

# SNAPPERS STADIUM PARKING PLANS STILL UNDER DEVELOPMENT

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Austin Montgomery/Beloit Daily News Beloit residents say they are concerned about parking downtown following the announcement of plans for a downtown Beloit Snappers stadium.

BELOIT - Officials remain silent on the concerns voiced by residents about a shortage of parking if the Beloit Snappers build a new stadium downtown.

At a public meeting on Sept. 30, prospective Snappers owner Quint Studer, whose company Studer Entertainment & Retail co-owns the Pensacola, Florida Blue Wahoos minor league baseball team, said his experience in Florida showed him minimal parking needed to be included in a downtown stadium plan. Studer said the Florida stadium has only 300 designated parking spaces, while seeing Saturday night sellouts for the last eight years.

"That's another wild thing because you want people to park and walk to the stadium and you want them to enjoy themselves downtown," Studer said at the Sept. 30 meeting.

Development officials tied to the future downtown Beloit stadium project said talks with the City of South Beloit are ongoing to acquire land on the south side of Shirland Avenue for parking.

As part of the oversight process, a planned urban development application is required.

The development application also requires a parking study to lay out any possible impacts. As of Thursday afternoon, no application had been submitted to the city's planning office, according to city staff.

Beloit City Manager Lori Curtis Luther declined to comment on questions regarding resident concerns about parking, saying it was "premature" to speak on the issue until final designs are submitted and the required parking study has been completed.

Downtown Beloit Association Executive Director Shauna El-Amin also declined to comment, directing the Beloit Daily News to information published in a 2017 parking study commissioned by the Stateline Area Transportation Study Metropolitan Planning Organization (SLATS MPO).

The boundaries of the study range to Barret Place and Bushnell Street to the north, east to Park Avenue, south to Clark Street in South Beloit and west to the Rock River and Fifth Street in Beloit.

According to the study, there are 5,632 parking spaces in that area, but 64% (3,604) parking spots are on private property compared to 36% (2,028 spots) along city streets or off-street public parking.

"Most of the private off-street parking lots are small, and are restricted based on posted signage for tenants use only, or patrons of a specific business," the study said. "These restrictions on use typically result in very low utilization during non-business hours for related businesses."

According to the study, weekday parking peaks at 11 a.m., with nearly 2,000 spaces used. Weekend parking peaks at 9 a.m. with just over 1,200 spaces occupied. Future projections in the study added around 800 more vehicles parked during peak weekdays and over 1,000 for peak weekend days.

The study also recommended creating formal agreements to allow public parking on private lots and create an employee parking permit program for certain city-owned lots to mitigate the use of parking between visitors and long-term users.

To date, no changes have been made.