PWL Partnership Landscape Architects allowed me to join the pop-up parks movement on the ground. The VIVA Vancouver parklet program guide was reviewed in detail to understand the audience for which the guide was intended and determine the feasibility of applying for a parklet. Responding to VIVA’s call for parklet applicants, I initiated one of the first parklets under the new program with the support of PWL’s partners and designers. For three weeks in July 2013, I approached businesses with one of the partners in the firm or on my own, making inquiries about a business-designer partnership with PWL to build a parklet. Figure 7 presents twenty-seven locations scouted as potential parklets with a fronting business as the sponsor. The

Figure 7. Potential parklet locations identified across Vancouver (Author, 2014)
scouting process resulted in PWL assisting three businesses in submitting applications for parklets in front of their stores.

All three proposed parklet locations were conditionally approved by VIVA on August 9, 2013; PWL pursued one of the locations as a parklet project for the office to be involved in on a *pro bono* basis with responsibilities given to me as an intern’s project to manage. As I worked to help design, build, and implement the parklet project in Fall 2013, my thesis topic narrowed from pop-up park programming to the study of parklet programming in Vancouver. Figure 8 provides a schematic of the process involved in the design and planning of the three parklet proposals.
WEEK 1

Initial application form reviewed including guidelines and technical requirements for building a parklet

WEEK 2

Scouting potential parklet locations, approaching business owners and staff to form a business-designer parklet partnership

2013 Parklet Program is Here: Apply for a Parklet!

VIVA Vancouver is accepting applications from businesses and organizations to sponsor and build out a parklet this year.

What are the benefits of a Parklet?
- Creates an innovative public space that extends from the sidewalk
- A functional high-traffic area through added seating
- Easy, low-cost improvements and added value to the business

We would like to work with you!

With over 30 years experience in landscape architecture, we are looking to team with a local business and provide our design services and assistance in applying for a new parklet space. Questions are typically 8'-10' wide by 1'-3' parklet spaces long.

The City of Vancouver has provided details about the Parklet Pilot Program at vancouver.ca/transpo/parks/parklet.aspx

Contact Us
- Mark Van Loon, VIVA
  - mark@vivaonline.ca
  - 604-878-6275

Submission of three parklet applications with fronting business as main applicant

East 21st Avenue at Main Street

West 4th Avenue at Dunbar Street

Robson Street at Richards Street

WEEK 3

Short-listed potential parklet partnerships led to assisting three businesses in separate application submissions to VIVA Vancouver Parklet Program

Parklet project proposed to partners
- Meetings follow to discuss feasibility

Office charrettes
- Mapping out of potential parklet locations

Figure 8. Initial parklet application process to VIVA Vancouver Program (Author, 2014)
San Francisco

Thirty-five parklets in San Francisco were visited over a seven-day period by bike or on foot to experience the public spaces from a car-free perspective (Figure 9). Observations and records in the form of handwritten notes and/or photography were taken at each parklet; site visits were mapped out based on geographic proximity to the next parklet resulting in batch neighbourhood visits. Background research for each parklet project was conducted after the visits to populate any data gaps. All data collected on these existing parklets was consolidated into a spreadsheet database categorized by their built features and design characteristics to organize the physical attributes of parklets in San Francisco.

Comparative Analysis

The characteristics of the parklet programs in San Francisco and Vancouver were compared through a qualitative causal-comparative analysis (Issac & Michael, 1990). The analysis started with a focused literature review of the parklet program application process in each city. The different environmental, social, and economic conditions to which parklet projects were approved were compared and summarized in table form. The San Francisco Parklet Manual and public release of parklet evaluation and monitoring reports were reviewed to further inform the application process and initiation of parklets in San Francisco. As a result of the VIVA Vancouver pilot parklet program being in its infancy, data on the first round of parklets approved were obtained through inquiries made to VIVA staff and direct conversations with designers involved in the parklet projects. The comparison of the two cities aims to provide insights into how parklets are initiated, approved, and transition from temporary to semi-and-permanent status.
Case Study

An action research approach was applied to understand and evaluate the sequence of events that shaped and influenced the outcome of the French Quarter Parklet, designed by PWL. These cause-and-effect relationships within the parklet project were examined as a case study for future parklets in Vancouver through moment-to-moment descriptive and visual data that materialized as the project progressed (Issac & Michael, 1990; Kolb, 1984). I became an active participant in the development of this future parklet, gaining knowledge on the process of parklet projects through reflective learnings on the progress, challenges, and opportunities that arose within the project. As shown in Figure 10, the research was aimed at documenting and analysing the parklet from its conceptualization to final detailed design through experimentation and reflection (Kolb, 1984).

Recommendations

The applications of a comparative analysis and case study on parklets are used to further understand the significance of these spaces and using descriptive language synthesize the lessons learned from emerging and established programs, and ultimately suggest directions for future parklets. A list of twenty-six recommendations was developed with a flow diagram summary of its relation to the initial application and permitting process outlined in the VIVA Vancouver parklet guide. The following chapter provides results on literature review of parklet programming across North America. The processes to design, build, and implement parklets are discussed including insights gained through an action research parklet case study.

Figure 10. Action research learning cycle (Adapted from Kolb, 1984)
Chapter 4 Results and Analysis

Leading municipalities of pop-up park programming, New York, San Francisco, and Vancouver, were researched in the field through direct observation. Action research was employed in Vancouver through interaction with public space advocates and designers in scouting for parklets and the organization of two Vancouver PARK(ing) Day installations. These initiatives led to the pursuit of a parklet project as a case study under the VIVA Vancouver parklet pilot program. Figure 11 provides the research sequence of data collected on pop-up park and parklet projects implemented under the respective municipal program with the exception of the PARK(ing) Day citizen-led interventions.

Figure 11. Research sequence (Adapted from PWL, 2013; Author, 2014)
The New York Model for Pop-up Plazas

The institutionalized pop-up park in North America was first applied in New York on a city-wide scale, and soon after was adopted by San Francisco and Vancouver.

In 2007, New York Mayor Bloomberg unveiled PlaNYC, a bold long-term plan to address increased population growth in New York by strengthening the economy, combating climate change, and enhancing the quality of life for New Yorkers (New York City Department of Transportation [NYC DOT], 2014). The plan assembled over twenty-five municipal agencies to work toward a more sustainable New York through progressive transportation policy goals; emphasis was placed on improvements and enhancement of New York’s transit system, cycling network, and public realm. A major goal set out in PlaNYC was to transform public spaces into pedestrian-friendly gathering places. This unprecedented effort spurred commitment to build or enhance a public plaza in every neighbourhood, community, and commercial district (New York City Government [NYC Government], 2012a).

The following spring, New York City Department of Transportation (NYC DOT) published Sustainable Streets, a strategic plan to provide a comprehensive policy framework for transportation in the city and build upon commitments made by PlaNYC. That same year, NYC DOT officially launched the Plaza Program aimed at generating high-impact creative public spaces, and the Summer Streets Program, which opens up streets to walking and cycling on three consecutive Saturdays in the summer. Summer Streets takes advantage of repurposing New York City’s streets into spaces for healthy recreation while promoting the use of sustainable forms of transportation. In 2012, over 250,000 people participated in the annual celebration (NYC Government, 2012b).

NYC Plaza Program

The NYC Plaza Program reclaims portions of streets and public rights-of-way by providing residents of New York access to a public space within a 10-minute walk from home (NYC DOT, 2010). Since the program’s inception in 2008, NYC DOT (2014) has been working “with selected not-for-profit organizations to create neighbourhood plazas throughout the City to transform underused streets into vibrant, social public spaces” (Introduction section, para. 1).

Non-profit partners are responsible for programming activities and events at the site at least four times a year, which have included farmers markets, holiday celebrations, public displays, and performing arts. These new public spaces led to the concept of “pavement to plazas.” On average, three plazas are built each year.
adding to a current total of thirty-eight plazas since 2008 (Appendix A).

**First Pop-up Plazas**

In attempt to deter developers in 1978, residents humorously coined the acronym DUMBO, “Down Under the Manhattan Bridge Overpass,” to describe their neighbourhood in the New York City borough of Brooklyn (Dumbo NYC, 2012). The neighbourhood is comprised of two areas: one located between the Manhattan and Brooklyn Bridges, and another that continues east from the Manhattan Bridge containing historical industrial buildings converted into lofts and art studios.

Pearl Street Triangle Plaza in Dumbo, Brooklyn is the first project of the Plaza Program. Formerly an asphalt surface for approximately two dozen parking spots, the process of applying bright green paint to the pavement and populating the space with planters and moveable furniture for people occurred within a matter of weeks, as opposed to years that it would take to implement conventional public spaces.

As Commissioner Janette Sadik-Khan announced on opening day in 2007, the triangular space was transformed into “a new living room for the neighbourhood” (Streetsblog, 2007). Pearl Street Triangle initially involved a team of Pratt Institute graduate planning students who identified the site and developed the plans, which led to engagement of local artists and businesses including Brooklyn Botanical Gardens. The widespread attention enticed architectural firms to inquire about future plaza design and installation opportunities.

The pedestrian plaza became a precedent for NYC DOT and other municipalities following suit in adopting tactical urbanism strategies through partnerships with the local community. In summer 2012, over the course of several days, artist David Ellis painted the pavement of Pearl Street Triangle in a series of improvised layers to produce a mural effect, as shown in Figure 12 (NYC Streets, 2012).

**Green Light**

The Green Light for Midtown Project is a major initiative that emerged out of collaboration between the Mayor’s Office and NYC DOT to improve mobility and safety in New York. Mayor Bloomberg officially announced the project in February 2009 with NYC DOT starting implementation of the project three months later in late May 2009 (NYC DOT, 2014). Operating under the NYC Plaza Program, the project’s first task was to create new pedestrian areas at Broadway in Times Square and Herald Square as shown in Figure 13 and 14 (NYC...
Both squares were officially pedestrianized on Sunday, May 24, 2009, following the closure of sections of Broadway to vehicles (NYC Streets, 2009a).

In 2012, Brooklyn-based artist Molly Dilworth refreshed the surface of Times Square with a colourful palette of blues and whites, evoking a sinuous representation of the urban heat island effect (NYC DOT, 2014). A compelling visual, the new look of the now permanent pedestrian plaza as shown in Figure 12 reduces heat absorption by reflecting sunlight off the pavement (Streetsblog, 2012).

**Observing Pop-up Plazas**

Accounts of tactical urbanism were explored through case study examples of Pearl Street Triangle Plaza (DUMBO), Times Square, and Herald Square. Direct observations took place on April 13 and April 14, 2013, including photography of design elements and user behaviours, and mapping in 15-minute intervals to describe the location and type of activities in relation to space. These plazas were predominately selected based on their relevance to the development of the pop-up park typology.

A summary of findings collected from direct observations and literature review of Pearl Street DOT, 2014; NYC Government, 2012a).
Figure 13. Times Square: Morning (left) and afternoon (right) of September 18, 2009 (NYC Streets, 2009a). Bottom image: Cool Water, Hot Island mural (NYC DOT, 2010).

Figure 14. New York pavement to plazas: Herald Square Plaza (top), Flatiron Plaza (left), DUMBO (right) (Author, 2013)
Triangle Plaza, Times Square, and Herald Square can be found in Appendix A. In general, Times Square provides the greatest form of entertainment in terms of media and advertising, as well as people watching. A site visit during the day (noon time) and in the evening revealed that Times Square is a dynamic space with a more relaxing atmosphere as the day progresses later into the night. The foot traffic of people was very high and sidewalk extensions (painted blue on the road adjacent to the sidewalk) addressed this issue to some extent depending on the time of day (e.g., people spilling over into traffic during site visit from 20:00 to 20:30 on April 13, 2013). Many people passed through the square or spent less than five minutes in one spot. Larger groups of three or more were more common in the early afternoon visit.

Pearl Street Triangle Plaza is located in a unique setting bounded by Anchorage Place, Water Street, and Pearl Street (Figure 12). Two site visits were conducted on April 13, 2013 from 14:00 to 16:00 and April 14, 2013 from 12:00 to 12:15. Both visits confirm that locals make up the majority of users in the space. Many people choose to sit at the moveable chairs under the umbrellas for ten minutes on average. The Heartwalk art installation was the main form of attraction for tourists who came and went under five minutes. Locals who use the space are reading, chatting in groups of two, or meeting friends or colleagues. The Archway Café is a main local attraction with many users coming from or going to the café.

