

CHAPTER 4. PARKING

Parking has been identified as a key concern among neighbors and employers in the area, both in terms of increased demand from potential new development and from SMART passengers that use adjacent on- and off-street parking as park-and-ride lots. Some have raised concerns that the demand for parking in the area will exceed the 130 spaces to be provided by SMART. This chapter discusses existing parking issues and requirements currently imposed on new development in the Study Area. The chapter then summarizes strategies recommended by the Advisory Committee, based on typical planning best practices, related to managing parking for new development, parking adjacent to the station (i.e., park and ride), and other general areawide management strategies.

4.1 EXISTING PARKING CONDITIONS

The project team conducted a study of existing on-street parking spaces, and collected data on how many cars were parked during the weekday midday conditions. The weekday midday was selected because that represents the time when most office uses are at their highest level of occupancy. The more residential areas of North San Rafael, such as the area between US 101 and the railroad tracks, experience their peak parking conditions during the evenings. However, the primary purpose of this study was to identify parking conditions during the time when the SMART station will contribute the most to parking demand – the midday.

Within a ¼-mile radius of the proposed SMART station, there are approximately 200 existing on-street parking spaces and 900 off-street parking spaces. Additionally, there are approximately 300 overflow parking spaces available in the vacant, unimproved lot in the southwest quadrant at the Civic Center Drive/Memorial Drive intersection. Combined, this means there are approximately 1,400 parking spaces within a ¼ mile radius of the SMART station.

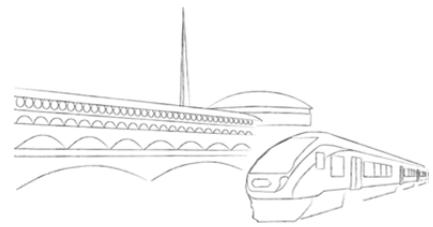
However, despite the large swaths of land in the Study Area devoted to parking, not all of the parking is available to the public. Three lots at 100 McInnis Parkway, 101 McInnis Parkway, and 3900 Civic Center Drive account for 551 of the total parking spaces. These lots are private property and reserved for employees and/or patrons of the 3900 Civic Center Drive buildings and the Embassy Suites. The remaining 662 off-street (including the 300 overflow parking spaces) and 201 on-street parking spaces are available for the general public and are generally unrestricted, although there are several 30-minute zones within some lots.

On-street parking on the west side of US 101 is generally used by the local retail and residential uses.

Generally, on non-event days, there is an abundance of available parking in the public County lots. When there are special events, such as the Farmers' Market or the Marin Center Auditorium, demand is increased substantially. Thus, while parking supply far exceeds demand on typical weekdays, the parking is necessary to accommodate special events. The Marin Center hosts over 120 events annually, mostly weeknights and weekends, where the lot adjacent to the station is used for overflow parking.

4.2 PARKING REQUIREMENTS FOR NEW LAND USES

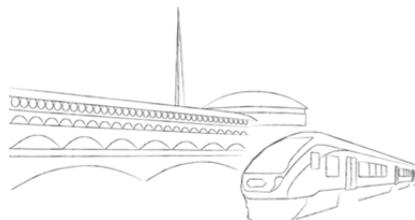
As discussed in the next chapter, accommodating additional land uses within a reasonable walking and bicycling distance of the Civic Center Station is one of the goals of the Station Area Plan. Along with this



new development will come increased demand for parking. Table 2, below, summarizes the City's current parking requirements for new development in the Study Area, based on the current Municipal Code. The uses summarized in the Table are those most likely to be considered in the Study Area; the full parking requirements for a number of additional uses are outlined in the City's Municipal Code.

TABLE 2 CURRENT SAN RAFAEL PARKING REQUIREMENTS (SELECTED USES)		
Land Use	Spaces Required	Unit of Measure
<i>Residential</i>		
Single-Family	2	Dwelling Unit
Studio in Duplex (<500 sq. ft.)	1	
Studio in Duplex (>500 sq. ft.)	1.5	
Studio in Multifamily Building	1	
1 Bedroom Unit in Multifamily Building	1.5	
2 Bedroom Unit in Multifamily Building	2	
3+ Bedroom Unit in Multifamily Building	2	
Guest Parking (Multifamily Buildings)	0.2	
<i>Retail Uses</i>		
Retail (Non-Bulky Items)	4	1,000 Square Feet
Retail (Bulky Items)	2.5	
Shopping Centers	4	
Restaurants (Excluding Fast Food)	20	
<i>Other Commercial Uses</i>		
Medical Office (Excluding Mental Health)	4.4	1,000 Square Feet
Administrative, Business Office	4	
Financial Services	5	
Source: San Rafael Municipal Code, Title 14, Section 18.040		

Parking on the Marin Civic Center property is subject to County parking codes, with maximum lengths that vary by location.



