

Building community evidence for urban parklets in Edinburgh

Final Report

June 2023



THE UNIVERSITY
of EDINBURGH



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The research presented in the following report has been undertaken, written and edited by Dr Simon Bell, CMLI, Co-director of the OPENspace Research Centre and PhD student Anne Gallagher MSc.

Special thanks go to Gordon Webster and Christina McCallum, Urban Designers in the 20-Minute Neighbourhoods team at the City of Edinburgh Council for their guidance in putting together the funding application, in developing the research and commenting on the results and final report.

The research was made possible through a grant from the Data-Driven Innovation (DDI), Small Grants funding programme of the University of Edinburgh.

Table of Contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	5
1 INTRODUCTION.....	6
2 BACKGROUND.....	7
2.1 Tactical urbanism as a city planning strategy.....	7
2.2 The origin and recent development of parklets.....	9
2.3 Capacity for parklets in Edinburgh.....	10
3 RESEARCH ACTIVITIES AND FINDINGS.....	11
3.1 The Survey.....	11
3.2 Outreach	11
3.3 Findings.....	12
3.3.1 Characteristics of the respondents.....	12
3.3.2 Who would like a parklet.....	14
3.3.3 Where should a parklet be located?.....	19
3.3.4 Who did not want a parklet.....	21
4 DISCUSSION	23
4.1 A community-led approach needs to be further investigated	23
4.2 Parklet design considerations	24
4.3 Limitations	24
5 OVERALL CONCLUSION.....	25
6 REFERENCES	26
7 APPENDICES.....	28

List of Figures and Tables

- Figure 1. A parklet installed in Hammersmith, London showing places to sit, and greenery.
- Figure 2. Collaborative top-down and bottom-up tactical urbanism approach for parklets.
- Figure 3. Praises and criticisms of past parklet programmes.
- Figure 4. Sample of parklet poster displayed in local businesses.
- Figure 5. Map of questionnaire responses within each Council ward.
- Figure 6. Age of respondents.
- Figure 7. Gender of respondents.
- Figure 8. Percentage of respondents' preference for wanting a parklet in their local neighbourhood (n=787).
- Figure 9. A parklet located at Calvert Avenue Parklet.
- Figure 10. Percentage of parklet preference and the proximity respondents live to their local neighbourhood centre.
- Figure 11. Percentage of parklet preference among bike owners and non-bike owners.
- Figure 12. Responses of what those who wanted a parklet (N=457) wanted to see in a parklet.
- Figure 13. Percentage of parklet preference and perception of traffic congestion in respondents' neighbourhood centres.
- Figure 14. Percentage of parklet preference and each sex. 'Prefer not to say' also included those who identified as non-binary or trans.
- Figure 15. Percentage of parklet preference in each age group.
- Figure 16. Preference for a parklet in local area and perception of cleanliness of local neighbourhood centre.
- Figure 17. Percentage of preference for a parklet and respondents' sense of community.
- Figure 18. Map of streets in purple where respondents thought they would like to see a parklet.
- Figure 19. Map of potentially relevant community centres listed by respondents overlayed on council wards.
- Figure 20. Percentage of parklet preference among those that do or do not own a car.
- Figure 21. Locations of respondents who are car owners and who reported using street parking.
- Figure 22. Responses on preference for parklet in red (yes) and yellow (no) points overlaid on the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation.
- Table 1. Responses from each Council ward.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report summarises the work undertaken by staff at the OPENSpace research centre at the University of Edinburgh's School of Architecture and Landscape Architecture (ESALA) in partnership with the City of Edinburgh Council, funded by a research innovation grant under the university's Data-Driven Innovation funding. The objective was to build community evidence for establishing urban parklets in Edinburgh. Parklets are small, temporary structures typically built upon one or two kerb-side parking spaces in order to add a community space to streets otherwise lacking this. Though these programmes exist in cities all over the world and in the UK, there is no precedent for parklets in Edinburgh.

This research aimed to find out the degree of local interest in parklets to help build the case for whether future support should be considered by the Council. It aimed to continue the tradition of The University of Edinburgh and OPENSpace research centre having an active involvement in the city community to support positive environmental and social change.

The research was undertaken primarily through a questionnaire created by the authors in partnership with staff from the City of Edinburgh Council. It was distributed city-wide, mainly online, and was open for a six-week period. Various outreach initiatives such as social media, phone calls, and emails, together with on-the-ground visiting of local businesses and organisations were implemented to ensure the questionnaire reached a wide audience. Once the survey was closed, 787 valid results were analysed both statistically and spatially.

Our research revealed notable community interest in the concept of parklets and their applicability to the Edinburgh context. There was a clear split in support, around half of respondents (58%) were in favour of parklets and 42% against them. There was a statistically significant correlation for people under the age of 45 years and non-car owning residents who felt a strong sense of community who were in support of having parklet in their neighbourhood. Conversely, older, car owning respondents were not in favour. In particular, there was a spatial pattern where the appetite for parklets was focused more in certain districts, such as in Morningside, Leith Walk and Southside/Newington wards. However, there were also districts with low numbers of respondents where the evidence base is not so clear, such as in Almond, Pentland Hills and Colinton/Fairmilehead wards.

In addition, we found evidence of established community involvement in various social and environmental initiatives and an idea of the kinds of amenities parklets could provide, based on feedback of what is currently lacking in the city. Respondents who were in favour of parklets also suggested a number of specific streets where they would like to see them. Therefore, while there were some limitations in reaching people across all parts of the city, the research provides sufficient and robust evidence to recommend that the Council further investigate the deliverability of this initiative in specific locations, to be considered alongside emerging policies on future street space allocation.

1 INTRODUCTION

Engaging local communities in road space decision-making is a growing trend for cities around the world. Other councils with similar overarching policy goals relating to health and well-being, placemaking and creating multifunctional local spaces, and supporting local businesses have successfully initiated parklet programmes that continue to be rolled out. In the past, city authorities have adopted policies that prioritised motor traffic capacity to accommodate an ever-increasing demand. The inefficiencies associated with more private motor vehicles, however, often create delays in public transport, road congestion, parking problems and challenges for pedestrians and cyclists navigating streets [1]. For Edinburgh, with a growing population and ever-increasing demand on the street space, there is a need to implement changes to the city structure to reflect an adaptation to this growth. One way this is being investigated is through reallocating street use from space prioritised for use by cars to that which more evenly accommodates different uses of the street, such as for walking/wheeling and cycling, but also for stationary activities such as sitting, or for green infrastructure provision. One such approach to implement reallocations, which has been adopted by many cities around the world, but not yet in Edinburgh is a parklet programme.

Parklets are, as the name suggests, small, often temporary structures which typically provide amenities such as seating, planting, play elements, cycle parking or exhibition spaces, and are usually formed of one or two kerb-side parking spaces. These can be in place for a few days, up to 18 months or even longer in some cases [2]. They have the potential to create community-led interventions when initiated, installed and maintained by local resident groups. As a type of “tactical urbanism” (bottom-up community-led local improvements) and “urban acupuncture” (small, focused improvements which are cheap to implement but have a wider spatial impact), parklets are dedicated for public use, as a community gathering space for people to stop, relax, and socialise.

The City of Edinburgh Council “City Mobility Plan 2021-2030” includes three objectives: People, Movement, and Place. These objectives aim to increase the health and well-being of people; promote sustainability through more eco-friendly transport; create places to rest; and establish a sense of neighbourhood by reducing vehicle traffic and increasing local amenities. A parklet programme in Edinburgh may be one way among many for the city to meet these objectives in a temporary manner, testing their impact while exploring more permanent solutions. However, there is a limited understanding of the appetite among Edinburgh’s residents for such a programme, given that there are no locally available precedents. Through Data-Driven Innovation (DDI) grant from the University of Edinburgh and in partnership with The City of Edinburgh Council, a study was undertaken to fill that gap by researchers from the OPENspace research centre of the Edinburgh School of Architecture and Landscape Architecture (ESALA).

This report presents the background to parklets as a concept and as implemented elsewhere, describes the research process undertaken for the study and presents the key findings.

2 BACKGROUND

Around the world, local authorities continually reallocate uses for city streets to reflect the evolving needs of the city and its residents. The 20th century was dominated by a shift from streets dedicated to a mix of wheeled vehicles and pedestrians to streets dominated by or exclusive to motorised traffic. Today, especially in older cities planned before the invention of the car, much of the street space remains dominated by vehicular traffic and/or car parking. Whether through large-scale city initiatives like Barcelona's Superblocks or small projects such as installing a bench, local authorities are attempting to shift the balance away from car and vehicle dominance to pedestrian and wheeling-friendly streets which reflect the needs of a diverse community and a better balance of motorists, cyclists, and pedestrian street users. However, as part of the public commons, city streets are where communities are exposed to green or blue spaces, experience social interactions, commute to work and patronise local shops and cafés [3]. These communities may in turn work with local authorities to enact changes to city streets [4] to increase liveability and quality of life for all.

2.1 Tactical urbanism as a city planning strategy

Car parking impacts the effectiveness of streets as mixed-use spaces [5]. Striking a balance between providing cheaper street parking for residents and using the space in other ways has been a challenge for cities trying to move away from vehicle-heavy designs [6]. There have been many approaches featuring varying levels of public participation in which cities have engaged. Most components within cities are planned in a top-down manner. City planners within local authorities often design initiatives and interventions which they present to communities, often with limited public input and participation. This top-down model allows for a streamlined process in areas where public participation may be viewed as resource heavy [7]. However, plans carried out in this way can often antagonise communities that may not have been consulted on what works best for their area. Alternatively, bottom-up approaches, where citizens help to drive design, allow urban communities to co-create interventions which are more reflective of what they specifically need [8]. While bottom-up approaches can be effective drivers of change, they may be biased by excluding those communities that may need a particular intervention but lack the cohesion or social capital to enact such changes. Newer approaches combine both top-down and bottom-up methods. City authorities can work with communities to help develop low-cost, locally relevant interventions by engaging in public participation [9] and co-design. Community involvement can also build support for more radical changes where, for example, through lowering speed limits, reductions in traffic or parking can increase space for walking and wheeling, create greener streets and help to increase economic returns for local businesses.

Parklets, as one tool within tactical urbanism, provide a solution for reallocating urban street space for the public in a modest and experimental way. This strategy, used globally, consists of quickly installed, inexpensive, small interventions that are permanent or temporary, aimed at a very specific area to increase the health and well-being of a community [10]. In addition, such projects can be initiated by or incorporate many stakeholders within the urban structure such as local residents, community

organisations, businesses, and public officials [11]. Such interventions have allowed urban areas to express themselves through innovative designs in spaces otherwise unused or used for a single purpose such as car parking. They have been lauded for their potential to create permanent solutions, driving changes within the city in a rapid manner [2]. Figure 1 shows an example of a parklet in Hammersmith, London.