When taking photos during site visits of the pop-up parks, the level of “intrusion” of personal space was noted as nonexistent at Times Square, “somewhat noticeable” in Herald Square, and “uncomfortable” at Pearl Street Triangle Plaza. This may be an indication of the differences between a tourist and local destination (e.g., the more local the space, the less likely people will be taking photos or will be open to others taking lots of photos). All three pop-up parks reduce exposure to vehicles by improving pedestrian safety through simplified intersections, shortened crosswalks, and increased opportunities for public gatherings.

Street Seats Pop-up in New York

The New York model for pop-up plazas inspired the Pavement to Parks program created in San Francisco, adapted to their climate, and led to the development of the parklet concept. In turn, New York adopted San Francisco’s parklets in 2010.

Pop-up café is the term used in New York to describe parklets: the extension of the sidewalk into the parking lane to provide a platform for seasonal-to-permanent public outdoor seating. In the summer of 2010, NYC
DOT partnered with local Lower Manhattan restaurants, Fika Espresso Bar and Bombay’s to pilot the city’s first curbside public seating platform on Pearl Street. Bombay’s sales in 2010 after the installation were reported to be an increase of 14% from the business’ 2009 sales (NYC DOT, 2010). Renamed from the Pop-up Café Program to Street Seats, the official program accepts applications from business sponsors for the design, installation, and maintenance of the parklet. The following is a summary of the Street Seat Program guidelines based on NYC DOT (2014):

- must be no wider than six feet to avoid projecting into traffic
- must be no longer than applicant’s establishment sidewalk-facing side
- should be open to pedestrians with chairs and tables brought indoors or locked and stacked outside each night
- should have vertical elements (e.g. planters, umbrellas)
- should be finished with quality materials, preferably recycled or sustainably harvested products

DOT is responsible for evaluating the site to determine if traffic control devices are required (e.g. traffic markings, flexible bollards, and wheel stops).

San Francisco Adapts the New York Model

In the summer of 2010, Mayor Gavin Newsom unveiled the Better Streets Plan to improve the streetscape in San Francisco by creating more accessible and environmentally-friendly spaces for all users. The plan carries out the intent of San Francisco’s Better Streets Policy that was adopted four years earlier by the Mayor and Board of Supervisors on February 6, 2006 (SF Public Works, 2010). Members of the Board of Supervisors are each elected to represent a geographic district, which is the equivalent role of that of a councillor. Through the establishment of a unified set of standards, guidelines, and implementation strategies, the plan governs how the City designs and maintains its pedestrian environment. The plan also reflects the understanding that the quality of the pedestrian experience goes beyond transportation.

Inspired by the success of creative placemaking in New York in 2009, the San Francisco Planning Department launched an initiative to reclaim portions of San Francisco’s streets and public rights-of-way. ‘Pavement to Parks’ is a joint effort between the Mayor’s Office, San Francisco Planning Department, the Department of Public Works, and the Municipal Transportation Agency (SF Public Works, 2010). The Pavement to Parks Program was officially launched in 2009 in coordination with Mayor Newsom and Supervisors. Pavements
to Parks is a creative response to wide streets: a characteristic of auto-centric planning common to North American cities (SF Pavement to Parks, 2013). The program seeks to temporarily reclaim spaces occupied by parked vehicles and inexpensively transform them into public amenities, such as seating, planting, community art, and bike facilities.

Locations for Pavement to Parks projects are selected based on the following criteria (SF Pavement to Parks, 2013):

- sizeable area of underutilized roadway
- lack of public space in the surrounding neighbourhood
- pre-existing community support for public space at the location
- potential to improve pedestrian and bicycle safety
- surrounding uses that can attract people and activate identified community or business steward

SF Planning merely facilitates the programming of the projects – active roles are assumed by site-specific partners, who design, fabricate, and install. These projects build off of the community partnership model, where much of the labour is volunteered by members of the community and pro bono services are commonly provided by art and design firms (SF Pavement to Parks, 2013; SF Public Works, 2010). PARK(ing) Day creators, Rebar, along with rg-architecture were leaders of the first several Pavement to Parks projects and continue to be heavily involved.

Castro Commons

Spanning over two days of construction, the first phase of the Castro Commons plaza was built by community partners with its public debut on May 13, 2009 (SF Pavement to Parks, 2013). The plaza is located at the end of 17th Street at the intersection of Castro and Market streets and forms a unique addition to the neighbourhood, tying into the historic Muni F-Line streetcar terminal and the Castro Village. Local design firm Public Architecture demonstrated resourcefulness in salvaging Sonotube concrete forms as temporary planters and dividers from traffic, as well as granite curbs and moveable chairs to populate and welcome the space (SF Pavement to Parks, 2013).

The estimated cost including labour and materials amounted to $20,000 through the help of Public Architecture, a national non-profit organization that provides pro bono design services at reduced fees through their 1% program by “connect[ing] nonprofit organizations in need of design assistance with architecture and design firms” (SF Pavement to Parks, 2013; The 1%, 2014). One year later the second phase of the plaza, shown in Figure 15, was completed and
renamed as Jane Warner Plaza in honour of late San Francisco patrol special police officer Jane Ellen Warner, known as “Officer Jane” in the Castro neighbourhood (Castro/Upper Market Community District Benefit District, 2012). Boor Bridges Architecture designed the permanent space pro bono while Flora Grubb Gardens and Nibbi Brothers General Contractors provided materials at reduced costs (SF Pavement to Parks, 2013).

Castro Commons was the first pavement to park project in San Francisco. Positive results of increased pedestrian traffic from the monitoring and evaluation of Castro Commons had informed SF Planning on immediate future plans for additional projects in this vein (SF Pavement to Parks, 2013).

Four months after phase one of Castro Common, two more parks emerged from the asphalt as San Jose/Guerrero Park on San Jose Avenue and Showplace Triangle on 8th Street. Formerly an inhospitable environment, San Jose/Guerrero Park plaza is at the crossroads where previously high speed traffic along San Jose Avenue caused dangerous pedestrian crossings at 28th Street (Shift Design Studio, 2009). The plaza repurposes traffic islands into a public space that was once occupied by unsanctioned car parking (Figure 16). The plaza provides traffic calming by transforming San Jose Avenue into a two-way street for residents to
access along the block (SF Pavement to Parks, 2013). The design is by Jane Martin of Shift Design Studio, who donated her time and energy with installation carried out by city staff. Reclaimed logs from Golden Gate Park and raised in-ground planters, arranged by colour, provide a soft edge to the space facing Guerrero Street; large trunk segments and cylinder plantings function as bollards (SF Pavement to Parks, 2013; Shift Design Studio, 2009).

As illustrated in Figure 17, Showplace Triangle repurposes a former unsanctioned parking lot in the street right-of-way between 16th and Irwin Streets. PARK(ing) Day creators, Rebar, offered their design services to transform the space into a little haven for skateboarding and relaxation spots on large grass mounds. The plaza is surrounded in large by industrial buildings within two blocks from the Embarcadero Freeway, and amidst the heavily paved landscape of the neighbourhood which lacks places for seating (Rebar Group, 2013).

The plaza is “built entirely of reused or repurposed materials – Recology debris boxes as tree planters, PUC sewer pipe as bollards, DPW granite curb as planting beds, and Italian black granite once used on Market street for public seating” (Rebar Group, 2013). The firm also donated their time to help facilitate the acquiring of materials and oversaw construction.
for the plaza. Building upon the successes of Castro Commons, landscaping services and construction was again provided by Flora Grubb Gardens and Nibbi Brothers General Contractors, respectively. While cost of materials for the plaza was generously covered by AT&T, a neighbouring business across the street, Nibbi Brothers General Contractors covered the cost of irrigation required for plant establishment (SF Pavement to Parks, 2013).

Showplace Triangle and San Jose/Guerrero Park were monitored and evaluated for increments of two months and six months after installation on September 14, 2009 (SF Pavement to Parks, 2013). Similar to Castro Commons, these projects demonstrate ingenuous reuse of materials that create welcoming plazas through a sophisticated palette of colourful plantings and seating elements.

The theme of community partnership to work collectively, share resources, and contribute to change is the embodied nature of public space programming under the San Francisco Pavement to Parks initiative.

Figure 17. Showplace Triangle plaza (Brian Gould, 2010)
San Francisco Parklet Program

Parklets evolved from PARK(ing) Day as an institutionalized version of the typology. San Francisco planners recognized that streets and public rights-of-way make up twenty-five percent of the city’s land area, which is greater than all of the park area combined (SF Public Works, 2010). The SF Planning Department piloted San Francisco’s first parklets under the Pavement to Parks program in 2010 to create more public space in the rights-of-way. Within a year, the program was made official.

The parklet program encourages community members, nonprofit leaders, and business owners to take individual actions in enhancing the public realm. The term parklet was coined in San Francisco to describe the process of:

[Repurposing] part of the street into a space for people. Parklets are intended as aesthetic enhancements to the streetscape, proving an economical solution to the need for increased public open space (SF Pavement to Parks, website, 2013).

To date, San Francisco has forty-four parklets with over two hundred applicants on the waiting list (Pavement to Parks, 2013). The successes of installing parklets at an expeditious rate has inspired many municipalities in both Canada and the US: Vancouver, Seattle, Oakland, Miami, Philadelphia, and Boston are among the cities that are piloting parklets (Chapter 2, Figures 4 and 5).

First Parklet

The trial run of building several parklets to develop the program in San Francisco was informally referred to as the Pavement to Parks 2.0 projects (Streetsblog, 2010a). The Mojo Bicycle Café sponsored parklet was the first iteration of the trial projects to introduce the idea of public spaces providing greater space on the sidewalk (SF Pavement to Parks, 2013). The parklet was celebrated on March 18, 2010 in a kick-off ceremony heralded by Mayor Gavin Newsom, Supervisor Ross Mirkarimi, Department of Public Works Director Ed Reiskin, and Pavement to Parks Program Manager Andres Power.

The parklet was inaugurated before a large crowd of supporters, standing on the sidewalk and spilling into the adjacent lane (Streetsblog, 2010a). Managing the first several plaza and parklet projects, Andres described the parklet concept as essentially building a bulb-out at a fraction of the $100,000 cost the municipality would typically spend, while providing a great public amenity (Streetsblog, 2010b). The parklet stakeholders include Mojo Bicycle Café, San Francisco
Bicycle Coalition, the San Francisco Great Streets Project; and the city, regional, and federal agencies for fiscal sponsorship of both the Divisadero corridor and parklet projects.

Divisadero’s roadway is heavily travelled with four-lanes divided by a planted center medium (Figure 18). Spanning two parking stalls, the Divisadero parklet provides seating in the form of moveable café-style furniture with one fixed bench, integrated planters, bike racks, and solar lighting, and a receiving panel. Mojo Bicycle Café is the hosting business providing daily maintenance of the parklet. Riyad Ghannam of rg-architecture and Greg Upwall of Studio Upwall provided design services _pro bono_. The traffic-facing side of the parklet is enclosed by the planters and cable rail to provide a permeable continuous edge.

Figure 19 illustrates the maturation of the parklet over the course of three years. The plant canopy has increased by approximately 1 metre with cosmetic upgrades of new paint and furniture. Prior to the parklet’s installation, Divisadero corridor was under construction for streetscape improvements: curb extensions, wider planted medians, landscaping and irrigation, new street trees, and new site furnishings (SF Public Works, 2010). The improvements are part of the Great Streets Program, which "aims to improve and enhance the experience for people visiting [the] corridor” (SF Public Works, 2010). These improvements are on a block separate to the parklet project.

During the design process durability and maintenance requirements for the parklet’s platform raised considerable debate among the stakeholders, such as provisions for drainage flow and sanitation measures (Streetsblog, 2010a). The platform is a modular kit constructed of sustainable harvested hardwood (FSC certified) donated by Bison Innovative Products to the City. The platform features a leveling system of adjustable pedestals made of 20% post-consumer recycled plastic to ensure the platform is flush with the curb (SF Pavement to Parks, 2013). The planters were...

![Figure 18. Mojo Bicycle Café site context (Author, 2013)](image-url)
purchased at reduced price and the cabling donated. Flora Grubb Gardens provided their landscaping services below cost marking their third involvement in a pavement to parks project. A grant from the Office of Economic and Workforce Development’s Neighborhood Marketplace Initiative covered parklet costs for features not donated.

The Green Streets Project released an impact study report on the before and after effects for the parklet; the data collected was analyzed independent of the Divisadero corridor project since it relates to a different block and would be difficult to “parse the impact of the two projects” (SF Public Works 2010; Pratt, 2010, p. 3). Results from the study show that people walking along the 600 block of Divisadero Street benefited from the parklet, which allowed for greater passing spaces on the sidewalk and attracted people to sit with an increased perception of community character.

