



Arup's parklets could provide socially-distanced seating without needed new construction | Photo source Arup

Innovation > Food & Drink > Pop-up 'parklets' can turn any restaurant into a pavement café

POP-UP 'PARKLETS' CAN TURN ANY RESTAURANT INTO A PAVEMENT CAFÉ

 FOOD & DRINK

Small planters with seating attached could help restaurants reopen and make cities more user-friendly in the post-coronavirus age

Spotted: Engineering firm Arup has designed miniature parks that could help cities re-imagine how they use public spaces in the post-COVID era. The “parklets” are made up of seating and greenery that fits in existing parking bays. The idea is to create pop-up parks that can transform the look of almost any street.

The parklets are currently undergoing a trial run in Liverpool, as part of the ongoing “Liverpool Without Walls” project. The scheme is aimed at making streets more user-friendly, in order to give local businesses a boost. The modular parklets are designed to be flexible and easy to clean and to move around. They provide café-style seating, which can be used to turn any restaurant into a pavement café, allowing for easier social distancing.

The idea for the parklets came from Arup's earlier FitzPark project, a temporary seating space with planters installed in London in 2017. The company adapted the FitzPark design to make it suitable for use whilst social distancing.

The greenery used in the parklets can also be adapted for different public spaces. Arup landscape architect Emily Woodason has [said that](#) most planters will use “Hardy, drought-tolerant shrubs and perennials such as ivy, periwinkle, asters and lavender,” in order to “provide a variety of colour, textures and scents through the season.” Local businesses could also choose suitable plants, such as edible herbs to use in the kitchen.

Many people hope that the post-COVID age will see a broad reimagining of cities to make them more pedestrianised and sustainable. At Springwise, we have seen a number of innovations that could help with this, including plans for a [sustainable neighbourhood](#) in Albania and a [car-free district](#) in China.

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Takeaway:

Liverpool is hoping to use ideas like the parklet not only to make social distancing easier and help businesses recover but as a way of re-envisioning the city centre and neighbourhood high streets. As the street furniture can be easily reconfigured, it can be adapted to the needs of particular towns and areas. The hope is that similar initiatives could be rolled out across the country to help make cities more pedestrianised and user-friendly.