



March 1, 2018

Mr. Jeff Blackman  
Bedford Lodging  
5646 Milton Street, Suite 890  
Dallas, TX 75206

## Focused Evaluation of AC Hotel Off-site Parking Conditions

Dear Mr. Blackman;

As requested, W-Trans has prepared a focused evaluation of potential off-site parking conditions associated with the proposed AC Hotel project, to be located at 210 5<sup>th</sup> Street. We understand that the City has requested this evaluation in order to determine if sufficient findings exist to approve a reduction in the project's required parking supply, consistent with provisions included in the zoning code. The 142-room hotel project would include 26 onsite parking spaces.

It is understood that the hotel may provide valet parking service to an off-site parking facility to accommodate guest parking as needed. In order to assess the maximum potential parking effects of the project, however, this analysis is focused on determining whether the off-site parking demand could be accommodated on public streets and lots in the surrounding area *without* the use of valet parking at a designated facility.

The City of Santa Rosa commissioned the *Santa Rosa Parking Analysis*, CDM Smith, February 2015, which evaluates near-term and long-range parking demand and occupancy in the central business district. The report included extensive data collection, and its resulting analyses and findings have been used as the basis for this evaluation.

### Zoning Code Provisions

Section 20-36.050(C) of the City's zoning code contains provisions relating to parking requirement adjustments for projects within the Downtown Station Area Specific Plan boundary. The code indicates that:

2. *Parking requirements for projects located within the Downtown and North Santa Rosa Station Area Specific Plan boundaries (see Figures 3-12 and 3-13) may be reduced by the review authority, as a condition of project approval or Minor Conditional Use Permit, when supported by a parking study. The review authority may approve a decrease in parking spaces after first making the following finding:*
  - a. *The number of parking spaces approved will be sufficient for its safe, convenient and efficient operation of the use, and will be compatible with the neighboring properties.*

### Parking Time Limits and Supply

The Railroad Square commercial area is adjacent to the City's downtown parking district, and includes time-restricted on- and off-street parking. The portions of 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, Davis, and Wilson Streets nearest the AC Hotel site include paid on-street parking with three-hour limits that are enforced between 10 a.m. and 8 p.m. Three off-street lots also currently exist under US 101 and on the AC Hotel project site, with eight-hour limits that are enforced between 10 a.m. and 6 p.m. Parking enforcement occurs Monday through Saturday excluding holidays. The areas near the project site that include time-restricted pay parking are shown in Figure 1.

The *Santa Rosa Parking Analysis* report summarizes the existing downtown parking inventory. The entire parking study area includes 6,645 spaces. The Downtown focus area includes 3,046 spaces and the Railroad Square focus areas includes 515 spaces (482 auto and 33 motorcycle).

## Existing Parking Occupancy

The *Santa Rosa Parking Analysis* evaluates the existing parking demand and peak occupancy in public parking spaces throughout the downtown study area, as well as for focused areas including a six-block section of Railroad Square (bounded by 5<sup>th</sup> Street, 3<sup>rd</sup> Street, SMART, and Morgan Street) and the downtown core area (roughly bounded by 7<sup>th</sup> Street, 1<sup>st</sup> Street, B Street, and E Street). The study area included all public on-street and off-street spaces, including those in garages operated by the City. It did not include privately-owned parking spaces, however, including those available in the Santa Rosa Plaza parking garages and lots. The peak parking occupancy throughout the entire study area was found to be 45 percent on weekdays during the midday lunch hour.

Of greater relevance to the AC hotel project is the parking occupancy that occurs in the Railroad Square focus area. The parking analysis found that parking occupancy in Railroad Square peaks at approximately 46 percent on weekdays during the midday lunch hour, and at approximately 44 percent on Saturday evenings. A chart excerpted from the *Santa Rosa Parking Analysis* report showing on- and off-street parking occupancy trends in Railroad Square is shown in Figure 2.

## AC Hotel Parking Demand

An analysis of the potential parking demand associated with the AC Hotel project is contained in the *Traffic Impact Study for the AC Hotel, W-Trans*, November 2016. The report presents an evaluation of parking demand on both weekdays and weekends by time-of-day and by individual hotel component (guests, employees, retail, and restaurant). The hotel is projected to experience a peak demand of 114 spaces during the weekday lunch hour, and 124 parking spaces on weekends at 9:00 p.m. Of this demand, 26 vehicles would be accommodated onsite. In general, the hotel is projected to generate a higher parking demand on weekends than weekdays, with the highest weekend demand occurring during the evening and overnight periods when guests are typically onsite. The projected parking demand profiles for the project are shown in Graphs 1 and 2.