The Mojo Bicycle Café sponsored parklet set the precedent for future parklets to inexpensively transform parking stalls into a space accommodating public seating, planters, and bike racks.

*Figure 19. Mojo Bicycle Café in 2010 (top) and 2013 (bottom) (Shaw, 2010; Author, 2013)*
Parklet Mapping

The general characteristics of the forty-four parklets in San Francisco have been categorized in Table 1. Business-sponsorship for parklets as the main applicant is highly common in San Francisco with 93% of parklets in the city hosted by a business. Nine parklets were sponsored by community-based organizations such as: Haight Street Market, Friends of Poets Plaza, Yerba Buena Community Benefit District, Noe Valley Merchants Association, Excelsior Action Group, and the San Francisco Bicycle Coalition.

Parklets by community members include the Deepistan

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>Business Sponsor</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Sponsor</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bicycle Parking</td>
<td>13</td>
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<td>Vegetated</td>
<td>41</td>
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<tr>
<td>Both Seating Types</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Umbrellas</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>16</td>
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<td>Bollards</td>
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To date the Deeplet is the only resident-sponsored parklet and is among four other parklets located on Valencia Street, a bike corridor in the Mission District. The Luna Rienne Gallery sponsored parklet is on 22nd St off of Valencia and is another creative example of community-led parklets. The parklet is a venue for public art that rotates annually featuring new local artists (Figure 20).

Parklets last indefinitely with 95% (42/44) remaining since program inception in 2010; special cases involve one parklet de-installed and another relocated to another site. Existing parklets, including those under construction, are shown in Figure 21. Parklets in San Francisco are public spaces commonly installed in the street rights-of-way, occupying parking stalls along streets where sidewalks are narrow or there is a heavy flow of foot traffic; such circumstances often arise in
commercial districts. As shown in Figure 21 and Table 1, bicycle parking is a feature of twelve existing parklets and one future parklet. Integrated bicycle parking is strongly encouraged in the San Francisco Parklet Manual through use of bike racks directly installed on the parklet platform or on-street as a bike corral occupying the adjacent parking stalls. In addition to being credited for introducing the first parklet program, SF Planning is also the first to accommodate bicycle users in parklet designs.

Figure 20. Deeplet (top) and 22nd Street parklets (Author, 2013)
Figure 21. Parklet mapping in San Francisco. Top left: existing parklets (blue) and plazas (green); Top right: bicycle parking in blue; Bottom left: parklets under construction (Author, 2014). Base GIS: San Francisco Data Catalog.
**VIVA Vancouver Program**

Throughout the months of July, August, and September of 2009, Summer Spaces was a pilot program launched in four Vancouver neighbourhoods: Commercial Drive, Joyce-Collingwood, Gastown, and Mount Pleasant. The goal of Summer Spaces was to encourage community events in the streets, such as car-free Sundays and farmers markets that brought people together and showcased local performers, artists, and vendors (Tate White, 2011). The Winter Olympics in 2010 influenced the largest, unprecedented experimentation with pedestrian corridors for the twenty-first century. The opening of five straight blocks on Granville Street for non-vehicular traffic was positively received by Olympic supporters and Vancouverites, who collectively shared stories of their experiences watching the games and building community dialogue amongst crowds of people in the streets.

The state of Granville Street during the Olympics led to Rediscover Granville, a collaboration between the City and Downtown Vancouver BIA in adopting a similar concept for summer weekends on Granville Street (Tate White, 2011). What began as projects aimed at activating streets during summer time, Summer Spaces and Rediscover Granville amalgamated into VIVA Vancouver in 2010; within the same year as the City’s first pilot parklet project and among the first parklets built in North America. VIVA Vancouver (2013) operating within the Street Activities Branch of the Transportation Engineering Department is defined as the following:

> VIVA Vancouver is about creatively transforming streets into vibrant public spaces. During the summer, the City closes roads to vehicle traffic in collaboration with local businesses, regional partners, and community groups, and converts them into public spaces for walking, lounging, and lunching. VIVA Vancouver enhances the city’s sense of community, encourages active forms of transportation, and benefits local businesses.” (vancouver.ca)

Continuing the tradition of Rediscover Granville, VIVA is entering its fifth year of annually transforming the downtown core streets into a lively meeting ground for exchanging ideas on improving Vancouver’s streets during summertime. From June until Labour Day, the summer program “brings the community together to sit and relax, meet new people, and talk with neighbours” (VIVA Vancouver, 2013). On every summer weekend, Granville Street between Smithe and Hastings Streets are closed to vehicular traffic, opening them up to people in celebration of VIVA Granville. The bus mall is transformed into a pedestrian corridor inundated...
with new events and attractions each weekend, such as swing dancing, vegetarian food festivals, bike rodeos, mini-football, and live music and entertainment (VIVA Vancouver, 2013). Regular bus routes for Granville and Robson Streets are rerouted for duration of the weekend street activities.

For several months leading up to VIVA Granville, the City, the Downtown Vancouver Business Improvement Association, and TransLink work with local community and business organizations in planning new, creative activities each year to program the streetscape. The festivities in the street culminate at the 800-block of Robson Street bounded by the Provincial Law Courts and the Vancouver Art Gallery. The block is closed to vehicular traffic and is transformed into a pedestrian plaza that lasts until Labour Day.

The annual pedestrian plazas began in the summer of 2011 through a VIVA-initiated request for proposal. Picnurbia, produced by the Loose Affiliates, introduced a new concept for making Robson Square a more inviting and pedestrian friendly space lasting for one month under VIVA Vancouver’s Summer Streets program. Robson Square is located in downtown Vancouver between Hornby and Howe on Robson Street. Despite its pedestrian vitality, the 800-block is heavily paved with seating set back in enclaves of the Square, away from the main pedestrian thoroughfare.

The introduction of Picnurbia as a temporary addition to Robson Square prompted a petition to keep traffic off the plaza, circulated by the Vancouver Public Space Network, a grassroots organization that works on advocacy, education, and outreach related to Vancouver’s public realm (VPSN, 2011; Gould, 2011). After Picnurbia’s relocation off-site to the warehouse, VIVA explored with two more pop-up parks following in its footsteps of being temporary public spaces at Robson Square for two more summers, along with a pavement-to-plaza installation in 2013:

**Pop Rocks** – Interactive art in bean-bag like forms designed by AFJD Studio and Matthew Soules Architecture, made locally from recycled materials including sail material from Canada Place. On August 15, 2012, the public eagerly crossed the caution tape to lounge on the soft seats before official launch. The installation lasted for 3 weeks.

**Corduroy Road** – A modular, large outdoor patio designed by Hapa Landscape Architecture Collaborative. Bright yellow and lime green benches were assembled on-site by Fricia Construction for June 27 and June 28. The deck spans across half of the 800-block raising a section of the roadway to the top of curb.

Similar to Pop Rocks, the public enthusiastically welcomed the new public space by crossing the caution
tape and taking seat before its official launch (Jenniffer Sheel, 2013). On July 3, 2013 Mayor Gregor Robertson declared the full program for VIVA Vancouver 2013 at Corduroy Road, five days after installation, detailing the summer activities to come and official announcement of the Parklet Pilot Program (VIVA Vancouver, 2013). VIVA launched a guide concurrent with the announcement (VIVA Vancouver, 2013). General and technical guidelines provided in the guide drew on previous experiences from three of VIVA’s test pilot parklet projects (T. Martin, personal communication, September 4, 2013) – Parallel Park, Urban Pasture, and Hot Tubs – and review of the current edition of San Francisco Parklet Manual at the time.

**Bute Plaza** – The “Heart of Davie Village” plaza on Bute Street at Davie Street is the first pavement-to-plaza project for the West End community and greater Vancouver. The Pavement-to-Plazas Program is an initiative of the Transportation 2040 Plan, implemented through VIVA Vancouver. The West End Community Plan adopted the concept which emphasizes creating new public plazas that encourage movement and gathering along Robson, Denman, and Davie streets by “reallocating road space on a seasonal or permanent basis” (City of Vancouver, 2013). City council approved the West End Community Plan outlining the long-term development of the neighbourhood over the next thirty years.

**Existing Parklets**

There are currently three parklets in Vancouver installed as pilot VIVA-initiated projects with locations indicated in Figure 22. VIVA was responsible for siting all three parklet locations and worked closely with the designers in both the design and construction phases.
with engineer staff volunteering their labour to install Urban Pasture’s plantings.

First parklet: Parallel Park
The first parklet in Vancouver initiated through Summer Spaces program, predecessor to the VIVA program, was designed by Travis Martin. As a recent graduate of the UBC Master of Landscape Architecture Program, Travis came across the Summer Spaces program call-out in 2010 through his involvement with Livable Laneways, a non-profit which would later partner with VIVA in activating laneways. Travis took on the project as an initiative independent from Livable Laneways and saw the parklet as an opportunity to be further involved within his Main Street neighbourhood community (T. Martin, personal communication, September 4, 2013). The parklet is located on 14th Avenue at Main Street and was initially funded by VIVA until JJ Bean Coffee Roasters reimbursed the City to enthusiastically become the hosting business. The parklet is conveniently at the corner of two coffee shops, attracting clientele from both JJ Bean and Starbucks. JJ Bean maintains the parklet year-long.

The design and build of the parklet was a 6-month process between Travis, an interior designer as the prime contractor, and VIVA. The total project budget amounted to approximately $18,000: $2,000 paid by Travis for liability insurance; $15,000 for the material
and labour costs, and $1,000 to hire a structural engineer to sign off on the drawings. In an interview at the parklet, Travis emphasized the parklet design was iterative undergoing several revisions with VIVA and advised persistence in setting personal deadlines was key in obtaining the permit in a timely fashion.

2nd parklet: Urban Pasture – a sinuous bench built by FSOARK in partnership with Café Crêpe, located at Burrard on Robson Street. Along Vancouver’s busiest shopping street, Urban Pasture was installed in summer 2012 at a total budget of $20,000 (White, 2011). Urban Pasture is maintained by Café Crêpe, a popular spot to dine in or take-out food by the front window. The parklet was deliberately sited in front of Café Crêpe to widen the sidewalk and passing space for the many people that walk along Robson Street.

3rd parklet: Hot Tubs – inspired cedar ‘hot tub’ seating by Matthew Thomson from PFS and Erika Mashig from Hapa Collaborative on E. 44th Avenue, west of Fraser Street.

Vancouver Parklet Pilot Program

VIVA accepted applications on July 26, 2013 from the public with intentions of installing three to five parklets by the end of 2013. The Parklet Pilot Program was launched in June giving applicants one month to submit proposals. Six locations were selected by VIVA and are identified in Figure 22. Among these locations, there are three applicants that have made their intentions public of building a parklet: Perkins+Will, Commercial Drive Parklet Team, and the French Quarter Parklet Team. Of the six parklet projects selected in 2013, all are sponsored by a store or café except for Perkins+Will and at least four have encountered funding setbacks.

The general application requirements included the following:

1. Application form providing base information on applicant, proposed parklet address, parklet stakeholders, and parking meter impacts
2. Site plan including footprint of proposed parklet with existing street and sidewalk context
3. Photographs of existing street conditions
4. Project narrative on visions, project goals, and ideas
5. Design concept conveyed through hand-drawn sketches and/or renderings (optional)
6. Demonstrated support: property owner(s) notified; signed letter from neighbouring property and business owners (optional); petition and/or letters
of support from nearby residents and/or customers; community organization (recommended); and business improvement association (recommended)

7. Financial support: funding identified and secured (recommended)

VIVA Vancouver is about creatively transforming streets into vibrant public spaces that enhances the city’s sense of community, encourages active forms of transportation, and benefits local businesses. Transitioning away from the existing municipal-led parklet projects, the VIVA parklet pilot program is an opportunity to move toward a citizen-led effort to activate Vancouver’s streets, and further incubate ideas on the role and needs of creating public space. The development of three parklets in Vancouver under the pilot program is examined in the following section.
Figure 24. VIVA Vancouver Projects. Top row: Urban Pasture (Brian Gould, 2013), Picnurbia (Brian Gould, 2011); Bottom row: Parallel Park (Paul Krueger, 2010), Hot Tubs (Paul Krueger, 2013), Granville Street (Author, 2013)
Perkins+Will Sponsored Parklet

Global architecture and design firm Perkins+Will is leading a parklet proposed for Homer Street in the Yaletown neighbourhood. As the main applicant and funder, the Vancouver office of Perkins+Will is the only designer applicant among the six conditionally-approved businesses. Project Manager Rebecca Holt is overseeing the design and build of the parklet in partnership with LEDCOR, a diversified construction company serving as general contractor. The parklet will be in front of the design firm, bounded by residential buildings with street-level retail and spanning two parking stalls. It is intended to be a neighbourhood amenity to “strengthen community relationships by providing a crossover space for residents and commercial business users, support local businesses with a non-commercial amenity, and provide more softscape on the block” (R. Holt, personal communication, April 8, 2014).

