

From: [B LeBrun](#)
Sent: Monday, October 4, 2021 2:19 PM
To: [PublicComment](#)
Subject: Siewert Apartments & Downtown Parking Study for the 10/4/2021
Hastings, MN City Council Meeting

Mayor & Councilmembers-

I noticed something interesting in the September 13th Planning Commission meeting agenda/minutes/packet. The Siewert Apartments (which I am in full support of) and the recent Downtown Parking Study were both on the agenda. I was glad to see the Planning staff had done a downtown parking study. It had some interesting insights which confirmed my prior thinking that concerns over a lack of parking supply in downtown are overblown and not based on facts or reality. If you haven't read the study already, I highly encourage you to take a look. You can find it in full here: <http://156.99.88.54/weblink/0/edoc/617420/5%20-%20Downtown%20Parking%20Study%20Report.pdf>

With a public hearing for the Siewert Apartments on the agenda for the October 4th City Council Meeting, I have some comments and questions that I would like to share related to the development if I am unable to attend the meeting in person:

The short version is that, based on the recent downtown parking study, I believe that the City is requiring too much off street parking for the Siewert apartments development on 3rd and Tyler. The off-street parking required takes up the entire first floor of the proposed building, and the building has no doorways, storefronts, housing units or openings to the street/sidewalk as a result. This is not in line with the type of buildings that currently exist downtown. The downtown parking study shows that less parking could be required since parking supply downtown is not in fact restricted. Less required parking would allow for first floor commercial space or more housing units instead of under-utilized parking spaces. Every additional parking space is also extremely expensive to the developer, which usually results in increased rents as well. The long version is below:

I would like to point out a paragraph that I have highlighted from page 5 of the downtown parking study:

Effects of Recent Developments

Since the study conducted in 2017, a parking ramp has been constructed, parklets have been installed, Artspace Lofts was completed, Levee park improvements were made, and Confluence continued its redevelopment of Hudson Manufacturing. All of which have had an impact on downtown's parking supply, demand, and utilization. For example, the installation of parklets on East 2nd Street and Sibley Street reduced the number of usable on street parking spaces from 30 to 20 and 9 to 7 respectively. While the addition of parklets on East 2nd Street and Sibley Street has been observed to have put an increased strain on East 2nd Street (Vermillion to Ramsey) and the surrounding area, the newly constructed parking ramp has the capacity to accommodate both the loss of on street parking and the areas found to have exceeded the 75% threshold. All while only being a couple blocks away. The ramp is currently underutilized with an average of 18 spaces reported out of the 122 spaces available. This is expected to change however with the completion of the Confluence redevelopment.

The newly constructed Artspace Lofts' impact on downtown's parking demand and utilization was analyzed and was found to have a minimal effect on the surrounding area as it provided on-site parking for its tenants. Its data however could be applied to future development projects currently being proposed within the study area. Overall, it was found that Artspace Lofts only utilized 42% of its parking spaces or an average of 25 parking spaces out of the 58 it has available. This is an important finding for developments looking for a variance to the Downtown Core's requirement of providing two parking spaces per dwelling unit.

It does not appear that the planning commission connected the dots between the highlighted portion from the parking study and the Siewert Apartments plans, but it looks to me that the amount of parking required for a development similar to Artspace or the Siewert apartments could be decreased or left up to developers discretion entirely. The staff report on the development shows that the Siewert apartments as currently planned are on the higher end of the parking calculations (shown below from the staff report on the development), and the downtown parking study shows with hard numbers that the required parking spaces will likely be underutilized. From page 15 of the staff report on the Siewert proposal:

Required Parking

Proposed parking is acceptable and falls within the range of recognized parking standards. Parking requirements for construction of new buildings within the DC Zoning District are determined through utilization of The Urban Land Institute's (ULI) Shared Parking Standards Guidelines or International Transportation Engineers (ITE) Shared Parking Standards. ITE provides the average and 85th percentile parking demands for a site based on the land use type, size and number of units, and context (urban, suburban, rural, proximity to transit). ULI provides calculations based on different types of land use context (urban, suburban, rural) and size of building. Calculations follow below:

Parking Calculation

Gross Required Parking Calculations	Number	Requirement	Needed
ITE - Apartment - average	32 units	1.21 per unit	39
ITE - Apartment - 85 th percentile	32 units	1.52 per unit	49
ULI - Shared Parking - Suburban (less than 4 floors)	32 units	1.23 per unit	40

Off Street Parking Provided	Spaces
Garage	32
Surface Parking	13
TOTAL	45

1.41 spaces per unit

So in summary, the fully-occupied Artspace building is utilizing less than half of its off street parking spaces. Artspace has 37 units and 58 parking spaces for a ratio of 1.57 spaces per unit. The actual utilization for the Artspace parking is more like **0.68** spaces per unit (25 spaces used for 37 units), which shows that the Siewert building could probably have a parking ratio of closer to 1 space per unit, 13 spaces less than currently planned. A quick glance at the parking portion of the plans for the Siewert building shows that a 1:1 parking ratio (32 spaces for 32 units) could potentially allow them to use about half of the first floor space for something like street facing retail or office space instead of car storage, which I am sure would be favorable to the developer, and would also be favorable to the downtown and more in keeping with the historical use pattern of downtown buildings having street-facing retail or office space. The downtown parking study also shows that there is ample street and public off street parking available to supplement off street parking at this site, similar to every single other existing building in the downtown area.

To reiterate, I am in total support of what Luke Siewert is trying to build, as this is the sort of housing development that Hastings is desperately in need of. I am also glad to see that some of my original concerns about the streetscape have been alleviated with the addition of windows along the sidewalk on the first floor of the building. However, it does bother me that the entire first floor of this building as planned is taken up by unproductive car storage. Where else in downtown Hastings is there an entire building with no street facing doorways or storefronts? Imagine

what a diminished place downtown Hastings would be if every single building had nothing but parking on the first floor or had a giant surface lot required with it. Even under the current special "Downtown Core" zoning district it would be impossible to replicate the enjoyable & productive environment that is downtown Hastings if it were built under today's ordinance.

My main concerns for bringing this up are as follows:

- Why is the Downtown Core parking requirement so high if our own study shows that the current requirement, when enforced, would require a developer to build an excess of expensive and unproductive parking spaces?
- Why should a developer on a potential project have to apply for a variance to a parking requirement when we have already established through staff research that the parking requirement is too high?
- Why not revise the requirement for the zoning district?
- How many potential housing units or first floor commercial spaces are we giving up in the downtown core on this development or future developments by requiring more parking than is necessary as shown by our own recent staff report?

Please feel free to reach out for any clarification or further discussion. I intend to continue thinking about and bringing up the issue of excess parking because I believe that it is extremely important and that it is fully within the city's ability to make changes for the better on this issue.

Thank you,

Bryce LeBrun
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