

**Madison's Central Business Improvement District (BID) Board  
Statement on "Parklets/Cafelets" within the public right-of-way in existing parking stalls**

June 5, 2014

Madison's Central Business Improvement District (BID) includes the greater State Street and Capitol Square areas. The [Board of Madison's Central BID](#) includes retail and restaurant business owners, property owners, and other downtown stakeholders.

**BID Board Statement on "Parklets"**

Regarding the city's [draft policy](#) for "Parklets/Cafelets" within the public right-of-way in existing parking stalls:

- **Public Process:** The parklet concept needs a wider public process with input from property and business owner and others. Moving forward with any concept without communicating with affected stakeholders does not result in a good product.
- **Policy:** The concept needs to be reviewed from a holistic perspective as to how it will affect the city, downtown and neighborhood business districts. Before working on details of physical implementation, the city should address policy questions such as whether or not the city should allow parklets, and if so, where, how and for whom.
- **Policy before Pilot:** There should not be a commercial parklet pilot for one business before a public process and before policy issues are decided. In particular, there should not be a pilot when neighboring business and property owners have expressed concerns, and the city's draft policy itself states: "All parklets must have approval letters from adjacent property and business owners acknowledging the loss of parking and approving the proposal."

The [BID Retail Strategy](#) encourages quality "3rd places" (business and other) that differentiate downtown as a social and experience destination, and are attractive to residents. Much of the central downtown (State St. and the Capitol Square) has already been reconstructed to provide wide sidewalk terraces for public amenities including benches, planters, and sidewalk cafes, which removed street parking. The BID Board recognizes that the parklet concept is exciting and could work well for an individual business, especially for a restaurant that does not have wide sidewalks for a café.

At the same time, the BID priority is to expand the overall downtown customer base for all businesses. The BID Retail Strategy highlights the special importance of convenient and ample short-term parking (i.e., metered on-street parking), especially for retail. Parking for customers, visitors, and employees is especially important because Madison Metro bus services stops operating at midnight, and we do not have a regional public transit system. Moreover, there are currently 120 on-street metered parking spaces out of service in the central downtown due to construction.

Once one commercial parklet/cafelet is allowed (even a pilot), there would likely be high demand from other businesses (as there are for sidewalk cafes). Multiple private parklets in a dense business district with limited on-street parking will be detrimental to the overall health of the business district and to businesses that rely on that parking.

There needs to be a public discussion of whether parklets would work downtown, and a policy addressing these issues, before the city allows a pilot to move forward.