

# WINSTON-SALEM JOURNAL

July 15, 2007

## Knights May Move Uptown, Size Down

**Other Triple-A teams have found success on smaller pieces of land**

The Associated Press

CHARLOTTE

A plan for a new \$35 million ballpark for the Charlotte Knights calls for the team and their fans to squeeze into one of the smallest sites in Triple-A baseball.

The proposed 7.8-acre site in Charlotte's financial district would mean the Knights could move into the city after attendance numbers at their home in nearby Fort Mill, S.C., have fallen toward the bottom of the nation's 30 Triple-A teams.

The new 10,000-seat uptown ballpark would take up just two blocks northeast of the Carolina Panthers' Bank of America Stadium where a vacant distribution center now sits.

Most Triple-A clubs building new stadiums have chosen bigger pieces of land, but some say there's evidence that smaller spaces work and may even help the area's economy.

Triple-A teams such as the Durham Bulls and Toledo Mud Hens in Ohio have found success with their 8-acre sites in the past 10 years. Even the major-league Minnesota Twins hope to begin playing in a couple of years in a new 40,000-seat stadium that's being built on 8 acres in downtown Minneapolis.

"Whenever you deal with urban sites, you're going to have the problem of not as much space as you'd like," said Knights Vice President and General Manager Dan Rajkowski. "It's all a give-and-take."

One thing the Knights would say goodbye to is onsite parking. But Chris Dunlavey, the president of a company that's overseen ballpark design for several minor- and major-league teams, said that might be better.

"Part of the purpose should be to help stimulate economic activity in the downtown," he said. "If you're creating a situation where people drive in, park, attend the game, then get in their cars and leave, there's not a lot of opportunity for a spillover effect into downtown."

Dunlavey's company, Brailsford & Dunlavey in Washington, has helped design stadiums for the Mud Hens, Cincinnati Reds, Washington Nationals and the Triple-A Sounds in Nashville, Tenn. He recommends that teams build a stadium on more than 7 acres, and says at least 9 acres is ideal.

In Winston-Salem, plans are under way to build a 5,500-seat stadium and commercial complex for the Winston-Salem Warthogs on a 28-acre tract at Peters Creek Parkway and Business 40. The Warthogs are a Single-A team in the Carolina League.

The Charlotte stadium's design hasn't yet been completed, and those who have led other ballpark projects said that design can be more important than size.

"I really think a small site is better," said Patti Clare, the director of development for a nonprofit that helped get a 13,600-seat stadium built in Louisville for the Triple-A Bats.

Though Louisville had 18 acres to work with, Clare said that cities shouldn't automatically reject sites based on size.

"The trend in the minor leagues is to make it smaller, as intimate as possible. They're a lot more fun than major-league ballparks," she said.