Figure 1: A parklet installed in Hammersmith, London showing places to sit, and planting. Hammersmith and Fulham Parklet, London, UK, Cyclehoop (2017). <https://cyclehoop.com/our-parklet-has-been-shortlisted-for-the-healthy-streets-awards-2017/>

There are, however, some criticisms of this approach. For example, the feasibility of carrying out parklet interventions requires multiple stakeholders, each parklet is subject to various levels of regulation from permission, to planning, to building, to maintaining, and finally taking down. This can hinder the rapid, time-effective implementation of these types of projects [12]. In addition, many projects have been criticised for missing areas of the city that may benefit most for the sake of carrying out a project in a higher visibility area or where residents are more vocal and able to organise themselves [11]. Despite these criticisms, it can be demonstrated that parklets in more heavily used pedestrian areas can make a positive impact on the city as a whole. Furthermore, with proper involvement of relevant stakeholders and clarity about how these projects fit within the larger city plans, obstacles to carrying out tactical urbanism can be overcome [8]. Figure 2 shows a diagram of how both bottom-up and top-down approaches can be used.

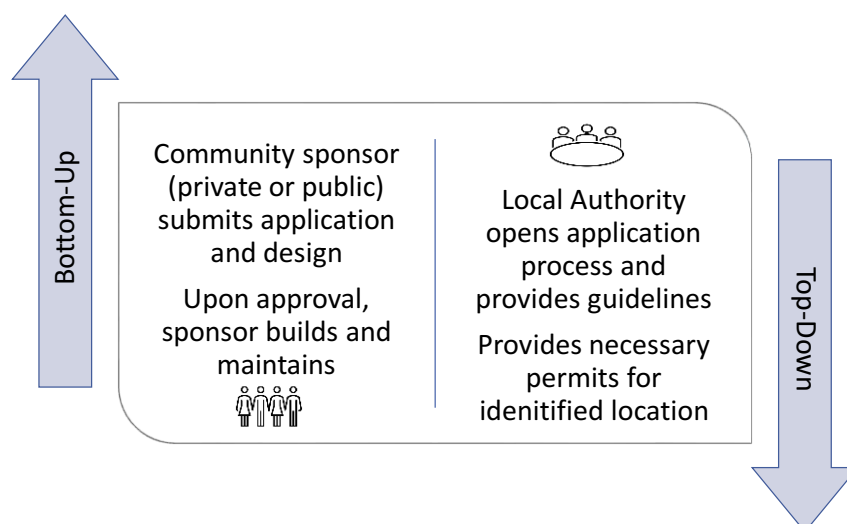


Figure 2: Collaborative top-down and bottom-up tactical urbanism approach for parklets [6].

2.2 The origin and recent development of parklets

Parklets started in San Francisco in 2005 where the Rebar design group addressed problems of access to green space and the prioritisation of shared streets dedicated to car parking [3]. Since then, parklets have expanded globally and can be found in over 162 cities in 35 countries with almost 1,000 parklets being installed world-wide to date [2]. The first parklet in the UK was implemented in Hackney, London in 2015 and by the summer 2022, there were more than 80 parklets installed in urban areas across the UK. Most of these were created through community collaboration. However, guidance on best practices for applying, designing, building, and maintenance, as well as data about their success or failure has been lacking. In addition, more is needed on how to create one with wider city planning initiatives in mind. As such, there has been both praise and criticisms of parklets programmes reported in the literature (see Figure 3).

Praise	Criticism
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides seating or cycle parking where it is lacking • Fosters social interaction between community • Is temporary and easy to construct • Increases foot traffic to street for local businesses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss of parking space • Costs money and time so typically falls to commercial sponsorship, especially during COVID • Green space added is minimal • Favours tighter communities and popular areas.

Figure 3: Praise and criticism of recent parklet programmes [8] [13] [14].

Despite the criticism, parklets have been shown to increase use of otherwise underused public spaces which has led in turn to an increased sense of social

cohesion, economic benefits to local businesses, and enhanced physical activity through walking or cycling, with places to sit and rest, or park a bike [2]. Some of these programmes have also led to permanent changes or acted as a catalyst for cities to change traffic patterns and increase pedestrian or wheeling areas. However, given the unique character of each city, the cookie-cutter “Park(ing) Day Manual” [15] may not be suitable everywhere. As such, many cities are looking for ways to incorporate parklets into their urban planning based on locally identified need, such as in Los Angeles, USA [16], London, UK [17], Philadelphia, USA [18], Lambeth, UK [19], and, more broadly in the UK with the Living Streets initiative [20]. These initiatives aim to make parklets application, installation, management, and take-down easier on communities and to diversify applicants from the private to the community sector [12].

2.3 Capacity for parklets in Edinburgh

Though parklet programmes exist worldwide, in the UK, and in Scotland, there is no precedent for establishing them in Edinburgh. There is, however, precedent for building parklet-style structures in Edinburgh based on the many pop-up venues around the Festival Fringe, the winter holiday markets, and the COVID-time outdoor dining structures for restaurants and cafés. However, these are mostly for commercial use, with the COVID examples being both a public health and an economic intervention [3]. Parklets have the potential to create a non-commercial gathering space which can contribute to the health and well-being of urban residents as a low cost and time intervention [10]. There is, however, a lack of locally specific evidence as to whether communities have the appetite to initiate this type of public space intervention in Edinburgh, as opposed to transferring evidence from what goes on in other cities or from other studies. Additionally, there is limited understanding as to whether there is city or community-level capacity to lead the planning, delivery and maintenance of the associated infrastructure. Through a city-wide questionnaire, this study therefore assessed the appetite for parklets in communities across Edinburgh.

3 RESEARCH ACTIVITIES AND FINDINGS

3.1 The Survey

To assess public opinion regarding the possibility of introducing parklets to the streets of Edinburgh, a questionnaire was created. This questionnaire, entitled “Building community evidence for urban parklets in Edinburgh” was developed through collaboration between the University of Edinburgh researchers and The City of Edinburgh Council’s 20-Minute Neighbourhood team. The questionnaire comprised a set of questions pertaining to parklets, aspects related to local neighbourhood centres, local green and blue spaces, and finally some demographic information (See Appendix 1 for the full survey). These questions were also in line with The City of Edinburgh Council’s City Mobility Plan 2021-2030 “People, Movement, and Place” initiative. The survey was opened for six weeks from 22 February 2023 to 7 April 2023.

3.2 Outreach

The survey was pilot-tested to ensure it was understandable and that it would not take too long to complete, and then a link to it was shared through social media via Twitter and Reddit. In addition, community organisations such as libraries, community allotments, and community centres were contacted to share a poster of the survey (see Appendix 2) to attract respondents who might not use social media. It was also posted on websites and distributed through news channels, for example within the University of Edinburgh. After initial survey results came through, postcodes of participants were mapped using Google MyMaps to determine any gaps in local responses in the city. This revealed neighbourhoods where survey uptake was low, so that they could be approached via on-the-ground outreach through discussing the survey with local businesses and community centres and posting flyers. There was also additional publicity once several newspapers published short pieces about the survey.

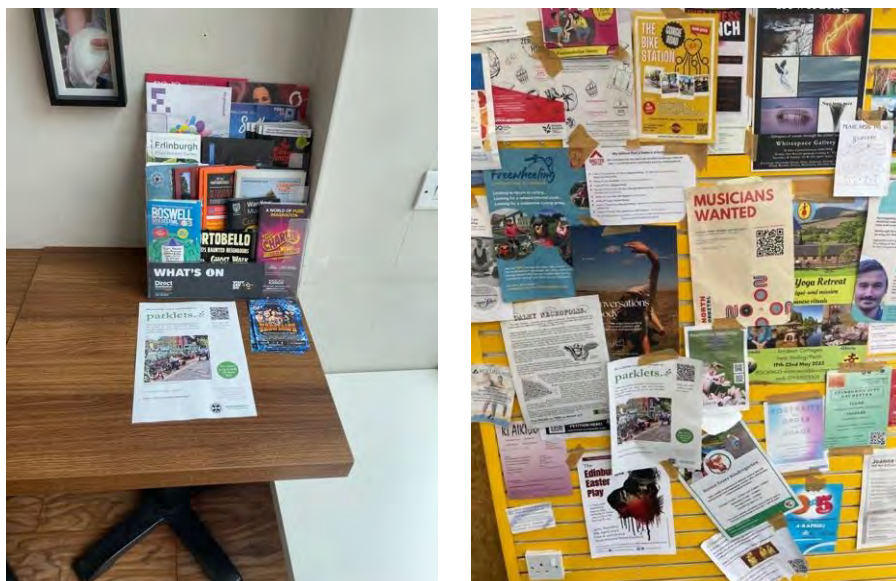


Figure 4. Examples of parklet information poster displayed in local businesses.

3.3 Findings

3.3.1 Characteristics of the respondents

The survey resulted in 787 completed questionnaires. Entries using either the first half or whole postcodes were cleaned and then mapped for spatial analysis. Fourteen of the 787 were excluded due to incomplete postcodes. This allowed for the mapping of 772 responses, two of which lie outside the Council wards. An analysis of responses from the questionnaire showed statistical significance in terms of the degree of variance, meaning that the results show no statistical bias. The responses also form a representative sample size of the city with regards to age and gender distribution, having a 3.4% margin of error with a 95% confidence interval. They are also widely distributed across the city as a whole, though some areas were relatively over- or under-represented (see Figure 5 and Table 1).

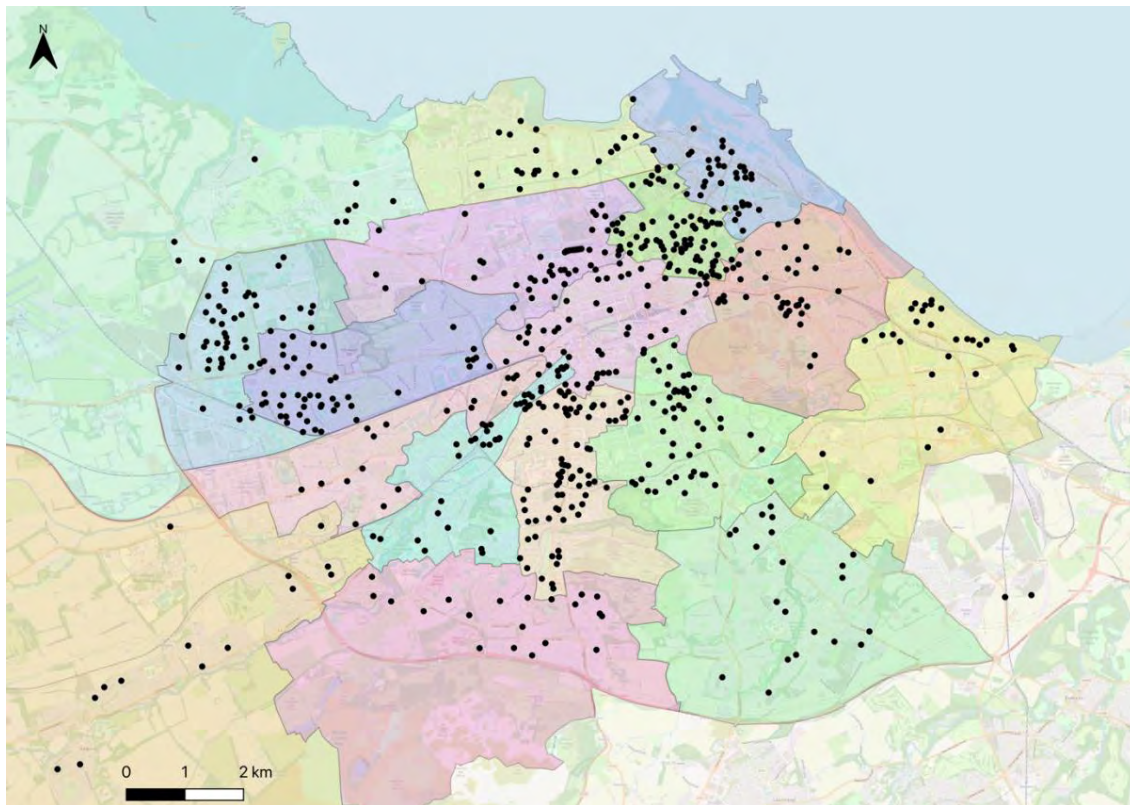


Figure 5: Map showing the residential location of questionnaire respondents within each Council ward.

