



Image source: Pavement to Parks

Divisadero Trial Parklet Impact Report

A summary of data collected before and after the installation of the Divisadero trial parklet on March 18, 2010.



SAN FRANCISCO
GREAT STREETS
PROJECT

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Executive Summary

The Divisadero Street Parklet is the first of the trial parklets in the San Francisco Pavement to Parks streetscape improvements program. Parklets repurpose two to three parking stalls along a block into a public space for people to enjoy the city. Parklets are public space hosted and partly maintained by a local business or other entity. The parklet analyzed in this report is located in the commercial corridor of Divisadero Street between Grove Street and Hayes Street, in front of Mojo Bicycle Café.

This study analyzes the public use and perception of the new public space and the entire block as well as how business owners think it has impacted their sales. The Great Streets Project collected before and after pedestrian counts, activity tallies and surveys to measure these impacts. The parklet is an early stage trial; the City will engage with local stakeholders to determine whether it should be continued on a trial basis, removed or made permanent.

The findings of this report should be qualified by noting that the Divisadero corridor, though not this particular block, was under construction during the collection of the “before” data and featured new streetscape improvements – again, but not this block – during the “after” data collection thanks to the City’s Divisadero Streetscape Improvement Project. It is impossible to parse the impact of the two projects.



The space before the installation of the trial parklet.

Our research reveals that the trial parklet has already increased pedestrian activity in the study area, the satisfaction of pedestrians in the area and people's sense of community character. Some businesses on the block have welcomed the increased foot traffic.

- The greatest increase in activity was seen on weekday evenings when pedestrian traffic rose 37% from an average of 363 to 497 people per hour. The average number of pedestrians during all observation periods increased 13%.

- The average number of people sitting or standing increased 30% from 10 to 13 at a time, and the average number of weekday visitors in particular almost doubled from 8 to 14 people at a time.

- The percent of people surveyed who thought the area has a strong sense of community character increased from 80% to 90%

- Despite the increase in potential customers walking by all stores, nearby businesses are evenly split between whether they agree the parklet should be made permanent or not.



The space after the installation of the trial parklet.

Context

Parklets and the Pavement to Parks Program

Streets and public rights-of-way make up fully one quarter of the city's land area, more space even than is found in all of the city's parks. According to the City's Pavement to Parks program, many streets are excessively wide and contain large zones of wasted space, especially at intersections. San Francisco's new Pavement to Parks projects are intended to temporarily reclaim unused roadway spaces and quickly and inexpensively turn them into new public plazas and parks. During temporary trial closures, the success of the plazas and parklets is evaluated to understand what adjustments need to be made in the short term, and ultimately, whether the temporary closure should be a permanent community investment.

The parklet is a new type of Pavement to Parks Project. Instead of reclaiming a piece of underutilized roadway at an intersection, parklets repurpose two to three parking stalls along a block as a public space for people enjoy the city. Parklets do this by building out a platform into the parking lane so that the grade of the sidewalk gets carried into the parking lane. The Divisadero parklet features three café tables, 10 chairs, one bench, three bike racks, landscaped planters and solar lighting on a platform.



Schematic of a parklet.

Image Source: Parklet Schematic by ReBar Group 2010

Divisadero Corridor

The trial parklet is located on the Divisadero commercial corridor between Grove and Hayes Streets. Divisadero is generally acknowledged to be a neighborhood-oriented retail street, with some city- and region-wide draw. Area businesses include several cafes and restaurants that are busy during afternoons and evenings as well as retail stores that attract customers throughout the day. Across the street, the Independent music hall is a popular night time attraction. The street is also served by the 24 Divisadero bus.

Though there is a great deal of walking-oriented retail on the street, Divisadero is a busy cross-town driving and transit route, with narrow sidewalks in many places. The City has been trying to better balance these functions of the street through the Divisadero Streetscape Improvement Project. Between fall 2009 and spring 2010 the corridor received new bus bulb-outs, median widening with trees, landscaping, lighting fixture upgrade and other enhancements.

The coupling of the parklet and general streetscape improvements mean that the data in this report may be influenced by the streetscape project.