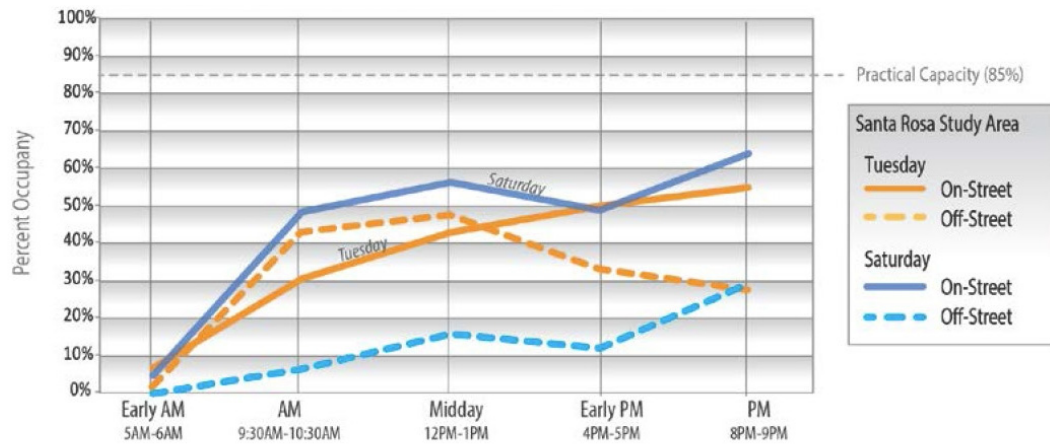
It is relevant to note that the parking demand projections for the AC Hotel are based on a model developed by the Urban Land Institute that is described in its 2005 publication *Shared Parking*. The analysis utilizes standard mode share assumptions for full-service hotels, and in order to provide a conservative assessment, was intentionally not adjusted to account for guests and customers that may travel via SMART instead of via a private automobile that would need to be parked. The baseline parking demand rates for hotels used in the ULI methodology have also likely changed in the past decade, particularly during the past several years as use of ridesharing services such as Uber and Lyft has dramatically increased. The projected parking demand for the project should therefore be considered a conservative, worst-case estimate.

**Figure 1 – Areas of Time-Restricted Pay Parking**



Source: Santa Rosa Parking Division, excerpt of map available at <https://srcity.org/2591/Downtown-Parking>

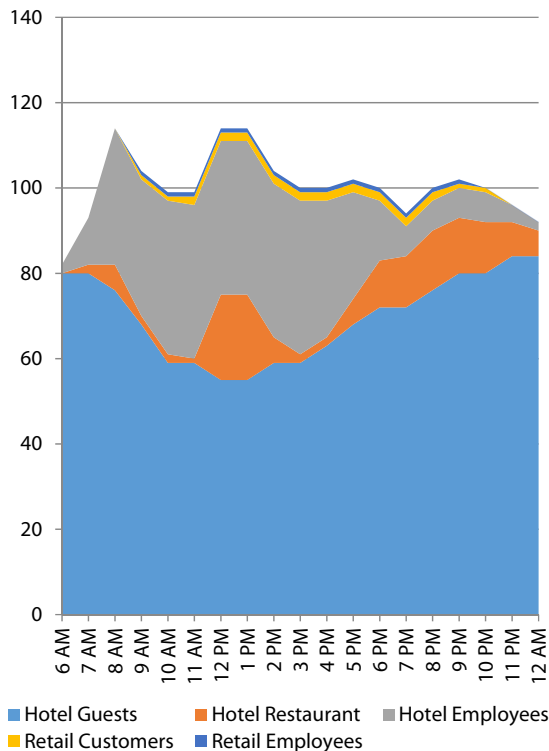
**Figure 2 – Railroad Square Parking Occupancy**



