



February 2014
DOWNTOWN CLAYTON

Central Avenue Activation Plan
City of Clayton



THE CENTRAL AVENUE ACTIVATION PLAN CONCENTRATES ON THE CENTER SPINE OF DOWNTOWN CLAYTON AND BUILDS ON THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE 2010 MASTER PLAN UPDATE

INTRODUCTION

Clayton’s Downtown Master Plan Update adopted in 2010 defines a North Central District and a Central Station District, both intersected by Central Avenue. Thoughtful implementation of flexible and tactical urbanism along Central Avenue and other nearby streets has the potential to join these two districts and create a strong sense of place. Consistent with the guidance of the Master Plan, this report provides a selection of recommendations for improving and activating Central Avenue and the surrounding area.

In North Central, the historic heart of downtown, we recommended the following action items applicable to Central Avenue:

- Support existing retail and restaurants and recruit more unique shopping and eating destinations.
- Encourage the development of office space and civic space that attracts new tenants and employees by providing more nearby amenities.
- Establish standard setbacks for large scale development within the pedestrian priority zone.
- Modify the street section and adjust regulations to accommodate outdoor dining.
- Discourage surface parking along pedestrian priority streets.
- Improve the streetscape to make smooth connections to the Metrolink Station.

In order to develop implementable strategies, Sasaki conducted site visits and met with small groups of stakeholders to share precedent examples and gather input. The first meeting engaged Susan M. Istenes, Director of Planning and Development Services, and Louis R. Clayton, Planner, who shared their vision for Clayton’s downtown while sharing their insights on the 2008 Master Plan. The second meeting gathered Sheryl L. Hodges, Saint Louis County Director of Public Works, Saint Louis County staff and Craig Owns, City Manager, in a collaborative effort to identify both county and city fiscal projects and to prioritize key projects under a holistic vision.

CENTRAL AVENUE OVERVIEW

Central Avenue has the potential to be the destination street in Downtown Clayton – anchored to the south by the Metrolink Station and to the north by the St. Louis County Library on Maryland Avenue. The street has recently undergone reconstruction with new curb extensions and brick crosswalks designed to make it more welcoming to pedestrians. Small scale retail along the northern block engages users at street level while the larger office and government buildings further south frame the street's vista. New street trees and lighting help to give the corridor a more consistent feel. One section of shared lane markings that connect to the Bike St. Louis network and some bike racks may also attract cyclists to the area. Only at points where surface parking abuts the sidewalk does the street feel unfriendly on foot, and at least one of these moments will be changing soon with the construction of a new county courts facility.

Building on the Master Plan that designated Central Avenue as one of the two key pieces of the pedestrian priority zone, this is an opportune moment to carry this implementation forward to develop the heart of a vibrant Central Station District. This report recommends ways to make Central Avenue a vibrant and exciting place that attracts more users and in turn attracts an increasing number of retail opportunities. In order to build on Clayton's sustainability initiatives, the efforts to brand and activate Central Avenue should draw in a diverse range of users who arrive with a multi-modal array of options, and support steady economic growth.

Efforts to improve Central Avenue from Shaw Park Road to Maryland Avenue should be shaped by three key principals:

- Grow at a **pedestrian scale**, with fine-grained development, **active streets**, and a **walkable commercial** area.
- Create **civic place** with a focused identity and a space for events.
- Promote **infill** development at an appropriate scale.

Strategies for improving this four-block section and the surrounding area can be organized into Metro, Civic, Retail (Restaurant Row), and Plaza. The existing conditions, recommended actions, and appropriate precedents for each are described below.



METRO: The Existing Node

With two decades of service and regular headways, the light rail trains of the Metrolink provide transit accessibility to the residents and commuters of Downtown Clayton. The pedestrian bridges and overpasses connect the station to the Central Avenue, a short seven minute walk up to Maryland Avenue. Crossing Shaw Park Road and walking along the existing parking structure disconnect the station from the downtown.



