



# Parklet and Plaza Manual



# Baltimore City DOT Parklet and Plaza Manual

## Program Overview

Parklets and Plazas are temporary installments of amenities for pedestrians. Parklets are installed in existing on-street parking, while Plazas are installed in existing under-utilized Right-of-Way. Parklets and Plazas have the ability to reclaim infrastructure for pedestrians, creating more room for people to gather, dine, and perform. They are ideal for areas high in foot traffic with mixed uses but can also be used to “activate” under-used curb space. Parklets and Plazas typically complement the existing sidewalk by providing additional pedestrian, bicycle, and scooter amenities. These amenities may include seating, greenery, lighting, art, and bicycle/scooter parking or maintenance facilities. Parklets and Plazas may even be a destination for play or exercise. These mini parks can become crucial assets to communities with limited public space.

This manual was developed to help answer questions about Parklets and Plazas pertaining to allowable locations, design criteria, and the application process. The Planning Division within BCDOT will provide guidance and technical assistance to community partners interested in sponsoring a Parklet or Plaza. Community partners may include neighborhood associations, Business Improvement Districts, Community Development Centers, local businesses, local non-profits, schools, and school PTAs/PTOs.

Residents may also apply for a Parklet or Plaza in front of their homes. Applicants are also encouraged to consult with design professionals such as a licensed Architect, Engineer, or Landscape Architect for the execution of the Parklet or Plaza.

The applicant will be responsible for funding, installing, operating, and maintaining the Parklet or Plaza. The applicant will enter into a maintenance agreement with BCDOT, in the form of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). In order to enter into a MOU with the BCDOT, the applicant must provide proof of liability insurance and show that they are in Good Standing with the Maryland Department of Assessment and Taxation. The MOU will be reviewed of The Board of Estimates (BOE). After BOE approval of the MOU, the Parklet or Plaza may be installed. It is further understood that the BOE reserves the right, in its discretion to terminate the agreement at any time with thirty-day notice.

This manual describes the process for implementing **public** Parklets or Plazas only. Businesses who wish to implement a Parklet or Plaza for the purposes of outdoor table service or other private retail should still adhere to all design criteria outlined in this manual. To implement a Parklet or Plaza intended for private use, businesses should apply for a Curbside Commercial Permit through the Department of Transportation Right of Way Division.



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Businesses may use parklets to route the sidewalk around their outdoor seating area.





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## Placement, Fire Safety, and ADA Criteria

### Placement of Parklets and Plazas

- Cannot be located in existing loading zone
- Cannot take the place of disabled parking
- Cannot be placed in peak-restricted parking lanes that function as travel lanes during peak hours
- Must be at least 15 feet from a fire hydrant
- Should not be located on a street with 5% or more running/cross slope
- If located adjacent to an active bus stop, must be sited 20 feet behind the start of the concrete pad for bus loading/unloading
- Should be 5 feet away from the start of a driveway on both sides of the drop curb
- Cannot obstruct any bus stops or bus loading zones. Parklets must be at least 10 feet from an existing bus shelter.
- Cannot be located on a road with a posted speed limit above 30 mph
- Cannot block access to emergency facilities
- Avoid overhead utility wires. For any work within 10 feet of overhead wires, BGE must be contacted at 1-800-685-0123

### Fire Safety Guidelines

- Facilities built primarily out of untreated wood and other flammable materials must be built a minimum of ten feet away from buildings.
- Facilities built primarily out of fire-resistant materials such as treated wood may be built a minimum of five feet away from buildings.

### ADA Criteria

- Must provide ADA-compliant access:
  - For parklets or plazas with a platform, the top of the platform should be at the level of the sidewalk with a maximum gap of one-half inch. Parklet and plaza platforms shall be flat with a maximum slope of 2% in any direction.
  - For parklets and plazas that do not have a platform, ADA-compliant temporary ramps must be included in the design, if ramps do not already exist on the curb.
  - Entrance must be at least 36 inches wide.
- All ADA regulations for outdoor spaces must be followed, including but not limited to regulations for cables, cords, and wires used for lighting and speakers, wheelchair turning space, wheelchair seating area, and accessible route



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Parklets do not require a platform but must be ADA-accessible.



