

CITY MANAGER'S WEEKLY REPORT

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CITY OF
Raleigh
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OFFICE

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INFORMATION:

Midtown-St. Albans Area Plan Update

Staff Resource: Jason Hardin, City Planning, 996-2657, Jason.Hardin@raleighnc.gov

The second phase of public input for the Midtown-St. Albans plan wrapped up last week with participation from more than 600 survey respondents and more than 100 in-person meeting attendees. In order to include a broad range of input, staff worked to supplement mailings and social media communication with on-the-ground efforts, including outreach to bus riders, paper versions of Spanish-language surveys, outreach to apartment complexes and employers, and more.

The “Understanding the Area” phase, which included a series of in-person meetings as well as an online open house, provided information and analysis about land use and transportation conditions and gathered input on top priorities for the area.

Compiled input from the meetings is available on the [Midtown project page](#). A formal issues and opportunities report will be published in February.

Staff and the consultant team will present a summary of input to the project confirmation group and discuss takeaways on February 5. The process will then pivot to the options phase, in which specific policy and project recommendations and choices will be developed. Those options will be presented to the community during the next input phase, scheduled for spring 2019.

(No attachment)

Weekly Digest of Special Events

Staff Resource: Derrick Remer, Special Events Office, 996-2200, derrick.remer@raleighnc.gov

Included with the *Weekly Report* packet is the special events digest for the upcoming week.

(Attachment)

Council Member Follow Up Items

Follow Up from the September 18, 2018 City Council Meeting

City Planning Fee Adjustment Study

Staff Resource: Travis Crane, City Planning, 996-2656, travis.crane@raleighnc.gov

During the meeting Council requested staff to perform a City Planning application fee adjustment study. The study is to include a review of existing application fees, potential new fees, and recommendations to align fees with the FY2020 budget.

At this time, staff has produced an inventory of existing departmental application fees and has identified applications and processes for which no fee currently exists. Staff is currently conducting research on peer-city application fees for benchmarking and is drafting recommended changes to the current fee schedule. This information will be submitted for consideration during the FY2019-20 budget development process.

(No Attachment)

Parklet Pilot Program and Vacant/Residual Parcels Evaluation (Council Member Crowder)

Staff Resource: Dhanya Sandeep, City Planning, 996-2659, dhanya.sandeep@raleighnc.gov

During the Council requested staff to evaluate the parklet pilot program along with conducting an analysis of vacant/residual parcels located in the Downtown area. A team of staff from Zoning, Planning, Urban Design Center, Development Services, and the Raleigh Department of Transportation convened internally to review and evaluate the pilot program. Additionally, staff interviewed a prior permit applicant to gather direct feedback on the program – its process and the permitting requirements.

The City has supported the installation of two active parklets since 2013 that have been successful in serving the community as a unique public space and as an extension of sidewalk to support vibrant uses within the Downtown limits. The high parking encumbrance fee however, has been a deterrent in attracting more parklets to Downtown. Included with the *Weekly Report* materials is a memorandum and analysis which summarizes the findings of the team evaluation of the parklet pilot program and suggested areas for refinement.

(Attachment)

Truck Traffic-Pineview Drive (Council Member Crowder)

During the meeting Council requested staff investigate if “No Thru Truck” signage could be installed on Pineview Drive, at the intersections of both Avent Ferry Road and Kaplan Drive. A large vehicle had recently hit some low hanging utility lines causing power outages throughout the area. Shortly thereafter, Duke Energy addressed the issue of the low hanging utility lines. In response to the Council request, staff has installed “No Thru Truck” signs the week of January 14.



Pineview Drive is currently closed to thru traffic due to an active stormwater construction project along Pineview and Swift Drives. Local truck traffic associated with this project may still occur as construction equipment is needed to complete the project.

Weekly Report

Special Events Weekly Digest

Friday, January 25 – Thursday, January 31

City of Raleigh Special Events Office
specialevents@raleighnc.gov | (919) 996-2200 | www.raleighnc.gov/specialevents

Permitted Special Events

No permitted events during this time.