THE 2012 CONFIGURATION OF THE METROLINK STATION PROVIDES A COVERED WALKWAY TO CONNECT WITH CENTRAL AVENUE BUT PROVIDES MINIMAL SIGNAGE AND CONTEXT



SOUTH CENTRAL AVENUE NEEDS TO DRAW IN A CONTINUOUS FEELING FROM THE METROLINK STATION UP TO THE CIVIC CENTER

Recommendations

This area needs increased wayfinding signage, improved lighting, and a clear sense of place that reinforces the sense that stepping off the train equates to arriving at a real and engaging destination and not only to structured parking.

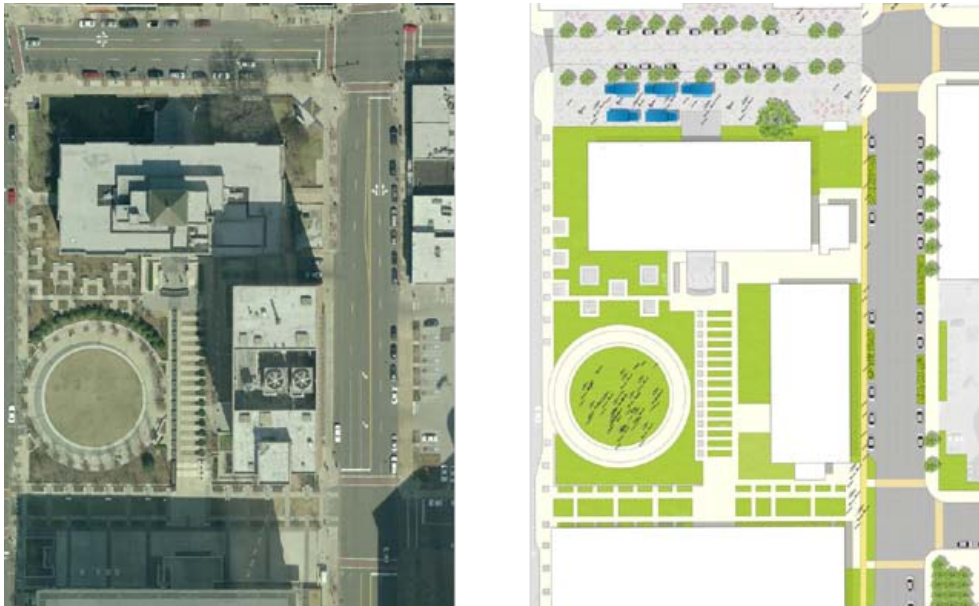


WAYFINDING SIGNAGE CAN TAKE THE FORM OF AREA MAPS LIKE THOSE IN BELLVUE, WASHINGTON (TOP) OR FINGERBOARDS LIKE THOSE IN BATON ROUGE (BOTTOM)

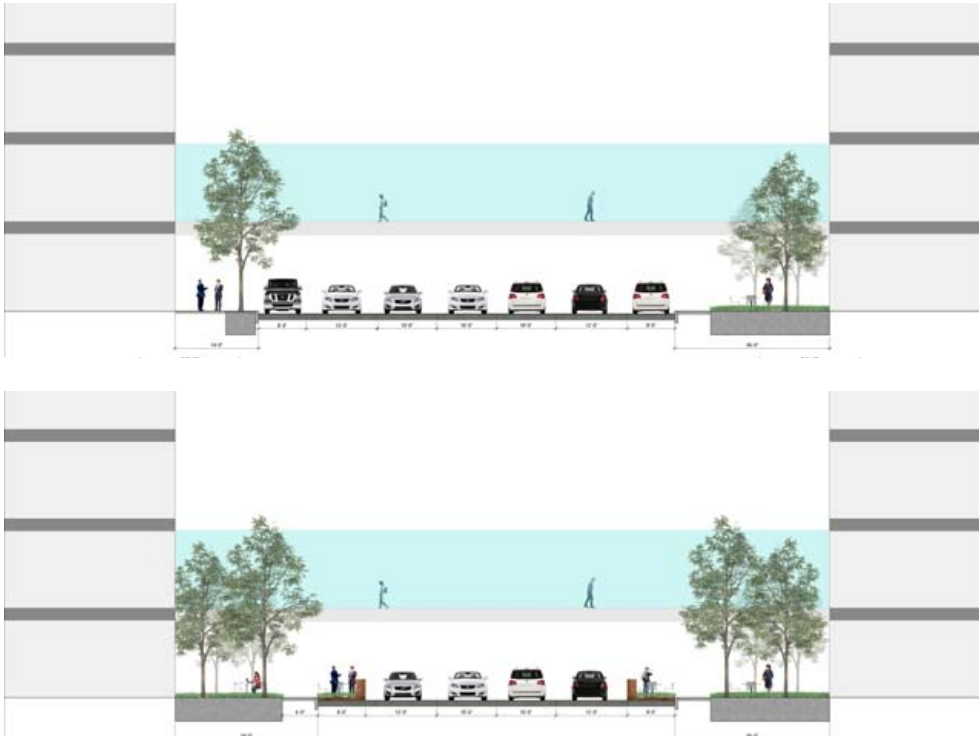
CIVIC: Permanent Improvements and Attractions