Table 1: The number of responses from each Council ward (N=770)

Ward number	Ward name	Responses
1	Almond	10
2	Pentland Hills	15
3	Drum Brae/Gyle	64
4	Forth	23
5	Inverleith	65
6	Corstorphine/Murrayfield	56
7	Sighthill/Gorgie	23
8	Colinton/Fairmilehead	22
9	Fountainbridge/Craiglockhart	47
10	Morningside	90
11	City Centre	55
12	Leith Walk	90
13	Leith	46
14	Craigtoun/Duddingston	42
15	Southside/Newington	63
16	Liberton/Gilmerton	25
17	Portobello/Craigmillar	34
TOTAL		770*

There were responses from each age group, with the majority coming from people between the ages of 25-75. The proportion of responses from each age group is shown in Figure 6. The age spread is therefore very wide and representative. In terms of gender, there was a slight majority of male respondents but this is also suitably representative of the city (see Figure 7).

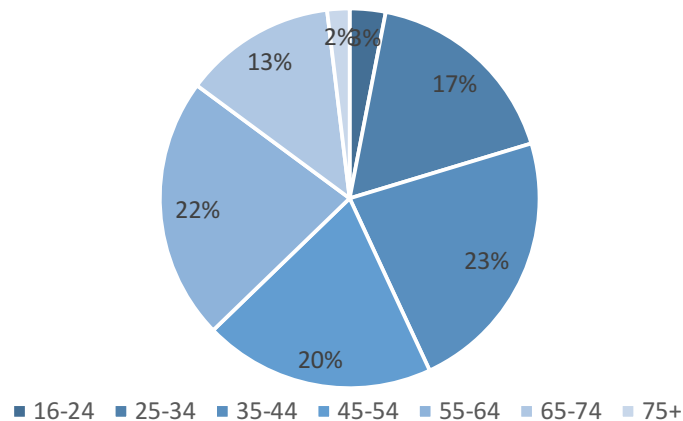


Figure 6: Age of Respondents (N=787).

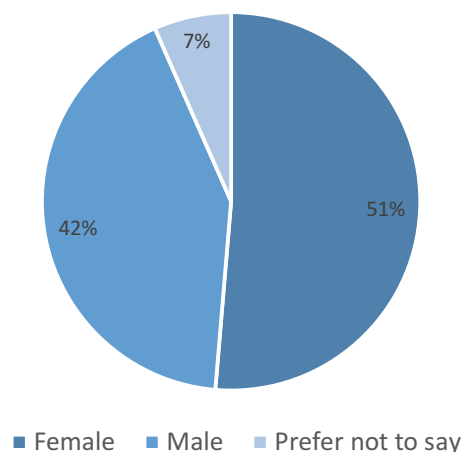


Figure 7: Gender of respondents (N=787).

More than half (64%) of respondents live within 5 minutes of a green or blue space by walking or wheeling. The majority (N=635) visit these spaces every day (N=100), several times a week (N=312), or once a week (N= 223). More than half (58%) of respondents also live within a 5-minute walk of their local neighbourhood centre. These areas are also frequently visited by the majority of respondents (N=713: every day- N = 122, several times a week- N=432, or once a week- N=159), with a third visiting for 15 minutes or less (34%).

3.3.2 Who would like a parklet

Of the 787 responses, 58% of respondents would like to see a parklet in their neighbourhood, while 42% would not (Figure 8). See Appendix 3 for a table of responses on preference for parklet within each Council ward. However, 57% have never heard of a parklet prior to the survey and 73% have never visited a parklet. Of those respondents who would like to see a parklet, 54% were unsure about whether they would be willing to start the process of applying for one by completing an application.

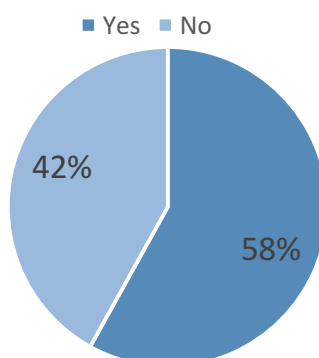


Figure 8: Respondents preference for wanting a parklet in their local neighbourhood (n=787).

Building community evidence for urban parklets in Edinburgh

Of those who wanted a parklet, an example of a parklet from Shoreditch, London, (Figure 9) with planting, cycle parking, and seating was the most preferred style (see Appendix 4 for full list of examples from which survey participants could choose).



Figure 9: A parklet located at Calvert Avenue Parklet, Shoreditch, London, Meristem Design (2017). <https://www.meristemdesign.co.uk/shoreditch-parklet>.

Respondents living closer to their neighbourhood centres – less - than 10 minutes away were more likely to want a parklet (see Figure 10). However, a third of participants currently visit their local neighbourhood centre for less than 15 minutes.

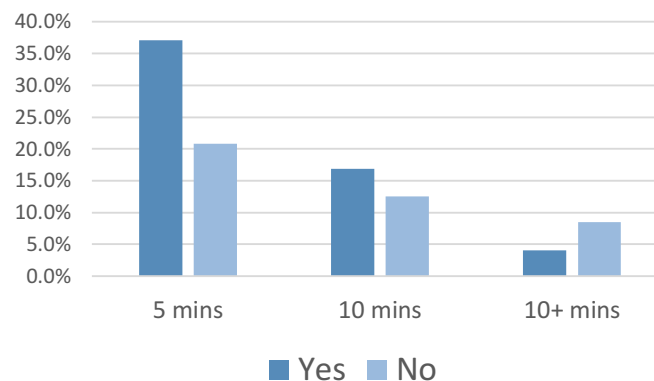


Figure 10: Percentage of parklet preference and the proximity of respondents' residence to their local neighbourhood centre.

Respondents cited the low availability of seating and bike parking in Edinburgh. Indeed, bike owners were more likely to want parklets in their neighbourhood than non-bike owners (Figure 11).

Building community evidence for urban parklets in Edinburgh

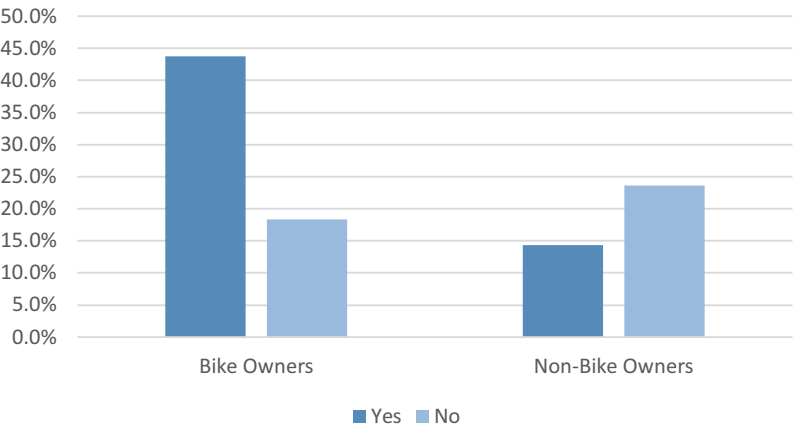


Figure 11: Percentage of parklet preference among bike owners versus non-bike owners.

Of those who wanted a parklet, more than 60% stated that the lack of seating and bike parking negatively affects the time they spend in their local neighbourhood centre (See Appendices 5- 11 for visuals of these data). Accordingly, from the parklet functions which were suggested in the questionnaire, seating was the top choice from those who wanted a parklet, followed by planting/gardening, bike parking and supporting local businesses (see Figure 12).

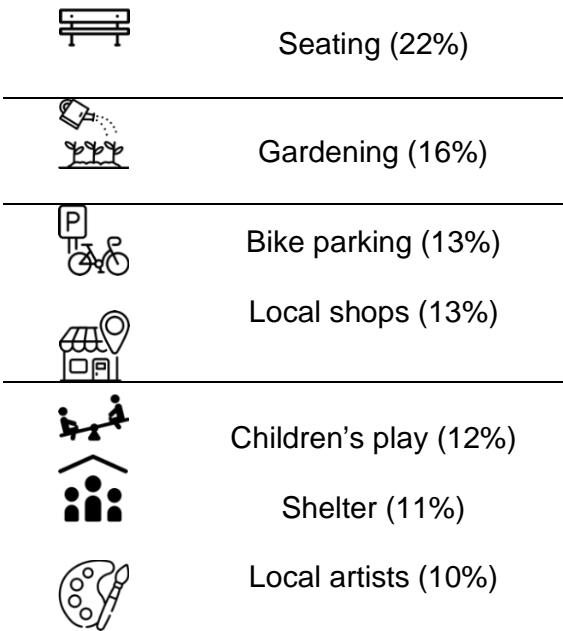


Figure 12: Responses of what those who wanted a parklet (N=457) would like to see included. Respondents could select more than one choice. In the other (2%) category, a space for socialisation and plants was most often mentioned. Icons from <https://www.flaticon.com>.

Of those who would like to see a parklet, most assessed their local neighbourhood centre as having very heavy to congested traffic (Figure 13).

Building community evidence for urban parklets in Edinburgh

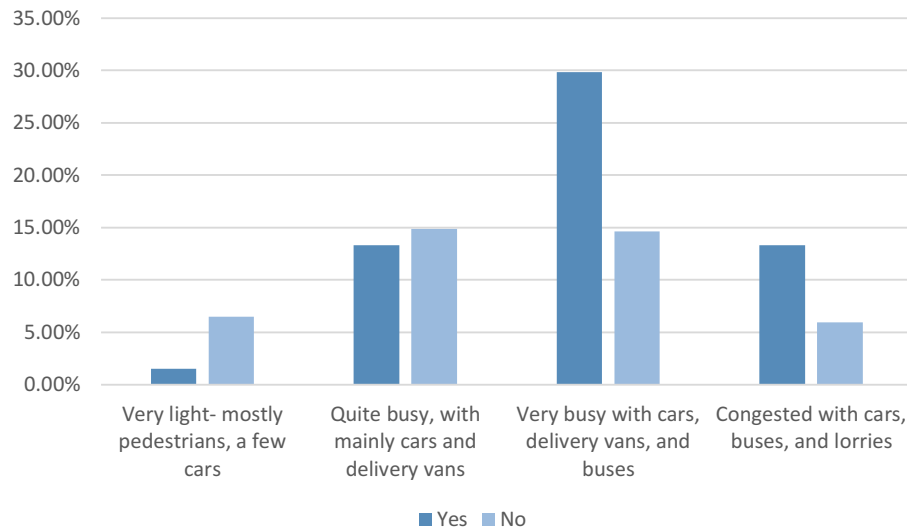


Figure 13: Percentage of parklet preference and perception of traffic congestion in respondents' neighbourhood centres.