The block the parklet will be situated on contains a mix of small businesses offering services in café-style foods, pet products, health, and beauty/spas; it has a tranquil atmosphere throughout most hours of the day with diverse clientele. In comparison to its neighbouring patio-focused commercial street, Hamilton, which bustles in mid-to-late afternoons and well into the evenings, the 1200 block of Homer Street is relatively quiet after work hours and tends to attract those who happen to be walking or jogging through on their way to a destination.

The parklet concept as submitted in the initial application is presented in Figures 24 and 25. The hand-drawn sketches show a public space with fixed seating surrounded by integrated plantings buffered from traffic by lightweight railing. The sketches are among several concepts that were a product of the collective ideas generated from P+W staff during an office charrette held one Friday evening from 4-to-5 pm (R. Holt, personal communication, April 4, 2014). P+W met the community support requirements laid out in the initial application: letters were hand delivered
to businesses and residents, including informational flyers on what parklets are and the option to sign a declaration of support for the parklet in the form of a petition. Yaletown BIA has been supportive throughout the process and had done a parking study prior to the parklet project which demonstrated that the parklet will not impact parking availability on the block. In addition, as part of the initial application, Yaletown BIA would “continue to keep the area tidy by directing weekly cleaning services to support this parklet” (Perkins+Will, 2013a).

Desiring to reach out to the public even further, the parklet project was the first to be made public through a tweet on August 22, 2013 followed with an open house announcement on September 16, 2013 (Perkins+Willi VAN, 2013): “Excited to meet our #Yaletown neighbours tonight to show them and talk about our design for @ greenestcity #Parklet program!” For two full hours, P+W invited neighbours from the community into their office space, presented the initial parklet concept, provided one-page summaries containing contact information, and included the VIVA Vancouver Parklet Team for any further questions. The general reception was much more negative than the project team expected; however, criticism of the project was expressed primarily by three to four residents in each neighbouring mid-rise building (R. Holt, personal communication, April 4, 2014), an

*Figure 26. Perkins+Will parklet concepts submitted as part of initial application package (Perkins+Will, 2013a)*
unbalanced representation of the neighbourhood. Yaletown BIA representatives were present and continued to show their full support for the project (R. Holt, personal communication, April 8, 2014). Residents were concerned that the proposed public space would attract the bar crowd from Hamilton, resulting in noise disturbances late into the night and potential for people to vandalize the parklet. VIVA staff who attended the Open House were supportive of P+W and viewed the negative reactions that arose at the open house as the opinions of a small group of residents.

Nevertheless, the open house resulted in P+W generating an outcome list leading to a report request by VIVA to determine mitigation measures to address the negative feedback. VIVA suggested that perhaps moveable furniture would be the possible solution to concerns of unlawful behaviour late into the evenings. P+W would prefer that the parklet be a permanent public space open to the community for all hours of the day and viewed the introduction of moveable furniture as requiring additional effort to lock or secure after work hours (R. Holt, personal communication, April 4, 2014). Further, P+W viewed café-style seating as resembling a business establishment rather than a public space that is available during all times of the day.

P+W had put the parklet project on hold due to the process continuing late into fall; the realization that the parklet installation would be most favourable in 2014 during the summer months, when peak seasonal use of the space is anticipated, was influential in making this decision. Shortly after the open house, in response to VIVA’s request, P+W had begun to develop a report on how to garner community support on a larger scale. In early April 2014, P+W reallocated staff time toward a parklet budget for 2014, and met with the VIVA Parklet Team to discuss the next steps in proceeding forward with the project. A plan to determine the extent to which community support must be sought has been undertaken by VIVA, while P+W has begun finalizing the design with LEDCOR. The final design will offer a variety of programming opportunities for public interaction throughout the day.

Commercial Drive Parklet

The Commercial Drive Parklet is a project led by Julien Thomas and Stewart Burgess, residents of the neighbourhood with backgrounds in public space advocacy, public art, and architecture. The parklet sponsor is Sammy Piccolo of Prado Café, which is one of the businesses scouted by PWL in July 2013. The shop owner, who is familiar with parklets in San Francisco, saw the initial application process as an exciting opportunity to engage with the community on a parklet project (S. Piccolo, personal communication, July 14, 2013).
Overhearing a conversation about the project between Sammy Piccolo and a Café patron, Julien Thomas first learned about the parklet in June 2013 while a customer at Prado Café, and soon became part of the team after expressing interest to the two in getting involved (J. Thomas, personal communication, November 1, 2013). Identifying himself as a social artist, Julien has worked on similar public space initiatives in 2013 such as Park-A-Park: a mobile parklet created out of “minibins.com” disposal bins in partnership with Emily Carr University of Art + Design (Spacing Vancouver, 2013a; J. Thomas, personal communication, September 11, 2013). Gather Round, another creative urban intervention initiated by Julien involved converting a traffic calming circle at St. George and 10th Ave into a small public space where people can meet at a table and chair set-up on a stone foundation (Vancouver Courier, 2013).

As with Sammy, parklets were not a new concept to Julien and in addition they were very similar to projects he had already undertaken. Julien is managing the communications and resource gathering aspect of the parklet project while architect and VPSN PARK(ing) Day organizer, Stewart Burgess is working on the detailing of construction drawings. Both Julien and Stewart live off of Commercial Drive and are drawn to the public space project for its citizen-led action to reallocate space back to public use, as urban mobility transitions to an emerging post-autocentric age in Vancouver:

“[Parklets are] a pretty powerful symbol that people can experience, and...definitely an urban form that I think is important for a city, or a society, in transformation. Let’s be clear, I’m not saying that parklets are the answer to creating a more self-reliant, healthy, vibrant, engaged city, but they’re part of it. And Commercial Drive is a good place to start.” (J. Thomas, Spacing Vancouver, 2013)

The parklet will be among the first to be permitted for construction. As shown in Figure 27, the parklet will occupy a space equivalent to 1.5 parking stalls on Commercial Drive, setback 6 metres from the corner of 5th Ave with an optional bike parking area (Burgess & Thomas, 2013). Over the course of several months in fall 2013, the Commercial Drive Parklet team grew to include members further afield, drawing people across Vancouver with backgrounds in “construction, architecture, maker [movement], and community arts” (Kickstarter, 2013a). Referring to Figure 27, the parklet features include the following collaborations (Kickstarter, 2013a; Vancouver Courier, 2013):

1. Fixed seating - benches and tables, perpendicular to the sidewalk to create permeability into the space, will be built with students from Britannia Secondary School;
students will be trained in laser cutting and etching.

2. Vegetation - planter boxes will feature laser etched art pieces by public artist Jordan Bent.

3. Platform – a steel frame will be built by BCIT Ironworks students with 2x10 cedar boards to form the deck.

Community Partners:
• Benches and tables  
  *Students from Britannia Secondary School*
• Laser etchings  
  *Derek Gaw, Vancouver Community Laboratory*
• Steel fabrication  
  *BCIT Ironwork students at Burnaby Campus*
• Soil and plants  
  *Brinkman Urban Restoration (donation)*
• Cedar and fir building materials  
  *Western Forest Products*

In early November, Julien began to explore the possibility of crowdfunding a portion of the parklet costs and was informed by VIVA of the French Quarter Parklet team making preparations for a Kickstarter campaign launch in late fall. At a meeting with Julien, I shared the French Quarter Parklet team’s process with VIVA; an ongoing dialogue which began in early September on whether financing parklets through public support would meet City approval. Since the initial application recommended that funds be Board
the initial application recommended that funds be already secured or identified, VIVA was just beginning to take campaign fundraising for parklet projects into consideration. Within the next few days, Julien met with Director of Art program at Kickstarter, Stephanie Pereira, to discuss crowdfunding plans for the Commercial Drive Parklet, and had extended the invite to the French Quarter Parklet team in addition to public space advocates, students, and City staff. The meeting is an example of sharing information between parklet stakeholders to foster communication between project leads and better understand the parklet process. Further, it was an indication of the untapped potential for VIVA to coordinate informational sessions for each round of selected applicants, an option that is made available to interested applicants under San Francisco’s parklet program (SF Planning, 2013).

On December 4, 2013, the Commercial Drive Parklet became the first crowdfunding project for a parklet in Vancouver and the second to announce intentions of building a parklet to the public. With 7,500 views of the campaign video, the reception was very positive with the funding goal of $3,500 raised in 11 days after its launch date (J. Thomas, personal communication, April 10, 2014; Kicktraq, 2013a). At the time, the total budget for the parklet was $14,000 with the following funding allocations: $5,000 from Sammy Piccolo of Prado Café, $1,000 from Awesome Foundation, an anticipated Parks Board grant, and the $3,500 Kickstarter project goal. A diversity of media outlets promoted and featured the project including articles in Vancouver Sun, Huffington Post, Scout Magazine, Vancouver Is Awesome, Spacing Vancouver, and radio interviews with Julien on CBC and CKNW.

On the 14th day of the campaign, the project’s main Kickstarter page announced the necessity to raise $8,000 in order to fund the entire parklet. The announcement came shortly after news of the Vancouver Parks Board declining a grant proposal from the Commercial Drive Parklet team, despite being strongly encouraged to apply (Kickstarter, 2013a). In conjunction with this announcement and feedback to include features that should further impact the community, Julien revealed two improved stretch goals (Kickstarter, 2013a; J. Thomas, personal communication, April 10, 2014):

1. $5000 (raised) - Five youth in the community will be trained on laser etching and cutting, and the Commercial Drive Parklet team will be working directly with students from Britannia Secondary School to design a street mural for the neighbourhood.

2. $8000 (not raised) - Ten youth in the community would be trained on laser etching and cutting, and the
Commercial Drive Parklet team would coordinate a painted street mural in the neighbourhood and host a parklet launch block party.

The project campaign concluded with $5,940 funds raised, 169% of the parklet’s project goal, through contributions by 153 backers. The success can largely be attributed to the advanced preparatory work done by Julien leading up to the Kickstarter project’s launch date and the team continually networking with social media and media outlets during the campaign. Raw backer data received from Julien was processed and is presented in Table 2. The neighbourhood boundaries are based on the first three postal codes of 70 out of the 153 backers. Given that the data collection is incomplete, the breakdown represents only 45.8% of the total possible community support with 22% of these backers residing in the Grandview-Woodland area, which is the neighbourhood of the proposed parklet.

Preceding the campaign, the project team anticipated a mid-to-late March installation date. The third revision of the final drawings set was submitted to VIVA in early February 2014 with feedback provided in early March. In the project’s Kickstarter Update #9 post, Julien explained the unexpected delays attributed to VIVA during the permitting process, viewable only by backers. In addition to addressing comments by VIVA in relation to the revised drawings, the team had also

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Neighbourhood</th>
<th>Backers</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vancouver</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Kensington-Cedar Cottage</td>
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<tr>
<td>Downtown</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grandview-Woodland</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mount Pleasant/Riley Park</td>
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<td>Fairview-South</td>
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<td>5.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cambie-Oakridge</td>
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<td>Downtown Eastside-Strathcona</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>Fairview-Shaughnessy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sunset</td>
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<tr>
<td>East Side Vancouver</td>
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<tr>
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<td><strong>Outside Vancouver</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>North Vancouver</td>
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| **TOTAL**                          | **70**  | **100**
PARK(ing) Day Interventions

On September 20, 2013, PARK(ing) Day participants joined together to celebrate the eighth annual global event of transforming parts of the streetscape into places for people. Over 1500 parking or underused spaces within the street rights-of-way were repurposed into public spaces. In Vancouver there were at least three installations, each inviting people to use the space and generate critical debate about the role of streets in the public realm. Constructed in under two hours, the temporary public spaces emerged at 500 Robson Street downtown, 1050 Homer Street in Yaletown, and 198 East 21st Avenue in Mount Pleasant, lasting for four to six hours and open to the public to enjoy. Designers and advocates from a number of organizations collaborated on these installations, illustrating ways to create more interactive streetscapes in each neighbourhood. The temporary public spaces demonstrated a desire for a more inclusive and organic system of creating public spaces, some evolving into parklets overtime, which are the permanent successor to PARK(ing) Day.

