



CONTACT: Stephanie Hawkinson
shawkinson@wellesleyma.gov

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

New Parklet in Progress for Wellesley Hills

Gathering Space at Clocktower Park Encourages Users to Shop, Sit, and Share

August 28, 2020 (Wellesley, MA) – The Town of Wellesley is launching a new parklet program to provide safe outdoor public gathering space, improve mobility for walking and biking, and support local merchants. Parklets are extensions of the sidewalk where on-street parking spaces are blocked off with barriers and repurposed to create new, publicly accessible areas for users to enjoy. Wellesley’s parklet is a pilot program installed on Washington Street along Clocktower Park, also known as Elm Park, in Wellesley Hills.

The Department of Public Works began setting up the parklet this week; it will remain in place until early November, as weather permits. Wellesley received \$61,312 to fund the project through the Shared Streets and Spaces grant program offered by the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT).

Orange and white barriers and steel planters purchased with grant money are helping transform the current on-street metered parking along Washington Street into park-like outdoor seating for community activities like shopping and dining. Both Town officials and merchants hope the parklet helps revitalize the commercial areas in Wellesley Hills that are continuing to face significant challenges due to the Coronavirus pandemic.

“This is an incredibly difficult time for small businesses, and I appreciate that the Town is being proactive in helping the local establishments,” said Petro Belezos, owner of Pizza Peddler & Deli at 263 Washington Street. Like many other restaurants in the area, Pizza Peddler is offering online ordering, take out, and delivery. Belezos hopes the parklet will result in more pedestrian and bike traffic and will encourage the public to visit local retailers and buy food to eat outdoors.

New Seating and Signs.

While the Town is currently using existing picnic tables to expand seating, a portion of the Shared Streets and Spaces grant money was used to purchase new tables and chairs which are ordered and will be installed as soon as they arrive. Tables will not be routinely cleaned but DPW is providing hand sanitizing stations and wipes for the area and will be regularly picking up trash. Parklet users must follow all current COVID-19 guidelines; signs will be in place to help remind residents to practice good hygiene, wear masks, and maintain proper physical distancing.

Additional signage in the area will also help support pedestrian safety, traffic calming, and alternate modes of transportation. Pedestrian crossing signs will be placed near the parklet and at crosswalks. Some of the repurposed parking spaces along Washington Street will be for bike parking only. Signs at the parklet and at Trail markers will help improve the connection between Wellesley’s Fuller Brook Park and the Crosstown Trail, pathways that are extensively used by walkers, runners, and cyclists. There will also be a raised platform to allow for ADA accessibility.

Parklet users will also notice signs asking them to share feedback on the program. As this is a pilot project, Town officials hope residents will give input on the overall look, location, and feel of the space. All ideas and recommendations can be shared through a Town survey that can be accessed through a smart phone.

With initial set-up complete in time for the upcoming [Sales-Tax Free weekend](#) on August 29-30, the Town is encouraging residents to try out the new space. Look for more details and enhancements in the coming weeks.

Shared Streets and Spaces Program.

The Shared Streets and Spaces quick-launch/quick-build grant program provides grants to municipalities to implement or expand improvements to sidewalks, curbs, streets, on-street parking spaces and off-street parking lots in support of public health, safe mobility, and renewed commerce in their communities. More information about the program can be found [here](#).



Photo courtesy: Allison Burson, Natural Resources Commission

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