



City of Alexandria

Parklet Requirements

Approved by the Traffic & Parking Board on November 15, 2021

Updated and approved by the Traffic & Parking Board on April 25, 2022, and February 27, 2023

Overview

Parklets are an extension of the sidewalk into the parking lane to be used for open space, public seating, or extra space associated with a business, such as a restaurant or a retail establishment. As referenced in [Section 5-2-29 of the City Code](#), parklets are permitted encroachments within the public right of way, subject to compliance with these Parklet Requirements approved by the Traffic and Parking Board. Parklets shall not be installed/set up prior to receiving a Right of Way – Parklet Permit from the Department of Transportation & Environmental Services.

Parklets are typically 20 to 30 feet long and 6 feet wide, and in no case shall a parklet extend into a vehicular or bicycle travel lane, or into a designated emergency vehicle easement.

Parklets may be used for a private commercial use if the Parklet Host complies with the requirements of the Zoning Ordinance (specifically Section 7-1500). Commercial parklets must be in operation during all hours that the associated business is in operation, however, retailers have the option to remove merchandise from the parklet during inclement weather. Otherwise, parklets shall be considered public spaces and open to the public at all times. The different types of permitted parklets are defined in the following section.

Parklets shall be permitted through the process established in these requirements and may be approved for up to one year. Permits may be renewed, subject to continued compliance with the Parklet Requirements and payment of permit fees.

Specific parklet requirements may not apply on streets permanently closed to traffic (e.g., the Unit and 100 blocks of King Street), or a different standard may apply. These exceptions are noted in italics under the associated requirement.

The Traffic and Parking Board has reviewed these requirements and approved them on November 15, 2021. Removal of parking to accommodate parklets that meet these requirements will be approved administratively by staff. After receiving extensive feedback at numerous meetings with business owners in the spring of 2022, City staff developed several proposed updates to these Parklet Requirements which were reviewed and approved by the Traffic and Parking Board on April 25, 2022. Updates to these Requirements were proposed by City staff once more following the permit application process in late 2022 and approved by the Traffic and Parking Board on February 27, 2023. Furthermore, the City will review these requirements at least once every two years, and report back on the program to the Board. Any changes to these requirements will be considered at a public hearing before the Board.

These requirements have also been coordinated with internal City departments including Fire, T&ES, Police, Planning and Zoning, and Code Administration to ensure coordination and compliance with relevant codes and requirements.

Types of Parklets

Parklets can be public (open to the public at all times) or commercial (used for a private business). The City of Alexandria currently permits three kinds of parklets:

Annual Commercial Parklet

- Can be in place permanently but must be removed as needed
- Annual cost relative to parklet length and location
- Anything that the business is permitted to sell can be sold in the parklet
- Must meet the Parklet Requirements

Short-Term Commercial Parklet

- Cannot be in place for longer than 6 days
- Annual cost is \$100 plus \$30-40 daily per occupied parking space
- Anything that the business is permitted to sell can be sold in the parklet
- Does not require a full build-out of a platform

Annual Public Parklet

- Can be in place permanently but must be removed as needed
- Annual cost relative to parklet length but more affordable than a commercial parklet
- Nothing can be sold in the parklet
- Must advertise it as open to the public at all times
- Must meet the Parklet Requirements

Parklet Locations

Parklets are NOT permitted:

- In dedicated bus lanes (against the curb) or bus stop areas (minimum 50 feet of curb space before the nearest bus stop sign, unless there is a curb extension for the bus stop)
 - The Parklet Host may request a written exemption from City staff for this specific requirement if warranted due to extenuating circumstances
- In dedicated bike lanes
- In Emergency Vehicles Easements
- Where rush hour regulations exist (e.g., Washington Street)
- Within 20 feet of an intersection, unless specific factors related to the surrounding location and design justify approval by the director of T&ES
- Within 10 feet of a curb cut to a driveway, parking lot/garage, or alley, unless approved by the director of T&ES
- Within 20 feet of a storm inlet (also known as a storm drain)
- On street curves or hills where horizontal or vertical sight distance is an issue
- Within 5 feet of a fire hydrant
- To obstruct or cover up access to underground public infrastructure or utility, such as a manhole, with a platform or planter
- On a street with posted street sweeping restrictions
- On streets with a speed limit of more than 25 mph or with high vehicular traffic volumes (e.g., Patrick and Henry Streets)
- To replace a loading zone, handicap parking, or otherwise designated curbspace unless the space and restrictions are reviewed by the Traffic and Parking Board pursuant to Section 5-8-3(f) and recommended to be changed
- To obstruct existing or planned Capital Bikeshare stations or bike and scooter corrals

Parklets located on streets on the City's [Planned Paving List](#) within the upcoming year will be conditionally approved with a requirement that the parklet host must remove the parklet within 30 days of notice by the City. The City reserves the right to require removal with a shorter notice if emergency conditions warrant removal.

Parklet Hosts *may* operate a parklet that is on the City's sidewalk improvement plan within the upcoming year, with the understanding that the parklet may be required to close for a short period during sidewalk improvements. In some cases, the parklet may need to be removed completely, and then can be reinstalled. City staff can provide more information on a case-by-case basis.

Each parklet location will be reviewed for potential impacts to fire access. Specific locations may not be approved or design adjustments may be required if the City determines the parklet will obstruct the required turning radius for emergency vehicles and access to FDCs.

Design Requirements

Parklets must meet the following design requirements. Exceptions for parklets on streets that are permanently closed to traffic and short-term parklets are noted in italics.

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PLATFORM

Platform Surface: All annual parklets are required to be situated atop a platform placed on the street.

- The top of the parklet platform must be flush with the curb to provide seamless connection with no more than a 0.5-inch gap.
- Conform to Accessible and Usable Building and Facilities (ICC/ANSI A117.1) and Virginia Construction Code.
- *Short-term Parklets are not required to have a platform.*

Parklet Width: Parklets shall not exceed 6 feet total in width (extending from the curb) to accommodate a buffer between the parklet and the travel lane.

- The Parklet Host may request a written exemption from City staff for a wider parklet on blocks without mass transit, with lower traffic volumes and speeds, wider travel lanes, or permanently closed to vehicular traffic.

Barrier: Provide a continuous 3- to 4-foot-high railing/barrier (measured from the top of the platform) along all sides of the parklet except the side facing the sidewalk. This may include freestanding planters, freestanding railings, or other freestanding barricades.

- Barriers must be at least 50% “open” per the Planning & Zoning Department’s outdoor dining requirements—please refer to the City of Alexandria’s [Outdoor Dining Design Guidelines](#) for additional barrier design requirements.
- Heavy barrier elements such as planters shall not be situated in the direct path from the street to the main door/egress.
- The barrier may not be within the buffer—nor less than two feet from the curb if the barrier is placed on the street as opposed to the platform—and may not extend into an emergency vehicle easement.
- The Director of T&ES reserves the right to require additional barriers if determined necessary for specific locations.
- Barriers **must be freestanding and easily removable by one person without tools.**
- *A continuous barrier for the parklet is not required on streets permanently closed to traffic unless necessary to comply with another regulation, such as ABC regulations related to serving alcohol.*

Drainage: A minimum of 6 inches of vertical clearance between the pavement and the bottom of the parklet surface shall be provided for a minimum of 1 foot from the curb along the entire length of the parklet.

- The Parklet Host may request a written exemption from City staff for these specific requirements if warranted due to curb and/or roadway conditions.
- *Short-term temporary parklets that do not construct a platform and are set up on existing pavement must ensure any barriers or furnishings are outside of the gutter pan to allow water and debris to flow freely.*

Materials: The parklet platform shall be assembled with sustainable and durable weatherproof materials and contain walking/rolling surfaces that are firm, stable, and slip-resistant. Materials must comply with specific design standards established in the City of Alexandria’s [Outdoor Dining Design Guidelines](#).