Preferences related to demographics

There was no significant gender difference in who would like parklets (Figure 14). However, there was a significant difference in parklet preferences according to age group. People below the age of 44 years are particularly in favour of seeing a parklet in their local area, while responses from people aged 45 years and over are more variable, with some age brackets (55-64 and 75+) showing a majority not in favour of seeing parklets in their local area (Figure 15).

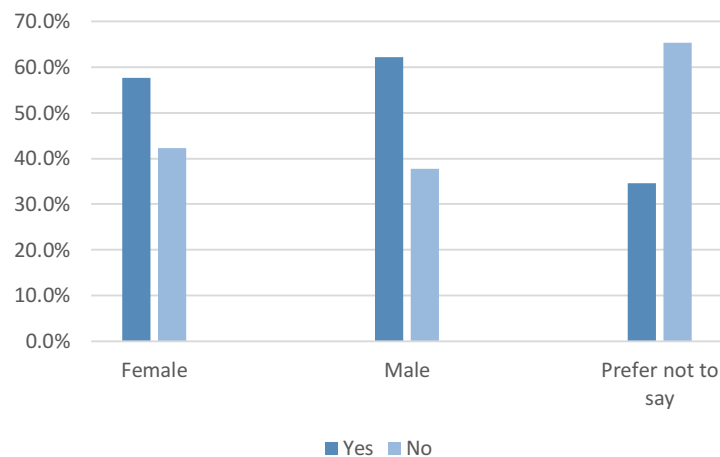


Figure 14: Percentage of parklet preference and each sex. 'Prefer not to say' also included those who identified as non-binary or trans.

Building community evidence for urban parklets in Edinburgh

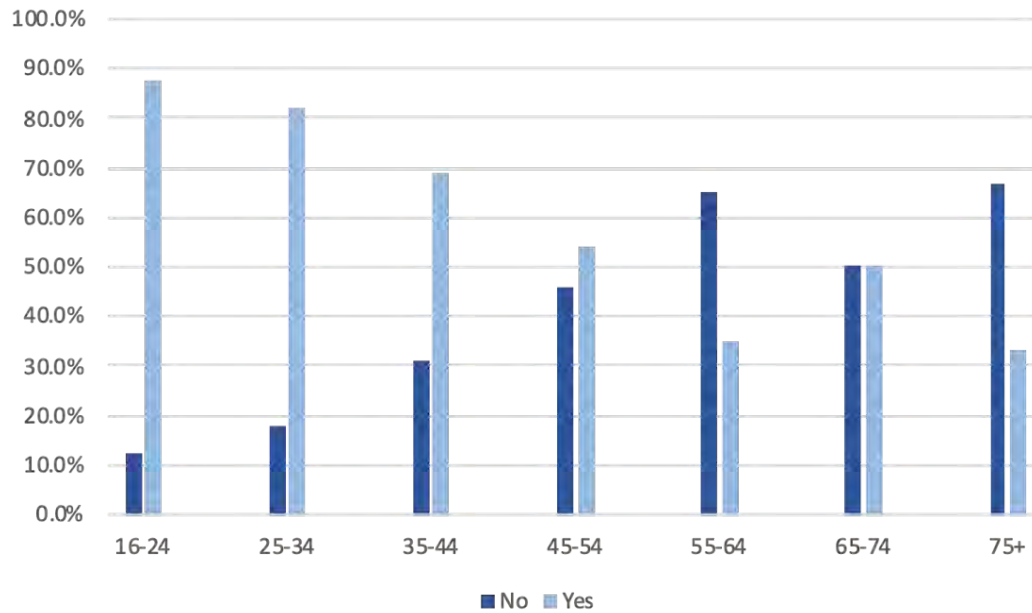


Figure 15: Percentage of parklet preference in each age group.

Those perceiving the local neighbourhood centre as less clean and assessing their area as having a poorer sense of community are also more likely to want a parklet (Figures 16 and 17).

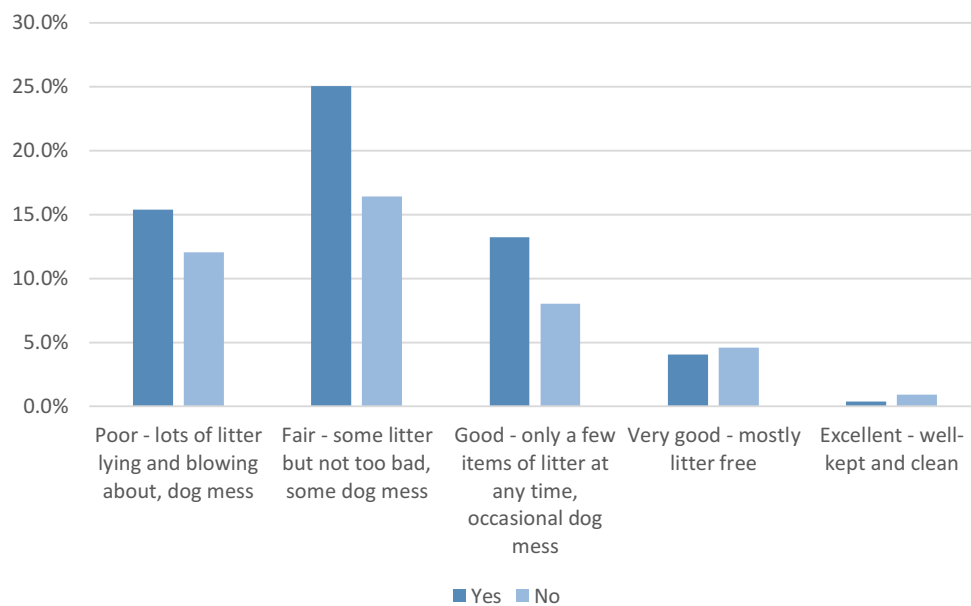


Figure 16: Preference for a parklet in local area and perception of cleanliness of local neighbourhood centre.

Building community evidence for urban parklets in Edinburgh

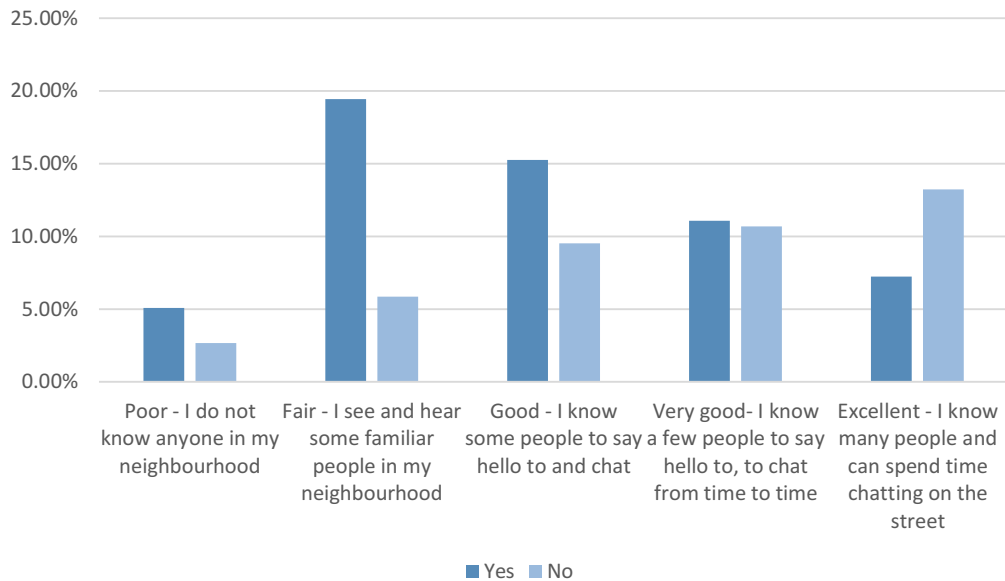


Figure 17: Percentage of preference for a parklet and respondents' sense of community.

3.3.3 Where should a parklet be located?

Those who wanted a parklet were asked on which streets they would like to see one. The following streets were listed most frequently as potential areas for a parklet installation:

- Morningside Road by the M&S (N=25)
- Leith Walk (N=22)
- The Shore (N=10)
- Portobello High Street (N=8)
- Easter Road (N=8)
- Bruntsfield Place (N=8)
- Broughton Street (N=6)

Many other streets were also named, and these have all been mapped (see Figure 18)



Figure 18: Map of streets (in purple) where respondents suggested they would like to see a parklet.

Organisations which might be helpful for setting up a parklet

Those who want a parklet and expressed a willingness to apply for one listed some streets and community organisations which could be considered for parklet programmes and/or as sponsors. These were groups or organisations that might be interested in applying, setting up, and maintaining a parklet in their neighbourhood. There were 95 organisations listed, their locations are mapped in Figure 19. For the full list see Appendix 12).

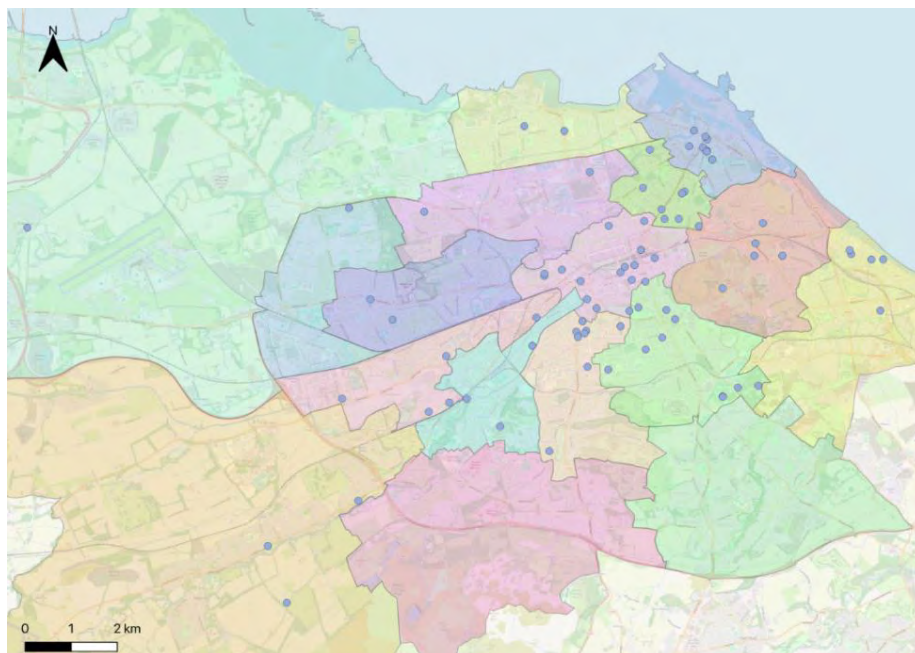


Figure 19: Map of potentially relevant community centres listed by respondents overlaid on council wards.