4.3 PARKING ISSUES

The primary issue that has been raised is insuring that residential neighborhoods are not impacted by SMART-related parking. A number of strategies could be deployed to better manage parking supply, both for public parking areas near the Station (including both on- and off-street parking), and to manage supply at new development. Parking-related issues that have been identified include:

- Preventing commuter parking in residential areas
- How much SMART parking is needed
- Potential additional parking for SMART patrons
- Coordination among jurisdictions
- Parking requirements for new development
- Bike parking for the station and in new development

4.3.1 *How Much SMART Parking is Needed*

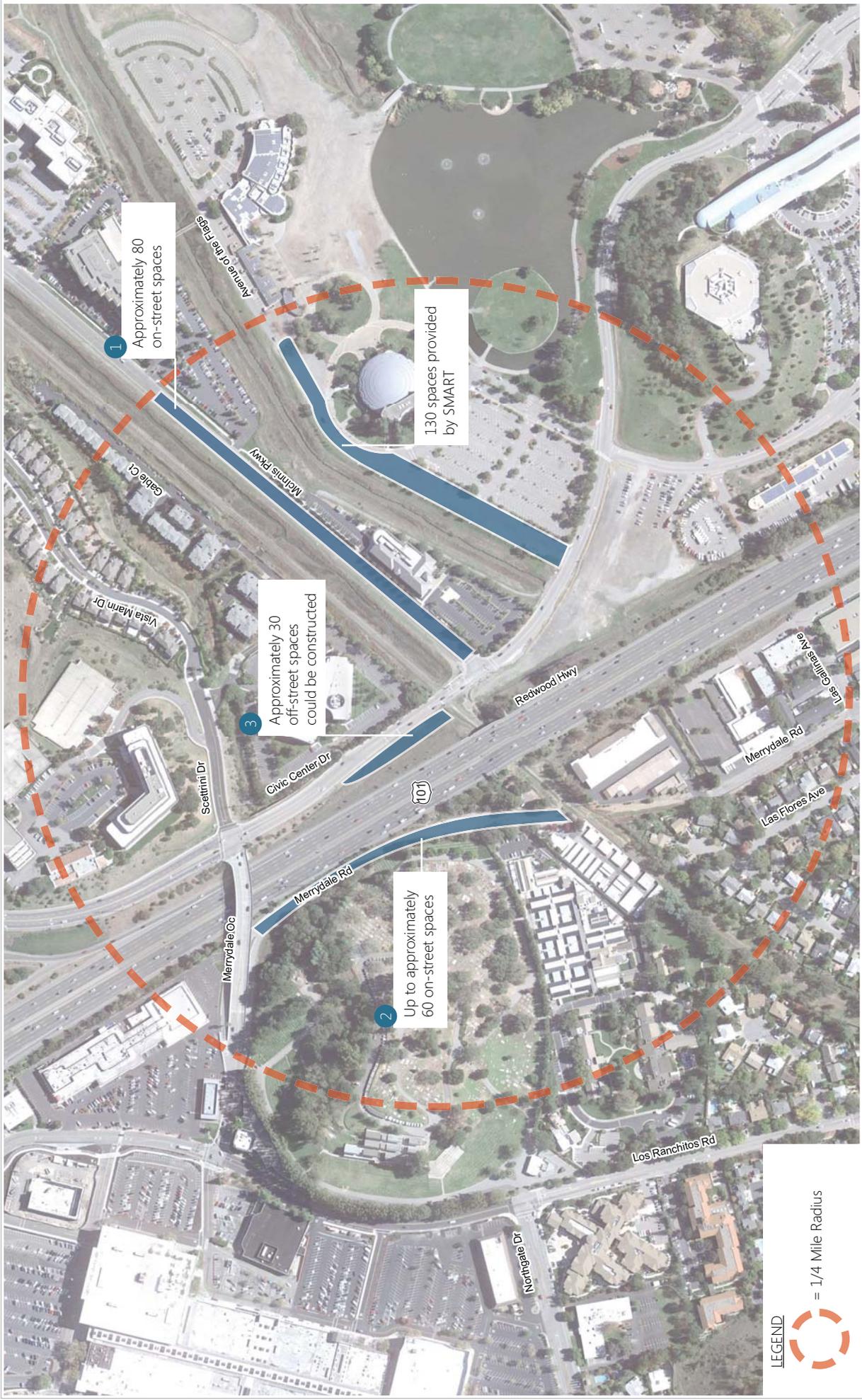
Although one of the primary purposes of this Station Area Plan is to identify ways to increase SMART ridership through walking and bicycling to the Station, a substantial number of riders may drive and park near the Station. Forecasts developed for the SMART Project Environmental Impact Report (EIR) predicted that the Station will generate a peak demand for parking of approximately 60 spaces. SMART has committed to providing 130 parking spaces – more than twice the projected peak demand – near the Civic Center Station. Specifically, SMART and the County are currently discussing a joint use proposal for 130 spaces along Avenue of the Flags to fill this purpose. Currently, SMART has no policy requiring charging for parking at any of the lots in the SMART system.