1050 Homer Street, Yaletown

VIA Architecture was the first to celebrate PARK(ing) Day, early in the morning in front of their design firm on Homer Street in downtown Vancouver. The newly created space, using salvaged materials, was a volunteer initiative which the designers, planners, and
architects at VIA saw as a fun, playful way to introduce “playing in the street” public space concepts at both their Vancouver and Seattle offices. The public space occupied two parking stalls with a base assembled out of shipping pallets which defined the park’s boundaries and created a platform flush with the curb. Newly painted in red, moveable office stools were brought into the space along with potted plants and furniture from employees’ gardens to provide a buffer from vehicular traffic and create a more natural, inviting aesthetic. The overhead structure composed of umbrellas was a sudden addition to the design in response to forecasted rainfall and inspired by artistic canopies in Barcelona which can span across entire streets. VIA PARK(ing) Day lead organizer Brendan Hurley emphasized that “instead of hiding from the rain, we wanted the opportunity to celebrate it, if only visually” (Spacing Vancouver, 2013b).

VIA staff took shifts throughout the day; they received positive feedback from passerby and “spurred energy toward looking at more permanent options” within the office and among visitors (Spacing Vancouver, 2013b; B. Hurley, personal communication, September 25, 2013). Hurley remarks in Spacing Vancouver (2013b) that one “of the best moments was a Parking Bylaw Enforcement Officer walking by smiling and with his hands in the air saying ‘Even if I wanted to do it, what would I ticket!’” Vancouver’s two other PARK(ing) Day installations would experience similarly positive public responses to these spaces and stir curiosity about more permanent possibilities.

500 Robson Street, Downtown

As a “small group of keen and nerdy public space lovers,” VPSN members and supporters including myself met on Granville Island at Vancouver’s Park-A-Park to discuss plans for the next VPSN PARK(ing) Day installation (VPSN, 2013, VPSN Celebrates its Sixth Park(ing) Day, para. 2). Park-A-Park, a mobile parklet by Julien Thomas, was parked in front of Emily Carr University of Art and Design; it attracted students and passersby to stop for

Figure 28. Temporary Vancouver public space on 1050 Homer Street (VIA, 2013)
a quick pot-luck snack and chat. Approximately twenty people visited over the five hours. Key project leads were Alexandra (Zanny) Venner, Stewart Burgess, Ken Lum, and myself (VPSN, 2013).

Taking one week to prepare, VPSN selected a PARK(ing) Day location on Robson St where high foot traffic occurs along a congested sidewalk block. Celebrating its 6th year of participation, the VPSN series of mobile public spaces occupied three metered parking spaces with fronting businesses: Falafel Maison, Viet Sub, JAPADOG, and Curry Fusion (Figure 29). Owners were notified of PARK(ing) Day in advance and enthused about the concept and permanent possibilities. During its installation debut, VPSN volunteers continually plugged the meters until the ephemeral public space was disassembled and taken away. VPSN collaborated with City Studio, Tradeworks, Ken Lum’s Little Shop of Happenstance, and Modo Car Share to create an outdoor living room featuring wooden components such as the Polka Dot Piano, an art cart, harvest tables and benches, as well as a wagon with pews and a canopy. Designed and built in the backyard of one of the VPSN’s project lead’s home in East Vancouver, the platform supported City Studio’s Long Table on PARK(ing) Day and was flanked by the Studio’s traveling Polka Dot Piano “along with Ken Lum’s mobile art car and Robert Beckenwermert’s covered wagon” (VPSN, 2013).

JAPADOG staff at the restaurant and food stands were on holiday for the week, but owner Noriki Tamura was still very pleased to hear of the temporary public space installation (N. Tamura, personal communication, September 13, 2013). VPSN released a visually engaging video by a UBC Master of Journalism student acknowledging volunteers and visitors who assembled and sat in the smorgasbord of urban interventions through the course of the day. Even though it was for only a few hours, the parking space became interactive with the street by providing “a place for people to sit, read, eat, talk, rest, meet new people, play the piano,
and engage in art” (VPSN, 2013).

21st Avenue at Main Street, Riley Park

The PARK(ing) Day installation at the corner of 21st Avenue and Main Street was a joint effort between Anne-Geneviève Poitras, owner of Chocolaterie de la Nouvelle France, and myself as representative of PWL Partnership Landscape Architects. Hosted by the Chocolaterie, the installation occupied two parking stalls in front of the shop and was an experimental process of gathering borrowed resources to program the space with furniture and games. Preparation occurred over several days leading up to the event with a meeting the night before between Anne-Geneviève and myself to finalize the strategic plan.

Recalling on the eventful day, Anne-Geneviève Poitras says “Everybody came together that morning. A neighbour showed up with a leaf blower to clean the area, another one lent us games. Some businesses also gave a hand. It was a community effort, really” (Spacing Vancouver, 2013b). Similar to the installation by VIA on Homer Street, a traffic engineering vehicle passing through the neighbourhood stopped in front of the installation during its set up, prompting Anne-Geneviève and me to describe PARK(ing) Day to the parking enforcement officers as an international celebration of creating citizen-led public spaces.

Red patio furniture regularly lined up against the store facade was brought into the road and juxtaposed with bright yellow milk carts filled with bundles of fresh cut flowers. The flowers were bought from a friendly flower-stand owner on Dunsmuir, located across from the separated bicycle lanes in downtown Vancouver; he generously lent his containers to transport the bundles to the PARK(ing) Day site. A tenant living above The Chocolaterie and friends of the owner had stopped by to drop off Bananagrams for children to play and, inspired by the colourful flower display, the lady decided to buy the flowers at the end of the day to re-use as decoration in a street festival event she was organizing the following day.

A life-size “Hi” composed of empty gelato containers was constructed by Anne-Geneviève to face Main Street and welcome everyone on foot and bike (Figure 30). Owners of The Soap Dispensary, located a block down on Main St, donated an organic bubble maker to enhance the friendly character of the space in which both children and adults had fun playing (Figure 31). Planter boxes borrowed from Coco et Olive bordered the traffic facing side of the Park(ing) Day installation to provide a comfortable buffer from moving vehicles.

The shop’s first PARK(ing) Day installation aesthetic matched the mural of a Provence house painted on the building by a local artist and resident in the
neighbourhood years ago. This installation matched the fronting business enough to prompt a few people to ask if it was okay to join in, despite signage declaring it as PARK(ing) Day and a “public space.” A young woman had remarked with a laugh afterward, “There may have been one negative reaction throughout the entire day. While walking by the installation, a mother viewed the floating bubbles as a danger to her child’s face. I wanted to yell to her, ‘It’s okay, it’s organic!’” (Anonymous, personal communication, September 20, 2013).

Nevertheless, many familiar faces from the neighbourhood came by to experience PARK(ing) Day and chat with fellow Vancouverites; an estimated twenty people sat in the space during work hours not including members of the PARK(ing) Day team. The types of users were young couples, professors, mothers with their children, seniors, students, teenagers, customers, and designers. Locals were excited about the temporary public space, providing only supportive comments, while visitors from across Vancouver or out of city, seemed to hesitate before sitting down.

Figure 30. Temporary Vancouver public space on 21st Avenue at Main Street (Author, 2013)
Figure 31. PARK(ing) Day 2013 in Vancouver neighbourhoods: Yaletown (Top row: VIA, 2013), Downtown (Middle row from left to right: Eric Scott Photography, 2013; Author, 2013), and Mount Pleasant/Riley Park (Bottom row: Author, 2013).
Case Study The French Quarter Parklet

Among the six selected parklet locations by VIVA, Chocolaterie de la Nouvelle France is the third and final main applicant to announce intentions of sponsoring a parklet project. On 21st Avenue at Main Street, a fun, interactive public space for seating and a place for gathering is currently under production. With full funding secured for the parklet proper, the community public space initiative is on schedule for complete installation on-site by April 17, 2014.

The parklet team comprised of Chocolaterie de la Nouvelle France, the property owners, and PWL was formed during the initial application process. After conditional approval was received from VIVA, the team expanded to include landscapers and master carpenters: Holland Landscapers and Tradeworks joined the team in early Fall. In addition to PWL generating the design drawings *pro bono* and helping facilitate, Holland is installing the platform *pro bono* with material costs covered by the parklet budget. Living next door to the shop, owner Anne-Geneviève Poitras will be responsible for maintenance of the parklet throughout the seasons.

Opened in 2005, the Chocolaterie has demonstrated an on-going dedication to bringing the streets to life through participation in Main Street Car Free Days, PARK(ing) Day, “ShopMain.ca” festivals, and other events such as Roam Main and the Drift. Car Free Day held on Main Street in 2013 announced the shop’s corner as “The French Quarter,” which inspired the naming of the parklet project. On June 15, 2014, Car Free Day will encompass twenty-one blocks along Main Street programmed with festivals, mini-concerts, kids zones, and artisan markets (Car Free Day Vancouver, 2014).

Tradeworks, the prime contractor for the parklet project, is a community impact social enterprise located in Vancouver’s Downtown Eastside. Since 1994, Tradeworks has provided carpentry training, life skills, and transitional employment to at-risk youth and inner-city women with multiple barriers to employment (Tradeworks, 2013). All of the profit from the fabrication of the parklet by Tradeworks has been invested back into training and support programs for at-risk youth with multiple barriers to employment.

Scouting Process

PWL initially considered applying to the parklet program as the main applicant. However, parking on Pender Street outside of the office is restricted to provide an additional travel lane during certain hours of the day which prevented the installation of a parklet on the building’s frontage. It became evident that parklets are best sited on commercial corridors with
fronting business owners sponsoring the public space. Parklets also commonly occupy parking stalls along streets where sidewalks are narrow or there is a heavy flow of foot traffic; such circumstances often arise in commercial districts with a heavier retail emphasis than Pender Street.

In search of a suitable location for a parklet, PWL identified twenty-seven potential spaces throughout Vancouver to develop a short list of businesses. For three weeks in July 2013, PWL approached businesses making inquiries about a business-designer led partnership to build a parklet in the parking stalls fronting the establishment. Among the thirteen business owners contacted, PWL Parklet Team received strong interest from eight businesses in Kitsilano, Grandview-Woodland, Mount Pleasant/Riley Park, Kerrisdale, and Downtown.

Figure 31 shows the twenty-seven locations scouted with eight businesses expressing interest in a parklet application. Many businesses were unfamiliar with the term parklet or the newly launched program; an informational PWL flyer on the program and precedent images of parklets was dropped off at businesses with interested owners and supervisory staff. Approximately 10 of the business representatives that PWL spoke with were familiar with the existing parklets in Vancouver; Urban Pasture was the most recognized followed by Parallel Park; only one staff member was aware of Hot Tubs. The scouting process resulted in PWL assisting three businesses in submitting applications to VIVA.

A week before VIVA selected the successful applicants, I presented the three parklet concepts that PWL developed for each business during a Brownbag office session. The presentation was requested by the partners to inform and gauge the level of interest among
the designers. An overview of the general guidelines and technical requirements for the proposed parklets to VIVA was also discussed. Many designers in the office were interested in being involved in the parklet project; one of several community initiatives each year PWL staff have put their pro bono efforts toward.

Shortly after VIVA selected six applicants for a 2013 parklet installation, a meeting was held in the office among the partners, senior designer, and myself on which of the three proposed parklets would be targeted as a 2013 initiative. Within the office a core design and management team was formed with myself, Alex Man-Bourdon, and Jack Tupper as the project leads.

Initial Application

The French Quarter Parklet began with a successful application submitted by PWL and shop owner Anne-Geneviève Poitras of Chocolaterie de la Nouvelle France. The Chocolaterie is the fronting business for the proposed parklet on 21st Avenue at Main Street (Figure 32). PWL met Anne-Geneviève during the business scouting process one week prior to the application deadline. Anne-Geneviève was immediately interested in applying when PWL visited her shop, at which time Anne pointed out the similarities between the patio public seating in her hometown Montréal and the parklet pilot program in Vancouver (A. Poitras, Personal...
of the office during lunch on September 4th and in the evening of September 5th of 2013. These charrettes set the stage for a significant change to the concept design; the consensus among the participants in the office was that the initial concept was in need of creativity separate from the business establishment. The initial concept was developed based on visions for the parklet expressed by Anne-Geneviève and a few designers in the office. In revisiting the concept for the final design phase, PWL kept the essence of a low-lying planter wall on the street-facing side and permeability into the space; however, a major change was the seating layout. The proposed moveable seating arrangement with tables affixed to the planter wall was replaced with fixed triangular benches and three diagonal benches built into the planter wall. The inspiration came from the idea of puzzle pieces where the triangular benches appear to have broken apart from the diagonal benches (Figure 33).