3.3.4 Who did not want a parklet?

Respondents who did not want a parklet tended to be older (see Figures 16), car owners (Figure 20), those with a stronger sense of community (Figure 17) and living further away from the city centre. Additionally, of the respondents who were car owners, about half of them stated that they use street parking – key locations for this are mapped in Figure 21.

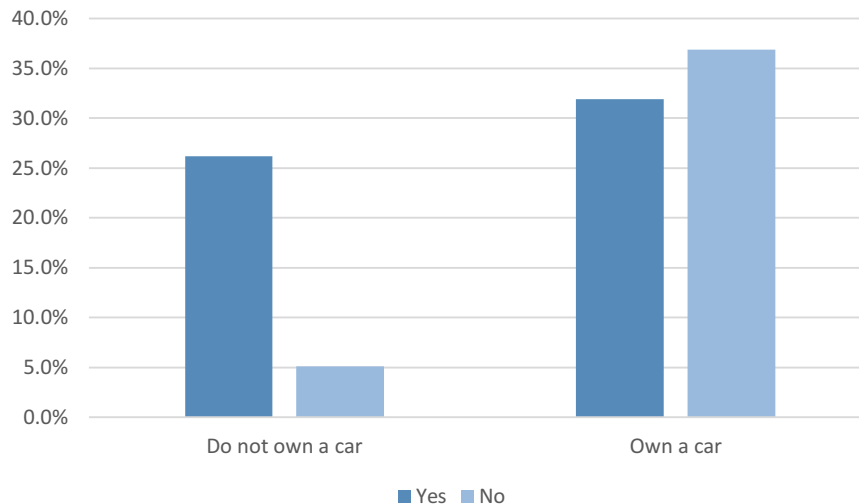


Figure 20: Percentage of parklet preference among those that do or do not own a car.

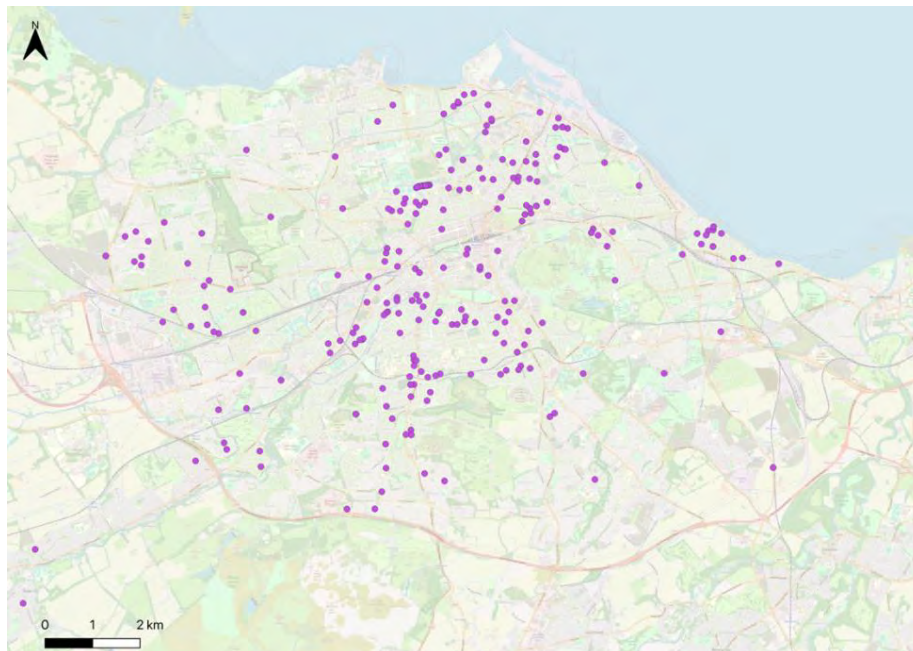


Figure 21. Locations of respondents who are car owners and who reported using street parking (N=276).

Those who did not want a parklet had the option to list a reason why. These reasons included: an already abundant green space provision in the city, not wanting to lose

Building community evidence for urban parklets in Edinburgh

car parking (including 17 mentions of how parklets may remove disabled parking spaces), and concerns about the cost.

Pattern of preference related to social deprivation

Finally, those respondents wanting a parklet were more likely to live outside the city centre (Figure 22). In the more deprived areas of the city there was a lack of responses or a poor to fair sense of community. Thus, it is not possible to draw conclusions for such areas from the sample.

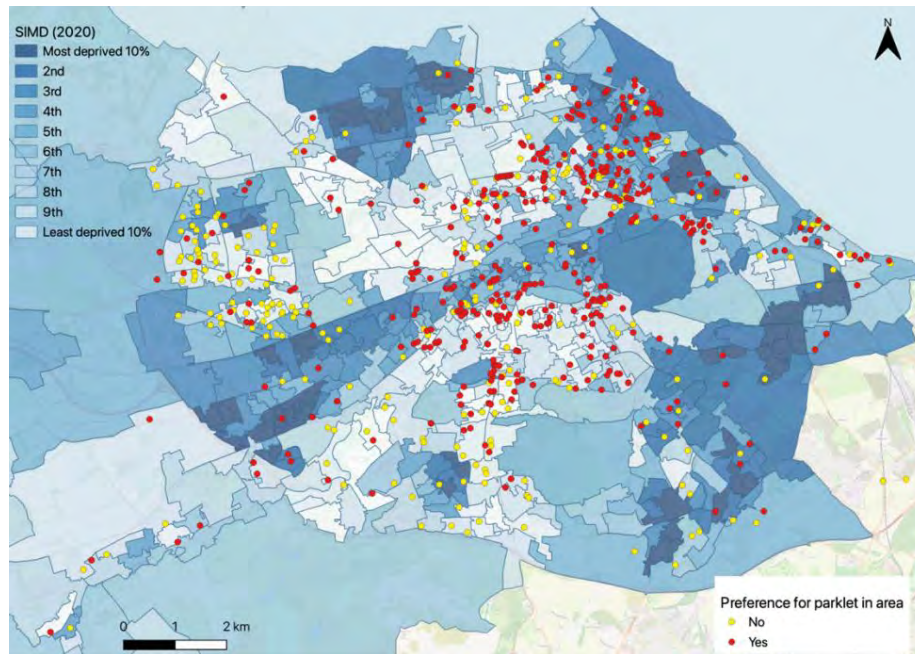


Figure 22: Responses on preference for parklet in red (yes) and yellow (no) points overlaid on the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (N=772).

4 DISCUSSION

The overall general picture emerging from the results is that city residents are fairly evenly split between younger, non-car-owning residents with a low sense of community wanting parklets and older, car-owning residents with a stronger sense of community who do not want them. It is of course somewhat more nuanced than this – there are also differences among those who would like parklets and their willingness to become engaged in applying for one, for example. The places where parklets are desired also tend to be local centres with traffic congestion, a lack of seating and bike parking and often poor street maintenance.

Based on the questionnaire results, there are several considerations to be taken into account when developing parklets in Edinburgh. These can be grouped into considerations for a community-led approach and considerations on what design elements could be best suited for a parklet programme in Edinburgh.

4.1 A community-led approach needs to be further investigated.

The research findings show a local community interest in finding ways to initiate and deliver parklet interventions. The fact that nearly one hundred organisations were listed by respondents as groups which could be a suitable partner in leading the sponsorship of a parklet programme, shows there is an active community in many parts of the city. Local communities would benefit as there is greater potential for this initiative to be progressed in future, including more opportunities for funding.

Some existing parklet programmes have been criticised for creating an application process that is time consuming, confusing to navigate, and expensive for community organisations [3]. As a result, several parklet programmes have ended up being sponsored by commercial organisations as an extension of their business, rather than community organisations [12]. Indeed, in this questionnaire, 54% of respondents who wanted a parklet were unsure who would fill out an application or would not fill out one themselves. Therefore, ensuring a comprehensible and supported application process may be one way to help enable communities to implement parklets in their local area, following the successful precedents set in other cities. Any parklet programme in Edinburgh should be made accessible for communities that would most benefit from it, while ensuring the Council is able to support the review of applications internally, permit distribution, and monitoring required.

Parklets have been praised in other cities for their ability to bring communities together and provide an aesthetic change to the street [12] [14]. While parklets may not be needed for additional green space, they can help to promote more sustainable travel within the city [1]. Edinburgh's many traffic sensitive areas reflect the need to find appropriate places for individual parklets. The city should ensure the voices of local people are heard when if and when deciding where interventions are to be created, as some areas may not need or want them, otherwise they may produce a negative impact. This is particularly the case for those areas with a high level of neighbourhood satisfaction or those relying on street car parking, especially as continued access to disabled parking spaces was listed as a concern.

Should additional funding be made available by the Council, more research could be undertaken through pilot programmes. This could be done in further partnership with

the University of Edinburgh to continue the university's active involvement in the community to facilitate positive environmental and social change.

4.2 Parklet design considerations.

Any future pilot programme should consider the design elements preferred by respondents. Doing so would follow other cities like Melbourne, San Francisco, or Vancouver, where parklet programmes have been implemented for many years. This approach of installing temporary parklets could be extended and maintained over several years as the local authority carries out changes under the City Mobility Plan. They can serve as a trial of road space reallocation ahead of any potential permanent approach.

The objective of “place” for the City Mobility Plan aims to generate a sense of place attachment through the creation of local neighbourhood centres where the need for extensive travel to other parts of the city for everyday amenities is reduced, thereby reducing vehicular traffic [21]. Parklets may be a way for the city to adapt streets to make them more friendly for walking/wheeling, rather than as places dominated by car parking or vehicle throughways [11]. Adding new seating and bike parking areas would help to promote foot traffic to local businesses and increase the time spent in the local neighbourhood areas. The City Mobility Plan 2021-2030 offers an opportunity to create permanent changes in Edinburgh that include more seating, cycle networks and green spaces. Parklets may be one way to engage in temporary fixes ahead of any long-term changes. However, these programmes need to be best suited for neighbourhoods, which is why bottom-up models are likely to be more successful than top-down ones.

4.3 Limitations

There were some limitations to this research. During the outreach process, only a few local businesses were approached for advertising the questionnaire based on where there were gaps in responses. As many parklets are commercially sponsored, it would also be beneficial to approach local businesses to assess their appetite for parklets. Future research could approach businesses that are situated on streets recommended by respondents as potential places for parklets.

