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To: Planning Commission  
From: Urban Design Committee  
Date: August 17<sup>th</sup>, 2020  
RE: **Final location, character, and extent review of a Baseline Parklet Design, Citywide; UDC 2020-13**

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**I. APPLICANT**

Mark Olinger, Director, Department of Planning and Development Review

**II. LOCATION**

City-wide

**Property Owner:**

City of Richmond

**III. PURPOSE**

The application is for final location, character, and extent review of the Baseline Parklet Design.

**IV. SUMMARY & RECOMMENDATION**

The Baseline Parklet Design is intended provide a basic design for the platform and railings used for the parklets submitted through Venture Richmond's and the City of Richmond's "Picnic in a Parklet" program. Each parklet application will use the same Baseline Parklet Design which can be further customized according to specific location and preferences of the applicant. A customizable "kit of parts" includes elements such as waste receptacles, shade structures, bike racks, seating, etc.

Staff finds the proposed Parklet Baseline Design is in compliance with the City of Richmond's Parklet Design Guidelines, following the guidelines' suggested methods of construction, anchoring and positioning, as well as suggested clear zones and dimensions. The Baseline Design is simple, and will allow each applicant to customize their proposed parklet.

Therefore, the Urban Design Committee recommends that the Planning Commission approve the final design as submitted.

**Staff Contact:**

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**V. FINDINGS OF FACT**

**a. Site Description and Surrounding Context**

City-wide– No specific site

**b. Scope of Review**

The project is subject to location, character, and extent review as part of a "public structure" in accordance with Section 17.07 of the Richmond City Charter.

**c. UDC Review History**

The Urban Design Committee has not previously reviewed applications for parklets.

**d. Project Description**

Venture Richmond has launched “Picnic in a Parklet,” a program designed to assist Richmond restaurants and other businesses with reopening. Through this new partnership with the City of Richmond, business owners can receive design and permitting assistance for their parklet applications.

Parklets are outdoor patio spaces, constructed in the on-street parking lane of the street in front of a business, that can function as an area for customers to gather and/or take to-go orders and eat outside in a physically-distanced environment.

Parklets are, by definition, public space; however, restaurants can offer lightly packaged to-go orders for people who simply want to dine in the parklet in front of the restaurant.

Business-owners who are interested in temporarily converting an on-street parking space adjacent to their storefront into a parklet will be connected with Venture Richmond to better assess their needs. If a parklet would be helpful and appropriate, Venture Richmond will work with the American Institute of Architects Richmond Chapter (AIA-Richmond) to connect businesses with a certified architect for pro-bono parklet design services. Venture Richmond will assist the applicant through the steps needed to obtain a permit from the City of Richmond.

The Baseline Parklet Design for consideration by the Urban Design Committee is intended to be the platform and railings used for the parklets submitted through the Picnic in a Parklet program. Each parklet application will use the same Baseline Parklet Design which can be further customized according to specific location and preferences of the applicant. A customizable “kit of parts” includes elements such as waste receptacles, shade, bike racks, seating, etc.

The platform design will be of pressure treated wood construction with a 6”x6” minimum detail to accommodate proper drainage based on the city guidelines as well as mounted levelers to plan for the various sloping site conditions throughout the city. The platform and railing will adhere to the horizontal force and live load requirements defined in the guidelines with the assembly being bolted to the face of the curb. The assembly will be 34’ long by 7’ deep, incorporating the 18” buffer from assembly to drive lane and 4’ buffers on either side of the assembly

The Baseline Parklet Design is in compliance with the City of Richmond Parklet Design Guidelines, meeting the following design considerations:

- Parklets must be placed so that they do not block any stormwater drainage.
- The sidewalk-facing side of the parklet should be open to pedestrians.
- Parklet decking must be flush with the curb. If this is impossible, the parklet must be ADA accessible.
- The outside-edge of the parklet railing must be 18” from the travel lane, creating an 18” clear zone

- The outside-edge of the parklet must be at least 6” high.
- To withstand bumps, the outside edge of the parklet closest to the street should contain a beam of pressure-treated lumber with a cross-section of 6”x6” or equivalent.
- No wall or rail may be higher than 4’ as measured from street.
- The platform must be easily assembled and disassembled.
- The platform should allow for easy access underneath the platform; curbside drainage must not be impeded. A 6” gap from the face of the curb is desired. In order to facilitate the movement of water, the parklet decking should not contact the street surface. The platform must be affixed to minimize unintentional shifting.
  - o Options include:
    - anchoring into curb (concrete curb only)
    - anchoring to sidewalk over curb using plate straps
      - anchoring to street surface
      - anchors to be max 3/8”

The Baseline Parklet Design is estimated to cost approximately \$1500 to construct and will increase in price as elements of the “kit of parts” are included. Funding sources are to be determined.

Construction will commence once a site-specific parklet application is submitted, permitted, and funding is available. A contractor will be selected by Venture Richmond and the parklet applicant.

**e. Master Plan**

The City of Richmond’s Master Plan mentions in its Key Strategies section that the overriding strategy for the City park system is to improve the existing resource base, fill critical gaps in services and park inventory, and capitalize upon unique opportunities to provide desired amenities” (pg. 24). Parklets are a unique solution to providing park space to the public, and are in response to a dense urban setting.

**f. Urban Design Guidelines**

“Public parks are integral to the quality of life found in any urban landscape. Parks should respond to the environment in which they are located and should be designed in accordance with their intended use” (pg. 9). Parklets are a unique way to reclaim right-of-way for public use, and respond to the need of gathering/green space in an urban setting.

The Guidelines note that “site furnishings, such as benches and trash receptacles, should be appropriately styled and scaled to complement building architecture” (page 24). The Guidelines also note that “site furnishings should be durable, both in construction and finish, and be easy to maintain and to install” (page 25). As individual parklet designs are submitted, site furnishings and finishes will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis for material durability and compatibility with the streetscape and neighborhood where they are being installed.

- VI. ATTACHMENTS**
- a. Vicinity Map**
  - b. Application**
  - c. Plans**