From municipal offices like the Clayton Police Headquarters to county government buildings like the Lawrence K. Roos Building, Central Avenue has been known for decades as a civic core and continues to house the majority of key departments along with serving as a major public sector employer. The Buzz Westfall Justice Center and the Courts have drawn law firms to the area, which are interspersed with major banks and other office buildings. This active employment center makes the area is particularly busy on weekdays, especially during lunchtime and commuter hours.

The park at the intersection of Carondelet Avenue and South Meramec Avenue and the pedestrian walkway connecting it to Central Avenue are currently underutilized both as public spaces and as civic attractors. The highly sculpted central lawn does not invite active uses nor does it feel connected to the more active corridor on the other side of the Roos Building.



CENTRAL AVENUE IMPROVEMENTS WILL ALIGN PEDESTRIAN MOVEMENTS FROM METRO TO RETAIL



WIDER SIDEWALKS ALLOW FOR PROGRAMMABLE AREAS AND ALLOW FOR MORE DIRECT PEDESTRIAN MOVEMENTS

Recommendations

With few reasons to come to these blocks outside of working hours, this area could easily be closed to vehicular traffic on evenings, weekends, or holidays for activities including farmers markets, arts festivals, and civic events. On weekdays, activities that draw users out of the large buildings to visit food trucks or eat in pocket parks with a variety of seating options would further activate the space during its hours of standard use. Sidewalk widening should continue through this area and appropriately-scaled infill development should have active ground floors in order to feel active and inviting.

Landscapes around the government buildings should create a distinct civic place with a clear identity. The construction of the new juvenile detention center at the intersection of South Central Avenue and Bonhomme Avenue should allow for informal meeting and gathering areas within the pedestrian realm.

The civic park could host events connected to or concurrent with those on Central Avenue or the new plaza on Forsyth Boulevard. It is even possible that a small outdoor ice rink could be installed here in the winter. Activating this space may be done through an annual arts competition. Although the space is owned by the county, pursuing opportunities to receive corporate sponsorship from Clayton firms is recommended.