Participants were not asked their length of time living in Edinburgh, which may have provided a better understanding of respondents' sense of community. Finally, due to time and cost constraints, the survey captured mostly quantitative data with limited qualitative answers. It would be beneficial to conduct further qualitative data collection through interviews, for example, to capture a more in-depth picture of how parklets are viewed in different neighbourhoods – especially those where locations were suggested, as well as testing out different design ideas. Previous studies [22] have shown the importance of interviews for capturing neighbourhood perception of change and community involvement. Any parklets projects in Edinburgh would benefit from this type of further research.

5 OVERALL CONCLUSION

As Edinburgh grows in population, plans for the future use of common spaces need to consider all members of the community. One such space that has been targeted includes city streets. The reallocation of these spaces for more equitable use, not only by car drivers but also for pedestrians, public transport vehicles, and cyclists alike is under consideration. Future Streets under the City Mobility Plan 2021-2030 aims to deliver changes to Edinburgh streets to improve community life and local neighbourhood centres. Parklets offer a temporary solution for the city to reallocate streets under a community-led tactical intervention and as a type of natural experiment.

Our findings show there is community evidence in support for building urban parklets in Edinburgh, but it is by no means universal – there is also plenty of support for not wanting them and this must be acknowledged. Notably, respondents wanted to see an increase in seating. There is evidence of support and interest among residents familiar with and using community centres in creating parklets in their local area.

Respondents who were in favour of parklets tended to report a low sense of community, especially the younger residents. Therefore, parklets have the potential to increase social cohesion, as has been the case in other cities around the world. The right design, one which answers the local needs as identified by the community, might encourage people to spend more time in their local neighbourhood centres. All community members should be considered in any potential parklet initiative in Edinburgh. This includes residents who currently rely on streets for car parking. Though parklets typically take up only one to two kerb-side parking spaces, proper consideration for parklet location could mitigate any impact.

This study provides the City of Edinburgh Council with evidence that there is community interest in parklets and to consider investigating further the potential that parklets projects could provide, particularly in areas where interest is high. Prior to any parklets project being further explored, it would benefit both the local authority and communities to gather additional qualitative data. This would provide a more in-depth understanding of how parklets are viewed in specific neighbourhoods and by different community members. It would also be useful to extend research into areas where the survey did not penetrate, especially the more deprived ones. If successful, the establishment of a formal yet simple process for parklets would enable local communities across the city to deliver them. Further research should be considered in line with the City of Edinburgh Council's vision for a cleaner, pedestrian-friendly city.

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7 APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Questionnaire 'Building community evidence for urban parklets in Edinburgh'.

Building community evidence for urban parklets in Edinburgh

Page 1: Introduction

Researchers at the University of Edinburgh School of Architecture and Landscape Architecture are working in partnership with The City of Edinburgh Council to gather information about the potential to introduce parklets in the city.

A parklet is a small community gathering space for people to stop, relax, and socialise, and is usually made up of one or two kerb-side parking spaces and dedicated for public use. Parklets usually consist of an impermanent structure which can be in place for anywhere from a few days, up to 18 months or even longer in some cases. Here is an example to give you an idea of what a parklet could include:



Photo: Calvert Avenue Parklet, Shoreditch, UK, Meristem Design (2017). <https://www.meristemdesign.co.uk/shoreditch-parklet>. Shoreditch Parklet was created using two parking spaces and consists of benches, planters with greenery, and spaces to park bicycles.

Building community evidence for urban parklets in Edinburgh

We are interested in finding out what Edinburgh residents think of this idea and whether there is scope to introduce them. This survey asks you questions about parklets, your neighbourhood, and about you. You must be at least 16 years of age to take part in this survey. You can end the survey at any time.

All responses are anonymous. By completing this survey, you consent to us using the data for the purpose of this study. This data may be published or used for future research by the City of Edinburgh Council and/or the University of Edinburgh. If you have any questions about the survey, please contact Dr. Simon Bell, Principal Investigator, at s.bell@ed.ac.uk or the City of Edinburgh Council, at 20minuteneighbourhood@edinburgh.gov.uk.

Participation in this questionnaire is voluntary and should not take longer than 10 minutes to complete. If you are interested and wish to know about the results, we will use your email address to contact you.

I consent to participate in this survey *Required*

Yes

No

Page 2: Parklets

The following section includes questions related to your experience of parklets and the features they could include.

Have you ever heard of a parklet? *Required*

Yes

No

Have you ever visited a parklet? *Required*

Yes

No

If yes, where was it?

The following are some examples of parklets. Please select the three you like best

A. Parklet featuring plantings with various seating heights.



Photo: Croydon Parklet, College Road Parklet, Croydon, UK. by The Decorators (2017) <https://the-decorators.net/Croydon-Parklets>

B. Parklet featuring plantings, various benches and space for children's play.



Photo: Hammersmith and Fulham Parklet, London, UK, Cyclehoop (2017) <https://cyclehoop.com/our-parklet-has-been-shortlisted-for-the-healthy-streets-awards-2017/>

C. Parklet featuring plantings, benches, and spaces for cycle parking.



*Photo: Calvert Avenue Parklet, Shoreditch, UK, Meristem Design (2017).
<https://www.meristemdesign.co.uk/shoreditch-parklet>.*

D. Parklet featuring overhead shelter and exercise bikes.

Building community evidence for urban parklets in Edinburgh



Photo: Ride, Covington, Ohio, USA by Alexandra Taylor (2016)
<https://www.cincinnatiimagazine.com/citywiseblog/covington-parklets/>

E. Parklet featuring many plantings and benches, located off a main street.



Photo: This parklet next to The Eagle... Manchester, UK by Skyliner [@skylinermcr]
(2019) <https://twitter.com/skylinermcr/status/1153007413219463174\u0026u8203>

F. Parklet featuring performance space.

Building community evidence for urban parklets in Edinburgh



Photo: *Where We Are Now 02*, Melbourne, Australia. by Aeden Ratcliffe (2021)
<https://www.rmit.edu.au/news/all-news/2021/nov/playful-parklet>

G. Parklet featuring areas for children's play, some seating, and plantings.



Photo: *Hopscotch Garden*, Covington, Ohio, USA by Alexandra Taylor (2016)
<https://www.cincinnati.com/citywiseblog/covington-parklets/> Required
Please select no more than 3 answer(s).

A

B

C

D

E

F

G

What function would you like to see a parklet serve? Check all that apply *Required*

Supporting local business

Supporting local artists

Space for shelter

Space for cycle parking

Space for gardening

Space for seating

Space for children to play

Other:

If you selected Other, please specify:

Would you like to see a parklet in your neighbourhood? *Required*

Yes

No

If yes, please name the street where you could imagine a parklet being installed.

If no, please explain.

Are you aware of any local groups or organisations that might be interested in applying, setting up, and maintaining a parklet in your neighbourhood? *Required*

Yes

No

If yes, what are the local groups and organisations?

If there was an application process with information on how to request, set-up and maintain a parklet for your neighbourhood, might you be interested? *Required*

Yes

No

Not sure

How strong is your sense of community in your local neighbourhood? *Required*

Poor - I do not know anyone in my neighbourhood

Fair - I see and hear some familiar people in my neighbourhood

Good - I know some people to say hello to and chat

Very good- I know a few people to say hello to, to chat from time to time

Excellent - I know many people and can spend time chatting on the street

Page 3: Your Local Neighbourhood Centre

Now we would like to learn more about your experience of accessing local facilities to understand how parklets could enhance your everyday activities. This section includes questions about your local neighbourhood centre, which could be a local shopping street or place that you go to frequently for facilities.

How close are you to your local shops and services by walking/wheeling*? *Required*

Building community evidence for urban parklets in Edinburgh

5 minutes

10 minutes

More than 10 minutes

**Wheeling refers to people using a mobility scooter, wheelchair, or other wheeled mobility aid, as well as people walking with pushchairs and prams. In this document we use walking and wheeling together.*

How frequently do you visit shops and services in your local neighbourhood centre? *Required*

Never

Rarely

Once a week

Several times a week

Every day

How much time do you typically spend in your local neighbourhood centre every week? *Required*

Less than 15 min/ only for passing through

15 minutes

30 minutes

1 hour

More than 1 hour

Do you usually visit: *Required*

By myself

With friend(s)

With family

With a pet

Other

If you selected Other, please specify:

How would you describe the traffic in your local neighbourhood centre? *Required*

Very light- mostly pedestrians, a few cars

Quite busy, with mainly cars and delivery vans

Very busy with cars, delivery vans, and buses

Congested with cars, buses, and lorries

How would you rate the cleanliness (related to the presence of litter, dog fouling, cigarette ends, fly-posting) of your local neighbourhood? *Required*

Poor - lots of litter lying and blowing about, dog mess

Fair - some litter but not too bad, some dog mess

Good - only a few items of litter at any time, occasional dog mess

Very good - mostly litter free

Excellent - well-kept and clean

How safe do you consider your local neighbourhood to be? *Required*

Very Safe - good lighting, many people around, safe crossings

Fairly safe - mostly good lighting, people around, and safe crossings

A little unsafe - some lighting, some underpasses, and unsafe crossings

Very unsafe - poor lighting, bad behaviour of people around, many unsafe crossings

Do not know or wish to say

How convenient and available is public seating, such as benches that are not connected to a restaurant or café in your local neighbourhood? *Required*

Poor – There are no benches or seats

Fair – There is one bench

Good – There are a couple of benches

Building community evidence for urban parklets in Edinburgh

Very good – There are a few benches

Excellent – There are many benches

If you cycle, how convenient and available is cycle parking in your local neighbourhood? *Required*

Poor – There is no place to park a bike

Fair – There is one place

Good – There are a couple of places

Very Good – There are a few places

Excellent – There are many places

I do not have a bike

Does seating and cycle parking availability affect the time you spend there? *Required*

Yes

No

If you own or use a car, where do you park it? *Required*

On the street

In a car park

In my driveway or private garage

I do not own or use a car

Page 4: Green and blue spaces in Edinburgh

Next, we would like to learn more about the green and blue spaces in your local neighbourhood. Green spaces are areas such as parks, gardens, playing fields, allotments and woodlands. Blue spaces are water bodies such rivers, lochs, ponds and shorelines. The following section includes questions related to blue and green spaces you use around the city of Edinburgh.

What is the nearest green or blue space that you use? *Required*

How long does it take to reach this space by walking/wheeling? *Required*

5 minutes

10 minutes

More than 10 minutes

How do you use this blue or green space? *Required*

To exercise

To relax

To watch nature

To be with family

To meet friends

To take children to play

I pass through it on my commute

Other

If you selected Other, please specify:

How frequently to you use this space? *Required*

Never

Rarely

Once a week

Several times a week

Every day

How much time do you typically spend in you blue or green space? *Required*

Less than 15 min/ only for passing through

Building community evidence for urban parklets in Edinburgh

15 minutes

30 minutes

1 hour

More than 1 hour

Do you usually visit: *Required*

By myself

With a friend(s)

With family

With a pet

Other

If you selected Other, please specify:

Page 5: Demographics

Finally, please tell us a bit about yourself.