Removal: Parklets must be disassembled within 24 hours in the case of an emergency request by the City or a utility company. Removal of the parklet is the responsibility of the Parklet Host, as is the disposal or storage of the parklet once removed.

Freestanding: Parklet platforms must be entirely freestanding.

- Dining furniture, planters, and barriers are prohibited from being fixed to the parklet platform.

- Parklet platforms are prohibited from being fixed to public infrastructure, such as the curb/sidewalk or the street.
- It is prohibited to make alterations to public property without the appropriate City-issued permit.

SAFETY

Buffers between Parklets and Parking/Loading spaces: Parklets must maintain a 4-foot buffer between the parklet barrier and any other parking/loading spaces.

- Any 4-foot buffers must be counted toward the total length of the parklet which will increase the cost of the annual parklet permit fee accordingly.
- A 4-foot buffer is not required wherever parking/loading is prohibited nor between abutting parklets.
- Parklet Hosts will not be charged additional for any Fire Department-mandated egress zones (e.g., between two parklets).
- The City will provide and install two wheel stops and two flexible posts at minimum.
- *The buffer is not required for parklets on streets that are permanently closed to traffic.*

Visibility: Parklet should have vertical elements that make them visible to traffic. 4-inch-wide orange and white retroreflective stripes shall be mounted to the outside of the railing/barrier facing oncoming traffic. The parklet should not greatly obstruct visibility between the sidewalk and the roadway.

- *This requirement may not be required for parklets on streets permanently closed to traffic.*

Emergency Access: Parklet furniture must be arranged to allow for a clear path from the street to any fire department connections (FDCs) located on the façade of the building. Heavy parklet furnishings such as umbrella bases and planters shall not be situated in the direct path between the street and any main door/egress point. The design of the parklet shall ensure a minimum 5-foot-wide continuous and unobstructed path on the sidewalk is maintained.

- *Parklets on streets permanently closed to traffic shall not be situated in the direct path between the street and the FDC.*

FURNITURE

Tables and Chairs: For commercial parklets, refer to the City of Alexandria’s [Outdoor Dining Design Guidelines](#) for permissible tables and chairs.

- The tables and chairs shall be made of sustainable and durable weatherproof materials. These materials must comply with specific design standards established in the City of Alexandria’s [Outdoor Dining Design Guidelines](#).

- Per Section 603.6 of the Virginia Existing Building Code (VEBC), restaurants may not add outdoor seats in excess of 20% of the total indoor occupant load without providing additional lavatories.
- Tables and chairs must remain set up (i.e., not stacked) or brought indoors when the parklet is not in operation. Tables and chairs can be locked to one another or other objects if remaining set up in the parklet when not in use.

Landscaping: Parklet Hosts should consider how plants will do in specific locations and weather conditions. Watering and maintenance of any landscape are the responsibilities of the host. Landscape container or planter design and size are subject to design standards established in the City of Alexandria’s [Outdoor Dining Design Guidelines](#) and cannot be bolted to the parklet platform or street/sidewalk. Landscaping design shall not create a continuous barrier that causes an obstruction to Fire Department access.

Lighting: Parklets shall only have low-impact lighting that is either battery- or solar-operated.

- Extension cords are not permitted anywhere in/on the parklet, and electrical work in the public right of way shall not be permitted.
- Electricity may not be drawn from the public streetlights.
- Lighting affixed to poles higher than the 4-foot-high railing/barrier may require additional review.

Signage: For commercial parklets, no signage or branding is permitted.

- *For public parklets, signage must be installed in the parklet indicating it is open to the public and signage may state that the parklet is sponsored by the Parklet Host.*

Freestanding: All furnishings must be entirely freestanding.