**Final Design**

The French Quarter Parklet is a public space that opens to the sidewalk with low-lying planter walls on the traffic-facing side to maintain views into and from the space. The vertical elements in the parklet gradually increase in height away from Main Street and will welcome passersby along the commercial street to experience the space in a variety of ways, such as having...
Figure 34. Site context with proposed French Quarter Parklet design (PWL, 2014)
a snack on custom “dipped” triangular benches, or reading a book on benches slatted with blue highlights.

A long term plan is to build a bike bar on the far west side for people to roll up to and use without leaving the seat of their bike. Figure 35 shows the proposed parklet with the bike bar design included; a comparison with PARK(ing) Day installation is made where the initial moveable seating concept is replaced with fixed triangular benches. The proposed bike bar was one of several perceived risks to obtaining the permit, contributing to further revision requests by VIVA. The structural integrity of the bike bar table top and the mechanisms of balancing one’s own weight on a bicycle while seated at the bar, were the major concerns expressed by VIVA. Other concerns included moveable seating and umbrellas; explanations of VIVA’s uncertainties in the presence of factors such as public safety, theft, and graffiti are summarized in Appendix C.

**Kickstarter Project**
The French Quarter Parklet Team launched the Kickstarter project on December 13, 2013, a week after the Commercial Drive Parklet; however, Anne and I had started the dialogue with VIVA to gain their approval to crowdfund in early September and had substantially completed the campaign materials by October. The campaign successfully raised $5,383 in 30 days, surpassing its project goal of $5,000. The Kickstarter project was intended to include additional features for the community, a requirement set by VIVA, as well as engage the broader public and give anyone interested the opportunity to get involved and provide feedback. As tokens of appreciation for contributions, rewards were offered including custom chocolates, supporter names on the art wall, a Chocolate 101 and Tasting Class, and petit parklet model (3D print) to be based on the final design for construction.

Funds were raised to cover material costs for extra features to enhance the parklet: a bike bar, art wall, and two large heavy duty umbrellas (Figures 35 and 36). As a stretch goal, the team announced a newly formed partnership with Livable Laneways regarding a permanent art installation surrounding the art wall. During the campaign Livable Laneways created a temporary wheeled art installation located at the corner of 21st Avenue and Main Street to promote the campaign and raise awareness around the future parklet.

A local artist will be creating a display to be part of the community art wall. The parklet team inherited a vintage Fleetwing bicycle, known as the “Green Envy,” which will be an art sculpture at the bike bar if the design is approved by VIVA, providing a wheeled seat for those in need. A local bicycle shop will restore the Green Envy and the parklet team is working with
Figure 35. Temporary PARK(ing) Day installation comparison with semi-permanent parklet proposal (PWL, 2014)
Vancouver Cycle Chic to perfect the bike bar design.

A distribution of funds from 63 out of the 98 total possible backers is provided in Table 3. Vancouver supporters with no relation to the parklet project make up 19% of the 63 backers who pledged; based on my knowledge as campaign manager and Kickstarter information provided. This suggests that a majority of funding came from those who were already familiar with the project or were introduced to the campaign through family, friends, coworkers, clients, etc.

Table 3. French Quarter Kickstarter backer analysis (Author, 2014)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Breakdown</th>
<th>Backers</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>15.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>17.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parklet Team</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>15.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coworkers</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clients</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neighbourhood</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vancouver Supporters</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>27.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>63</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Permit

The French Quarter Parklet will be among the first to be built under the new VIVA Vancouver Pilot Parklet program and is scheduled for installation on-site on May 17, 2014. A prototype of the bike bar is required in order to be included in the final product and will be reviewed by VIVA Vancouver following installation of the parklet. If approved, the bike bar and umbrellas funded through the Kickstarter campaign will be added as an enhancement to the parklet.
**Post-installation Public Outreach**

NeighbourMaker is a multi-year public program launched by the Museum of Vancouver in April 2014. In conjunction with the program, the Project Assistance Award was granted to three students including myself through an application process with a jury of City staff and local urban designers. Each student proposed a project urban intervention to take place at one of the three locations in Vancouver: Yaletown Farmers Market in downtown, Bute Plaza at Davie St, or a site of their choosing. These interventions will occur on a day in May 2014. Program coordinator Adrian Sinclair describes NeighbourMaker as an initiative for "creating dialogue and cross disciplinary linkages between the academy, community groups, activists, and artists who are creating a more connected and engaged city" (A. Sinclair, Personal Communication, April 7, 2014).

My proposal was for an intervention on 21st Avenue at Main Street to follow two weeks after the complete installation of the French Quarter Parklet. The urban intervention is to celebrate the more permanent and formal phase of the final parklet (Figure 37), by bringing the community together in an afternoon of activities. A local artist will be commissioned to write on “picture frames” the thoughts expressed by neighbours about their neighbourhood and city (photographed by volunteers). Friends, family, and especially children, will be provided with multicoloured yarn rolls and encouraged to create a wayfinding trail for inviting people along Main Street into the parklet, facilitated by volunteers for easy set-up and clean-up. While these activities take place, a local musician will play for those gathered along the building facade’s existing mural.

The intervention would be an experimental process of repurposing simple resources to program the space and engage the community in rethinking the role our streets play in the public realm. The tentative date scheduled for the urban intervention is May 31, 2014.
Figure 37. Urban intervention concept proposal to NeighbourMaker program (Adapted from PWL, 2013; Author, 2014)
Chapter 5  Discussion and Conclusion

Parklet Programs in North America

There are at least sixteen cities in the United States that have either implemented parklets under a municipal department, or in the case of Richmond, Tucson, Grand Rapids, and Berkeley, are piloting the concept of parklet projects or a pilot program. Tables 4 and 5 present the parklet program progress for cities in the United States and Canada, respectively. NYCDOT began to experiment with San Francisco’s parklets through pilot test projects in New York within the same year of the San Francisco Pavement to Parks parklet program launch. Oakland, Long Beach, and Philadelphia soon followed with their own version of piloting parklets in the city.

The implementation and lifespan of parklets in North American cities generally operate on a seasonal or annual basis, often influenced by factors of climatic conditions. The cities in the central to eastern region of North America, such as Philadelphia, Montréal, New York, and Chicago, accommodate parklets for seasonal use with installations approved for several months outside of the winter season. Warmer weather conditions in west coast cities: San Francisco, Vancouver, Portland, Los Angeles, and Seattle are where parklets last year-long. In addition to climate effects on parklets, the municipal program’s capacity to review parklet applications and issue permits also determines the outcome of when and for how long parklets are installed.

The leading cities for parklets in Canada are Montréal and Vancouver. Montréal shares strong resemblances to the urban form of European cities and is a unique example of invigorating street life into the public realm on a city-wide scale. Celebrated as the City of Festivals year-round, Montréal introduced the concept of curbside patio seating under the Terraces Permit program and has built over ninety seasonal installations (Table 5). The first parklet in Vancouver initiated through Summer Spaces program, predecessor to the VIVA program, was inaugurated in 2010 during the same year San Francisco and New York were experimenting with parklets.

Similar to Montréal, and referencing the New York pop-up café typology, the City of Calgary streamlined a pop-up patio permit process in 2012 to “simplify the process” of approval for public and private seating spaces (City of Calgary, 2014; Calgary City News, 2012); however only one on-street parklet exists to date. Five typologies for public and private outdoor seating are eligible for a permit in Calgary, which include use of the sidewalk and curb lane. In summer 2013, Councillor Kristyn Wong-Tam and the Church Wellesley Village BIA launched the first stage of “Proud of The Village”
Table 4. Parklet Programing Progress in United States (Author, 2014)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>Program Progress</th>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Department</th>
<th>Duration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Projects</td>
<td>Pilot</td>
<td>Official</td>
<td>Pavement to Parks</td>
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<tr>
<td>San Francisco</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>Street Seats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oakland</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philadelphia</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Street Seats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portland</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>Street Seats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boston</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chicago</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>People Spots under Make Way for People Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long Beach</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Los Angeles</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Spring Street Parklets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seattle</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2013, 2014</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Public Space Management Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miami</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Diego</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richmond</td>
<td>2014</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tucson</td>
<td>2014</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Tucson Bicycle &amp; Pedestrian Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grand Rapids</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2014</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Streetscape Improvement Incentive Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Berkeley</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2014</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5. Parklet programming progress in Canada (Author, 2014)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>Program Progress</th>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Department</th>
<th>Duration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Projects</td>
<td>Pilot</td>
<td>Official</td>
<td>Lead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montréal</td>
<td>1980's</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Department of Public Works</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vancouver</td>
<td>2010, 2012</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>VIVA Vancouver</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calgary</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Pop-Up Places Permit Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toronto</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Church Street Summer Parklet Program</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6. Parklet sponsor responsibilities (Author, 2014)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>Insurance</th>
<th>Maintenance</th>
<th>Moveable Furniture</th>
<th>Table Service</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boston</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chicago</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grand Rapids</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long Beach</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miami</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montréal</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>‹</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oakland</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>‹</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philadelphia</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>‹</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portland</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Francisco</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>‹</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seattle</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>‹</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
initiative to transform its streets into “a more walkable, accessible community” (Church and Wellesley Village BIA, 2014). Four parklets were constructed along Church Street by custom, landscaped planters and featured café-style furniture with umbrellas to provide shade (Church and Wellesley Village BIA, 2014).

Ten municipalities: San Francisco, New York, Vancouver, Oakland, Philadelphia, Portland, Chicago, Grand Rapids, Seattle, and Miami were identified as programming parklets. Additionally, Table 6 provides a comparison of parklet sponsor responsibilities for twelve North American cities. Parklets are typically public spaces yet as noted in the table, sponsoring businesses in four cities are permitted to provide table service to parklet users; this may influence the type of people in the space (e.g. clientèle versus neighbourhood residents).

As shown in Table 7, the inclusion of seating and planting in the parklet is a common requirement for the ten cities with parklet programs in North America: San Francisco, New York, Vancouver; Oakland, Philadelphia, Portland, Chicago, Grand Rapids, Seattle, and Miami, whereas art as a specific end is more seldom mentioned. Four of the ten identify bicycle infrastructure as a recommended investment for the neighbourhood. San Francisco, Oakland, and Seattle encourage bicycle parking adjacent or in the parklet space, whereas Philadelphia and Miami present the amenity as an

Table 7. Parklet feature preferences of ten cities (Author, 2014)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Features</th>
<th>Benefits</th>
<th>Required</th>
<th>Recommended</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Seating</td>
<td>Encourages social interaction and accommodates functional and recreational activities¹</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planting</td>
<td>Improves urban environment by decreasing stormwater runoff, improving water quality, and reducing heat buildup²</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art</td>
<td>Contributes to community identity, as well as cultural and economic value³</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bicycle parking</td>
<td>Provides convenient storage for bicycles and should be connected into bikeway system to optimize accessibility⁴</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹ Gehl (2010); ² Spirn (1984); ³ Walljasper (2007); ⁴ Birk (2012)
In Philadelphia, the interested party must contact the Mayor’s Office of Transportation and Utilities, and provide an address for the proposed parklet location. Preliminary site approval takes approximately two to three weeks. If preliminary approval is granted, the applicant is required to submit an initial application.

**Community Support**

Nine of the municipalities require demonstrated community support as part of the initial application. The applicant is required to notify the property owner for all cases. Approval must be granted in the form of a signed letter, or on the application form, for New York, Oakland, Philadelphia, Portland, Chicago, Seattle, and Grand Rapids. Documented support is not required in Miami; however, the municipality strongly encourages gaining the support of adjacent property and business owners, as well as a neighbourhood organization and business association.

Sponsors of existing Street Seat installations in Portland are required to submit an application to renew their permit, which includes demonstration of community outreach and documented support for the parklet.

The first Kickstarter parklet project on April 1, 2012, A Parklet at Farm:Table (Appendix B), was backed by 186 donors. The project raised $15,327, surpassing its project goal of $14,500 by 106%. To date there are five

While moveable seating is encouraged by New York, Oakland, Seattle, and Miami, the remaining municipalities: San Francisco, Vancouver, Philadelphia, Portland, Chicago, and Grand Rapids suggest it as an option. San Francisco strongly encourages fixed seating; however, of the existing parklets in the city, 56% contain moveable seating and 56% fixed seating with some having both features (Chapter 4, Table 1). Oakland, Portland, Seattle, and Miami are other cities encouraging fixed seating.