What age group do you belong to? *Required*

16-24

25-34

35-44

45-54

55-64

65-74

75+

What is your sex? *Required*

Female

Male

Prefer not to say

Do you consider yourself to be trans, or have a trans history? Only answer this question if you are aged 16 or over. Here we use trans as a term to describe people whose gender identity is not the same as their sex registered at birth. *Required*

No

Yes

Prefer not to say

If you would like to, please describe your trans status (for example: non-binary, trans man, trans woman):

What is your ethnic group? Choose one section from A to F, then tick one box which best describes your ethnic group or background. *Required*

Tick one box which best describes your ethnic group or background.

Scottish

Other British

Irish

Polish

Gypsy / Traveller

Roma

Showman / Showwoman

Other

If you selected Other, please specify:

Any mixed or multiple ethnic groups, please write in

Tick one box which best describes your ethnic group or background.

Pakistani, Scottish Pakistani or British Pakistani

Building community evidence for urban parklets in Edinburgh

Indian, Scottish Indian or British Indian
Bangladeshi, Scottish Bangladeshi or British Bangladeshi
Chinese, Scottish Chinese or British Chinese
Other

If you selected Other, please specify:

Please write in (for example, Nigerian, Somali)

Please write in (for example, Scottish Caribbean, Black Scottish)

Tick one box which best describes your ethnic group or background.

Arab, Scottish Arab or British Arab

Other (for example, Sikh, Jewish)

If you selected Other, please specify:

What is your postcode? *Required*

If you are interested and wish to know about the results, please share your email address to contact you. *Optional*

Page 6: Final page

Thank you for taking part in this survey!

Key for selection options

30 - What is your ethnic group? Choose one section from A to F, then tick one box which best describes your ethnic group or background.

- A. White
 - B. Mixed or multiple ethnic groups
 - C. Asian, Scottish Asian or British Asian
 - D. African, Scottish African or British African
 - E. Caribbean or Black
 - F. Other ethnic group
 - G. Prefer not to say
-

Building community evidence for urban parklets in Edinburgh

Appendix 2. Poster shared with community to advertise the survey.

We would like to hear your thoughts on

parklets.



Scan this QR code to begin the survey

These are small community gathering spaces for people to stop, relax and socialise, typically made up of one or two kerbside parking spaces.



Photo: Cabot Avenue Parklet, Stamford, UK, Mavis Design (2017)

The survey is open until 7th April 2023

Access the survey online:

<https://bit.ly/parkletsedinburgh>

This research is being undertaken by the University of Edinburgh School of Architecture and Landscape Architecture, in collaboration with the City of Edinburgh Council



Appendix 3. Responses of preference to parklet within each ward.

Ward number	Ward name	Parklet: Yes	Parklet: No
1	Almond	3	7
2	Pentland Hills	10	5
3	Drum Brae/Gyle	10	54
4	Forth	14	9
5	Inverleith	39	26
6	Corstorphine/Murrayfield	21	35
7	Sighthill/Gorgie	12	11
8	Colinton/Fairmilehead	4	18
9	Fountainbridge/Craiglockhart	23	24
10	Morningside	65	25
11	City Centre	37	18
12	Leith Walk	66	24
13	Leith	37	9
14	Craigentinny/Duddingston	32	10
15	Southside/Newington	50	13
16	Liberton/Gilmerton	8	17
17	Portobello/Craigmillar	22	12
		453	317
TOTAL		770*	

Building community evidence for urban parklets in Edinburgh

Appendix 4: Selection of parklet preference given to participants.

A. Croydon Parklet featuring plantings with various seating heights.



Photo: Croydon Parklet, College Road Parklet, Croydon, UK. by The Decorators (2017) <https://the-decorators.net/Croydon-Parklets>

B. Parklet featuring plantings, benches facing different directions and space for children's play.



Photo: Hammersmith and Fulham Parklet, London, UK, Cyclehoop (2017) <https://cyclehoop.com/our-parklet-has-been-shortlisted-for-the-healthy-streets-awards-2017/>

C. Parklet featuring plantings, benches, and spaces for cycle parking.



Photo: Calvert Avenue Parklet, Shoreditch, UK, Meristem Design (2017). <https://www.meristemdesign.co.uk/shoreditch-parklet>.

D. Parklet featuring overhead shelter and exercise bikes.



Photo: Ride, Covington, Ohio, USA by Alexandra Taylor (2016) <https://www.cincinnati.com/citywiseblog/covington-parklets/>

E. Parklet featuring many plantings and benches, located off a main street.



F. Parklet featuring performance space.

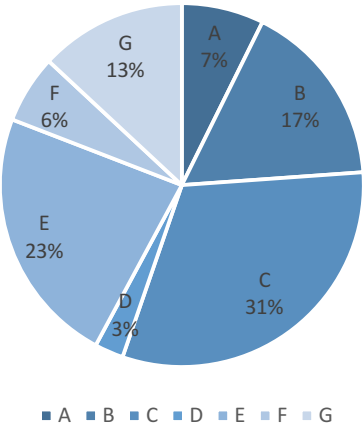


Photo: Where We Are Now 02, Melbourne, Australia. by Aeden

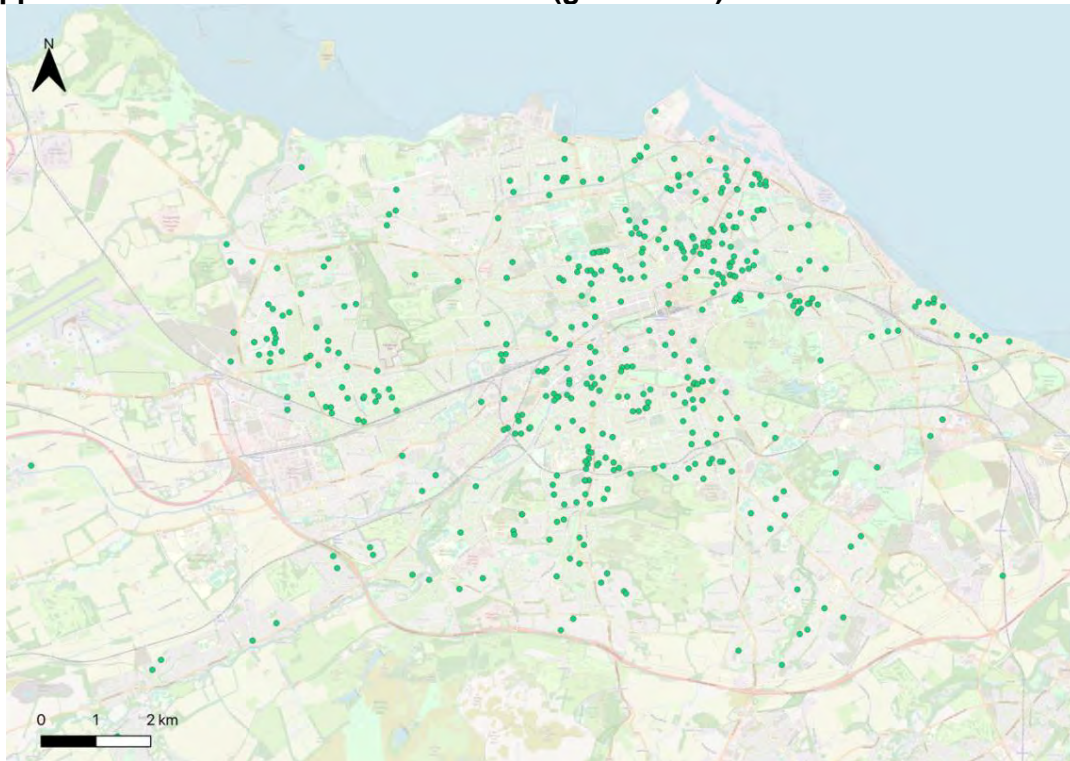
Building community evidence for urban parklets in Edinburgh

<p>Photo: This parklet next to The Eagle... Manchester, UK by Skyliner [@skylinermcr] (2019) https://twitter.com/skylinermcr/status/1153007413219463174u8203</p>	<p>Ratcliffe (2021) https://www.rmit.edu.au/news/all-news/2021/nov/playful-parklet</p>
<p>G. Parklet featuring areas for children's play, some seating, and plantings.</p>  <p>Photo: Hopscotch Garden, Covington, Ohio, USA by Alexandra Taylor (2016) https://www.cincinnati.com/citywiseblog/covington-parklets/</p>	

Type of parklet likedfor those that wanted a parklet



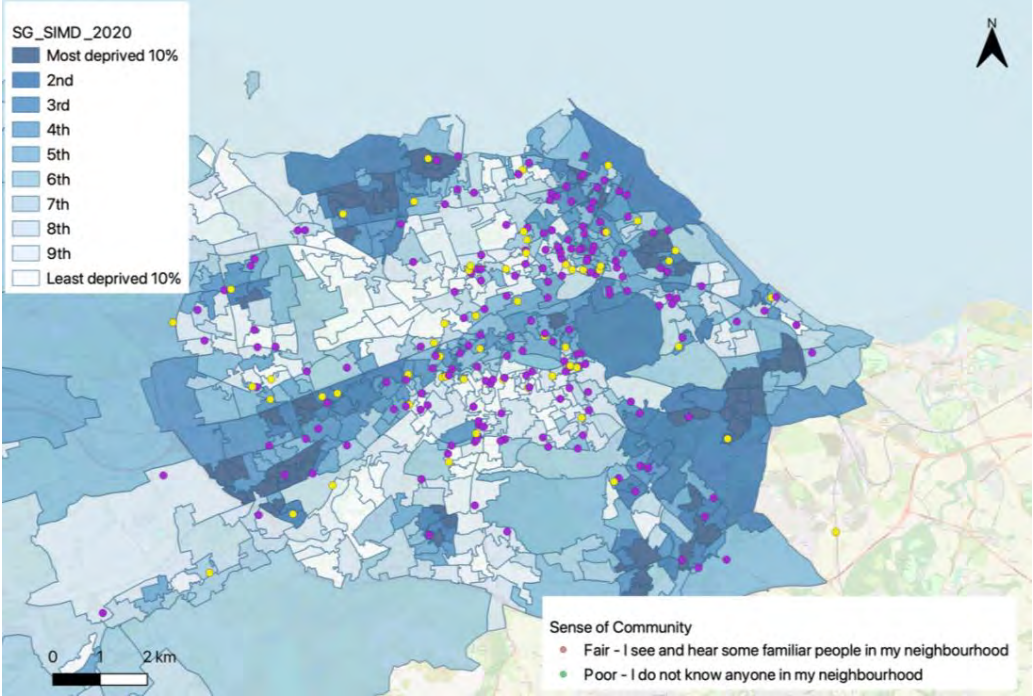
Appendix 5. Distribution of bike owners (green dots).