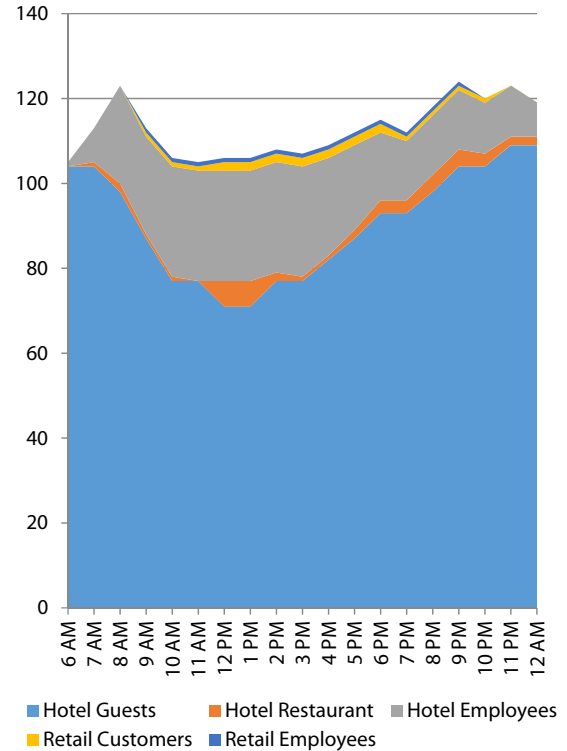
Weekday (Tuesday) Occupancy: Santa Rosa Study Area					
On-street	6%	30%	42%	49%	54%
Off-street	1%	44%	49%	34%	28%
Overall	3%	38%	46%	40%	39%
Weekend (Saturday) Occupancy: Santa Rosa Study Area					
On-street	4%	48%	56%	48%	63%
Off-street	0%	7%	16%	12%	30%
Overall	2%	25%	34%	28%	44%

Source: *Santa Rosa Parking Analysis*, CDM Smith, February 2015, "Figure 1-8: Railroad Square Focus Area On- and Off-street Occupancy," Page 12

**Graph 1 – AC Hotel Weekday Parking Demand**



**Graph 2 – AC Hotel Weekend Parking Demand**

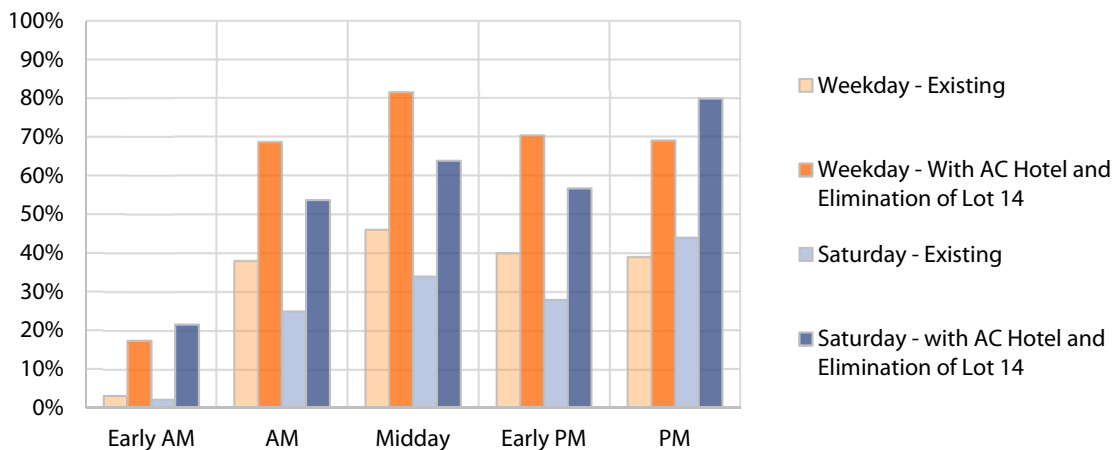


### Near-Term Parking Occupancy including AC Hotel

Development of the AC Hotel would affect Railroad Square’s parking occupancy in two ways. First, assuming that a valet program with remote parking is *not* implemented, the project would increase the utilization of public parking spaces on surrounding streets and parking lots. Second, the project would eliminate an existing 62-space surface parking lot (Lot 15) that the City currently leases and makes available for public parking. While Lot 15 is considered a temporary parking facility and is identified for development in the Downtown Station Area Plan, its displacement will have an effect on parking occupancies in the surrounding area.