A comparison on the processes for initial application, design, and permitting adopted by these ten cities is presented in the following categories:

**Initial Application**

Applicants in San Francisco, Vancouver, Portland and Miami must submit a completed application form, site plan, photographs, and project narrative in order to be considered for a parklet project. Oakland follows the same requirements with the exception of submitted photographs being optional.

The approval process in New York, Chicago, Montreal, and Calgary utilizes a permit-based approach, requiring less documentation than the other municipalities that operate on an application-based approach.
Kickstarter parklet projects and similarly, three that are Indiegogo-sponsored. By comparison, every Kickstarter project has succeeded its campaign goal and every Indiegogo project has failed to reach its goal. The data suggests that the all-or-nothing Kickstarter model may provide greater incentive for the campaigner to reach its funding goal, whereas Indiegogo campaigners retain all funds raised regardless of meeting their goal.

Public Notice Period
Portland sponsors pursuing a parklet project are encouraged to download a notification flyer template available on the City's website for use as "one of several methods...to develop community understanding and support of the proposed Street seat installation prior to submitting the application package." Similarly, sponsors of projects proposed under the Seattle Department of Transportation Pilot Parklet Program fill out a notice of parklet application form, publicly made available for a two-week period. The notice period for proposed parklets in San Francisco, Seattle, and Portland upon conditional approval after application submission last for 10, 14, and 14-calendar days, respectively.

General Costs
The costs associated with building the platform for the parklet minus the furnishings are typically $5,000-10,000 for a two-space parklet (SF Planning, 2013). The low end is based on platforms built using loose lay tiles over compacted sand in a timber frame, whereas the high end is representative of timber decking. The French Quarter Parklet is an exception to this rule costing $1,500 for the platform which is composed of granular material (e.g. crushed granite and drain rock). The labour was provided free of charge by Holland Landscapers further lowering the costs.

Based on San Francisco parklet's Kickstarter projects (Appendix B) and online sources, permanent seating would be an additional $5,000-10,000, and that designing for features required for longer durations adds cost. Material selection, size of platform, and donations are the determining cost factor.

The minimum program recovery costs to the applicant, including permit fees for Oakland, Seattle, San Francisco, Vancouver, and Montréal are $1283.73, $1,500, $1,434.44, $1,900, and $2,207, respectively.

Financial Commitment
Four municipalities address financial commitment requirements in the application form. Funding for a Vancouver parklet is strongly encouraged by VIVA, whereby finances should be identified and secured in the initial application. Seattle provides a recommended budget of at least $15,000 for the applicant to reserve for parklet costs. The applicant must provide an estimated project budget in the application form for a
parklet in Chicago.

**Design Review and Permitting**

Applicants in San Francisco granted a permit must secure funds and begin construction within the allotted time of 6 months with a possible 6-month extension. The design review for the Commercial Drive and the French Quarter parklets in Vancouver was a 6-month process beginning end of October with the design officially approved end of April.

**Impact Studies**

Parklet impact studies operating as research collaborations with volunteer groups have been implemented in Los Angeles, Seattle, and San Francisco. Impacts before and after the Divisadero parklet installation were collected by the San Francisco Great Streets Project. A baseline of on-site data was collected on Wednesday, March 3, and Saturday, March 6, 2010; and again, six weeks after the parklet installation on Wednesday, May 5 and Saturday May 8, 2010 (Pratt, 2010). Data was collected in the form of pedestrian count and activity tally sheets, a user survey, and a business survey. Findings reveal that on average there is a 30% increase of people sitting or standing at or near the parklet; an increase of nearly 200% was observed on weekdays (Pratt, 2010).

The DLANC Complete Streets Working Group has issued a Parklet Impact Study for Los Angeles’s first four parklets piloted on Spring Street. The Group is currently documenting the pre-and-post parklet evaluation of the benefits to parklets. The research initiative is a volunteer-led collaboration between DLANC and USC School of Architecture (Complete Streets, 2014).

**Safety**

Siting parklets in urban areas of reduced motor vehicle speed limits or reducing speed limits where parklets are proposed has been recommended by a majority of the municipalities. Five and three municipalities require parklets to be built on streets with maximum speed limits of 25 mph and 30 mph, respectively; streets with limits may be considered on a case-by-case basis. The rationale is to site parklets where there is greatest potential for more people to walk and use bicycles along the street.

The use of protective barriers at the ends, corner edges, and traffic-faceing side is a subject of debate. Six of the municipalities require wheel stops and reflective soft-hit posts at the ends of the parklet or similar feature. The Department of Transportation in New York and Chicago assess each site to determine if necessary traffic safety improvements are needed. Planters, railing, cabling, or other similar features are common proposals made by the municipalities as protective barriers at the corner edges of the parklet. Similar features for the
corner edges are proposed for the traffic-facing side, the requirement that a continuous 36” (min) - 42” (max) high buffer is provided for San Francisco and Grand Rapids parklets.

Since the first parklet installation in 2010, there is only one recorded incident among the three dozen parklets in San Francisco of a car backing up into a parklet; however no injury or damage occurred.

**Sustainable Design and Construction**

Recycled and sustainably harvested products are preferred as the material choice for parklets in San Francisco, New York, and Grand Rapids; and encouraged in the VIVA Vancouver Parklet Program Guide. At least two of the conditionally approved parklets in Vancouver were not required to nor proposed the use of recycled or sustainably harvested materials. The remaining six municipalities all state in their parklet material that parklet materials should be of high quality and durability.

**San Francisco and Vancouver Map Comparisons**

Figure 38 presents a timeline of plazas and parklets in both San Francisco and Vancouver.

The SF Planning Department launched parklets under the Pavement to Parks program as a trial run in 2010, and within a year the program was made official. The first parklet in Vancouver was initiated through the Summer Spaces program. The first parklet in each city was built in 2010 with San Francisco being a few months earlier than Vancouver.
Figure 38. Parklets (blue) and plazas (green) timeline in San Francisco and Vancouver (Author, 2014)
Recommendations

A list of twenty-six recommendations is proposed for informing revisions to the current Vancouver Parklet Pilot Program Guide for the next round of applicants. These recommendations were developed based on research, direct involvement with the French Quarter Parklet, and a compilation of feedback from eight individuals, including key parklet stakeholders and public space advocates. Figure 39 summarizes the recommended municipality procedures for the initial application, design review, permitting, construction, and installation processes.

Figure 39. Vancouver recommended parklet process (Author, 2014)
**Initial Application**

1. The applicant must select at least one of the following durations for the proposed parklet by checkbox on the form: short (e.g. 1-year), medium (e.g. 3-year), or long (e.g. 5-year) plans. See Recommendation #3.

**Rationale:** Identifying the duration of a proposed parklet will determine the level of complexity in permit approval and help expedite the process. Parklets should be built to last; however, quality and durability expectations should be proportional to the parklet’s intended life-span. A choice between medium and long term would allow the sponsor to be clear about their expectations up-front; three and five years are suggested as typical durations used by VIVA. A choice of a short project would allow an expedited process and more experimentation consistent with the tactical urbanism philosophy; furthermore, selecting short as well as medium or long would suggest an interest in installing quickly and upgrading based on actual use.

2. The initial application should include examples of built parklets to inform the sponsor of typical features and provide a reference to the Guide for further explanation.

**Rationale:** During the scouting process for a business sponsor, many of the businesses approached were not familiar with parklets including their use and features. Photos in the Guide with explanations of typical parklet features encouraged by VIVA will better communicate to the general public of its intended uses.

3. The applicant must commit in writing to a minimum expenditure based on duration, size, and features (e.g. $10,000 for short-duration with moveable seating). Proof of funds is not required at this stage. The cost implications of each of these factors, quoted conservatively, should be provided. See Recommendation #9.

**Rationale:** The costs associated with building a parklet must be clearly acknowledged by the applicant before proceeding further in the process. This would help calibrate expectations and provide a more accurate estimate to avoid later surprises. For example, the breakdown could include that typical costs to build the platform minus the furnishings are $5,000-10,000 for a two-space parklet, that permanent seating would be an additional $5,000-10,000, and that designing for features required for longer durations adds cost. Proof of funds are required after permit approval and before construction begins enabling the applicant to gather any necessary funds.
Short-listed Applicants

4. All other factors equal, short-duration parklets should be expedited over long-duration parklets, especially those planning a staged installation process.

   **Rationale:** Parklets are semi-permanent installations that are evolutionary processes. Priority should be given to applicants intending to install soon, and in such cases, short-duration should be encouraged. Parklet designs can then be assessed on a trial basis without causing delays in the approval process.

5. Short-listed applicants proposing a parklet for short-duration may select movable furniture rather than fixed seating. Parklet installations intended for medium-to-long duration should include fixed seating.

   **Rationale:** Longevity and costs for parklet materials and features should be proportional to intended duration.

Community Support

6. Short-listed applicants are selected based on proof of documented support in form of petitions and letters at minimum. Signatures from neighbours within a 15 minute walk or 5 min bus/bike ride to the parklet should be obtained.

   **Rationale:** Public outreach begins with tenants and property owners in buildings fronting and neighbouring the public space; however, parklets are in the public realm therefore demonstrated support must go beyond the five-block radius (currently listed in the sample petition form) in order for a balanced pool of supporters. Informing the public at large in the early stages of the proposed parklet will provide a more accurate picture of the level of support.

7. Short-listed applicants will be issued a public notice posted on-site and online by VIVA staff to last for 14 calendar days.

   **Rationale:** The notice period for proposed parklets in San Francisco and Seattle last for 10 and 14 calendar days, respectively. Parklet locations with conditional approval should notify the greater community in Vancouver for a 14 calendar day period, which is consistent with the Vancouver Charter. Posting information publicly in the earliest stages of the parklet approval process creates transparency. Someone who files an objection to the parklet during this period will present their case before a public hearing officer, setting a consistent
and measurable bar for formally opposing a project similar to a public hearing.

Financial Commitment

8. In addition to proposed parklets being prioritized based on duration, priority of installation scheduling should be given to applicants who already possess sufficient funds within the $10,000-$30,000 range.

**Rationale:** If additional funding is required, applicants granted a permit must secure funds and begin construction within the allotted time of 6 months with a possible 6 month extension.

9. Crowd-funding is encouraged to build community support; however, it is highly encouraged that the permit is obtained first before launching the campaign. Applicants should expect to spend at least one month of preparatory work on the campaign, most of the funding period working on the campaign, and another month following after the campaign to distribute awards to backers.

**Rationale:** Parklet campaigns are most successful when “getting the word out” is planned well in advance. As a result, campaigning should not occur during permitting process but after permit approval, as the final design is subject to change and may affect the funding goal. The amount of work involved in a campaign should be noted up front to ensure it is the best use of the needed time.

Impact Studies

10. Monitoring and evaluation of parklets must be performed or delegated to a volunteer task force by VIVA staff before and after project installation. Pre-and-post installation monitoring data should be collected at the same time(s) of the year with the time and frequency selected based on usefulness and comparability. Post installation monitoring must be established no later than a year after installation.

**Rationale:** Parklets must be assessed quantitatively and qualitatively in order to evaluate the public space on economic, social, and environmental benefits. The peak use of the parklet must be represented in the data set through user counts taken on days with high foot traffic and favourable weather (e.g., peak business hours for parklets located on commercial streets).

Guide-specific Revisions

General Design Guidelines

11. Existing Text: “The sponsor is responsible for all costs associated with the design and installation of the parklet. Parklets typically cost around $10,000
to $20,000, depending on design factors, size, and material choice.”

**Suggested Change:** The sponsor is responsible for all costs associated with the design and installation of the parklet. Parklets typically cost $10,000-15,000 per parking stall, depending on design factors, size, and material choice. *It is important to note that the low end factors in volunteer and pro bono services established through community and/or stakeholder partnerships.*

**Rationale:** Parklet costs are highly variable given the diversity of stakeholders and community partnerships. The applicant should be made aware of cost implications for the parklet. Based on final costs for Vancouver parklets to be installed in 2014, estimates should be refined and categorized as much as possible.

12.**Existing Text:** “Any movable items, such as tables and chairs, must be either locked down at night or taken inside. Unsecured furniture is not permitted after business hours. All tables and chairs must be different from what you are using as part of your business, including sidewalk café tables and tables inside the restaurant.”

**Suggested Change:** Abide by the spirit of this statement and enable movable furniture. Conditionally-approved parklet applicants were advised not to include moveable seating, and moveable or fixed umbrellas were not permitted for at least one applicant.