Other Events This Weekend

Raleigh Police Department Career Fair

Friday, January 25
Raleigh Marriott Crabtree Valley

The Firebird – North Carolina Symphony Classical Series

Friday, January 25 – Saturday, January 26
Meymandi Concert Hall

Carmen – North Carolina Opera

Friday, January 25 & Sunday, January 27
Memorial Auditorium

Raleigh Roasts

Saturday, January 26
City of Raleigh Museum

18th Annual African American Cultural Celebration

Saturday, January 26
North Carolina Museum of History

NC State vs. Clemson

Saturday, January 26
PNC Arena

Phil Wiggins Blues House Party – PineCone Piedmont Council of Traditional Music

Saturday, January 26
Fletcher Opera Theater

Astronomy Days

Saturday, January 26 – Sunday, January 27
North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences

Cher

Sunday, January 27
PNC Arena

State Permitted Event

Women's March on Raleigh

Halifax Mall & Sidewalks
Saturday, January 26
Event Time: 12:30pm – 3:30pm

The State has issued a permit for a rally at Halifax Mall for the 2019 Women's March on Raleigh. In conjunction with this event, participants will march on sidewalks around the Legislative Building and Halifax Mall. The march will begin at 1:00pm in front of the Legislative Building and the rally will take place on Halifax Mall from 2:00pm until 3:30pm. At the time of permit issuance, attendance was expected to be 5,000.

Raleigh Police Department Permitted Event

Sudanese Community of Raleigh Protest

Hargett Street Sidewalks

Saturday, January 26

Event Time: 1:00pm – 5:00pm

The Raleigh Police Department has issued a permit to the Sudanese Community of Raleigh for a sidewalk picket in front of the Raleigh Municipal Building on Hargett Street between Dawson Street and McDowell Street. Participants will be highlighting the current situation in Sudan. At the time of permit issuance, attendance was expected to be 100.

Public Resources

[Event Feedback Form](#): Tell us what you think about Raleigh events! We welcome citizen and participant feedback and encourage you to provide comments or concerns about any events regulated by the Special Events Office. We will use this helpful information in future planning.

[Temporary Road Closures](#): A resource providing current information on street closures in Raleigh.

[Online Events Calendar](#): View all currently scheduled events that are regulated by the City of Raleigh Special Events Office.

Council Member Follow Up



Raleigh

MEMO

TO: Ruffin Hall

FROM: Dhanya P. Sandeep, AICP

DEPARTMENT: City Planning

CC: Ken Bowers, AICP
Roberta Fox, AIA, ASLA
Travis Crane

DATE: January 24, 2019

SUBJECT: Parklet Pilot Program and Downtown Vacant Parcels Evaluation

At a Council meeting held on September 18th, Councilor Crowder requested staff to report on an evaluation of the city's parklet pilot program. Additionally, the Mayor requested an analysis of vacant/residual parcels in Downtown. A team of staff from Zoning, Planning, UDC, Development Services, and Transportation Divisions convened internally to review and evaluate this pilot program. Additionally, staff interviewed prior permit applicants to gather direct feedback on the program – its process and permitting requirements.

Raleigh has supported the installation of two active parklets since 2013 that have been successful in serving the community as a unique public space and an extension of sidewalk to support vibrant uses within the Downtown limits. The high parking encumbrance fee however, has been a deterrent in attracting more parklets to Downtown. This memo summarizes the findings of the team evaluation of the city's parklet pilot program and suggested areas for refinement.

What are Parklets?

The National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO) defines parklets as “public seating platforms that convert curbside parking spaces into vibrant community spaces.” A parklet is a tactical urban intervention that takes one or more parking spaces to expand the sidewalk to create places for people to sit, play, interact, eat, read, observe, plant, or park bikes. *Parklets repurpose part of the street into a public space for people.* Advocates believe that parklets are an effective strategy to reclaim parking spaces from automobiles for pedestrians, to promote street life, face-to-face interactions, and to activate the public realm. Parklets are generally considered more impactful in urban areas lacking open spaces, with narrow congested sidewalks, and in need of vibrant activities.

Overview of Parklets and Related Public Realm Programs in other Cities

There is a movement in downtowns across the country that is set out to reclaim and repurpose underutilized spaces for people as demonstrated by projects like PARKing day, New York City's highline, and Los Angeles' CicLAvia. Parklets have gained the most popularity amongst these initiatives. Funding mechanism for parklets vary largely depending on the goals of the program and the permit fees typically range from \$300 to \$4000 depending on the context and program

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222 West Hargett Street
Raleigh, North Carolina 27601

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Raleigh, North Carolina 27601

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(Mailing Address)

priorities. (See attached Summary of Parklet Program Fees of Peer Cities for additional information.)