In order to determine the potential parking occupancy trends that could exist with the project, the parking data and evaluation contained in the *Santa Rosa Parking Analysis* report as shown in Figure 2 was updated to add the hotel’s off-site parking demand by time of day, as well as the elimination of 62 existing parking spaces in Lot 15. For the analysis it was assumed that all of the project’s added parking demand would occur in the six-block Railroad Square focus area. The results indicate an increase in the peak weekday parking occupancy to 82 percent during the midday lunchtime peak (compared to the current 46 percent), and an increase in the peak weekend parking occupancy to 80 percent during the evening (compared to the existing 44 percent). The results are shown for the various times of day and by weekdays versus Saturdays in Figure 3.

**Figure 3 – Railroad Square Focus Area Parking Occupancy with AC Hotel**



Note: Projections assume that all off-site hotel parking occurs in the six-block Railroad Square focus area, and that the hotel does not offer or operate a valet service that utilizes an off-site parking lot

The evaluation described above conservatively assumes that all additional project off-site parking demand would occur in the Railroad Square focus area. The downtown focus area encounters similar overall occupancy trends to Railroad Square, however, and would also be within walking distance of the hotel site, including the City-owned Garage 5, Garage 9, and Garage 12. If the hotel’s off-site parking demand were to be spread between the Railroad Square and downtown focus areas, its level of impact would be less than shown in Figure 3. While not publicly-owned spaces, a considerable supply of paid parking also exists at the Santa Rosa Plaza parking garages near the hotel site.

**Finding** – Assuming that all off-site parking demand generated by the project occurs in the Railroad Square focus area, and accounting for the elimination of 62 existing parking spaces in Lot 15, the resulting parking supply would remain adequate to accommodate the area’s total demand.

### Future Parking Demand and Occupancy

The *Santa Rosa Parking Analysis* report also includes a range of future parking demand and occupancy projections for the Railroad Square area. Projections represent three possible scenarios: 1) the added demand created by

planned development, 2) the added demand created by planned development and additional uses consistent with the Downtown Station Area Specific Plan, and 3) added demand created by planned development plus 35 percent growth in all land uses. The Downtown Station Area Plan envisions development of the AC Hotel site with "Transit Village Mixed Use" land uses, and assumed a representative 50,000 square feet of office and 5,000 square feet of retail at the site. With respect to changes in the future parking supply, the calculations contained in the *Santa Rosa Parking Analysis* report conservatively assume that only one space per new residential unit will be added. In other words, the projections assume that new nonresidential uses would provide no additional parking, even though in reality the City would require some level of added private parking supply. By calculating future parking occupancy calculations in this manner, it is possible to understand the maximum potential future parking impact, and use this information to make decisions about the amount of added parking supply that will be needed.

The future peak parking occupancy estimates for the Railroad Square area under the three development scenarios are contained in Table 2-5 of the *Santa Rosa Parking Analysis* report. Including the potential demand associated with the currently-inactive New Railroad Square development (mixed-use development adjacent to the SMART station), the parking occupancy estimates range from 84 to 99 percent during the weekday peak, and 58 to 76 percent during the Saturday peak. In theory, these projections support the premise that the future peak parking demand in the Railroad Square area would not exceed the available supply, even if added nonresidential uses provide no additional parking. In reality, however, most added uses *would* still be required by the City to provide some level of additional parking supply. Any individual projects that include onsite parking, such as the 26 spaces proposed for the project, would correspondingly cause peak parking occupancy levels to be lower than indicated.

The *Santa Rosa Parking Analysis* report also includes future parking occupancy estimates for the Downtown area (Table 2-4). While not as proximate to the AC Hotel site as the Railroad Square area, examination of parking occupancy trends in Downtown still merits consideration, as it is still within a reasonable walking distance. The report indicates that future parking occupancies are projected to range from 60 to 87 percent during the weekday peak and between 35 and 59 percent during the Saturday peak, again suggesting that the future parking demand would be met by the available supply.

**Finding** – Parking projections contained in the *Santa Rosa Parking Analysis* indicate that the overall future peak parking demands occurring in Railroad Square and Downtown are anticipated to be met by the available parking supply on both weekdays and Saturdays.