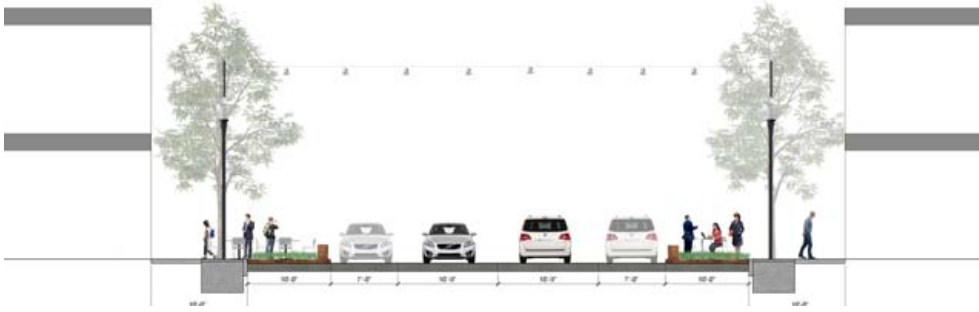
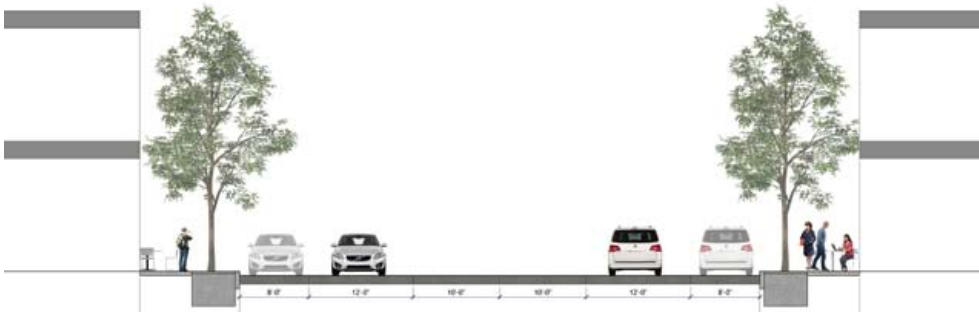
THE WOODLANDS, TEXAS (TOP) AND THE WINTER VILLAGE AT BRYANT PARK (BOTTOM) SHOW OPPORTUNITIES FOR PROGRAMMING THAT ENHANCE THE PUBLIC REALM IN THE CIVIC SECTION OF CENTRAL AVENUE AND THE CIVIC PARK TO ATTRACT NEW USERS

RETAIL: Flexibility and Engagement

The block of North Central Avenue from Forsyth Boulevard to Maryland Avenue is already home to a wide array of restaurants, small shops, and other fine-grained uses. Within easy walking distance of the major office buildings as well as neighborhoods to its north, this "restaurant row" is already fostering an identity that should be preserved and enhanced to be a destination best appreciated on foot. At present, it has the longest windows of activity, although many users arrive by car, parking in the rear lot or on the street in front of the shops.



CONTINUOUS PARKLETS NARROW THE VEHICULAR REALM WHILE WELCOMING PEDESTRIANS AND CYCLISTS



PARKLETS WIDEN THE PUBLIC REALM AND, ALONG WITH CANTENARY LIGHTING, MAKE THE RETAIL DISTRICT A DESTINATION

Recommendations

Preserving this restaurant cluster is critical. Activating the retail section involves widening the experience of the public realm without eliminating on-street parking. In order to do this, a series of parklets, mini-parks that often provide additional seating and green space to street users should be installed in the existing parallel parking spaces. These can serve as additional seating for cafes along the street and enhance the feel of a wider pedestrian space.

After discussing parking configurations - parallel, angled, or reverse-angled parking curbside or in the median - the best strategy for protecting the parklets and creating a safe environment for cycling resulted in a recommendation for parallel parking along the parklets as shown in the cross section at right. These parked cars will be bumped out to replace outside travel lanes and protect the parklets and their users.

Removable or retractable bollards should be installed along Central Avenue at the intersections of Forsyth Boulevard and Maryland Avenue to close the street to traffic completely during events. Finally, in order to brand this unique area within the larger surrounding buildings and civic uses, catenary lighting and moveable planters can be used to define this vibrant block.



SANTANA ROW IN SAN JOSE (TOP) SHOWS HOW OVERHEAD CANTENARY LIGHTS CAN BRING A STREET TO LIFE AT NIGHT

PARKLETS IN SAN FRANCISCO (BOTTOM) BRING PEOPLE OUT ONTO THE STREET MAKING THE SIDEWALK MORE THAN A PEDESTRIAN RIGHT OF WAY BY TURNING IT INTO AN ACTIVE PUBLIC REALM WHERE PEOPLE STOP AND SPEND TIME

PLAZA: Events and Landscape

Forsyth Boulevard, between Central Avenue and Meramec Avenue, currently serves as an extension of restaurant row on the north side of the street and as the border of the civic district on the south side of the street. The area in front of the St. Louis County Police Headquarters building is currently landscaped to provide limited public space while the setback makes the four lane road feel particularly wide.