There are two primary concerns with the proposed parking arrangement. First, residents from the west side of US 101 may park on nearby neighborhood streets, such as Merrydale Road, rather than drive across US 101 to park on the east side of the freeway in the designated spaces. Secondly, the station could be much more successful than projected, and demand for parking could exceed the 130 spaces provided by SMART. This Plan includes recommendations developed in collaboration with the Committee to address these concerns.

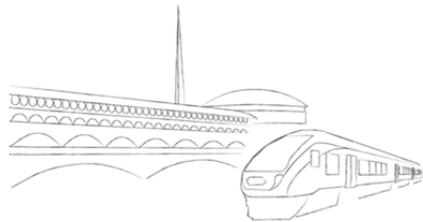
4.3.2 *Potential Additional Parking for SMART Patrons*

If demand is substantially more than projected, the 130 spaces proposed by SMART may be inadequate. To address this, there are three additional, potential opportunities to provide parking near the SMART station. The locations of this additional parking are shown on Figure 14.

1. McInnis Parkway currently provides approximately **80 on-street parking spaces**. Although not explicitly dedicated for use by train patrons, the parking is generally unoccupied during peak weekday periods. There are no time restrictions on these spaces, which means that these 80 spaces would be available for all-day parking by train patrons. In fact, given their proximity to the train station, these spaces may be more desirable than the spaces on Avenue of the Flags that will be dedicated for SMART patrons.



