

Oliver Breweries Expands due to Increasing Demand

ADAM BEDNAR, The Daily Record

BALTIMORE (AP) — Demand for Pratt Street Ale House's brews is forcing the craft beer maker to expand its brewing operations.

Currently the ale house, which brews its suds as Oliver Breweries, makes its beers on the premises of its bar and restaurant across Pratt Street from the convention center in Baltimore. Because of increasing demand and limited production capacity, the company is expanding its operations into a 12,000-square-foot industrial space in East Baltimore's Orchard Ridge neighborhood.

"I feel very confident and excited once the beer is available the popularity will increase," co-owner Justin Dvorkin said.

He said the company's beers are distributed in Maryland, Virginia and Washington D.C., but its current production facility allows it to produce only about 2,000 barrels of beer a year.

The expanded facility, which will eventually include bottling and canning, is expected to allow the company to produce as much as 4,000 barrels in the first year of operation and 6,000 barrels in the second.

The Baltimore Board of Municipal and Zoning Appeals approved using the facility, located at 4216 Shannon Drive, as a craft brewery on Feb. 11.

Dvorkin said the facility will employ about six people, which could double to 12 once it begins canning and bottling operations. Production at the site is expected to begin by no later than August of this year.

The brewery specializes in English-style beers and produces ales such as Draft Punk and Three Lions.

Marshall Weston, president and CEO of the Restaurant Association of Maryland, said craft brews are becoming an important part of what restaurants are offering because beer drinkers are becoming more sophisticated.

He said it's too early to tell whether there is a trend of brew pubs looking to expand production and distribution, but added that Pratt Street Ale House may be ahead of the curve.

"We haven't seen this to be the norm just yet. But with the demand for craft brews, I would not be surprised to see others go in that direction," Weston said.

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J.T. Smith, executive director of the Brewers Association of Maryland, said local breweries are booming and that the industry has seen 35 percent growth in the number of brewers and volume of beer being produced in the state in the last five years. He said Maryland brewers account for 20,000 jobs, and contribute more than \$600 million in wages and \$570 million a year in federal and state taxes.

"Across the state we see brewers are finding continued success, and with the continued success comes expansion," Smith said.

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