

FROM PARKING TO PARKLETS

Our project turned car parking spaces into parklets, which involves transforming one or two car parking spaces into a micro public space for people to enjoy for recreation and socializing.

Keywords:
Public Space, Community, Children, Elderly, Parklet

Project Partner:
Work for a Better Bangladesh Trust

Location: Dhaka City and Chittagong, Bangladesh

Duration: 12/2015 - ongoing

Target Issue and Target Group

Too many modern cities cater to cars, not people. There are parked cars everywhere, but little or no space is available for people to relax, socialize, or play. The aim of our project was to demonstrate the feasibility of parklets in Dhaka to promote the benefits of having new, attractive, and lively spots for people to enjoy socializing and to give them space to play near their home, school, or workplace.



Parklets are an easy-to-implement intervention to carry out that has a lot of impact on the surrounding community.

Strategies Employed within Project

The Institute of Well-Being (IWB), along with our partner the Asian University for Women (AUW) engaged in a multi-faceted strategy to show the value of parklets for city residents.

The strategy involved organizing parklet celebrations, recruiting youth, and training other organizations.

Activities

We organized four parklet celebrations over a six-month period. They were easy to organize, as we used simple and inexpensive materials and arranged for police permission beforehand the interventions. Our parklets were set up for just two hours. This was sufficient time to both take video footage to use in our promotional campaign and to give people a taste for having recreational



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opportunities where none existed previously.

In addition, we prepared a manual on parklets and created a video that describes what they are and how they can be implemented. These items helped us train other organizations on the ways in which parklets can be created in their own community. A further activity encouraged youth participation by involving them in creating temporary spaces for recreation. Youth engagement is part of a longer-term strategy to build a critical mass of engaged citizens to advocate for permanent parklets in each neighbourhood of the city.

Preliminary Results

The project is a new initiative but has already achieved some encouraging results. Since our interventions many people and organizations are now aware of what parklets are and are convinced about the importance and feasibility of introducing such micro public spaces to the cityscape. Overall we have reached approximately 1000 people. We have increased the number of organizations and individuals working on improvements in public spaces. There are now plans to organize subsequent events such as parklet celebrations with additional organizations in the near future.

Impact

Parklets are an easy-to-implement intervention to carry out that has a lot of impact on the surrounding community. Parklets allow organizers to demonstrate the ways in which urban space that is currently exclusively used for car parking can be used in a better way and provide many more benefits for urban residents. This generates awareness and allows citizens to experience what their city could be like, which in turn creates more critical mass that is required to support necessary to implement long-term changes to urban public space's.

When organizing a parklet program in your own city, we feel that:

1. It is important to understand the basic logic behind parklets so as to answer questions from those observing/participating in your intervention. Parklets are a strategy for turning under-used space in a city into micro public spaces that create civic engagement and builds communities connections.
2. Consider producing a "parklet kit" that could be a large box on wheels containing the needed materials. This makes it easy to move it from place to place and to install it for temporary demonstrations.

Take-away Messages from the Project:

- Parklets are an effective and visible intervention to carry out at low cost.
- It is important to understand the basic logic behind parklets so as to answer questions from those observing/participating in them.
- The desire for car parking spaces is insatiable; it is impossible to meet demand, but easy to destroy your city by trying.
- People have the right to public space; we as citizens can create it.

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