**Rationale:** The application form should include the option of selecting moveable seating and umbrellas. Among the 42 existing parklets in San Francisco, 47% include moveable seating and 47% include fixed seating (6% of parklets contain a mixture of both). The City of San Francisco strongly encourages seating to be integrated into the parklet; however, the data presented shows the demand from sponsors to use moveable seating is equivalent to that of fixed seating and reasons further may be for economic savings.

13.**Existing Text:** “Seating should be durable and comfortable for individuals and groups of all ages and abilities. Designs that encourage use in rainy weather should be considered.”

**Suggested Change:** Seating should be durable and comfortable for individuals and groups of all ages and abilities. Designs should encourage use in rainy weather in order to be considered.

**Rationale:** Parklets in Vancouver are annual
installations and therefore should accommodate public use in all weather conditions and encourage protection from rainfall remaining on the structure. The City of Vancouver’s Transportation 2040 Plan directs staff to “incorporate rain-friendly design features into public spaces” (Action W 1.4.3).

14. Existing Text: “Parklets are semi-permanent structures that must withstand the rigours of everyday outdoor use. Materials and design should be durable and low-maintenance.” (extracted from General Guidelines bullet point list)

Existing Text: “Parklets should be constructed with high quality, durable materials. The use of recycled or sustainably harvested products is encouraged.” (extracted from Technical Requirements bullet point list)

Suggested Change: Parklets are semi-permanent structures that must withstand the rigours of everyday outdoor use. Materials and design should be durable and low-maintenance. The use of recycled, donated, or sustainably harvested products is encouraged.

(revised text for General Guidelines)

Rationale: Parklets often operate on a community partnership model using creative resources to acquire durable and high-quality construction materials. If text reads as “encouraged” then it is a guideline more than requirement.

15. New Text: Plantings should be included and provide visual enjoyment year-round.

Rationale: 91% of parklets in San Francisco use plantings to repurpose paved surfaces into green spaces, such as potted plants, planters (i.e. for shrubs, trees), and integrated planter walls (i.e. for groundcover). A variety of planting features should be encouraged to meet Vancouver’s Greenest City Action Plan Access to Nature goal of “ensuring that every person lives within a 5 min walk of a park, greenway, or other green space by 2020.”

16. Existing Text: “The design should consider travel patterns and behaviour of people walking and biking in order to minimize potential conflicts and maximize contribution to public life and public realm.”

Suggested Change: The design should consider travel patterns and behaviour of people walking and biking in order to minimize potential conflicts and maximize contribution to life and public realm. Adjacent and/or integrated bicycle parking infrastructure is strongly encouraged.
**Rationale:** The Transportation 2040 Plan aims to provide “facilities that feel comfortable for people of all ages and abilities.” Parklets are an opportunity to promote cycling in addition to walking. Through the design process, bicycle parking corrals have been encouraged by City staff.

**Technical Requirements**

17. **Existing Text:** “The parklet must be located where permanent parking is permitted, i.e. it must not occupy a lane used by moving traffic at any time (no rush hour regulations).”

**Suggested Change:** See rationale.

**Rationale:** Because permanent parking is signed or not signed in several ways, examples should be given. See Appendix for signage examples for where parklets are permitted and not permitted.

18. **Existing Text:** “The parklet shall use a minimum of two parking spaces with no set maximum length.”

**Suggested Change:** The parklet shall use a minimum of one-and-a-half parking spaces with no set maximum length.

**Rationale:** At least three of the conditionally approved parklet locations for a 2013 installation are one-and-a-half parking stalls in length including the 1.5m set back from nearest parking space.

19. **Existing Text:** “Parklets shall not be located on a street exceeding a running slope of 5%.”

**Suggested Change:** Parklets shall not be located on a street exceeding a running slope of 5% and cross slope of 2%. Parklets on streets with running slopes greater than 3% require a wheelchair rest area at minimum 900mm wide and 1200mm deep.

**Rationale:** Parklets are public spaces that must be built to accommodate all ages and abilities.

20. **Existing Text:** “To maintain clear sight lines for traffic at intersections, a 6 metre distance shall be maintained between the parklet and the nearest edge of the intersecting sidewalk.”

**Suggested Change:** To maintain clear sight lines for traffic at intersections, a 6m distance shall be maintained between the parklet and the nearest edge of the intersecting sidewalk, crosswalk, or stop line (such as at a stop sign or traffic signal). A 1.5m distance shall be maintained between the parklet and the travelled portion of any alley or driveway crossing.
**Rationale:** Five of the six conditionally approved parklet locations for a 2013 installation are located next to an intersection. It was not clear to at least three applicants that alleys needed to satisfy the 6m requirement, which is not consistent with the City of Vancouver’s Street & Traffic bylaw as it applies to stopped motor vehicles. A 6m clearance from an alley or driveway encourages parking in that space, which would otherwise be legal, and thereby potentially increases the potential for blocked turns and sight lines versus a shorter clearance.

21. **New Text:** The parklet outside corners shall be protected by a bollard (e.g. soft-hit post), sidewalk bulb-out, or other similar feature.

**Rationale:** The current Guide makes no reference to bollards yet their use and purpose was a subject of debate during meetings with VIVA staff and the French Quarter Parklet stakeholders. It is highly encouraged that bollards relate to the site context and are used with discretion as visual aids. Only 20% of San Francisco’s parklets use or used bollards (e.g. soft-hit and hard posts).

22. **Existing Text:** “Curb and roadside drainage must be maintained; catch basins may not be blocked.”

**Suggested Change:** Curb and roadside drainage must be maintained by installation of a 3” diameter (min.) PVC drainage pipe; catch basins may not be blocked.

**Rationale:** All existing parklets contain a 3” diameter PVC pipe and the two conditionally-approved parklets closest to obtaining a permit were required to meet this engineering standard.

23. **New Text:** Proposing parklets on streets that have high foot and/or bicycle traffic along transit corridors is encouraged.

**Rationale:** Siting parklets in urban areas where major bicycle and transit routes exist will create better access to the public space and promote more people to walk and use bicycles along the street.

24. **Existing Text:** “Parklets should be constructed with high quality, durable materials. The use of recycled or sustainably harvested products is encouraged.”

**Suggested Change:** Parklets should be constructed with high quality, durable materials. Parklets are encouraged to be built with cedar or other materials that can easily be relocated or disassembled. Cedar products must meet sustainable treatment.

**Rationale:** Use of timber for parklets should be
acknowledged as typical material choice; one of the parklet applicants was not permitted to use concrete as the platform. Sustainable treatment of materials must meet health standards. Note: see Recommendation #12 regarding “use of recycled and sustainably harvested products.”

25. New Text: Plantings should include native and drought-tolerant plants. Refer to the City of Vancouver Green Streets Program website for a list of approved plant species. The main applicant is permitted to delegate plant maintenance responsibilities to a resident volunteering in the Green Streets Program.

Rationale: A resident within a block away from the French Quarter parklet expressed interest in plant maintenance of the parklet and is a volunteer with the Green Streets Program. Collaboration between programs is encouraged.

26. Existing Text: “The majority of construction (as much as possible) should be completed off site, in advance of installation.”

Suggested Change: The majority of construction (as much as possible) should be completed off site, in advance of installation. Parklets are typically constructed off site in a warehouse for three to four weeks. Installation often occurs over the course of several hours to a couple of days if advanced preparation is required.

Rationale: Applicant should be given an estimate of typical construction and installation timelines for parklets. The French Quarter Parklet is anticipated to be installed in two days. Preparatory work is required for stripping the top soil of the boulevard one day in advance of installing the furnishings.
Advice to Landscape Architects

Based on personal experience in tactical urbanism planning, the following is advice to landscape architects interested in pursuing parklet projects:

- begin by familiarizing oneself with the parklet process in own municipality or refer to San Francisco Parklet Manual for guidance on design and technical requirements

- locate a future parklet based on site visits throughout city to acquire knowledge of its environmental and social contexts

- assess the suitability of the proposed parklet site based on municipal program goals, potential sponsors, and parking requirements

- identify the goals and objectives for the proposed parklet and explore both community and municipal partnerships

- include the local community in the early stages of the parklet project to demonstrate support and gauge interest within the neighbourhood

- be open to the possibilities of local and volunteer involvement on various aspects of the project

- maintain a master contact list of parklet stakeholders and partnerships throughout the design and permitting process

- facilitate the process for the community or business parklet sponsor, helping them navigate through the design, permitting, and installation of the parklet (applicable if not main applicant)

- ensure continuous communication with municipal staff, especially during design revisions and review process

- reach out to other design professionals to help acquire building materials and legal resources to fabricate and install project

- explore the possibilities of offsetting parklet costs through donors and grant awards

- communicate with local the neighbourhood the parklet’s progress and provide updates through a website and/or sponsor’s establishment

- remember that parklets intend to bring community together and are fun spaces for the public to enjoy; focus on the community building opportunity that can arise from direct involvement as a facilitator or main applicant
Closing Remarks

After nearly a century of public realm erosion in favour of the automobile, the parklet demonstrates the possibilities of increasing access to public space and the potential for community engagement. Parklets push back into the roadway, extending from the sidewalk and repurposing on-street parking stalls into public spaces. The community gains increased public seating and vegetation in the neighbourhood, often with art and bicycle parking, but the collaborative processes and symbolic results are often as important as the physical changes.

There are at least twenty-one cities in North America aiming for the success of San Francisco’s four dozen parklets; however, these new public spaces are normally initiated by designers or businesses and the iterative design processes emphasize municipal input. Municipalities programming parklets encourage or require applicants interested in building a parklet to demonstrate community support, but it is often the need to enlist volunteers that does the heavy lifting.

The direct involvement of Vancouver landscape architects in the French Quarter Parklet case study influenced the outcomes of the project goals, as well as design, construction scheduling, and material choices. Yet community dialogue and the formation of partnerships through the initiative of other parklet stakeholders had shaped the final product of the parklet.

Action research on parklets in Vancouver and comparison to San Francisco shows that although most parklets are sponsored by businesses, the processes themselves can lead to forming community partnerships that strengthen support in the neighbourhood and further afield.
References


*San Francisco Pavement to Parks Web site [SF Pavement to Parks].* (2013). Retrieved February 18, 2013, from pavementtoparks.sfplanning.org


## Appendix A - New York

### NYC Plaza Program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Round</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Borough</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Partnership</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>0 - Year 2007</td>
<td>Pearl Street Triangle Plaza</td>
<td>Brooklyn</td>
<td>Pearl St at Water St</td>
<td>DUMBO BID</td>
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<tr>
<td>1 - Year 2008</td>
<td>Knickerbocker Plaza</td>
<td>Brooklyn</td>
<td>Knickerbocker Ave &amp; Myrtle Ave, Humboldt St between Moore St &amp; Varet St, Fulton St &amp; Marcy Ave</td>
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<td>Humboldt Street Plaza</td>
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<td>Marcy Avenue Plaza</td>
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<td>Myrtle Avenue Plaza</td>
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<td>Fox Square</td>
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<td>3 - Year 2010</td>
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<td>Brooklyn</td>
<td>South Elliot Place at Lafayette Ave &amp; Fulton St, Ashford St at Livonia &amp; New Lots Ave, East New York Ave &amp; Pitkin Ave</td>
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<td></td>
<td>New Lots Triangle Plaza</td>
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<td>Zion Triangle</td>
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<td>4 - Year 2011</td>
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<td>Louise Nevelson Plaza</td>
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<td>Municipal Plaza</td>
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<td>37th Road Plaza</td>
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### Plazas Built Independent of Rounds

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<td>Putnam Plaza</td>
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### Similarities & Differences between SPACES

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<th>Maintenance</th>
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<td>Natural stone benches</td>
<td>Asphalt seal coating</td>
<td>Meeting/Waiting</td>
<td>Groups (3 or more)</td>
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<td>Raised flower beds</td>
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<td>Pairs</td>
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<td>Polished granite benches</td>
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**Pearl Street Triangle Plaza**
- Art installation
- Natural stone benches
- Meeting/Waiting
- Groups (3 or more)

**Times Square**
- Art installation
- Natural stone benches
- Meeting/Waiting
- Groups (3 or more)

**Herald Square**
- Natural stone benches
- Meeting/Waiting
- Groups (3 or more)
Appendix B - San Francisco

Kickstarter Parklet Campaign Projects (Author, 2014)

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<th>City</th>
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<th>Project Name</th>
<th>Goal</th>
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# Indiegogo Parklet Campaign Projects (Author, 2014)

<table>
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<th>Goal</th>
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## Appendix C - Vancouver

VIVA's uncertainties in the presence of factors such as public safety, theft, and graffiti. (Author, 2014)

<table>
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