

March 28, 2018

STARS Steering Committee  
Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education  
2401 Walnut Street, Suite 102  
Philadelphia, PA 19103

To Whom It May Concern:

I am pleased to submit this letter of affirmation that the information presented for Lehigh University's STARS Innovation Credit is complete and accurate to the best of my knowledge. This letter affirms that in the Summer of 2017 eight low-cost, replicable parklets (temporary, miniature parks) were designed, built, and installed throughout Bethlehem. The purpose of these parklets was to transform on-street parking spaces and portions of parking lots into places for outdoor dining, enjoying locally-made artwork, exercising, and socializing - to increase neighborhoods' walkability and discourage driving.

This project was part of Lehigh's Mountaintop initiative, which is a summer experience where Lehigh students, working across all disciplines, are given the freedom to pursue creative and innovative answers to any number of challenges and open-ended questions. The Parklet Mountaintop Team consisted of seven students and one faculty member who focused on answering the question of 'how can we develop and design simple urban spaces to build community and increase quality of life?'

Throughout the summer, the team of students designed, built, and installed parklets throughout Bethlehem. Most of the parklets that they installed had chairs or benches, but each included a unique element to draw visitors and encourage them to stay, including a Japanese sand garden, a free library and reading nook, exercise equipment, local artwork, information on bike lanes and biking resources, a music garden, and a performance space.

The student team was able to determine which parklet models worked the best by asking anyone visiting a parklet to complete a short online survey. The surveys gave the team feedback on what people liked or did not like about each parklet, who visited each parklet and how long they stayed, and whether the presence of the parklet affected people's perception of neighborhood safety and walkability. Additionally, the team conducted pedestrian counts and user counts. The data from the surveys was analyzed to determine which parklets, which

design elements, and which locations proved to be most successful.

The results of those surveys and additional feedback from business owners and city staff has informed work this academic year on a more permanent parklet, also designed and built by students, that will be installed in front of a local business from April through October of 2018.

This project is just one example of how Lehigh students and faculty utilize the campus as a living laboratory and how multidisciplinary student research across campus generates potential solutions that positively impact the institution and the surrounding community. Through Mountaintop projects like this that are focused on sustainability, faculty and students help to create sustainable change on campus and in the local community. It is the hope that these student-made parklets might encourage additional parklets to be installed throughout Bethlehem.

Please let me know if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Karen Beck Pooley". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Karen Beck Pooley  
Director, Environmental Policy Program  
Professor of Practice, Political Science  
Lehigh University