



Town of San Anselmo

525 San Anselmo Avenue
San Anselmo, CA 94960

Staff Report

TO: Town Council

6/28/2022

Item #: 5.

FROM:

Sean Condry, P.E., Director of Public Works

SUBJECT:

Review and Provide Guidance Regarding Regulations of the Town's Parklet Program

RECOMMENDATION

That Town Council provide guidance to staff regarding the status of Parklets in San Anselmo.

INTRODUCTION

Upon direction from the Council, in November 2021 staff presented a proposed parklet ordinance and guidelines for the Council's consideration. The Council heard public comment and directed staff to return at a later date for further consideration of long term parklets. Now, staff returns to the Council seeking guidance and direction regarding the desire to implement a long term parklet program, and if so, under what general parameters.

BACKGROUND AND DISCUSSION

A. History of Parklets in San Anselmo

To serve the community and local business during Covid, the Town of San Anselmo swiftly implemented a temporary Outdoor Activities Program in the Spring of 2020 that authorized outdoor dining and retail activities in on-street parking locations. Parklets developed under this temporary program have enlivened and activated the downtown area and increased pedestrian activity and a sense of community. In addition to the parklets, the Town started closing San Anselmo Avenue on weekend nights with live music and added the new Creek Park picnic area. The closing of San Anselmo Avenue, the creation of the Creek Park picnic area, and the parklets have come together to create a place where residents and visitors from all over come to San Anselmo to relax, shop, and dine, making the Town a destination to be. Without action from the Council, the parklets will not be allowed once the State of Emergency due to Covid is lifted.

Parklets repurpose public space, such as on-street parking, into areas for public and commercial use. The development of parklets, particularly for outdoor dining and retail purposes, dramatically expanded at the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic as a way to allow restaurants and retail businesses safely operate outdoors. Beyond responding to Covid-19, parklets provide benefits such as increasing outdoor community space, promoting walkability, and encouraging pedestrians to linger in business areas, as we have all seen.

B. Public Outreach and Participation

Over approximately the last year, Town has held three community workshop meetings to discuss parklets - on May 11 and May 27, 2021, and more recently on April 14, 2022. On September 28, 2021, and November 9, 2021, parklets were brought before Town Council to consider a long-term program, see Attachments 1 and 2, respectively. The Economic Development Committee also discussed parklets on February 9 and September 14, 2021. Prior to the above meetings parklets have been discussed with Council in relation to Covid and the Urgency Ordinance allowing temporary parklets.

At the community meetings various opinions were heard for and against parklets. The biggest objection has come from some merchants between Tunstead Avenue and Tamalpais Avenue who are concerned about the loss of parking, line of sight and other issues. To address the parking concerns, the Town conducted a parking study, Attachment 3.

The Parking Study key findings were that during peak hours for parking downtown north, San Anselmo Avenue from Ross Avenue to San Rafael Avenue:

1. There are over 138 spaces available.
2. The highest occupancy rates are in the 2-hour zones.
3. 70% of the vehicles stayed less than 1 hour in the 2-hour zones.

Based on this information, staff believes there is adequate parking, but it can be better managed. The main recommendations of the Parking Study are:

1. Increase enforcement on San Anselmo Avenue (*General Recommendation*).
2. Increase available 2-hour spaces by converting on-street Magnolia Avenue, southbound SFD (Hub to Tunstead) and Creek Park Lot from 4-hour to 2-hour (removal of Merchant spaces) (*G-1, G-2, CP-1, CP-2*). 71 2-hour spaces
3. Install Pay Stations on San Anselmo Avenue from San Rafael Avenue to Tunstead Avenue to reduce occupancy rates in this section (*SA-2*).

If long term parklets are implemented, staff recommends implementing all of the above recommendations.

A majority of community public comments received by the Town have been in favor of parklets. First, at the community meetings, a majority of public comment supported parklets. At the April 14, 2022, meeting, approximately 25 people spoke and about 80% were in favor of parklets long term. Second, in addition to the community meetings the Town had a survey with over 500 people responding (Attachment 4), and overwhelmingly 90% of the 428 residents who participated supported long term parklets. Similarly, visitors supported long term parklets by 80 percent. Business owners were approximately evenly split in favor and against parklets. It is notable that in the survey both residents and visitors by 80% and 70% respectively, were not concerned about parking. Business owners were again split 50/50 over

their concern for parking.

