



SWBR and PARKlets for the People of Syracuse partner to celebrate National PARK(ing) Day

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Syracuse, NY SWBR and PARKlets for the People of Syracuse partnered to mark National PARK(ing) Day on Friday, Sept. 18th. This is the third year SWBR has turned parking spaces on South Franklin St. into a “sustainable hangout area.” While the annual event encourages community members, students and designers to transform metered parking spaces into temporary PARKlets for the day, SWBR and Parklets for the People of Syracuse have worked together over the past three months to make the initiative more long-term by creating additional outdoor seating to help downtown Syracuse sustain businesses during COVID-19.

The PARKlets are public seating platforms that convert curbside parking spaces into vibrant community spaces.

The temporary mobile platforms are barricaded off from moving traffic and decorated with barriers, greenery, lights, tables, chairs and more to allow a safe and secure outdoor curbside dining experience. The platforms allow the restaurants to expand their socially distant outdoor seating beyond the sidewalk dining spaces currently being utilized.

The designated spaces will encourage community members who work, shop, eat and play in the area to “hang” in what is traditionally a parking spot. The local movement is the product of a collaboration between city, local businesses, residents and neighborhood associations to help revive Syracuse’s downtown by helping area businesses and restaurants expand their dining areas during the pandemic. PARKlets for the People of Syracuse was founded by local entrepreneur Michael John Heagerty with a goal to raise money to build PARKlets for Syracuse businesses.

In August, the first PARKlet was installed at Kitty Hoynes Pub in downtown Syracuse on South Franklin St. in Armory Square. A team of architects at SWBR worked with Heagerty and Pastabilities Restaurant, also on South Franklin Street, to design their outdoor seating PARKlet which was installed last month. The third PARKlet at Funk n’ Waffles on S. Clinton will be unveiled on PARK(ing) Day and will feature a unique wall of vintage records enclosed behind sheets of plexiglass and adorned with fried egg/bacon strip string lights. The group is fundraising for their fourth PARKlet at Three Lives, also on S. Clinton. The PARKlet will be designed with an 8-bit Super Mario-theme, which the owner hopes to work into a Halloween dinner bash.

“As architects and designers, we have a great appreciation for sustainability and not only is our PARKlet project meant to get others talking about it — we want to expand the conversation and help local businesses in the long run,” Matthew Lupiani, AIA, SWBR office manager in Syracuse said. “We’re constantly thinking about new ways to be sustainable and we are thinking critically to improve local business beyond COVID-19. SWBR wants to lead the movement and inspire local restaurants to look at ways to expand their business into the outdoors seasonally and more permanently. National PARK(ing) Day can be the catalyst for deeper conversation — and hopefully action.”

Inspired by a national movement based in San Francisco, PARK(ing) Day is meant to raise awareness of the impact of public park space and the benefits it provides to the urban environment. The event is intended to start the conversation locally about the value and importance of green space and pedestrian-friendly park areas in urban environments. These include improved water management, reduced heat island effects and a pedestrian space with opportunities for community enjoyment.

“To customize the design of these parklets to the uniqueness of each of these restaurants was a ton of fun,” PARKlets for the People of Syracuse founder Michael John Heagerty said. “My passion for activating and reclaiming public spaces drew me to partner with SWBR and help local business owners by quarterbacking them through the process of permits with the city to help them design the PARKlets as street eateries. I want nothing more than to see our Syracuse restaurants thrive during the adversities of COVID-19 and by partnering with Matt and SWBR to reclaim public spaces, we are helping local restaurants by giving them a boost.”

In the coming weeks, SWBR’s Lupiani and Heagerty are working with Lauren Staniec, owner of re-habitat LLC, an interior design, project management and sustainability consulting group and Syracuse University and Onondaga Community College professor. Staniec’s Onondaga Community College students will use their community project requirements to build out two additional PARKlets on S. Clinton by Funk ‘N Waffles and Three Lives.