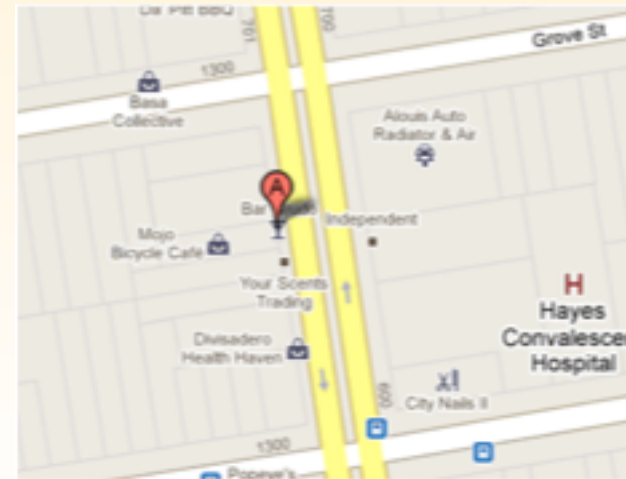


Image Source: Google Maps



Source: www.sfidpw.org "Divisadero Streetscape Project"

Business Host

Mojo Bicycle Café is the host of the trial parklet. The store, which opened in 2007, is a combination bicycle shop and café serving pastries, sandwiches and other light food, and a wide range of hot and cold beverages, including alcohol. Prior to the parklet installation, the café had tables and chairs on the sidewalk. The owner of Mojo Café is heavily involved in the local merchant's group.

The cafe provides daily maintenance of the parklet, but all seating and bike parking is free and open to the public. Alcohol is not allowed on the parklet.



Image Sources : Mojo Café



Methodology

The study area was defined as the entire west-side block of Divisadero Street between Grove and Hayes Streets for the purpose of this report. The Great Streets Project performed two rounds of on-site data collection: a baseline collection on Wednesday, March 3rd and Saturday March 6th, 2010 and another after the parklet had been installed for six weeks, on Wednesday, May 5th and Saturday May 8th, 2010. Data was collected between 12 and 2 pm and 5 and 6 pm on all four days. Weather conditions were comparable on all four days, and were generally sunny and very pleasant.

Trained staff and volunteers performed pedestrian and bicycle counts; stationary activity tallies that looked at the number of people engaged in various activities, such as sitting, standing, or playing along the block; and surveys of users' perceptions of the area. The Great Streets Project also surveyed businesses along the 600 block of Divisadero after the parklet was installed to gauge their perception of the parklet's impact on their businesses. These data collection tools were inspired by those used by the San Francisco Planning Department, and is consistent with the methodology used to analyze previous Pavement to Parks projects.

The pedestrian count and activity tally sheet, user survey and business survey are included in the appendix of this report.

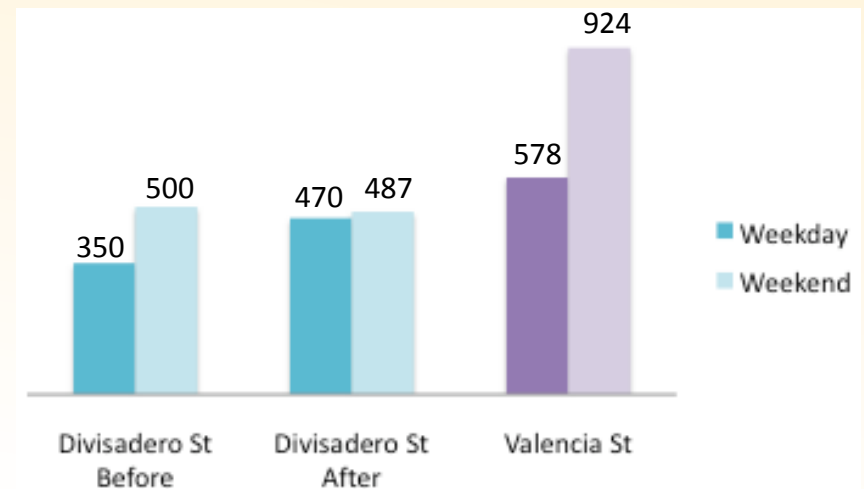


People Traffic

Counts indicate that the parklet attracted new visitors and encouraged a steadier stream of foot traffic throughout the day and week. Thanks to several cafes, restaurants and stores along the block, the sidewalk already had heavy foot traffic, especially on weekend evenings, comparable to that seen on Valencia Street. This pattern continued once the parklet was created, but the number of pedestrians who visited the site during the weekdays significantly increased – almost to the amount previously seen only on weekends.

- The average number of pedestrians during all observation periods rose from 404 to 459 per hour, an increase of 13%.
- The greatest increase in activity was seen on weekday evenings, when pedestrian traffic rose 37% from an average of 363 to 497 per hour.
- Pedestrians continued to make up 95% of the sidewalk traffic, but the number of people walking bikes in the area increased 14% overall, and 350% on weekdays.

Hourly Pedestrian Counts



Behavior Analysis

The data collectors counted stationary activity to track what visitors are doing when they stop on the sidewalk along the block. Items tracked included people standing, sitting at benches, sitting at café tables, sitting on the ground, sitting on other surfaces, engaged in commercial activity, children playing and the number of bikes parked. There was no significant change in the *type* of activity observed after the parklet was installed, but like the pedestrian counts, these observations demonstrate that the number of people using the area increased, in particular on weekdays and evenings.