NEW PAVEMENT TURNS THE STREET INTO A PLAZA AND SHARED STREET, MAKING IT THE NEW HEART OF THE DISTRICT



THE FLUSH PAVING CONDITION ELIMINATES CURBS AND SUPPORTS FLEXIBLE PROGRAMMING OPPORTUNITIES

Recommendations

This area has been re-envisioned as a plaza that extends into a naked street with pedestrian priority. Special paving and curb-less access along the roadway should designate this as an area where vehicular traffic moves slowly under normal conditions. The new plaza will become an iconic civic space and the heart of the branded Central Avenue district serving as an exciting destination for public events. Regular use may be encouraged by moveable seating, mobile phone charging stations, and wireless hotspots. A new kiosk and wayfinding signage will anchor the plaza year round. Outside of normal business hours, the full street may be programed to host festivals and markets, summer film screenings, light installations or projections, and more.



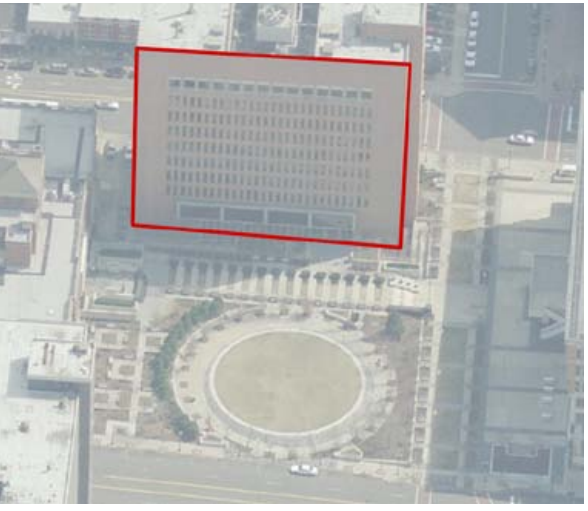
DETROIT'S MIDTOWNTTECHTOWN PROJECT (TOP) SHOWS PROGRAMMING IDEAS FOR A NARROW PLAZA

NAKED STREETS (BOTTOM) USE PAVING TO INDICATE THE IMPORTANCE OF SHARING THE ROADWAY

ACTIVATION TOOLKIT

Clayton has the opportunity to be a leader in the Midwest in municipality-driven streetscape activation. There are a range of strategies for giving Central Avenue a sense of place. Tactical Urbanism typically makes small incremental changes to the right of way that changes people’s perceptions about a street and usually reclaims some of the vehicular space for other uses. Flexible Urbanism intentionally designs the space to adapt to a range of programs depending on the time of day, the day of the week, or the season. Some tactical and flexible urbanism components are listed below.

- Moveable seating and planters
- Cell phone charging stations and wi-fi hotspots
- Art installations
- Catenary lighting
- Farmers markets
- Light show
- Temporary ice rinks
- Outdoor movies
- Food trucks



THE PARK SIDE OF THE ROOS BUILDING (TOP) IS A POTENTIAL BACKDROP FOR A PROJECTED LIGHT INSTALLATION LIKE THE ONE BY THE MOMENT FACTORY SHOWN HERE (BOTTOM)



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: FOOD TRUCKS AND PICNIC BENCHES, MOVEABLE SEATING, MOVEABLE PLANTERS, PHONE CHARGING STATION, TEMPORARY ICE RINK



PARKLETS

Parklets are modular public spaces that typically occupy two parking spaces. First developed in San Francisco by the design company ReBar and now managed by the city's Pavement to Parks program, this reclamation of vehicular space has spread across the country. Each parklet is designed to meet the needs of the adjacent businesses and expand the public realm for pedestrians with enhanced green space, additional seating, and other amenities while still allowing access to storm drains. In Clayton, they may be installed in phases along restaurant row as well as extending south into the civic area.