POTENTIAL ADDITIONAL PARKING SUPPLY



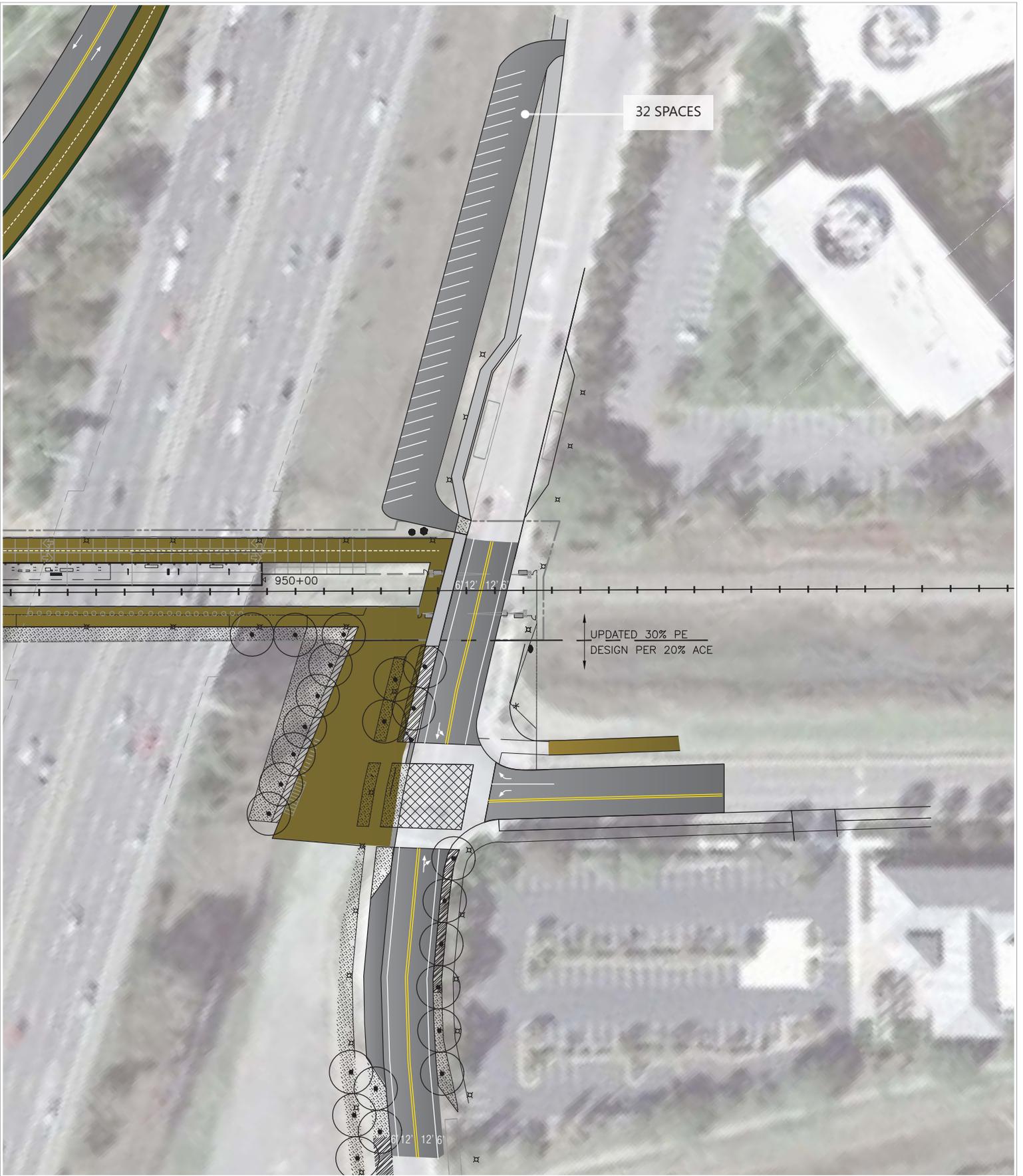
2. Merrydale Road (North) will be configured to allow on-street parking, where feasible. Unlike Merrydale Road (South), there are few adjacent land uses that would be adversely affected by increased on-street parking demand on Merrydale Road (North). Therefore, this parking could be unrestricted so as to allow train patrons to park. Although parking may not be possible on the entirety of Merrydale Road (North) due to the planned Promenade improvements, it may be possible to provide up to **65 additional parking spaces** on Merrydale Road (North).
3. There is a vacant parcel northeast of the Station, north of the railroad crossing, between US 101 and Civic Center Drive. Parking could be constructed on this site, as shown on Figure 15. If configured as shown, approximately **30 additional spaces** could be provided, including ADA parking for the station.

4.3.3 Coordination Among Jurisdictions

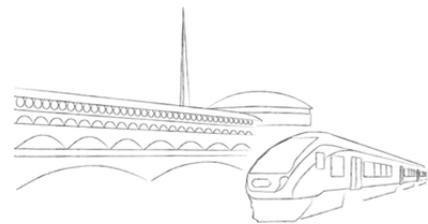
Between the 130 spaces provided by SMART and the 175 additional spaces identified above, over 300 spaces could be used by SMART patrons. If the available parking is shown to be inadequate, SMART, the City, and the County should collaborate to make more efficient use of the existing public and private parking in the area, prior to constructing new parking in the area. The City should take a proactive role in this coordination and annually survey the SMART related parking situation to identify problems and seek solutions. Coordination among the jurisdictions is essential to insure that SMART parking does not intrude into residential neighborhoods such as Rafael Meadows. Every effort should be taken to prevent this from happening.

4.3.4 Parking Requirements for New Development

Parking strategies could reduce the need for new parking associated with new development. However, failure to provide adequate off-street parking for new development could result in additional on-street parking demand, which is already relatively scarce during evenings. Therefore, the concept of providing reduced parking for new developments through the implementation of new strategies that reduce the overall demand are generally recommended, wholesale changes to the City's general parking code for this area are not warranted. Instead, reductions in parking requirements can be considered based on strategies proposed with each new development. Developments seeking to provide less parking than required by City code should demonstrate a parking program that involves periodic reporting to prove a true reduction in parking demand. Exceptions or reductions are subject to review by the Planning Commission as part of the project review process.



