WHAT IS A PARKLET?

A parklet is a small urban park, often characterized by trees, benches, cafe tables with chairs, flower(s), artwork and or bicycle parking.

PURPOSE

Somerville, Massachusetts is the most densely populated municipality in New England, yet it lacks the open space and parks available to neighboring communities. Parklets are an innovative and inexpensive way to create more open space in a densely populated environment.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- Where are there possible parklet areas in Somerville?
- Where are the most suitable areas for parklets?
- What areas of Somerville have high proportions of underserved populations or young children?
- What are the top three potential parklet spots?

METHODOLOGY

GIS data layers were gathered from the City of Somerville, U.S. Census data and the MA Office of Geographic Information (MassGIS).

POSSIBLE PARKLET LOCATIONS

1. Somerville building footprints were erased from the city 2008 parcel data.
2. This new layer was converted to a raster dataset which retained the original zoning code data (Commercial, Industrial, Exceptional and Residential). Read and building information is now “no data”.
3. Finally, this information was combined with the raster data of all impervious surfaces in Somerville.
4. The resulting layer shows all building footprints and impervious layers in Somerville.
5. The pixels in the raster data were re-classified so that commercial zones were rated highest (5), while other zones were rated lower (4 - Industrial; 3 - Residential; 2 - Downtown; 1 - Business District).

SUITABLE PARKLET LOCATIONS

Ideally, parklets should be within 50 feet of a commercial zone (for walkability and sponsorship of the parklet) and at least 1/2 mile from other available open space.

1. Commercial zones were selected from the Somerville 2008 parcel data, and a new layer created from this data.
2. Euclidean distance calculator was run on the commercial zone data layer.
3. The resulting layer shows all building footprints and impervious layers in Somerville.
4. In the raster data, the nearest distance to each commercial zone was measured.
5. The pixels were classified so that commercial zones were rated highest (5), while other zones were rated lower (4 - Industrial; 3 - Residential; 2 - Downtown; 1 - Business District).

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE FACTORS

It is well documented in the literature that minorities and those in poverty often live in areas with a lack of community resources, including parks and open space (see References). Therefore, these underserved populations were a priority for creating parklets in their neighborhoods.

1. Somerville 2010 census data was gathered.
2. The percent of those living in poverty is defined as those whose ratio of income to poverty level is 1 or less (by census tract).
3. The percent of families with children under 6 years of age out of the population of all families.
4. The population percentage remaining after subtracting out those individuals whose race is “white alone (by census track).”

REFERENCES


