



22ND STREET PARKLET

REBAR GROUP
22nd Street at Bartlett

Key Components

- Seating and tables incorporated into the modular deck design
- Bike racks
- Self-watering planters

Who uses the space?

Patrons waiting for tables at neighboring restaurants, shoppers

CITIZEN'S REST

Redefining the city's relationship to its streets, San Francisco's Pavement to Parks program is encouraging residents to stop, sit and relax in the most unexpected of places. **BY ERIN FEHER**

In 2005, San Francisco art and design collective Rebar stocked up on quarters and took over a single, metered downtown parking space for two hours. Instead of squeezing in a car or motorcycle, they rolled out sod, brought in a tree and a park bench and got ready for a couple hours of lounging. More than just an eye-catching stunt, it was a political and social statement about the short supply of public open space in the city's urban center. "Essentially 25 percent of the city's land area is taken up by our roadways, but in places like Barcelona or Paris, the public right of ways are incredible social spaces because they aren't dominated by private vehicles," says John Bela of Rebar. "We wanted to rethink the streets as a space for play and fun rather than storing cars."

Since then, Park(ing) Day has become a global movement, with thousands of people (in 140 cities in 21 countries) taking over small segments of city streets for one day each year. San Francisco has responded in admirable fashion. It has embraced the concept and expanded on it, making the transformation of city streets to public spaces part of official government business. Taking a cue from New York City's creation of pedestrian plazas on underused roadways, San Francisco's Pavement to Parks was initiated in 2009 as a collaborative effort between the Mayor's Office, the Department of Public Works, the Planning Department and the Municipal Transportation Agency.

With such a list of government agencies at the helm of the project, citizens might not expect to see these new parks popping up until 2027, but in an unlikely and

GUERRERO PARK

JANE MARTIN OF SHIFT DESIGN STUDIO
Intersection of San Jose Avenue and Guerrero

Key Components

- Raised planters made of steel ducting and fallen logs from Golden Gate Park's earliest planted trees
- 60 species of native and climate-adapted plants
- Future plans include a children's play structure

Who uses the space?

Dog walkers, families, joggers



FROM TOP: BLAINE MERKER, REBAR; JEREMY SHAW



DIVISADERO STREET PARKLET

RG-ARCHITECTURE AND STUDIO UPWALL

Divisadero Street, between Hayes and Grove

Key Components

- Two parking spaces covered with an FSC-certified wood deck
- Tables, chairs and bike racks
- Solar lighting
- Landscaped planters

Who uses the space?

Unemployed masses, waiters on break, cyclists from GGP



CASTRO COMMONS

PUBLIC ARCHITECTURE

17th Street at the intersection of Castro and Market

Key Components

- Benches made from salvaged granite curbs
- "Sonotube" bollards filled with gravel and hydroponic planters
- Movable cafe tables and chairs
- Terracotta-painted street

Who uses the space?

Sunbathers, coffee drinkers, people watchers



SHOWPLACE TRIANGLE

REBAR GROUP

16th and 8th Street intersection

Key Components

- Sunset Scavenger debris boxes used as tree planters
- Bollards/planters made from public utilities sewer pipe
- Black granite salvaged from former seating on Market Street

Who uses it the space?

CCA students, skateboarders, designers and showroom managers from the SFDC

exceptionally innovative move, the city decided to skip over the months of pre-construction traffic and environmental impact studies. The catch? The parks and plazas are labeled "temporary," and can be modified or completely removed if they prove to be a bad idea—a sort of city-planning version of "innocent until proven guilty." "It was a compromise that allowed us to create more open space immediately," says Liz Ogbu of Public Architecture, who designed the first plaza, Castro Commons.

Located at the busy intersection of Castro, Market and 17th streets, the roadway at the end of the historic F-line was sectioned off with tall, tubular planters and terracotta-colored paint. Tables and chairs were donated from a closing restaurant, and granite curbs were salvaged from a DPW supply yard to be used as additional seating. Flora Grubb Gardens provided succulents and other plants at wholesale prices, while city workers donated their time to work on the lightning-fast (two-day) install. In a speech at the opening of another park, Mayor Gavin Newsom admitted to thinking that five people at most might show up to utilize the Castro Street space, which is framed by speeding cars and active train tracks. "But about 150 people immediately showed up and demanded to know what we were going to do next," he said. "We quickly realized we had fallen onto a really good idea."

Castro Commons opened in May 2009, and since then four other parks have been completed. The latest two are Park(ing) Day-style takeovers of metered stalls—one designed by Rebar—where raised decking topped with tables, chairs, plants and bike racks replaces street parking. The city has dubbed these new spaces "parklets," installing them on busy, retail-and-restaurant-heavy stretches of Divisadero and 22nd streets. As more parks, plazas and parklets pop up around the city, the enthusiasm for the project has grown. "I already have a long list of neighborhood groups and organizations who are requesting one in their area," says Andres Power, the project manager from the city's planning department. Wide community support has prompted the city to make Castro Commons permanent; it has since been updated with more durable materials and long-term plantings. Twelve parks in total are scheduled to be completed before the end of the year. In his announcement, the mayor said, "It's about bringing the community together, bringing people together, and slowing down the pace of life in the frenetic urban environment we call home." ■

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