

THE BIRTH OF THE PEDLET

By: Dan Devine, Mayor, West Allis



How does a community introduce sidewalk dining on a busy street that is also a heavy trucking route?

I had read several articles about pocket parks, sidewalk dining, parklets, and even a story out of San Francisco where they turned old dumpsters into mobile green spaces. I was on a mission to expand our outdoor dining scene. I had visited a parklet in Milwaukee and liked the concept. A parklet is an extension of outdoor seating into the parking lane, thus widening the sidewalk and allowing tables and chairs for outdoor dining.

Downtown West Allis had just witnessed the long-awaited opening of Urban Joe's Café, a downtown coffee and sandwich shop. Their popularity often had people standing waiting for tables.

A conversation with Urban Joe himself, who had a great vision for the area, led to the discussion of sidewalk dining. However, there were challenges. Greenfield Avenue is a busy street with relatively narrow sidewalks, which led to safety concerns from some of the council members.

I proposed that we reverse the layout, meaning the dining tables would be directly on the sidewalk, and the pedestrians

would use the pedlet to walk around the diners. The Council went along with this, and thus, the pedlet was born.

Our second pedlet is already in place up the street at Mis Suenos Mexican Restaurant. The outdoor dining combined with landscaping & flowers have enhanced the streetscape in our downtown. We also learned that the idea has grown, and there is now a pedlet in Great Falls, Montana!



About the author:

West Allis Mayor Dan Devine has served as mayor since 2008 and before that served as a Milwaukee County Supervisor from 2004-2008. He is the immediate past President of the League's Board of Directors.

Questions about pedlets? Contact Steve Schauer, City of West Allis, Manager of Planning & Zoning at sschaer@westalliswi.gov or 414-302-8460.