Staff suggests that the findings of the survey and community meetings seem to indicate that the community as a whole values the vibrancy and life parklets have brought to the Town and is less concerned about parking.

C. Other Jurisdictions

Many cities and towns have adopted long term parklets while others are still trying to determine how, or whether, to move forward. For example, recently the City of Healdsburg with a similar population size of San Anselmo passed a new "Ongoing Parklet Program", Attachment 5, which lays out the rules and guidelines for parklets. Similar to the draft guidelines brought to Council on November 9, 2021, it requires that 50% of the sidewalks be open, and allows roofs/canopies. Safety and ADA requirements are included. In addition, Healdsburg charges a \$1.50 per square foot monthly fee for the private use of the parking spaces, and also includes an annual staff administrative fees of \$2,400. (i.e., a 352 sq. ft. space x \$1.50 x 12 months = \$6,336; plus \$2,400 = \$8,736 annual fee.) Healdsburg also provides that a maximum of 5% of the public parking spaces may be used for parklets.

Seattle adopted a parklet program similar to San Francisco which now has over 2,000 parklets, but with a twist. Instead of making them private only they are a hybrid, both public and private, and they call them Streateries. For example, during business hours customers use the parklets, and during other times they are open to the public. This may be something that the Town wants to look into too.

D. Direction Sought

Based on all of the information above, community meetings, and Council meetings to date, staff has the following options to be considered by Council.

Option 1: Permit Long Term Parklets

Staff would come back to Council with draft guidelines and an ordinance to allow for long term parklets. Some items to be considered include the following:

1. Permit parklets in downtown areas, with the same or different rules for each, for example: San Anselmo Avenue from Bolinas Avenue to Ross Avenue, and from Ross Avenue to San Rafael Avenue, Sir Francis Drake Boulevard, and the Greenfield Avenue corridor.
2. Put a cap on the number of spaces used, such as 5%, which is similar to Healdsburg. With 538 spaces in downtown north from San Rafael Avenue to Ross Avenue, only about 26 spaces or approximately 13 parklets would be allowed if each one were two spaces. On San Anselmo Avenue from Bolinas Avenue to Ross Avenue, there are 255 public parking spaces, which would only allow about 12 parking spaces to be used or 6 parklets if

each business used two per parklet.

3. Consider protection from the elements such as rain and sun by allowing canopies or roofs. Roofing is seen as essential for businesses that have parklets, and designs can be made to be low-profile and maintain traffic and bicycle visibility.
4. Permit duration: should it be 1 year, 3 years, or more with an annual review.
5. Fee structure for use of right of way.
6. Should parklets be private only, or public and private? During business operation the parklets could be private only and during closure the public would have the right to use them or some combination thereof.

Option 2: Parklets Seasonal Only

1. Allow parklets but they must be removal during winter months.
2. Who pays for cost of installation and removal? Public funds set aside to assist?

Option 3: Parklets Discontinued

1. Parklets would no longer be allowed after a date set by Council, or after the expiration of the current Covid State of Emergency.

CONCLUSION

Staff recommends that Council approve Option 1 to permit long term parklets based on broad support of the community, along with the vibrancy and activation that parklets bring to the Town. While parking and some other items have been raised as a concern, the Parking Study has shown that parking in and of itself is not an issue, and both the residents and visitors support parklets based on surveys.

GENERAL PLAN AND CLIMATE ACTION PLAN CONSISTENCY

A Parklet Ordinance and Parklet Guidelines are consistent with the goals and policies of the Town's General Plan to preserve, maintain, and enhance the character and quality of life in San Anselmo; and are consistent with the Town's Climate Action Plan since it will encourage pedestrian use of the downtown area and utilize outdoor spaces.

CEQA

A Parklet Ordinance and Parklet Guidelines are categorically exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act ("CEQA") pursuant to CEQA Guidelines section 15301(c), as a minor alteration to existing public or private facilities.