

# CraftPittsburgh

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**PCBW  
WRAP-UP**

**CRAFT BEER  
AND THE  
SECOND TIER**

**MOBILE  
CANNING**

**WHY NOT  
DUQUESNE?**

**TRASH XXVII**

cooking with beer • homebrewing • upcoming beer events • local beer trivia



An illustration at the top of the page features several large, stylized beer mugs with white foam overflowing from them. The mugs are dark with some having white patterns. Behind the mugs is a silhouette of an industrial cityscape with various buildings and smokestacks. In the background, a large Ferris wheel is visible on the left and right sides. There are also stylized wheat stalks and clouds scattered throughout the scene. The entire illustration is set against a solid orange background.

# WHY NOT DUQUESNE?

Words Ian Mikrut Photo Mike Weiss

By now the narrative is familiar, particularly in Pittsburgh's Revival over the last decade: a once bustling neighborhood hasn't seen significant growth or change in 20 or so odd years. New business comes in, in this case breweries, which in turn helps to bring more business, people and money to the area.

The process continues and doubles over. Almost two years ago we ran a story about many of the new breweries at that time setting up in neighborhoods that were relatively untouched (*Brew Gentlemen in Braddock, Voodoo in Homestead, Hop Farm in Lawrenceville, to name a few*). Since then the number of breweries in the Pittsburgh area has more than doubled, with multiple breweries within blocks of each other in some neighborhoods with different, previously untouched neighborhoods finding new life as well (*Sharpsburg, anyone?*). And with no sign of oversaturation in sight, there's no reason this trend can't continue for the time being.

With so many areas having benefitted from the presence of breweries and other new businesses, it's always surprising to find out about the seemingly endless hurdles new brewers have to jump over to get started, and in some cases, blowback from the community or municipal leadership that complicate things even further. In steps the curious case of the City of Duquesne. Once a major hub in Pittsburgh's industrial history, it's been quite some time since it was a destination for anything other than being on the way to Kennywood.

Like I said, you've heard this story before. However there is a bit of a twist. Since no breweries have yet to set up shop in Duquesne, the municipality has opened its doors to entice and welcome anyone willing to give them a chance.

"We've seen other municipalities like Duquesne. Old steel mills come down, economies down, then all of a sudden people are bouncing back. And the idea came from Brew Gentlemen going into Braddock and being successful. And obviously you have Homestead with Blue Dust and Voodoo moving in there, Dorothy 6, and now Trios is going in an old Levin hardware store and they're just generating excitement," Frank Piccolino, City Manager and Open Records Officer of Duquesne says.

In all honesty, it is a bit surprising that Duquesne has gotten a little lost in the shuffle. Located just south of Braddock, on the other side of the Monongahela River, right off of State Route 837, it's a prime, easy-to-get-to spot for any business in the Pittsburgh area. Nestled among other relatively untapped communities in the Mon Valley, it could also potentially serve as a connecting destination point between breweries in East Pittsburgh and those in the South Hills.

"So the thought was these brewers are taking a chance on these buildings in random places. These guys made it work, they're generating excitement," Piccolino says. "And that's what we want to try to mirror, not steal it, but mirror it. Hey, why don't you come look at Duquesne?"

In recent developments of their comprehensive plan for where the city wants to be, the municipality has added microbrewing as a large part of their zoning plans while making it easier for permitting. There are plenty of possible buildings, many of which acquired directly by the municipality through Sheriff's Sale and are available to own or lease at very affordable rates.

Duquesne's leadership really wants this to happen and have streamlined the process to make things a bit easier, while offering some interesting incentives.

One of the more unique ones being that the city has its own, private water distribution that would be much cheaper than elsewhere in Pittsburgh. There are even working wells that a brewery could potentially be built



around. Regardless, anyone building a brewery in Duquesne would have access to a clean, private water supply at a much cheaper rate than anywhere else in the Pittsburgh area.

New businesses would also have access to loans and other benefits through the Redevelopment Authority of the City of Duquesne.

"We have been an enterprise zone in the state of Pennsylvania which they capitalize us with a business loan program. So it's a gap-financing program where we'll owe up to one half of the funds borrowed at 3 percent interest rate," Charles H. Starrett III of Starrett and Associates says. "So we administer this loan program for Duquesne, McKeesport and Clairton."

Starrett and his wife Amy are administrators for the Redevelopment Authority of the City of Duquesne, along with Mayor Phillip Krivacek who is the Chairman of the Board of Directors. Having much of the leadership support needed for new businesses under both the municipality and redevelopment roofs is yet another aspect to Duquesne's streamlined process.

"We don't have any red tape," Mayor Krivacek says. "We try to make sure that nobody wants anything from you, and we give you what you need to get it done. In the last five years there's been upwards of \$10 million dollars of investment in commercial buildings. Employment at the RIDC Riverplace site is now upwards of 1,000 with more jobs being added."

Starrett explains that at the old Duquesne mill site (RIDC river site), which is now a large industrial park housing several large employers, and the nearby trail that the Great Allegheny Passage comes through running parallel with the railroad track, brings plenty of activity around the city. Because of that activity, Duquesne has experience in providing loans, certain state tax credits and in tax increment financing.

"If you have a piece of land that has a given value and someone puts a building up, we can take funds, anticipated monies we would get under the real estate taxes of the building, and really put that into the infrastructure of the property," Starrett says. "So we can pay for gas lines, water lines, utilities, paving lighting and all of those outside amenities."

A participating business would pay taxes as they normally would, but they wouldn't have to pay back anything invested in the property's infrastructure. Essentially it's a grant. The city, county and school district defer those taxes for a period of five to seven years.

"So it's a nice incentive. For a small city, we have a loan program that is pretty well-financed and the city will work with you," Starrett says.

Taking a tour of the city, it's pretty easy to imagine a new brewery stepping into one of the available buildings. There's an old Moose Lodge with two floors and duckpin bowling just blocks from the municipal building. An old VFW with ample open space for parking and a wide open view of the railroad tracks and river. What used to be a bank sits right off of 837 next to one of Duquesne's shopping centers, just yards away from the GAP trail.

Taking a look around, it's easy to take these old buildings and see everything that's been lost to this city over the years. But if Pittsburgh's revitalization and the role that craft beer plays in it has taught us anything, it's what the potential cities like Duquesne have to offer for the future as the region continues to grow and change. Even at the existing industrial park, there are hundreds of newer employees finding work where decades before the steel industry thrived.

And with leadership that desperately wants to see its city thrive again, then why not Duquesne? The narrative may be a familiar one, but at least there's always potential for another happy ending.



Charles H. Starrett III, Mayor Phillip Krivacek, Frank Piccolino





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## CITY OF DUQUESNE

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  - Unique Buildings & Land
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