Many cities with existing parklet programs report the following benefits:

- Offers economical solution for public space needs for people to gather and interact
- Provides aesthetic enhancement to streetscapes
- Supports local businesses. Research shows a strong increase on retail sales for adjacent businesses and subsequent increase in city revenues
- Encourages pedestrian activity - Increase in pedestrians seated in front of business
- Fosters neighborhood interactions
- Encourages other modes of transportation such as walking and biking
- Impacts to urban areas include traffic calming, low cost extension of existing sidewalks, increase in safety and livability

Parklets, in general fall in three categories based on its purpose and intended users:

1) Those that serve as a public space that is accessible to all users of the public right-of-way

San Francisco, who led the pioneering effort in creating the first parklets has now made parklets into a permanent part of their cityscape. San Francisco's *Pavement to Parks Program* is an overarching public realm program that seeks to look at wide streets that contain zones of wasted space, at intersections, and in areas that need more public spaces by temporarily reclaiming underused areas and turning them into public parks and plazas with a low budget and in short period of time.

2) Those that serve as an extension of the adjacent business space to serve as an outdoor dining space

There are examples of parklets that serve a different purpose: to augment and enhance businesses such as in Long Beach, CA, where parklets allow business expansion to serve outdoor dining needs. Restaurants can restrict the space to patrons only during restaurant hours.

3) Those that are administered as elements of larger public realm enhancement programs

A few cities such as San Francisco, Seattle, and Charlotte allow parklets as a function of a larger public realm program that manages and permits a variety of public realm activities. The City of San Francisco allow parklets or small pocket parks to occupy former parking spaces, street medians, traffic triangles, repurposed travel lanes, or excess asphalt space at angled or irregular intersections. Similarly, the City of Charlotte has the Charlotte Placemaking Hub, a one-stop shop for public realm enhancement tools that includes parklets and other placemaking activities. Charlotte residents are invited to apply for grants of up to \$10,000 for placemaking projects that include painted traffic circles/crosswalks, urban gardens, parklets, sidewalk dining, street furniture, lighting, pocket parks, bike parking, etc.

An example of a similar work done in Raleigh is the conversion of a loading zone space as an extension of the mid-block crossing improvements along Wilmington Street. While not technically considered a parklet defined under the city's parklet pilot program, this is an example of a city-initiated right-of-way treatment integrated with artwork and bike racks, which, in coordination with the mid-block crossing improvement serves as a public realm enhancement to improve safety of the area. Such improvements on public right-of-way spaces not only improves safety but fosters a sense of place and identity for the community.

Overview of Raleigh's Parklet Pilot Program

Raleigh's parklet pilot program was first endorsed by the City Council in late 2013 as an outcome of an initial citizen's petition, which resulted in Council directing Urban Design Center staff to conduct research, analysis, and community dialogue to draft recommendations for a pilot program. Subsequently, Raleigh's first approved parklet was created and opened for public access in Spring of 2015. Raleigh's parklet program is also supported by several policies in the 2030 Comprehensive Plan.

The parklet pilot program is limited to the Downtown area and the adjacent Pedestrian Business Overlay Districts (legacy districts) of Hillsborough, Peace, Oakwood-Mordecai, Glenwood, and Five Points. The approved program policy outlines the application process, criteria for site selection, design requirements, design guidelines, roles and responsibilities, post-construction requirements, fees, and timeline. For more details on the parklets pilot program, access:

<https://www.raleighnc.gov/business/content/PlanDev/Articles/Zoning/PUPS.html>



PARKLETS PERMITTING PROCESS FLOW

Raleigh's very first parklet was installed at the southeast corner of West Hargett and South Salisbury Streets under the sponsorship and stewardship of Pam Blondin, an active Downtown advocate and business owner of "Deco". Blondin and team worked with the North Carolina State University College of Design and raised more than \$17,000 through a Kickstarter campaign to build the parklet. About \$5,000 from the money raised on Kickstarter was used to pay the city fee for the parking spots. However, over the 5-year period, Blondin noted that she personally invested around \$40,000 for permitting and continued maintenance of this parklet that serves as a public space. Per program requirements, while parklets are sponsored and maintained by neighboring businesses/residents/community organizations, they are intended to be open to all users of the public right-of-way. No private advertising or retail service is permitted in the space.

Raleigh's first parklet thus represents the close collaboration between NCSU design students, local designers, Raleigh Urban Design Center, business owners, and other Downtown advocates. The final design chosen through a competition aims to attract different demographics to downtown, including families in search of a play area for children, visitors needing a break from their walk, and downtown workers needing fresh air from the office. The ongoing existence of this parklet has depended upon the willingness of a single individual to fund it in the absence of a clear business reason for doing so.