The following are some key benefits and considerations from the San Francisco Parklet Manual:

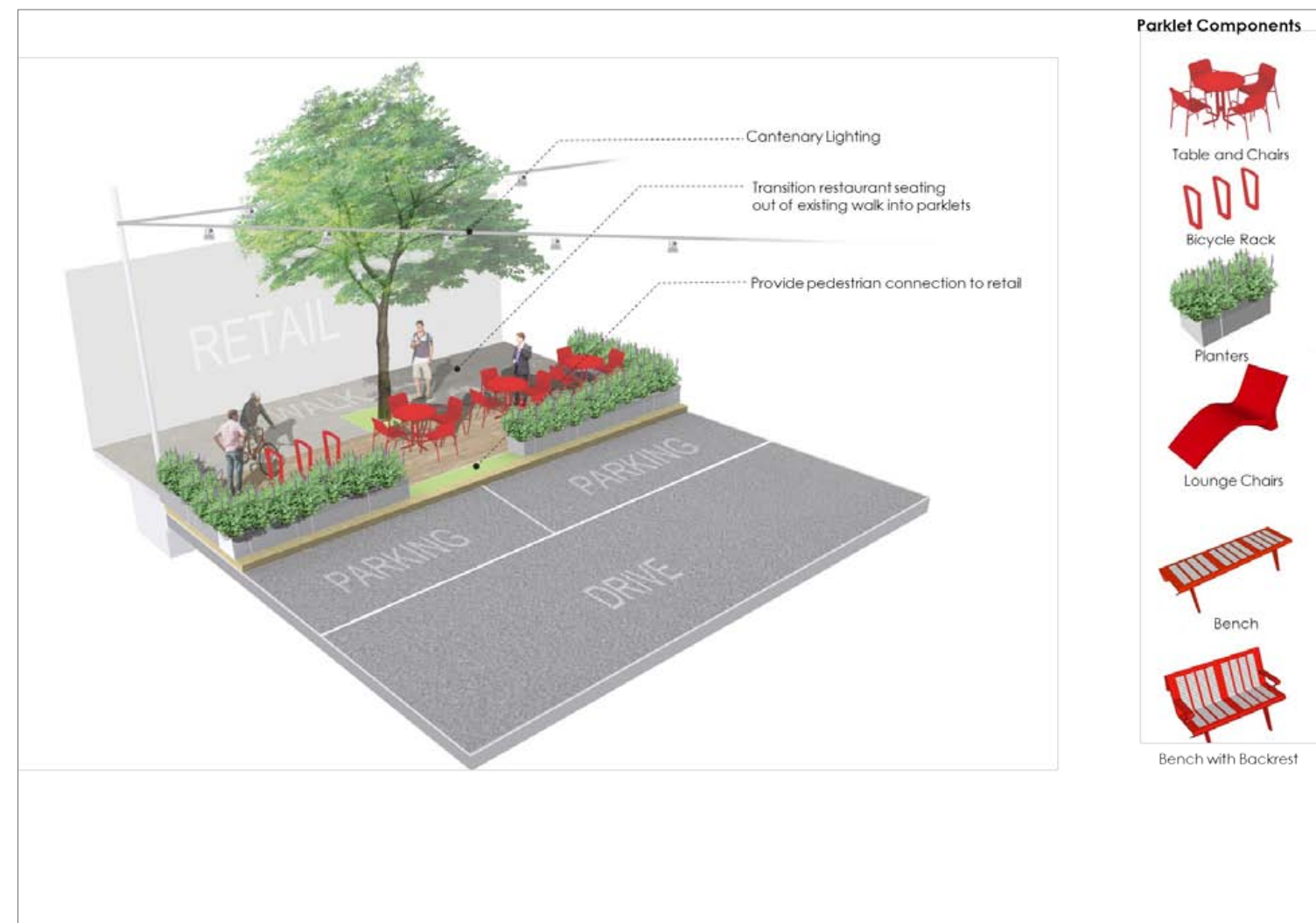
BENEFITS

- Address the desire and need for increased public space and wider sidewalks
- Encourage walking and cycling
- Improve the public realm by providing places to sit and relax
- Beautify the street and help to brand it as a neighborhood destination
- Attract attention to business and provide additional space for customers
- Foster neighborhood interaction