- The predominant activity on the block (over 50% of users) before and after the parklet installation was sitting at café tables and chairs.
- The average number of people in the area increased 30% from 10 to 13 at a time, and the average number of weekday users almost doubled from 8 to 14 people at a time.
- The number of bikes parked on weekday afternoons increased significantly to an average of 10 at a time, although weekend and afternoon use decreased slightly.
- The area continues to be primarily for adults visiting nearby stores and cafes; only one child was observed playing during all of the observation periods. However, the afternoon survey time was during a typical young child nap period so it may be that more children were present at other times.



Image Source: Pavement to Parks

Opinion Surveys

User Characteristics

The Great Streets Project was able to survey 35 people in the area before and 20 people after the parklet was installed. *All findings below should be qualified by the fact that the analysis involves a very small sample size.*

- The percent of respondents who were visiting friends increased 10%, while the percent who were just passing through and running errands decreased 14%. Dining continues to be the primary purpose for about 25% of people coming to the area.
- Prior to the parklet, 78% of respondents visited the area multiple times a week. After the parklet, this dropped to 65% and the percent who visit multiple times a month or year increased from 9% to 30%. This may indicate that people are not coming as often, or it may indicate that the parklet is attracting new people who previously did not frequent the area.
- Prior to the parklet installation, respondents walked an average of 7.5 blocks to the area, and after an average of 6.5 blocks. The maximum distance also decreased from 20 to 15 blocks. This difference may be because fewer people are coming from farther away, or because the parklet is attracting more people from the neighborhood nearby.



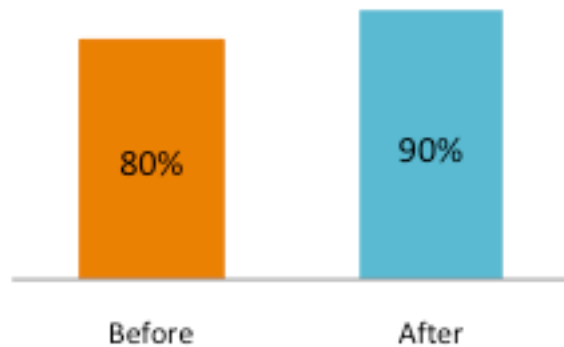
User Satisfaction

Furthermore, the user surveys revealed a slight increase in user satisfaction in the area, and an increased perception of community character.

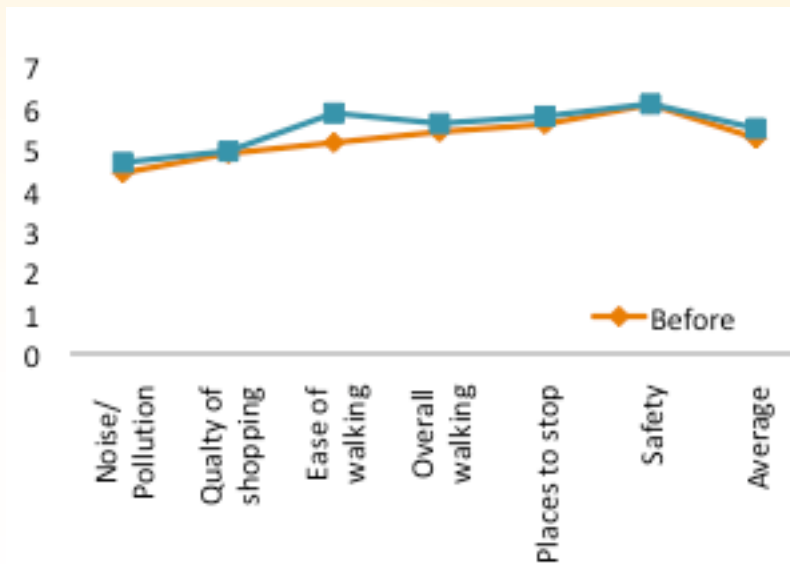
- On a scale of one to seven (least to most), users ranked their satisfaction with characteristics of the area slightly higher after the parklet was installed.

- The most significant increase in satisfaction was for ease of walking, which increased from an average ranking of 5.1 to 5.9.

“This area has a strong sense of community character”



User Satisfaction



The surveys revealed that the parklet not only provided needed bicycle and pedestrian facilities, but – because it created a lively and attractive space – also increased demand for them as well.