## Assessment

Per the provisions contained in the zoning code, in considering a parking reduction for the AC Hotel project, the City would need to determine that "the number of parking spaces approved will be sufficient for its safe, convenient and efficient operation of the use, and will be compatible with the neighboring properties." Following is a discussion of each of this statement's components.

With respect to safety, there are no apparent safety concerns associated with the use of off-site parking. Continuous sidewalks exist throughout the Railroad Square and downtown areas, including marked crosswalks at intersections and pedestrian phasing at signalized intersections, facilitating walking between the hotel and a vehicle parked on one of the surrounding blocks.

Determining whether the off-site parking would be convenient is subjective; in urban downtown areas, people are generally amenable to walking several blocks to their destination, though in more suburban locations this may be seen as an annoyance. This determination would be most appropriately made by City staff and members of the design review board, in consideration of the site's context in Santa Rosa and future vision for the downtown and Railroad Square areas. It is noted, however, that walking one-quarter of a mile to a transit stop is generally considered adequately convenient, and all of the parking areas that was be used by employees and guests of the hotel are considerably closer than a quarter mile walking distance.

In regards to efficiency of the use, the 26 onsite parking spaces would be continuously managed and utilized, and parking in the surrounding area used as necessary to accommodate demand. Since the evaluation indicates that

spaces are indeed available in the surrounding area, no adverse impacts to efficiency are anticipated. Some efficiency may be *gained* in the sense that hotels generate some of their highest parking demands during overnight periods when parking usage in surrounding commercial areas is at its lowest.

The most substantial finding may be related to the use's compatibility with neighboring properties. Based on the data contained in the *Santa Rosa Parking Analysis* study, and in consideration of the potential off-site parking demand that could be generated by the project at different times of day, it appears that the available parking supply will be able to accommodate the anticipated demand in both the near-term and longer-range periods. Parking is likely to be fully-utilized in the most desirable spaces during parts of the day, but alternative spaces are projected to be available within several blocks. The City has recently implemented a parking strategy for Railroad Square and downtown that strives to achieve 85 percent parking occupancy rates through pricing. In other words, the City may increase parking rates in the most desirable parking spaces while maintaining (or even decreasing) the rates in peripheral locations in order to effectively balance supply and demand. This type of strategy has been used successfully in other communities to ensure efficient use of parking resources.

The parking time limits established by the City will also help to effectively manage the added parking demand created by the project. The three-hour on-street parking limits (which are enforced until 8 p.m.) should effectively deter hotel guests from using these spaces for long-term parking, lessening the potential impacts to fronting businesses. The availability of off-street City parking lots near the project site for longer-term parking between 6 p.m. and 10 a.m. is expected to work particularly well, increasing the utilization of currently-underutilized parking lots while directing hotel guest parking away from the busiest commercial areas.

**Finding** – Sufficient evidence appears to exist for the City to determine that the AC Hotel's proposed parking supply will allow safe, convenient, and efficient operation that is compatible with neighboring properties.

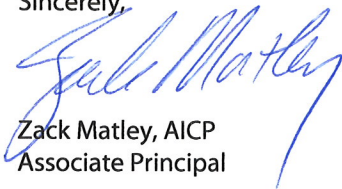
## **Additional Considerations**

Two additional factors may positively influence how the hotel's off-site parking demand affects the area, though they are difficult to quantify and should not be relied upon exclusively in considering whether to allow a parking reduction. First, the limited onsite parking supply will inherently influence the types of customers selecting (or not selecting) to stay at the hotel. Some customers intending to drive or needing their vehicles to conduct business may simply choose to stay at a different hotel where parking is more convenient. In contrast, customers who do *not* use their own vehicle, traveling via SMART, airport shuttle or tour group, and/or relying on ridesharing services (Uber, Lyft) may be more drawn to this particular hotel.

Second, in order to be successful in the long-term, the hotel management/operators need to ensure a positive customer experience. Doing so may require contracting with other entities to use available off-site parking spaces through a valet parking program, if such an arrangement is proven to be needed by the hotel's client base. While not mandatory to justify a parking reduction per the City's zoning code, we understand this may ultimately be an approach utilized by the AC Hotel project.

Thank you for giving W-Trans the opportunity to provide these services. Please call if you have any questions.

Sincerely,



Zack Matley, AICP  
Associate Principal