- Dining furniture, planters, and barriers are prohibited from being fixed to one another or the parklet platform.
- Dining furniture, planters, and barriers are prohibited from being fixed to public infrastructure—such as the curb/sidewalk or the street—or trees.
- It is prohibited to make alterations to public property without the appropriate City-issued permit.

WEATHER PROTECTION

Generators and Fuel-fired Heaters: These items require a Fire Prevention Permit issued by the Fire Department prior to use. These items are subject to a building permit review and fire prevention permit review by the Department of Code Administration and Fire Department prior to installation.

Electric Heaters: These items require an Electrical Permit issued by the Department of Code Administration prior to use and must be UL listed and rated for outdoor use. Fans and heaters affixed to poles higher than the 4-foot-high railing/barrier may require additional review.

Overhead Coverings: No overhead coverings, including tents (permanent or temporary), are permitted in/on the parklet except for umbrellas, subject to design standards established in the City of Alexandria's [Outdoor Dining Design Guidelines](#).

- Umbrellas must be cranked down and secured with a bungee cord at close of business every day and in anticipation of storms/high winds.
- Umbrella bases shall not be situated in the direct path between the street and any FDCs or main doors/egress points.
- No umbrella canopy or any other parklet furnishings shall extend outside of the designated parklet area, including into the street or five-foot-wide clear path on the sidewalk.

Maintenance Requirements

Parklet Hosts are required to sign a Maintenance Agreement with the City that outlines maintenance responsibilities. A template of this agreement can be found [here](#) and key responsibilities are summarized below. Violations of this requirement will result in the termination of a parklet permit and removal by the host will be required.

Parklet subsurface and surface elements shall be kept clean and in a state of good repair at all times. This includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Sweep the parklet surface and the area surrounding the parklet
- Water and maintain the parklet's vegetation
- Clean the parklet platform, seating, and other parklet elements
- Remove any debris, litter, grime, or graffiti from the parklet surface and around the parklet
- Clean out the gutter area prior to and after storms to ensure gutters are unobstructed
- Replace any failing parklet elements or components
- Provide pest control as necessary

Drainage function of the gutter pan area (the two feet of roadway along the curb) shall be maintained at all times.

Leaf removal and snow removal in and surrounding the parklet, including the sidewalk, is the responsibility of the parklet host.

The City is not responsible for any damage to the parklet resulting from storm recovery or snow removal operations.

Parklets may be subject to temporary removal for City purposes including, but not limited to, streetscape or other public improvements in the area, public utility repair and replacement, and public safety reasons. The temporary removal will be at the Parklet Host's expense. Except in emergency situations, the City will provide 30 days of notice to remove the parklet. Emergency access may be required with shorter notice depending upon specific circumstances.

Upon permanent removal of the parklet, either at the City's direction or expiration of the parklet permit, the Parklet Host shall restore the area to its original condition, or a condition approved by the City.

Insurance Requirements

The Parklet Host shall be required to maintain, in force, insurance as described below and approved by the City for the duration of the Permit, which limits may be satisfied (in whole or in part) with an excess/umbrella policy. Proof of acceptable insurance shall be required prior to approval of a permit. The Parklet Host shall provide a complete copy of any policy including any endorsements and related documents via PDF, if requested. The Parklet Host's Insurance Coverage shall:

- Be an occurrence-based policy
- Be primary and non-contributory for any claims related to this Permit
 - Claims Made policies are not acceptable
- Be acceptable to the City and placed with companies that have an A.M. Best minimum Rating of A, Class VII or better
 - Insurers must also be authorized to do business under the laws of the Commonwealth of Virginia
- Not be changed or canceled unless the insured and the City of Alexandria is notified in writing at least 30 days prior
 - The City shall have the right, but not the obligation, to remove the parklet at the Permittee's expense and/or to purchase such insurance at the Permittee's expense

The required minimum limits may be met by any combination of primary and excess or umbrella policies as follows:

- Commercial General Liability Insurance
 - Coverage with limits no less than:
 - \$2,000,000.00 Annual Aggregate
 - \$1,000,000.00 per Occurrence
 - \$1,000,000.00 Products and Completed Operations
 - \$1,000,000.00 Personal and Advertising Injury
 - The Certificate of Insurance should explicitly state that the "The City of Alexandria is an additional insured with respect to general liability."
- Automobile Liability
 - Comprehensive automobile liability insurance in the amount of no less than \$1,000,000 per accident for each owned, non-owned, and hired vehicle that is used in any way to complete the Work¹, as required under the laws of the Commonwealth of Virginia, whether the vehicle is registered in Virginia or not.
- Workers' Compensation and Employer's Liability
 - If the business employs at least three employees, Statutory Limits of Workers' Compensation Insurance is required under the laws of the Commonwealth of Virginia, and Employer's Liability Insurance with limits of at least \$1,000,000 per accident for Bodily Injury by Accident and Bodily Injury by Disease.

¹ Any task conducted for the benefit of the business while operating the vehicle.

Required Documents for Permit Application

For examples of how each of these documents should be completed prior to being submitted, please see our Parklet Permit Guide with sample photos and images [here](#).

- Site Plan
 - Shows the location of the parklet from an aerial point of view
 - Provides a plan showing the parklet area. All drawings must be to-scale and must include the following:
 - Business name and address
 - The extent of your building frontage and immediately adjacent businesses (property lines must be shown)
 - Location of any Fire Department Connections (FDC) on building face/façade
 - Sidewalk width (building face to curb edge)
 - Sidewalk elements (i.e., tree wells, lamp posts, fire hydrants, signs, parking meters, light poles, trash receptacles, and any other streetscape element)
 - Relevant measurements (parklet length and width)
 - Proposed configuration/locations of any tables, chairs, planters, and/or umbrellas
 - Location of barriers
 - Location of designated handicapped accessible seating area (for restaurants only)
- Design Plan
 - Shows the design of the parklet—and the materials it will be constructed with—from a pedestrian’s point of view and includes:
 - Relevant measurements (parklet height; curb height; barrier and/or planter height, length, and width)
 - Photos (or manufacturer’s specification sheets) and dimensions of any proposed furniture, including tables, umbrellas, chairs, planters, barriers, rope
- Proof of Outreach and Notice
 - Letter(s) of Support
 - If any part of the parklet (including the required buffer) is located in front of any properties not occupied by the Parklet Host, Letters of Support from the businesses, residents, and/or property owners of said properties are required.
 - If the Parklet Host is not the owner of the building that the parklet is in front of, the property owner must provide a Letter of Support for the parklet. If the Parklet Host owns the property, indicate so in the application.
 - For a Letter of Support template to use, click [here](#).
 - Public Notice

- Fill out the Parklet Notice template [here](#) and submit to the following stakeholders:
 - The presiding neighborhood organization (contact list provided online or ask Max Devilliers)
 - All businesses and residents on the block where the parklet is located
- Certificate of Insurance
 - For an example of a valid Certificate of Insurance for operating a parklet, click [here](#).
- Maintenance Agreement
 - Fill out the Maintenance Agreement [here](#).
- Commercial Use Details (Supplemental Application)
 - NOTE: Only applicable for commercial parklets
 - Fill out this Supplemental Application [here](#).

Application Process

Step 1: Pre-Submittal Meeting

- Contact Max Devilliers (max.devilliers@alexandriava.gov) in T&ES – Mobility Services to discuss proposed location and design concept