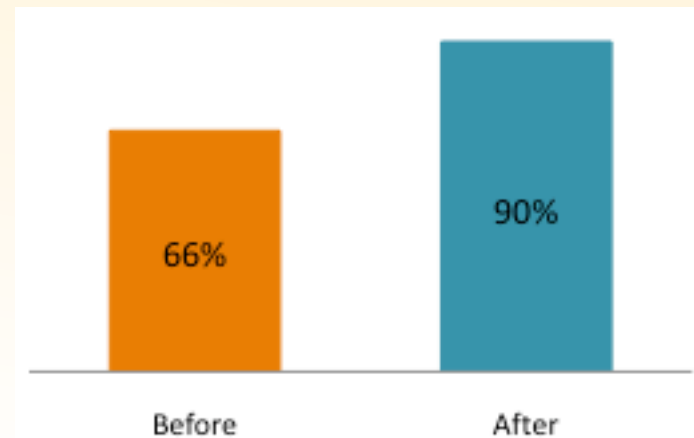
- When given the opportunity to make other recommendations for improving the corridor, the percent of respondents who said that the area was too crowded or needed more sidewalk space declined from 30% to 5% after the parklet seating was installed.

- The percent of respondents who recommended more trees and greenery declined from 26% to 5%.

- The percent of respondents who recommended more bike lanes, racks, and other facilities be installed increased from 9% to 40%.

- After the parklet was installed, when directly asked if they would visit the area more often if there was more public seating provided, 90% of respondents agreed they would.

“I would visit more if there were more seating.”



Unprompted, 20% of people surveyed said that they liked the parklet and there should be more of them.

When given the opportunity to make other recommendations for improving the corridor during the “after” survey, respondents’ demand for more sidewalk space decreased, while their demand for more bicycle facilities and outdoor seating increased. Because this was an open-ended question, some of the answers may be more related to the overall scope of the Divisadero Streetscape Improvement Project than this specific parklet project.

Before

More sidewalk space, less crowding

Building maintenance, aesthetics

Outdoor seating

Trees and greenery

Cafes and restaurants

Reuse the theater

Traffic calming and enforcement

Bike lanes, racks, facilities

Other entertainment

Police and safety

Less noise

More parking

Murals and art

Taxi service

After

More sidewalk space, less crowding

Building maintenance, aesthetics

Outdoor seating

Trees and greenery

Cafes and restaurants

Reuse the theater

Traffic calming and enforcement

Bike lanes, racks, facilities

Shops

Less Parking

Public space activation

Like the parklet, make more!

Business Experience

Business Context

Because the success of current and future parklets depends on their acceptance by the community – including residents and businesses – particular care was taken to survey neighboring business about how they think the parklet may have impacted their business.

- All eight businesses on the block were surveyed: three restaurants, two retail shops and three other establishments. Hours of operation spanned from as early as 7 am to as late as midnight, attracting customers throughout the day and week.
- In general, businesses agreed the Divisadero commercial corridor is doing fine or very well.
- Most businesses believe that they have customers that arrive by foot and bike in the mix of their patrons.
- Most business believe that about half of their customers come from the immediate neighborhood and half from the rest of the city.



Perceived Business Impacts

The business surveys reveal that there is a mix of perceptions regarding how the parklet has impacted neighboring businesses.

- About half of the owners said their business and customer levels have been the same since the parklet, and the other half is split between better and worse.
- Three agreed that the parklet should be made permanent, three did not and two were unsure or declined to comment.
- There was no significant change in their perception of where their customers seemed to come from (neighborhood or city) or their mode of arrival.



Business response and reaction to the parklet is split and dependent on the type of business and how close it is to the parklet. Some of the concerns expressed by owners were the loss of parking and unloading spaces for businesses that require delivery and drop-off service and the unfair business advantage for the cafes and restaurants closest to the parklet. The latter concern of course actually indicates that the parklet is perceived as a benefit to certain businesses.

These results emphasize the importance of choosing appropriate locations for future parklets near compatible businesses and considering what mitigations may increase compatibility in certain locations.

Furthermore, although not the primary purpose of the Pavement to Park projects, this trial demonstrates that parklets do have the potential to contribute to economic activity in an area. The surveys indicate that some businesses have been able to capitalize on the increased foot traffic generated by the parklet.



Recommendations

Data collected from the pedestrian and activity counts, user surveys and business surveys, paint a fairly positive picture of the impacts the parklet has had on the 600 block of Divisadero Street in the first two months of its trial.

The benefits of the parklet to pedestrians in the area is clear. By creating an attractive public space for seating, the parklet has freed-up sidewalk space for passing pedestrians, making it a better place for those who want to sit and easier for those who want to walk to other destinations along the block. These improvements translate into more people walking up and down the block and more people stopping to enjoy themselves, contributing to a livelier more vibrant neighborhood and a greater sense of community character.

The impacts perceived by businesses are mixed. Mojo Café and some other establishments agree the parklet has increased foot traffic on the block and in turn their customer base. However, the other half of the businesses do not feel that they have benefited from this activity or the parklet. Some businesses want the competitive advantage of a parklet in front of their store. Others are concerned about the loss of parking so close to their store.





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