POTENTIAL NEW PARKING SITE



Potential strategies could include:

- Transit incentive programs, whereby employers subsidize the cost of transit passes for employees who elect not to drive
- Provision of parking spaces for carshare programs
- Unbundled parking, whereby the cost of a parking space is removed (i.e., unbundled) from the cost of housing, ensuring that residents who do not own cars or who choose to own fewer cars do not have to pay for parking spaces
- Shared parking, whereby complimentary land uses that do not experience peak parking demands simultaneously can share parking facilities and make more efficient use of parking supply

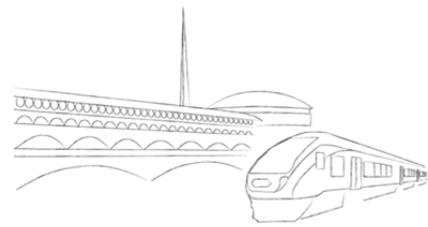
4.3.5 Bike Parking for Station and in New Development

SMART will provide 6 bike racks (which could accommodate at least 2 bicycles each, and possibly 8 or more) and 8 bike lockers as part of the station design. The City of San Rafael requires new development to include bike parking of at least five percent of the number of auto parking spaces provided, per Section 14.18.090 of the City's Zoning Code. The City and SMART should ensure adequate bike parking is provided at the station and throughout the area. The demand for bike parking provided at the station should be monitored over time and additional space provided if needed.

4.3.6 Residential Permit Parking

Many residential neighborhoods that experience severe parking shortages due to long-term commuter parking have elected to set up Residential Parking Permit programs, accompanied by time limits, to reserve on-street parking for residents and short-term visitor parking. These programs require residents to purchase a permit to use on-street parking within a given district. Permits are purchased from the City, and are only available to residents who live within the district. The cost of the permits is typically based on the cost of administering the program. Drivers who do not have permits can typically park for only a short term, typically two to four hours, during daytime hours. Parking is typically unrestricted during evenings and weekends. Implementing this type of program would ensure that commuter parking due to the SMART station does not severely impact residential neighborhoods.

The City of San Rafael does not currently have a Residential Parking Permit program, so implementing this type of program would require some institutional and administrative efforts; however, the City has expressed willingness to consider such a program if it were requested by the affected neighborhood in response to a documented parking problem.



4.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

The parking recommendations in this plan aim to ensure adequate parking for new housing, businesses, and commuters while encouraging transit use.

1. **Explore residential parking permits and time limits.** Residential parking permits coupled with 2 or 4-hour time limits can protect neighborhoods from long-term commuter parking spillover.
2. **Provide more commuter parking opportunities throughout the area.** Three additional parking opportunities have been identified for SMART commuter parking. This will be public parking and therefore they will be open to non-SMART users as well. They are:
 - a. McInnis Parkway, approximately 80 on-street parking spaces
 - b. Merrydale North, approximately 65 on-street spaces (depending on how the roadway is configured without compromising the planned promenade extension)
 - c. Vacant parcel northeast of station, approximately 32 spaces (can include some ADA parking for SMART and possibly more bike parking for station)
 - d. If more parking is needed, the City and County should pursue the use of public lots for SMART parking
 - e. Consider using new technology as it develops to communicate real-time availability of parking to station users.
3. **Coordinate parking controls.** A successful parking strategy will require extensive on-going coordination and planning for increased parking demand between the County of Marin, SMART and the City of San Rafael. The City should survey the SMART related parking situation annually to identify problems and seek solutions. Coordination among the jurisdictions is essential to insure that SMART parking does not intrude into the residential neighborhoods such as Rafael Meadows. Every effort should be taken to prevent this from happening.
4. **Reduce parking requirements.** If coupled with other strategies that can demonstrably show a reduced demand for parking, such as transit incentive programs, carsharing, shuttles, unbundling parking, and shared parking, new development may need less parking than the current ordinance requires. Developments seeking to provide less parking may be subject to periodic review for efficiency. Reduced requirements can also be linked to neighborhood serving uses such as dry-cleaning and Laundromats, drug stores, and food stores.
5. **Provide bike parking.** Provide adequate bike parking at the station and in new development.