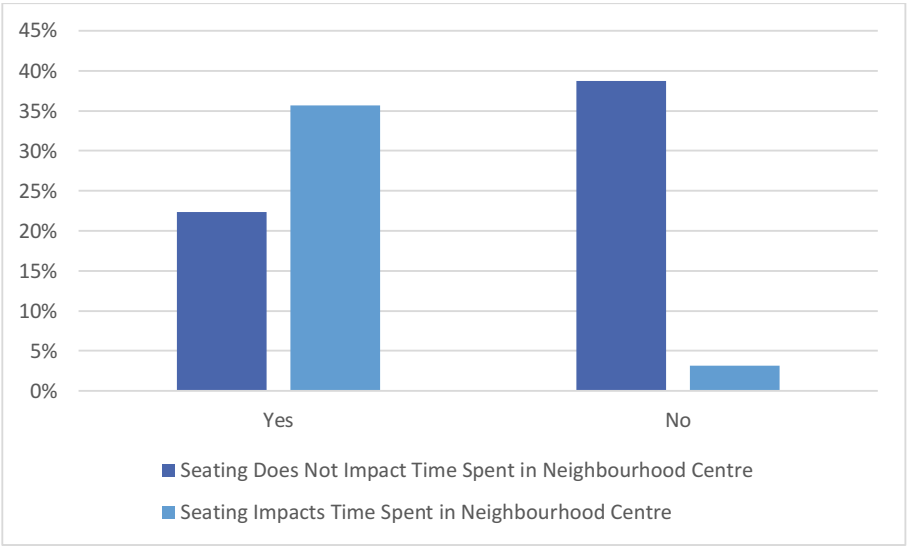
Appendix 6. Distribution of car owners (red dots).



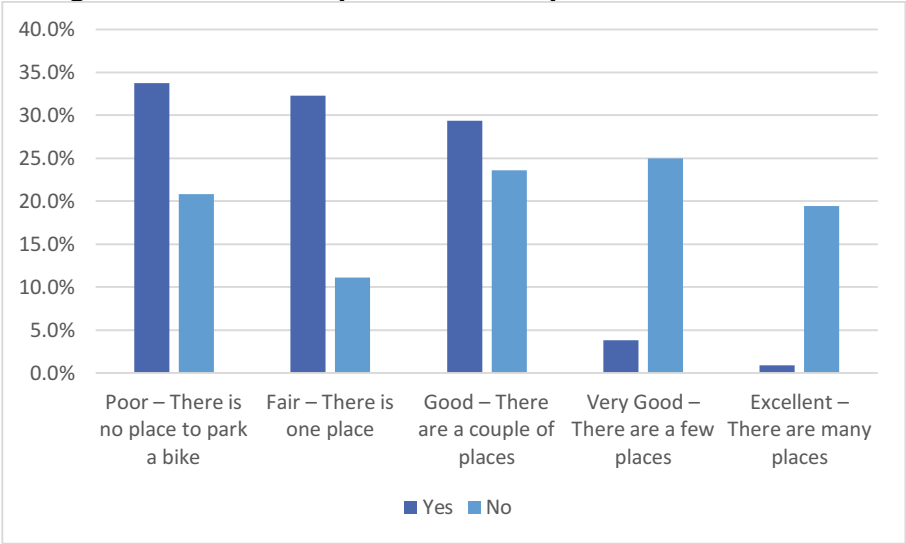
Appendix 7. Respondents listing a poor to fair sense of community.



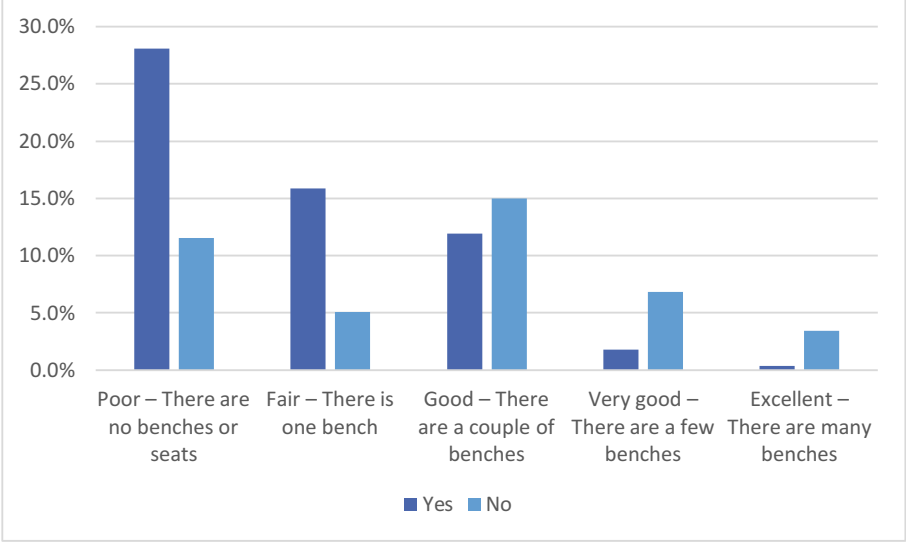
Appendix 8. Does a lack of seating and bike parking impact the time you spend in your local neighbourhood centre compared with wanting a parklet or not.



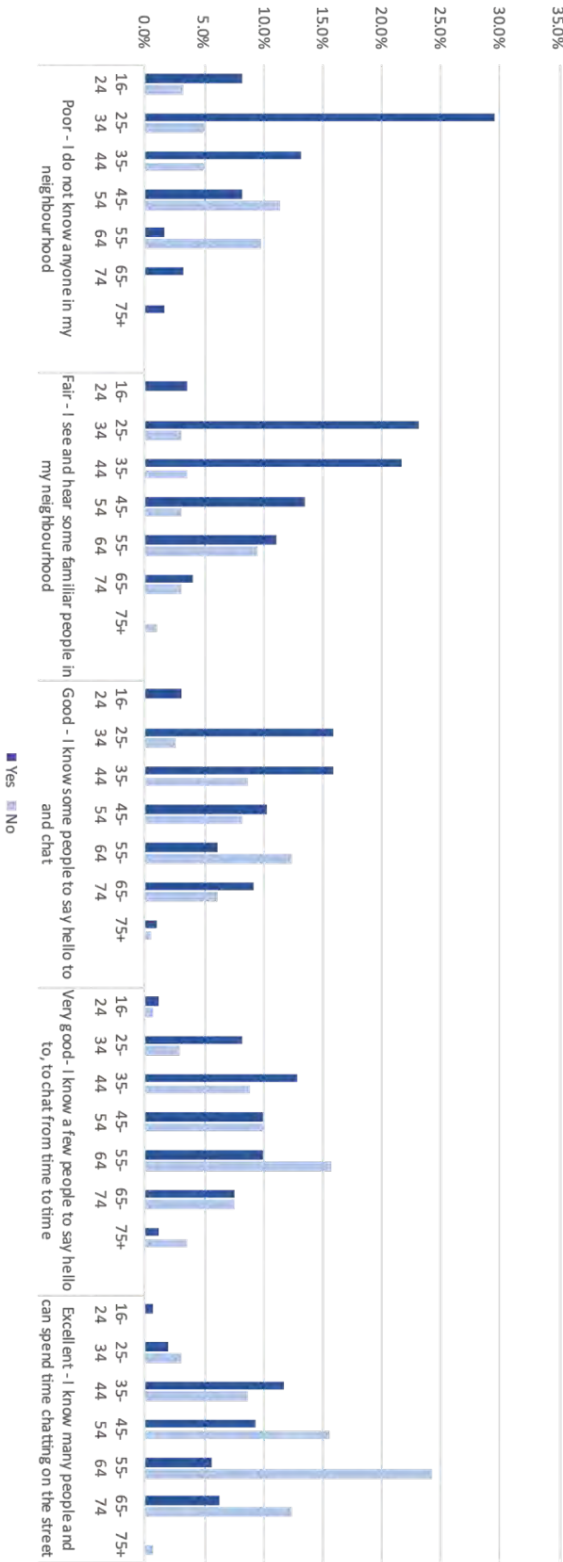
Appendix 9. Perception of bike parking availability in the local neighbourhood centre among bike owners and preference for parklet.



Appendix 10. Perception of seating availability in the local neighbourhood centre and preference for parklet.



Appendix 11. Sense of community and preference for a parklet within each age group.



Appendix 12: Local community groups and organisations

1	Abbeyhill Colony Of Artists
2	Action Porty
3	Astley Ainslie Hospital
4	Bruntsfield Area Net Zero Action Initiative (Banzai)
5	Bennets Bar
6	Blackhall
7	Bridgend Farmhouse
8	New Town / Broughton Community Council
9	Broughton Primary
10	Brunswick Street
11	Bruntsfield Primary School Parents Council
12	Captain's Bar
13	Carrick Knowe School
14	City Of Edinburgh Council
15	Corstorphine Community Centre
16	Craigentanny Community Garden
17	Craigmillar Park Conservation Area
18	Currie Community Council
19	Customs House Leith
20	Edinburgh Toolshed
21	Dig-In Bruntsfield
22	Earth In Common
23	Edinburgh Association Of Community Councils
24	Edinburgh Garden Partners
25	Eglington Glencairn Gardens
26	Glencairn Gardens Association
27	Giles Street
28	Harrison Park
29	Friends Of Montgomery Street Park
30	Friends Of Roseburn Park Murrayfield Community Council
31	Friends Of The Water Of Leith Basin
32	Grange
33	Granton Community Gardeners
34	Great King Street
35	Harrison Park
36	Dalry Cemetery Group
37	The Meadows Community Garden

Building community evidence for urban parklets in Edinburgh

38 Inch Community Education Centre
39 Inch Nursery
40 Kirkliston Community Council
41 Leamington Terrace Greener Streets
42 Dalmeny Street Park
43 Leith Community Council
44 Leith Community Croft
45 Leith Links Community Council
46 Edinburgh Open Workshop
47 Leith Community Gardeners
48 Leith Links Activity Park
49 Leith Community Growers
50 Leith Connections
51 Edinburgh Napier University
52 Living Rent
53 Out Of The Blue Drill Hall
54 Friends Of Redhall Park
55 Currie, South West Edinburgh 20 Minute Neighbourhoods
56 Scottish Green Party
57 Longstone Community Council
58 Magdalene Community Centre
59 Marchmont Neighbours
60 The Meadows Community Group
61 Munro Community Centre
62 Morningside Community Council
63 Willowbrae Church
64 Marchmont Neighbours
65 Murrayfield Community Council
66 Out Of The Blue
67 Out Of The Blue Drill Hall
68 Portobello Central
69 Portobello
70 Possibly Pentlands Community Space
71 Project Coffee Edinburgh
72 Water Of Leith Basin
73 Leith. SoSLeith
74 South Eat Edinburgh Green Party
75 Preston Street Primary School
76 St Peter's Church
77 Edinburgh Southside Community Council
78 Living Rent

Building community evidence for urban parklets in Edinburgh

79 Edinburgh Southside Heritage Group
80 Sustrans Scotland
81 The Croft In Leith
82 The Friends Of Easter Craiglockhart Hill
83 The Hub
84 Tollcross Community Council
85 The Friends Of James Court And Lady Stair's Close
86 Friends Of Lady Stair's Close
87 Wardie Bay Residents Association
88 Warriston Residents Association
89 Leamington Terrace
90 Portobello Community
91 Willowbrae Community Council
92 Willowbrae Community Group
93 Transitions Streets Willowbrae
94 Car-Free Holyrood Park
95 Northfield Community Council