CONSIDERATIONS

- Ensure that each parklet feels welcoming and inviting to all users
- Incorporate flexible and durable design features
- Allow for iterative design so that the parklet can reflect unique features of its sponsor and designer
- Develop a clear permitting process

PARKLETS ARE MOST PREVALENT IN SAN FRANCISCO WHERE DESIGNERS COMPETE TO CREATE INNOVATIVE NEW PUBLIC SPACES
DESIGNS BY CMG (TOP) AND REBAR (BOTTOM) ARE SHOWN HERE



ELEMENTS OF A CLAYTON PARKLET

LIGHTING

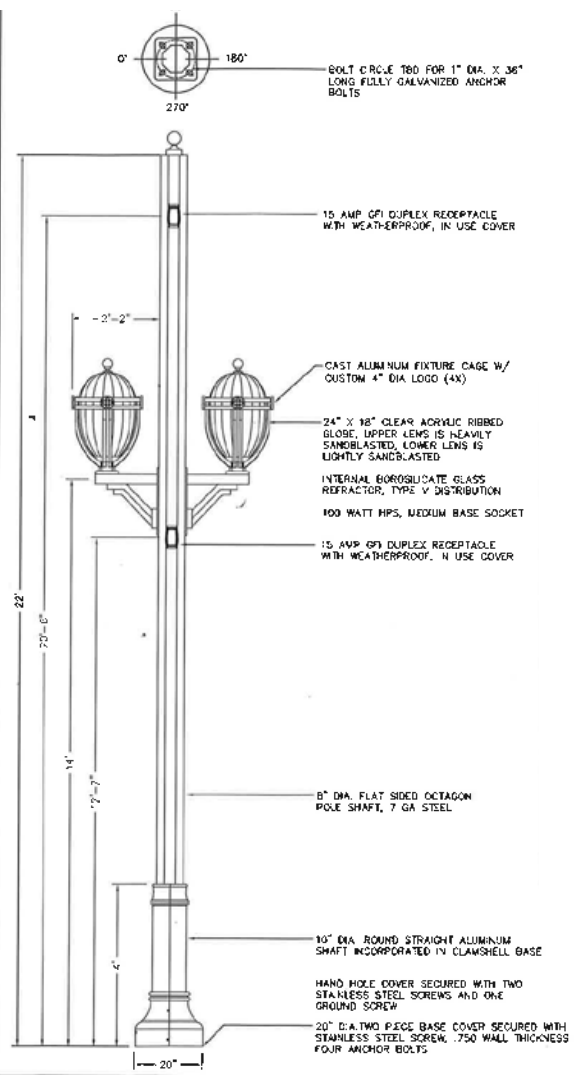
Lighting has the capacity to attract evening users by providing a greater sense of safety, design, and place. Consistent light fixtures define the brand of the street corridor while artistic lighting choices can draw people to the area and enhance the atmosphere. From catenary lighting to light installations and light shows, the previous examples and the following list includes a few different kinds of lights that Clayton may consider purchasing and installing.

CATENARY

- www.tensile.com.au/projects-2/cables/
- www.heper.eu/en/catenary-system
- www.ronstantensilearch.com/project-gallery/all-projects/catenary-lighting-all-projects/
- www.cuphosco.co.uk/products/Catenary%20Lighting.aspx

TEMPORARY

- www.airstarlightingoftexas.com/airstar-gallery.html
- www.luzinterruptus.com & luzinterruptus1.blogspot.com/2009/03/bolsas-de-la-compra-esperando-entrar-en.html
- gridofflightsoncooper.wordpress.com/2013/03/28/alternative-lighting-sources/
- incandescentcloud.com/aboutcloud/



CLAYTON'S LIGHTING SCHEMATIC DESIGN



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: BADEN, GERMANY; MADRID, SPAIN (2); ALBERTA, CANADA; UNKNOWN