Raleigh's parklet permits are administered by the Zoning Division of the City's Planning Department. *To date, a total of only 2 parklet permits have been received and granted for two locations in Downtown – northwest and southeast corners of West Hargett and South Salisbury Street intersections.*

Raleigh's Vacant/Residual Spaces Analysis

City of Raleigh's assessment of vacant properties and residual right-of-way spaces within the Downtown area indicates that there are ample opportunities for the city to consider holistic public realm programs. *A map of the initial analysis is attached.* Approximately 7 acres of city owned land remains vacant in Downtown. Further analysis could evaluate and organize vacant parcels/unused right-of-way into size ranges with possible implementations associated with those ranges.

However, since parklet programs are specifically defined to reclaiming on-street parking spaces, a new public realm program would be needed to expand such functions into other vacant and residual right-of-way spaces or underutilized private land. Raleigh may consider modeling a program such as those in cities like San Francisco, Seattle, and Charlotte.

Raleigh's public right-of-way occupies about 14.4% (26 Sq. Miles) of its jurisdictional area (181 Sq. Miles). An expanded public realm program could apply to all types of public realm spaces, to include activities such as parklets, pocket parks, pollinator gardens, community gardens, bike parking, green infrastructure, and other public realm enhancements. Further evaluation is recommended should Council want to consider using private underutilized parcels or publicly owned parcels for these types of uses.



A THEATRE SHOW HOSTED IN RALEIGH'S FIRST PARKLET

Program Evaluation Findings

Based on the research, discussions, interview, and evaluations conducted by the staff team, the following findings have been noted:

- Raleigh's parklet pilot program has helped create two parklets in Downtown. The two parklets have been actively used and have created an identity in Downtown as unique public spaces serving different needs of the community. However, the overall interest is low predominantly due to the high parking encumbrance fee associated with parklets. Raleigh has one of the highest parking encumbrance fees when compared to other peer city programs.
- The loss of on-street parking spaces is a concern that has been raised. Currently there are 964 metered on-street parking spaces within the Downtown limits where parklets are permitted; the loss of on-street parking is a trade-off identified for any benefit realized by the installation of a parklet.
- Further definition of program goals and policies could incentivize the program if desired.
- Adding additional types of public realm improvements (either on public or private land) will require the creation of an additional program outside of a parklet specific program.

Next Steps

Should Council desire to move forward with a more robust parklet program or general public realm beautification and enhancement program, the following are recommended as considerations for further refinement:

- Refine the program requirements, including vision and goals of the program, and adopting an ordinance as part of Chapter 12 that helps clarify enforcement authority, violations, and penalty language. Currently the parklets pilot program is in effect as an adopted resolution.
- Review and refine the fee structure to meet policy priorities.
- Refine design standards to address cross slope, flush-in standards, safety stops, and additional material specifications.
- Define a maintenance plan for applicants.
- Evaluate seasonal permits instead of annual permits.
- Evaluate grant incentives to businesses to activate streetscape with parklets such as the Grand Rapids Streetscape Improvement Incentive Program that reimburses 50% of the parklet project costs.

(Attachments – Vacant/Residual Parcels Analysis Map, Summary of Program Fees of Peer Cities)

DOWNTOWN VACANT/RESIDUAL SPACES ANALYSIS MAP



SUMMARY OF PARKLET PROGRAM FEES OF PEER CITIES

City	Number of Parklets	Parklets Permitting Fees	Use (Public and/or Private)
Raleigh, NC	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$220 one-time permitting fees • \$3,000 annual parking encumbrance 	Public use only
Charlotte, NC	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$150 one-time permitting fees • \$5,475 annual parking encumbrance 	Public use only
Seattle, WA	10 public, 7 private	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$1,385 one-time permitting fees • \$140 Annual Fee 	Public and private use allowed (two separate permits)
San Francisco, CA	65	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$794 one-time permitting fees • \$4,015 annual parking encumbrance 	Public use only
Portland, OR	12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public use permit <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ \$600 one-time permitting fee ○ \$250 annual renewal fee ○ \$2000-\$7000 parking encumbrance • Private use permit <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ \$600 one-time permitting fee ○ \$250 annual renewal fee ○ \$105/linear foot annual fee ○ \$2000-\$7000 parking encumbrance 	Public OR private (two separate permits and fee structures)
Richmond, VA	< 10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$300 one-time permitting fee 	Public use only
Philadelphia, PA	10 - 20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$125 one-time permitting fee 	Public use only
Washington, DC	0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$10,800 annual parking encumbrance • Parklets located within certain districts can have their meter fees waived 	Public Use Only