Step 2: Outreach

- Required approvals:
 - If the Parklet Host is not the owner of the building that the parklet is in front of, the property owner must provide a Letter of Support for the parklet. If the Parklet Host owns the property, indicate so in the application.
 - If any part of the parklet is located in front of any properties not occupied by the Parklet Host, Letters of Support from the businesses, residents, and/or property owners of said properties are required.
 - If the Parklet Host can prove that they made a written request to the property owner and/or occupant of a property to be fronted by the parklet and the owner/occupant did not respond within 10 business days, the City will consider this requirement satisfied
 - If a property fronted by the parklet is vacated and the subsequent property owner/occupant opposes the parklet, the parklet shall not be shortened/removed until the following renewal period (i.e., October 1)
- Notification:
 - The parklet host must provide notice to all businesses, neighborhood organizations, and residents on the block where they are applying to host a parklet.
 - Parklet Hosts must provide the City with a list of the addresses notified and an example notice (City to provide notice template).
- City Notice:
 - The City will post a sign for 14 days at the proposed parklet location indicating a parklet is under consideration and inviting public comment. Notice will also be provided online and through the City's eNews.
 - If no concerns are received, the parklet will be approved administratively by staff, subject to these Parklet Requirements.
 - If concerns are received, the City will coordinate with the Parklet Host to address issues, and may require review by the Traffic and Parking Board at a public hearing.
 - If a parklet is proposed to be located on a blockface where one or more parklets already occupy a total of at least 80 feet of curbspace length, the application will be reviewed by the Traffic and Parking Board at a regular monthly meeting.

Step 3: Submit Documents into APEX

- An application for a parklet shall be submitted to the T&ES Permit Office/APEX and must include all of the Required Documents listed on Pages 12-13:
 - Site Plan
 - Design Plan
 - Proof of Outreach and Notice
 - Certificate of Insurance
 - Maintenance Agreement
 - Commercial Use Details (Supplemental Application)

NOTE: Reviewing departments will include specific conditions of approval for the permit. The application will be reviewed by the following departments:

- T&ES – Mobility Services
- T&ES – DROW
- T&ES – Operations
- Fire
- Code Administration
- Planning and Zoning

Step 4: Approval and Installation

- After all reviewing departments have approved the application, , all fees have been paid, and the maintenance agreement is signed by all parties, the T&ES Permit Office will issue the permit
- Once the Parklet Host installs the parklet, the Parklet Host must call the City for an inspection.
 - T&ES Construction & Inspection will inspect the parklet to ensure it is consistent with the location approved in the permit and that appropriate buffers and safety features (wheel stops, reflectors, etc.) are installed.
 - The Fire Department shall inspect the parklet to ensure it does not impede egress from buildings and there is adequate fire access to all hydrants and FDCs.

Step 5: Annual Renewal

- The City will send a reminder about permit renewals 30 days prior to the permit expiring. The reminder will note that, if the permit is not renewed, the parklet must be removed by the date the permit expires.
- Permits will be approved through September 30th and can be renewed annually. If there are no changes to the design and location, the permit will be renewed upon payment of fees and submission of updated documents (insurance, maintenance agreement, letters of support, etc.).
 - Note: Locations will be reviewed for potential impact from proposed paving in the next year and will be conditioned accordingly if the parklet will need to be removed.

Permit Fees

Parklet permit fees were approved by the City Council on March 8, 2022, to be effective starting October 1, 2022. Permit fees for the first year were 50% of the approved fee for any permit issued and valid between October 1, 2022, and September 30, 2023. The final resolution on parklet permit fees can be found online [here](#).

Permit fees for parklets shall be based on the square footage that the parklet occupies, including the required buffer area, and will be assessed as follows:

- Annual parklets that are open to the public at all times: \$2 per square foot
 - This may be a good option for retailers! If interested, reach out to Maxime Devilliers (Max.Devilliers@alexandriava.gov)
- Annual parklets in which a commercial business operates:
 - Within the King Street Retail Strategy area: \$21 per square foot
 - All other areas: \$14 per square foot
- Short-term (i.e., in place for less than 7 days) parklets in which a commercial business operates:
 - Annual review of plans and location: \$100
 - Temporary Reserved Parking signage: \$30 per day per non-metered parking space (i.e., 20 feet in length); \$40 per day per metered parking space