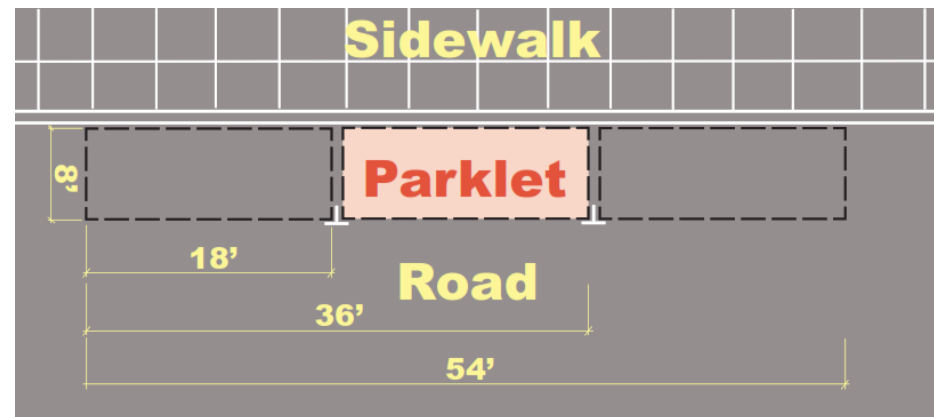
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## Design Criteria

- Parklets may take up one or more parking spaces. A parallel parking space is typically 8' x 20'. Width of parklets cannot exceed 8 feet unless approved by DOT. Parklet requests in angled parking are allowed and will be evaluated case-by-case for safety compliance.
- Plazas have no requirement on size or shape, but will be reviewed by DOT for functionality. If located on a curve, the radius should be at least 10' for neighborhood roads and 15' for higher-trafficked roads.
- Must have traffic barriers on all sides facing the roadway, with a minimum height of 36 inches. Barriers must not obstruct sightlines. Noncontinuous barriers can be spaced a maximum of 12 inches apart.

### Example barriers:

- Concrete Jersey barriers
- Plastic Jersey barriers
- Wooden crate planters or other custom wooden planters
- Granite blocks
- Galvanized steel planters
- Tire planters
- Large polymer plastic planters
- Self-watering planters
- Small trees or plants
- Structures associated with the parklet or plaza cannot be fixed to the sidewalk with the exception of accessible ramps and thresholds
- No objects shall be bolted or attached in any way to the roadway or any other structure, including but not limited to trees, street furniture, fire hydrants, traffic poles, buildings, and streetlights



- Roof canopies may be constructed and should be sloped in a way that drains towards the street and away from the sidewalk
- Edges of parklet or plaza should be marked with high intensity retro-reflective tape or reflectors to be visible to drivers at night
- Sightlines, including pedestrian and bicycle sightlines, must not be obstructed
- Platform floor load-bearing should be at least 100 pounds per square foot
- Railings are optional. If included, railings should be no higher than 3' and able to withstand 200 feet of horizontal force
- Any vertical element shall be evaluated by BCDOT
- Solar lighting is encouraged over traditional lighting
- Cannot block gutter flow runoff. Platform support beams should be offset from curb or run parallel to the curb to allow drainage to occur between beams.
- Images/words depicting gratuity, a strong religious theme, violence, profanity, or logos are not allowed



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Angled parking spaces can be used for parklets.



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## Applicant Checklist

- Contextual Map** (Google Satellite) showing street names and site inventory i.e. utility access panels, streetlights, hydrants, bike racks, etc. with distances from proposed parklet. Label nearby businesses
- Schematic Plan** showing visual of proposed parklet or plaza with dimensions/footprint and materials labelled
- Materials Specifications**
- Signed Petition** including 60% of occupants (renters and owners) of the block. Property owners of vacant properties do not apply.
- Property Owner Support** from property directly in front of the parklet or plaza
- Commercial Liability Insurance**, \$1 million for each occurrence and \$2 million in aggregate
- Construction Schedule**
- Maintenance Plan**

*DOT Planning and Traffic will review the application and work with the applicant to ensure safety compliance and appropriateness of the design. Upon DOT approval, applicants will sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the City of Baltimore, assuming responsibility for maintaining the parklet or plaza. The MOU will last for a duration of two years. The applicant may request to extend the MOU.*

- **MOU:** After signing the MOU, applicants will need a permit for installation
- **Notification:** 14 days prior to installation, applicant is required to notify the adjacent property owners or occupants of the project. Notification can include but is not limited to a letter, flyer, postcard, and other written notification



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**Questions?**

**Contact Baltimore City  
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